



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

John 15: 1-11

Spring 2023

"Abide In Me"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you Seth, and good morning. It is so good to be with all of you on this April morning. We are in John chapter 15 this morning; this great and glorious passage, (with some interpretive issues, but we'll cover those).

Let me read through the text; Jesus said to His disciples,

**15** "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. **2** Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every *branch* that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. **3** You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. **4** 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. **5** 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. (...*Did you notice that!?!... "apart from Me you can do nothing"!*).

**6** 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. **7** If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. **8** My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. **9** Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. **10** If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's

commandments and abide in His love. <sup>11</sup>These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and *that* your joy may be made full.

John 15: 1-11

May the LORD bless this reading of His Word and bless our time of study in it together. Let's bow together in a word of prayer.

Father, what a great thing it is to be able to gather with Your people and open the Bible as we are able to freely do in this nation: We thank You for that great privilege and pray that it would continue from generation to generation. What a privilege and blessing it is to be able to do that here, but also to do this very thing; to come before The Throne of Grace, (as we all are doing at this moment), and seek Your help in time of need—and seek it for others as well.

So Father, we pray for our spiritual needs. Our spiritual need is to understand the great Word that we have just read and what Your Son was teaching His disciples—and is teaching us. And we pray, LORD, that You would encourage us and enable us to 'abide in Him and bear much fruit.' Only in that way can we produce anything that's pleasing to You; and so LORD, we look to You—we can do nothing apart from that and we can do nothing in our own strength anyway.

So we look to You to move us, to open our eyes and open our minds and see the great importance of the things Jesus is talking about to all of His children. So may we be moved by this and directed by this; and may the Spirit of God enlighten us and move us to seek to obey You and serve You joyfully. So bless us spiritually, LORD.

There are many needs we have; and You know what they are. And fortunately, even when we don't pray for them, You know, and You bless—and You do as Paul told the Ephesians, 'exceedingly abundantly beyond all that we ask or think.' (Eph 3:20). And that means, even when difficulties come You're doing great things in our life; so we need the faith to lay hold of that and be encouraged by it.

But LORD, bless us with faith. We have our faith strengthened, it grows, through the study of Your Word: "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing from the Word of Christ." (Rom 10:17). And so we've heard that Word, and now we will consider that Word; as we do, strengthen us and build us up in the faith to Your glory. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

*(Message)* William Carey was, is, called "the father of modern missions." He was a man of amazing Christian accomplishments: A shoemaker, a cobbler by trade, who opened up India for the Gospel. In 1792 he preached a sermon, the title of which became his motto: "Expect great things from God, attempt great things for God." That's a bold statement and may seem idealistic, but he did it. And it is what earnest Christians can do and will do because they can't be satisfied with a spiritually idle life.

The spiritual Christian desires to be productive; God made us for that. And in John chapter 15, Jesus explained how it happens—how we have fruitful lives. That's the subject of our passage, *fruit bearing*. And the promise that the Lord gives here is that, 'We will bear much fruit, not in our own strength, but in His.' It is the great things from God that He speaks of; but those things, *fruit bearing*, require *abiding*—that's the Lord's lesson. It can be summarized in verse 5, "...he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing."

He arranged His instruction around the figure, or metaphor, of the grapevine. He began the chapter by saying, "I am the true vine." This is the last of His 'I AM' statements, and many feel it was suggested to Jesus by an external object, maybe the great golden vine that decorated the temple gates. Chapter 14 ended with the Lord saying, 'Arise. Let us go from here.' (vs31). And some think that the rest of the lesson occurred in the streets of Jerusalem, as Jesus and His disciples were walking to Gethsemane. Along the way they may have passed the temple, and there He began the lesson of chapter 15.

Others feel they must have lingered in the room until after chapter 17 because chapter 18 begins, "When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth with His disciples..."; so maybe there was a vine growing along the outside wall that hung over the window and that inspired Jesus to use this metaphor.

Wherever the Lord was, His statement wasn't due to what He might have seen but what He had read in the Old Testament—and in it the figure of the vine is used frequently of Israel. In Psalm 80, for example, Asaph wrote, "You removed a vine from Egypt; You drove out the nations and planted it." (vs8). And there are many other examples.

