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**STRIVING TO DO
 GOD'S WORK, GOD'S WAY, FOR GOD'S GLORY**

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Listen to this authoritative command, which the Lord Jesus has issued to every authentic disciple, "ABIDE IN ME and I in you, as a branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it ABIDES in the vine, 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 bears much fruit; for without me you can do nothing." The Lord Jesus Christ is issuing an emphatic imperative to every authentic branch, who has been implanted into a living connectivity with Him. The Lord Jesus Christ, who is the True Vine, is declaring, 'Since you have entered into this spiritual union with Me, I am commanding you to walk in a daily, intimate communion with Me!' Fellow disciples, this is not an option to be debated. This is a mandate from the Master! Furthermore, this divine command to abide in the Vine is in the 'present imperative tense'. This is an ordinance that is to be personally obeyed in the continual practice of your lifestyle! In other words, the weight of the responsibility to 'abide in Christ' is placed squarely at the feet of every authentic branch which is in union with the Vine.

I remind you that, 'The Lord Jesus had already promised (in John 14) that He was going back to God the Father to prepare an eternal and heavenly dwelling place for every follower of Christ Jesus. However, in John 15:4, the Lord is declaring that, 'Until you enter into that eternal abiding place in Heaven, I am going to be a 'spiritual abiding place', for you to continue dwell in!' Furthermore, the Lord Jesus is declaring that your personal compliance to this divine command to 'abide in intimate communion with the Vine' is the essential key for spiritual productivity in your life. For if your life is going to be spiritually fruitful, for the glory of the Lord,



then it is your personal responsibility to 'abide in Jesus' as your intimate, personal and spiritual habitation. For this is the vital secret that unlocks the door for 'fruitful living for the magnification of Jesus'. Our Lord and Savior is basically giving us a conditional command with a conditional promise, "If you will ABIDE in ME, then I will reciprocate by abiding in the fire and freshness of 'first love' intimacy with you."

There is a 'two fold portrait', which can be painted, as we consider this vital word "ABIDE". There is one sense in which the concept 'ABIDE' portrays the picture of an 'ENDURING CONTINUATION' in union with Christ. The word 'abide' can be defined as, 'remaining in the Lord; continuing in Christ; or persevering in Jesus'. This view of the spiritual portrait describes a person who is staying in one place of residence for a full duration of time. This critical issue of 'remaining' in union with the Vine is the primary evidence that a person's faith in the Lord Jesus is 'saving faith'; and not an artificial, superficial and temporary faith. A genuine conversion experience will always be evidenced by the reality that this bonafide disciple continues in the sphere of a 'living union with the Vine', no matter the trials, troubles, tribulations or temptations. On the contrary, those who do not persevere (abide) in Christ are manifesting that they were only externally and artificially attached to Christ. They have never entered into a living and internal connectivity to the Vine! You well recall that the 11 disciples never suspected that Judas was a false branch. However, the Lord Jesus knew all along that Judas had never been immersed into a vital union with Himself. There are many 'professing branches', within the pale of Christianity today, who are eventually exposed to be 'Judas branches'. For they do not continue in Him; they do not persevere in Him; they do not abide in Him. They went out from us, because they were never of us! Oh, but the genuine branch abides; he remains; he perseveres! (Continued on next page)

However, there is another side of the portrait of this word 'ABIDE'. For it also pictures a believer who is pursuing a daily, priority and consistent reality of 'abiding in the fire and freshness of FIRST LOVE COMMUNION with the Vine!' For beloved, the Lord Jesus Christ is not only a Savior to be trusted in; He is not only a King to be submitted to; He is not only a Teacher to be followed; He is also a HOME for you to dwell in, through daily, intimate communion with Him! The Lord Jesus Christ is an abode, which is richly furnished with everything that you will possibly need, to live a life that 'bears much fruit for the glory of God'! When the Lord Jesus gives disciples a personal summons to 'ABIDE IN HIM', He is commanding every believer to establish their 'constant and continual abiding place' in a daily, quality and intimate union with Him. The One who is the all-sufficient Vine is giving a divine dictum to every authentic branch, "to remain in the fire and freshness of a first love intimacy with Him, as the habitual residence of your life"! So that, you live your life at home in Jesus; and the Lord Jesus lives at home in you!

