

John Chapter 15 v 1 - 17 Part 2

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Date: 15 September 2019

Preacher: Peter Robinson

[0 : 00] Thank you.

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[2 : 30] Thank you.

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[4 : 59] Thank you.

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[7 : 29] Thank you.

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[9 : 59] Thank you.

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[12 : 29] Thank you.

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[14 : 59] Thank you.

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Thank you. Thank you.

[17 : 59] Thank you.

So, Thank you.

Then we are bound like other branches for the fire. Verse 6. If you do not abide in me, if you do not have this living union, if you're not one with me, if you are not part of me, you are like a branch thrown away and withers picked up and thrown into fire.

There can be no, how can I put it, sort of watering down the truth that Jesus is saying here, is there? It's clear by the language that Jesus is using, he's talking about eternal judgment, hell.

In other places when Jesus talks about this day of judgment and what will happen, he uses similar language. Matthew 13, verses 40 to 42. The Son of Man will send out his angels, they will weed out

of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil.

[20 : 28] They will throw them into the blazing furnace where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears to hear, let him hear.

He is the only saviour of the world, dear friends. There is no other saviour. There is no other way to be saved apart from being united to and one with Christ.

I'm sure we all have a soft spot in our hearts for the story of Noah and the ark.

But as you are aware, I'm sure that the whole point of the ark was not the saving of the animals, but the saving of the people. Noah and his family were saved.

How were they saved? Because they were in the ark. Everybody outside of the ark was lost and fell under the judgment of God. Only those in the ark were saved.

[21 : 27] And so the question is for you, are you in Christ? Has that spiritual union taken place between your soul and his? That you are one in spirit with him?

That you are a branch of the vine? Otherwise, dear friend, you are lost. The consequences of that are unthinkable and unspeakable. And I must urge you again to consider your eternal soul.

But for you, dear believer, for those who are united with Jesus, we are in a life-saving union.

And it's an eternal life-saving union. It's not something that can be removed or broken. That's why I say the word abide and the sort of discussion that goes around the word abide as to whether it's possible to no longer abide as a believer.

I do not think that is the case at all. The Bible, the rest of Scripture, the New Testament, again and again, lays down this glorious truth once in Christ, in him, forever. We cannot break ourselves off from the vine.

[22 : 37] Neither can anybody else break us off from the vine. As Jesus said in his wonderful, I am saying the good shepherd. And he spoke to the believers there, didn't he?

And he said to them this glorious truth to his disciples. I give them eternal life and they shall never perish. No one can snatch them out of my hand. No one can snap them off my vine.

Though there are times, dear friends, certainly when we feel a wobble in our faith. And we struggle and doubts assail us and so on. You are in a life-saving union with Christ.

Secondly, here, I think as well, we can see that to be in Christ is to be in a life-empowering union. A life-empowering union.

Jesus, again, is very plain when he says to his disciples here, No, perhaps, verse 4, abide in me as I also abide in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself.

[23 : 41] It must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. And then he goes on even stronger in verse 5. I am the vine, you are the branches. If you abide in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit.

And this is the slap, as it were, across the face. Apart from me, you can do nothing. You can do nothing.

What Jesus is speaking about and what is very plain from his words and the words of the rest of Scripture are clear and absolutely crystal. Without Christ, without union with him, you are dead.

You can do nothing. You are impotent. You are powerless. Those phrases come out, don't they, in the New Testament and Romans, when we were still without power, Christ died for us.

Ephesians in chapter 2, Well, we were dead in trespasses and sins. You cannot have spiritual life. You cannot come to God.

[24 : 43] You cannot pray. You cannot bear fruit. You cannot do any single spiritual thing. Unless you are united to Christ.

Jesus doesn't say, as we wish he would or would like to read in, apart from me, you can do nothing except. There's a few exceptions.

Isn't it interesting when people come to the word of God, they always look for a few exceptions. Is there a loophole in God's word that I can sort of sneak in? You can't sneak anything in that.

Apart from me, you can do nothing. Full stop. Underline. In bold prints. And again, as I say, that's something that scripture declares. Just as Paul spoke very much about being in Christ.

And Ephesians, of course, is one of those glorious passages of scripture that speak about our salvation. He tells us in Ephesians in chapter 2 how it is that we have been saved.

