

John Chapter 15 v 1 - 17 Part 1

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Preacher: Peter Robinson

[0 : 00] We're going to turn together in God's Word in our Bibles to John and chapter 15, Gospel of John and chapter 15.

We're taking a break from Luke's Gospel for harvest and going to read from chapter 15 of John rather.

And if you've got one of the red church Bibles, that's page 1083, 1083, and we're going to read the first 17 verses.

We're going to return to this passage tonight as well, but we're going to be studying the words of our Lord Jesus this morning too. Beginning at verse 1 then of John 15, Jesus of course is speaking to his disciples, I am the true vine and my Father is the gardener.

He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I've spoken to you.

[1 : 11] Remain in me as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself. It must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

I am the vine. You are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit. Apart from me, you can do nothing.

If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that's thrown away and withers. Such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you.

This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.

Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. I've told you this, so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

[2 : 18] My command is this, love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.

You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends.

For everything that I learned from my Father, I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you, so that you might go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that whatever you ask in my name, the Father will give you.

For everything that I have loved you. This is my command. Love each other. Wheat for bread, yeah. Okay. There we are. Now you're relieved that I remember that, haven't you?

Let's put your minds at peace and rest. I'm sure when you were a child, perhaps even when you've been a bit older, you thought something like this. What sort of animal would I be if I was an animal?

[3 : 26] And I know kids play this sort of game, don't they, when you're a child. Girls particularly like to be cats for some reason, I'm not sure exactly why. And boys like to be lions and tigers and all those sort of things.

And perhaps you remember playing like that when you were a child. But I doubt if any of us have ever thought, what sort of plant would I be? Because you can't, a plant's not quite like a tiger or a cat that does things.

A plant just sort of stands still. So it's not really much of a game if you play plants. But perhaps we could just think about that for a moment. Perhaps if I was to ask you and say, what sort of plant would you be?

Some of you would say, well, I'd be an oak tree, tall and big and strong and able to weather the problems of life. Or perhaps you ladies would say, well, I'd be an English rose, elegant and bringing

joy and pleasure to people.

The trouble is I know most of you very well. And so in reality I think there's quite a few of us who would be more like a bramble bush. Wild and prickly.

[4 : 32] Or will I even get away with this? Will I get to exit the building when I say this? I think more of us, I think, are akin to a walnut, a chestnut or a hazelnut.

We're rather nutty. Anyway, whatever you think. The reality is this. When we come to John chapter 15, there is something about every believer which is like a plant.

There is something which is essentially one thing that we as believers must do. And that is we must bear fruit. We are like a plant in that we are to bear fruit.

And of course this, I am saying of the Lord Jesus, very well known to us. But there's an inescapable truth that Jesus repeatedly teaches disciples that they are to bear fruit.

There in verse 5, I am the vine, you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit. Then also in verse 8 as well, this is to my Father's glory that you bear much fruit.

[5 : 36] Verse 16, did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit. Jesus is the true vine, and we don't need to go necessarily into that at the moment.

But he's the one who produces the good fruit, but it is born, it is produced, as it were, on the branches that are connected to him. And we find not just those three passages, but in fact eight occasions Jesus speaks about fruit in these verses.

The other word, of course, that crops up, and we're going to think about that tonight, is the word abide. Or remain. That's ten times in these verses too. Now, if you and I as believers are to bear fruit and be fruitful, there are two questions that must arise in our minds, hopefully.

First one being, what kind of fruit should I bear? What is the fruit that Jesus looks for and expects and should be there in the life of a Christian?

Well, of course, there's a very simple answer to that. As simple as the answer is this. What fruit would you expect to find on an apple tree? Apples.

[6 : 50] And what fruit would you expect to find on the branches of a pear tree? Pears. So what fruit would you expect to find on a Jesus vine?

Fruits like Jesus. Fruits like Jesus. The fruit that's found in his life. Those who are connected to him and one with him, their lives are to bear fruit similar to and like the fruit that he bore in his life, in his ministry.