The King of kings is charging each one of us to remain devotedly connected to Him, as our royal residence; and to glory in all of the majesty of His kingly rule in the throne room of our heart and life. Consequently, as we walk in sweet intimacy with the Vine, we will think as He thinks; we will choose as He would choose; we will see believers as He sees them; we will see the lost as He sees them; and we will love others as He loves them. In other words, "He who says that He abides in Jesus, ought himself to walk even in the same manner as Jesus walked." So that, when it is time for you to pass through the fiery furnace of adversity, the Son of Man will be walking in the midst of the fire with you. When you must battle the flaming missiles of daily temptations, you will already be abiding in sweet intimacy with the Captain of the army of the Lord of hosts. And on that final day, when it is your appointed time to walk through the valley of the shadow of death, the Good Shepherd will be with you, guiding you through. And why? Because you have been abiding in a close and conscious communion with the Husband of your soul. Oh dear friend, the Lord did not save your eternal soul so that you would be a 'distant friend', who only communes with Him occasionally. He redeemed you so that you would abide in an intimate connectivity and living communion with Him. So that, as a direct consequence, your life and ministry will bear much fruit for the magnification of Jesus and the glory of God!

KENYAN 2017 PASTORS' CONFERENCE

I have recently returned from the 13th annual conference in the nation of Kenya. This Kenya ministry began in Bungoma, Kenya (in 2005) with less than 100 pastors and spiritual leaders. Over the following years, the attendance has blossomed to this year's conference, in which nearly 700 pastors, evangelists and spiritual leaders from all over Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda were in attendance! 100's more wanted to attend, but they could not house them. God graced me with the tremendous privilege to teach 14 sessions of an exposition of John 15:1-9. Those verses (in which our Lord employs the metaphor of the Vine, the Vinedresser and the branches) are filled with some of the most monumental treasures in the entirety of the Word of God! The Holy Spirit mightily applied the tremendous treasures in each verse, as He plumbed deeper and deeper into the hearts and lives of each the ministers, who were in this overflowing auditorium. Upon the conclusion of the teaching of verse 4 (session 7), the Spirit of God was powerfully piercing the hearts of everyone in the room! As I concluded this session, I knew that it was time to take a 30-minute break for refreshments. **HOWEVER, NOBODY MOVED** from their seats! Everyone's heart was shattered; and almost every eye was shedding the tears of repentance! God graced all of us with a touch of revival! Friends, it has been a long time since I have been blessed to be in the midst of a meeting, in which the Heavenly Wind of God was so intensely blowing on the hearts of His people. The vital truths of John 15 were effectively producing a harvest of 'a glorious refreshing of vital godliness' in the audience! The following words of testimony are written from the heart of the Director of Kenya Ministries Training Institute, Rev. George Wafula. Bro. George is one of the key organizers of this annual conference; as well as my interpreter throughout every conference, Rev. Wafula writes, **"We have just concluded a magnificent conference on "The Life That Glorifies God" (from John 15:1-9). I can personally testify that the entire conference was a tremendous blessing and spiritual success! I want to give my very sincere thanks and appreciation to all the brothers and sisters, from all over the world, who prayed for us and supported this conference. Your prayers were answered by our Lord, in a surpassingly awesome manner, in the lives of hundreds of East African spiritual leaders.**

church planters, evangelists and other church leaders from the entirety of Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda in attendance. Our leadership team had prepared for 600 hundred attendees, but we had an overflow of over 90 pastors. This was a big challenge for us; but we considered it to be a precious problem. We sought to provide a place of 'sleep and meals' for these 90 extra spiritually hungry pastors, who could not be stopped from coming to attend the Ed Lacy annual conference. God honored the meeting with His manifest presence and power, throughout each session of teaching. The Spirit of God mightily used His servant Ed, to bring out a vast treasury of truths from John 15:1-9. There was great conviction of the Spirit of God, which produced a deep confession from each of these spiritual leaders. Everyone, who attended this year's meeting, returned to their prospective places of service testifying and confessing that they had grossly misinterpreted and misapplied this passage of scripture. They had come to realize that they had been believing unsound doctrine, that was entirely different from much of what the Lord Jesus intended to teach in this vital verses! There were also several pastors who said they had misused this passage of scripture ignorantly, to throw away many sinning church members (branches that were laying on the ground); instead of seeking to 'lift them up', see them cleansed from sin and restored to a place of spiritual fruitfulness. This series of teachings from John 15 has powerfully awakened every one of these spiritual leaders. It has resulted in a profound understanding of the true teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ, in this crucial passage of scripture.

