

Title: The Vine, The Branches, The Vinedresser

Text: John 15:1-11

(2A) We are looking at the Instructions of Jesus to His followers. He is preparing them for His departure, His resurrection, and what He wants them to do after His ascension. It all began around the Lord's table in chapter 13. Then at the end of chapter 14, they got up from the table and left the upper room to walk to the Garden of Gethsemene. As they walked along they passed some vines and branches. And Jesus takes the opportunity to continue His teaching ministry with them.

Dear friends, take your Bibles and turn with me to John chapter 15. We come today to the Parable of the Vine, The Branches, and The Vinedresser. There is food for all of us here in this parable. This is the banquet table of the Lord. And, Oh, how we need to sit down at the table and eat.

(6B) John chapter 15..The Instructions of Jesus Concerning Our relationship to Christ as explained, here, in this parable.

John chapter 15 beginning with Vs 1...(Read Vs 1-11)

PRAYER

(1C) Now, first of all, in Verses 1-2, we find a discription of the Vine, the Branches, and the Vinedresser. WHO ARE THEY?

(1D) First, the Vine. Jesus said in Vs 1.."I am the true vine." So, Jesus is the Vine.

The word "true" is not used in the sense of a comparison: Like..true Vs false. It is true in the sense of type..Meaning: 'genuine.'

The reason I point this out is because in the O.T. the vine is applied to Israel. Israel is called "the vine."

And Jesus is simply saying that "I am the true vine." I am that which Israel was a type of. I am the fulfillment. The Messiah, himself. The genuine vine. The real thing. *So Jesus is The Vine*

(2) Secondly, in this ^{discussion} illustration, the Father is the vinedresser. This carries with it the idea of a cultivator. This is referring to a person who washes the branches. He goes down the rows and washes the branches with water. He would clear off insects that might be on the branches. Or, any moss that might be forming. He would clear off all foreign matter that doesn't belong on the branches. And this was a continuous process. Because if you kept the branches clean, you would have better grapes and a more fruitful harvest.

WHAT AN ILLUSTRATION! The Father is the cultivator. And He is the one that goes through the vineyards and keeps the branches clean. BEAUTIFUL!!!!

Now, He is cleaning the branches. And this is telling us about the love of the Father. Because He cares for the branches. He cleans them so that they will produce more fruit. You see, God isn't really trying to punish the Christian. He is not working overtime to prove that He is against you. The Father loves the branches. He cleanses us so that we would be more productive. God wants you to produce good fruit in your life. The fruit of the spirit... YES...But, also, the fruit that the Spirit bears and produces. Which is the fruit of bringing others to know Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

I believe, dear friends, that God wants every Christian to be a soul winner. I don't think there is any question about that. He who winneth souls is wise, says the Bible. The Bible tells us that those who go forth winning souls will at the second coming of Christ come forth rejoicing with the fruit of the harvest. And I believe the Lord really wants us to understand and live by this principle. That we should have children in the faith. That we should be soul winners for Jesus.

Paul wrote in Hebrews 5:11-14, "I wish that you were teachers, but you have need that one teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God."

of the oracles of God. And you have come to need milk and not solid food. For solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil."

The problem is that many of us are spiritual immature. We are new babies in christ even through we have known the Lord for a long time. We hate to admit that because it is embarrassing. Especially if you have known the Lord for many years, and yet you are a new baby in Christ. That is embarrassing

And to complicate the matter the more busier you are in christian service the worse the problem becomes. Because you really do not build christian maturity on service alone. Christian maturity comes as a result of the application of the word of God to life and service. God wants people to reproduce. Paul wrote that there are not many Fathers around. As you grow through the stages of christianity, you go from a new born babe to a toddler. Then you grow to a little child who needs discipline from the father. Then to grow into a young man who knows what victory is all about. You know victory because you are strong in the Word of God. And the word is ~~app~~ abiding in you. But, finally you become a Father or Mother. A ~~par~~ Father or mothers need is to reproduce after his own kind. God wants you to be a spiritual Father or mother, so that you can win people in the faith. And then to bring them along to do exactly the same thing.

So, I ask you. How many children do you have in the Faith?.....
How many FOLKS have you led to Christ!
This is God's will. You are to bear fruit, friends. That is it. Don't run away from it. Don't try to spiritualize the text. If you are spirit directed, and the fruit of the spirit is being manifested in your life, that fruit is going to reproduce after its own kind.

and You are going to see others come to receive Christ through your life. The Vinedresser ^{is the Father who} has only one goal. And that is to cause you to bear more fruit. To become more productive in your life as a believer.