We are united with him. Through him, life flows. And it's natural and it's expected that that life will produce fruit which characterized his own life.

After all, that is what a Christian is. We are those who reflect Jesus. We are bear the image of Jesus. We are those who are saved so that we might be made into the image of Jesus.

That's what the Apostle Paul says himself in Romans chapter 8. For those God foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son.

[8 : 04] And Jesus makes that very plain here as well, doesn't he, in verse 8. This is to my Father's glory that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to me, my disciples.

A disciple of Jesus will bear fruit. That shows, that is the evidence, that they are connected with, that they are part of the vine, that they are truly one with Christ.

And so the question then is this. Do you desire to be fruitful? Is your longing to bear fruit like Jesus? Is it your goal? Is it your purpose? Now I know there are a few people, maybe even some here, a little bit cuckoo, who talk to their plants. Plants don't usually talk back.

But imagine if they did. Imagine there's a vine, or a fruit vine, or a tomato vine, or whatever it may be. And you could talk to that vine, or to that branch. And you say, what is your goal in life, branch?

[9 : 07] And if it was, could talk, they can't talk. Okay, please don't think that they can. But I imagine if they could talk, they say, I just want to bear fruit. I want to grow tomatoes. I want to grow apples.

I want to grow orange. Whatever branch they were, that would be their *raison d'etre*, their purpose for life. Well, dear friends, as Christians, our purpose, our meaning, our reason for being here, the reason that we are saved is that we should be fruitful people.

And bear fruit for God's glory, and fruit that is seen to be the fruit of the Lord Jesus. I think that's one of the truest signs of being a Christian.

Now, some of us may struggle with that. We may lack assurance whether we are genuine believers or not. But the question is this. If in your heart and life your desire and your goal is, I want to be like

Jesus, I want my life to bear this fruit that shows that I belong to him, then that is the truest sign that you are a believer.

If, however, and this is a challenge, isn't it? If, however, that your greatest desire is something else other than that, or that you have no desire that your life should bear fruit like Jesus, then it's very questionable as to whether you truly are a branch of his and connected with him.

[10 : 24] In fact, isn't that really what Jesus expects us to pray? And there's another test. What do you pray for?

There's many, many things we should be praying for, good things we should be praying about, important things. But when we pray for ourselves, which we all do, what is it essentially that we are praying for?

Is it that more of Christ may be seen in me, that more fruit may be born in my life that shows the reality and the power and the love of God? Don't you think it's interesting that here Jesus, in the context of abiding in fruit, talks about prayer?

Notice what he says there. Verse 7. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish that it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory that you bear much fruit.

But isn't the prayer that Jesus is expecting us to pray the wish of our hearts that we might bear much fruit to the Father's glory? And surely again, later on, isn't it?

[11 : 28] Verse 16. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit. Fruit that will last and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.

It's connected. We can't disconnect it. It's a wonderful promise. I'm not saying that we shouldn't pray about other things or that we shouldn't have confidence that God would answer prayers in other matters as well when we are abiding in Christ and seeking him.

But surely the desire of Christ's heart will be the desire of your hearts. Surely the prayer of Jesus will be the prayer of us. That we bear fruit that lasts.

Fruit that's seen. Fruit that's real. Fruit that tastes good. Well, what is this fruit then? What is it that we see in the life of Jesus that particularly should be seen in your life and mine?

Now, of course, we could immediately turn to the Galatians chapter 5. There's a wonderful passage there, isn't there, about the fruit of the Spirit. Love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, self-control.

[12 : 34] A marvelous list. And without doubt, all of those things should be seen in the believer in some part and were definitely seen in the life of Christ in perfection. Because his life was the perfect fulfillment of God's will.

And I would encourage you, I'd encourage you, dear friends, that when you get an opportunity, go to Galatians 5, read through that list of the fruit of the Spirit and pray. Father, I long that I might have greater love, greater peace, greater joy, etc., etc.