[25 : 41] How it is that we have life. Verse 4, Ephesians 2. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, verse 5, made us alive with Christ.

Even when we were dead in transgressions. Now, we can't get away from the language of the scripture, can we? Made you alive.

You don't make alive somebody who's already alive. You know, if you get, those of you who watch 24 Hours and A&E; and all those sort of things. I always have to peek behind my fingers when they get to the gory bits.

But, you know, they bring somebody in who's been in a tragic accident. And those people work on them and they save their lives and they prevent them from dying. But they never make them alive. They can resuscitate them if they pass away on the table. But all they're doing is ultimately, in one sense, they are helping what is living to keep living.

[26 : 44] If, and it does sadly happen, though we don't tend to see it, on the TV, somebody is involved in a terrible situation and they're brought to the hospital and they die.

There may be attempts to resuscitate, but there comes a point where the doctors and the nurses and those with all their qualifications and abilities have to say we can't do anything more for him. He's dead. We cannot make alive, but God can make alive. And God does make alive. And for the believer, those who are in union with Christ, he gives us living power. Well, I find it exciting.

I'm thankful. Because otherwise I'd be dead. Otherwise, like those branches that are cut off from the, that are separated from the tree, then we would just wither.

You know what it's like, isn't it? You pruned a few branches of an apple tree the day because you're picking some apples. And I know what will happen because you've seen it happen before. You cut it off. And to begin with, it looks quite fresh, doesn't it?

[27 : 49] It may even have an apple on the branch and the leaves are there. But you know what's happening. From the moment that it's separated from the life of the tree, that branch is dead. And it will soon be clearly dead.

It's a life empowering union. If we try to live apart from a total reliance upon Christ, we shall abysmally fail.

From start to finish, every spiritual fruit, every spiritual action in the life of the believer, is Christ's life flowing in us and through us. Again, Paul, in Galatians 2 verse 20, I no longer live, he said, but Christ lives in me.

And what does he say elsewhere? I can do all things. Is that the end of the sentence?

Is that where he stops? I can do all things because I'm Paul the Apostle. I'm a mighty Christian. I'm powerful and nobody can stand against me. I can do all things through him who gives me strength.

[29 : 04] Through Christ who strengthens me, who empowers me. This is what Jesus wants his disciples to grasp. This is what he wants them to rejoice in. Whatever we face, whatever we feel we can, whatever we feel that we cannot do, we can do when we are abiding in Christ.

That's why he talks about them bearing fruit and much fruit and increasing in fruit. That's why elsewhere he says to his disciples on that same night that the things that I do, you will do more of. You will do even greater things than I've done. Because we're greater than Jesus? Heaven forbid. No, because he, his life empowers your life.

Whatever the challenges are, whatever the difficulties are, whatever it is that you face. And you would say to God, I cannot do it. His response is, yes you can. Because you are united with Jesus. And his very life power, his resurrection life power lives in you. Every progress we make, dear friends, is the very work of God.

[30 : 14] Here's Paul again in Philippians 1, encouraging the believers. It's one of my favourite verses. Verse 6 of chapter 1, being confident of this. That he, God, who began a work in you, believer, will carry it on to completion.

His confidence wasn't in the church, was it? At Philippi. My confidence is in you because you're such a prayerful and godly and Bible studying and loving people.

I'm confident that you'll get to the end. I'm confident you'll make it through. No, his confidence, his absolute, assured, definite, immovable, concrete confidence was this.

God began the work in you. God will carry on the work in you. Why? Because you're united to Christ. Because you're one with him. Because you're in a life empowering union.

For any of us, dear friends, to take pride in ourselves. To pat ourselves on the back because we're believers. Or to think of ourselves that somehow in our own goodness or faith or wisdom or deeds that God has blessed us or used us and worked through us.

[31 : 23] It's as ridiculous as one branch on the vine looking to the other branch on the vine and saying, look at what I've made. Look what I've done. Look what I've done. Thirdly, we see here that union with Christ is a life altering union.

Life empowering, yes, but life altering. Verse 7. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you.

Verse 7. Verse 8. Sorry, verse 10. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love just as I've kept my Father's commands and remain in his love.