But as Leon Morris pointed out, whenever the symbol is used of Israel, Israel is being reprimanded for being unfaithful and unfruitful, or under discipline. But Jesus said, "I am the true vine." He is the genuine vine, the faithful and fruitful vine, the only true faithful man who has ever lived sinless and perfect. Whatever is real, imperfectly symbolized, Jesus fulfilled. Israel failed to bear fruit to God—Christ succeeds fully. And the lesson is, 'so do all who are in union with Him.'

Jesus' Father insures that. He's likened to a farmer, or "*vinedresser*", Jesus said, who cares for the vine in such a way that it will grow and it will be fruitful. He does two things: He takes away barren branches and He prunes, (or cleanses), fruitful ones. "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit." (vs2).

Literally, the word "prunes" is *cleanses*; and that's the point that the Lord is making. The Father is involved in our spiritual development. He's involved in our sanctification, our spiritual *cleansing*—the process of producing spiritual growth in us. But the Lord illustrates that in His description of a farmer, or *vinedresser*, cultivating his vines that necessarily involves cutting back the branches to make the vine produce more grapes. On the face of it appears harmful, the cutting off branches. But in reality, it is best for the vine because it removes whatever is harmful to the vine, whatever hinders its growth and its fruitfulness.

This process was something the disciples were very familiar with and would not have needed an explanation. But *vines* and *wine* is not the Lord's point, as indicated by the word *cleanses*. The Father "prunes" us; He "cleanses" us by removing what is harmful from our lives. —This is *sanctification*. This is the process of transforming us within—and making us more and more like Christ.

Westminster Shorter Catechism, (Question 35), gives a good definition of *sanctification*. It is, "The work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness." He only does that with His people, (His chosen ones), those whom He loves, so that we develop in our Christian lives. There's no other way for that to happen but to be *pruned*.

You think of that and you think, "Ouch! That's painful." And it is—and that itself is instructive. We tend to think like Job's friends that, 'If a person is suffering he must be sinful. God is disciplining him or her for something.' No, that's not correct at all. Trials come to the righteous in order to produce growth, spiritual growth. Paul wrote of that in Romans chapter 5, verse 3. "We also exalt in our tribulations..." Really? 'We exalt in our tribulations!?' That's what he says—and then he explains, "...knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proving character; and proving character, hope."

Now of course, *cleansing*, or *pruning*, does also involve *discipline* as well, in order to influence us to give up what is bad and harmful in our lives. And *discipline* may be what is referred to in the first part of the verse, "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away..."

But this is the difficult statement in the passage; the one that divides interpreters—and divides the best of them. Is it about sanctification—or is it about salvation? Is He removing unbelievers; those who falsely profess faith in Christ—apostates? Judas is the example of that. He only recently left the room, remember; "...and it was night." —He was taken away.

One argument in favor of that interpretation is the “branch”, (or person), that is taken away “does not bear fruit”, (vs2)—and no true Christian can be said to be without fruit, that's true. Don Carson, who for many years was professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, wrote an excellent commentary on the Book of John, and has written other books on this Gospel. He wrote, "Fruitfulness is an infallible mark of true Christianity."

Every person who is born again has a new heart, has a new nature, has the Holy Spirit. Each and every one of us, at the moment of faith, are sealed with the Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption. He is permanently there; and so we cannot but bear fruit. Now we may not see the fruit in one another, but there will be some fruit in every child of God. *Faith* itself is the first fruit of the new life. When a person is born again, and has a new nature, he or she will naturally believe the Gospel when he or she hears it.

Paul told the Philippians, in Philippians chapter 1, verse 29, that "To you it has been granted...to believe in Him", to believe in Christ. It has been given. That's what the word *granted* means. It has been given to believe; faith is a *gift*. It is the fruit of the Spirit. So a child of God will bear fruit by God's sovereign grace...it is inevitable. So the statement, “does not bear fruit”, settles the question for many.

