

The Communion of Saints

Delighting in God Together in 2025

2- Union with Christ

Church January 12, 2025

John 15:1-11

1 "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.

2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.

3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.

5 I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.

7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

8 My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.

9 Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love.

10 If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.

11 These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.

*To the Glory of God the Father; God the Son;
and God the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

I have longed believed that most people- both in and out of the Church- have a fairly good handle on Issues like Judgment; Damnation; Punishment; Wrath; and God's Anger against Sin. Those Issues are almost *universally* recognized and understood by both Sinner and Saint. We are "Bad"; and we constantly do "bad Things". God is "Good" and therefore- God is angry with us; and is going to throw most of us into Hell. In fact, in my Travels over the last 54 years- I have found that the Reason most people say they don't believe in Hell- is because they realize they are going there. And rather than repent- they simply don't want to think about it.

But what alludes people, however, is an Issue that makes up the very “Core” of Christianity: God’s Grace. So, after the Church being on the earth for over 2,000 years; after almost every person in this Country having a Bible; in spite of the fact that it is hard to go through even a day without hearing somebody say something about God and Salvation- *fewer* people today seem to understand the *foundational* Issue of the entire Bible: *the Grace of God*.

And to me- that is Unconscionable. The Fact that many cannot even discuss the Grace of God with more than two words- is one of the great Scandals of our Time and something about which we should hang our Heads in Shame. And as far as I can determine- the ONLY Way to fix this Problem is to teach it- *repeatedly*- until it sinks down into our hearts and minds.

So, while far too many in the modern Church are very well- versed in the most intricate of political Details- the Grace of God- without which NOBODY is going to Heaven- remains a Mystery about which few- if any- are even concerned. I simply cannot understand how that could be. But what bothers me even more is that few- if any- seem to even care. And even fewer than that are determined to fix this Problem. Suffice it to say that I see this Problem; I am greatly concerned about it; and I plan to fix this Problem- at least with the Members of the Covenant of Peace Church.

In every single Religion on earth- except Christianity- lost Sinners have to “DO SOMETHING” to make themselves attractive to God- or to make themselves *worthy* for God to save them. So, in the Teaching of Salvation- in every religion on earth- *including modern Judaism*- the Issue of “*personal, individual Merit*” is *fundamental*. And the ONLY differences between the various religions is in the details of what we have to “DO”- so that we can “MERIT”; or “EARN”; or “DESERVE”; or “BE ENTITLED” for God to rescue us from His Wrath and allow us to go to Heaven.

So, everything from being baptized; to attending the Mass; to going through the Rite of Penance; to speaking in tongues; to walking down an aisle; to raising your hand; to praying a Prayer; to taking Communion; to going on a Pilgrimage; to flying airplanes through Buildings- false and Man-made religions have taught and are teaching right now- that lost Sinners have to DO these things- so they can become “*GOOD ENOUGH*” for God to save them!

Now what we have to come to grips with- is that these Teachings are NOT merely Wrong. They are “*damnable Heresies*”. In other words, these Teachings damn people to Hell- if they understand them and believe in them. Let me say this another Way: If a lost Sinner hears someone teach that the Way of Salvation is based on that Sinner doing something to make himself Acceptable to God- and he comprehends what is being taught and embraces it- that Sinner will NEVER be

saved! Now he is *already* Lost. But this false Teaching will *guarantee* that he will NEVER be rescued from that lost Condition.

Now NOBODY has the Right to do this to another person. So, what is also true- is that those who have deceived people- by teaching one or more versions of this Heresy- will burn in Hell forever, too!

So, ALL variations of what is called a “*Works-based Salvation System*”- *guarantee* three things:

1. Lost people will stay Lost
2. Saved people stay ignorant of God’s Grace
3. The Teachers of this false religion will be damned by God

... and God will NOT be glorified; and people will NOT receive the Fullness of Joy!

The Bible teaches that the Old Covenant was between God and Man. And the Covenant was: “*IF you people do this- THEN I God will do that*”. For example, in **Deuteronomy 28:1-14**- Almighty God said,

1 “Now it shall be, if you diligently obey the Lord your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I command you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth.

2 “All these blessings will come upon you and overtake you if you obey the Lord your God:

3 “Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the country.

