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John 15:1 - 15:8



Gospel of John - Steve Gregg

In this passage, Steve Gregg discusses the symbolism of the true vine and its branches in John 15:1-8. He explains that the purpose behind this imagery is to emphasize that every member of the church is a part of one organism, one body, and one vine. Furthermore, the fruit produced by the branches represents the character of Christ exemplified by love, peace, and joy, which is only possible through the Holy Spirit dwelling within believers. Gregg concludes by noting that bearing fruit is essential to salvation and approaching the Father in the name of Jesus requires being spiritually discerned through the revelation of the Holy Spirit.

Transcript

John 15 verses 1-8. He begins by saying, I am the true vine and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, he takes away.

Every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes that it may produce more fruit. You are already clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you, as a branch cannot bear fruit unless it remains in the vine.

Neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, bears much fruit, for without me you can do nothing.

If anyone does not remain in me, he'll be cast out as a branch and withered. And they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

By this my Father is glorified that you bear much fruit, so you will be my disciples. Israel has been likened to a vine and a vineyard. Sometimes both images in the same passage.

In fact, both Psalm 80 and Isaiah 5 refer to Israel both as a vine and also as a vineyard. Now, Jesus says, I am the true vine. And in this, it would seem that he is saying, I am the true Israel.

And you are the branches that are in me. That is, if you are in Christ, you are in the true

Israel. Jesus was treated by the New Testament writers as if he was the new Israel.

When Jesus was born, his family had to flee to Egypt to escape an attempt on his life by Herod, who slew all the male children under two years old in Bethlehem. An angel forewarned Joseph, and he took Jesus and his mother down to Egypt. And after that, when Herod was dead, Jesus came back into the prophecy from Egypt.

And his returning from Egypt is said to fulfill the scripture in Hosea 11.1, Out of Egypt I call my Son. But of course, when you look at that passage in Hosea 11.1, you find it is not really a prediction about the Messiah in any obvious way. It is instead a historical recollection about God calling Israel out of Egypt.

It is actually not predicting something, it is remembering something of the past. He said, when Israel was young, I loved him and called my son out of Egypt. That is Hosea 11.1. Israel was his son, and God called Israel out of Egypt.

But when Jesus came out of Egypt in his infancy, Matthew saw that as a fulfillment of what? Of the type, apparently. Israel coming out of Egypt was a type. Jesus coming out of Egypt was the anti-type.

Israel was the type of Christ. In the New Testament, to be one of God's chosen is not to be in Israel, the nation, but it is to be in Christ. Christ is corporate in the New Testament.

As he describes himself as a vine with branches. Each branch is like a person. The people who are his followers are branches.

Now branches are not something additional to the vine. In other words, the vine does not refer to the stalk, a part of the plant, and the branches are a different part of the plant. The vine refers to the whole plant.

The plant is made up of a stalk and branches. The branches are the vine as much as the stalk is. Now when he said, I am the true vine, you are the branches, he is basically saying you are part of me.

You are like limbs that hang out from me. Paul took the same imagery, only made it a human image instead of a vine, that we are members of his body. And thus we are him.

We are the presence of Christ in a body here on earth, just as Jesus was the presence of Christ in a body on earth. If anyone wonders whether Paul thinks that way, you can see it quite clearly in 1 Corinthians 12. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul is using the image of a human body.

When he says, for as the body, he means any human body, it is generic. As the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. What is Christ? He is a body made up of many members.

What is that? He is talking about the church. But he does not say, so also is the church, or so also is the body of Christ. He said, like a body with many members.

It has many members, but it is one body. That is what Christ is like. Christ is manifest, since his spirit has been given to us, in a body made up of many members.

In Ephesians 1, verses 22 and 23, Paul said that God has put all things under Christ's feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him, who fills all in all. The church is Christ's body. The church is the fullness of him.

He is not full and complete without the members of his body. The head is not complete without a body, nor is the body complete without the head. Later on, in the same chapter of John 15, Jesus said to his disciples, without me you can do nothing.

That is because the body can do nothing without the head. But the imagery of a plant made up of many members, branches, and a body made up of many members, somewhat more diverse than branches, but the idea is there is an organism. This organism is Christ.

And the life of Christ is in this organism. Or the spirit of Christ is in this organism. And this organism is the true Israel.

