

# Abiding in God's Love

**Key Verse:** *"This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you."*  
—John 15:12

**Selected Scripture:**  
John 15:1-17

**ONE OF THE FINAL LESSONS** Jesus gave his disciples before he died was that of the vine and the branches, recorded in John 15:1-8. In this parable, Jesus begins, saying, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman." (vs. 1) As was his practice, here Jesus honored and glorified his Heavenly Father, emphasizing that God was higher and greater than himself. The expression "true vine" implies that there is also a false vine. This is described in the Bible as one that God "hath not planted," the "vine of the earth," a false, earthly system.—Matt. 15:13; Rev. 14:19

Continuing the parable, Jesus said, "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." (John 15:2) "Branches" in the parable refer to individual followers of Christ. "Every branch in me" indicates that each of us has an individual relationship with Jesus and the Heavenly Father. The phrase "he purgeth it" refers to God's pruning, accomplished through our experiences. God's methods of pruning must be understood as being for our spiritual benefit, otherwise we may get discouraged. Our pruning may involve the taking away of earthly wealth or cherished plans, the permission of persecution or sickness, or the loss of reputation and earthly friendships.

Such pruning should be an encouragement to us,

because they show God's love, and that he is looking toward our highest spiritual interests. As the Apostle Paul wrote, "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." (Heb. 12:11) What a comfort it is to know that God is the one doing the "pruning" in our lives as branches of the true vine!

Jesus said that the purpose of our pruning is that we "may bring forth more fruit." This is not the "fruit" of building large, impressive church buildings. Otherwise, Jesus and the apostles bore no fruit. Likewise, these fruits are not our activities in the service of the Truth, nor the time, effort, or wealth used in such endeavors. Our activities in the service of the Truth and the brethren are only acceptable to God in proportion as they are the result of fruitage already developed in our character. These fruits of the Holy Spirit, Paul says, are "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."—Gal. 5:22,23

In our Key Verse, which follows the parable of the vine and the branches, Jesus says that we are to love one another as he has loved us. Such love is pure, unselfish, sacrificial, and is one of the key elements of character fruitage we are to attain. We are provided experiences in which to develop this love along various lines. These include comforting our brethren who may be "in any trouble," and by encouraging one another "unto love and good works." (II Cor. 1:4; Heb. 10:24) We also show forth this love by avoiding, in our words and actions, anything which might stumble, offend, or weaken our brethren spiritually. (Rom. 14:21) Instead, we are to be "kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another." (Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13) Let us cultivate this fruitage of love so that it permeates our words and actions each day—toward our brethren, the world of mankind, and even our enemies—and thus abide in God's love. ■