

**WCCC 1996**

**Brother Stephen Kaung**

**In Christ and Christ In Us (4)**

*John 15:1-11, "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 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. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 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. 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. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. 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. These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full."*

Let's bow our head and pray.

Lord, we really thank You and praise You. You have led us to this last session. All is grace. All is mercy. We ask that You bless Your own words so Your words can be spirit and life in us. In the name of our Lord Jesus. Amen.

The mystery of God is Christ. All the fullness of God dwells in Christ. The fullness of the Godhead dwells in Christ bodily. Why does God do this? It is because God wants us to appropriate all the riches. I remember such a story: There was a very rich man in the past. At that time, riches meant owning oxen, sheep and land. And this man had much land. He had many oxen, sheep and other livestock. And he had servants, maids and bondmen. But he had only one son. His son was sent overseas to study. When his son was a student overseas, his father became ill, almost to the point of death. So, he hurried to notify his son, and asked his son to come home quickly. But he was afraid that his son would not come back in time, so he asked a lawyer to establish a will, hoping that in case his son could not see him, things could be done according to his will. Indeed, when his son arrived home, his father had passed away. So, after the funeral, the lawyer asked everybody in the family to come so he could read the will. And so, all the family gathered in that room. The son was there. His

bondmen were there. They were waiting for the will to be read. And the lawyer started to read, and this was what the will said, "I am going to give all my property, my whole property, no matter what kind, I want to give all my property to my steward. Then I want my son to have the right to take from my steward any part of my property." When the will was read, of course the son was disappointed. He was the only son. He hoped that his father would give him all the property. But the father gave the estate to the steward, and allowed him to pick only one thing in the estate. If he wanted oxen, then he would not have sheep. If he wanted the house, he would not have the fields. So, he thought his father might be confused before he died, and he was very sad. Then the lawyer whispered something into his ear. And when he heard the words, his face brightened up. He said, "I want to abide by my father's will. He promised me to let me pick one thing out of his estate. I am going to pick now. I pick this steward." Because this steward was also a bondman, he was part of the estate. When he got the steward, he had all things. Because the father wished to give all he had to the son, yet he was not able to list everything. He was afraid he would miss something; therefore, he established this will. So, brothers and sisters, here we see why God put all His riches in Christ, because He is afraid, He may miss some grace to give to you and me. He puts all the riches in Christ bodily. If we choose Christ, we will not miss any part of the goodness. This is the wonderful love of God.

We have also mentioned how we can enter into Christ on the second morning. We know that in the gospel of John, there is this word "believe". This word has been used many times in the gospel of John. But when this word is used in the gospel of John, in the original language, there is a word added at the end. This word in Chinese is "in". So, in John's gospel, "believe", often means "believe in". Not only do we believe, we believe this Lord Jesus Christ; when we believe Him, we believe in Him. When we believe Him, God puts us in Him. So, brothers and sisters, all of us who believe in Jesus Christ are in Christ. God has already taken us out of Adam, and has put us in Christ. Because of the death of the Lord Jesus, we are dead to Adam. Because of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, we live in Christ today. Therefore, we see God has given to us all the spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ. As our brother has already said in the afternoon, God said to Abraham, "Raise your eyes to see east, west, north and south. Whatever you see is yours. And all is given to you." Also, God brought Moses to the mountain to see the land of Canaan that God has given to Israel. God said, "All this I will give to Israel." Brothers and sisters, these were what we saw yesterday morning. In Christ, God has already given us all the spiritual blessings in the heavenly places. All this is ours.

This morning I would like to move one step further. All the riches of God are in Christ, and God has also put us in Christ. And, God has also already given us

all the spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ. God said, "All this is yours." Now, how do we appropriate it? How do we experience all the riches in Christ? As the people of Israel, God had already given them the land of Canaan. Now God says, "You have to enter. Everything that the soles of your feet steps on is yours." This land is already theirs, but they are not ready to experience the riches of the land, until their foot is on the ground. It is the same for us Christians today. God has already given us all the riches in Christ, but now you have to enter and gain it.