There were also several Bible college professors, from various institutes, who attended with some of their students. One of the professors came to my home, on the day following the conference. He said, and I quote, "I never imagined that John 15 contained such depths of profound truth. It seemed to me like I was attending some very important Bible exposition classes, that I desperately needed to hear. For I realized that I had not been teaching my students correctly." This Bible college professor then promised that he is planning to bring all his students to attend next year's conference. Another pastor testified to me that, 'He came to this conference with a thousand questions in his mind. But after coming under the powerful teachings of the Word of God, all his questions were answered'! And he left glorifying God. Yesterday, Bro. Fredrick Mulei and I attended a church service in Nairobi, Kenya. The pastor of this particular church was already beginning to teach the material which he had received in the conference! He told us that He has already committed to teach through the workbook on every Sunday, for the next 3 months. He has purposed to equip his flock with these vital truths, that they all desperately need. I sat there in amazement, just listening to this pastor, as he passed on what he had received to others. Friends, this was just one of the many hundreds of pastors (who were present at the conference) who will be putting into practice what they have heard. This ministry of multiplication has been the major goal of these conferences, from the very beginning in 2005. Bro. Ed, we must pour the truths, which we have received from you, into those who are able and ready to pour them into others also. Dear brother, it is happening! And I praise our Lord and God for that precious reality! My sincere thanks

A DIVINE DELAY FOR DIVINE APPOINTMENTS!

As I approached the ticket counter of British Air in Nairobi (to begin my two day journey home), I was informed by the airline agent that my plane to Heathrow Airport in London had been cancelled, because of a terrible winter storm in London. She added to the bad news by informing me that I would not be able to catch another plane for two full days! I am not ashamed to say that "my heart dropped in disappointment"! I was physically exhausted and very homesick. However brothers and sisters, the grace of God enabled me to focus on the fact that this must be a 'Divine delay for a Divine appointment'! I rejoice to testify that, "Only a few moments passed, before I was given the first appointment!" It was the cab driver who was in charge of my 35-minute drive to the hotel where I would stay. He immediately asked, "What have you been doing in Kenya?" I told him about the pastors' conference in Kitale. But I also shared that I was once an agnostic professional drummer in America. He responded with this question, "*What caused you to have such a dramatic change of careers?*" It was quite obvious (through our conversation) that he was a pagan man. For the next 30-minutes, God gave me the joyous opportunity to proclaim, "*The bad news of his terrible problem before a Holy God and The Good News of God's tremendous provision in the Gospel!*" He was absolutely enthralled by message. He asked a number of wonderfully insightful questions, which told me that he was completely plugged into the message (continued)

that I was heralding! At the conclusion of that appointment, I knew that God had orchestrated this glorious opportunity!

The next morning, I was having breakfast in the hotel restaurant, when my (approximately 25 year old) waitress asked the same question! When I informed her of the 'pastors' conference' in Kitale, she responded by saying, "When you are finished with your meal, would you please give me 10 minutes of your time? I need help!" She commenced to tell me that she and her husband had recently given birth to their first baby. As soon as the baby came into the world, her husband began being unfaithful to their marriage and abusive to her. This eventually opened another tremendous "Gospel opportunity", in which I discovered that both 'her and her husband' were lost sinners and in desperate need of the Savior. God graced me with another Divine appointment to plant the Gospel seed of the "bad news and the good news" into her heart and mind. I also had the joy of testifying about my precious wife Dianne's conversion (2 years previous to mine); her steadfast intercession for me; the changed life that she lived out before me; her multiple attempts to witness to me; which all ultimately led to my conversion! Oh precious brother and sister, I was powerfully reminded once again, that even a '2 day' plane delay is never by accident. Our God is sovereign over the snowstorms! Furthermore, He opens doors of Gospel opportunities for us, if we will fix our minds and our hearts on Him.

PLEASE PRAY FOR UPCOMING CONFERENCE IN INDIA

I am so grateful to report that the 'Christ-Centered Evangelism' study has just been translated into its 5th language in India, as well as its 11th language overall. I will soon be teaching this study to a conference of pastors from various locations in the state of Kerala, India. The conference will commence on January 15th. Please pray for this needy preacher and each pastor who will be in attendance.

Friends, Dianne and I are profoundly grateful for your love for this ministry and for us. Your continual and compassionate intercessory prayers for us; as well as, your faithful support for all of the tremendous open doors of training ministry and evangelistic opportunity to many nations is an immeasurable blessing. You are a vital part of every soul that is saved; every pastor and church planter that is trained; and every congregation who is edified, through the glorious multiplication of discipleship, which is occurring through these 'equipping conferences'. Please continue to pray that the Word of God may run swiftly and our Savior would be magnified, through each opportunity that is ahead. As we enter into a new year, it is our prayer that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful unto every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God..., as we abide in Him! We love you and thank the Lord for you.

II Corinthians 4:5

ED LACY

UPCOMING SCHEDULE

- JANUARY 10-22TRIVANDRUM, INDIA – CHRIST CENTERED EVANGELISM**
- JANUARY 31 MISSION OF HOPE – MOBILE, AL**
- FEBRUARY 18-22PAMPA BIBLE CHURCH – TEXAS
(CHRIST CENTERED EVANGELISM)**
- MARCH 4-8 FELLOWSHIP BAPTIST CHURCH – STEINHATCHEE, FL**