But what makes it difficult is the statement, "Every branch in Me." The phrase, “in Me”, or ‘in Christ’, is very common in the New Testament, and very common in Paul's letters—and it always refers to Christians. But Christians can't be broken off from Christ. The Lord has made that clear in this Gospel: Back in chapter 6, verse 37, He promised that all who come to Him will be received; ‘all who trust in Him will be received by Him and He will not cast them out.’ And that is an unqualified promise; one put in the very strongest terms, “...I will certainly not cast out.” Or, “...in no wise cast out.” (KJV).

The Lord used two negatives there to emphatically affirm it; ‘No, not cast out.’ He repeats the promise in the language that is just as strong in chapter 10; His sheep “will never perish”, and ‘no one will snatch them out of My hand.’ (vs28). Not the devil—not

the Lord Himself. "Never perish." So either way, this is not about a Christian losing his or her salvation. That is as impossible as a true Christian never bearing any fruit.

But the expression, "in Me", tilts me toward the idea of discipline. If so, then bearing fruit is not absolute, (meaning, *never* bears fruit), but describes a temporary state of rebellion or worldliness. And that happens to all of us...but not indefinitely. The LORD is patient, very patient with us. But eventually discipline comes; and to those who resist it can be very severe in which a person is physically removed from this world.

There are examples of that in the New Testament, most notably those in Corinth who were abusing the Lord's Supper. As a result Paul said, in 1 Corinthians 11, verse 30, that, "a number sleep." A number of them were sick—and a number slept; meaning that they died in discipline. God took them out of the way. He removed them from the church, because they were a hindrance to others—and also to themselves. Divine discipline is that serious. That may be the idea here.

Still, it is a difficult statement and it makes me wonder if it isn't deliberately so. What I mean by that is many students of the Gospel of John have noticed *ambiguity* in a lot of the Lord's statements. (Now it's deliberate ambiguity, not ambiguity because John wasn't being careful.) If that's the case, it is intended in order to invite us to think rather broadly about things—and to invite a couple of interpretations. So while there is one specific meaning, we may be motivated or moved to see this as a 'double-edged' warning. Either way, a serious person will heed the warning and avoid being taken away.

But again, *fruit bearing* is the emphasis here—and it is serious business. It involves *pruning*, it involves *cleansing*, which isn't always pleasant but which produces healthy change in our inner self. So really, we need to hope and pray for the LORD's cleansing work. It is necessary if we want to be fruit bearing believers—and in fact, if we will attempt great things for God. The disciples were clean, (the Lord reminds them of

that in verse 3). The *'unclean one'* was gone into the night but, as believers, they should expect further cleansing according to Christ.

Then in verse 4, He gives them the key to fruitfulness. And it's not *pruning*, (as necessary and inevitable as that it), but *abiding*; "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." Apart from this mutual abiding, us in Christ and Christ in us, there is no fruitfulness or progress in the Christian life. So Christ commands them, (*commands* them ... this isn't optional), to abide in Him with the idea that they were to live in such a way that He would continue to abide in them. Leon Morris translated the verse, "Abide in Me and see that I abide in you." Only in this way can we be fruitful.

So, what does it mean to abide in Christ? Very simply it means, *'Remain* in Christ;  *dwell* in Him.' For example, in Acts chapter 27, verse 31, we have the account of Paul at sea in a storm; and in verse 31 he told the sailors to "*remain* in the ship". 'Don't abandon ship; they will survive only by remaining in the ship.' And that word, *remain*, is the same word as *abide*.

Now it goes without saying that before the sailors could *abide* in the ship, they had to have boarded the ship. And the same is true for the one who abides in Christ. Before abiding, a Christian must first be joined to Christ, must be made alive and believe in Christ. That occurs through regeneration, through the new birth, and the faith that results from that.

At the moment of faith we are justified, we're forgiven, we're declared innocent of sin, we're declared completely righteous in God's sight, and joined to Christ in a vital, living relationship that continues throughout all eternity.

But we are to continue in that fellowship.; and as we do that, as we continue in that fellowship, we increasingly partake of His life, (the life of the vine)—and as a result produce fruit, sweet fruit—increasingly.

But we must first be in Christ, before we can abide in Christ. Or as Dr. Johnson put it, (and I think he put it very clearly and well), "Believing leads to union. Abiding is



communion." *Being in Him is the source of life. Abiding in Him is the source of fruit.* And so it is essential that we stay close to Christ, that we stay in communion with Christ—otherwise, we will produce nothing.

