

Good morning! Are you smiling? Hey, before you sit down, would you turn around and say hello to someone? Give them a high five or something like that. Tell them your name. Yes. So good to have you here this morning. Thank you for coming to church. This is supposed to be a joyous place, a fun place to be. You get to be with other people who love Jesus. Yes. Outstanding. Thank you so much.

Hey, I just wanted to mention, tomorrow night we're going to be starting a class called The Art of Marriage, 7 o'clock tomorrow night. I mentioned in the previous service I think all of us need to be constantly working on our marriage. We can't ever take that for granted. And whether you're in, like, certain need right now to deal with some stuff there or whether you're just wanting to go, you know, we just need to get this thing just a tune up. Starting tomorrow night, \$25 for six weeks gets you the materials and all that kind of stuff. So I really encourage you to be a part of that tomorrow night at 7 o'clock.

Brandon, Wednesday night? Are you going to tell us about that?

Brandon: Yeah! This Wednesday night we're having an all-church worship night in this room. We just want to take some time to thank the Lord for the end of the semester and Wednesday night groups and classes. This is our Wednesday night capstone. And also, we just want to have a dedication of worship in this room, so we want to kind of gather just together as the church and just exalt Him and worship Him this upcoming Wednesday for a longer—

Lee: A longer period of time.

Brandon: Yeah, so it's going to be about an hour of worship, communion, some prayer, and it'll be a great time.

Lee: Nice. Nice! Thanks for doing that for us.

Yeah, if you enjoy that kind of thing, which followers of Jesus enjoy worshiping Jesus, so come. That's good.

Hey, let's take a moment and give our gifts and our offerings back to the Lord. Before we do that, let's just say a word of prayer.

Lord,

Thank You for all You've given us individually, corporately. Thank You for the ministry that's going out from this place. Thank You that we get to be a part of it by giving back to You. I pray that You will use these gifts for your glory, to further your kingdom. And Lord, I pray that You'll bless each person that is giving today for being obedient, for doing what You've asked them to do. So we love You.

It's in Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.

There are buckets at the ends of the rows. If you're sitting near an end of the row, if you'll grab that, or if you're not sitting near the end the row and there's nobody between you and the end of the row, if you'll grab it and pass it across that would be wonderful.

[Offering Break]

Lord God,

We do bow before You in awe and wonder and I pray that You would allow your Word to sink in deep to each of us right now and to meet us right where we're at today.

We ask in Jesus' Name. Amen.

I read what may be called a testimony of someone this week and I thought I'd read it to you. This is not a great testimony. But I would say that I'm pretty sure there are probably some of you in this room that this would be your testimony. Let me read it. This guy says this:

I cannot in good conscience tell a friend about a faith that didn't excite me. I couldn't share something I wasn't experiencing and I wasn't experiencing Christianity. It didn't do anything for me at all. It felt like math; like a system of right and wrong of political beliefs, but it wasn't mysterious. It wasn't God reaching out of Heaven to do wonderful things in my life, and if I would have shared Christianity with somebody it would have felt mostly like I was trying to get someone to agree with me rather than meet God.

Now, don't raise your hand, but is there anyone in here that would say, "Yeah, that's sort of where I'm at." If that's you, and I'm pretty sure there's a bunch of you in this room right now, I'm sorry. I don't want you to be in that spot. That's—the news of Jesus Christ is called the Gospel which means "good news"—that's big. That's not good news what I just read. And so I want today to share with you that Good News again.

We're in the middle of a series called VIRAL. What that guy wrote doesn't go viral. That just sort of takes the air out of the room. It sort of causes you to sort of drag in here. The Good News of Jesus—that He died, that He was buried, that He rose to take our place, that He's alive so we can know that we can have life, that He's at the right hand of the throne of God interceding on our behalf, that He loves us, that He wants to give us life—that's Good News! That's something you want to repeat. That's something that you want to share. And if God has moved in your life and you have found connection with God, you can't help but keep that quiet. You have to shout it out. You have to tell someone about that Good News. And so that's why we're having this conversation because there *are* those who have come very close to Christianity, who have come very close to Jesus, have had a connection of some sort and never really gone anywhere with it, disappeared, and we wonder whatever happened with them. Did they lose their faith? Did they lose their salvation? How does God see them? What do I make of that?

