

“Vital Vintage Union” (Part 2)

John 15:7–11

⁷“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. ⁹Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also 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 so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.” [NASB]

HOPE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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I. Introduction

In the first six verses, we observed four principles of vital vintage union as branches with Jesus Christ who alone is the true vine. One: Vital vintage union begins with the Father and the Son. Two: The visible church is the place where dead branches are taken away from the vine, and where living, fruit-bearing branches are pruned for more fruit. Three: There can be no justification and there can be no sanctification apart from vital vintage union with Jesus. And four: Vintage union presents consequences for vitality and hypocrisy, namely, fruit or fire; productivity or perdition.

In the next five verses Jesus moves to the next stage of preaching vital vintage union with Him. He dealt already with the question of His Father the vinedresser pruning or removing. He is now beyond that; it is no longer the question. He focuses now on the disciples, and the sermon assumes their union with Himself. These branches are alive. Judas Iscariot, the dead fruitless branch, has been removed from among them. That one will be gathered for the fire; these will be pruned to bear more fruit.

So Jesus now moves to the question of how their union with Himself will bear fruit pleasing to God. And Jesus gives three ways by which their union will bear fruit. These are, Ask in His Will; Abide in His Love; and Abound in His Joy. These are three timeless rules of life—of vitality and fruit—for you and for me.

II. Ask in His Will

First Rule of Life: *Ask in His Will*. ⁷“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.” There is a command, a condition, and a consequence.

A. Command

Firstly, the Command. It is easy to miss this command, because we love to find loopholes to avoid commands. If a Martian were to observe us he would think we are absolutely nuts for the way we avoid this command. But commands make the hair on the back of our necks stand up. We are so resistant to commands, that if someone commands us to take the five dollars they are giving us and go buy an ice cream Sunday, the first thing we want to say is “Just try and make me!” We just can’t stand commands.

So what is the command here? It is right in the heart of v7: “Ask.” Shall we expand the command? “Ask whatever you wish.” What is the command? “Ask.” Simple command. We MUST repent and begin obeying this command! ^{Mt7:7}“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.” What kind of fools are we to neglect, let alone refuse, to Ask God to do whatever we wish? If the world is going to think we are fools, let it not be for the reason that we refuse to ask God to do what we wish!

B. Condition

1. Abide in Me and My words in you

But there is, secondly, a *condition* to the command. Actually two conditions. Condition number one is this: “if you abide in Me and My words abide in you.” Now again I say, the question is not whether the disciples will remain in Jesus or be cut off as dead branches. Rather, the condition is related to the kinds of things you ask; the things you wish for Jesus to do.

Very simply, Jesus is commanding us to ask Him to do what *He* wants to do. This is what He means by us abiding in Him and His words in us. I’m not saying that He sticks a CD into our slot and out of our mouths comes what He’s recorded. I’m not saying we sit under His teaching like

in college and just regurgitate on a test what the teacher scribbled on the board. No, as we saw last week, when we are a branch united to the true vine, our life-giving sap comes from the vine. It flows in and through us. The Spirit in Him is the same Spirit in us.

Jesus says to ask whatever WE wish. Do not lose sight of that. But *do* recognize that as branches deriving our life and our very being from the Vine, the things we wish are derived from the things He wishes. Our wishes are changed... thank God! No longer are we bound to wishing for things that are powerless to bring joy or bear fruit. Our wishes—our will—abides in His will. His words—His will that He has revealed in Scripture—abides in us and replaces the things we used to wish for when there was no Christ in us and no hope of glory.

2. *What you Will*

Condition number two is *what you wish*. Ask whatever you wish. So what do we wish him to do? What do we will? Well, the disciples are quite gifted at showing us what our flesh, our old man wishes for. We hear disciples asking Jesus things like, “Won’t you tell the children to go away?”^{Mt19.13} They are such a bother! “Won’t you tell these hungry people to go away?”^{Lk9.12} They are keeping us from supper! “Won’t you let me and my brother sit at your right and left hands in heaven?”^{Mk10.37} We really do deserve this above the others. “Won’t you let me save You from dying to save the world?”^{18.10;Mt16.22} It won’t look good on your resume or mine if I let something happen to you. “Won’t you let me have some glory by dying for You when You die for me?”^{13.37}

But Jesus blesses us by telling us six things our living, vital, fruit-bearing spirit—our new man—wishes for. 1) “Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. 2) Your kingdom come. 3) Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. 4) Give us this day our daily bread. 5) And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 6) And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”^{Mt6.9ff}

This, then, is the condition for the command. Ask... *in His will*. The condition is not questionable, you see. These *are* the things the living you wishes for; these *are* the things the living you wills, if you are a branch united to the true vine. The dead you wishes for money, for power, for sex, for reputation.