Go through that list, think through them and pray that with the Holy Spirit's help, these fruit may grow and develop in your life more and more. However, we're not going to do that.

We're going to look at the fruit here in this passage that Jesus speaks about. He gives a, what I might say, a briefer list of the sort of fruit he expects to be born in your life and mine if we are Christians.

If we are branches connected to the vine. Three fruits, particularly that stand out here in the life of Jesus and should stand out and should be seen above all else in the life of those branches of his.

[13 : 49] The first of them is, of course, love. Verse 9, as the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now abide, remain in my love.

And then he gives this great commandment that we are to love one another and so forth. The very first fruit that's listed in the Galatians 5 is love.

The first work of the Spirit is love. So it's no surprise that we see it in the life of Jesus. We see it, first of all, and this is the wonderful mystery, in the loving relationship between the persons of the Trinity.

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. The Father, the Son, the Spirit have co-eternally existed in a fellowship of love.

Reciprocal, perfect love. It's something that blows our minds. But before the world was made, there was God. And God was three persons, Father, Son, and Spirit.

[14:47] And they loved each other with a perfect, perfect love. And Jesus speaks about that love. He speaks about being loved by the Father.

He knew he was loved by the Father. And he loved the Father, he tells us later on. And we know the Spirit is the Spirit of love as well. But for us, of course, the fruit of this love, which is in the heart of Christ, the Father and the Spirit, is the love that was manifest and demonstrated at the cross. So here we have verse 13, this incredible, marvelous verse. Greater love has no one than this. To lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends.

The laying down of the life of the Son of God for you and for me is the most glaring, unmistakable demonstration of love that the world has ever witnessed or will ever witness.

Because it was not love for the lovely. It was not love for those who loved back. It was love for enemies. Love for those who hated. Love for those who spat and crucified and tortured and beat.

[15:58] Father, forgive them. That is love. Unqualified and unequalled in the world. That's why when Paul speaks to husbands and sets before them the challenge of how they are to live in relationship to their wives, he tells them that just as Christ laid down his life, so they are to love their wives in the same way as Christ loved the church.

Love. Love. And again, as I say, to reinforce this truth, Jesus repeatedly gives this commandment, the commandment he gave back in chapter 13. And here it is twice.

First in verse 12, my command is this, love each other as, in the same manner, in like way, as the fruit of how I loved you. Your love must look like my love.

In verse 17, this is my commandment, love each other. If love is to be the very first fruit, if I can put it that way, of a life connected with Christ, then everything that I do should taste and savour of love. Be flavoured and smell of love. Those of you who use fruit in your cooking, you know, when you use it to make an apple pie, whatever it is, all the way through, there's apple through it.

[17:26] The fruit is there, all permeating the whole pie. And so it is with love, dear friends.

Everything that I do, everything that I say, everything that I am, every action is to, as it were, be flavoured with, have that scent of love.

Like the love of Christ. Sacrificial love. Love for enemies. Forgiving love. My attitudes.

My judgments. And particularly my words. My reactions. Let me ask you the question, dear friends.

Do they? Do they?

Do they savour of love? Is the fruit of love? Now, I'm sure that all of us will reply something like this. Not as much as they should do. But that's the point.

Fruit is to increase. So the first thing we see in the life of Jesus, the first fruit that is to be seen and to be manifest and to be affecting everything that we are as branches connected with Christ is love.

[18:38] The second thing we see here in the life of the Lord Jesus, which is to be born in our lives, is the fruit of faithfulness. Verse 10.

If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. This is remarkably apparent in the life of Jesus.

He was faithful to do the commandments of his Father. We could say he was obedient to his Father. That's what faithfulness is. It's sticking to, and it's carrying out, and it's obeying, not my will, but God's will.

As we saw before, he and the Father were one. He was loved by the Father. He was sinless and perfect. All his life in every part was pleasing to God.

And though he was equal with God the Father and one with God the Father, yet to rescue you and me, yet to save us, yet to go to the cross and suffer and die for us, he humbled himself and became obedient and placed himself on the level of a servant of God.

