

WE ARE THE BRANCHES

[We Are Series]

I. BACKGROUND

A. SETTING

1. Remembering the Lord's Supper—the vine provided the wine
2. By the Temple—the Golden vine adorned Herod's temple
 - On trellis over the Temple gate
 - Almost 40 feet long; grapes the size of a man
 - Uppermost part was 100 feet from the ground
3. East to the Mount of Olives [where they went after the Lord's Supper]
 - Through Kedron valley—where they burnt the dead vines
4. Around Jerusalem—the Judean hillsides with vineyards
 - One of the [now five] main grape-growing districts in Palestine
 - Hills blooming with new vine-growth in the Spring
 - Time of the year to when new plants were grafted

Read the Text—JN 15:1-8

1 I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. 3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. 5 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. 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. 7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.

B. IMPORTANCE OF THE VINE AND BRANCHES

1. 'Vine' in ancient Israel—usually meant the grapevine
2. A main source of drink—either fermented or unfermented wine
 - a. Potable water was difficult to get
 - b. Drinking milk was less common
 1. Cattle used mainly for farming/hauling—not milking
 2. Main source of milk—goats—produced only 5 months during year
 3. Heat caused milk to go sour—so it was used mainly for cheese
3. Used in sacrifice—part of some drink offerings in OT
4. For food

- a. The grape itself—and raisins
- b. Rendered honey-type sweetener used in cakes

5. Medicinal

- a. Paul told Timothy to take some wine for his stomach—**I Tim 5:23**
- b. Good Samaritan—poured oil and wine on wounds—**Lk 10:34**
- c. Contemporary research
 - Helps weight gain in infants [like breast milk]
 - Helps fight anemia, liver failure, and tuberculosis
 - Relieves constipation and hemorrhoids
 - Strengthens nerves
 - Lowers blood level in urine
 - Can act as a diuretic
 - Fights fatigue
 - Anti-inflammatory
 - Helps fight cancer, heart and degenerative nerve disease
 - Leaves of branches can stop hemorrhaging

C. NATURE OF THE VINE AND BRANCHES

1. Vine

- Connects nutrients to—branches—to fruit
- Must be pruned to produce ‘much fruit’
- But *it has* to have *branches* to produce *any* fruit

2. Branches

- a. Definition—**κλήμα**—tender, flexible shoot, vine sprout
- b. Term used 4 times in NT—only in this passage—**vv 2,4,5,6**
- c. Nature—2 things in this passage
 - Can survive only on the vine
 - Must also be pruned
- d. One main purpose—to bear fruit

D. THE TRUE VINE AND TRUE BRANCHES

1. The True Vine

- a. In the OT—the ‘vine’ was Israel
 - Which produced only ‘worthless grapes’—**Is 5:1-8**
- b. In the NT—the ‘**true** vine’ is Jesus Christ
 - Who was everything Israel had failed to become

2. The Branches

- a. We were like Israel—wild, unruly plants—with worthless fruit
- b. But now we **grafted** onto the vine—into the New Israel

1. **Rom 11:16-24**—explains this [using olive tree as an example]

2. Meaning—**εγκεντριζω**—cut for implanting—inject/inoculate

Example: T-cut engrafting

- Best done in early spring—[vines around Jesus—just grafted?]
- Main vine is the **root stock**—or stock
 - Make T-cut in side of vine
 - Peel back bark—making vertical pocket
- The bud being grafted is the **scion** [scion = heir]
 - Slice bud above and below—cut it off
 - Slide scion into T-cut
 - Cover bud with bark/skin of root stock—and bind
- Make a bleed cut 1-2 inches below T-cut
 - Or graft will not heal—it will keep bleeding
- Remove binding after healing—or it will girdle the stock

II. EXPLANATION OF TEXT

A. BEING A PART OF THE VINE

1. **Becoming** part of the vine

- Either we have been grafted—or not!
- Either we have been converted—or not!

2. **Remaining** part of the vine

a. Either we are doing so

- We abide **in Him**—**v 4**
- And **His words** abide in us—**v 6**

b. Or we are not doing so

- We do **not abide** in Him—**v 2**
- And we are **cut off**—**v 2**—**and thrown away**—**v 6**

B. EVIDENCE WE ARE PART OF THE VINE OR NOT

1. If we are **not abiding**

- We **do not** bear fruit—**v 2**
- We **cannot** bear fruit—**v 4**
- We can do **nothing**—**v 5**

2. If we **are abiding**

a. Two results

1. We bear fruit—**v 2**

2. Then we are pruned—**v2**

- So we can become even more fruitful—**v 2**
- The further result—we bear *much* fruit—**vv 5, 8**

b. What actually happens when we are **pruned**

1. Meaning—**καθαίρω** = to clean—to purge

a. See verse 3—“you are already **clean**” [adjective: **καθαίρος**]

b. Here: to clean excess foliage—cut away useless shoots

2. How Christians are pruned—or cleansed

a. Cleansed of **sin**—filthiness of the flesh—**II Cor 7:1**

b. Cleansed conscience—of **dead works**—**Heb 9:14**

c. Cleansed and **made holy**

- Set apart as God’s own possession—**Tit 2:14**

d. Cleansed **by His word**—removing everything ungodly

1. The washing of the water of His word—**Eph 5:26**

2. The sword of the Spirit—His word—**Eph 6:17**

SUMMARY: removal of anything between us and God

c. Three examples of pruning—live oaks, tomatoes, grapevines

1. **EXAMPLE—live oak and fruitless pear trees**

- Dense foliage kills all the grass beneath
- Solution: to prune (remove) low branches *earlier*

