

JOHN

Stories Related To The Last Days Of Christ

February 17, 2019

I. Introduction

- A. **John 15:1-5** . . . “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 [will abide] 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.”
- B. Prayer

II. The Vine, the Vinedresser, and the branches

- A. **John 15:1-2** . . . “I (*Jesus*) am the true vine, and (*God*) My Father is the vinedresser. [2] Every branch **in Me** (*that is, every branch attached to the vine*) that does not bear fruit, [God] takes away; and every branch [**in Me**] (*that is every branch attached to me*) that bears fruit, [God] prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.”

- B. In these two verses, Jesus makes it clear that there is a difference between His role in our lives and God’s role.

1. Jesus is our vine, that is, He is the source of our spiritual life. He is the source of our nourishment – thus enabling us to live a healthy spiritual life. And it is His life and nourishment in us which enables us to bear fruit.
2. In contrast to Jesus’ role, God is the vinedresser. In other words, God is the one who works on us, in us, with us, and in our environment, for the purpose of promoting and making possible the kind of growth that leads to spiritual maturity and ensures spiritual health so that we produce the quality and amount of fruit that it is reasonable for Him to expect from us.

- C. As our source of life, Jesus is not just any source or one of a number of sources. He is the **TRUE SOURCE** – which means He is the only genuine source of life – even though the devil and the world offer us numerous other sources that they present as providing a better life than Jesus provides.

1. At the beginning of his gospel, John confirms that Jesus is the true source of life when he compares the life that we get from Jesus to Light and the life that we get from the world to darkness. We read this in **John 1:4-5**, “In [Jesus is] life, and the life [is] the Light of men. [5] The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness [does] not comprehend it.”
 2. And Jesus, himself, contrasts the life He gives with what the devil and the world give. We read this in **John 10:10**, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”
- D. Sadly, we are too often like Adam and Eve, who followed their own selfish desires and sought life in what looked good, tasted good, felt good, and promised good, yet resulted in loss, destruction, and death – not only to them, but to their children and subsequent generations.
1. Like so many Christians before me, I have come to see how challenging it is to pursue true life, that is, a godly, Christ-like life, in a world with attractive allurements, and in a body that has a mind that is curious and that likes pleasure in almost any form, and that wants its own way.
 2. But like Adam and Eve, I also know the present results of seeking life where only loss, destruction, and death await those who go there.
 3. And so I urge each of us to make it our sincere and daily aim to pray, and work, and persevere in pursuing and abiding in Jesus Christ, for He is the only true, the only genuine source of life.
- E. Moving on, Jesus says that God is the gardener
1. There is much that can be said here, but I want to focus on only two points.
 2. **First**, if Jesus were using the family as His analogy, He would have said God is the father, or parent who has the responsibility of raising his children in such a way as to promote growth toward such things as spiritual, mental, intellectual, educational, emotional, social, marital, and parental maturity – so that they will be a proper benefit to those they are responsible for.
 - a. Now I am not stepping outside God’s word when I make this analogy, for the writer of Hebrews did this long before I was born.
 - b. Therefore, we read in **Hebrews 12:6**, “For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives.”

- c. So whether you use the vinedresser analogy or the parent analogy, the point is that God is working on us, in us, with us, and in our environment, for the purpose of promoting and making possible the kind of growth that leads to spiritual maturity and ensures spiritual health so that we produce the quality and amount of fruit that it is reasonable for Him to expect from us.
3. The **second** point I want to make about God being the vinedresser is that all this is for Him, and that includes what Jesus has done, is doing, and will do.
- a. In other words, the vineyard is His. The vines are His. The branches on the vines are His. And the fruit that the branches produce is His.
 - b. Paul affirms this truth when He says that as fellow citizens with the saints, we are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone (*notice, Jesus is part of the building – but the building is God's*), in whom (*that is, in Christ Jesus*) the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a **dwelling of God** in the Spirit (**Ephesians 2:19-22**).
 - c. Peter makes the same point when he says that we, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices **acceptable to God** through Jesus Christ (**1 Peter 2:4-5**). Here again, it is all for God, even the work that Jesus does to make it possible for us to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God.
 - d. What I hope you are understanding from this is that God is the supreme being. God is the supreme focus. God is to get all the glory. God is to be praised above all others. God is to be held in highest esteem. God, alone, is to be worshiped. And God is to be loved above all others. And we cannot do better than to humbly and sincerely give God His due and keep Him in His rightful place in our lives.
- F. Jesus went on to say that the branches that do not bear fruit, God will remove from the vine.
- 1. For those who hold to the theology of eternal security, this is a startling statement that must either be explained away or ignored. And for those who believe Christians can lose their salvation, this is used as one of their proof texts.

- a. However, I want to remind you, again, that the Bible speaks of losing one's salvation as well as being secure in Christ unto eternal life.
 - b. Therefore, I urge you to take all of God's word seriously and to do your best to hold together even those scriptures that, on the surface, seem to contradict each other.
 - c. In this case, it is like seeing eternal security and losing one's salvation as two sides of the same coin. You may not fully understand how both can be true, but to disregard or reject one and hold to the other is to disregard or reject part of God's word in favor of other parts.
 - d. With this in mind, I want to draw your attention to three truths implied by Jesus' words that God will remove any branch in the vine that does not bear fruit.
2. **First**, bearing fruit is not confined to the outward activities often associated with being a Christian – such as evangelism, teaching a SS class, tithing, daily Bible reading, visiting the sick and the prisoners, feeding the hungry, hosting a Bible Study, or being a minister or missionary.
- a. And I am saying this about Jesus' words here in **John 15:2** because it is a continuation of Jesus' words in chapters 13 and 14. Therefore, when we examine the context, we see that bearing fruit includes:
 - (1) serving those around us (**John 13:5-17**),
 - (2) remaining loyal to Jesus instead of turning on Him to make money, or abandoning Him to avoid embarrassment or worse (**John 13:18-36**),
 - (3) seeing God in Jesus (**John 14:7-11**),
 - (4) loving God and validating your love for God by keeping His commandments (**John 14:15-24**),
 - (5) and abiding in Jesus like a branch abides in the vine.
 - b. In other words, the fruit we are to bear is not confined to Christian service, but is the fruit of a godly life lived for God's sake! ***Remember who owns the vineyard?***
 - c. John the Baptist makes this point when he said to the religious leaders who were coming to hear his message, "Bear fruit in keeping with repentance" (**Matthew 3:8**).
 - (1) Surely he meant bearing fruit that went beyond their religious practices.