Christ is the true Israel. He is the true vine. If you are a branch in the true vine, then you are part of that true Israel, the true vine.

And Paul gives almost exactly the same imagery, but changes the vine to an olive tree, another established image of Israel in the Old Testament. Because in Romans chapter 11, Paul said, in verse 16, Romans 11, 16, he says, For if the first fruit is holy, the lump is also holy. And if the root is holy, so are the branches.

And if some of the branches were broken off, and you being a wild olive tree were grafted among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and the fatness of the olive tree, do not boast against the branches, but if you boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you. You will say, then, branches were broken off that I might be grafted in. Well said, because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith.

Do not be haughty, but fear, for if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either. Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God on those who fell severity, but toward you goodness. If you continue in His goodness, otherwise you also will be cut off.

And he continues, but we won't take the time to look there. Now, the olive tree that Paul brings up is Israel. We know this because the same image is used by Jeremiah the

prophet.

In Jeremiah 11.16, Romans 11.16, is where Paul begins to talk about the olive tree. Jeremiah 11.16 is just a coincidence, but happens to be the reference where he is taking his imagery from. Because in speaking to Israel, Jeremiah says, in Jeremiah 11.16, Yahweh called your name, green olive tree, lovely and of good fruit.

With the noise of great tumult, He has kindled fire on it, and its branches are broken. So, he is here, of course, talking about the fact that the people of Judah have been taken into captivity. The branches are broken off and separated from Israel.

But Israel is called a green olive tree, with its branches broken off. Paul also describes the olive tree with its branches broken off. And by the way, in Romans 11, as you may well know, it is part of a lengthy discussion about Israel.

Romans 11 is the latter chapter of a three chapter section. Romans 9, 10 and 11 are one discussion about Israel. What is up with Israel? What is God up to with Israel? And he comes to the final portion of his discussion on that, and he says, You know, the olive tree, Israel is the olive tree.

Some branches have been broken off, just like Jeremiah talked about. Some branches were broken off the olive tree in his day. Well, some have been broken off in our day, because of their unbelief.

Unbelief in what? Obviously, unbelief in Christ. And he says to the Gentiles reading it, he says, And you that came from a wild olive tree, you are branches that have been grafted in among them. Among the ones that weren't broken off.

So the believing branches, the originals, are the believing Jews who came to Christ and believed in him. The original church, the disciples, Jews who came to believe in Christ. Then Gentiles were later grafted in among them, and they became part of the same tree.

What is that tree? Israel. So, Jesus and Paul are given exactly the same kind of picture. The difference is that Jesus takes one established symbol of Israel, the vine.

Paul takes another established symbol of Israel, the olive tree. Both of them agree that the disciples are branches in the organism. The organism as a whole is one organism, one body, one tree, one vine.

It is Christ, and he is the true Israel. He is the true vine. Israel was a vine, but he is the true vine.

Israel was an olive tree, but the believers in Christ, Jew and Gentile, the branches that are part of the olive tree, they are the true Israel in Christ. If you are in Christ, you are in Israel. And so what Jesus is saying here in John 15 is that I am redefining what it means

to be Israel, the vine.

I am the vine. You are branches in me, so you are part of me. You are part of Israel too.

You belong to Israel now. Now, there will be branches that do not remain in me. Well, they are not part of Israel anymore.

Jewish people who were part of Israel in the natural, but did not receive Christ, they are not part of it. They do not abide in him. They are cut off.

They are not part of this vine. So that Jesus is redefining Israel, and Paul picks up and redefines it the same way. So we have then Jesus saying what the purpose of this image is.

Vines and olive trees both have a purpose. When they are cultivated, it is for the purpose of yielding to their owners fruit. Now, in Isaiah, God complained that he had done everything a man could expect to do in order to get the kind of fruit he should get from his vine.

And he could not figure out why he did not get good fruit. He got bad fruit. What was the fruit he was seeking? He said justice and righteousness.

He wanted Israel to be a people who practiced justice. People characterized by righteousness. They did not produce that fruit.

They produced oppression and injustice. And now Jesus says, okay, I am the true vine now. You are the branches and you are going to produce the fruit.

The fruit God has always been looking for. God has always wanted a people who were just and righteous. People who cared about what is right and wrong.

