

God's Objective: Fruit



The Vine and the Branches (Part 2)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again as we continue with our theme for this week: The Vine and the Branches, a theme which provides us with a beautiful, scriptural picture of the relationship that we can have with God through Jesus Christ.

In my introductory talk yesterday we looked at the parable which Jesus gives in John 15:1-8, and I'm going to read those words again because they are so beautiful and so important to all that I'm going to say this week. This is what Jesus says:

> "I am the true vine and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit, he trims clean so that it will bear even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."

Well, that's a parable. And in my talk yesterday I explained that one of the main purposes of the parable is to reveal the things which are truly real, which we do not apprehend with our senses. Contrary to the way we're used to thinking, that which we apprehend with our sense, that which we see or hear or touch or taste or smell, is not truly real; it's temporary, it's transient. The truly real things are the things which we cannot see, which are spiritual and eternal. And one purpose of a parable is to speak through familiar objects which we can apprehend with our senses, but to use them as a pattern or a mirror reflecting the unfamiliar, the unseen, the truly real and the spiritual.

I pointed out yesterday that this particular parable, The Vine and the Branches, introduces us to all three persons of the

Godhead. The vine is Jesus. The sap, the life that comes up from the roots through the vine into the branches, that life is the Holy Spirit. And then Jesus tells us that His Father, God the Father, is the gardener, the farmer, the owner of the whole vineyard. And then we're left with one more major element: the branches. And Jesus says to His disciples, "You are the branches." So true disciples or real Christians are branches growing in the vine which is Jesus. The whole issue is one of relationship, not doctrine or theology.

Now, in my talk today I'm going to deal with the vital question: What does God expect of us as branches in the vine? What is the evidence that we really do have this kind of relationship with Him? And we can answer that question in one short word: the word fruit. Fruit is the issue, fruit is the evidence, fruit is what God requires. And this fruit is developed in three stages. First of all Jesus talks about fruit: "Every branch that does bear fruit," in verse 2 of that chapter. Then He goes on in the same verse to speak about more fruit, "The Father trims it clean that it may bear more fruit." And then a little further on, He says in verse 5, "If any man remains in me He will bear much fruit." So there's a very clear, simple progression: Fruit, more fruit, much fruit.

That's the life in Christ: we start by bearing fruit, as God trims us clean we bear more fruit, As we continue to abide in Him we bear much fruit. But the issue is always that short simple word, fruit. The only alternative is no fruit. Jesus says in verse 2, "He [the Father] cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit." And He tells us what happens to the branches that bear no fruit. In verse 6 He says, "If anyone does not remain in me he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers. Such branches are picked, thrown into the fire and burned." So the end of the unfruitful branch that withers is to be burned. That's a very clear and a fearful picture.

You see God's requirement of fruit is a central theme of the New Testament. When John the Baptist came to introduce this new period of God's dealings, the New Covenant, in his introductory explanation to the men of his time in Matthew 3:10, he said this:

> "The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."

That's the same principle. Every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. Notice, that it's not sufficient to say, "Well I don't produce bad fruit." That doesn't satisfy God. God says, "I require good fruit." You may be the kind of tree that doesn't have any fruit at all, but that will not get you by with God. God demands fruit, good fruit, more fruit, much fruit. So God's requirement is fruit.

Let's consider for a moment what is involved in fruit. What is fruit. To come away from the parable to the reality, when God says He's looking for fruit, what is He actually looking for in our lives? I want to suggest to you that there are two main forms of fruit which are pictured in the New Testament. The first is the fruit of character. The second is the fruit of other believers brought to the Lord through our lives. So those are the two basic types of fruit that God requires. First of all the fruit of character and secondly the fruit of other believers brought to God through our lives.

Let's look at God's requirements of character for a moment. The character that God requires in us can be summed up in one simple, beautiful word: the word love. Love is ultimately what God requires and demands in us. In John 13:34, Jesus says this:

> "A new commandment I give you..."

Moses had given the ten commandments. Judaism today has 613 commandments. Jesus says, "I'll sum it up all in one new commandment. Love one another." And He sets us the standard of love: "...As I have loved you," so you must love one another. If we are in the vine, then the kind of love Jesus has will flow out of Him into us. We will love one another as He has loved us.

