

**John 15:16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and I set you that you should go forth and bear fruit and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in my name, He may give you.**

### THE LORD'S PURPOSE AND HIS COMMAND

The Lord said, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you." This choosing transpired in eternity past. Before the foundation of the world, the Lord chose us in Himself (Eph. 1:4). Then in time we were born, and eventually we heard the gospel and believed. By this we know that we have been called, yet we must realize that we have also been set. The Lord set us in a certain position and in a particular environment. The Lord said, "I set you that you should go forth and bear fruit." The Greek for *should* in this verse has two moods. One is the mood of purpose; the other is the mood of command. The word *that* denotes purpose, and the word *should* denotes command. We see the Lord's purpose, and we also have a command from the Lord. We should go forth, and we should bear fruit. These are commandments. The Lord set us in a certain position because He has a purpose—*that* we should go forth and bear fruit. Yet this is not only the Lord's purpose; it is His command—we *should* go forth and *should* bear fruit. Furthermore, the Lord continues, "And *that* your fruit *should* remain." How could our fruit remain? It depends on us. We have to do a lot to carry out the Lord's commands. We should go forth, we should bear fruit, and our fruit should remain. Otherwise, the Lord's purpose cannot be accomplished, and His goal cannot be reached.

To bear remaining fruit is not easy, yet it is the Lord's command. If you do not go forth, you are disobeying the Lord's command. When the Lord comes, you will have to face Him and give Him an account. The Lord may ask, "How much fruit have you borne?" You may say, "Lord Jesus, it was too hard. I never went forth." In John 15 following abiding, that is, following the enjoyment of Christ, there is the matter of fruit-bearing. The Lord may say, "In John 15 I charged you that you should go forth and bear fruit and that your fruit should remain." If you do not go today, one day you will be judged by the Lord. Even if you do go forth, yet you would not endeavor to bear fruit, the Lord will condemn you.

To go forth is one thing; to bear fruit is another. To get married is one thing; to deliver a child is another. To get married is not hard; it is an enjoyment. But to deliver a child is a kind of suffering, travailing. The mother must suffer not only on the day of its delivery; she has to suffer for nine months. After the child is born, she must spend all her time and energy so that it will grow and be healthy. Not only should her child "remain," but it must remain in a proper way. The Lord Jesus spoke in a detailed way concerning bearing fruit because this is not a simple thing to do.

### OUR PRAYER FOR REMAINING FRUIT

Now we must consider the remaining portion of verse 16: "That whatever you ask the Father in My name, He may give you." Again the Lord used the word *that*. The Lord set us *that* we should go forth and bear fruit, *that* our fruit should remain, and *that* whatever we ask in His name, the Father may give us. The last point in this verse is to pray not merely in a general way but to "ask...in My name." The Lord does not intend for us to ask for material things. The Lord's intention is for us to pray purposely for remaining fruit. Even if we would go forth and bear fruit, and even if we were able to labor much to keep the fruit, our fruit still might not remain.

After doing so much, one thing remains—we have to ask. We may be able to preach, baptize, and bring people to the church meetings, but we cannot give life. Paul says, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God caused the growth" (1 Cor. 3:6). We must admit our dependence on the Lord. We can and should do a lot, but whatever we do will not produce the result. The result comes from the Lord's direct work. However, His direct work depends on our work. We have to go forth, we have to bear fruit, and we have to work that the fruit will remain. However, whatever we do without His additional doing means nothing.

The final thing that is needed is our asking. We have to pray in a particular way. To ask in His name is to ask for remaining fruit. We must pray, "Lord, I went forth. I worked hard. I preached the gospel to this one. I baptized him and visited him regularly for more than one year. I even brought him into the church meetings, but thus far, there is nothing promising that I can see within him. Lord, what is needed is Your

work. I can do a lot, but I cannot give life. I may bring a hundred into the church life, but without Your additional work, the giving of life, my labor is vain.”

This does not mean that our labor is not needed. Without Paul’s planting and Apollos’ watering, the Lord could not have given life. We must lay the base with our labor. Then the Lord can give life. We need to ask the Lord for remaining fruit.

### **HAVING A START OF FRUIT-BEARING**

We all must realize that we have been set to go forth and bear fruit, so we should all have a start. We were set with a purpose and a command that we should go forth. To go forth is to have a start. The Lord has set us in the race, so we have to run. If we never have a start, nothing will change; we will remain in barrenness. We must hate our barrenness and endeavor to bear fruit. We were chosen for the start of fruit-bearing. We all need a start. Then after being chosen and after starting, we need to be disciplined. We need to go out but not in a natural way. Being natural even a little bit can kill our purpose and annul our effectiveness. We all must have a spirit to learn. Anything that is old or natural must be crossed out. We have to be disciplined. In addition, we need a lot of prayer. When we pray, we touch the Spirit. This will change us, disciple us, and cross us out. Only the Lord Spirit can change us, so we must have adequate prayer for us to be disciplined. We also need to ask the Father in the Lord’s name for the giving of life to produce the remaining fruit.

Many Christians love John 15 because it teaches us how to abide in the vine, how to enjoy the riches of Christ. However, in verse 16 the Lord said, “You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and I set you that you should go forth and bear fruit and that your fruit should remain.” The Lord did not choose us without a purpose. His choosing was for His setting. He has set us for three things: first, we should go forth; second, we should bear fruit; and third, our fruit should remain. In this matter we have no choice; the Lord requires that we accept our being set.

Regardless of how much we have spoken concerning this, there are some who think, “That is good! There is nothing wrong with preaching the gospel. If the Lord has burdened that brother so much, then he should go. But I do not feel burdened to go. Surely, if the Lord wanted me to go, He would have burdened me.” We may not speak this, but this may be in our heart. One day when we stand before the judgment seat of Christ, we will have to give an account of what we have done. If we have not been faithful, we will have to tell the Lord why we did not bear fruit, and the Lord will rebuke us. He may even remind us of this message concerning John 15:16 and ask why we would not take His charge to bear fruit.

Some say that they are busy and do not have any time. This is not true. If our house were on fire, we would not say, “I am too busy. I do not have time to take care of the fire.” What we have time for depends on what we consider is more important. But regardless of whether we have the time or not, whether it is in season or out of season, we have no choice. It is not up to us. He is the Master, and He has charged and is still charging us to go forth and bear fruit. He will not let us go. This is very serious. If we do not bear fruit, we will be cut off from the enjoyment of the riches of the vine (vv. 2a, 6).

### **BEING SERIOUS AND DESPERATE TO GO FORTH AND BEAR FRUIT**

If we see that we have been charged by the Lord, we will have a heart to carry out a successful contact with the sinners. We must be serious, earnest persons. We all have to do a job to make a living. The sisters, as wives and mothers, have to take care of their households. But if they have seen that they have been charged by the Lord, their hearts will not be fully occupied with their households. Although they take care of their responsibilities properly, their deep desire should be to go out to visit people with the gospel, to contact and gain sinners.