THE CHARACTER OF THE BRANCHES IN JOHN 15:2a

by

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John 15:2a has long been a battleground for theological controversy. Are the branches representative of true believers or false professing believers? Arminians have interpreted these branches to be true believers that lose their salvation. Calvinists interpret the branches to be false professing believers. The Arminian view is easily refuted by scripture. But in more recent years a moderate Calvinistic interpretation views the branches as true Christians who are not bearing fruit. This view rests on a possible interpretation of αιρω and the words "in me." The problem discussed in this paper is which of the two Calvinistic views is correct. Only one can be correct.

The basis for Jesus' use of the vine and the branches is found in the Old Testament. The principle passages cited are Psalm 80:8-16; Isaiah 5:1-7; Ezekiel 15. These passages reveal God's treatment of unfruitful branches in Israel the Vine. Just a cursory reading will reveal that God's judgment of unfruitful Israelites is severe. It could only be poured out on unbelievers. Comparing these passages with John 15:2 and 15:6 the evidence is that the branches are false professors.

The grammatical and contextual features of John 15:2 also point to the false professor interpretation. A lexical study of αιρω shows its basic idea is removal. This idea best fits John 15:2a. The use of the present tense to characterize those not bearing fruit and the contrast of 15:2a (the branches not bearing fruit are taken away) with 15:2b (the branches bearing fruit are cleansed to bear more fruit) points to the branches in 15:2a as being false professors. This is borne out by a study of the contrasts of the lost and saved in the writings of John. The close connection of 15:2a and 15:6, which says that non-abiding branches are burned is strong contextual evidence that these two verses are speaking of fruitless false professors. The use of εν is also studied and although it seems to look conclusive that these branches are vitally related to Christ a lexical study shows other possibilities, namely, that εν may indicate close association. The varied translation of Greek prepositions and the contextual evidence reveals that this possibly is not a vital union but only a professing union.

Fruit is the subject and main emphasis of John 15:1-16. The New Testament usage indicates that fruit is the outcome of a person's life. Fruit is also not to be limited to just the fruit of the Spirit or converts but has many facets. If the branch is fruitless the character of the branch is obvious.

Abiding is the key to fruitbearing. The basic meaning of μενω is to continue or remain. John's writings reveal that true Christians will continue or abide. Since this is true, true Christians will bear fruit. Reasoning backwards then, fruitlessness means non-abiding and non-abiders are false professors.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to determine whether the branches in John 15:2a are believers or unbelievers. This question has been debated by Calvinists and Arminians for many years. The Arminians believe that these particular branches could be both and one writer states it like this:

> We need not puzzle about the unfruitful branches being 'in me'; for evidently these are disciples whose hearts have lost the faith and the love that once dwelt in them and joined them to Christ, and who thus adhere to Christ only outwardly until even this connection is broken. It is idle to think of branches which are unfruitful from the start because Jesus uses the phrase 'in me' for no man becomes a branch unless fruitfulness is in him from the start. But he may lose his faith and then he is promptly cast away.[1]

This interpretation of Lenski can be disproved by many passages in the New Testament. Because volumes have been written on this particular subject (which mainly concerns the doctrine of "Eternal Security") the passages will be cited and only a few remarks will be given to show the fallacy of the Arminian View. The passages are: John 5:24; 6:37; 10:28,29; Romans 8:35; Philippians 1:6; 2 Timothy 1:12; Hebrews 7:25. A study of these verses (this group not exhaustive) will reveal that believers are eternally secure. As usual the Arminians have pulled some passages out of the

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[1]R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1943), p. 1029.

context of the whole counsel of God. Dr. J. Dwight Pentecost gives four scriptural reasons for the security of the believer:

1. God's work is the foundation of the believer's security. In Hebrews 2:10 God's plan is to bring to heaven those who have been saved. If some do not get there his plan has failed. This, of course, cannot be true. The true believer will go to heaven.

2. God's power is foundational to the believer's security. In John 10:29 it is the ability of God to keep us that insures security. The only way a believer can be lost again is if something or someone more powerful than God takes them from his hand.

3. God's promises are a sufficient basis for the believer's security. In John 3:16; 5:24 and 10:28, God promises to give eternal life. Eternal life is God's life forever.

4. Last of all God's love is the basis for the believer's security. Romans 5:8,9 teaches because God loved us Christ died for us that we will never come under condemnation and wrath.[1]

In John 15:2a, if it comes to choosing between believers being lost or the Calvinistic interpretation that

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[1]J. Dwight Pentecost, Things Which Become Sound Doctrine (Westwood, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, n.d.), pp. 128-29.

they were never believers at all; because believers cannot be lost, the latter is the only choice that can be made. But there are those who differ on the interpretation of John 15:2a in the Calvinistic group. As already mentioned many say these branches were never believers but a more recent and popular interpretation is that these branches are believers. They are apparently unfruitful believers. This view teaches that the father raises up (based on a possible use of αἴρω) unfruitful branches (Christians not bearing fruit) to a position where they will be able again to bear fruit. Hence the useless branch can become useful again.[1] The evaluation of this interpretation will be the main thrust and also answer the question, are the branches in John 15:2a believers or unbelievers?

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[1]James E. Rosscup, Abiding in Christ (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1973), p. 239.

GREEK TEXT

According to the second edition of the Greek New Testament, edited by Aland, Black, Martini, Metzger and Wikgren; the following is the received text:

πᾶν κλῆμα ἐν ἐμοὶ μὴ
φέρον καρπὸν αἴρει αὐτό·

Varients

A study of Constantinus Tischendorf's Novum Testamentum Graece shows that there are no major variations of the text that would in any way be related to the grammatical analysis and problems to be discussed.[1]

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[1]Constantinus Tischendorf, Novum Testamentum Graece, Vol. I (8th ed.; Lipsiae: Giesecke and Deorient, 1869), p. 907.

ENGLISH VERSIONS

Four translations are represented here. The first three are probably the most well known. The fourth is the newest and is cited because of its apparent acceptance and affirmation of evangelicals today.

King James Version, 1611

Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away.

Revised Standard Version, 1952

Every branch of mine that bears no fruit, he takes away.

New American Standard Version, 1971

Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, He takes away.

New International Version, 1973

He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit.

CHAPTER I

CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

John's Gospel

The purpose of John's gospel is stated clearly. It was written so that men might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God and that believing people might have life in his name (Jn. 20:30,31). This is important to our text because only true believers (those with his life in them) can produce and bear fruit that will glorify God.

In chapters 1-12 Jesus is presented as the Savior of the world and the revelation of God. The Jews did not consider him such and rejected him. In these first 12 chapters the emphasis is the public ministry of Christ. In chapters 13-21 the emphasis is his private ministry.[1]

John 13-17

These five chapters in John record the last discourses of Jesus to his disciples and his high priestly prayer. The time is the evening before the crucifixion.[2]

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[1]William Hendriksen, "Exposition of the Gospel According to John," New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1954), p. 66. (Hereinafter referred to as "Exposition of John").

[2]A. T. Robertson, A Harmony of the Gospels (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1922), p. 190.

The significance of this particular context is the instruction and encouragement to the disciples. Jesus reminds them again of his departure; they had heard it before during Jesus' ministry to the Jews (13:33). This reminder caused the disciples to lose heart (14:1), but Jesus assures them that he is going to come back again and take them where he is going (14:2,3). At least one of the apostles is still not sure where Jesus is going (14:5). Another after three years had missed the truth that Jesus was the revelation and equal of the Father (14:8-9). Knowing their troubled hearts and confused minds Christ gives them another promise. He is going to request of the Father to send them the Holy Spirit to comfort their hearts and clear up their confusion (14:16 cf. 16:7-15). The fifteenth chapter takes up the subject of the apostles relationship to Him after he is gone. If they can do nothing without Him (15:5); they must know what it will take to maintain a vital relationship with Him. So as far as their ministries are concerned this chapter may be the most important of the five (13-17).[1]

John 15:1-16

This division has been chosen because verse 16 is the last mention of fruit abiding.