People that would glorify him in their behavior. That would produce the kind of fruit that he is looking for in people, in society, in the earth. And Jesus said, you are the ones that are going to produce that fruit.

Now there is an interesting corollary to Matthew chapter 21. Because there Jesus is clearly alluding to the passage in Isaiah 5. The parable of the vineyard. Where God said, I planted a vineyard, a fruitful hill, put a hedge around it, built a wine press in it.

Did everything I could to make sure it would produce good fruit and produce bad fruit. Here Jesus is picking up that imagery and adding a little something to it. In Matthew 21.33 Jesus said, hear another parable.

There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge about it and dug a wine press in it and built a tower. This is practically verbatim a repeat of the parable that Isaiah gave. Clearly in the minds of his listeners he intended for them to connect it

with Isaiah 5. But he added a dimension to the story that was not in Isaiah 5. And he leased it to vine dressers and went into a far country.

That is he gave some people charge to tend the vine for him and to produce fruit for him and to pay him their rent of the property in fruit. Now when vintage time drew near he sent his servants to the vine dressers that they might receive its fruit. That is God wanted Israel to produce fruit.

He sent his servants to the leaders of Israel and said where is the justice? Why aren't you people doing justice and righteousness? This is the fruit God made you for. God planted Israel in this land so they would be a just people who keep his laws. Why aren't you doing that? Where is the fruit? These messengers who brought this message to Israel were the prophets in the Old Testament.

And the vine dressers took his servants and beat one, killed one and stoned another. Again he sent other servants, more than the first and they did likewise to them. So this is the whole history of the Old Testament.

God wishing for Israel to produce the fruit of justice and righteousness. They are not doing it so he sends his prophets to complain about that and say where is the fruit? And the leaders of Israel always kill them or at least don't listen to them and they abuse them. Verse 37, then last of all he sent his son to them saying they will respect my son.

Obviously this comes to the point in history that Jesus was standing. It was him, he was the son. God had sent many prophets to Israel over the centuries previous.

They had never gotten the job done, the fruit had never been given. Israel never did produce what God wanted them to produce. So finally he sends his son.

By the way notice this, last of all. Jesus is saying this is their last chance. Israel will never have another chance if they don't get it right this time.

They can be his vineyard if they supply the fruit in response to his son. But it's their last chance. Last of all he sent his son.

Anyone who thinks that Israel has a future after they have rejected his son have not read what Jesus said. This was their last chance as a nation to get it right. Now any Jewish person can become a believer and be part of the true vine.

But the nation as a whole is no longer in that picture. Because this was their last chance and according to Jesus they blew that again too. He says, but when the vinedressers saw the son they said among themselves this is the heir.

Come let us kill him and seize his inheritance. And they caught him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. Just as they took Jesus outside of Jerusalem and crucified

him there.

Now he's saying this just a few days before his crucifixion, this parable. And he's predicting his own death. But look at verse 40.

Therefore when the owner of the vineyard comes what will he do to those vinedressers? And the audience said he will destroy those wicked men miserably. And lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons. And Jesus said to them did you not read in the scriptures the stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.

This was the Lord's doing and it's marvelous in our eyes. Verse 43. Therefore I say to you the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.

The kingdom of God will be taken from one nation and given to another nation. The nation from whom it was taken was Israel. They had had many chances over many centuries and they had their last chance when Jesus came and they rejected him.

He says okay you say that the owner will take it from those wicked vinedressers and judge them and give it to someone else who will bring forth the fruits. Precisely the right verdict. God will destroy these evil men in 70 AD.

He was about to do so in fact. He did take the kingdom from them. The privilege of being Israel.

The privilege of being the kingdom. And he'll give it to another people, another nation. Who is that? That's the church.

Is the church a nation? It is. In 1 Peter 2. Verse 9. It says. Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation.

Spiritually we are a nation. Not ethnically. So the nation to whom he has given the privilege of being the kingdom and being Israel, the vine and the vineyard.

Is us. And so Jesus says to his disciples and here in John 15. This is only a couple or three days after Jesus gave that parable.

Parable about he'll take that vineyard from those people and give it to someone else who will produce the fruits. Now two or three days later he's speaking to his disciples and he says. You're going to produce the fruits.