(3) ~~the~~ Third ^{in this description we are} illustration ~~is that~~ of the branches. The branches are the believers. In the context it was spoken of the disciples. But it is applied to all believers, here.

Now, some folks incorrectly believe that some of the branches are believers and some are non-believers. AND THAT IS NOT TRUE...

Notice vs 2.. "every branch in me that doesn't bear fruit, he takes away." So, some folks have conclude that that means that you are not saved. Therefore it couldn't refer to christians. And they re-inforce their opinion by Vs 6... "If anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."

Therefore, that is referring to Hell and the judgement of God. So, *They say that*
Jesus is talking to both un-believers and believers.....~~WRONG!!!!~~

YOU say - How do you know that?
Friends, these branches are referring to believers. And believers only. The little phrase "in him", or, "in me" is always referring to believers. If you are a branch "in me" you are a believer. *IT IS Talking about your Position in Christ*

Thus, the issue is not salvation. The issue is bearing fruit. The issue is being a productive Christian. It is not dealing with salvation at all.

But being a productive Christian
~~O.K. this is talking about believers.~~ *Now* And that is very important to remember because *it* will effect your interpretation and how you apply all of this to your life. *EASY TO understand*
EASY TO apply - Hard to accept applicat

By the way, the little phrase "he takes away" in Vs 2 couldn't refer to salvation anyway. Because that is not the heavenly Father's ministry. The Father doesn't do that to the unbeliever. The Bible specifical says in John 5:22 "that the Father judges no man, but he has given all judgment to the son." So, even if we tried to apply this to salvation, it would be in contradiction to the Bible. Because the Father does not do that. However, the heavenly Father does cleanse his children so that they do bear more fruit. The issue of final judgement He committed unto his son, Jesus Christ. So, the branches are referring to believers. *The Vine is God The Father*
The Vines are men

Now, secondly, notice this matter of the discipline of the branches. This is the process whereby God puts you through testing. Why?....Why does God put the believer through periods of testing? *Why?*

You get into an auto accident

You get sick and have to go to the hospital. A recession comes along and you lose your job. A wife has to go to work to help support the family. There are all kinds of things that come into our life. And we ask, WHY?

Listen, God knows what He is doing. The Father loves the ~~vines~~ ^{Branches}. He is not trying to destroy the ~~vines~~ ^{Branches}. He is trying to clean them up so that we will be more productive. And we ought to be thankful for that. God will not let ~~you~~ go on in the same old way. ~~We~~ try and then then the Lord comes along in His loving way and disciplines us a little bit. Not because he is trying to punish us. But, because He is trying to make us more productive. He will not let you go on like you are going on. That is what the discipline of the ~~vine~~ ^{Branches} is all about.

Now, let's look at it. Vs 2.. "Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, he prunes, or, cleanses it, that it may bear more fruit. (Vs3) You are already clean (this word means "clean" by washing with water), you are clean because of the word which I have spoken to you."

Therefore, the purpose of discipline according to this text, is that we would bear more fruit. Therefore, you should never be bitter at what you are going through. God is only going to make you more productive. I have ~~discovered~~ discovered that to be true in my own life. Yet, I am not going to stand here and say, "HAY, PRAISE THE LORD, I AM GOING TO GET SAPPED TOMORROW!" Or, something like tht.

The book of Hebrews says that :all discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful." And I have noticed that that is so true. It is really tough to go through it. But, afterwsrds "it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness, to those who have been trained by it."

Now, maybe you are young either in age or in the faith; and you may say, "I have never been disciplined like that." Well, cheer up. You will...God will discipline you. Because the ~~vine~~ ^{Branch} must be cleansed so that it can bear more fruit. And if you are a mature christian, and you have been saved for many, many years, you know one thing..that you ~~never~~ ^{never} get over your need of cleansing....

You know, those vines in Palestine, some of them really get old. They could stand there with their leaves shining in the sun and say, "Yes, I have born fruit. Yes, these many seasons, I have done my part.

But, I want to tell you something. The vinedresser will still come through those vineyards cleansing those old vines. You see, God never stops with you. You may have been serving the Lord for many, many years. And maybe you have been very productive during all those years. And then "bang" God hits you with a little discipline. And you say, "How come He did that to me. I have been faithful to Him?"