We would like to use the Lord's words in John 15 as a basis. The night our Lord was betrayed, He and His disciples had the Passover dinner, and He established the table that we celebrate today. He spoke His last words to His disciples, and showed His disciples there was this new relationship between Him and them. When He was on earth, our Lord Jesus was their rabbi. Our Lord Jesus taught them. But His relationship with His disciples was on the side. Now, the Lord wanted to show them that He was going to leave, but after He left and returned, His relationship with them would be a new one. It would no longer be on the side but it would be an inner relationship. So, He said, "I am the true vine. My Father is the husbandman. I am the vine. You are the branches." Brothers and sisters, here we see the words "is", "am" and "are". Anytime when you see the words "is", "am" or "are", you know that this is the truth. This is something that God has already done in Christ, and this will never change. Lord Jesus said, "I am the vine." When Word became flesh, our Lord came to this earth. He is that true vine, and we are the branches. The vine and the branches are one.

Brothers and sisters, we need to see we are not united with the Godhead, but we are united with the Son of God, the Word that became flesh. It is not that we are united with the Godhead so we become God, but we are united with the Word incarnate, Son of God. And that unity allows us to enter into the riches of the Godhead. I hope brothers and sisters are very clear about this point. Our unity with God is not unity with the Godhead. If that is the case, then we would become God. We are forever man. Only God is God. We are forever man. Although this is the case, we can be united to Him in life. We are united with the beloved Son who is incarnate, because all the riches of God are in His Son. As a result, when we unite with His Son, we can enjoy all the riches of God. Truth does not change. Truth is absolute. In other words, no matter what conditions we are in, we cannot change the truth. We cannot change what God has already done for us in Christ. He is the vine. We are the branches. This is absolute. Brothers and sisters, if we have revelation in these words --our brother talked about revelation last night-- there would be a great change in our life.

A typical example of the vine in John 15 in church history is the story of Hudson Taylor. We, Chinese, are very much related to Brother Hudson Taylor. Although Hudson Taylor was British, God called him to preach the gospel in China. Hudson Taylor was the one who first spread the gospel to inland China. He offered himself to the Lord when he was young and he prepared himself to go to China to preach the gospel. When he arrived in China, most preachers would stay at the sea ports, or they lived in the Concessions. But Hudson Taylor felt, if he were to bring the gospel to the Chinese, he had to go to the Chinese people. So, he moved out of the Concession and went into where the Chinese people lived. He felt if he were to preach the gospel to the Chinese, he had to be like a Chinese. At that time, the Chinese wore a braid so he also wore a braid. He also wore Chinese clothing, and he learned to live the life of a Chinese. He worked several years, and he had some coworkers working with him.

Even though he was such a person who loved God, after several years, he had a deep feeling inside. He felt he was weak before God. He felt he had many shortcomings before God. He felt that if he did not have a victorious life, how was he able to bring the gospel to the Chinese people? Therefore, he seeks earnestly before the Lord. He fasted and prayed. He read the word of God. He hoped that he could enter into that victorious life. But after many months, although he pursued earnestly, he still felt he had not got it. He thought, "Our Lord is abundant, our Lord is powerful, our Lord is victorious. If I can draw the riches and power from the Lord, then my life would be changed drastically. But how can I come into contact with my Lord?" He said, "I must have faith." So, he prayed for faith, asking God to give him faith so that he could be united with Christ, then he could draw the riches from Him. But, no matter how he prayed, faith did not come. One day, when he was seeking, he read John 15. When he came to verse 5, "I am the vine. You are the branches.", suddenly God opened his eyes. He said, "I am seeking the Lord and asking to be united with Christ, but the Lord tells me I have already been united with Christ. He is the vine. I am the branch. I am already in Him. He is already in me. Whatever He has is mine. I do not have to beg because this is already mine. I can rest in the truth of God. "When he saw this, there was a great change in him. If you read the biography of Hudson Taylor, there is one chapter titled, "Exchanged Life". It is not the improvement of your life. It is not a little bit of power added to your life. But it is a changed life. It is no longer I, but Christ. You have already united with Christ. This is the truth. We need to accept this fact with faith, then revelation will give us this faith.