[19:49] Philippians 2.

Rather, he made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness and being found in appearance as a man. He humbled himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.

Love is faithful. And if Jesus, who is and was and always will be God and co-equal with God the Father in every way, if he should be faithful and obedient to serve, then how much more, dear friends, must you and I be faithful and obedient as he was when we are not equal to Christ?

When we are at the very best to be called his servants? So love, faithfulness.

Is that true of you and me? Does my love produce faithfulness? Does the love and fruit in my life make me more faithful, more obedient, more concerned to keep and to do the will of God?

[21 : 37] Again, we come back to ask ourselves this challenging question. What is the chief desire that I want? What is it that my heart longs for? It longs to be more like Jesus in his love, but it longs to be like Jesus in his faithfulness.

Faithfulness. We live in an inconsistent and faithless world. What is it that we are hearing again and again, pumping into our ears?

These people are not faithful. They do not keep their promises. They do not know what is right. They do not live their lives in a way which shows that they are trustworthy. That has to be a hallmark of you and me, dear friends.

That we stand out as different. That we say something, we do it. That we are faithful. Faithful. Faithful in our choices. Faithful in our relationships.

Faithful in our use of time. Faithful in our use of finances. It's your greatest desire, dear friends, to be faithful to God.

[22 : 38] Faithful to Christ, who was faithful to his Father and who was obedient to him. Here again is one of the acid tests. Whether I am a believer or not.

Whether I am united to Christ or not. The acid test is this. Is my desire to please my heavenly Father. Is my longing to live a life faithfully keeping his word and doing his will.

Or is it rather a battle that is constantly going on between what I want and what he wants. Now in one sense, dear friends, as we go through Christian life, there is something of that battle.

Paul talks about it in Romans chapter 7. About how he struggles with the sinful nature. As Christians, we are not perfect. There is that battle going on. That spiritual battle within.

Whereby our sinful nature wants us to be unfaithful to God. To leave him. To do our own thing. And the spirit of God within us draws us and calls us and convicts us of the importance of faithfulness.

[23 : 45] But, in that battle, who wins most of the time? If it is always the sinful nature. If we are always, as it were, rejecting, ignoring the call and the voice and the command of God.

Then we are unlikely to be true members of Christ's body. One more fruit that we see here in the life of Jesus.

Which perhaps is surprising to some of us. We have seen love and faithfulness. We would expect them to be there. But here is something that is quite incredible. There is the fruit of joy.

I have told you this. Verse 11. So that my joy may be in you. And that your joy may be complete. Or full. Or perfect.

My joy. Your joy. Again, remember. We are bearing the fruit of Jesus. This is what we are seeing here. That just as he was faithful and kept the commands. So we are faithful to keep the commands.

[24 : 48] Just as he loved us and died for us. So we are to love each other. Just as he has joy. As he speaks of here. So it is that we might have that joy too. When people look at the life of Jesus.

They very rarely see that this was a man who was full of joy. All they can see is the cross and the suffering. Well it is right that we concentrate on those things.

But dear friends. The life of the Lord Jesus was a life full of joy. Why was it full of joy? Because he kept his father's commandments. Because he delighted to do his father's will. Because he was able to say to his disciples.

My food and drink is to do the will of him who sent me. He loved and delighted and enjoyed pleasing his father. It wasn't a terrible thing for him.

He wasn't as it were constrained with this terrible burden upon his heart. So I've got to please God. And it's so awful and terrible and hard for me. No, quite the opposite. And that's why he's able to say my joy.

[25 : 48] If he didn't have that joy. Then how could he share it with his disciples? My joy. I want to have told you this. My joy will be in you.

And we see that when we read through the scriptures. There's that wonderful occasion. We looked at it in Luke some weeks ago. Chapter 10. At this time Jesus full of joy. Through the Holy Spirit. No, I'm not saying that Jesus went around smirking all the time.