I'm the vine. You're the branches. If you remain in me you're going to produce the fruits.

You're the new Israel. You're the new vineyard. The kingdom has been given to you and you will produce the fruits of it.

If you abide in me. Now this is his message in John 15 verses 1 through 8. So he begins by saying. I'm the true vine and my father is the vine dresser.

Every branch in me that does not bear fruit. He takes away. So apparently.

Every Israelite. Who is in Israel. But is not bearing the fruit of faith and righteousness and so forth.

Is removed from the vine. Just as Paul speaks about branches being broken off of the olive tree because of their unbelief. Every branch that does bear fruit.

He prunes that it may produce more fruit. When Jesus was telling his parables in Matthew 13. The disciples came to him afterwards and said.

Why are you speaking to these people in parables? They don't understand what you're saying. He says they're not supposed to. It's not given to them to know.

What I'm talking about. It's not given to them to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God. It's given to you.

My disciples. Not those crowds out there. So that seeing they may see and not perceive.

And hearing they may hear and not understand. As Isaiah said of them. And Jesus said him that has.

To him more shall be given to him. But he that has not. Even that little which he seems to have will be taken from him.

And Jesus said that those in Israel who already had something. Some light. Some response to God.

Some faith. They'd be given more. But those who didn't have any of that.

It would be taken from them what they had. Jesus said those branches that have a bit of fruit. Will be pruned so they produce more fruit.

In Israel when Jesus came there were some Israelites. Who were righteous. They were part of the faithful remnant.

They had fruit and they'd become more fruitful. By being attached to Jesus. The Israelites who were not faithful.

They weren't fruitful. They were taken away. Those branches don't bear fruit.

The father takes them away. What happens then? Well whatever it is isn't good for the branches. But it's good for the vine.

To have dead wood removed. So that there's more of the life of the vine. Available to the branches that are producing something.

And he says in verse 3. You are already clean because of the word that I've spoken to you. Now when he says you are already clean. The word clean is similar in the Greek to the word prune.

In the previous verse. It's kind of a word play. Because the word prunes.

In the Greek actually means something like cleans. And so when he says you are clean. It's likely he's using a word that in the context means you've been pruned.

You've been pruned by my words. Now he has said you are clean earlier in the same discourse. And that was when he washed their feet.

In chapter 13. And he said at the end of verse 10. John 13 10.

You are clean. But not all of you. The disciples as a group were clean.

Like washed. Bathed. They didn't need to be bathed again.

Only had their feet washed he said. Because they were clean spiritually. But not all of them were.

Because Judas was still among them. However now he was gone. He had left the room.

And Jesus could say to the disciples. You have been pruned. Your company has been pruned.

We've gotten the dead wood out. You are clean now. You're all good branches now.

The vine has been pruned properly. And now we only have fruitful branches remaining. And he says abide in me.

Which just means remain. This word abide is very common in John's writings. Both in the gospel of John and the epistles of John.

To abide. The word means to remain. Or to continue.

Or to abide. Or to dwell. So he said remain in me.

You are in me now. So you need to remain in me. And I in you.

Fruit as a branch cannot bear fruit. Unless it remains in the vine. If it stops being part of the vine.

It won't bear any fruit anymore. It doesn't produce anything on its own. It only produces fruit as a branch.

Through which the vine. The whole plant is producing fruit. The branch is just a piece of the plant.

It can't by itself produce fruit. And just as a branch cannot produce fruit on its own. If it doesn't abide in the vine.

You cannot be fruitful. You cannot be part of that nation that will bring forth the fruits of the kingdom. Unless you abide and remain in me.

He says so neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine. You are the branches.

He who abides in me. And I in him. Bears much fruit.

For without me you can do nothing. Now bearing much fruit means what? It's the fruit God's been looking for from his vine all along. It's going to be righteous.

It's going to be just. It's going to produce a different quality of character. The character of Christ.

In the disciples. Now what's kind of interesting here is that. This whole section.

Even all the way up through verse 16. Is talking about fruit. Because in verse 16 he says you did not choose me but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit.

And back in verse 8 he says by this my father is glorified that you should bear much fruit. So you'll be my disciples. In this same immediate context he mentions as we saw last time.

In chapter 14 verse 27. Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you.