That's what the Lord said in verse 5, "...apart from Me, you can do nothing." That's a warning not to be neglectful. We are absolutely dependent on Christ. There is no spiritual growth apart from Him. That's the warning, as I said.

But, the encouragement here is great, because the one who abides in Him, has life; that's eternal life. Eternal life, as Jesus will explain later in chapter 17, is 'knowing God, and Jesus Christ whom You sent.' (vs3). So, there's nothing greater than eternal life.—and eternal life is essentially knowing the LORD. And so *abiding* in Him, *knowing* Him, is the greatest blessing there is. And as a result of abiding in Him, we bear much fruit.

But we need that reminder because spiritual growth is not quick; it's not instant; it takes time just as physical growth takes time. You didn't feel yourself grow up from four feet to five feet when you were a child—but you did. And spiritually we grow gradually as well—and that can be discouraging. Which is not all bad for we should never think that, 'we have arrived.' We should never think that we're '*There*'. There's always more growth, more development into maturity.

But there's also the danger in discouragement, in not developing as we would like and we become anxious and get distressed over the fact we're not growing 'as we ought to.' That's not all bad, as I say. But it can be discouraging.

Or being *pruned* can result in confusion, a sense that we were being disciplined when perhaps we're not. We're just going through the trials of life because they strengthen us ultimately—which is why we need to turn to this passage at such times, because of the instruction that it gives.

The promise is, 'As we *abide* in Christ, we will bear much fruit'; that should encourage us. Even though things may not be moving as quickly as we like, 'we will bear much fruit', He promises. So we should be encouraged not to be complacent. We should

be encouraged not to be discouraged. And instead, what we are to do is strive. We are to abide and strive in Him. We are to apply ourselves to this very thing, abiding in Him, communing with Him, knowing Him more and more. But, that takes time.

Now this talk of *vines* and *grapes* is, I confess, foreign to me. I'm not a gardener. My wife will attest to that, although she told me, 'You'll be doing some digging in the garden this next week and planting bulbs.' So I have some experience, but very little experience of that. I don't grow things, flowers or vines.

And I guess James Boice didn't either. But in his commentary he wrote, that he was once told by those who know about cultivating vines, that it takes about three years before a vine begins to produce fruit. It must be trimmed and allowed to grow, then trimmed and allowed to grow again—and so on for a considerable length of time. Only after this does the vine become useful for bearing fruit.

Well, it's the same for us. There may be long periods when we don't seem to be very fruitful, or useful. We're not to get discouraged. We're to abide in Christ; grow and mature; fellowship with Him. There is nowhere else for us to go, and nowhere else where we are to be, because as Jesus said, "Apart from Me, you can do nothing." (vs5b). We're not going to find fruitfulness in any other place, in any other person, than Him. And that includes *faith* as well as *deeds*. Sovereign grace is what produces this within us: From our understanding, to our faith, to our deeds, as we act upon the things we know—it's sovereign grace.

The consequence of *not abiding* in Him is given in verse 6. By becoming fruitless and useless comes suffering and great loss and such a person "is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned." (vs6).

Now this goes back to our earlier discussion. You will understand verse 6 according to your understanding of verse 2. If this refers to an apostate, (and the Scriptures speak of that; Hebrews 6 is a great example of that), if this refers to an

apostate then the end is eternal ruin. That's a great warning to make your calling and election sure.

But, if this is a disciple who becomes idle and fruitless, worldly and useless, then he or she will suffer loss of great reward, although not loss of his or her soul—that can't happen. I think we have a parallel for this in 1 Corinthians chapter 3, verse 15, where Paul wrote of the person whose, “work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet as through fire.” Now I suppose there's some comfort in that—but there should be *absolutely* no contentment in it. To come to the end of one's life with little to show for it is a tragedy.

A largely fruitless life is a foolish life, not only because of the waste but because the person who doesn't abide in Christ forfeits great blessings: The great blessing of fellowship with the second Person of the Trinity and in Him with the Triune God—there's nothing better than that.

But also he will not enjoy the promise of verse 7. The Lord said, "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you." That's the promise of prevailing prayer that comes with abiding in Him.