Or he went around humming a happy tune. But there was a joy in his heart that nothing could take away. In fact, in spite of the very reason. The fact he went to the cross and suffered and died.

Even in the midst of his death. And suffering there is a joy. For Hebrews 12 tells us. For the joy that was set before him. And he endured the cross. Now that sort of joy that is able to thrive.

And to be fruitful. And to be seen in the midst. And to blossom in the harshest conditions of death. Now that's a real joy that the world does not have.

[26 : 48] It's not a fleeting happiness. Or a passing entertainment or pleasure. It's something which is ultimately deep. And meaningful. And unquenchable. Why?

Because this joy. Jesus' joy. And the joy that he wants his disciples to have. Which is full and complete. Is a joy that is not based upon circumstance. Situation. Health. Looks. Appearance. Finances. Any of those things around about us. It is a joy that's rooted in the very person. Of God himself. And the love of God.

If only I really believed that I was loved of God. Then I would never ever be lacking in joy. And neither would you. But we just don't quite get it do we? Jesus lived that life of joy.

[27 : 46] By faithfully keeping God's commandments. By living that life of love. For the Father. And for us. Now dear friends. We've looked at these three fruits in the life of Jesus.

And again the question comes back to us. Are these evident in my life? Are these my chief desires? Are these the motivations? Are these the prayers?

Are these the things that are real to me? Because ultimately again. They are the evidence. That we are connected to Christ. And one with him. The world in which we live is a joyless world. It is an unhappy world. And the reason it is unhappy is ultimately. Primarily. Firstly. Because it does not know Jesus. The love and the faithfulness and the joy of Jesus.

But that is what God has given to us. And we're to bear that fruit. Now. When I've asked you these questions. And we've looked at them. And I hope all of us have been honest enough to say that.

[28 : 48] In my life. These things are there in small quantities. But they're not there in abundance. I'm a little bit like that. That sort of cherry tree that I had. And I planted in the very first year.

One cherry. That was probably meant to be like that. But just there was a one single. I took a photo. The one single cherry. And so we could say. Well. Yeah. On my. In my life.

On the branches of my life. There's maybe one. There's one fruit. And it's not all that brilliant. So the second question is not.

What is the fruit I'm to bear. But how can I bear more fruit. How can I be more fruitful. And notice that's really what Jesus speaks about here. Isn't it as well. How there's an increase in the fruit.

Verse 2. Every branch that does bear fruit. Verse. Next. Sorry.

[29 : 43] Verse 2 as well. That does bear fruit. He prunes that it will be even more fruitful. And then. Down in verse 8. This is to my father's glory. That you bear much fruit.

So you've got fruit. More fruit. Much fruit. We are meant to be. Dear friends. Increasing in our fruitfulness. Now that's a natural law.

More. In the world. Isn't it? That where there is life. There is increase. There is growth. Whether it be in our bodies. Physically growing. Older. Taller. Stronger. And so on. So it is in a tree. Or a plant. No plant. Sort of stays the same size. Unless it's some sort of a bonsai. Or something. Where they. They cut off the main roots. Or something. They do. But in. In the natural course of events.

All. Life. Increases. And that is true for us dear friends. Physically. And spiritually as well. We are to be growing.

[30 : 36] In Christ. And growing. In fruitfulness. And that is to be seen. Is it seen? Those of you who have been a Christian for some time.

Those of you who. Who have grown up. And you. You've come to faith in Christ. Is there an increasing fruit in your life? How can I put it dear friends? Is our fruit becoming sweeter? Or is it getting more bitter? Is our fruit increasing in number? Or is it shrinking? As we're getting older.

Old age is a difficult time. So you keep telling me. And I can appreciate that it is. But dear friends. That does not mean that our fruitful harvest. Decreases. But rather increases. Now. You'll say to me. We can't do the things we used to do.

[31 : 36] No. You're getting it wrong. Aren't you? Say yes Peter. We're getting it wrong. It's not about. Outward doing things. It's about the fruitfulness. Of the character. And of the heart.