And then in chapter 15 verse 9. He says abide in my love. And in verse 11 chapter 15 11. These things I've spoken that my joy might remain in you.

My peace my love my joy. Those are fruits of the spirit. That's the fruit.

That they produce. If you abide in me. You'll produce my fruit.

The branch produces the vines fruit. Not some other organisms fruit. The branch in a vine produces.

Vine fruit. And the fruit that Jesus produces. Is love and peace and joy.

And we know that when Paul picks up this theme. In Galatians 5.22. He says but the fruit of the spirit is love. Joy.

Peace. And he goes on. He lists nine things.

But the first three are love and joy and peace. What are these things? They are the fruit of Christ. It's Christ the vine producing the fruit.

We simply have the privilege of having that life. Passing through us as part of that organism. We share in that life.

And therefore we share in the task of bearing the fruit. His love. His peace.

His joy. That's the fruit. Now how is that different than justice and righteousness? Not at all.

Love itself is the basis of all justice and righteousness. You can't please God and be righteous. Unless you love God and love your neighbor.

And if you do love God and love your neighbor. You're going to be just. And you'll be righteous.

You can't be unjust and be loving at the same time. And so the justice and the righteousness that Israel never produced in the Old Testament. Is going to be produced in the disciples.

In the Christian community. In the corporate vine. Which includes all the branches.

The organism is the body of Christ. The organism is what the New Testament calls the church. What Jesus calls the vine.

It's him. Embodied in many members. And because it is him.

One organism. His fruit is produced by every member. Every branch produces his fruit.

It's not his own fruit. It's his. The vine produces the fruit.

The branch doesn't produce fruit. It just bears it. So every branch that remains will bear much fruit.

It holds the fruit. It carries, bears the fruit. The vine produces the fruit.

Jesus is the fruitful one. It's his life. His spirit that he's already said is going to be sent.

Is going to dwell in them. And it's the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Because the fruit of the Spirit comes into the body of Christ.

And produces through the body of Christ. The fruit of love and joy and peace. And gentleness and meekness and self-control.

Goodness and such. Patience. Jesus is saying you will bear my fruit.

Because you are my branches. He says I'm the vine, you're the branches. He says verse

5. He who abides in me and I in him bears much fruit.

For without me you can do nothing. Just like a branch has no power at all to produce or bear fruit. The vine itself.

The organism. The plant. Including it's root and it's stalk and it's branches.

All that. The whole thing. As a whole produces fruit.

And the whole thing is Christ. The whole thing is the true Israel. And if all Israel is to be saved.

Then it is this Israel that will be saved. Those that are in Christ. So verse 6. He says if anyone does not remain in me.

Okay. You're not remaining in me. What's going to happen to you then? Well, he'll be cast out as a branch.

And withered. And they gather them and throw them into the fire. And they are burned.

This sounds very much like a reference to being lost. And yet this is a branch that was in the vine. But didn't remain in the vine.

It was there but it's not anymore. It didn't stay. And because it didn't stay.

It no longer had the life of the vine in it. The life of the vine is in every connected branch. What is that life? It's the life of Christ.

It's eternal life. God has given us eternal life. And this life is in his son.

If you have the son. If you're in the son. You have the life.

If you're not in the son. You don't have the life. There's a certain quality of life in this particular vine.

Because it's Christ. It's Christ life. Every branch that's connected has that life.

That eternal life in it. Because it's in the vine. In Christ we have that life.

Every branch that no longer remains on the thing. Doesn't have any connection to that life anymore. It had at one time life in it.

And that life that it had is eternal life. But they're no longer drawing upon that eternal life. They're now on their own.

And there's no more life flowing into them. Eternal life comes continuously as you abide in Christ. It's not just a deposit.

We're so individualistic. We think, okay, I'm a believer now. So I have eternal life.

And if it's eternal and I have it. It must be forever. I can't lose it because it's forever.

It's eternal. But it's not that I have it. I mean, we do have it.

But I have it in Christ. This life is in his son. It says in 1 John 5. So it's in Christ that the life is.

In the vine. So if you stay in the vine, you stay in the life. You don't abide in him, you don't stay in the life.

And you wither and you burn and dry up. Now, there are many people who believe in an unconditional eternal security of those who are believers. And therefore they really don't believe that if you ever were attached to Christ truly that you could ever really be lost.