Again, in the same 15th chapter of John we've been looking at, He says a little further on after the parable of the Vine and the Branches, he says this in verse 12:

> "My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you."

Notice, love is not an option, it's a command. If we don't love, we are disobedient. We are not bringing forth the fruit that God required.

Now love is further unfolded in the epistles and it's shown to us in seven specific forms called the fruit of the Spirit. In Galatians 5:22-23, Paul unfolds what is the fruit of the Spirit (capital S, the Holy Spirit). Remember the Spirit is the sap, the life that flows from the trunk into the branches. Paul says:

> "The fruit of the Spirit is love, [notice love always comes first] joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control."

Really, those are all different manifestations of love. You can say they are nine different forms of the one fruit of love. Let

me list them again and as you hear them, just check on yourself whether you are really bringing forth that kind of fruit.

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

So that's the kind of character that God requires in us as being fruitful branches in the vine.

Now, let's look at the other aspect of fruit: other believers won to the Lord through our lives. And remember we are talking in terms of the tree, the vine. One very significant fact is that from creation onwards, God has ordained that trees shall produce seed only in their fruit. Therefore, if a tree does not produce fruit it does not produce seed. If a tree does not produce seed, it will not reproduce itself. So the essential requirement for a tree to reproduce itself is to produce fruit which has in it the seed that will produce another tree. This is stated in Genesis 1:12, where it speaks about the process of creation:

> "The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds."

Notice, right from creation onwards, trees bear fruit with seed in it, so that the possibility of a tree reproducing itself always depends on its producing fruit with the seed in it. And then there's a very forceful proverb in Proverbs 11:30 which drives this lesson home. The Proverb says this:

> "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise."

That's the same principle. The fruit with the seed in it becomes another tree, because when the seed drops into the ground and takes root and grows up, another tree, like the first tree that produced the fruit, grows up. And then the writer of Proverbs interprets it this way, "...he who wins souls is wise." In other words, if we are fruit-bearing, we'll produce seed, and the seed in turn will produce another tree, another believer like ourselves.

So that's what God looks for as fruit in our lives. First, the fruit of character, second, the fruit of other believers brought to the Lord through our lives.

Well our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this same time. Tomorrow I'll be dealing with a vitally important question which arises out of today's talk: What do we have to do in order to produce the fruit that God requires?



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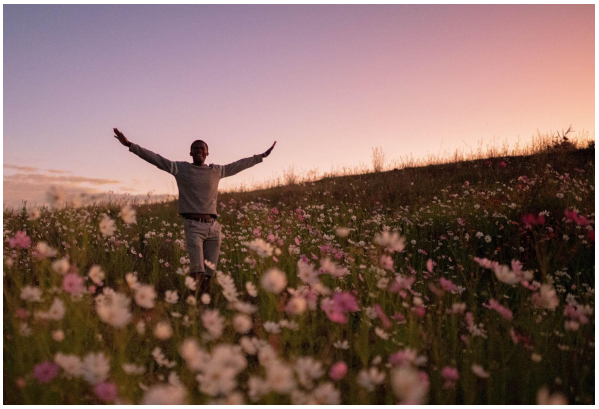

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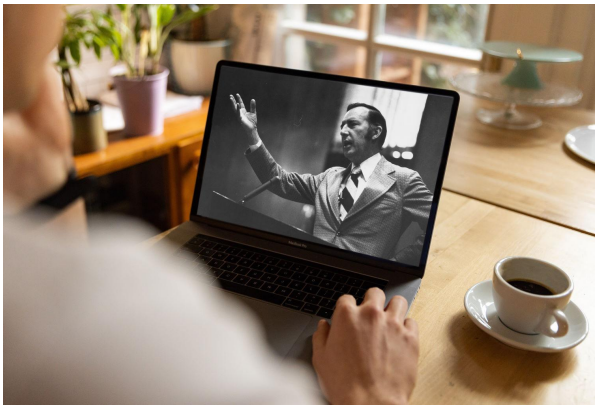

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