But, brothers and sisters, the Lord also shows us, besides having faith, we also need to submit if we really want to experience the riches in Him. In the Chinese Bible, in John 15, there is a word "if". In verse 4 the last part, "unless it abides in the vine". The "unless" is the word "if" in Chinese. Verse 6, "If anyone

does not abide in Me”, verse 7, “If you abide in Me”, and verse 10, “If you keep My commandments”. Anytime you see this word “if” in the Bible, the passage refers to an experience. If you find the words “is”, “am”, and “are” in the Bible, that refers to the truth. If you see the word “if”, it refers to an experience. This is very important when you read the Bible, because you have to see the truth and the experience very clearly. Truth is absolute; experience is relative. Truth does not change; experience changes all the time. Truth is what God has already done in Christ. Experience is what the Holy Spirit is going to do today in us. Truth and experience should be consistent. If you do not have truth and only have experience, this is a counterfeit and is an error. If you only have truth but do not have experience, this is only the letter, and is dead. The experience should be based on the truth. If you have truly seen the truth, then the experience should follow. If you said you have seen the truth, but you do not really have the corresponding experience, it shows that you have not had the revelation. Therefore, John 15 starts from truth and then then the experience. Many people take things out of context. When they read the Gospel of John, they say one who has already been saved can still not be saved. Because it says, “Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away, and they will be cast into the fire. ” So does it not mean that after one is saved he can still perish? If you want to take things out of context, you can say anything.

There is this excellent saying in English, “A text out of context is a pretext.” If a Bible verse is explained not based on its context, it is taking it out of context. So, brothers and sisters, when we read John 15, we have to remember the Lord is not talking about salvation. Who is He speaking to? He is speaking to the eleven disciples. These eleven disciples belong to Him. The Lord said, “You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.” John 15 does not speak about being saved or not. John 15 talks about bearing fruit. Bearing what kind of fruit? It is the fruit of the true vine, the fruit of the Holy Spirit. The believers ought to display the beauty of Christ. The life of Christ in them has to mature, and produces Christ’s character, so that God is satisfied. This is what is in chapter 15. So, brothers and sisters, we have to pay attention.

Let’s also read verse 5, “I am the vine, you are the branches.” We say this is the truth. It is already done. It will never change. You are the branches. The Lord is the vine. It continues on, “he who abides in Me and I in him.” Immediately you see the order is changed. Earlier it says, “I am the vine, you are the branches.” The Lord first, you are second. It is because He is the vine, then you can be the branches. If the Lord did not incarnate and come to this world, if there is no such vine on earth, then you and I would not be here, and we would not be the branches. But because the Lord is the vine, therefore, we are the branches. We are the branches, we do nothing. It is not that we are added onto the vine. We grow from the inside. Everything was done by the Lord, and we have received grace. But what follows says, “he who abides in Me and I in him”. The order has

changed. Here you see, “if you abide in Me, then I will abide in you. “In other words, you are first and He is second. If you abide in Him, then He abides in you. If you do not abide in Him, then He does not abide in you. Whose responsibility is it? This has become your responsibility. Therefore, brothers and sisters, we need to see when we are speaking about truth, the Lord is responsible. When we are speaking about experience, you need to be responsible. You have to take initiation. Abide in Him, and He will abide in you, then you can bear much fruit.

“In Christ” and “abiding in Christ” are two different things. “In Christ” is God putting us in Christ. You are already in Christ. To “abide in Christ”, In English we see it means always staying in Christ, making your home in Christ. As if here is a home God has already prepared for you, and you have already been born into this home. However, you don’t always stay at home, you often go out of your home. It is like the prodigal son who has left his father’s home and went far away. He thought he could find happiness in the land afar, thinking there were too many restrictions at home. In the end, he wasted all he had, and there was a famine and he could not even have the pods that the pigs were eating. This is the misery of leaving home.

Then he thought, “I have to go home. In my father’s house, there is abundance. Even the servants can eat to their satisfaction. I need to return to my father’s house.” When he went home, the whole situation was different. Brothers and sisters, we are the same. God has already prepared a home for us. We are born into this house. We enjoy the fatted calf, we enjoy the good garments, we enjoy the ring of this house, and we have the shoes from the home. All these are the enjoyment of home. We should live at home happily and contently. However, we always think what is outside is better than what is at home. We are like the prodigal son wandering out, we do not abide at home, and do not abide in Christ. I have said this before, as far as the truth is concerned, you are in Christ, you are forever in Christ. You cannot come out of Christ and you cannot go back to Adam. But, when it comes to experience, you can abide in Christ, you can also not abide in Christ. That is why in experience it is like you have left home. Dear brothers and sisters, since God has put us in Christ, we should happily abide in Christ. We should have sweet fellowship with our Lord. We should consider Christ as our satisfaction. We should not have any other pursuits outside of Christ. This is rightly so.