4 “Blessed shall be the offspring of your body and the produce of your ground and the offspring of your beasts, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock.

5 “Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl.

6 “Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out.

7 “The Lord shall cause your enemies who rise up against you to be defeated before you; they will come out against you one way and will flee before you seven ways.

8 “The Lord will command the blessing upon you in your barns and in all that you put your hand to, and He will bless you in the land which the Lord your God gives you.

9 “The Lord will establish you as a holy people to Himself, as He swore to you, if you keep the commandments of the Lord your God and walk in His ways.

10 “So all the peoples of the earth will see that you are called by the name of the Lord, and they will be afraid of you.

11 “The Lord will make you abound in prosperity, in the offspring of your body and in the offspring of your beast and in the produce of your ground, in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers to give you.

12 “The Lord will open for you His good storehouse, the heavens, to give rain to your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hand; and you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow.

13 “The Lord will make you the head and not the tail, and you only will be above, and you will not be underneath, if you listen to the commandments of the Lord your God, which I charge you today, to observe them carefully,

14 and do not turn aside from any of the words which I command you today, to the right or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them.

Now the unarguable Proof that many people today miss the main Message of this Passage lies in the fact that when they heard this read- they would shout; and praise God; and rejoice over what God said here! Because, fundamentally, those NEW TESTAMENT Believers- who *supposedly* understood and celebrated that EVERYTHING God does- is BY Grace and THROUGH Faith- actually thought they could EARN or MERIT all these Blessings by simply doing what verse 1 said:

... if you diligently obey the Lord your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I command you today ...

... so, ALL we had to do to DESERVE or to BE ENTITLED to receive ALL these Blessings- was to obey God’s Commandments- PERFECTLY! Without any Flaw or Failure! That’s it!

But it NEVER seemed to dawn on them that, not only was their perfect Obedience NOT POSSIBLE- but the fact they thought they actually COULD reach a place where they MERITED these Blessings; and that God would then be OBLIGATED to give them- was a hideous Sin against God’s Grace!

In other words, for anyone to take the “square peg” of a Promise from the Old Covenant and try to put it into the “round hole” of the New Covenant- *perverts* their Understanding of the Grace of God! Let me say this another Way: To use an Old Covenant Mentality and try to superimpose that onto a New Covenant Situation- is to- *at best*- damage their Comprehension of Grace. But- *at worst*- it *destroys* their Understanding of Grace- until the Heresy of the Judaizers (Legalism) becomes very attractive!

NOBODY that reads the Bible with any degree of Honesty should ever rejoice at **Deuteronomy 28:1-14**. God the Holy Spirit did NOT “move” on Moses so he would give ANYONE cause to rejoice! This Passage should make us all weep- because the ONLY Reason it is in the Bible is to irrefutably demonstrate

how the Fall of Adam *totally* and *radically* ruined us all- to the Degree that we simply CANNOT obey God in a Way that this Passage *requires*.

But our Problem doesn't end with us simply NOT keeping God's Commandments perfectly. Because **Deuteronomy 28** does NOT stop at verse 14. It stops at verse 68. So, from verse 15 over the next 54 verses- God proves that we are *hopelessly* destroyed by Adam's Sin- as God's Curses are promised 3 times MORE than His Blessings! So, the 2nd part of the Old Covenant was: "*But if you people do NOT do what I command- I God will damn you!*"

So, if we wrongly believe we are *entitled* to the Blessings of verses 1-14- if we obey perfectly- then, to be consistent- we also MUST believe we are in line for the CURSES of verses 15- 68- if we do NOT obey perfectly! But here is the Problem: We CANNOT obey God perfectly! NOBODY CAN! Moses himself didn't! And so, if we *wrongly* believe that the Promise of all the Blessings of verses 1-14 are ours (as long as we obey)- and we also acknowledge that we CANNOT obey all of God's Commandments perfectly- then ALL this Chapter does- is to damn us!

But either Way we go- whether we falsely believe we actually CAN obey God perfectly or we realize that we are damned because we CAN'T- all we have done is to cast God's Grace off the side and ignored it! And that is Legalism- NOT Christianity! Taking **Deuteronomy 28** completely out of Context to make it say something it was NEVER designed to say- is one of the most *common* Examples that I am personally aware of- that illustrates our glaring Ignorance of the Issue that we talk about; read about; sing about; and pray about the MOST: God's amazing Grace!

