

# SUNDAY MESSENGER



*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.*

## The Vine and the Branches

He tried counselling, rehab centres and patches. He read books about rehabilitation for alcoholics and used will power to get over his addiction. He even began his blog, 'John's quit drinking blog' to share his experience of fighting with the demon of alcohol and get encouraged by others. Yet, nothing worked. There was no power of this world, no treatment or therapy that could get him out of this slavery. Everybody gave up on him, except his daughter.

### Withered Christians

The Father's work is to remove and prune. The pruning is done by the word spoken by His Son. We can immediately sense the importance of God's word. "The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb 4:12). The prophet Jeremiah compares the Word to fire and hammer (Jer 23:29). Our Lord himself used it to refuse Satan's temptations (Matt 4:1-11) and his disciple called the Word "the sword of the Spirit" (Eph 6:17).

I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every 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. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. 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. 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. If 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. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

(John 15:1-8)

Our life-task is to abide in Christ by letting the Word abide in us. This can only be done by making Bible the food for our souls. We live in times when the Bible can be bought at any bookstore or devotional shop. It can be also downloaded to our phones, tablets, and PCs. We have no excuses not to read it. Yet many are not willing to spend even few minutes with God's word in order to nourish their minds and hearts. To say that we have no time for the Scriptures is tantamount to admitting that we do not need God in our lives. No wonder that there are so many among us who are spiritually dead. Jesus made it clear: "If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers" (Jn 15:6).

The world has seen too many withered Christians. You cannot distinguish them from worldly people who act as if God did not exist. They are "filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless" (Romans 1:19-31). They follow the 'flesh' instead of bearing the 'fruits of the Spirit'.

### Pruned Christians

Letting the words of Christ abide in us - by reading and meditating on the Gospel - we avoid the fate of the withered branches. The seeds of God's word planted in our hearts cannot but bear fruit. It has the power to accomplish that which God purposes and the power to succeed in the thing for which God sends it.

The apostle Paul is a very good example of the power of God's word. Because Christ abode in him, he was able to preach the Gospel in the regions of present Syria, Turkey, Cyprus, Greece and Italy. As one among the most fruitful branches in Christ's vine, He was continually being pruned. His missionary life can be summarized with two words: danger and worries. He testified that during his journeys he was "in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness,

danger at sea, danger from false brothers" (2 Cor 11:26). He also worried about newly planted churches whether they could survive and grow under hostile circumstances. His life on the edge taught him to rely on God, and his worries reveal his love and concern for those neophytes.

Bearing fruit is not about worldly success but about glorifying the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are called to become the disciples of Jesus, not celebrities. It cannot happen without pruning. Testifying to the Gospel often entails risks, challenges, and new adventures. Yet, this pruning is for our good and God's glory. Moreover, Jesus has attached an incredible promise to those who abide in Him: "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you" (John 15:7).

What is that you want? Prosperity? Happiness? Peace? God can grant us all our wishes and do far more abundantly than all that we ask for or think of. Jesus did not put any limits to our requests. Yet, in order for those wishes to be granted, we need to abide in Him. Without Him we cease to exist, without Him we can do nothing.

### Conclusion

It took Mary, the daughter of John, nine months to set her father free from his addiction to drinking. The method was so simple that till now few people believe that it truly happened. Every evening she read him a few chapters from the Scriptures. They started with the New Testament and then moved to the Old Testament. The reading always ended with a short prayer: 'Dear God, make my father the man you want him to be'. The power of God's word did for John what all sorts of treatments and therapies could not do.

Do you abide in Christ? Does His word abide in you? The answers to these questions will determine the direction of your life. Amen.

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