Notice that the words and the commands are the same thing. Abiding in Jesus is shown largely by how we react to and respond to his words.

Yeah? I think we'd agree to that. That being a Christian, living the Christian life, is largely and mainly about our attitude to the commandments of God and the words of Christ.

[32 : 33] Jesus has said this over and over again, hasn't he, to the disciples. Verse 15 of chapter 14, the previous verse. If you love me, keep my commandments. Here again.

If you keep my commands, you'll remain in my love. Abide in my love. And again, if you remain in me and my words remain in you, my words abide in you, then you'll bear fruit.

We must be very careful that we don't seek to separate the words of Jesus from the person of Jesus. There's much of that going on, isn't there? People say, well, I love the person of Jesus. Well, he heals the sick and he stoops down to the outcast and the poor and he lifts them up. I love that type of Jesus. But I don't like the Jesus who says, there's hell waiting for those who reject me. I don't like the Jesus who says, this is God's commandment and you must keep it. I don't like the Jesus who says, there's a separating, isn't there, between the person and the words. You can't separate a person from their words because a person is their words.

[33 : 33] We relate to one another through the words that we speak to one another and the words we hear from one another. You can't say, I love the person, but I don't love the words.

And you can't say, I like this Jesus. I like the idea of Jesus loving me. I love the idea of Jesus loving me so much he died for me. But I don't like the words of Jesus say, I must repent of my sin and put my faith in him.

It's a life-altering union. In other words, the words of Jesus abide in us. And we abide in his word by keeping his commandments.

What does that mean? I think it means something like this. To abide, to live in the words of Christ and for them to live in us. In one sense, the words of Jesus are the hedge around about where we live and how we live.

They're the fence around my thoughts and my thinking. They're the line, as it were, in the sand that I don't cross when it comes to sin. I live within the context of the word of Christ.

[34 : 42] So when his word tells me that I shouldn't do that, then I do not do that. His word tells me that I am to do that, then I do do that. It's like a perimeter.

And our lives are altered by that, aren't they? Has to be. Because Jesus has spoken about fruit. And fruit is visible.

Fruit is tasted. Fruit is known and experienced, as we thought this morning. His words abide in me, of course. And they take their home in me.

Because in one sense, that's what we've been saying. They find their place of residence in me. Why? By me opening up my life to God, to the words of Jesus. By opening the door to them. By reading them, of course.

Thinking upon them. Nourishing my soul through them. Feeding upon them. Do they stay with me, those words of Jesus, through the day?

[35 : 42] Am I meditating upon them? Word abiding. There's a union which alters our life.

It alters our thinking. It alters our behavior. It alters our words. Because we are living and imbibing of the very words of the Lord Jesus.

It's a sort of life. Life altering. I don't know what number I'm up to now. It doesn't really matter. We'll just keep going. But this communication, this union with Christ, has a certain aspect where it is reciprocal.

It's two-way. Yes, there is the life of Christ flowing into us to empower. It's a save and so on. But then also, and I've used this phrase because I couldn't think of a better one.

Life enriching. It's a life enriching union. And that is because it is a life in which we can pray and receive.

[36 : 43] So we're enriched as we pray because we receive from Christ. Twice again, isn't it, Jesus talks about prayer. If you abide in me, verse 7, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, it will be done for you.

We looked at this just briefly this morning and thought about how the very prayers of our hearts reflect our chief goals and desires.

And I hope that we saw that what Jesus wants for us is to have a heart which is longing to be like him. That our lives may be the fruit of his life.

And so we're to pray. But prayer is not, can I put it, it's not make-believe. Do you know what I mean by that? When somebody says, well, I pray and I'm not really sure it's going to happen.

Because God's already got his plan and his purpose. So prayer is really, well, just going through the motions of saying the things that I think God wants me to say. But no, it's not than that. We see this, it's a mystery to us.

[37 : 48] But prayer is God calling us to seek his face, to ask the things upon our hearts of him and him giving them. Him giving them.

And we're enriched by that. And I hope that each one of us here this evening is somebody who has felt and known and experienced their lives enriched by prayer.

And it's on so many levels, isn't it? Because when we pray, we're engaging in fellowship with the Father. We're engaging with communion with God. We're talking with him. And that's a lovely, lovely, wonderful experience.