But it also illustrates a glaring Ignorance of how infinitely superior the New Covenant is to the Old. The Old Covenant was NEVER designed to save anyone. ALL that the Old Covenant was for- was to convince all of God's chosen people that Salvation is a sovereign Work of God alone and is NOT the Product of human Effort- not even noble or religious Effort! And that is why the Holy Bible teaches that Salvation is:

- BY God's Grace ALONE
- THROUGH the Gift of saving Faith ALONE
- IN Jesus Christ ALONE
- To the Glory of God ALONE

...and the Latin phrases that the 16th Century Church developed to verify that was that Salvation is:

- Sola Gratia

- Sola Fide
- Solus Christus
- Soli Deo Gloria

... because the New Covenant is NOT between God and Man. The New Covenant is between God the Father; God the Son; and God the Holy Spirit. And we are simply the BENEFICIARIES of the Work of all three Persons of the Godhead! And that is why the Bible *clearly* and *repeatedly* says that Salvation is:

... not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Ephesians 2:8)

Let me try to say this yet another Way: If all that the New Covenant did- was to give us a different set of Requirements that we had to measure up to in order to find Favor with God- then we are NO better off under the New Covenant than we were under the Old!

“Okay- but if all of this is true, Brother Blair- then what IS the Requirement to find Favor with God?” Jesus said this in **John 3:3:**

... Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

... and as we have discovered- the Miracle of the New Birth is a sovereign ACT of God alone!

So, it is *unbiblical* to think; or say; or teach; or believe; *“We MUST believe so we may be born again!”* or *“We must DO SOMETHING in order to be born again!”* The Bible does NOT teach that. The Bible has NEVER taught that. The New Birth is the gracious and sovereign Act of God in giving spiritual dead people- new, spiritual Life. In other words, the New Birth is the Product of God’s Grace- ALONE!

Lost Sinners do NOT *cooperate* in their own spiritual Birth. They do NOT *pray* for it; they do NOT *ask* for it; and they do NOT even *want* it. They CAN’T- they are “spiritually Dead”! So, the New Birth is sovereign GIVEN to the lost Sinners who have been chosen by God for Salvation. And it is sovereignly and graciously IMPOSED on them! So, we are born again- so that we may then have both the Power and the Desire to believe!

Okay- but then what is the Condition of the Individual as he is now born again? That person is now “IN UNION” with the Lord Jesus Christ.

We must understand that, like the term, “*Trinity*”- our “*Union with Jesus Christ*” is a central Theme in the New Testament- even though the term itself is NOT used. But the term, “*Christian*” is used only three times in the entire New Testament- yet I would suggest it’s what the New Testament is all about. So, even

though a specific Term may NOT be used- the Teaching about this “Union” is found in all 27 Books of the New Testament.

Here in **John 15**- the Apostle used the term, “**ABIDE**” to discuss our “*Union with Jesus*”- as Jesus is the VINE and we are the Branches that come off from the Vine- but that are always *connected* to the Vine and do NOT live by themselves. So too, we are always connected to this “Union with Jesus”. And it is that CONNECTION- that UNION- that allows us to be “spiritually alive” and to “bear godly Fruit”!

But Scripture is crystal clear that we did NOT connect ourselves to Jesus- through a Choice; or a Decision; or a Prayer; or based on ANYTHING we did to supposedly earn or merit or deserve it. Instead, Jesus sovereignly brought us into this Union with Himself BY God’s Grace!

Even as we did NOTHING to be “*sons and daughters of Adam*” and Recipients of his Sin, Rebellion, Fall, and Curse- by God’s Grace and TO God’s Glory- Believers did NOTHING to be people who have been given a new Identity such that we are no longer “united to Adam” but have entered into an eternal “Union” with the Lord Christ. And even as we inherited the Divine Curse on Father Adam- so too, by the Miracle of the New Birth- we have been brought into a “new Humanity” in Jesus Christ. Therefore, ALL the Riches of God’s Grace have been given to us- to transform us into His Likeness- and ultimately, to lead to the “Fruition of that Union” when we see Jesus Face to face!

