

THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES

BIBLE TEXT : John 15:1-27

LESSON 236 **Senior Course**

MEMORY VERSE: "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 15:5).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

John 15:1-27 (KJV)

¹ I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

² 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.

³ Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

⁴ 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.

⁵ 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.

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.

⁷ If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

⁸ Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

⁹ As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.

¹⁰ If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

¹¹ These things have I spoken unto

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I The Vine and Its Branches — Christ and His Disciples

1 Christ is the True Vine; and God, the Father, is the Husbandman, or Caretaker, John 15:1;

Ephesians 4:21 (KJV)

²¹ If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus:

2 The branches are purged (pruned) in order that they might bear much fruit, John 15:2;

Galatians 5:22-23 (KJV)

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

²³ Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

3 The disciples are made clean by the Word Jesus spoke, John 15:3;

1 Peter 1:22 (KJV)

²² Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, *see that ye* love one another with a pure heart fervently:

II The Necessity of the Branches' Abiding in the Vine

1 Fruit is made possible only by the branches' abiding in the vine, John 15; 4, 5

2 The state and fate of a branch that abideth not in the vine is shown, John 15:6;

1 John 2:6 (KJV)

⁶ He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

2 Peter 2:20 (KJV)

²⁰ 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.

3 Prayer is answered and the Father is glorified by our abiding in the Vine, John 15:7, 8;

Psalms 91:1 (KJV)

¹ He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

Psalms 91:15 (KJV)

¹⁵ He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: *I will be* with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him.

1 John 3:22 (KJV)

²² And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

III The Bond of Love Between Christ and His Disciples

1 Keeping the love of God in our hearts is conditioned on our keeping His commandments, John 15:9, 10;

1 John 3:24 (KJV)

²⁴ And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he

you, that my joy might remain in you, and *that* your joy might be full.

¹² This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

¹³ Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

¹⁴ Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

¹⁵ Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.

¹⁶ Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

¹⁷ These things I command you, that ye love one another.

¹⁸ If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before *it hated* you.

¹⁹ If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

²⁰ Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

²¹ But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.

²² If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for

abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.

2 Christ's chief commandment is that we love Him and love one another, John 15:11-14

3 The disciples are chosen by Christ, not Christ by the disciples, John 15:15-17;

John 8:31 (KJV)

³¹ Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, *then* are ye my disciples indeed;

IV The Disciples and the World's Hatred of Them

1 The world hated Jesus before it hated His disciples, John 15:18, 19;

1 John 3:1 (KJV)

¹ Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

2 Jesus has reminded us that "the servant is not greater than his lord," John 15:20, 21;

John 13:16 (KJV)

¹⁶ Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him.

3 All persecutors of Jesus stand condemned, without excuse, John 15:22-27;

Proverbs 29:1 (KJV)

¹ He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth *his* neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

NOTES:

This illustration of the vine and its branches beautifully sets forth the spiritual oneness of Christ and His people. He portrays His relation to them as the source of all their spiritual life and usefulness.

True and False Vines

When Jesus said, "I am the true vine," He definitely implied that there were false vines. False vines can have much foliage, the leaves of which might appear exceptionally beautiful to the natural eye. But the fruits of holiness and righteousness are missing on a false vine. Only the True Vine can give these essential attributes of spiritual life and cause the branches to bear the true fruit of the Spirit, which is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance.

Many religions today have an outward show of ceremonialism and ritualism, but they lack the attachment to the True Vine that would give them the life-giving flow of the Spirit. "Their vine is of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah: their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter: their wine is the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps" (Deuteronomy 32:32, 33). What a contrast in the fruit! Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? No. There is only one Vine who can produce the real fruit, and neither the fruit nor the attachment to that Vine can be counterfeited.

The Condition of Branches

Some branches may be fruitful and others be quite barren. This is according to the degree of connection between the branch and the vine. Some branches, when first joined to a vine by

their sin.

²³ He that hateth me hateth my Father also.

²⁴ If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.

²⁵ But *this cometh to pass*, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.

²⁶ But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, *even* the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:

²⁷ And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.

grafting, may show signs of life and then wither and die, bearing no fruit at all. So the disciples of Christ will be spiritually fruitful because they are vitally attached to the Vine and are drawing their strength from their God. If they are not thus vitally attached to the Vine, they will never bear fruit for God, no matter how favorable they may appear from the outside. Theirs is but a superficial attachment. They draw no life nor strength from God.

The fruit-bearing branch is continuously and entirely dependent upon the vine. The life that it has is the life that flows from the vine out through every part of the branch. Every leaf, every twig is nourished, and pulsates with that life. That unsolved mystery called life is hidden in the depths of that vine, and we have seen and known for ourselves that unless the branch is vitally connected with it there will be no fruit. The new birth that Jesus explained to Nicodemus connects us with God — the branch with the Vine — giving us a source of life. We were dead in trespasses and sins but were made alive by being grafted into the True Vine and made partakers of the Divine Nature. We are alive because we have been attached to the Source of Life and are drawing our food and strength from that never-failing supply.

There is a relationship between the vine and the branches that no human skill or science can produce. In religious organizations, men can establish a system and have their elders, deacons, and various boards, and then draw up a charter and formulate rules to govern their body; but none of these bring attachment to the Vine. But how wonderful is God's Plan, for we see that simple repentance, godly sorrow for sin, and faith in the shed Blood of Jesus Christ will attach any soul to the True Vine.