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[1]Merrill C. Tenney, John: The Gospel of Belief (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1953), p. 226.

Jesus' Audience

In chapter 15 Jesus is speaking to eleven of the twelve original apostles. Judas is the one who is absent (13:30, 31). Those who hold the view that the branches represent unfruitful Christians believe it is important to remember that Jesus is talking to Christians, not the unsaved. Pink mentions it twice in his commentary; once in the introduction to chapter 15 and again when he comments on verse 2.

> Let us repeat what we said in the opening paragraph: Christ was not here addressing a mixed audience, in which there were true believers and those who were merely professors. Nor was he speaking to the twelve--Judas had already gone out! Had Judas been present when Christ spoke these words there might be a reason to suppose that He had him in mind. But what the Lord here said was addressed to the eleven, that is, to believers only! This is the first key to its significance. Very frequently the true interpretation of a message is discovered by attending to the character of those addressed.[1]

Wang also feels this argument is significant to the interpretation of the branches in 15:2a.[2]

The implication that these commentators are making is that because Jesus is here speaking to true believers He could not be speaking to them about salvation or hell. It is agreed that to know the audience of the speaker is

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[1]Arthur W. Pink, Exposition of the Gospel of John, Vol. II (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1945), pp. 397-98.

[2]Paul C. Wang, "The Unfruitful Branches of John 15: 2a" (M.Div. Thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, 1973), pp. 17-18. (Hereinafter referred to as "The Unfruitful Branches").

very important in Biblical interpretation. But that does not mean the speaker might not use comments contrary to their character or that if he did those comments would not be relevant. The common opinion of most Bible expositors is that the Bible was written for the saved. Does this mean all the references to salvation, hell, etc. are irrelevant? The answer is no. In particular we could refer to the epistles where the readers are Christians and many passages refer to the unsaved (Rom. 6:21-23; 8:12,13; Gal. 5:21; 6:8; Eph. 5:5-7).[1]

The Main Teaching of the Passage

The two prominent words through verse 16 are μένω (twelve times) and καρπον (eight times).[2] And though a variety of subjects are talked about (prayer, love, obedience, vinedresser, burning of unfruitful branches, joy) the main teaching is to abide in Christ that you may bear fruit abundantly.[3] In this context we must remember that we are dealing with figures and pictures. Jesus is not literally a vine, God is not literally a vinedresser, nor are believers literal branches. To push these figures too far can be dangerous. The only way to truly interpret these figures is to

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[1]Rosscup, Abiding in Christ, pp. 187-88.

[2]The Englishman's Greek Concordance of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970), pp. 405,481.

[3]Hendriksen, "Exposition of John," p. 294.

compare them with the plain teaching of the Scriptures.

CHAPTER II

THE OLD TESTAMENT USE OF THE VINE

The plain teaching of the Old Testament Scriptures concerning the vine is that it represents Israel.

> Jesus, as he so often did, is working in this passage with pictures and ideas which were part of the religious heritage of the Jewish nation. Over and over again in the Old Testament, Israel is pictured as the vine or the vineyard of God. . . . The vine was part and parcel of Jewish imagery; it was the very symbol of the nation of Israel.[1]

There is no doubt that Jesus often referred to and based much of His teaching on the Old Testament and its figures. The following two passages compare the nation to a vineyard and a vine.

> Let me sing now for my well-beloved a song of my beloved concerning His vineyard. My well-beloved had a vineyard on a fertile hill. And He dug it all around, removed its stones, And planted it with the choicest vine. And He built a tower in the middle of it, And hewed out a wine vat in it; Then He expected it to produce good grapes, But it produced only worthless ones. 'And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, Judge between Me and My vineyard. 'What more was there to do for My vineyard that I have not done in it? Why, when I expected it to produce good grapes did it produce worthless ones? 'So now let Me tell you what I am going to do to My vineyard: I will remove its hedge and it will be consumed; I will break down its wall and it will become trampled ground. 'And I will lay it waste; It will not be pruned or hoed, But briars and thorns will come up. I will also charge the clouds to rain no rain on it.' For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of

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[1]William Barclay, The Gospel of John, Vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Westminister Press, 1955), p. 201. (Hereinafter referred to as John).

> Israel, And the men of Judah His delightful plant. Thus He looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; For righteousness, but behold, a cry of distress. (Isa. 5:1-7).
>
> Thou didst remove a vine from Egypt; Thou didst drive out the nations, and didst plant it. Thou didst clear the ground before it, And it took deep root and filled the land. The mountains were covered with its shadow, And the cedars of God with its boughs. It was sending out its branches to the sea, And its shoots to the River. Why hast Thou broken down its hedges, So that all who pass that way pick its fruit? A boar from the forest eats it away, And whatever moves in the field feeds on it. O God of hosts, turn again now, we beseech Thee; Look down from heaven and see, and take care of this vine, Even the shoot which Thy right hand has planted, And on the son whom Thou hast strengthened for Thyself. It is burned with fire, it is cut down. (Ps. 80:8-16).

In the fifth chapter of Isaiah the nation has been planted by the Lord. It has received the utmost in care and cultivation (5:1,2). But the nation produces only wild fruit, not the Lord's fruit (5:4). Because of this the Lord brings judgment on the nation (5:5-6). These ones who produce foreign fruit, wild grapes, are unregenerate people. Isaiah 1:29 shows that their desire was for the places of idol worship. Jeremiah says "yet I planted you a choice vine, a completely faithful seed. How then have you turned yourself before me into the degenerate fruits of a foreign vine (Jer. 2:21)?" Can this picture believers? No, it is a picture of the unbelieving branches in the vine of Israel. Again in Psalm 80:8-16 it is the Lord who planted the vineyard and cultivated the ground (80:8). But the picture changes and the vineyard is being destroyed and finally burned (cp. Jn. 15:6) by outsiders (80:13). But this is

because God has lifted His protection (80:12). To find out the reason we need only look at Psalm 78.

> Yet they tempted and rebelled against the Most High God, And did not keep his testimonies, But turned back and acted treacherously like their fathers; They turned aside like a treacherous bow. For they provoked Him with their high places, And aroused His jealousy with their graven images (Ps. 78:56-58).

In all of the above passages the Lord punishes those who are fruitless. And in Ezekiel 15 the utter uselessness and destruction of the unfruitful branches is again emphasized.

> Then the word of the LORD came to me saying, 'Son of man, how is the wood of the vine better than any wood of a branch which is among the trees of the forest? 'Can wood be taken from it to make anything, or can men take a peg from it on which to hang any vessel? 'If it has been put into the fire for fuel, and the fire has consumed both of its ends, and its middle part has been charred, is it then useful for anything? 'Behold, while it is intact, it is not made into anything. How much less, when the fire has consumed it and it is charred, can it still be made into anything! 'Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, 'As the wood of the vine among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so have I given up the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I set My face against them. Though they have come out of the fire, yet the fire will consume them. Then you will know that I am the LORD, when I set My face against them. 'Thus I will make the land desolate, because they have acted unfaithfully,' declares the Lord GOD (Ezek. 15).

This passage especially parallels John 15:6, which is directly connected to John 15:2, as will be demonstrated later. One more Old Testament passage should be cited. Hosea 10:1 again shows that Israel is in a decayed condition. "Israel is an empty [luxuriant with many leaves but little fruit] vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself . . . but

not to God" (Hos. 10:1 A.V., amplified by Charles R. Smith).[1] This parallels the branches in John 15:2a, the ones not bearing fruit. One very important consideration is to note that everyone of the references cited and actually every one in the Old Testament where the symbol of the vine is used, it is always used with the idea of degeneration.[2] Thus it seems clear that the Old Testament passages that speak of the vine speak of judgment on unbelievers. This is precisely the interpretation that will be set forth with reference to the taking away of the unfruitful branches in John. 15:2a.