And so we're answering the question in these few weeks that we're talking about this, answering the question: Can I lose my salvation? And last week we answered it with this simple question: Well, it depends on who saved you. If you saved yourself, you're not saved. You can't have salvation because you can't save yourself. That's something only God can do. And if God has saved you, we read all sorts of verses last week and you can go back and review that message on the Internet, if God saved you, He will never leave you. He will never forsake you. And it will change you and it will radically transform you.

Today, I want to answer the question and the question is this: Is there something more? Is there something more that I need to do? If I did this, that's what I really need to do. Here's the problem with that: When we talk about coming to Jesus we tell you that it is something that only God can do. It's by

grace through faith alone. You can't work for it. You can't do enough. You couldn't do enough. You'd have to be perfect all your life and we know that we can't be that. So God comes to us and offers us His grace, so there's nothing you can do to earn it. But then once we come to Jesus Christ, then we somehow get this false notion in our head, "Well, if I'm going to keep it then I have to do a bunch of stuff." Which is very UN-true. It's not truth when someone tells you, "If you're going to keep it, you have to do all this stuff," that's not true. I'm going to in a moment ask you to turn to John chapter 15. And John chapter 15 he says that a follower of Jesus has fruits in his life; in other words, there's going to be some results of being a follower of Jesus. Something's going to come out of you as a result of being a follower of Jesus. And just about anything in our life that if we're *that*, something happens. You can't be a baseball player and not own a baseball glove. You can't be a baseball player and not hit balls. You can't be a baseball player and not catch balls. That's what baseball players do. It just naturally flows out of them.

So it tells us here in this passage that we're about to study that as a result of being a Christ follower, fruits come out of us. There's some results that happen, but I'm going to tell you this today: Those fruits don't come because we're sitting here somehow trying to make those fruits happen. It's a natural response of being connected to Jesus.

John chapter 15, let me give you the back story here. Jesus has been with his disciples in the Upper Room and you may remember that was a bit of a spiritual evening. Some really cool stuff happened in that Upper Room, but at the end of the evening something very dark started to happen. I'm not sure that the rest of the disciples understood exactly what was happening; Jesus did. Judas slipped out of the room and you may remember he slipped out to sell Jesus out for thirty pieces of silver. Now here's Judas who's been with them for three years. He had been the one collecting the money and been near to Jesus and here he is, walking away from Jesus to sell Him out. So as Jesus leaves that room with those other disciples they're headed towards Gethsemane. You may remember that where He went and prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane and really is focused in on what was about to come with God.

But on the way, I believe Jesus gives us a little talk that we read in John chapter 15. And as He's walking along—we're told that there would have been vineyards along the way between the Upper Room and the Garden of Gethsemane—and Jesus stops at one of those vineyards and He points at a vine and He begins to use this vine as an illustration, as a talking point, as a—something very physical that if you can grab onto it and picture it you can understand the concepts that He's trying to share. And I think one of the things that would be on Jesus' mind at this point was that momentarily Judas is going to sell Him out and the rest of the disciples are going to see this and they're going to wonder, "What do you do with this? How is it that this guy was so close to Jesus and with us and now he does THIS? How does that happen? What's going on?" And so Jesus stops along the way to have that conversation with them, and I just want to read a little bit of that conversation and it's found in John chapter 15. I'm just going to start reading at verse 1:

"I am the true vine,

~ JOHN 15:1a

I'll stop there for just a moment. So when Jesus begins to explain what's going on and what's going to take place in their lives in the days ahead, He begins to paint a picture by pointing at that grapevine and He points at the stock that comes out of the ground (SEE PHOTO AT RIGHT) and I'm told that stock comes out about four feet high and it's fairly big and out from that stock come the branches of the vine. Jesus says I am that true vine; He's speaking



of that trunk there. It is from there that all the nutrients, all the power for the entire plant comes. He goes so far as to say, *"I am the true vine."* If you read your Old Testament you'll see that the word vine is used oftentimes and this metaphor is pictured often. In fact, Israel had as its national symbol a vine (SEE PHOTO AT RIGHT) and many people had grabbed onto that as the thing that they felt like, "If I'm connected to this, I've got everything I need for life." Jesus here would say, "Wait a minute. I want you to know this—I AM the true vine." If you're grabbing onto anything else for your life, for the things that will sustain you, for the things that will keep you going, if you grab onto anything else you're grabbing onto the wrong thing.



So, that makes me think a moment about each one of us. What is it that we're grabbing onto that we are depending on for our sustaining aspects of our lives that aren't the True Vine? We grab onto our career and our job and we say, "That gives me life. That's life-giving." And some people say, "No, it doesn't." "We're depending on that for our provision and for our needs to be met." Some of you are frustrated because it's not. It doesn't, because it's not the True Vine. And some of us have all sorts of stuff that we've accumulated, that we've put together, that we've gathered over the years and we think with those things we can be happy, we can have all our needs met, we can be fulfilled. What we find is that doesn't happen; it doesn't work. We turn to a person or we look for a person that can be that person that can meet those needs, that can fulfill those needs, and we grab onto that person. So we might be grabbing onto a job, we might be grabbing onto our stuff, we might be grabbing onto a person, maybe it's philosophy, maybe it's some new product or new movement that is taking—oh, there's always something coming up and there's a, "Well, if we do this, you'll have the Fountain of Youth. You'll feel good, life will be good, you'll have a clear mind, be able to think clearly,"—you know, all that kind of stuff and we grab on to those things only to see them fail. Jesus says I want you to know this, *"I am the true vine."*

And then He says:

and my Father is the vinedresser.

Very simply this: Father God is the One who takes care of this plant and takes care of the branches coming out of it. So Jesus is the vine, the One who is sustaining us; the branches coming out of that, that is us, and God the Father is maintaining that. So now He begins to define for us what it looks like for God the Father to maintain this vine and this is what He'll say:

² *Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away,*

~ JOHN 15:1-2

Okay, I'm going to stop there a moment. I said we are the branches and when we read this very oftentimes people that want to say that you can lose your salvation will point at this and say, "Hey, here's a picture of God taking a branch and taking it off. It's not bearing fruit and so God is snapping it off and getting rid of that. Be afraid. Be very afraid. Be scared because you could find yourself in that spot yourself." And so if that's true, you spend your life in this insecure, fearful mode which is never how God called us to live. It's not how God wants us to live. It's not what He promises when He says, "No one that has been given to Jesus will anyone be able to snatch away." Not even you; you won't be able to snatch yourself away. So you begin to step back and you say, "Well, what exactly does that mean?"

And I want to just use one passage of Scripture today to explain what that means and the reason I want to use this one passage of Scripture is because it describes exactly what I want to say and it's easy to

remember, and it is John chapter 6, verse 66. Can you remember that? John 6-6-6. All right? [Laughter.] Now you're getting it. Okay.

⁶⁶ After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him.

~ JOHN 6:66-71

John 6:66 says many who followed Jesus turned away. Think about this for a moment, and you've read enough of the New Testament now that you're starting to get a feeling of this: There were a whole lot of people in that time that watched Jesus and saw Jesus and told other people about Jesus and people came en masse to see Jesus. He was healing people—that would be great, that

would be fun to see. Can you imagine? He was feeding people. I'm in. I'm showing up. He was preaching these great messages and saying these things that caused people to think and have great conversation. He was doing miracles in front of them. Imagine seeing water turned into wine. It's just an amazing experience and so a whole lot of people were coming en masse to watch Him.

