

# John 15:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

## Analysis

**If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch** (ean me tis mene en emoi, eblethe exo hos to klema)—The aorist passive eblethe (was cast) indicates decisive action. The conditional 'if not' (ean me) presents the alternative to abiding: not gradual decline but immediate severance. **And is withered** (exeranthe)—The aorist tense again, pointing to completed action. A branch severed from the vine cannot gradually wither; it is already dead, withering merely manifests the prior spiritual death. **Men gather them, and cast them into the fire** (kai synagousin auta kai eis to pyr ballousin)—The plural 'them' after singular 'man' suggests corporate judgment. Withered branches have one destination: fire. **And they are burned** (kai kaietai)—Present tense, ongoing burning. This evokes Ezekiel 15:1-8, where useless vine wood (unsuitable for timber) is fit only for fuel. The vine's sole value is fruit-bearing; fruitless branches are worthless.

The verse's force lies in what it doesn't say: it never states these branches were genuine believers. Christ's metaphor describes profession without reality—religious affiliation without spiritual life. The branch 'cast forth' (exo) was never truly 'in' Christ salvifically. Judas, present at this discourse, exemplifies this: outwardly a branch, inwardly already severed (John 13:10-11, 27). Reformed theology distinguishes covenant relationship (visible church) from saving union (invisible church)—many are 'in' the vine externally but not vitally.

## Historical Context

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This passage sparked intense debate over apostasy and assurance. Arminians cite it proving saints can 'fall away'—genuinely regenerate believers can lose salvation by failing to abide. Calvinists counter that truly saved persons persevere; those who 'fall away' were never saved (1 John 2:19). The Council of Orange (529 AD) affirmed perseverance while acknowledging professing Christians can apostatize. The Synod of Dort (1619) established the 'P' in TULIP—Perseverance of the Saints: true believers endure because God preserves them. The Westminster Confession (1646) distinguished apostasy from backsliding: genuine believers may grievously sin but cannot totally or finally fall. The Keswick movement (1875+) emphasized 'abiding' as the key to victorious Christian living, sometimes treating it as optional for believers, contradicting the verse's warning. Modern 'Free Grace' theology debates whether genuine Christians can be fruitless, citing this verse both ways.

## Related Passages

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**1 Corinthians 13:4** — Characteristics of love

**John 15:13** — Greatest form of love

## Study Questions

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1. Does 'cast forth as a branch' describe loss of salvation for genuine believers, or exposure of false professors who were never truly 'in' Christ?
2. How should the terrifying imagery of burning shape pastoral ministry—emphasizing warning or emphasizing assurance?

## Interlinear Text

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ἐὰν μή τις μείνῃ ἐν ἐμοί βάλλουσιν ἔξω ὡς τὸ<sup>1</sup>  
G1437 G3361 a man abide in me cast forth as G3588  
G5100 G3306 G1722 G1698 G906 G1854 G5613

κλῆμα καὶ ἔξηράνθη καὶ συνάγουσιν αὐτὰ καὶ εἰς<sup>2</sup>  
a branch and is withered and men gather them and them into  
G2814 G2532 G3583 G2532 G4863 G846 G2532 G1519

πῦρ βάλλουσιν καὶ καίεται  
the fire cast and they are burned  
G4442 G906 G2532 G2545

## Additional Cross-References

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**Matthew 7:19** (Parallel theme): Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

**John 15:2** (Parallel theme): Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

**Matthew 13:41** (Parallel theme): The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;

**Matthew 3:10** (Parallel theme): And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

**Hebrews 10:27** (Parallel theme): But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

**2 Peter 2:20** (Parallel theme): For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.

**1 John 2:19** (Parallel theme): They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

**Revelation 20:15** (Parallel theme): And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

**Ezekiel 17:9** (Parallel theme): Say thou, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Shall it prosper? shall he not pull up the roots thereof, and cut off the fruit thereof, that it wither? it shall wither in all the leaves of her spring, even without great power or many people to pluck it up by the roots thereof.

**Isaiah 14:19** (Parallel theme): But thou art cast out of thy grave like an abominable branch, and as the raiment of those that are slain, thrust through with a sword, that go down to the stones of the pit; as a carcase trodden under feet.