And when I have talked to them about this particular passage, which strikes me as relevant. They say, well, this is not a relevant passage. Because you're talking about salvation, but this is talking about fruit.

They say, this is not a passage about salvation. This is a passage about fruit bearing. Well, I'd say, let's not be so reductionistic.

It is about fruit bearing. But the idea is the branches bear fruit because they're alive. The branch that does not bear fruit is withered and burned because it is dead.

True, fruit is the mark of having life. It is a passage about fruit bearing. But the assumption is, if the branch is still alive, it is bearing fruit.

If it ceases to bear fruit because it got cut off and withered, it's not alive anymore. The life of the vine is no longer in it. You can't just take the passage and say, this is only about one aspect.

No, it's about the whole aspect of being part of Christ. Being in Christ. Abide in me.

If you stay in me, you keep producing fruit. And we see, of course, it's so similar to what we read a moment ago in Romans 11. When Paul is talking about the olive tree and the same imagery of branches being either attached or not attached.

And he said there, in Romans 11.22, he said, Behold, therefore, the goodness and the severity of God on those who fell, severity, but on you, goodness, if you abide. That is, if you continue in his goodness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off.

Now, he's not writing to people who are not genuine Christians. He's talking about people who are attached. A few verses earlier, he said, you have been grafted in and you partake of the root and the fatness, that is of the life, of the olive tree.

You're there. You've got the life in you. You're saved.

But, if you do not continue in it, if you don't abide in him, then it says you also will be cut off, like they were. Well, what happens when they got cut off? They're not saved anymore. The Jews that have been cut off because of their unbelief, all of them that used to have now since died, they're not going to come back.

Some people think that Paul's predicting that all the Jews who have been cut off are going to be coming back. Well, every Jew and every Gentile has the opportunity to come back. Paul never says they will.

After all, the ones who were broken off are now dead. The ones that were in his day, they were part of Israel when Jesus arrived, but their rejection of Jesus caused them to be cut off from Israel. They're not alive anymore.

That's a generation long since dead. The Jews who are born today are not born in Israel. The vineyard is no longer Israel.

Before Jesus came and redefined Israel as himself, any Jew who was born Jewish was born in Israel. But when Israel was redefined as those who were in Christ, only a remnant of Israel came into that Israel, those who believed in Christ. And then Gentiles were added to them.

Of course, that's called the church also. The church is Israel, the true church. The body of Christ is Israel.

Those who were fallen away in Paul's day, they haven't repented yet. They're not likely to because they're dead. But the point here is that life is in Christ and fruitfulness is a result of life in Christ.

If you are a Christian, then you have his spirit because his spirit is his life in you. And you have, therefore, the fruit of the spirit being produced in you. The surest mark of being a Christian is that you have the fruit of the spirit, the chief of which is love.

And Jesus said that in the same discourse in John 13, 35. By this, all men will know that you're my disciples. If you have love one for another, if you're producing fruit, you really are the real thing.

If you're not, you're not. Fruitfulness in love and in the other fruits of the spirit is the proof that you are attached to Christ and that his life is in you. In other words, that you are saved.

Now in verse 7 he says, If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. Now this is apparently one aspect of fruit bearing in the mind of Christ because he kind of interjects it in this context of fruit

bearing. He's not done talking about fruit bearing.

It's not like he talked about fruit bearing right up until verse 6 and then he's on to something else. Because in verse 8 he repeats it. By this my father is glorified that you bear much fruit, so you will be my disciples.

In other words, you are my true disciples if you bear the fruit. And God will be glorified in your fruit bearing. But in the midst of that whole discussion he says this, he repeats really what he said in chapter 14 and verse 13.

He had promised them there that whatever they ask in his name will be given to them. And he says it again here in verse 7 of chapter 15. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

You might remember when we were looking at chapter 14, verses 13 and 14. I mentioned that in verse 14 there's a textual difference in different manuscripts. And some have him saying, if you ask me anything in my name.

But that's not, the text that says it that way can't be correct. Because Jesus does not teach that we'll ask him in his name, but we'll ask the Father in his name. And he makes it very clear in this chapter in verse 16.

In John 15 at the end of verse 16 he says that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it you. This is a repeated thing he brings up in this discourse. One of the consolations about his departing is that they will now be in the position to use his name to approach the Father.