Prayer is more than requests. When we think of prayer we think of requesting things—and it is that. But it's more than that—it's also praise; and it's thanksgiving to God for who He is; it's praising Him for His greatness. We looked at Isaiah chapter 40, briefly, in Mike's class. And you read that passage and you cannot but praise God for His greatness: How small we are, and how great He is, and how many great things He has done. He's created the stars and named them all, and calls them out every night as though they're a marching army.

You begin to study the Word of God and you get to know the LORD more and more, and you're full of praise for Him—and you're full of thanksgiving for what He's done for you, what He's given you, and how He's taking care of you every moment; and doing, as Paul said in Ephesians 3, ‘exceedingly, abundantly beyond all that we ask or think.’ (vs20). So, that is a great part of prayer; it's thanksgiving, and it's praise.

And prayer is a good gauge for *abiding* because when we are abiding, prayer is as natural to us as breathing. But prayer is also requesting the LORD's blessing. It is our lifeline to God and necessary for gaining His help. But you may think, 'Well, God is in control of everything', and I agree. And you hear me preach it all the time: 'He is absolutely sovereign...' So why pray?

Well, we pray because it's *the means* He has given us, a *means of grace* for obtaining the things that He wants us to have. We gain His help through prayer. And that's what the Lord spoke of here, "ask whatever we *wish*." (vs7). But, in order to get that, we must *wish* for what is pleasing to the LORD—and is for His glory. And that means we must want what He wants, and seek His will. And that requires that we know Him.

Well, we only know Him by knowing His Words; Scripture. His Words are His revelation about Himself and about reality; what is true and what is not true, what's right and what is false. In Deuteronomy 18, the LORD promised Israel to raise up a prophet for the people like Moses. (I think He's speaking, ultimately, of Christ; to raise up a prophet like Moses.) And He said, "I will put My words in his mouth.", Deuteronomy 18, verse 18.

When prophets spoke, they spoke God's words. When apostles wrote, they wrote God's words. He breathed His words into them. That's *inspiration*, God *breathing* His words into men. That's 2 Timothy 3, verse 16, "All Scripture is inspired by God." Well, "inspired by God", literally means, "God breathed." He "breathed out" His words into and through His apostles and His prophets; the whole Word of God is God breathed, inerrant, and our authority. We cannot separate God's words from the LORD Himself, from the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We can only know Him according to the knowledge of Himself that He has given to us.

And so obviously, to know Him and grow in our love for Him, we must know His revelation—all 66 books of it. Loving Scripture is loving Him. And when we know and love Him, we want to do His will. It's then that we will 'attempt great things' for Him. Not

what we think is great, or what grand plans we wish for ourselves, but what is great and good for Him and His people.

Prayer is not the means of getting a personal wish list. James stated the problem with unanswered prayer in chapter 4 of his book, verse 3, "You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives." If you want wisdom, God gives that freely over a lifelong pursuit of it. If you want selflessness, and you want faithfulness, if you want holiness, God gives that—and He gives it in abundance through a lifelong study of His Word. That is what it really is, 'To attempt great things for God.'

For some it may be giving up home and comfort to go to a far country and evangelize, (to be what we call 'foreign missionaries'). But not for everyone; in fact, most of us are to stay here and be a *light*. And we do that miraculously, supernaturally, by the wisdom that God gives in our day-to-day lives and in serving others—putting them first just as Christ did. That's 'Christlike', He put others first.

Think of a man like Princeton professor and theologian, Benjamin B. Warfield. I speak a lot of Warfield; very impressive is B. B. Warfield who basically did two things in his long life and ministry. He taught his students faithfully year after year—and he took care of his invalid wife day after day. She became an invalid just weeks after they were married and he never left her side; he was there every day with her. Rarely traveling outside of Princeton, he took care of her.

I've known people like that. You have, too. That is, a man or woman who is 'abiding in Christ', and 'Whose Words are abiding in them'. The result: Prayers are answered; and they don't only 'attempt', they *do* great things for God and His people. What the Lord was saying here is, 'know God's Word'; 'learn the Scriptures.' It is a lifelong practice and the only way to know Christ and grow in love for Him, bear fruit, and glorify Him.