- (2) For example, they needed to be godly in their thinking, in **the** desires they pursued, in their hidden behaviors, in their attitudes towards those they deemed less religious, in their dealings with power, money, and fame, and in their view of Jesus – just to name a few areas in which they bore the fruit of unrighteousness.
 - d. Paul gives some clarity to the kind of fruit all Christians are to bear in **Ephesians 5:9**, “For the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth.”
 - (1) And in **Galatians 5:22-23**, Paul becomes very specific in describing the fruit we are to bear when he says that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, [23] gentleness, and self-control.
 - (2) Therefore, the fruit God is looking for is the fruit of a righteous life that honors Him in every area of one’s life.
3. The **second** truth we see in Jesus words about God removing unfruitful branches from the vine is that the lack of fruit is a serious problem – and should never be taken lightly.
 - a. To show how serious the lack of fruit is, I want to direct your attention to the parable Jesus told about the talents, as found in **Matthew 25:24-30**. As you may recall, a Master was going away for a time and entrusted some of His possessions and/or wealth to His servants.
 - (1) One servant was given 5 talents, and he put them to work and in so doing turned them into 10 talents.
 - (2) In like manner, another servant was given two talents, and in putting them to work he turned them into 4 talents.
 - (3) A third servant was given 1 talent, which he hid to make sure that when the Master returned he was able to give back everything the Master had entrusted to him.
 - b. Now notice the response of the Master, for he said, “You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I scattered no seed. Then you ought to have [at least] put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest.”
 - c. And the master went on to say, “Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”
 - d. My point is simple. Never think that God saves us only or even mostly to go to heaven instead of hell after we die.

- e. He saves us to change us and to transform us into the likeness of Jesus Christ. He saves us so that we will live a life of ruled by love – so that we will no longer live for ourselves but for Him. And He saves us to one day spend eternity with Him in His eternal kingdom – which will be an eternal continuation of the life we begin with Him here on earth.
4. The **third** truth we see in Jesus words about God removing unfruitful branches from the vine is an implied truth, and that truth is this: “Even though God is at work with us and in us for the purpose of helping us bear good fruit, we can resist that work or ignore that work or get so engrossed in other things that it is as if we are oblivious to that work.”
- a. Jesus makes this same point when telling the parable of the four soils. In **Matthew 13:22**, Jesus said that the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, yet the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.
 - b. You see, as branches, we can abide in the vine and respond to the vinedresser in that way which enables us to bear the fruit of the vine.
 - c. Or we can be attached to the vine, yet so disinterested or distracted or apathetic, that we block the life of the vine from entering in and resist the work of the vinedresser with the result that we become unfruitful.
 - d. Therefore, beware of the devil’s wiles, the world’s allurements, and the temptations that come from desiring what we ought not desire or fearing what we ought not to fear – for such things become blockages to the life of Christ entering in and to the work of the vinedresser – whose goal is to enable us to bear more and healthier fruit.
- G. Finally (**John 15:2**), Jesus said and every branch that bears fruit, God prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.
- 1. The wonderful truth here is that neither Jesus nor God leaves us on our own to become as godly as God created us to be and Jesus saved us to be. Both of them are constantly there to give us what we need and do for us what we need having done so that we can become as godly as possible in this life.
 - 2. Peter confirms this when he says God’s divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness . . . so that we can

- become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by ungodly desires (**2 Peter 1:2-4**).
3. However, as we see here in **John 15**,
 - a. We are the ones who decide the extent to which we will remove those things that block the life of the vine, *who is Christ*, from flowing into us and nourishing us and enabling us to bear fruit.
 - b. And we are the ones who decide the extent to which we will cooperate with the work of vinedresser, *who is God*, in using His variety of means to make us healthy branches able to bear good fruit.
 4. Paul aptly describes this working together of the vine, the vinedresser, and the branches in **Philippians 2:12-13**, “So then, my beloved, just as you have always **obeyed**, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; [13] for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”
 5. In other words, we must never underestimate the necessity and the presence of the life of Christ and the work of God in and through us. And in the same way, we must never underestimate what God has given us to do in receiving the life of Christ into us and experiencing the work of God on us.

III. Conclusion

- A. I want to conclude by saying that we cannot see the life of the vine flowing into us, but we can see those things that the Bible says inhibit or diminish the life of Christ from coming in. Therefore, let's work on what we can see.
- B. On the other side, we can often see the work of God in pruning us. The problem faced by too many of us is that at the time of being pruned we cannot see the good outcome the pruning will produce, and so we resist the pruning because it is painful.
- C. May we be wiser than that, so that in the midst of God's pruning we both trust Him for a good outcome and patiently wait for that good outcome to arrive, just as a pruned branch must wait for the results of the pruning to show themselves.