What would you do in ancient Israel at night for fun? How do you keep yourself entertained? These people were coming and they're going, "Wow! This is awesome! This is fun. I get to see what Jesus is doing." And so it's almost like following this roadshow, following something that's going on and you're stepping back and it's a show every night and so they're coming en masse. But then all of a sudden John says: And many turned away and walked away from Him. So they were following Him in that they were showing up, they were near Him, they were touching Him and they continued to show up to hear more, but they weren't *with* Him because all of a sudden Jesus begins to talk about a number of different subjects that they go [*puts his hand up* – SEE PHOTO AT RIGHT], "N-n-n-No! No. No. You just stepped a step too far. I'm not going there." And they walk away. They don't like how it's going to impact their life. They don't like how it's going to impact their families. And they say, "I don't want to have anything to do with that." And they leave. So just because someone is close or in proximity does not mean that their heart has been changed, that God has done a work in their hearts.



You and I know a people like this. I was impacted by a story that I found myself in the midst of not too long ago. My daughter brought home from college a friend of hers. This girl spent the evening with us and had dinner with us and at dinner I wanted to find out a little bit more about her, asked her what she was studying, where home was, asked about her brothers and sisters—you know how that goes. And finally I asked about her father and knowing that I'm a pastor she said, "My dad used to be a pastor." I said, "Oh, wow. Used to be?" She said, "Yeah, he used to be pastor." She goes, "I remember those days," and you could just see this glow coming out of her. She said, "They were wonderful days when dad was a pastor." But she goes, "I don't know what happened, but one day it was just as if something happened [*snaps his fingers*] and he was done, and from there on out our family said we don't believe in God." I said, "So, you don't go to church anymore?" "No." "You dad doesn't serve in ministry anymore?" "No." "You just left the church and he's never gone back?" "No."

I can tell you it was one of the saddest things I ever heard. You go from being a pastor to saying I don't believe in God anymore. It's sort of like this Judas thing. You and I are struggling to process that. *What don't I understand? What don't I know?* How do you go from being a pastor to saying *I don't believe in God anymore?* How do you go from being one of the disciples walking and talking with Jesus every day, dealing with the money, dealing with the other guys, seeing the, I mean, seeing this stuff front row, right up front and seeing it face to face and then walk away and sell Jesus out? How do you do that?

Well, the way you do that is just because you're in proximity, just because you are close by does not mean that you've allowed Jesus to change your heart. And there are a lot of people that get very involved and get close that aren't with Jesus. There are some of you probably that have been brought in here today, a family member or maybe you're just trying to be nice and you're coming with your spouse or maybe you realize it's good for your kids because they do just amazing stuff upstairs with the kids and you're going, "You know what; I'm just going to come because..." Or maybe you really do, you just sort of enjoy it here but you're not really sure about the Jesus thing, and when I read that opening, the little testimony about how it wasn't working for that person, you're going, "Yeah, that's sort of me. I'm not excited about this but I sort of like what this place does, and they do have good coffee and bagels out there, so [*he shrugs*] and it's a nice thing to do on Sunday morning. That's what Americans do, we should go to church, probably a good thing, good people, good life, and if I do those good things then good things will happen." And remember, that's you saving yourself and the problem is God hasn't saved you.

And that's when this says here that God is the gardener and He comes up to this vine and He sees these different branches and there's a dead branch and He cuts it off and He lays it off to the side. I believe that's what's being spoken of here. But then He says this and I would throw this out to you, and I think this is way more important; oftentimes we want to think about this subject, "Well, wait a minute. I don't know that I'm happy with where you left that branch that was just cut off. I'm not sure I'm comfortable there." And I think it's because as we look at our own lives, we know that we are not perfect. We know that we don't have it all going on. Some of us know that we've had a week where we haven't been walking with God. Just a minute ago when I asked you to open up your Bibles to John 15 you realized, *That was the first time I've opened my Bible this week*, and you're thinking *Uhhh, I wonder how many things it takes before God says "Enough for you and I'll chop you off, too!"*

I don't think that's where we're going here today. The reason why is I want you to read what it says next. If you're looking there in the middle of verse 2, after He says He takes away every branch that does not bear fruit,

² Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away,

He says this:

and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

If you want to make a branch do better, you cut it back. It seems counter-intuitive. It also sounds painful. So the thought that God would take a scissors to me—when I think of the thing that I use to trim things with that thing is sharp. I always worry when I'm trying to hold something and I'm cutting that I'll get my fingers at the same time. So far all ten are still in one piece. That baby is sharp! You just know that if God decides to prune us that sounds difficult, but think with me for a moment; that pruning is meant to get our attention, to wake us up, to wake us up to a need. But as we read that, the word *prune* means "to cut", but if you read the next down into the next verse, verse 3 says:

³ Already you are clean

~ JOHN 15:2-3

That word clean is very similar in the original language to the word prune. In fact, the word prune, which means "to cut", but if you look down to the #3 dictionary definition of that word—you know how there's numerous definitions—you'll see that the third meaning is "to lift up or to clean." And here's why I want you to hear this because sometimes I believe God prunes us to get our attention, but here's what God does that's way more important. It's not about the cutting. It's not about God saying, "I'm going to

get your attention and hurt you." Rather, when it talks about cleaning there is this picture of lifting up. So the week that you just had, those of you who just said, "Oops! I haven't opened my Bible," those of you who the tape of your week is rolling through your mind and going, "I'm not where I need to be"—this says that God takes you and the week has pushed you down into the mud—Right?—and He picks you up, picks that branch out of the mud, and He cleans that branch tenderly and carefully and skillfully so that you can bear fruit.

That branch is not going to bear fruit down in the mud. When you're living and there's sin in your life, it's not going to bear fruit. So God will do something to get your attention, then He carefully and skillfully pulls you up to clean you.

I also believe that it says here you're clean because of His Word.

because of the word that I have spoken to you.

Important to recognize that we are clean not because of something that we have done; we are clean because of everything that Jesus did, what He did on the cross. And when God says that you are righteous, that's His Word. And He says you're clean because of that. Now you and I, once He sees you as clean and He sees you as righteous because of Jesus, we're stupid. Do you remember what Paul said? He said the things that I want to do I don't do, that things that I don't want to do I end up doing. And he shouts out, "What a wretched man I am!"¹ And so we look at our lives this week and we go, "I don't like where I'm at." And a loving, caring God knows that He wants you to bear fruit and He comes and He lifts you up and He cleans you off gently and prunes you so that you can bear fruit.

Now let me say this about fruit. Fruit is the natural result of what being attached, the branch being attached to the vine, brings about. Because we are attached to Jesus we will bear fruit. In fact, in the chapter you may notice there what we just read in verse 2, right before the end of verse 2 it says:

he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

So for those who bear fruit, He prunes you so you may bear more fruit. And then in the middle of verse 5 it says:

⁴ Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

~ JOHN 15:2b-5

What's the fruit? Galatians chapter 5 says this:

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is

Stop.

When Jesus was here on this earth the disciples could say to Him, "Jesus, how do I do this?" "What do I do about that?" They could talk back and forth, they could have a conversation. Before Jesus leaves, Jesus says, "I am going to give you, I'm going to allow you to have My Holy Spirit, God Himself residing within you."² When you put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ and you say, "I want you alone

¹ For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.

²⁴ Wretched man that I am! ~ ROMANS 7:16, 24

² See JOHN 14:26, JOHN 15:26, JOHN 16:7

in my life, Jesus," He gives you His Holy Spirit to go along every day and He is always with you. And this is what it says, as a result of that, this natural result of having the Holy Spirit in your life, the fruit of the Spirit is going to come through. And Galatians chapter 5 says:

²² *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,*
²³ *gentleness, self-control;*

~ GALATIANS 5:22-23a

That's what's going to come out of your life as a result of being connected to the vine; being connected to Jesus. When He says there you'll bear more fruit, He is saying that that happens because you are connected to the vine. He says without me, without Jesus, you can do nothing.

