

The Vine and the Branches: Picture of the Christ-Life

On this Sunday in our discipleship series we are discussing the Christ-life or exchanged life. This is the essence of the victorious Christian life. One of the best illustrations of this life is given to us in John 15 in the analogy of the Vine and branches. There are two key thoughts I want to implant in your hearts with this study in John 15. 1) Jesus said, "...without me ye can do nothing...." 2) Then our Lord also said, "...so shall ye be my disciples." This is after He said, "*Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit...*" (John 15:8). So fruit-bearing is the outworking of Christ within us.

Notice:

1. The Resource of the Vine

Christ is the True Vine. He alone is the sole resource giving to us everything we need in this life. "*And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power*" (Colossians 2:10). "*Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours*" (1 Corinthians 3:21). Let us not chase that which is unprofitable.

King David was exasperated running from Saul. He finally asked, "*After whom is the king of Israel come out? after whom dost thou pursue? after a dead dog, after a flea*" (1 Samuel 24:14). What an amazing comparison. David is saying, "Your Majesty, why would you, the king chase me like this? You might as well chase after a worthless flea or dead dog. This behavior is not only non-productive, it is useless!" To seek the things of this world is also useless. Our Lord said: "*...Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth*" (Luke 12:15). Let us follow the advice of the prophet Amos, "*Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night: that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The LORD is his name*" (Amos 5:8). When we tap into the True Vine, we find the Might that made the stars, Who can turn the darkest night to day!

2. The Ruin or Replenishment of the Branch

Jesus said, "*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*" (John 15:2). Our Lord's goal is fruit. We understand that a person who is a Christian does not get ousted from the family of God (Isaiah 49:15). Christ said, "*Every branch in me that beareth not fruit...*" so we see the branches are in Him. But the passage says, "*...He taketh away....*" Where, might you ask, do they go? The answer is given in John 15:6, "*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.*" We suggest this is speaking of our works that follow salvation: "*Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire*" (1 Corinthians 3: 13-15). If we do not abide in Christ and serve Him with the life-giving source that He alone provides, then what we do without Him will end up as "... wood, hay, stubble" (1 Corinthians 3:12b). So perpetual backsliding can bring this end. On the other hand, those who are fruitful in Christ and going on with the abiding fellowship are still pruned by Him. I read of a vineyard keeper who said up to 95 to 98 per cent of the previous year's growth from a fruitful branch will be pruned, so that the next year the grapes will be plush, juicy and ready for harvest. He tries to keep the branch as near to the vine as possible so the sap doesn't have to make such a long trip and lose it's potency. He pointed out that branches left to themselves will bud, grow great leaves, but bear scraggly fruit. God wants His branches to replenish!

3. The Refreshing of the Word

Jesus said, “*Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you*” (John 15:3). A vineyard owner informs us that the new branches have a tendency to trail down and grow along the ground. When this happens, the young branches get dirty, muddy and even mildewed. He doesn’t cut them off; he gently and carefully lifts them up, washes them off with water and either wraps them around the trellis or ties them up. This is exactly what Christ does for His own, “*That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word*” (Ephesians 5:26). Thank God for the gentle, loving, nail pierced hand of our Savior that will lift us up and clean us up through His precious Word!

4. The Relationship of the Vine and the Branch

Jesus requires that we must be drawing from Himself, the True Vine constantly. He said, “*Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing*” (John 15: 4,5).

The Greek word “meno” can be translated: to stay (in a given place, state, relation or expectancy): --abide, continue, dwell, endure, be present, remain, stand, tarry. This is the word translated in our English Bible “abide.” We need to get the idea that we are to continue, endure, simple stay put in Christ and His will. Everything that brings forth fruit in our relationship comes from being inextricably linked in love to Christ!

5. The Revival of the Branch

Our Lord said, “*If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples*” (John 15:8). Oh, that we, as God’s people, would live in a continual state of revival! God has intended for us to do so. When we abide in Christ we have our prayers answered - we ask what we will and have it done. Since we are so one with Him, everything we do, in terms of ministry, glorifies the Father. We are living with the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5), through the power of the Holy Spirit, for the absolute glory of the Father. Let us abide and abound! “*And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work*” (2 Corinthians 9:8).

- Pastor Pope -

[Back to Pastor's Word](#)