Last time I told you that to begin this new year of 2025- I want to take a short “Vacation” from our verse-by-verse “Journey” through the **Gospel of Matthew** and examine what the early Church called, the “*Communion of Saints*”; and what the Bible teaches about HOW we can obey the 50 “one-another” Passages that we find in the New Testament. And Jesus answered that Question with just three words, “*Abide in Me*”. Because when Jesus said if we would abide in Him- we WOULD bear godly Fruit- that includes obeying all the “one-another” Passages.

But what I fear is that far too many in the modern Church want some “*Formula*”; a “*How to Method*”; some “*Check List*” about How we can obey all the “one-another” verses- when Jesus did NOT teach that was the Way. Jesus taught that the Way to bear godly Fruit was NOT to concentrate on bearing godly Fruit- but to simply “*Abide in Him*”. Look again at verses 4&5 of **John 15**:

4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.

5 I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

... and “zero in” on the middle of verse 15:

... he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit ...

... that’s the Key! IF we “abide in Jesus”- IF we are in “Union with Christ”- we WILL bear godly Fruit! And bearing Fruit has to do with our Obedience. So, our Obedience to the Commands of Scripture do NOT flow out from us concentrating on our Obedience- but by us concentrating and yielding to our abiding in Jesus!

More than any other Passage, **John 15:1-11** is the Place where the “*Doctrine of Union with Christ*” came alive to me. It is where the Reality of Jesus sovereignly bringing me into Union with Him became a Reality to be personally *experienced*- rather than simply a Doctrine that explains things. This Passage has proved to be *enormously* important to me in both the Experience and the Articulation of the “Doctrine of Union with Christ”.

Now back in **John 14:31**- Jesus said,

... so that the world may know that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father commanded Me. Get up, let us go from here.

... so, Jesus put His entire Ministry- *especially* those final few hours- under the Command of His Father. “**I do EXACTLY as the Father commanded Me.**” So, God the Father is overseeing the whole thing!

So, Jesus will give His Life; and become the Bread of Life; the Water of Life; as well as the “Door of Life”. But the Father Himself is tending to every Detail- so that this Work will accomplish *exactly* what the Father decreed before the world was.

Then, in the very next verse, Jesus said, “**I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser.**” So, **John 15:1-11** is a “*Metaphor*” of **John 14:31**. In other words, **John 15:1-11** *explains* what Jesus *meant* by what He said in **John 14:31**.

But if you *expand* the narrow Focus of this Metaphor- of Jesus as the Vine and the Father as the Vinedresser- *beyond* what Jesus intended- it will display Falsehood- NOT Truth. And you can prove this by looking at verse 10:

If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.

Here, Jesus compared our Abiding in His Love to His own Abiding in the Father’s Love. Yet we know the Vine does NOT abide in a Vinedresser the way a

Branch abides in the Vine. So, by *expanding* this Truth further than Jesus intended- the Metaphor breaks down very quickly. So, by that we know that's NOT what the Metaphor was designed to show about the Vinedresser. The Reality is that ALL Metaphors break down if pressed too far. Parables do too- which is why so many get the Parables of Jesus so wrong.

So, what was this Metaphor designed to teach us? Why did Jesus even mention in verse 1 that His Father was the Vinedresser? Why didn't He just begin with the words of verse 5: "*I am the vine; you are the branches.*" The whole Paragraph is built around that Metaphor and would work without any Reference to the Father as the Vinedresser. ALMOST- but not all of it! Specifically, verse 2:

Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.

The Reason Jesus built into this Metaphor not just the Vine and the Branches- but also the Vine and the Vinedresser- is because there are two things the Father does that are important for us to know as we abide in the Vine and get our Life and our Power from the Vine. One is that God takes away *fruitless* Branches, and the other is that God prunes *fruitful* Branches.

God Himself *cuts away* the Lifeless while *cultivating* the Living. So, God *destroys* AND God *disciplines*. So, the Branches have one of two Things that will happen to them: They WILL be "*cut up*"; or they WILL be "*cut off*". As Jesus said in **Luke 8:18**:

... whoever has, to him more shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has shall be taken away from him.