And in verse 8, the Lord returns to the idea of the vine and fruit bearing. He said by this, "My Father is glorified...that you bear much fruit..." Now He didn't state specifically what fruit is. It could involve evangelism, could involve teaching, church

planting, church building, or building orphanages as George Mueller did by faith and not by fund raising. But certainly, it is "the fruit of the Spirit" that is listed in Galatians chapter 5, verse 22; "Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" which is the character of Jesus Christ. And so it's becoming like Christ. It is chiefly in this way that, as the Lord said, they will, "...so prove to be His disciples." (vs8b).

Well, the Lord is more specific in verses 9 through 11, where He spoke of *love*, *obedience*, and *joy*. Those aren't random characteristics for there is a connection between them. It begins with *love*—and with an amazing statement, really a startling statement, about it. Jesus said to His disciples, "Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love." (vs9). Think of that.

Think of that; He loved them (*the disciples*), and us. He loved us as much as He loved them. And He loved them and us "as the Father loved" Him. How much did the Father love Him? How much did the Father love His Son? Without limit; infinitely. And that's how the Son loves us: Unconditionally and without limit. And that's how this discourse began: "...having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end." (Jn 13:1), —to the end of His life, to the end of the full measure of love.

We should remember that when we're being *pruned*, when we're going through trials and difficulties—He's sovereign; He's all wise; He knows what He's doing. And I know that when you're healthy and things are just fine, it's easy to talk like this. When you're going through the great trials, the protracted—oftentimes protracted, on-going trials of life, it's not so easy. But nevertheless it's true and we should remember that He loves us infinitely, eternally, and that everything He's doing is for our best—even when we're being pruned.

Love like that deserves a response from us—one of drawing close to Him, and abiding in Him, and obeying Him. That's what He said in verse 10; 'We are to keep His commandments'. We don't do that in a slavish, legalistic way; rather we do it from love.

I've talked about this more than once: Love is the motivation; it's the *mainspring*, as it were, for obedience, so that it is not a burden. It occurred naturally; it's what we want to do if we love Him to the degree that we love Him. So we need to abide in Him; we need to continue in communion with Him, in our relationship with Him. And as we do, love grows and increases.; our knowledge of Him increases; our appreciation and praise and thanksgiving *for* Him and *to* Him appreciates. Our love increases for Him; and that is the best life of all. It's not a burden. Far from it.

It results in joy; that's what Jesus said in verse 11. He told them this, and told us all these things, this whole discourse in chapter 15 has been told to us so that, as He said, "Your joy may be made full."

The world challenges us at that point every day, doesn't it? '*Joy, happiness, is found in following its path of self-gratification.*' And it's an attractive path; it's a very tempting way. That's why Psalm 1 begins with that; the first Psalm, which is very much like a proverb to give us wisdom. Psalm 1 begins with a warning against "the path of sinners", who David said, "are like chaff which the wind drives away." (vs4). That's what happens with the wicked, ultimately. That's what happens with 'the way of the wicked', "the path of sinners".

The good life is the obedient life. It is life in Christ, in the vine, which occurs by God's sovereign grace the moment we believe in Christ—and which can never end. And as we abide in Him we bear fruit, we have real joy, and we have a real, productive, full life. "I came that they might have life," He said, "and have *it* abundantly." (Jn 10:10). Well that's how it comes to us; that's how we have it.

Are you in Christ? Have you been put in the vine? That's the only way to bear fruit, to a joyful life, and to live to the glory of God which is eternal life. Are you there? Have you believed in Him? If not, come to Him, trust in Him, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, who loved us and gave Himself for us, and from whom we can expect great things, the greatest things. May God help you to do that.

What a great thought it is, Father, that 'Those He saves are His delight.' Why would You be delighted in a sinner like me? That's Your goodness and grace. And because of that, You'll hold us fast, every one of us, and bring us safely through the storms of this life into Your presence forever. So we thank You, Father, for that. We praise You for that, and we pray, LORD, give us a desire to hold fast to You and abide in Christ.

Now the LORD bless you and keep you. The LORD make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. The LORD lift up His countenance on you and give you peace. In Christ's name, Amen.

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