But, brothers and sisters, sometimes we are not this way. Therefore, the Bible tells us some branches do not bear fruit. If we are the branches of the vine, then the branch should bear fruit, because that is a very natural thing. It is not the branch that would bring fruit on its own. It is the vine that produces the fruit. It

is the life of the vine flowing into the branch and causes the branch to bear fruit. It is the same with us. It is not we who can bring forth fruit of the Spirit. It is the life of the Lord in us that bears this fruit. But the fruit is brought forth from us by Him. This is a very natural thing. A Christian should live out Christ. This is the way it ought to be. If a branch does not produce fruit, it is unnatural. It is abnormal. It is the same with Christians. We Christians should live out Christ. If we do not live out Him, we are unnatural Christians. These are abnormal Christians. But unfortunately, we have more abnormal Christians than normal Christians today. This is the same with us individually. Our time of being abnormal is more than our time of being normal.

Why does a branch in the vine not produce fruit? Perhaps the channels in the branch that let nutrients go through are clogged. Perhaps insects have made their nests there. Even though the outside is still connected, the inside is no longer cleared. If that is the case, the branch cannot bear fruit. Or, maybe this branch is broken, but is not severed even though broken. It is still hanging there. But the nutrients cannot get to it, and therefore it does not bear fruit. Brothers and sisters, we are the branches, we belong to the vine. But sometimes we have problems within, maybe we are unwilling to confess our sins, maybe we are not willing to give up our love of the world, maybe our flesh refuses to be crucified, maybe our “self” hinders the life of Christ, or maybe something happened and we stumble because of the Lord. Why does the Lord allow this to happen to me? Why does the Lord not answer my prayers? Why does the Lord not deliver me? Why didn’t the Lord remind me earlier so I wouldn’t fall into this trouble? Then you are just like a branch that is broken, the life of the Lord cannot pass through. Brothers and sisters, if that is the case, then you cannot bear fruit. You have lost God’s purpose on you.

But if the branch bears fruit, He will prune it. Among all the pruning of the trees, the pruning of the vine is the most drastic. After the gardener finishes pruning the vine, it seems nothing is left. But such pruning causes the vine to bring even more fruit. Why does God do so much pruning on us? The purpose is for you to bear more fruit.

How do I know if I am abiding in the Lord? What is the phenomenon? Here it tells us, “If you abide in Me, and My word abides in you.” The “word” here is not logos, it is rhema. It is not objective doctrine, but the Holy Spirit takes the word of God and speaks to you directly. If you abide in the Lord always, then the Lord will speak to you from within. If you cannot hear the word of the Lord, it is not that you can just go flip the Bible. Some people, when they want to know the will of God, would close their eyes to pray and open the Bible. And wherever they put their finger on is the word of God. And if you point to the place where Judas hangs himself, what would you do? You say, “No, this cannot be.” Brothers

and sisters, if you abide in the Lord, the Lord will speak to you, and you will hear His voice in the depths of your spirit. Then, no matter what you ask, He will answer, because you are asking according to His will.

How do you know you are abiding in the Lord? The Lord said, “Abide in My love.” If you abide in the Lord, you abide in His love. The love of the Lord constrains us and this proves that we abide in Him. If this is the case, we will bear much fruit. How can we abide in the Lord? What is the secret? If we read *1John 2:24 and 27*, “*As for you, let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father.*” Here we see two things. First, we have to let the word of God abide in us, we let the word of God richly dwell in our hearts, and this allows us to abide in the Lord. Verse 27, “*As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.*” On the outside there is the Bible, you have let it dwell in your heart; on the inside, there is an indwelling Spirit. He is the anointing. He will teach us. How does He teach us? He uses the word of the Lord to teach us. If we are obedient, we will abide in the Lord.

Let us bow our head and pray.

Our God, we thank You and praise You, because You have shown us that we are in Christ, and Christ is in us. This is Your perfect salvation. We worship You. We ask You to help us to trust and obey, so that Your glory can be manifested. In the name of the Lord Jesus. Amen.