So, let's take these two Works of the Vinedresser one at a time. Verse 2a: "**Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he (the Vinedresser, God) takes away.**" Now I said this is both a "*cutting away*" as well as a "*destroying*". How so? Because of verse 6: "**If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.**"

Now this is NOT some disjointed Statement. This is the Completion of the Work of the Vinedresser in verses 2 and 6: "**Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away . . . AND it dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.**"

Jesus used another Metaphor in **Matthew 13:38-40** to point in a *similar* Direction: "**... the tares are the sons of the evil one;... the enemy who**

sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels... the tares are gathered up and burned with fire ... the Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

So, the very FIRST Work of the Vinedresser (the Father) is Judgment- some of it right now and some at the “End of the Age”.

But that raises the Question: “*Can a branch, a disciple of Jesus, have eternal Life in Union with Jesus and then lose it and be finally condemned?*” The Answer lies in us determining who branches are that are “in Jesus” and yet- Lost.

And the Key to understanding this- is to realize that in the **Gospel of John** there are people who act and talk like Believers (to some extent) and yet- are NOT genuine Believers. Jesus called them, “**Tares**”. There are people who act and talk like Disciples (to some extent)- who are NOT true Disciples. There is the “chosen Twelve”- and yet one of them is a devil! So, in the same Way there are people who act and talk like Branches (to some extent)- who are not true Branches. They are “in Jesus” in one sense (outwardly)- but NOT truly “in Jesus” (inwardly).

Judas Iscariot is the clearest Example of a person who acted and talked like a Branch (to some extent)- who was attached to Jesus for three years! He was in the circle of the Twelve. He looked like he was in a real and close Relationship with Jesus (Union). Yet Judas was NEVER a true believer (**John 6:64&65**).

So, the Reason Jesus doesn’t just say, “**I am the vine you are the branches,**” but includes the Vinedresser in the Metaphor is because He wants us to know two great things that the Father does in tending both the Vine and the Branches.

1. God sovereignly takes away *fruitless* Branches
2. God sovereignly prunes *fruitful* Branches

... He *cuts away* the Lifeless while *cultivating* the Living. He *destroys* AND He *disciplines*! He “*cuts up*” or He “*cuts off*”!

So, Jesus is actually preparing His Disciples for two things that will come:

1. Defection and Betrayal from the Inside
2. Persecution and Suffering from the Outside

Now the best Exposition of the Work of the Father in being the Vinedresser is **Hebrews 12:6, 10&11:**

FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES. For they [our earthly Fathers] disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He [God] disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

... and in the Context of **Hebrews 12**, this Discipline is happening through the Persecution brought to Believers by lost Sinners (**Hebrews 12:4**).

But here, in **John 15:20**- Jesus said, “**A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you.**” Persecution is NOT the only Way the Father cuts and prunes the true Branches- but it is *one* Way.

But what Jesus wants us to see is that our Union with Him is NOT isolated from our Experiences in this Life. It is influenced by these Experiences. And He wants us to know: His Father sovereignly governs those Experiences! So, Persecution and Hardship and Calamity do NOT come to the Branches- by chance. Our Experiences are NOT Aimless or Random or without Purpose and Meaning. They are the sovereign Work of the Vinedresser. And they have a very distinct and narrow Purpose: MORE godly Fruit! Verse 2b: “... **every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.**”

And that means our Experience of this Union with Christ (our Attachment to the Vine/our Abiding in Jesus) is energized and intensified and enlivened by Father-controlled Experiences. There are great internal Workings in Union with Christ from the Holy Spirit and from Jesus as well as from the Father Himself.

But here the Focus is on the *external* Element. The Vinedresser is NOT the Sap nor the Vine. But His Work in pruning, cutting, caring has a profound Bearing on our Experience of both the Sap and the Vine.

A picture of how this works would be **2Corinthians 1:8&9**:

8 For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our affliction which came to us in Asia, that we were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life;

9 indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead;

... Paul’s own Abiding in Christ- in God- was deeply assisted by this Pruning that took him to the Point of Death.

So, the Purpose of verse 2 is that Jesus is preparing His Disciples for Defection and Betrayal from within and Persecution and Suffering from without. And He is encouraging and emboldening them that His Father is in absolute

Control of both. No Betrayer will escape, and all our Hardships will draw us deeper into the Enjoyment of that Union with sweet Jesus.