Solomon is not only a great example, but a type of Christ. One night Christ appeared to Solomon and said to him, “Ask what I shall give you.”^{1Ch1.7} It was a command. Same command. Ask whatever you wish. Solomon’s reply? It was heavenly. Of the Spirit of Christ.^{2Ch1:10} “Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people, for who can rule this great people of Yours?”

Solomon was simply asking for God to be honored. He was asking for God’s kingdom to come. He asked for God’s will to be done. He asked for God’s people to be fed. He was asking for God to be merciful to His people. He was asking God to lead His people in holiness. Such was Solomon’s wish, and he asked in God’s will.

C. *Consequence*

Command with a condition. Ask in His will. There is, thirdly, a consequence. *It shall be done for you*. WE MUST REPENT AND START BELIEVING THIS PROMISE! What happens when we ask and God does? Three things.

1. *Father glorified*

One, “My Father is glorified.” When we ask God to do what He wants to do and then He does it, He is glorified. He is honored, who can do all things, for nothing is too difficult for Him. He can give wisdom that leads a small nation to be the center of the world. He can give salvation from the impossible imprisonment of sin’s guilt before His holy law. This honors Him.

2. *Bear much fruit*

Two, when we ask God to do what He wants to do and then He does it, we bear much fruit. God is glorified by creating all things from nothing. How much more glorious is taking dead souls and turning us into fruit-bearing branches united to the Holy one of God, Jesus Christ? When we bear fruit of faith, we do greater things than Jesus did on earth.^{14.12} And the things Jesus did on earth were far greater than God’s entire work of creation.

Did you in love invite someone to come to church and hear the good news of salvation? You overcame the massive forces of the devil arrayed against you to keep your mouth shut. Greater work than creation! Did you give someone the reason for the hope that is in you? You planted a seed that can sprout into generations upon generations of believers and their children. Far greater work than creation! Do you think God is not glorified by such fruit?

3. *Be My disciples*

Three, when we ask God to do what He wants to do and then He does it, we show that we are His disciples. How a father is honored when his child imitates him (imitates his virtues, that is, and not his vices!) When we declare by our lives our dependence upon our Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer, He is rightly honored. Disciples advertise their dependence. Fools declare their independence. Fools dream that they can suspend themselves in midair and bear lovely fruit, when in fact they are powerless, lifeless branches like a heap of bones awaiting the furnace.

Ask in His will... and it shall be done. This is Rule of Life number one for bearing fruit in your union with Jesus.

III. *Abide in His Love*

Second Rule of Life: *Abide in His Love*.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.” Abide in His Love. There is in this rule a command, a condition, and a complement.

A. *Command*

Firstly, the command. Abide in My love. There are few luxuries in this life so pleasurable as a good Edwardian showerhead. Instead of these little pinhole showerheads designed to keep the greenpolice happy and the bather dry or at least unrinsed, you have a 6- or 8-inch plate directly overhead that inundates you in a constant yet gentle deluge of steamy comfort. You can tell you are in at least a 4-Star B&B if you find yourself under an Edwardian showerhead. The worst thought you can have while in such a luxurious alternate universe, is having to get out from under it.

So why do we not find it so grievous when we stand out to the side of Christ’s love that would so generously deluge us with warm comfort? Abide in My love. Stay in the shower. It is a very secure place. It is a very cleansing place. Security and catharsis. Justification and sanctification.

B. *Condition*

Secondly, the condition. How do we abide in His love? ⁹ “Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you.” We abide in His love by acknowledging and resting in the way Jesus’ Father loved Him. How did Father love the Son? Father loved the Son by loving us through the Son. Father presented His Son with a promise and a plan to love us and give us to His Son forever.

Did you sin against God? He loved His Son by promising to purify you and give you to His Son as a bride. Did you by your corruption become utterly detestable to the Most Holy God who

is ^{Hab1:13}“of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness”? He loved His Son by making a plan to wash you with regeneration and renew you by the Holy Spirit.

Did you assert your independence from God by implying through your moping that you really *should* be able to make yourself acceptable to Him? He loved His Son by giving Him the privilege of dying the most horrible death possible to save you from the most horrible eternity possible.

You see, God’s love for His Son is not separable from His love for us. To love His Son He must love us; to love us He must love His Son. He obligated Himself to His Son to love us; He obligated Himself to us to love His Son. He fulfills His promise to His Son by faithfully loving us; He fulfills His promise to us by faithfully loving His Son. HOW CAN WE BEAR THE THOUGHT OF STANDING OUTSIDE THIS SHOWER?!?