Something that must be pointed out is that not all of the nation of Israel was unfruitful. As has been cited already God planted the vineyard with a choice vine and faithful seed (Jer. 2:21). And some had remained faithful, and obeyed God. Israel, the nation, was the vine of God. Some of the branches, people who obeyed God, brought forth fruit. But many more of the branches did not and were merely professing to know God. So God was dealing with individuals in the nation just as He is dealing with individuals here. This is the background of the figure of the vine. These passages would certainly come into the minds of the apostles as they listened.

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[1]Charles R. Smith, "The Unfruitful Branches in John 15," in Grace Journal, 9:2 (Spring, 1968), p. 6. (Hereinafter referred to as "Unfruitful Branches").

[2]William Barclay, Jesus As They Saw Him (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1962), p. 274.

CHAPTER III

GRAMMATICAL ANALYSIS OF 15:2a

It is clear that the unfruitful people in the Old Testament were judged severely, (see previous chapter) by the Lord. But what about the unfruitful person in the New Testament?

A very popular exposition of 15:2a is that an unfruitful person can be a saved person, and that the words "He takes away" mean "He (the husbandman) lifts up." Thus a believer who is not bearing fruit is lifted up to the place where he can bear fruit. Ivor Powell clearly presents this view.

> The husbandman on his rounds of inspection would see the fallen vine in the dirt, and with loving care would restore it to its rightful place, support it, cleanse it, and do whatever was necessary to restore it to repair any damage that had been done. The prevailing thought therefore in this text is not an act of judgment, severing a disappointing fruitless branch from the parent stem. Rather we see here the loving patience of a wise husbandman who rejects nothing if there be the slightest chance of restoring a branch to full fruitfulness.[1]

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer adopts a view with a judgmental aspect.

> The reference is evidently to true branches. . . . From the fact that the Greek word has the meaning 'lifting up out of its place,' it would seem

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[1]Ivor Powell, John's Wonderful Gospel (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1962), p. 317.

> probable that the reference is to the last form of chastisement mentioned in I Cor. 11:30. Such branches are taken home to be with the Lord.[1]

A. W. Pink, a very popular and able expositor feels that those who take the unfruitful branches as unbelievers have been misled by the translation, "takes away." In his commentary he says:

> Again a difficulty has been needlessly created here by an English rendering of the Greek verb. 'Airo' is frequently translated in the A.V. 'lifted up.' For example: 'And they lifted up their voices' (Luke 17:13, so also in Acts 4:22). 'And Jesus lifted up his eyes' (John 11:41). 'Lifted up his hand' (Rev. 10:5), etc. Therefore, we are satisfied that it would be more accurate and more in accord with 'the analogy of faith' to translate, 'Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he lifteth up' 'from trailing on the ground.'[2]

The Meaning of αἴρω

Arndt and Gingrich list the usage of αἴρω in John 15:2a as "take away, remove."[3] On closer investigation of the word αἴρω the primary idea is removal. Smith charts the following usages of the word.

Translation	Number of Times So Translated
"bear"	3
"bear up"	2
"carry"	1
"lift up"	4
"loose"	1

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[1]Lewis Sperry Chafer, Salvation (Findlay, Ohio: Dunham Publishing Company, 1917), p. 110.

[2]Pink, Exposition of the Gospel of John, II, p. 400.

[3]William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Chicaog: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 24.

"put away"	1
"remove"	2
"take"	25
"take away"	25
"take up"	32
"away with"	5

Dr. Smith's conclusion of the usage of this word is significant.

> This list should make it obvious that airo only indicates a removal of some kind and that the object, purpose, and direction of that removal can be determined only from the context--not just from the word itself. This can be supported by examining any good lexicon. Since the context must determine what kind of removal is in view, it is certainly not the best method of exegesis to interpret the word in a manner that is contradictory to the context.[1]

This is a very important observation. The context clearly states the destiny of an unfruitful branch. John 15:6 says:

> If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

This figure more accurately fits the idea of removal rather than lifting up. Also, the branches in 15:2a are not bearing fruit, therefore it is logical to assume that they do not have life. Both 15:2a and 15:6 imply that the removal is final. But the second half of 15:2 shows that those who do bear fruit receive a further work by the husbandman. This further activity is so the branches will bear more fruit. The fruitless branches are taken away (15:2a) and burned (15:6).[2]

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[1]Smith, "Unfruitful Branches," pp. 8,9.

[2]Rosscup, Abiding in Christ, p. 243.

It must be made clear that there are many references in the New Testament where the word αἴρω is translated to lift up. According to the above list at least thirty-eight times. Lift up is a legitimate translation. But the context must determine the usage.

Concerning the previous mentioned interpretations that the unfruitful branches are believers a number of difficulties are obvious. Powell says that the unfruitful branch is treated lovingly. But note that fruitful branches in 15:2 are given the harsh treatment of pruning. Should not the action be reversed? On his comments about viticulture Tenney points out:

> In pruning a vine, two principles are generally observed: first, all dead wood must be ruthlessly removed: and second the live wood must be cut back drastically.[1]

Powell's interpretation is inconsistent with the analogy. What should be ruthlessly cut away because it is <u>fruitless</u>, receives loving care. It seems better to interpret the fruitful branches as receiving the loving care, while the unfruitful are removed. The Greek verb καθαίρει in 15:2 is used in the present tense. This tense denotes continous or repetitive action and it can denote an action that is in process at present. The contrast is clear. The unfruitful are removed (burned in John 15:6) but the fruitful are continually cleansed to bear more fruit.

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[1]Tenney, <u>John: The Gospel of Belief</u>, p. 227.

The Sharp Contrasts in John's Writings

John is noted for speaking in no uncertain terms. He views people as having life or not having life (1 Jn. 5: 12) as not being condemned or being condemned already (Jn. 3:17). To John being a Christian means being obedient to the Lord, being controlled by the Spirit and being in fellowship with the Lord. To John if the life is disobedient, self-controlled and not in fellowship with the Lord the person is assumed to be lost. This can be clearly seen by studying the contrasting style of John.

Passage	Unsaved	Saved
John 3:6	born of the flesh	born of spirit
3:18	not believe . . . already judged	believes . . . not judged
3:20-21	does evil . . . hates the light	practices truth . . . comes to the light
3:36	does not obey the Son . . . shall not see life	believes in the Son . . . has eternal life
5:29	committed evil deeds . . . resurrection to judgment	did good deeds . . . resurrection of life
6:53-54	does not eat Christ's flesh . . . has no life	eats flesh of the Son of Man . . . has eternal life . . . will be raised
8:42-44	sons of the Devil	sons of God
8:47	does not hear the words of God . . . not of God	hears the words of God . . . is of God
10:27	not of Christ's sheep	Christ's sheep

11:9-10	walks in the night . . . light is not in him	hates his life . . . sees the light of the world
12:25	loves his life . . . loses it	hates his life . . . keeps it to life eternal
14:17	does not behold or know the Spirit of Truth	knows the Spirit of Truth
14:23-24	does not love Christ . . . does not keep His words	loves Christ . . . keeps His words
15:2	bears not fruit . . . is taken away	bears fruit . . . is pruned
15:5-6	abides not in Christ . . . is cast out, withered, and burned	abides . . . bears much fruit
15:19	of the world	not of the world . . . chosen out of the world
17:9	of the world (the world's)	those given to Christ by the Father . . . God's
1 John 1:6-7	walks in darkness . . . does not practice the truth	walks in the light . . . has fellowship and is cleansed
2:4-5	does not keep Christ's commandments . . . truth is not in him	keeps His word . . . love of God is perfected in him . . . is in God
2:9-10	hates his brother . . . is in darkness	loves his brother abides in the light
2:15	loves the world . . . love of the Father is not in him	does not love the world . . . love of the Father is in him
2:23	denies the Son . . . does not have the Father	confesses the Son . . . has the Father also
3:6-8	practices sin . . . does not know God . . . is of the Devil	practices righteousness . . . is righteous as Christ is