Now we might think that the Stage has been perfectly set for the Imperative of verse 4: “*Abide in Me.*” And the reasoning that supports it:

... and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, 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, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

So, the Stage is set in verses 1 and 2: Fruitless Branches are *destroyed* while fruitful Branches are *disciplined*. Therefore, abide in Jesus because without Jesus- we can do NOTHING! And that makes total sense. We can't do *anything* without Jesus- so, abide in Him- yield yourself to this Union! Because it isn't just your Fruit bearing that depends on being in Union with Jesus- our very Existence depends *totally* on Him!

We must understand that there are no Branches without a Vine. And so, when Jesus said, “**apart from Me you can do nothing**”- that's what He meant! We can't do *anything* apart from Christ! So, abide in Him for your Life; your Fruit; and your All!

But there is one more thing needed to be put in place before Jesus commanded them to abide in the Vine: verse 3. Something had to be put in place that would be distinctively Christian. Something that Jesus brought into the world unlike any other religion. Something at the heart of our Christianity, and something at the heart of what it means to abide in Christ and live the Christian Life.

Verse 3 is perhaps the strangest verse in the whole Paragraph:

You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

... and Jesus said that after He just said,

Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.

... so, what gives?

The first thing to see is something you can't see in the English vocabulary of verses 2 and 3. But if you thought long enough about the Relationship between verses 2 and 3, you could see the Idea. Jesus has just said God “prunes” you to make you MORE fruitful. Then He immediately said, “*You are already clean.*” So,

maybe Jesus is saying, “*God prunes you and already you are pruned*”. Or “*God is cleansing you, and already you are cleansed*”.

That much you can see in English. And that’s all you need to see. But to confirm it: in Greek the word for “prune” (in verse 2) is the SAME as the word for “cleanse” (*kathairei*). And the word for “clean” in verse 3 is a related word (*katharoi*). In other words, it’s more- plain in Greek that Jesus is making a play on words here. The Father prunes- He cleanses the Branches to make them more suitable for fruit-bearing. But keep in mind: you are *already* cleansed! You are *already* pruned! You are already *suitable* and have already been *fitted* or *attached* to the Vine! You are already in Union with Christ based on the Miracle of the New Birth!

And Jesus has used these exact words, “*you are clean*” once before. In **John 13**, Jesus washed the disciples feet. But Peter objected, “**Never shall You wash my feet!**” (verse 8). But then Jesus answered him, “**If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.**” In other words, “*There is no Union between Me and you, Peter, if you object to my cleansing your feet.*” And then Peter replied: “**Lord, then wash not only my feet, but also my hands and head!**” (verse 9). But then Jesus said (verse 10), “**He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean...**” But then He added, “**... but not all of you.**” Because, it says, “**He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, ‘Not all of you are clean.’**”

So, what’s the point in both **John 13** and **John 15** of saying that the disciples are already clean? Already “completely” clean (13:10). Already pruned, and already made suitable. Yet they need to be washed and to be pruned. And if they reject being washed and pruned, they have NO part with Jesus- NO Union with Christ. The Answer is that our Yielding to be washed and pruned is the Sign that we are already washed and pruned!

And this astonishing Position of being already washed and already pruned, already clean, happened, Jesus said in **John 15:3b**- “**because of the word which I have spoken to you.**” The “word” here stands for the whole Message of Jesus- Him being the eternal Son of God (**John 1:1–3**); Him coming in the Flesh (**John 1:14**); Him being without Sin (**John 8:46**), Him dying for His sheep (**John 3:15; 10:17**), and Him rising from the Dead (**John 10:18**). Believing the entire Message of Jesus is the Connection between a person and Jesus. Believing this Word is the “joining together” that God creates between the Branch and the Vine, between the Disciple and Jesus. And in the instant of that Joining; that Union; that Abiding- the Disciple is *completely* clean! *Completely* pruned!

John 5:24 is one of the *clearest* Statements in all this Gospel of what has happened to you if you are true Disciple (not like Judas who was NOT clean):
“**Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent**

Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.” So, we have ALREADY passed from Death to Life!