But we are in the shower. The shower of His blood. The shower of His Spirit. Secure with our title to heaven: Christ’s faithful obedience to His Father. Being qualified and made fit for heaven: cleansed from ungodliness and filled with holiness. Such is the condition of those abiding in His love.

C. Complement

Thirdly, the complement. 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.” Our obedience will reflect and *complement* the Son’s obedience. Our obedience does not *add* to the Son’s obedience. Our obedience is the *result* of the Son’s obedience. We love because He first loved us. We obey because He first obeyed for us.

Listen, this is important. V10 is NOT instruction on how to get into His love, despite our incessant contrivances to translate it that way. Here is the hinge, the fulcrum, the distinction between legalism, antinomianism, and gospel salvation. Jesus abided in His Father’s love *by* keeping His Father’s commandments. Jesus came down from heaven to do the will of His Father. And His Father’s will was for Jesus to do for us what we never did and never could do: satisfy the Law’s justice against our sins and present heaven-qualifying obedience to God.

The legalist says we can get into God’s love by keeping His commandments. Such a person knows nothing about being loved. The antinomian says we are in God’s love and therefore don’t need to keep His commandments. Such a person knows nothing about loving.

The Gospel says Jesus kept God’s commandments for us and thereby remains in His Father’s love. Therefore as we abide in Jesus, we too remain in His Father’s love. And in His love, we love as He first loved us. Obeying God’s commands, resting in Christ’s perfect love for us... is the only kind of obedience that produces fruit pleasing to God.^{Heb11.6}

Abide in Jesus’ love, is Rule of Life number two for bearing fruit in your union with Jesus.

IV. Abound in His Joy

Third Rule of Life: *Abound in His Joy*. ¹¹“These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.” There is in this rule a command, a condition, and a completion.

A. Command

Firstly the command. “These things I have spoken to you.” Somehow we think we can get by with standing outside the shower, or maybe half in/half out. But no! If we miss a single drop, we miss the whole thing! We think if we commit one small sin we can make up for it. But no! “For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all.”^{Jas2.10}

We think that if we unite with part of Jesus and Jesus unites with part of us, we will be sufficient. But no! ^{Mt5:18}“For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.” We must have *everything* Jesus has done for us, and Jesus must have *everything* we have done against Him. He must take *every sin and idol* from us, and we must take *every* letter of obedience from Him. This is what He has spoken to us. That is His command.

We do not choose the words any more than a branch chooses which rings of the vine it will unite with. The branch stems from the very pith, the center of the core. Jesus’ word is our command... and his command is not burdensome. Abide in Him as a branch in the vine. Love and be filled with His word—all of it. “I have spoken.” His word is our command.

B. Condition

Secondly, the condition. The condition of vitality and fruit is this: Joy—Christ’s joy in us. No vitality and no fruit: no joy. Likewise... no joy: no vitality and no fruit. God made you to be alive and to be fruitful. If you are dead and bearing no fruit, you will have no joy. How can your joy be full when you are just waiting for the vinedresser to come and take you away for the fire?

Furthermore, if you have no joy, you can have no vitality and produce no fruit. We are filled with joy when we are free from the need to make ourselves lovable. If you are trying to make yourself lovable, you are doing exactly the thing that makes you unlovable. You are rejecting the One and Only who can make you lovable—namely the Lord Jesus Christ. How can your joy be full when you are filling yourself with things that have no power whatsoever to make you lovable to God? *You can bear no fruit when you are striving to make yourself lovable.*

C. Completion

Thirdly, the completion. We are not complete unless every part of us is filling with His joy. If there is any part of us we are unwilling to surrender and subject to His will, that part is stealing His joy from us. If there is anything we are afraid He will take away from us, we may ask if we are really abiding in His love. We may ask if His joy really has a place in us.

Insofar as we fear that Jesus will *steal* our joy by taking a prevailing idol from us, we will question whether we have in us *any* seed of His joy inexpressible. The believer will find lack of assurance; the unbeliever may find prevailing hypocrisy.

Insofar as Jesus fills us with *His* joy—the joy of Him loving us by laying down His life and rising up for us; the joy of Him returning to receive us to Himself; the joy of Him releasing us from the fear of losing all we have in this world so that we might gain all heaven has to keep from losing us—thus far will we be made complete.

Ask in His Will; Abide in His Love; and Abound in His Joy. This is how you abide in the true vine and bear much fruit that is pleasing to God.