4:5-6	from the world . . . not from God listens to the world . . . not to the Apostles	listens to the Apostles . . . knows God
4:7-8	does not love . . . does not know God	loves . . . is born of God
5:10-11	does not believe in God or the witness concerning His Son	believes in the Son of God . . . has eternal life
5:12	does not have the Son . . . does not have eternal life	has the Son . . . has eternal life
2 John 9	does not abide in the teaching of Christ . . . does not have God	abides in teaching of Christ . . . has both Father and Son
3 John 11	does evil . . . has not seen God	does good . . . is of God

Rosscup points out that the Apostle Paul clearly indicated three and possibly four types of character in 1 Corinthians 2:12-3:4: the unsaved man, the saved and spiritual man, a recently saved man but carnal, and a carnal man who has been saved for a long period of time.[1] But John is not a specific. This can be seen from the above list. Based on this pervading style in John's writings it is best to interpret the unfruitful as unsaved and the fruitful as saved. As usual with John it is black and white.

John's Use of the Present Tense

Pink views the branches that are not bearing fruit as branches (believers) that did bear fruit previously. His

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[1]Rosscup, Abiding in Christ, p. 197.

argument is based on the present tense.

> First of all notice the tense of the first verb. 'Every branch in me not bearing [my underline] he taketh away' is the literal translation. It is not of a branch who never bore fruit that the Lord is here speaking, but of one who is no longer 'bearing fruit.'[1]

Rosscup goes much further in the use of the present tense showing that the present tense reflects the lifestyle of the branch, and not just momentary unfruitfulness.

> The word 'bearing' (Gr. pheron) is a present tense participle. It is possible to view it as what Greek grammar labels an adjectival participle in its ascriptive use. This simply means that the word 'bearing' functions as an adjective and, with the word 'not,' ascribes to the 'branch,' which it modifies, the quality or characteristic of bearing no fruit. Christ's thought would then be that it is a characteristic pattern or persistent habit of this type of branch not to yield fruit. But it also makes sense to understand the participle 'bearing' as expressing a verbal idea. As such, it could be causal [my underline] in its idea: 'because it is not bearing fruit' (that is, under conditions brought out in the context)'; or as conditional: 'if it is not bearing fruit'; or as temporal: 'when it is not bearing fruit' in any of these senses however the present tense would reflect what is habitually or characteristically true of the branch.[2]

There is no doubting the fact that Christians sin and that they may go through periods of life that are unfruitful. If Jesus is referring to a Christian who at this point in time is unfruitful then a difficulty arises with the view that interprets the "taking away" as judgment[3] (similar to that in 1 Cor. 11:30,31) by death. The difficulty

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[1]Pink, Exposition of the Gospel of John, II, p. 339.

[2]Rosscup, Abiding in Christ, pp. 207-208.

[3]Chafer, Salvation, p. 110.

is with the word πᾶν, every. There is no scriptural teaching that the Lord takes every Christian who is unfruitful during a period in his life by a judgment of death. If this were the case Christians would be only a thin part of the living population, if any part. But the Father will "take away" in judgment every unfruitful professor[1] and every unfruitful professor will burn in judgment (15:6).

Along with the view that these unfruitful branches are believers who are chastized is the association of chastisement with the judgment in 1 Corinthians 3:12-15.[2] Those who hold this view rightly associate 15:2a and 15:6 as the same branches but wrongly interpret both to be believers. The burning of the branches in 15:6 becomes the burning of their unfruitful works at the judgment seat of Christ. This interpretation also faces difficulty. In 15:6 the branches are burned because they have produced no fruit which can be in the form of work (whether or not fruit and works can be equated will be discussed). But the branches represent the persons not the person's works. It is the persons who are burned in John 15:6 because of their unfruitful life (15:2a), because they have not continued with Christ. It is also important to note that the context of 1 Corinthians 3:12-15 is

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[1]Rosscup, Abiding in Christ, p. 208.

[2]Everett F. Harrison, "The Gospel According to John," The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, ed. by Charles Pfeiffer and Everett Harrison (Chicago: Moody Press, 1962), p. 1107.

speaking primarily of a man's ministry in building the church and not the individuals of that particular church. It is a serious matter of isogesis to insert in the burning of John 15:6 the works of the branches in place of the branches themselves.

The Relationship of 15:2a and 15:6

So far in the discussion of the "unfruitful branches" the "non-abiding branches" of verse six have been identified as the same. This interpretation makes the best sense of the passage. The branches in verse six are burned because they are not abiding in the vine. It is obvious that the branches are useless, and they are good for nothing but firewood. The strong implication is that these branches did not bear any fruit. Branches that bear fruit are cleansed so that they can bear more fruit according to the second verse, so those in verse six can only be unfruitful branches. The obvious connection is to identify them with the "unfruitful branches" of verse two. Rosscup's comment here is noteworthy.

> When two verses so close together in the same allegory emphasize the same point (removal) about a branch that is unfruitful, it is unnatural and strained to say they picture two types of people. The burden of proof is on those who want to differentiate.[1]

It has already been shown that the Old Testament use of the vine helps us to interpret the figure in John 15. A

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[1]Rosscup, Abiding in Christ, p. 213.

comparison of John 15:6 with Psalm 80:15,16[1] along with Isaiah 5:1-7,24; and Ezekiel 15 should remove all doubt as to the destiny of unfruitful people.

Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer who at one time interpreted the branches of 15:2a as believers and the branches of 15:6 as unbelievers[2] later came to the same conclusion that to be consistent the branches must be the same.[3] Of course Chafer believes that the branches in both cases are believers, while the writer holds they are unbelievers. This is a good time to show the difficulty of at least one reason Chafer interprets the branches in 15:6 as believers. He feels that the judgment here in verse six is not from God but from men. He cites an Old Testament example, David, who by his horrible act with Bathsheba was causing "the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme" (2 Sam. 12:14). He also refers to James 2:14-26 and states "Justification must be on the ground of works in the sphere of men; for they judge only by what they observe."[4] He goes on to explain that a Christian should practice what he professes, and thus bring glory to God. He then states,

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[1]Homer A. Kent, Jr., Light in the Darkness (Winona Lake, Indiana: BMH Books, 1974), p. 181.

[2]Chafer, Salvation, pp. 103-10.

[3]Lewis Sperry Chafer, Systematic Theology, Vol. VII (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948), p. 4.

[4]Ibid., p. 4.

> As used in this passage [15:6], the figure which likens the judgments which men impose to 'gathering' and 'burning' of withered branches is exceedingly strong and must be interpreted in the light of existing facts. Men do not gather and burn their fellow men in a literal sense; but they do enter into very drastic judgment of the one who professes to be saved and yet does not manifest the ideals which belong to that life.[1]

It is agreed that the judgment in verse six is <u>exceedingly strong</u>. In fact, too strong to be viewed as the harm that might come to a believer from an unbeliever. The difficulty lies in the fact that the word "men" is not in the Greek text of John 15:6. Literally Jesus is saying "they gather" and not "men gather." As far as the verbs themselves are concerned both συνάγουσιν and βάλλουσιν leave the matter of who is doing the gathering an indefinite one. Therefore, because of the severity of the image "they gather them and they cast them into the fire and they are burned"; and because the imagery best describes non-abiders and unfruitful branches as unsaved people; and finally because it is obvious that both the unfruitful and non-abiders are the same class of people <u>they</u> could be interpreted as the angels. In Matthew 13, Christ says that the angels will gather the tares (unsaved, unfruitful) and cast them into the fire (Matt. 13:39-41). Again in the same chapter Jesus changes the figure to fish. Although in this life men keep good fish and throw away the bad, Jesus says the angels will separate the bad from the good and again "cast

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[1]<u>Ibid</u>., p. 5.

them into the furnace of fire" (Matt. 13:47-50). John the Baptist used a similar figure by describing the winnowing of wheat by a farmer. This passage deserves quotation for it deals with the subject of fruit also.