If you think it is astonishing for Jesus to say to Peter: **“You are already completely clean” (John 13:10)**; and to say to the Branches: *“You are already completely pruned”*- consider how astonishing it is to hear Him say (in 5:24) of all true Believers: *“You have ALREADY passed from Death to Life!” “You CANNOT come into Judgment, because you have ALREADY passed through Judgment. You are already on the other side of Judgment. Therefore, you will NEVER be cut off from the Vine and burned!”*

This is the part of the Stage that had not yet been set for the Imperative of **John 15:4- “Abide in Me!”** Before He gave us this Command, Jesus wanted to make sure we understand HOW this Command works for true Disciples, true Branches, who are in the Vine. “Abide in Me!” How are we to hear such an Imperative? Such a Command? We are to hear it as something we must “DO” AND we must hear it as something that has *already* “been done”! This we MUST do: “Abide in Jesus!” Why? Because, **“If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away”** (verse 6). So, first, we MUST abide! And by abiding- we WILL bear godly Fruit; we WILL obey the “one-another” Passages! And we WILL obey them as a natural and normal Function of abiding in the Vine!

But then we read verse 3: **“You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.”** *“My Father’s pruning and cleansing are simply fitting you to be what you ALREADY are! Your Obedience to my Command is simply becoming what you ALREADY are! You will NOT be cut off! You will NOT come into Judgment. You have ALREADY passed from Death to Life! That is the Nature of the Union you have with Me!”*

Yet the Father is NOT wasting His time when He prunes you and disciplines you. It is mere vain human reasonings to say: *“Well, if I am clean, and pruned, and beyond Judgment, then I don’t need any Discipline from the Father.”* But those who speak like that will hear Jesus’s Rebuke to Peter: *“If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me” (John 13:8)*. If My Father does not prune you- you are NOT clean. You are NOT My Disciple.

And then we read verse 8: **“My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.”** So, the Father is NOT wasting His Time in your daily Pruning. He is sanctifying you and saving you and keeping you in Ways that will prove you are Real and Genuine- so you may bring Him great Glory. So, don’t ever begrudge the Ministry of the Vinedresser! Prove that you are a true Disciple, that you are a true Believer, that you are a true Branch, by submitting JOYFULLY to the Pruning and the Cleansing! And the point of verse 3 is: Do it because you are ALREADY cleansed; you are ALREADY pruned; and you are ALREADY a true Disciple!

Now the Reason I have preached this Message on our “Union with Christ” in a Series on the “Communion of the Saints”- is because we CANNOT and we WILL NOT obey the 50 or so “one-another” verses that can be found in the New Testament unless our Union with Jesus is real and viable. And this goes back to what I said in the Beginning. Us obeying all of the “One-another” passages in the Bible in 2025- is NOT going to happen simply because we put forth Effort; or because we make our minds up; or because we choose to do it. That ISN’T Christianity. That is pagan Humanism. And hear me- there are pagans in this world who are very Kind and loving and merciful and patient and a joy to be around. But they do NOT love Jesus; and they are NOT glorifying God.

EVERYTHING *we do* REQUIRES a Dead and Risen Savior- or it is all of Flesh! And EVERYTHING we do- will be BY the Grace of God and THROUGH the Gift of Faith- or it is all of Flesh! So, we MUST first understand God’s Grace; and then we MUST have a real and viable Union with the Lord Jesus- where He alone is the Vine; where we are the Branches; and where His Father is the Vinedresser- or it is all of Flesh.

It is my firm Conviction that as we abide in Jesus- obeying Jesus will become “second Nature” to us. We WILL bear godly Fruit; and we WILL endure the Father’s sovereign Pruning with Delight- IF- IF- IF we are constantly abiding in Jesus in this spiritual Union! Other than that- we will do nothing but build up our own Self-righteousness!

The Bible teaches that bearing godly Fruit is the AUTOMATIC Result of abiding in the Vine and being pruned by the Father. And obeying the “one-another” passages in the New Testament IS bearing godly Fruit. So, the Way we may obey the many “one-another” Passages- is by NOT trying real hard to obey the many “one-another” Passages!

We will AUTOMATICALLY obey those Passages by RESISTING the Temptation to try to accomplish spiritual and godly Goals through carnal Means and by simply *yielding* ourselves to this “Union with Christ” and yielding ourselves to the Pruning of the Father. And as we do that- we WILL bear godly Fruit- and our Fruit will grow; and our Fruit will remain!

Amen. Let’s pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your Pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.