2. **EXAMPLE—tomato plant**

a. Why it is necessary

- Unpruned plant is unruly—can cover 4x4 feet—10 stems
- Dense foliage inhibits light—reduces sugar output
- Yellow leaves—use more sugar than they produce
- To produce larger fruit
- To keep leaves dry—prevent bacterial growth

b. Pruning process

- Prune only ‘indeterminate’ tomatoes
- Start when ‘suckers’ are about 2-3 inches long
- Do this about every 10 days
- Prune to two ‘leaders’
- First branch off main stem is first leader
- Sucker below first flower cluster becomes second leader
- Remove all suckers in leaf axles—between stem and branch
- 30 days before frost—cut off top of leader—focuses growth

3. **EXAMPLE—grapevine**

1st year

- Allow plant to grow many stems—no pruning
- Winter—stake only **one**—the strongest stem—cut others away

2nd year

- Spring—remove all but **two** best side shoots
- Summer—remove all new branches
- Winter—cut back all extra side branches—but these **two**

3rd year

- Growing season—allow only main shoots to grow
- Winter—leave **12 buds** on each branch
 - Prune all other buds
 - These 12 buds are the ‘renewal buds’
 - They will produce fruit in 4th season

4th year—and afterward

- Prune renewal buds
- Allow each to grow only one length each new year

C. RESULTS

1. If we **bear fruit**—then the **ultimate goal** is achieved

a. We **glorify** the Father—**v 8**

b. And our wishes will be accomplished—**v 7**

1. Because we wish consistently with the Father’s will

2. Reminder: **Jn 14:13-14**—**whatever** we ask will be done

2. If we **do not bear fruit**

a. Cause—not being on the vine

1. Not being really on the vine

a. Either never grafted—unconverted

b. Or the graft did not take—conversion not genuine

2. Or we are grafted—but we ‘die on the vine’

a. Like being choked by thorns—deceitfulness of riches—**Mt 13**

b. Process is gradual—Christians don’t realize when it happens

b. Warnings

1. By John the Baptist—in Matthew 3—dead **legalism**

- Like the Pharisees and Sadducees
- The ax is already at the root of the trees
- Trees not producing fruit—will be cut and burned
- Like verse 6 here—dried, gathered, burned

2. Jesus in **Matthew 7**—**false prophets**

- A sign being a ‘false prophet’
- By their fruit you will recognize them
- Bad trees cannot bear good fruit
- Every tree not bearing fruit—cut down and burned

c. Basis of condemnation (remember from Vine sermon)

1. Condemned for **not abiding**—not for lack of fruit-bearing

- a. The Father cuts off branches that do not bear fruit—**v 2**
- b. But *because* they are not living parts of the vine—**v 6**
- c. Condemnation not based on works—but lack of relationship

2. But lack of works indicates a lack of relationship

3. See **verse 8**

- Bearing much fruit proves you are my disciples
- Conclusion: bearing no fruit means you are not my disciples

D. TYPES OF FRUIT—[Three questions]

1. Question One: **Is our fruit—GOOD fruit—or BAD fruit?**

a. There is such a thing as ‘bad fruit’

1. Fruit of **idolatry**—poisonous like wormwood—**Dt 29:18**

2. Fruit of **disobedience**

- **Isaiah 5**—described this in Israel as ‘worthless fruit’

3. Fruit of **legalism** and **presumptuousness**—**Rom 7:4-5**

a. Paul contrasts this deadly fruit—with godly fruit

Rom 7:4-5—*Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joint to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God. For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death.*

b. [Empty] works are attractive—*seem* godly—but are deadly

EXAMPLE: deadly plants for dogs—**Lantana**

- Lantana—bright yellow-red-orange—Hydrangea-shape

Other poisonous plants for dogs

- English Ivy—flowing luxuriant green coverage vine
- Wolf's Bane—beautiful bluish-purple like Bluebonnets
- Larkspur—bright blue-pink-white—long stemmed
- Wild Rosemary—green or bluish-heather—aromatic

2. Question Two: **Is our REAL fruit—or FALSE fruit?**

a. **EXAMPLE:** plastic fruit

b. Four biblical descriptions of genuine fruit

1. Of the Spirit—**Gal 5:22-23**

- Contrasted with deeds of the flesh—**Gal 5:19-21**
 - Immorality—impurity—sensuality
 - Idolatry—sorcery
 - Enmities—strife—jealousy—angry outbursts
 - Disputes—dissensions—factions—envying
 - Drunkenness—carousing

2. Of the Light [fruit of character]

Eph 5:9—goodness—righteousness—and truth

3. *Good* works—being fruitful in ‘every *good* work’—**Col 1:10**

4. Evangelization—harvest

1. Pray to Lord of harvest—**Mt 9:37-38**

2. The Harvest in plentiful—**Jn 4:35**

3. Make disciples—Great Commission—**Mt 28:18-20**

3. Question Three: **Is our fruit—ENDURING fruit?**—see **verse 16**

- Does it produce eternal benefits?

E. FURTHER APPLICATION

1. We should all bear the same fruit

- Fruit of the Spirit
- Fruit of Light
- Fruit of Good Works
- Fruit of the Harvest

2. But each of us has different ways the fruit may be used

Example: Grapes used for many purposes

- For juice
- For wine
- For jelly
- For raisins
- For sweetener
- For medicinal purposes