> And the axe is already laid at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. And His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean His threshing floor; and He will gather his wheat into the barn but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire (Matt. 3:10,12).

The figures are similar to John 15:6. Whether it is a fruit tree or a branch on a fruit tree, it is expected to bear fruit. If not it is axed. Fruitless trees are just like chaff and tares and all have the same destiny, judgment in a burning hell. It should be noted that though the previous statement is put forcefully this truth should drive the Christian to tears, prayer, and the endeavor to win men to Christ. Rosscup notes something else significant about the word "gathering" in the New Testament.

> It is also significant that the word 'gather' occurs a number of times. In the New Testament, at least three of the verbs which mean 'to gather' are used for gathering a harvest. These become vivid figures for gathering men in judgment (συνάγω, Matt. 13:30; συλλέγω, Matt. 13: 28,29,30,40; τρυάγω, Rev. 14:18). Such imagery, applied to men, always elsewhere depicts a gathering of the unsaved for judgment. In view of this, it would seem to be the most evident idea of the gathering in John 15:6. Also at the same time there is no illustration in the Bible which uses 'gather' in relation to the judgment of a saved but carnal person. Nor is it said that men gather other men in some type of spiritual judgment. In several places, however, it is clear that angels gather men.[1]

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[1]Rosscup, Abiding in Christ, p. 229.

On the subject of judgment Pink also objects to the view that the branches and non-abiders are believers.

> 'He taketh away.' Who does? The 'Husbandman,' the Father. This is conclusive proof that an unregenerate sinner is not in view. 'The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son' (John 5:22). It is Christ who will say, 'depart from Me' (Matt. 25). It is Christ who shall sit upon the Great White Throne to judge the wicked (Rev. 20).[1]

This is really no objection, Jesus will do the judging and the angels will carry out the judgment. This has already been shown by Christ (Matt. 13:30,39,41,42,49,50).

The Meaning of "In Me"

Although the vast majority of Calvinistic commentators have interpreted the branches in 15:2a to be unsaved professors, this view has a problem. The major problem is the phrase "in me." Those who hold that the branches are believers lean heavily upon this phrase.

A dispensational view is taken by Hengstenberg.

> The Jewish branch is primarily meant; as by the contrasted fruit bearing branch we are to understand primarily the apostles, the christian church having its germ in them. That even the Jews were a branch in Christ the True Vine, is as certain as that, according to his own property. . . . But the evidence that Jesus has primarily in view the Jews, when He spoke of the branches not bearing fruit, is found in the fact that the same thought occurs in verse six, where the reference to Ezekiel 15 places the allusion to the Jews beyond doubt.[2]

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[1]Pink, Exposition of the Gospel of John, pp. 401-02.

[2]Commentary on the Gospel of John, p. 241, cited in Charles R. Smith, "The Unfruitful Branches in John 15" (Winona Lake, Indiana: Grace Journal, 1968), p. 12.

Hengstenberg feels that the whole parable refers to the Jews who were removed from the Vine because of their unbelief. Smith points out a danger in this interpretation.

> . . . application should not be limited only to the Jews. Any who merely profess to be in union with God face the consequences stated by Jesus in verse 2 and 6. The Jews, of course, would have been particularly in view at the time when Jesus spoke these words.[1]

Godet presents an alternate grammatical construction.

> Εν ἐμοί, in me, may refer to the word branch: every branch in me, united with me by profession of faith; or to the participle φερον : which does not bear fruit in me.[2]

But according to this view there would be the branches that bear fruit (15:2b) because they are abiding in Him but also branches that do not bear fruit because they are of another vine. And like the latter are those who do not bear fruit because they do not abide in the True Vine. The matter is made clear when it is recognized that the <u>one reason</u> that some branches are unfruitful is because they do not "abide" in the vine (15:4,6).[3]

Those who view the phrase "in me" as referring to believers equate it with the Pauline usage of ἐν Χριστῷ. Admittedly this seems logical. In fact there seems little doubt, if the words are taken at face value, that they could

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[1]Smith, "The Unfruitful Branches in John 15," p. 12.

[2]Frederick Louis Godet, <u>Commentary on the Gospel of John</u>, Vol. II (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1893), p. 294.

[3]Hendriksen, "Exposition of John," pp. 298-99.

mean anything else other than "in me," or "in Christ." But if the face value method of interpretation or surface method is applied to other scriptures there are real problems. Note the following verses: Genesis 6:6, God repented; Jeremiah 36:30, Jehoiakim had no one to sit on the throne after him; but the problem is that according to 2 Kings 24:16 his son did reign after him. Luke 14:26 says that anyone following Christ must hate his father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, and even himself, Romans 13:8 says "Owe no man anything but to love one another," which if taken on the surface it would forbid credit payments. To interpret correctly these passages and others must be explained in light of their proper meaning. To interpret hyper-literally or just take them as they are could lead to serious theological problems as well as serious practical problems.[1]

Even though Paul used "in Christ" to describe vital relationships there are a number of factors that reveal a different interpretation in 15:2a.

The Use of

The grammatical structure of ἐν with the dative case (ἐμοί) may indicate a close relation, or may introduce the persons who accompany someone, or the things a person brings with him. In this sense the word is translated in, with, or among. And the main idea is accompaniment or

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[1]Rosscup, Abiding in Christ, pp. 198-99.

association.[1]

Those who argue for a strict interpretation of "in me" to be the exact equivalent of "in Christ" put too much weight on this preposition. They would say that "in" means in and that is all it can mean. But the translation of Greek prepositions is so varied that to strictly systematize its usage is impossible.[2] Coupling this factor with the fact that αἴρω has as its basic meaning the idea of removal. And that John 15:2a and 15:6a are both speaking of fruitless branches, whose end is destruction (15:6); along with this, the usage of "ἐν" with the dative meaning "association with or accompaniment"; the black and white contrasts in John's writings; the use of the present tense that points to the character of these branches, namely that they are unfruitful; all favor the usage of "in me" as professing followers who have no vital connection at all.

More Evidence for the Professing Follower View

In Romans 2:28,29 Paul describes the differences between a professing Jew and a genuine believing Jew.

> For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he

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[1]Arndt and Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, p. 258.

[2]Ibid., p. 257.

[3]Rosscup, Abiding in Christ, pp. 201-04.

> is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

This passage should be compared with Romans 9:6-8 where Paul says that just because a person is born an Isralite and of the seed of Abraham that does not make him an Israelite. "For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel." It has already been shown that the background for John 15 is the Vine of the Old Testament, Israel. Just as Paul distinguished between two classes of Israelites so Christ is contrasting two kinds of followers. Those who outwardly claim allegiance but in reality do not produce fruit (15:2a). And those who outwardly profess allegiance who do produce fruit, thus showing that their allegiance is true and their union is spiritual and vital. Just as there were professing Israelites so are there professing Christians. Did Jesus ever make this distinction before? In Luke 8:18 Jesus points out that men may think they are in saving relationship with Him but they really are not.

> Therefore take care how you listen; for whoever has, to him shall more be given: and whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has shall be taken away from him.

In Romans 11:16-24 Paul teaches that the Israelites who were <u>in</u> the olive tree were broken off. He gives the reason for their removal as <u>unbelief</u>. Does this mean they were saved and then lost their salvation? The answer is no. It simply points out that they were connected only in the sense of profession and not in the sense of spiritual union. The

illustrations of Romans 11 and John 15:2 being similar the sense could be the same.