And of the way we speak. And the way we live. And the way we behave. It's not about. I can't do the things I did. When once I used to. Decorate the church. Or I used to clue the cleaning. Or I used to make the meals. Or I used to do all these things.

It's not that. They are the product. Of the fruit. But the fruit itself. Is that which matters most. Well how are we to increase.

In fruitfulness. Well then. We see the role. Of our heavenly father. Don't we. Verse 15. Chapter 15. Verse 1. I am the true vine. And my father is the gardener.

Or the vine dresser. He's the one who cares. For the plants. And the branches. He's the one who. Works. To make sure. And ensure. That the fruit increases.

[32 : 35] And grows. And the father does. Two things. He. First of all. Verse 2. He cuts off. Every branch in me. That bears no fruit. That's. Really.

Speaking. In a different way. Not of so much. The believer. But of those. Who call themselves. Outwardly. Christian. Call themselves. Outwardly. God's people.

And particularly. That speaks of the Jews. Of Jesus' day. But it may well. Speak of you. May well. Speak of me. Again. If there is no fruit. Dear friends.

In my life. If there is no fruit. On my branch. That resembles. Love. And faithfulness. And joy. Then it may well be. That I am not. Actually. A branch.

Connected to Christ. And God is very. Very. Or Jesus. Very. Very clear. Because he says. That. That. That. Branch.

[33 : 28] Will be. Cut off. And later on. In verse 6. It is picked up. And thrown into the fire. If you are. A branch. That is not. Connected to Jesus. If you are not.

Bearing this fruit. Which shows. That you are one. With Christ. And have his life. Living in you. Then you are a branch. Which is destined. For the fire. And we don't need to be. Too subtle.

To understand. What that means. It means hell. It means destruction. It means. Separation. From the living God. This is not just. A nice. Sort of talk.

That I am giving. It is not just. A nice. Sort of. Encouragement. For us. Or challenge. To us. It is something. Of life. And death. You are either. A living branch. Or a dead branch. And we know. What happens.

To dead branches. On the compost. Or in the fire. That is why. It is essential. Dear friends. Absolutely vital. That you are. Connected to Christ. That you have put. Your faith in him.

[34 : 20] And are made. One with him. By the work. Of the spirit. In your heart. So that this fruit. Is seen. So God. Cuts away. But he prunes.

As well. Those. Fruitful branches. Every branch. That does bear fruit. So the true branches. He prunes. So that they will be. Even more. Fruitful.

And. Most. Many of you. I'm sure. Will be aware of this. That. In the next verse. Where Jesus says. You are already clean. Because the word. I've spoken to you. That word clean. And the word prune. Is exactly the same words. It's just translated. In a different way. For us in English. But it means. To. Be cleansed. To be. Cleaned. To be pruned.

And we've all experienced. Something of that. Cleaning work. When we became Christians. So. Paul describes. Salvation in this way. Titus 3.

[35 : 16] He. God. Saved us. Through the washing. Of rebirth. By the Holy Spirit. Cleansing us. Of our sin. Cleansing us. Of those things.

That prevent us. From coming into the very presence of God. And acceptable to him. But there's an ongoing work as well. That the God the Father does.

Through the. Through his word. Which we might call his pruning knife. Notice Jesus says. You are already pruned. Because of the word. I've spoken to you.

God's word. Prunes. Us. To make us more fruitful. Hebrews 4. Hebrews 4. Talks about the word of God. As a living. And active. Sharper than any two-edged sword.

Penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit. Joints and marrow. Judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. The Holy Spirit applies God's word. To our hearts.

[36 : 10] And God the Father. As it were. In doing so. Cuts off. And cleanses us. From those things. That are. Fruit. Fruit crippling. Fruit preventing.

Sure. If you're a Christian. You've known that. In yourself. You've. Either been. Sitting under a sermon. Or you've been reading God's word. Or a Christian book. And as you've been reading. You've found. Something within you.

