

Christians Who Feel the Heat

John 15.1-11

Jesus is the vine, we're the branches, God is the vinedresser. If we aren't bearing fruit, God lifts us up. If we bear fruit, He prunes us so we'll bear more fruit! But Jesus adds a warning: Those who don't abide in Him are thrown away like a branch, dry up, and are burned. What's this mean?

Option 1: Fire = God's judgment on the unsaved (hell) – No.

Question: *Who are these 'branches'?* 2 views...

- *View 1: Christians who lose their salvation*
But... *You can't lose salvation (John 10.28-29)*
- *View 2: Superficial-but-never-really-saved 'Christians'*
But... *If never saved, never had any connection to Christ!*
Abiding isn't the same as believing
"In Me" is personal, not positional
A branch is a branch is a branch...

Option 2: Fire = God's judgment on Christians – Yes.

- *Christians who disobey and don't remain in fellowship*
- *God's progressively severe discipline in this life*
Goodbye intimacy...goodbye vitality...hello punishment
- *Shame and loss of reward at the Judgment Seat*



1. In John 15.1-11, Jesus 'paints a picture' of what a relationship with Him entails. Using the imagery of a vine and its branches, with His Father as the gardener, He explains different ways the Father deals with us to enable us to bear fruit. Our responsibility as branches is to "abide in" (be dependently connected to) the vine (Jesus). In verses 7-11, Jesus expands on what abiding in Him involves, and what the experience of abiding is like. What aspects of abiding can you see?
2. John 15.6 stands out from the rest of Jesus' encouraging instruction, because it is clearly judgmental. But what judgment is Jesus talking about? Some theologians say this "fire" is a reference to hell, which means the "branches" to which Jesus refers stand for people who are not saved. Can 'branches' who have been "in the vine" (Jesus) still end up going to hell? Is "abiding" just another way of referring to a person believing in Jesus? How would you respond to the idea that the fire in John 15.6 refers to eternal hell?
3. Many English translations of John 15.8 read that if we bear much fruit, we "prove" or "show" that we are Jesus' disciples. The Greek word behind this translation is the common verb γίνομαι (*ginomai*), which simply means *to come into being, become*. How does the act of fruit-bearing cause us to *become* disciples of Jesus?
4. In John 15.2b, Jesus said that God prunes branches (Christians) who are bearing fruit, so they will bear more fruit. The pruning process is not always painless! How do we tell the difference between pruning and punishment? If you are ever uncertain which God is doing in your life, what can you do?
5. Fire often illustrates God's judgment in Scripture. For OT parallels to John 15.6, see Deut. 32.22-24; Ps. 78.21; 79.5; 89.46; Isa. 5.1-25; 9.19; Jer. 4.4; 5.10-11; 7.20; 15.14; 17.27; 31.1-40; Ezek. 15. In the NT, compare Hebrews 6.4-8.
6. Do you see a progression in the experience of a non-abiding believer in John 15.6? How would you characterize this?