

Gospel and Union with Christ — 1

(Overview)

Outline

1. What we mean by Union with Christ
2. What we mean by a Fruitful Spiritual Life
3. Why we can bear fruit and how it confirms we are born again
4. What about the branches that don't bear fruit? (Read John 15:1-11)

1. What we mean by Union with Christ

It means that we have an organic union with Christ, just like a branch has an organic union with a stem.

Before we are born again, we are organically in union with the world. The world shapes our values, and it shapes the way we think and live. It shapes our hearts. We belong to the world, and **the world loves us as its own** (John 15:19). The world is perishing, and we were perishing with the world.

But once we believed the gospel and accepted Jesus as our Saviour and Lord, God uprooted us from the world, replanting us into a new stem—Jesus. We no longer belong to the world. The world hates us as it hated Jesus. But now, **Jesus loves us as His own** (John 13:1). He loves us as much as the Father loves Him (John 15:9). In John 15, Jesus gives us a teaching about our organic union with Him, like a branch of a vine has an organic union with the stem.

John 15:19-20 "If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you."

John 13:1 It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love.

John 15:9 As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. John 15:5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in Me, and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from Me, you can do nothing."

When we are organically in union with Jesus, we will bear much fruit (John 15:5).

2. What we mean by a Fruitful Spiritual Life

By a fruitful spiritual life, we mean to live a life that exhibits the character of Jesus and be involved in His mission (to make disciples of Jesus). In other words, to be progressively transformed into His likeness (2 Cor 3:18) and to walk as He did (1 John 2:6). We could describe it as the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23), the fruit of righteousness or holiness (Phil 1:11), the fruit of praise (Heb 13:15), evangelism and making disciples that includes prayer (Mark 16:15, Matt 28:19).

John 2:6 Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.

Cor 3:18 And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit

Gal 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness and self-control. Against such things, there is no law.

Phil 1:11 Filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ — to the glory and praise of God.

Heb 13:15, Through Jesus, let us continually offer God a sacrifice of praise — the fruit of lips that confess his name.

Mark 16:15 Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.

Matt 28:19 Go and make disciples of all nations.

3. Why we can bear fruit and how it confirms we are born again

2 Peter 1:3-11 His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his glory and goodness. ⁴Through these, he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. ⁵For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; ⁶and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. ⁸If you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹But if anyone does not have them, he is near sighted and blind and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins. ¹⁰Therefore, my brothers, be eager to make your calling and election sure. If you do these things, you will never fall, ¹¹and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

God called us into union with Jesus through His glory and goodness. When we accept Jesus as Saviour and Lord, we get a package of three amazing things:

- His Divine power to live a godly life,
- His very great and precious promises (2 Cor 1:20)
- His Divine nature **permanently and actively resides** in our human nature.

Can you imagine—God's Divine nature permanently residing in a believer? This is superior to somebody influencing you, whether a parent, teacher or friend. And however great evil you may have experienced, God's nature in you can overcome it because the One (Jesus) who is in you is greater than the one (Satan) who is in the world (1 John 4:4).

You will bear fruit through all these beautiful things—starting with your faith and ending with your love for God and others (2 Pet 1:5-7).

But notice *2 Pet 1:9-10 But, if anyone does not have them, he is near sighted and blind and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins. ¹⁰Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure.*

Our faith must go beyond what we mentally believe. It must become a central and active part of all we do, resulting in a transformed life of love, obedience and prayer. We develop the virtues listed in 2 Pet 1:5-7 out of gratitude for what Christ has done for us. People who claim to be saved but continue to act the way they did before becoming believers do not understand saving faith or what God has done for them. If we do not show a transformed life and bear the fruit listed in 2 Pet 1:5-7, we may still not be saved.

Therefore, it means that when you bear fruit, it confirms that you are a branch connected to the vine's stem. The fruit does not make you born again, it does not save you, but the fruit is the result that you are born again and saved. The fruit confirms you are born again. Without fruit, there is no assurance that you are saved, even though you may regularly attend church. This explanation is also given in John 15:2, 5 below.

4. What about the branches that don't bear fruit?

John 15:2-6 He (Father God) cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit...⁵ "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit...⁶ If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.

Can we be genuinely born of God and lose our salvation? No, we cannot lose our salvation. Jesus says in the following verses:

John 10:28-29 "I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand."

John 6:37-39 All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.³⁸ For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.³⁹ And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.

Jesus emphasises this: "When I choose someone for Myself, and they hear My voice, and I take them to be My sheep and My children, that never changes. They will always be My sheep and My children, and I will raise them up on the last day."

But what about the branches Jesus says were "in Me" (John 15:2) and broken off by the Father? I believe they are nominal Christians who did not have saving faith. Therefore, they had no vital union with the stem and could show no fruit of Christlikeness in their life. The words "in Me" are used only to complete the example of vine and branches. The New Testament gives many examples of nominal branches that appear connected to the vine.

John 8:30-31,37, "As he (Jesus) was saying these things, many believed in him." Then Jesus says to "the Jews who had believed him, 'If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples.'" Later in 8:37, Jesus says to these very so-called believers, "I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you" (8:37). So, this was a "belief" that provided a kind of attachment to Jesus, but not a true one.

John 6:64 Yet some of you do not believe." For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him (Judas)

John 6:66 From this time, many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. This occurred after Jesus spoke about eating His flesh and drinking His blood. They had been a kind of disciple and kind of believer. But they had fallen away.

Summarising: There are nominal disciples and "true disciples." There are nominal believers, and there are "true believers." There are nominal branches and "true branches". All the nominal ones are not saved, and they will perish.