And on his authority to come and make requests in his stead to the Father. And the Father will listen to them just as if they were Jesus. Because in a sense they are.

They're part of his body. They're part of him. They hold the same status before God as Jesus does in one sense because they're the fullness of him.

They're his body, he's the head. There's no real differentiation in the identity between the head and the body. And he says the Father is glorified and are bearing much fruit.

And that is of course what he assumes we are to be motivated by. The purpose of being a Christian is to glorify God. In this my Father is glorified.

He can bear fruit and thus you will be my disciples. Salvation of course has many benefits to the believer. Unfortunately when we preach the gospel to unbelievers we often give the impression that the purpose of salvation is primarily to get our sorry butts out of hell.

It's for us. But actually the purpose of salvation is to glorify God. The problem with the sinful world is not that we're all going to hell.

That's not a problem. We all deserve it. That criminals would get justice is not a problem.

That we who have rebelled against God should go to hell. That's not a problem. There's no problem in the goodness and righteousness of the universe if we all end up dying and going to hell.

That's not a problem that had to be solved. The problem was that God is not being glorified in the people that he has made. That's the problem.

God made us for his glory and we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God. That is we've come short of glorifying God as we were made to do. It is not that we're the victims of an injustice that Jesus came to rescue us from.

We're the victims of our own actions. It's a just penalty we were to receive. The problem is that God deserves something he's not getting.

The problem that Jesus came to solve is that God was not receiving what he deserves. The problem is not that we were going to receive what we deserve and we needed to be rescued from it. That people get what they deserve is justice.

But it's an injustice that God who made all things for himself to be glorified in them is not being glorified in them. And so that God could be glorified, Jesus came to gather those who could be attached to him. They would benefit from it, of course.

They get rescued out of prison. They get saved off death row. That's a great deal for them.

But what for? They're not saved just so they can walk free and say, hey, look at me, I'm a free man now. No, we were saved for God. We were saved so that God could have what he wants.

After all, isn't he the one who paid? He paid the price. Doesn't he get something for that? That's what we forget to tell people when we evangelize them. In other words, we forget to tell them of the gospel.

We forget to tell them even what it's about. We just advertise it like a product on television. Tell them how much their life will be enhanced if they buy this product.

But we don't let them know what they're getting saved for. Here's what they're getting saved for in Titus chapter 2, verse 14. Paul said that Christ gave himself for us that he might redeem us.

That means purchase us from every lawless deed and purify for himself his own special people, zealous for good works. What Jesus died for was that he might get for himself something of people who are zealous for good works. Why? Because in this the Father would be glorified.

Remember Jesus said, let your light so shine before men so that men will see your good works. And what will they do? And glorify your Father, which is in heaven. Let your light shine so men will see your good works and your good works will glorify your Father.

Jesus came to die and to redeem us from every lawless deed so we'd be purified and he'd have a people for himself who are zealous for good works, which glorifies the Father. That's what salvation is for. And so Jesus said, by this my Father is glorified that you bear much fruit and thus you will be my disciples.

You know when people get saved on the understanding of that, it changes the whole idea of what it means to be a Christian. If you think I was in trouble and Jesus valued me so much that he decided to rescue me and set me free, like I was a slave on the slave market and he bought me out of slavery and let me walk. Then I can do whatever I want and I'm a free man now.

I don't have to even consider anything except what I want. Because Jesus paid the price for me and I'm free to do what I want. And you find a whole bunch of people in the churches who are doing just that and thinking that way.

And if you talk to them about the need to be obedient to Christ, they say, what? That's legalism. That works. But you know I'm saved by grace.

Saved for what? No, saved from hell, they say. No, we're saved for something. God saved us for himself, for his glory.

Sometimes when the discussion comes up about whether anyone who's never heard the gospel, could they possibly ever go to heaven when they die? And sometimes it is suggested that if people respond well to the light they have, even if they've never heard the gospel, it might be that when they die, God will recognize that they would have received Christ in their lifetime and give them the chance that he'll save them on that basis. Maybe, we don't know. But as soon as you suggest that, what you suggest is that there may be people who could end up in heaven even if they've never heard of Jesus in their lifetime.