So here's where we go with that. How then do you become fruit-bearing and connected to the vine? I mean, how do you that? What does that look like? Ten times in verses 4 through 10 there is a word used and it is the word abide. Jesus says abide in Me and as a result of that you will bear much fruit. The word *abide* means "to wait patiently." How many of you are patient? How many of you love waiting? No hands going up in here. Okay, we got one or two. Pretty much a group of impatient people. Sit in the driveway on your way out this morning and block the driveway and sit there and text someone. [*Laughter.*] You will agree that this is a church full of impatient people. God will have to prune them afterwards and pull them up out of the mud after they say things they shouldn't say and clean them off.

Picture a branch. Do you ever see a branch that's attached to anything that wants to produce fruit and it is not producing fruit at that very second saying, "Wait a minute! I ought to have fruit all over me right now!" Disconnect from the vine, hop an Uber and head down to Michael's, buy a hot glue gun and some plastic grapes, hot glue them to the branch, hop an Uber back to the vine and attach back onto the vine. Doesn't happen—that's how *we* think. We think, "I need to be bearing fruit. I need to be *doing* these things. I need to add one more thing then God will be happy with me." NO! He saved you, free – gift – grace. End of sentence. How do you live? Abide, patiently waiting. Abide in Jesus.

That person that wrote that thing at the beginning of my message, they're struggling because all those things they think they have to do and so it becomes onerous. And God says I want you to abide in Me. Jesus says that how I did it with God; that's how I want you to do it. Stay attached to the vine.

You don't see the branch on any vine sitting there going, [*huffs and puffs struggling to produce grapes*] "I think I can get some grapes off. I think I can get some grapes off. There will be some grapes for [INAUDIBLE 0:15:32.6]." Abide in the vine. You see no movement. So what would it look like for us to abide? Jesus answers that question in John 15 here. Again, back to verse 3 that we read a moment ago. He says:

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. ²Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it *abides* in the vine, neither can you, unless you *abide* in me. ⁵I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever *abides* in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶If anyone does not *abide* in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷If you *abide* in me, and my words *abide* in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. ⁹As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. *Abide* in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commandments, you will *abide* in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and *abide* in his love. ¹¹These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

~ JOHN 15:1-10

³ Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you.

~ JOHN 15:3

He's speaking here of being in this Word [*holds up his Bible*]. When we are abiding in the Word, He says we're clean because these words, God's words, are in us. We're attaching to His vine. We know what God wants. And when we are hearing His words it's cleansing us.

Let me throw something out at you. Every time I talk about the Word I'm suggesting to you that we need to be a people that are reading our Bible, that we're studying our Bible every day. And for some of you you're really good about that and you're like all over that. You have notebooks full and your Bible is marked up and it's all worn out from it and you're trying to decide if you want a new one but you don't want to go away from the old one and all that kind of stuff. That's some of you in here. Then there are others of you in here that are like you've tried, you've started and you've stopped and it's become sort of a duty. Maybe you're not a great reader, maybe you're not a great studier, maybe you just haven't set aside the time—I don't know what it is but every time I say that, you're like, "I need to do that but I feel like I can't get there."

So we've tried to give you some ways of doing that. We started this Facebook group called Calvary Bible Readers. If you go to Calvary Facebook there's a link among the different things there that you can click on and it'll take you to that Calvary Bible Readers [NOTE: LINKS PROVIDED AT END OF THIS SERMON]. And what we've been doing is we've been doing one chapter a day every day. So we read the book of John twice, then we did the book of Matthew, we did the book of Mark, we did the book of Luke, and we decided not to go and read the book of John the third time so we moved to 1 John, which is at the very end of your Bible. Well, not the very end but real close to the end, the book of 1 John. We're going to start there today, but it's a really short book so we can't do a chapter a day. We thought, "Let's just slow down." When you think about this, I think sometimes we just need some space to know God, to enjoy God, to abide, wait patiently. He says that ten times in those verses, wait patiently and attach to that Vine. And sometimes we're just trying to read through a chapter, just pound it out, got it, done, now I can go to work. Or we put it on our Bluetooth in the car and we listen to it and we find our mind wandering.