It has already been noted that the Bible uses terms in different senses in different passages (see the use of). And sometimes the Bible uses terms for lost men that it uses for saved men. One example is 2 Peter 2:1.

> But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.

The Greek word used for bought is ἀγοράζω, to buy or <u>redeem</u>. But this cannot mean that these false teachers have been saved. They "deny" the Lord and are bringing "swift destruction" upon themselves. Peter means that the price has been paid for them and that salvation is available if they will receive it. The context reveals that ἀγοράζω cannot be interpreted in the sense that these are redeemed men. Other passages in scripture mean something different than the literal wording of a phrase might appear to mean.

The apostles themselves often point out that a person may be viewed as a believer among believers and yet the whole time have no vital union with Christ. John gives a perfect illustration of this in his first Epistle.

> They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, in order that it might be shown that they all are not of us (1 Jn. 2:19).

John expected the person who said that he was a Christian to live like a Christian. If this was not the case that person's profession was subject to doubt and even repudiation (1 Jn. 2:4). Further explaining this, John teaches the one who <u>says</u> he is abiding in Christ ought to walk as Christ walked (2:6). In other words the fruit of obedience should be manifest. James also taught that if a man professes "the faith" but the fruit of good works is not there, then that person's faith is not genuine, it is empty (Jas. 2:14). These reasons weigh heavily in favor of interpreting "in me" as an unfruitful professor.

CHAPTER IV

THE MEANING OF FRUIT

Caution

In this chapter the Biblical meaning of fruit will be defined. Usually when fruit is mentioned the idea of producing other Christians by soul winning comes to mind. The fact is that soul winning in the sense of fruit-bearing is a limited usage in the New Testament. Having discovered this truth many have played down the idea of soul winning even to the point of exclusion. This is very dangerous. It is also an excuse used by many not to win souls. It is dangerous because Christians who have not had the privilege of in-depth study will be wrongly influenced. The writer has read many pages concerning this subject and most minimize soul winning altogether.

New Testament Usage of Fruit

καρπός

This word is used most in the New Testament to describe fruit bearing. Of its sixty-six occurrences, forty-six are used in the gospels.[1]

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[1]Paul M. Biggers, "The New Testament Concept of Fruit Bearing" (Unpublished M.Div. Thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, 1975), p. 7. (Hereinafter referred to as "Concept of Fruit").

The Authorized Version of the New Testament translates καρπός "fruit" in all sixty-six occurrences.[1] This is the primary definition of καρπός . Though the basic definition is "fruit" the word is used in a variety of ways. The following usages are found in the New Testament.

Literal usage.--This basic usage falls under the general heading of produce or vegetation. It is used of the fruits of trees (Matt. 12:33; 21:19; Mk. 11:14; Lk. 6: 44; 13:6 ff). It is used of the fruit of the vine (Matt. 21:34; Mk. 12:2; Lk. 20:10; 1 Cor. 9:7). Καρπός is also used of field crops (2 Tim. 2:6; Jas. 5:7). This is not an exhaustive list of passages.

Hebraistic usage.--This particular usage is a carry over from the Old Testament concept of offspring or children (Gen. 30:2; Ps. 131:11; Mic. 6:7; Lam. 2:20). The following New Testament verses are the only two that use καρπός in this figure of the fruit of the womb.

> And she cried out with a loud voice, and said, 'Blessed among women are you, and blessed is the fruit of your womb' (Lk. 1:42).
>
> Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to set on his throne (Acts 2:30).[2]

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[1]The Englishman's Greek Concordance of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970), p. 405.

[2]Arndt and Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, p. 405.

Biggers[1] points out that this usage is significant because "that which was figuratively of the product of the womb came also to be applied metaphorically to the product of ones life."

Figurative usage.--The basic sense in this usage is result, outcome, or the product of ones life.[2] This is the usage that directly applies to John 15:2. The figure uses καρπός as that which characterizes and describes a man's life in terms of its productivity.

Hauck says there is a general figurative sense of "consequence, result, and profit."[3] Note two verses from the LXX of this usage.[4]

> Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices (Prov. 1:31).
>
> I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings (Jer. 17:10).

The writers of the gospels used καρπός in the sense of challenging the lives of men. John the Baptist challenges the Pharisees. "Therefore bring forth fruit in

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[1]Biggers, "Concept of Fruit," p. 8.

[2]Arndt and Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, p. 405.

[3]Alfred Rahlfs, ed., Septuaginta, Vol. II (Stuttgart: Wurttembergische Bibelanstalt, 1971), pp. 185,683.

[4]Frederich Hauck, "καρπός," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. III, ed. by Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968), p. 615.

keeping with your repentance" (Matt. 3:8).

John was calling for deeds or works that would manifest that they had truly repented. Jesus uses the figure in a similar way.

> Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thornbushes, nor figs from thistles, are they? Even so every good tree bears good fruit; but the rotten tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a rotten tree produce good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down, and thrown into the fire. So then, you will know them by their fruits (Matt. 7:15-20).

The context is about false prophets. But the main teaching is that whatever is characteristic of a man outwardly, his words and actions, manifests his inner life.[1]

This same usage is found in Matthew 12:33-37 where Jesus is charged with casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub. He appeals to the figure of the fruit tree to explain their accusation. Their blasphemous words are the revelation of a blasphemous heart. Here the words of men are considered fruit and those who use such evil words will be judged.

In Matthew 21:43 and Luke 13:6-9 the nation of Israel is described as a fruit tree that is barren. In Luke the tree was barren for three years and the man who planted it ordered the tree cut down. The vineyard keeper asked to cultivate it again and give it another chance; but if it did

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[1]Hauck, " ," p. 615.

not produce fruit it was to be cut down.

One thing is obvious. The fate of those who produce bad fruit and the fate of those who produce no fruit is the same; they are destroyed. These figures of fruit trees are similar to the image in John 15. The trees do not bear fruit, they are cut down and cast into the fire to be burned. The branch does not produce fruit, it is cut away, removed, gathered and thrown into the fire. This is the fate of professing believers whether they be Israelites or Gentiles.

Christian character.--The passages that relate to this use of καρπός are Galatians 5:22,23; Ephesians 5:8-13, James 3:17,18; and 2 Peter 1:3-11. All of these references have to do with inner characteristics that are to be produced in the Christian. John 15 stands in this group. All of these passages have to do with our Christian growth or sanctification. In Galatians 5:22,23 the Christian virtues are contrasted with unchristian "lust of the flesh." The reason that the Christian virtues are pure and different is because the Holy Spirit produces these fruit in us.

In the Ephesian passage again the emphasis is on Christian character. The "fruit of light" (5:8) is in contrast to our former "darkness." Paul points out what we are. The emphasis upon Christian character as a usage of καρπός is what we are. But take note that this "fruit of light" is

not a static character it comes out in "goodness, and righteousness, and truth." This kind of character does not take part in "the unfruitful deeds of darkness" (5:10). It is significant to note that this is in the context of being "filled with the Holy Spirit" (5:18).

In the Galatians passage many are led astray thinking that the believer is passive while the Spirit produces these virtues. But Peter clears this fallacy.

> . . . seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge; and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, Christian love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 1:3-8).

This passage clearly teaches that believers are not passive in the production of fruit. That even though the purpose of salvation is to end in being more like Christ (Rom. 8:29); and that this sanctification process is a work of the Spirit (2 Thess. 2:13); the believer is responsible to obey, love, be faithful, etc. In short he is to bear "fruit" (Jn. 15:8), "more fruit" (Jn. 15:2), and "much fruit" (Jn. 15:5).

Although the bulk of the New Testament meaning for fruit is "the product of ones life" and "Christlike character" fruit is used in various other ways in the New Testament.

Fruit as praise.--This concept of fruit is made up of words that are offered as praise to God.

> Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name (Heb. 13:15).