Pruning of the Branches

Jesus is the True Vine and the Father is the Husbandman, or Caretaker. "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." Every good husbandman takes pride in his vineyard. He wants it to bear the best of fruit. He wants it to look good and appear healthy and prosperous. Just so the Lord takes delight in His people — His vineyard. He wants it not only to bear fruit, but to bear much fruit and the best of fruit. He wants it to represent Him and to bring praise and honor to Him.

It is the husbandman's duty to prune the vineyard. In doing this he cuts off everything that would hinder a branch from bearing the best of fruit. When we look at a vinedresser pruning a vineyard, it seems as if he is surely heartless, but he knows just where and what to prune to make the branch bear more fruit. The Lord looks into our hearts and knows just how and when to permit the trials, the tests, and the persecutions that will effectively prune off the excess or that which will hinder us, in order that He might make us fruit-bearing branches.

Jesus said, "Without me ye can do nothing." This clearly shows that unless one abides in Christ all his good works, his charity, and his worship will amount to nothing. All these are unwanted and strength-sapping twigs that prevent the branch from bearing fruit. We must never forget that the Lord looks at the heart and not at the outward appearance. He knows our real need; and if we are content to stay in His hands and under His guidance, He will perfect us according as His infinite wisdom dictates what is best for us and for our effectiveness in His service. We must always depend upon Him. In ourselves we are

nothing. In Him, and in Him alone, we can bear fruit. If we abide in His love and keep His commandments, the natural tendency will be to bear fruit. The more fruit we bear the greater will be our joy in the day when He comes to receive His own.

Cast Forth

We read: "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered." Our Lord, in the plainest manner, teaches here that a person may be as truly and fully united to Him as a branch is to the tree that produced it, and yet afterward be cut off and cast into the fire. We see taught here that this is brought about by a separation, or a losing of vital contact; the result is that no fruit is brought forth to the glory of God.

No man could ever cut a branch from a tree that had never been united to the tree. But we can see here that there is a possibility of once being united to the Vine and afterward being cut off and cast into the fire and burned — separated from God's people, from God Himself, and from all the glories of Heaven.

It is possible to be a Christian, to have lived a godly life, and to be a possessor of the eternal life that is given to all who are truly saved, and then to lose that salvation. One need not lose it. One need not stay in that hopeless state if he has lost it. The Scriptures abound in instances where those who once had the salvation of God and had lost it were reinstated into the family of God by praying the prayer of repentance that brought it in the first place.

It is true that a child of God does not commit sin. And it is Scripturally true that when such a one does sin he is no longer a child of God but is a child of the devil instead. A so-called sinning Christian is no Christian at all, for he bears the image of Satan instead of being a member of the family of God.

God will keep us if we keep close to Him. He will not allow anything to separate us from His love, His care, His eternal hope, and His present-day assurance, if we "abide in the vine." But if we sin willfully, after having received a personal knowledge of the Truth and having God's saving grace wrought out in our hearts, the sacrifice that was in our hearts no longer remains and we are again outside the family of God.

Fellowship and Union in the Vine

Jesus called His disciples His friends. They were no longer to be His servants. He stated that a servant would not know his master's plans and desires. He executes the orders which are given him. On the contrary, a friend is a bosom companion and one in whom a person will confide some of his deepest secrets.

We marvel at the story of the friendship of David and Jonathan. The love that Jonathan had for David caused him to strip off his royal robes and put them on David, when he might have thought that he himself was legally entitled to them. There is also a love between the true children of God that binds them together as one in Christ. This Christian love is beyond all description. But Jesus had greater love than even this because He laid down His life for His enemies.

Chosen

It was customary among the Jews for a person to select his own teacher when he was setting out on a life career. This is true among many of us also. But Jesus told His disciples that they had not chosen Him when they had answered His call and

had started to follow Him. Instead, He had chosen them and ordained them, to go and bring forth fruit. They were to be His witnesses. And this applies to us also.

Then Jesus added that if the world hated them, they were not to be distressed; for it had hated Him first. He said that if they were persecuted, they could remember that He had been persecuted before them. He knew that it would be a consolation to them to know, when persecutions arose, that they were in the right path because they were in the road that Jesus trod. By the persecutions, they could know that they were still attached to the True Vine.

Love One Another

"This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." So far as we know this was the last commandment Jesus gave to His disciples before His crucifixion. It was given just before He went into the Garden of Gethsemane to pray. From the Garden He went to the judgment hall.

This last scene and the immortal words that were spoken must have made an undying impression upon the mind of the beloved disciple, John. This theme of love one for the other was the one great theme in the Epistles written by him. Over and over he repeated that they must love one another. One of the old saints has written: "So deeply was this commandment written on the heart of this evangelist [John the Beloved] that in his extreme old age, when he used to be carried by the saints to the public assemblies of the believers, his constant saying was, 'little children, love one another.' His disciples, wearied at last with the constant repetition of the same words, asked him why he constantly said the same thing. 'Because,' said he, 'it is the commandment of the Lord, and the observance of it **alone** is sufficient.'"

That love does not originate in the branches, but in the Vine. The branch must be closely connected with the Vine for the sap of divine love to flow through in its fullness. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35).

QUESTIONS

- 1 Who are represented by the Vine, the branches, the Husbandman?
- 2 How are we to bring forth fruit?
- 3 How are we purged to bring forth more fruit?
- 4 What happens when a branch does not bear fruit?
- 5 Is it possible to be once saved and afterwards lost?
- 6 Name two terms Jesus applied to His disciples.
- 7 What is Christ's chief commandment?