What we'd love for you to do in going forward is: Go onto our Facebook page, like Calvary Fellowship, and then go down there and look for this Calvary Bible Readers and click on it. Every day what you're going to be seeing is just one, two, maybe three verses to read with a little question or a little thing to think about that day. The Scripture talks often about meditating on the Word. I think we need space sometimes and to just focus in on the Lord. That's why we do a lot of the things we do like Brandon mentioned a little bit ago about the worship night coming up here Wednesday night. Not because you need to come here because that's going to somehow put you up a new notch. Some of us just need that space where we can just come and just be washed over with worship. Or in this situation where we can just be covered with the Word of God that's being taught, where we can let our mind for a moment just be filled up with God's truth, and we need to set aside that space. And some of us need to spend a little bit of time in our bedroom doing it. Some of need to take some time in our car and just talk to the Lord out loud while we're driving to work. Take that time because we need to be attached to the Vine, the True Vine.

He says the way you abide is by being in the Word, and then there's one other thing and you'll like this. If you look over to verse 7:

⁷ If you abide in me, and my words abide in you,

— so that's what we just talked about, then it says this:

ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

So if you pray—so you're abiding and you're in His Word—if you pray you ask anything in His Name He's going to do it for you, you'll get what you want. REALLY? What I want? Everything what I want? My kids always say when they opened up a gift, "What I always ever wanted." That always made me feel so good. Wait a minute. If you're in God's Word what He wants you to know is you're going to want what God wants, so when you pray you'll be praying what God wants and you will get what God wants. Most of the time we pray "me" prayers, what I want, and we are frustrated when that doesn't come to be. But when we pray God prayers according to His Word, we know, especially when we're studying His Word and just responded to that, we know that that's what God wants, and He says He will answer.

How do you abide? He seems to say that this is the way you're going to bear fruit, this is the way you're—if you're truly a believer—you're going to bear fruit. If you're not bearing fruit in your life, you may be just hanging out with the group. If you're a true believer, fruit is going to come, and He says the way you do that is you just abide there. Not through works, it's *always* by grace. It's always something that God does, not something that I do.

Now He says there's two things we're going to notice if we're abiding. He says in verse 10, He says:

¹⁰ *If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love,*

So if you're abiding, you're going to keep His commandments. Well, picture that branch coming out of the Vine. It's not going to do anything that the Vine doesn't want. So that's what it means when He says obey. And then in verse 12 it says:

¹² *"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.*

~ JOHN 15:7b, 10, 12

There's two things that are going to happen; you're going to do what God tells you to do because that's what you want to do because that's just what is now hard-wired in you because God's in your life, and you are going to love each other. Hatred doesn't come out of the heart of a child of God. You're going to begin to love each other; which is one of the reasons why we need to keep on getting together and why we need to do this every week.

Let me wrap up with these thoughts. When I started out I read to you that guy's list which had a checklist that basically said try harder, do better, be more committed, be more zealous, and in his mind that meant or equaled security. For many of us that is the case. From what I've shared with you today it's because of the precious blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who hung on the cross to take my place as my substitute to take the punishment that was due me, He extravagantly placed on me His righteousness and when Father God looks at me He sees me—and He sees you if you've put your faith and trust in Him—as righteous.

When I step back and I think about that for a moment, I become overwhelmed at what Jesus did for me. And I get to know Him more and I grab onto that Vine and I hold on tight, and I want to stay connected. I believe that many times this question of "Can I lose my salvation?" may be because we got down in the mud this week and we've learned here today that God will it up and prune us and clean us off. That's what the loving God does. But I think oftentimes the question is more along the lines of this situation that we have seen, someone that we've heard of, maybe a loved one that has died and they showed no

fruit and we're worried whether they will see Heaven. Maybe they went to church at one time or they were involved at one time or they prayed a prayer at one time or they made a confession to us at one time and we're wondering what happened when they got to Heaven? Can I say this: Let God deal with that.