This passage is a citation from Hosea 14:2 that the writer of Hebrews takes from a Greek translation of the Old Testament, which translates "fruit (καρπός) of our lips" as a paraphrase of the Hebrew wording "calves of our lips." The words of Hosea literally place "calves" and "lips" in apposition to each other. The meaning is that one day the Israelites will offer up a true sacrifice, namely their lips, in pure worship. The significance of this to the Hebrew Christian is that even though they are to stop animal sacrifices they still have a sacrifice to offer, namely praise-words from their lips. This sacrifice is said to be fruit to God.

Fruit as a contribution.--This usage is found in Philippians 4:15-17.

> And you yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs.

> Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit (literally τὸν καρπὸν , the fruit) [my parenthesis] which increases to your account.

This gift was sent to Paul while he was imprisoned at Rome (Acts 28:20). Paul was not concerned for the gift nor for himself but his concern was for the Philippians. He desired this fruit (contribution) to be credited to their account. No doubt that this gift was out of a heart of love from the Philippians to Paul but the gift itself becomes fruit because it is the outflow of that love. Hendriksen's comments are noteworthy.

> The gift was really an investment entered as a credit on the account of the Philippians, an investment which is increasingly paying them real dividends. These dividends or fruits in the lives of his friends are the object of Paul's concern.[1]

The Philippians gave liberally and out of love as the New Testament teaches (Prov. 11:25; 19:17). They no doubt gave gladly because they did not mind sending more than one gift (1 Cor. 9:7). They also gave sacrificially (Phil. 4:10,19cf.; Lk. 21:1-4). Because of such giving the Christian will harvest a number of fruits. Some of these fruits are, "a good conscience, assurance of salvation, enriched fellowship with other believers, increased joy and love (both of these imparted and received), a higher degree of glory in heaven, Judgment Day praise."[2]

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[1]William Hendriksen, Exposition of Philippians, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1974), p. 208.

[2]Ibid.

The Apostle Paul also spoke of an offering for the saints at Jerusalem as fruit.

> Therefore, when I have finished this, and have put my seal on this fruit of theirs, I will go on by way of you to Spain (Rom. 15:28).

What Paul meant by sealing was that he would see to it that the contribution (fruit) was delivered. Again this fruit was the product of God's love working in the lives of the believers who gave the offering. In both instances where fruit is used as contributions, fruit as love and fruit produced by that love are one unified idea.

Fruit as tasks.--Paul views fruit as consisting in the daily routine things that we do for the glory of God.

> So that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God (Col. 1:10).

There are many works that could be mentioned that Christians perform. Paul views these good works as fruit.

The evidence is definitely mounting in favor of a much broader concept of fruit than is usually given. Fruit cannot be limited to just inward character in light of the evidence of its usage in the New Testament. And there is still another use of fruit.

Fruit as souls.--By the term souls is meant converts. Jesus used the word fruit to indicate converts.

> Already he who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for life eternal; that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together (Jn. 4:36).

Having talked to the woman of Samaria about her own salvation Jesus realizes that the disciples are really not interested in the great purpose of soul winning. They are interested in carnal food but, Christ says his food, that which sustains him, is to do God's will (Jn. 4:34). The will of God was for Christ "to seek and to save that which was lost" (Lk. 19:10). Jesus tells his disciples that the harvest of men is ready to be reaped (Jn. 4:35). This is a comparison of the physical harvest of grain to the spiritual harvest of souls.

One more example of fruit used in the sense of converts is 1 Corinthians 16:15.

> Now I urge you, brethren (you know the household of Stephanas, that they were the firstfruits of Achaia . . .).

These were the first converts in Achaia. Some were converted later. But the point is that these two examples prove that the concept of fruit is applied to converts in the New Testament.

These different concepts of fruit in the New Testament bring up the important identification of fruit in John 15. Jesus does not cite one category over the other, as Tenney notes.

> The nature of the fruit is not stated categorically but the context following the allegory suggests what fruit is. Fruitfulness is implied in a prayerlife that

> brings answers: 'If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever ye will, and it shall be done unto you' (7) Fruitfulness appears in obedience which is a sure mark of the believer as disobedience is a mark of the unbeliever. Joy is mentioned here as a spiritual fruit. . . . John also includes love (12). . . . These qualities of love toward others, joy within ones own heart, spontaneous obedience to Christ and a prayer life that brings concrete answers are convincing proofs of the actuality of the life of God in the soul of man. 'By their fruits ye shall know them' (Matt. 7:16).[1]

The fruits that Tenney points out could fall into the category of attitudes or activity. A good prayer life is the product of ones life while love and joy are Christ-like characteristics. John 15:16 could refer to the disciples going and making converts. John 15:26,27 teach that the disciples will be witnesses, which leads to conversions. It seems better to understand fruit in its broadest concept throughout the chapter, and especially in John 15:2. Jesus does not specify the fruit that was not being produced in 15:2a nor in those who would produce more fruit in 15:2b. To say it is just Christlike character, or converts, or contributions would be reading into the text. It is better to say that Jesus wanted those who were abiding to manifest all of these concepts.

Concerning John 15:2a one thing is clear. The branches are not bearing fruit. But by contrast in 15:2b these branches are bearing fruit. And that fruit is spiritual productivity, Christlike character, concern for the

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[1]Merrill C. Tenney, John: The Gospel of Belief, pp. 228,229.

poor (as in the case of Paul), good works (Col. 1:10) and concern.

The Necessity of Fruit

John the Baptist felt it necessary for those who claimed repentance to prove it (Matt. 3:8). Jesus pointed out that the only way you will be able to know a false prophet is by his fruits (Matt. 7:15-20). Outwardly they appear to be gentle sheep, inwardly they are "ravenous wolves," but in the final analysis the real false prophet can be detected by his fruit, or his lifestyle. The view that interprets the unfruitful branches as Christians are forced to say that you can be a Christain and not bear any fruit. That would mean you could be a Christian without being productive for the Lord, without Christlike attitudes, without winning souls, without making contributions to the Lord's work and without praising Him. It is doubtful that any Bible teacher would classify this type of person a Christian.

It is true that we are saved by the one sacrifice of Christ and not by our own works (Rom. 5:12ff) but Romans six teaches that if a person is truly saved he will not continue in sin (Rom. 6:1ff). In the process of sanctification there will be some fruit sometime (Eph. 2:10; Ti. 2:11ff). Rosscup states it this way.

> Fruit is not simply nice; it is necessary. It does not merit salvation, but does manifest it once it is really there. It does not earn it but does express it; it does not secure it but is a sign of it; it is not a condition

of conversion but is a consequence of it.[1]

The application to John 15:2a is that a branch that is not bearing fruit is a branch that does not have life. Or, the "Christian" that is not bearing fruit is only a professing Christian without the life of God.

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[1]Rosscup, Abiding in Christ, p. 187.

CHAPTER V

THE MEANING OF ABIDING

Basic Usage of μένω

is used in Acts 20:23 transitively and this usage occurs here only. It means an "awaiting" or "waiting for."[1] The intransitive usage of μένω usually means "to stay, abide, or continue" (a) in place, (b) in any state or condition (with an adjunct of time during or to which a person remains, continues, endures),[2] (c) with regard to the condition in relation in which one person or thing stands to another.

In our text we are concerned with the figurative usage. In this usage μένω denotes a person who does not leave the realm or sphere in which he finds himself with the basic concept being to continue or remain. It is used of continuing in the teaching of Christ (2 Jn. 9a); continuing in the love of Christ (Jn. 15:9); continuing in darkness (Jn. 12:46).[3]

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[1]Joseph H. Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (New York: American Book Company, 1886), p. 339.

[2]Edward Robinson, A Greek and English Lexicon of the New Testament, new ed., (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1868), pp. 452-53.

[3]Arndt and Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, p. 505.

