

"THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES"

I. SOME OF THE THINGS ILLUSTRATED IN THIS METAPHOR OF THE CHURCH

A. This metaphor illustrates first of all how the Lord deals with believers to bring forth fruit in their lives for His glory.

1. In this respect we discover how He deals with those who are unfruitful (15:2). Just like a vinedresser would remove a dead unfruitful branch from his vine, so does the Lord deal with those believers who are fruitless because they will not stay in fellowship with the Lord. They are taken away or out of this world through physical death (I Cor. 11:30).
2. In this respect we see how our heavenly Father deals with believers who bear fruit and thereby show that they have spiritual life (15:2). Just like a vinedresser cleans or purgeth a fruitful vine so that it will produce more fruit, so does the Lord cleanse and cut away that which is useless and that which would prevent fruitfulness in our lives. This process is carried out through the cleansing and convicting power of God's Word and also through various trials and chastenings (Heb. 4:12; 12:11; Jn. 17:17; James 1:2-4).

B. This metaphor illustrates also the necessity for a believer to be in fellowship with the Lord to become more fruitful and thereby glorify God.

1. Notice the reason that believers are commanded to abide or stay in fellowship with the Lord (15:4). Just like a branch can't bear fruit unless it abides and receives its sustenance, from the vine, so believers can't be fruitful unless they are in fellowship with Christ and He is being revealed through their lives (Gal. 2:20).
2. In this connection we notice the result of being in fellowship with the Lord is bringing forth much fruit which glorifies God (Jn. 15:5,8).

II. SOME OF THE THINGS INVOLVED IN THIS RELATIONSHIP AS BELIEVERS

A. This relationship pictures the Lord Jesus as the True Vine and those who believe in Him as the branches. The Heavenly Father is pictured as the Vinedresser (Jn. 15:1,5).

1. Notice in the O.T. Israel was God's vine which was to bear fruit for His glory but it bore the wrong kinds of fruit (Isa.5:1-7; Ezek. 15::2; Jer. 2:21).
 2. Here in this N.T. relationship of believers in Christ we see Him as the True Vine (Jn. 15:1) bearing fruit through the lives of believers for God's glory.
- B. This relationship involves producing something for God's glory and reveals itself by varying degrees of fruitfulness.
1. Note that believers bear fruit but the Lord must work in their lives and purge them in order for them to bring forth more fruit (15:2).
 2. Then we notice if a believer stays in fellowship with the Lord he will bring forth much fruit and this will glorify God (15:5).
- C. This relationship reveals how we as believers are dependent upon the Lord Jesus for the strength to do anything that would glorify God (15:5).
- D. This relationship involves certain requirements of believers (Jn. 15:2,3).
1. In this respect we notice there is a vast difference between union with Christ and communion with Christ. In other words it's one thing to be saved and have sonship; it is quite another to have discipleship and this is the subject being addressed here (15:3).
 2. We notice then that while our standing before God can never change, our state can become defiled through sin and cleansing is necessary. The disciples to whom the Lord spoke had been cleansed once for all but they, as well as we, needed daily cleansing from sin by the Word of God (15:3). Compare Jn. 13:3-11).
 3. With this in mind, abiding in Christ or being in fellowship with Him is to have no known, unjudged, and unconfessed sin in our lives (I Jn, 1:6,9). On the other hand being out of fellowship because of sin's defilements results in a fruitless life for God's glory.
 4. As far as requirements are concerned to be in fellowship and to be fruitful, we see it is a

matter of keeping Christ's commandments (Jn. 15:9,10).

E. This relationship involves certain results for those who stay in fellowship with the Lord. Firstly, there is purging and cleansing for more fruit (2). Secondly, abiding insures much fruit (5). Thirdly, much fruit then results in glory to God (8). Fourthly, abiding results in our prayers being answered (7). Finally, abiding yields the joy of being in fellowship with Christ (11).

III. SOME OF THE THINGS IMPLIED TO US BASED UPON THIS RELATIONSHIP,

- A. We have an implication of what will happen to us if we don't stay in fellowship with the Lord (Jn. 15:6). There are two different views on this.
1. Some hold that such are cast forth or stripped of their privilege and set on a shelf as far as serving is concerned. They see the things gathered as dead works which will be burned.
 2. Others hold as I do that those cast away here are unfaithful and unfruitful believers who remain out of fellowship and are cast as it were into the fires of affliction and trials which overtake them or consume their lives. This seems to follow the parallel of what happened to the unfruitful Israelites (Ezek. 15:1-7).
- B. Another implication that we see here is what we as believers can expect in our lives. We can expect the Lord to work in our lives so that we may become more fruitful and glorify Him.