Here's the question that we need to say: Where am I with God? If you have put your faith and trust in Him alone for your salvation, He did a miraculous work inside of you and you are not the same and you will produce fruit. If you're not producing fruit, step back and ask yourself the question: Why not? Is something going on? Did I never put my trust in Christ? Am I just hanging out nearby? If that's the case, then come to Him right now and say, "I want You. I want You in my life."

For those of us who are attached to that Vine, will we grab hard onto that Vine and abide in Him and let Him produce fruit in our life that as the Scripture describes is within keeping of repentance. As this passage says, I can do nothing without Him. Am I willing to create some space in my life to just let God in so that I'm not crowding Him out with every moment being filled up and every input coming into my ears being something other than Him? Some quiet time, some down time, just some meditation time, some time to just stay with Him so that I can know what He wants so that when I ask Him for things I am getting what He wants. Because He loves you; He loves you so much.

If you're worried about whether you're going to lose your salvation, if you're questioning that today, if you care at all that you know Him and that You are connecting with Him, I don't think you're the one that has to be worrying whether you're going to lose your salvation. You love Him. You want to spend eternity with Him. You want to follow Him. He changed your heart and that's why you have that longing to be connected.

Let's take a moment right now and close by just bowing our heads and focusing in on Him.

I want to pray, Lord God, this morning for those in this room that may never have put their trust in You and they realize this morning that they've hanging out nearby looking in and hoping that that was going to do it, but today they realize they need to put their faith and trust in You, Jesus, alone for their salvation. And I pray that You will do that miraculous work inside of them where You change everything and Your Holy Spirit takes on residence. And we can just ask right now in our hearts, "God, would You do that for me personally?"

If you've never made decision, would you just ask Him to come into your life right now? And He promises He will and He says He will never leave you and He'll never forsake you. That He loves you. That's why He died for you. He's not looking to condemn you. Remember we read those words in John 3:16, For God so loved the world? God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He's not wanting to condemn us.

So Lord Jesus come into our lives; change us.

For those of you who have had a week where you've been drawn down into the mud, God's using this as a moment to prune you, to get your attention. Maybe something happened this week that was sort of a wake-up call. He's pruning you. He's trying to get your attention. Now He's lovingly cleaning up those leaves. He's not condemning you. He's lifting them up out of the mud and He's wiping them off. Just take this moment and say, "God, forgive me for that moment. Cleanse me. Purify me. I know what your truth is; I know what your Word is."

Maybe there's something that's been going on in your life. You've been doing some behaviors that you know are sinful and you go, "Yeah, that's not in keeping with the fruit of the Spirit. Lord God, forgive me of that thing. I repent of it."

You've been grabbing on to every other branch or every other vine and you realized that today that all those other systems and methods and philosophies and things are grabbing you more than Jesus. And so today we say, "Jesus, I want to grab on to You."

Lord, would You move mightily in each heart and life in this room right now? That even as we enter into another week, yet another week has gone by, would You do a work in our hearts this week?

Minister to us, Lord; minister to each person in this room. Lord, where people need a touch from You this morning, I pray that they'll feel that. I pray that they'll leave here knowing the Good News of Jesus and that they'll believe it and they'll shout it out, and they'll just go out from here big time because we know that we're clean because of Jesus.

We love You. It's in Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.

All right. Thank you for being here today. Here's what I'd love for you to do. We've said this before, we need each other. I think one of the most important parts of church is right now. Don't rush out of here. Take some time. Encourage each other. Make plans, go to lunch together, spend some time together. We need each other. We need to strengthen each other and encourage each other. And that's the love of God that comes from abiding in Him, loving each other.

So God bless you. See you maybe tomorrow night for the marriage class, Wednesday night for the worship night. Next Sunday morning, oh! I've got to tell you about this! The question we're going to answer next week is: Have I committed the unforgivable sin? Or, What is the unforgivable sin? And some people we wonder "Is suicide that?" We're going to answer all those questions next week. If you know someone that has some of those questions, that's awesome. See you next week. God bless you. Have a wonderful week.

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