God himself. The Holy Spirit. Speaking to you. Putting his finger upon something. Which is not right. It shouldn't be there. It's an attitude. Or a sin. Or a thought. And as the word of God is applied.

Then you. You repent of that. Say Lord. Cleanse me of it. Take it away. I don't want to have that attitude. That. That. That. That bitterness. That unforgiveness. Or whatever it may be. That sinful habit in my life.

Cleanse me and prune me from it. That's why it's so important dear friends. Let me stress to you. That you dear friends. Are under the word of God. Regularly.

[37 : 09] As often as you can be. That means you need to read the scripture. scriptures daily. With prayer. But it means dear friends. That when you have an opportunity. Like Sunday morning. And Sunday evening.

And Wednesday Bible study. That you. That at all. At all. In all possibility. You get there. Because unless dear friends. You are perfect. Then you don't need to come to church.

Okay. So I expect half of you. Not to be here next week. Because you all think you're perfect. That's not true. We're not perfect. We need the word of God. To prune us. We need the word of God.

To cleanse us. We. If we. If you genuinely. Sincerely. Say. I want to be fruitful. And I want Jesus. To be seen in my life. Then you will make. Every opportunity.

To be. Under the word of God. That's not because I want. Bums on seats. It's not because I want to feel good. Looking out over a full congregation. It's because. In my heart of hearts.

[38 : 05] I know this is Christ's will. For you. And because he said so. In his word. Do not give up the habit of meeting together. We were having a little discussion very. Briefly before the meeting.

Talking about. The sadness of those who profess faith. But then have. Have walked away from Christ. And we talked about that very briefly. To say. It doesn't happen.

Like that. It happens. Gradually. Over time. That somebody. Who falls away from the things of God. Somebody who turns their back. On Christ. It doesn't. They wake up in the morning.

Say. Last night. They were having. Yesterday. They had a time of prayer. And a quiet time in the morning. They've woken up to say. I'm an atheist now. It's a gradual. Eating away. And it begins by missing out. On the fellowship of God's people.

And sitting under the word. It begins by just. Those little things. Being let go of. And then other things. Creep in. So that ultimately. Eventually.

[39 : 00] It just. Drains the tank. I don't want that to happen to you. Or to me. God prunes us.

Through his word. To make us. Fruitful. His word. Is. Powerful. And we've seen as well. Already. The importance of prayer.

That we are to pray. Pray. Lord. Cleanse me. The psalmist said. Show me if there's any wicked way. Within me. Search my heart. That I might see.

And understand. God is the good gardener. Who cuts away. The bindweed. And the parasites. And the.

The. The things that solely strangle. Our fruitfulness. Listen. Dear friends. It is for the. Father. It is the father's will. That you are fruitful.

[39 : 54] God wants to bless. God wants you to be fruitful. God wants you. And he. And he. Can do it. And we'll think a bit more tonight. About the importance of being united with Christ. What happens when we are.

Close with these words of Jesus himself. In verse 16. You did not choose me. Why did God choose you? Not because you're handsome. Pretty. Not because you're like a rose.

Not because of anything in you. He chose you. And appointed you. So that you might go and bear fruit. Fruit. Fruit. That will. Last. Let's pray briefly together.

Before we sing our final. We thank you.

Father God. That you are the good. Gardener. And that you care for us. The branches. Of the vine. We thank you. Lord.

[40 : 52] That you are the one who is actively at work. In us. To make us more fruitful. And we pray Lord. That you would deliver us. From being obstacles to your work.

Forgive us Lord. And deliver us from being those who. Who reject your work. Or Lord. Who put a stumbling block. Or who. Who. Who. Who fight back as it were.

When you come to prune us with your word. We pray oh Lord. That you would give to us hearts. Each of us. That long for. A real harvest. Of fruit.

In our lives. That may give glory to you. For we ask it in Jesus name. Amen. Grow in the grace. And knowledge. Of our Lord. And Savior. Jesus Christ. To him be glory. Both now and forever.

Amen.