That is why He did it to you. So, that you would be more productive. So, you wouldn't set down and say that there are no more Sunday School Classes for me to teach. God doesn't want anybody to stop. He will put you through some things in order to get your attention. Because he wants you to bear more fruit. He wants you to be more productive.

Did you know that the Bible teaches that the older you get the more productive you can become? Hay! isn't that good news. All of you over 70, should really get excited. The Bible teaches that the old person can serve in ways that the young immature could never serve. You can be more productive and more fruitful. And I think that is tremendous.

But, the point is that the heavenly Father puts us through ~~a lot of~~ discipline and cleansing because He is working on us. His purpose is that we become more fruitful. *That we might grow in the grace of knowledge of J.C.*

~~Now, the process is by cleansing. The process is not by confession of sin. The process is by cleansing. The vinedresser cleanses the branches.~~

O.K. How? How does God cleanse your life and my life so that we will be more productive? How does He do it? ^{ANSWER} Through or by means of the WORD OF GOD.

Psa. 119:9 says, "How shall a person cleans His way? By taking heed according to thy Word. They wored have I hid in my heart, that I may not sin against thee."

The Word of God builds up a resistance in your life. As you renew your mind in the Word of God, ^{on a daily Basis} a resistance is built against temptation.

As you yield yourself to God, you will continue to build up a resistance to that sin. And eventually you will wind up being a slave to God and his Word. ^{But} If you make the choice to yeild to sin, it will be easier to the second time. And eventually you will wind up and you will discovery that you are a slave to sin.

~~No, You will continually be tempted all of your life... All of your life you will be tested.~~

^SBut, the issue is whether or not you will yield to that test. Because ^{what} ~~whom~~ ever you yield to over a pattern of ^{Time} life, you will eventually wind up being the slave to. And if you resist sin you will discovery the next time it will be easier because you have been yeilding to God....It is temendous the application the Word of God has in our life; and the ~~effect~~ effect it has in cleansigg us. *It is important to be daily, in the Word of God*

You see, the one thing standing in the way of each person being fruitful is sin. The old sin problem. Everyone of us is tempted. But the Heavenly Father comes forth and ~~he~~ he begins to cleanse the vine through the Word of God. So that we will be more productive. People are productive not because they know certain technices, or because they speech well. People are productive because God has made them that way. He has cleansed them.

Many of us do not see that. We continue to go on in our sin. Some of our worost sins fall into the category of unbelief. We simplyly don't believe God could use us. We denie what the Word of God really says. There isn't a person ~~here~~ whom God doesn't want to use to bear fruit for his glory. And this is a tremendous thing. When there is sin in the life and in the camp and it goes unconfessed, and we ~~entertain~~ entertain it and covet it, the Lord isn't responding to us in terms of bearing fruit. But be careful if you establish that pattern of sin because the heavenly father is going to do to you the same thing that I do to my children....~~He~~ He is going to discipline you.... WHY?...Because he wants you to be fruitful. He loves you. The lord loves ^{Those} ~~he~~ whom he disciplines. As a Father does his own son....Very important.

In Ephesians 5:26 the Bible says that Christ cleanses the church by washing it with the water of the word.

Now, there are two things that our Lord is saying here.

(1) One, is the impossibility of a branch bearing fruit without being connected to the vine. Or, let me put it this way. If you think that you can bear fruit without the power of Christ, you are nuts....

Now, I know that is Harrison 1:1; but really that is what it is saying. It is not talking about salvation. It is talking about abiding in Christ. And christians being fruitful. If you think that you can produce fruit in your life as a christian without christis power in you, forget it...You can not do it. *You need his power*

Oh, you might do some things that onewould call ~~vanir~~ ^{Veneer} christianity. You know, you can look like you are doing the right thing....But the only way God's fruit is produced in your life is through God's life in you.

Philippians 2:13 says "it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to do his good pleasure."

Half the time we are frustrated because we have forgotten to relax and remember that God's power is in us... We are working over time and ~~produce~~ producing that which God says he will produce himself.

Philippians 1:6 says "being confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus."

You see, God is powerful. It is the presence of almighty God in me. And he can perform all that needs to be performed in ther terms of producing fruit.

(2) *Admends* ~~I believe~~ there is a second truth that is taught in Vs 5 when Jesus said: "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing."

And the truth is the inability of believers doing anything apart from the power of Christ. It is impossible for a branch to bear fruit without being connected to the vine. That makes sense.

Now, make the application. Believers are tatally unable to do anything apart from the life of Christ.