And the next question people come up with is, well then why evangelize? Why should we risk our lives to go on the mission field if some of these people could go to heaven without us ever getting there? Why should we go anywhere? Why should we do anything? Why should we evangelize? Well, there's another thing considered. And that is that God is not glorified in their lives if they are living in paganism and controlled by demons and living in sin. The purpose of evangelism is that they might cease to fall short of the glory of God and fulfill the purpose God had for them, that he be glorified in them.

You see, our concern in evangelism has got to be that God is glorified. If we're concerned only to save people who we feel sorry for, then we've got a humanistic motivation. We're

thinking of the value of people, not the value of God.

We're thinking about people's well-being, not God's well-being. Now, there's nothing wrong with being concerned for people's well-being. But our first concern if we're thinking like Christ is that we love the Father.

First, we love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. And secondly, we love our neighbors, we love ourselves. The first thing about Christianity is it's God-centered.

It's loving God, caring about his interests. And Jesus said, that's what it's about. His Father being glorified will be a result of you bearing much fruit and being his disciples.

So, being a disciple, he said, is going to result in bearing fruit. He said, you will bear much fruit and so you will be my disciples. That is to say, being a disciple and bearing fruit are not separate experiences.

Bearing fruit is being a disciple. Being a disciple is bearing fruit. And bearing fruit is what? Loving, having the life and the love of Jesus.

My love, my peace, my joy in you. That's what Jesus is talking about here. You see, although there's a lot of different topics that he keeps revisiting in his discourse, there's really only one thing that ties it all together.

It's this, I'm going but the Spirit is coming. When the Spirit comes, then you are going to be part of me. You will have fruit, like I do.

In fact, you'll be bearing my fruit. You'll be identified with me in such a way that you can use my name as if it's your own. Or as if you are me.

The Father will listen to you as if you were me. You'll do the works I do. Why? Because the Holy Spirit is given.

You'll have this other comforter. He'll continue teaching you. I will continue teaching you through my Spirit within you.

I will come to you. I won't leave you orphans. He's going away, but he's coming back in the Spirit.

And he will be with them in them. And they will be in him. And he will still be here.

Or rather, here again. He was gone between the time he ascended and his return ten days later through the Holy Spirit. Only ten days was the world without Jesus.

He says, in a little while you won't see him, but in a little while you will. And they did. They saw, they came to know, that he was with them.

And that they were operating through his name. Because they were his body. And they

were identified with him as much as that body that was born in Bethlehem was identified with him.

He inhabited that body first. Now he inhabits a bigger body. A corporate body that's doing the same works.

And through whom he hopes to accomplish the same thing. Namely, that his father be glorified. And that the fruit that the father sought through Israel will be produced in the new Israel, which is Christ.

And through the branches attached to him, that are part of him. Well, these ideas are, I find fascinating. And elusive to really get a grasp of.

These are the kinds of ideas Paul is talking about in Ephesians. Where he has to stop every once in a while and say, I'm praying that God will give you the spirit of revelation and the knowledge of him. So that you can grasp these things.

And Paul doesn't even think that words themselves can suffice to get the ideas across. He says, I'm praying for God to give you that spirit of revelation. And the knowledge of him.

You've got to get it that way. He said, these are things that eyes have not seen and ears have not heard and has not entered into the mind of man. These are things that have to be revealed by his spirit.

Because why? Because they're spiritual things and they have to be spiritually discerned. It's very frustrating as a teacher. And I see Paul frustrated in trying to communicate it in his epistles.

Because he has to pray that God will get it across to these people. Because he can't. And think, am I getting this across in mere words? The analogies Jesus gives are helpful and that Paul gives.

But still, I always feel there's something deeper, something a little more just out of reach of fully grasping these truths. But this is what he's trying to get across to them. I'm sure they didn't grasp them at this time.

But they remember them later. Remember he said, when the spirit comes, he'll remind you of everything I've said. When you read all this, you wonder, were they writing this down at the time? This is pretty complex dialogue here.

And especially the monologue has a lot of turns and twists. How did they remember to write that down? Well, he said, I'm going to send my spirit and it will remind you of everything I said. So, they got it right.

And this is what he really said. And he's going to keep saying it further on through

chapter 15 and 16. We'll be covering that in the remaining sessions that we have.

Along with the rest of the Gospel of John, of course, eventually.