New Testament Concepts Involved in Μένω

Often times the term is applied in a technical sense to refer to a "deeper life" of a more "spiritual life." But the basic meaning of the word according to lexical definition and New Testament usage is simply to "continue." There may be different emphases and implications but that should not change the basic concept. Μένω does carry with it the following ideas.

The Time Element or Duration

To "remain" or "to continue" definitely conveys the involvement of a time period. There are four classifications of this element of time: temporary with an adjunct of time (Matt. 10:11; Lk. 1:56; Jn. 4:40; 11:6; 19:31), temporary without an adjunct of time (Matt. 26:38; Lk. 8:27; 10:7; Rev. 17:10), uncertain length of time (Acts 28:16), or lifetime or eternity (2 Tim. 3:14; Heb. 7:3,24; 1 Pet. 1:25cf. vs. 23). Considering the concept of a lifetime John writes in 12:24-26.

> Truly, truly, I say unto you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. He who loves his life loses it; and he who hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall My servant also be; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.

These verses have in view a saved man and a lost man and their whole life style. One hates his life (saved) the other loves his life (lost). The word abide (v.24) is

involved in this contrast. Just as a seed abides alone if it does not fall into the ground and die a person abides alone if he does not serve and follow Christ by faith. In light of verse 25 the person is unregenerate. But if a person, like a grain of wheat, does fall to the ground and die, that person "abides" with "much fruit." We can compare this to John 15:5,6.

> 'I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.'

In both of these passages Jesus is speaking of a general pattern of life. He does not pinpoint every time a saved person is inconsistent or unfruitful. Jesus in both passages is employing figures in the physical realm to illustrate a spiritual contrast (see pp. 19-21). Christ had in mind the rest of their lives. One man abides and brings forth fruit (15:5), while the other man does not abide and brings forth nothing (15:5b). Unfruitful branches are non-abiders in lifestyle and for a lifetime.[1]

Sphere of Residence

The following are a catalog of different passages

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[1]Rosscup, Abiding in Christ, pp. 107-08.

where μένω is used in this sense.[1]

Reciprocal Union of Persons

John 14:10 states, "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works." Here is the expression of a most intimate union.

Between God and Man

Deity in believers.--Christ portrayed himself as a vine continuing in union with believers (Jn. 15:4,5). God also is constantly united to believers (1 Jn. 3:24; 4:12,15, 16).

Believers in deity.--Christians are said to continue in Christ (Jn. 6:56; 15:4-7; 1 Jn. 2:6,24ff; 3:6,24) and in God (1 Jn. 2:24; 4:13,16).

Reciprocal relation of believers and manifestations of divine life

Built upon the truth of the abiding personal union between believers and the persons of the trinity is the fact that particular marks of divine life are said to continue in believers and believers continue in them.

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[1]Ardell Canaday, "Reciprocal Vital Union and the Perseverance of the Saints in Johannine Literature," Unpublished Paper in New Testament Theology (Winona Lake, Indiana: Grace Seminary, 1977), pp. 5-6.

Manifestation of divine life in believers

The expressions of eternal life residing in believers are God's Word (Jn. 15:7; 1 Jn. 2:24), eternal life (1 Jn. 3:15), the love of God (1 Jn. 3:17), the anointing from God (1 Jn. 2:27), and the truth (2 Jn. 2).

Believers in manifestation of divine life

Believers are said to continue in the word (Jn. 8:3), in God's house (Jn. 8:35), in Christ's love (Jn. 15:9,10) in the light (1 Jn. 2:10cf.; Jn. 12:46), and in Christ's doctrine (2 Jn. 2). The basic idea of μένω is time and is always present in some respect. The emphasis is upon the permanence and continuance of relationship. John uses the phrase μένειν ἐν τινι and ἔχειν τι(ς) μένει ἐν αὐτῷ to express the relationship of one person to another. The scriptural evidence of reciprocal union between believers and Deity points out that all who are authentically saved abide in Christ as a way of life.

But some object to this meaning of abiding in Christ.

> Chafer says, this passage will not support the notion that to abide in Christ means to remain in union with Him; when this superficial rendering is accepted, only false doctrine ensues.[1]

The "false doctrine" which "ensues" is the teaching of salvation by works. Chafer interprets abiding as being "communion" rather than "union" because a distinction is

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[1]Chafer, Systematic Theology, Vol. VII, p. 1.

made between the terms of salvation and the terms of discipleship. It is agreed that salvation is not by works but salvation does work. It works in such a way that when divine life is given to a person it remains with that believer and that believer perseveres by faith in that divine life and the sure outcome is fruitfulness. The branches in John 15: 2a have no fruit. This means they are not persevering which means they do not have the divine life. Will every child of God bear fruit? That is the same as asking, "will every child of God persevere"? The Bible teaches that every child of God will persevere. The believer was elected to that very purpose (Eph. 1:4; 2:10; Jn. 15:16; cf. Rom. 8:29; Heb. 12:14). The following passage will demonstrate that all believers abide in Christ.

Abiding and being begotten of God.--In John 3:6 the apostle says, "No one who abides in Him sins. . . ." In John 3:9 he states, "No one who is born of God practices sin. . . ." What John attributes in verse 6 to "abiding in Him" he attributes in verse 9 "being born of God." Being born of God and abiding are used as equivalents. Note in verse 6 that the one who does not abide is not a carnal Christian nor a less spiritual person; John says he does not know God and has not seen God. The one who does not practice sin abides. True believers do not practice sin therefore all true believers abide.

Abiding and obeying.--1 John 3:24a states, "and the one keeping his commandments continues in Him, and He in him. What kind of person keeps God's commandments? The kind that continue. Not just those who are in communion or a deeper relationship, but all believers obey. If all believers keep (present tense) Christ's commandments then they all abide in Christ.

Abiding and confessing.--1 John 4:15 reads, "whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God." Dr. Homer Kent defines abiding as believing.

> These passages (he cites 1 Jn. 3:23-24a and 2:24) also show that confessing Jesus as the Son of God (i.e., believing in Jesus) establishes the relation of abiding. Thus to abide in Christ is equivalent to believing in Christ. This relationship of abiding is initiated at the moment of faith; and is continued as we walk by faith.[1]

Jesus' clear teaching in John 15 is that fruit can only be produced if the branch abides.

> Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in me.

Since abiding is the only way to bear fruit, and abiding equals believing, then all believers bear fruit. But the branches in John 15:2a are not bearing fruit so the only conclusion is that they are not abiding. If all believers abide, then the only conclusion about the branches in 15:2a is that they were never believers.

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[1]Kent, Light in the Darkness, pp. 182-83.

Abiding is Flexible

It has already been established that fruit is a broader concept than most people allow for and that "in me" can mean something other than the Pauline doctrine of "in Christ." So also in the case of μένω to abide means more than just to persevere. It is not just the concept of time, although that is always there, but there is a sense in which abiding is qualitative. It is true, that all Christians abide and bear fruit. But not all Christians will bear fruit to the same degree. This is suggested in John 15 where the abiding person bears "fruit," "more fruit" and "much fruit." The Christian who is young in the faith will bear fruit. The Christian who is mature in the faith, more fruit. But both are bearing fruit because they are abiding.

This concept can be seen in Paul's letter to the Thessalonians. He and his companions prayed that they "might perfect that which was lacking" in the faith of the Thessalonian believers (1 Thess. 3:10). In 3:12 he says "and the Lord make you to increase and abound in love." Now both of these exhortations involve the fruit of the Spirit, faith and love. Paul is not saying they did not have any; he is challenging them to greater development. Their faith and love needed to be richer and even though they were abiding (they had faith and love) there was room for a more qualitative abiding.[1]

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[1]Rosscup, Abiding in Christ, p. 113.

The conclusion can be drawn then, that, it is not so much a distinction between union and communion. But the fact is that in order to bear fruit every Christian is persevering and in the process of persevering there is fruitfulness to a greater or lesser degree.

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