You know, when I make that statement, I know there are those who will disagree.

and out

I know there are people who are questioning that statement. To say that you are nothing without God's life in you. To say that there is nothing you can do. That is hard to swallow, especially if you have been programmed to believe in the worth of the individual and in the goodness of man. I know it is hard to accept. To say that you are nothing apart from the life of Christ. Now, I don't have to worry about interpretation here. Because Jesus said it. He made it very clear. "FOR APART FROM ME YOU CAN DO WHAT?..... "NOTHING"..... And that means just what you think it means. There is no option. There is nothing left out. It isn't some of the things that you can do and Christ does the big ones...NO...That isn't the way it is...NOTHING WITHOUT HIM..

So, what should we learn from that? We are dependent upon the power of God...Begin to realize that. Let it sink into your life. DEPENDENT UPON GOD'S POWER IN YOUR LIFE.

Not dependent upon your own strength. What is the difference between some folks who seemingly have the ability to win people to Christ, and those who do the exact same thing and ~~don't~~ *produce any results?*

While there are many different circumstances, nevertheless God is working through individuals. So, why does he use some folks and not others? Many times it comes down to a simple little issue. One is trusting God, even though they do not have the right words or say it the right way, but they are depending upon God's power. The other person is not...even though they may have the right words and say it the right way. It is God's power...

Fact also, there is a warning of not bearing fruit mentioned in Vs 6.

Jesus says "if anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned... Remember - We are talking about Believers

Notice it says, "they are burned." That is the branches that are not bearing fruit. They are burned. Now, what is he referring to? Is that eternal condemnation? No, it is that speaking about believers who are not doing what they are supposed to be doing productive?

I would like you to turn to I Cor. chapter 3, please. We have here a very good illustration of what we are talking about. I Cor. chapter 3:10....

(Read I Cor. 3:10-15)

QUESTION: WHAT IS BURNED?...The man or his work? ANSWER: "His Work."
If any man's work is burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet, so as through fire."

Now, the passage clearly teaches that at the judgement seat of Christ which is for believers, mentioned in Romans 14:10 and 2 Cor. 5:10, in addition to this passage, the works, the produce of the believer, the fruit of the believer, will be put to the test of the fire. If your work has been consistent with the scripture it will not burn. So, the branch that is cast forth that does not abide in the Vine, that is burned ...is dealing with the product of fruitfulness. The fruitfulness that comes out-off the vine.

Now, please think about the two items that are put to the test, here in I Cor. chapter 3. The two kinds of believers. Which I believe in context are either carnal or spiritual. Vs 3 says.."you are yet carnal or fleshly."

Now, look at this carefully. In Vs 12, it is gold, silver, and precious stones. WHAT HAPPENS TO GOLD, SILVER, AND PRECIOUS STONES THAT IS SUBMITTED TO THE FIRE?....WHAT HAPPENS?.....It purifies it. Fire makes it more beautiful.

BUT WHAT HAPPENS TO WOOD, HAY, AND STRAW WHEN IT IS SUBMITTED TO FIRE?
It burns up.....

So, I believe there is an important truth here. That one day the work of every christian will be tested by the fire of God's own judgment. And that which is done for the Lord will be purified and made beautiful. But, that which is done for self will be destroyed. Thus, the issue is rewards *not salvation*

Now, coming back to John 15, the issue of bearing fruit is towards rewards and deals with the product of a believers life. *And that is the danger we face. It is called complacency in a christian's life*

abiding

of the UN-fruit?

O.K. in light of all of this, what is the danger of not bearing

I believe there are two things involved.

(1) One is that you lose all rewards. You may set here and say, "What does it mean to lose rewards? After all I am going to be in heaven. Why should it matter to me that I lose rewards?"

you see A carnal believer acts that way. *you see* First of all, if your pattern of life is continual in sin, you have no guarantee by your pattern that you are really in Christ. The Bible warns people who continue in a pattern of sin that they are reflecting what it is like to be an unbeliever. And there are many folks who think they are saved. And merely profess that they are Christians. But their pattern of life proves they are not *Christians*

So, If you are continuing in a known pattern of sin, un-repentent and refusing to give it up, you had better examine yourself whether or not you are saved. I know one thing that when your heart is insistent to the Lord and you sin, man it hurts. It really hurts. And you feel it in your response between you and the Lord. And you know that you have grieved the Holy Spirit. *But* Listen, if you are insistent to this right now, and you are continuing in a pattern of sin, the Bible concludes that your pattern gives you no evidence that you are saved. As a matter of fact, it proves just the opposite. The Bible teaches that people who continue in a pattern of sin will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Open

So, I warn you about that kind of thinking. We ought to be productive. Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:10, that we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, unto good works. God wants us to be productive. And He designed us to be so. So, it could be very dangerous if you are not productive.