But also, again, there's the reality that our faith is strengthened as we pour out our hearts to him. There's a lifting of the burdens onto his shoulders. But then there's the giving of answers to prayer. Prayer is good. But there's prayer in this prayer. The prayer Jesus speaks of here is the prayer of the heart, isn't it?

[38 : 53] If you abide in me and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish. That's not like flick a coin in the well, wish that my lottery numbers come up, is it?

It's the burning desire and longing of the heart of the believer, which, as Paul puts it in Romans 8, doesn't he? At times it's just groans.

At times we can't express what we wish for, what we long for. When we're praying over those loved ones who break our heart, we think of them being separated from Christ. When we think of them. And leaving this world in a lost and godless eternity, we find ourselves, we don't know how to pray or what to pray. That's the prayer of the wish, isn't it?

That Jesus is talking about. It's what our hearts long for more than anything else. It's the heart speaking to God. The spirit speaking to God. It's not reeling off those red prayers or those prayers written by others.

[39 : 55] Not saying our prayers as the habit as we kneel by our beds at bedtime. It's prayers spoken from within. Because we're one with Christ.

Isn't that the wonderful mystery which we read of in Hebrews 4? That he sympathizes with us. We do not have a high priest who does not sympathize with our weaknesses.

But we have one who's been tested in every way. Elsewhere in Hebrews we're told about Jesus who cried out in his earthly life unto the Father and was hurt. And if Jesus cried out, we will cry out. And if Jesus prayed, then we will pray. And he was hurt. Because we're one with him. Finally, dear friends.

I'm sure you could find many, many more wonderful things in here. We find that this union with Jesus is a love confirming union.

[41 : 02] Verse 9 and 10. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Do you know, if only I could understand that.

Of course I can understand it in my head and we can talk about it. But if I really understood that. The Father, God. The eternal, infinite, perfect, holy God.

Just as he loves his son, so his son loves me. It would change everything, wouldn't it? And our union. Why is it that God, why is it that Jesus has brought us into this life-saving union?

Why has he brought us into this life-empowering union? Why has he brought us into this life-altering union? And this life, and the other things I said. Why has he done that? Because he loves you.

Because he loves you. Not because of the fruit that you bear, but because you are one with him. You are part of him. You are united with him for eternity.

[42 : 05] And nothing will ever change that. That's why we find in other places, Paul again, this time in Ephesians 5, talks about the love of Christ for his church as the love of a husband for his wife.

Ephesians 5, 25. Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

Later on, verses 31 and 32. For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife. And the two will become one flesh. This is a profound mystery.

But I'm talking about Christ and the church. Marriage. Marriage. Which is intended by God to be lifelong.

And I know that for some of you, that's a heartbreaking thought that hasn't happened. It's something I cannot fully enter into. But God's love for you is not like the love of that partner who left you.

[43 : 11] It's not like the love of that person who promised to be faithful to you. Not like my love for my wife or your love for your wife or your husband. Our loves are pitifully poor reflection of the love of Christ.

And he has brought you to that union with himself. He's made you one with himself. Because you are the church that he gave himself for. And that he saved.

It's Christ's love that is the power behind this union. This eternal union. One that shall never be broken.

One that never shall be divorced or dissolved. And the proof that we are part of that union is that we love him. That we love him who first loved us.

The evidence and the proof that we are part of this union is because we abide in his love. Again, the love of Christ lives within us.

[44 : 21] And therefore it affects everything that we do and say and are. We love him. And of course, as we thought even this morning as well, we love one another. Are you in the union?

Are you one with Christ? Are you united to him? Then dear friends, you have a joy which is irremovable.

You have a life which is unending. You have a salvation which is eternal. You have a strength which is unbreakable.

You have a savior. Who will never leave you. Forsake you. Or fail you. A final hymn.

I hope expresses some of those truths that we've been rejoicing in. I found a friend. Oh, such a friend. He loved me ere I knew him.

[45 : 27] And the end, as it were, of the lines. For I am his and he is mine. Forever and forever. Let's turn in 6. 648.

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power together with all the Lord's people to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge that you may be filled to the measure of all, the fullness of God's. Amen.