(2) Secondly, not only lose of rewards, but we lose the whole purpose as to why we are here.

You know, the Bible teaches that when we *are abiding in Christ* bear much fruit the Father is glorified. The reason we were created and designed *we were saved* was to bring glory to the Father. And when we are not *abiding in Christ* bearing fruit, we are not fulfilling the purpose of why we are here. No wonder Christians are discouraged, frustrated, never having Christian victory.

And the reason is that we get our eyes off of what God wants us to do. The real danger about believing in "eternal security", which I definitely believe, but the real danger is that we get to thinking that because we have our ticket to heaven it doesn't matter what we do in our lives. We believe that we can do what ever we want to do. That is dangerous. And if that pattern continues it only proves that we have not been born again.

There is real danger, also, in the fact that the Bible teaches that a Christian who is a dirty branch, he has insects eating away at his productivity, he has sin in his life, the Bible teaches that if you are a believer and you continue in that pattern of sin, there is a sin unto death. God will not only judge you physically in terms of illness or decease, but I Cor. 11 says that some are weak and sickly among you. Which means that some sickness is the result of sin. But, also, some are dead.

I John 5:16 says that there is sin unto death. Not a particular sin. But sin unto death. A pattern of sin that leds to death. Physically death. God will remove you and take you out-off the world because of your bad testimony.

Dear friends, we need to believe the Word of God. It is dangerous not to bear fruit. And if you are sensistive to the Lord, to not hear him say, "well, done thy good and faithful servant" ..to me is a great lose. I want one thing in my life and that is that it be counted for Christ that when I hear His evaluation..it isn't what other folks have said/..it is what Jesus has said.. His well done good and faithful servant. That is more important than what anybody has said. ^{SO} And the issue is what God things of you. Not what others may think.

Dear friends, will your life....will my life...stand the test of His jugsmnt? This is very, very important...

Let's close with a word of prayer

(5C) Then finally, Jesus outlines the discipleship that is needed for everyone of us in order to ^{abide in Christ} bear fruit. The discipleship that is needed. And there are three simple things, here, that are very important for your life in order to ~~be a productive Christian~~ ^{abide in Christ and be a productive Christian} bear fruit.

(1D) Number one, deals with the power of His Word. Vs 7 says, "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you." WOW! That is fantastic. *Power in Prayer* *Prayer in His Name*
Pray to Glorify God

How would you like to have a prayer life like that? Whatever you ask it is done. Well, dear friends, you can. If his word abides in you .. you will have that kind of prayer life. Because His will is revealed in His Word. You can ask whatever you want to and God will do it when His word is abiding in you.

WHAT A TREMENDOUS PROMISE

(2D) Secondly, in terms of the production of much fruit, in Vs 8 Jesus says: "By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples."

Now, when you come to Christ, you receive Jesus as your savior, you ARE A DISCIPLE. A disciple is a follower of Christ. But, our Lord also taught that discipleship is a pattern of maturity and growth. It is called "growing in the Lord." And God want mature believers..or christians.

Now, what is a mature christian. According to our passage, a mature christian is the one who is bearing much fruit. Now, that means that all of these things that we have been discussing here in John 15 has happened. You are abiding in the vine, the Father has cleansed you, you have learned to handle his discipline and now you are bearing fruit. That means that you are 'producing new Christians A mature christian is one who is witnessing...leding others to christ..inviting other to christ and his church. As Vs 8 says.."When you bear ~~fruit~~ fruit, you prove to be His disciple.

(3D) And third, the pattern of obedien^{that}ce that is always characteristic of the disciple. Look at Vs 9 and 10: "Just as the Father has loved me, I have also loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love; just as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in His love.

Obedience is the proof that you are abiding in Christ. ^{you understand} You see, ^{it} all comes back to that basic principle that we learned last Sunday. The basic principle of discipleship. In John 14:15 ^{Jesus} says, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And ^{his} commandment is to abide in ^{his} word..in his love..in the vine...^{To Bear Fruit} And all of that becomes proof that ^{you} love him.

And what is the result? Vs 11.. "Your joy will be made full." Man'. you will be filled up with Joy...Praise God...

Let's close in prayer

True Story -