

The Vine and the Branches

by C.I. Scofield

To bear fruit in our lives, we must maintain a vital union with Christ and continually abide in Him, living a life of dependence on Him in all scenes and experiences.

Scripture: John 15:1, John 15:4, 1 Corinthians 12:12, Galatians 5:22, Ephesians 1:3, Ephesians 5:26, Hebrews 8:10

Topics: "Christian Living", "Union With Christ"

Description

C.I. Scofield preaches on the profound analogy of Christ as the 'true' Vine, emphasizing the vital union believers have with Him as branches, highlighting the importance of abiding in Him to bear fruit and glorify the Father. The sermon delves into the cleansing power of the Word and the conditions necessary for fruitful Christian lives, stressing the significance of living a heavenly life in Christ and the new commandment of love given by Jesus. The lesson unfolds the essential conditions for fruit-bearing, focusing on the believer's union with Christ and the continuous experience of abiding in Him.

Transcript

(John XV:1-12.)

I. The Analysis.

1. Christ the "true" Vine. The word "true," in John's writings, means "real." The contrast is not between truth and falsehood, but between type and fulfilment. Israel was a vine (Isa. v) but a wild-grape vine. Christ is the real vine. Verse 1.
2. The fruitless branch. Verse 2. This is a believer, a true branch in the Vine, but one which in the soil of earth, does not bear fruit; so the Husbandman transplants it. "Taketh away" is, literally, "taketh up out of."
3. The cleansing Word. Verse 3. The application of the Word, by the Spirit, to the believer's ways. Eph. v:26.
4. The condition of fruitfulness. Verses 4, 5, 7. "Abide." The sphere of the believer's life is, "in the heavenly, in Christ." Eph. i:3; ii:6. To abide is just to live. "The heavenly" is not a place --the word should be stricken out of Ephesians: it is a state of being. Heaven, on the contrary, is a place. We are in the heavenly now; we shall presently be taken to heaven, and then we shall still be in the heavenly. So long as we are living a heavenly life down here we are "abiding" in Christ.

5. The mere professor. Verse 6. Here our Lord does not say: "Every branch in me"; but, "If a man abide not." Even "men" despise a fruitless, non-abiding professor.

6. The three degrees of fruit-bearing. Verses 2, 5, 8. "Fruit," "more fruit," "much fruit." Not until much fruit is reached do we glorify God.

7. The "Father's commandments" and the Son's "commandment." Verses 9-12. This is a distinction of vital importance. Christ came to fulfil the law, and kept His Father's commandments. To us He gives the new commandment of love, and He writes that on our hearts. Heb. viii:10. We do love one another.

II. The Heart of the Lesson.

The emphatic word in this lesson is "fruit," and the lesson itself is an unfolding of the conditions which must exist if fruit is to be borne. A preliminary word as to the meaning of the word. In Galatians (v:22, 23) fruit is defined to be "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance"; in other places fruit is good works; in still others, converts. I think the word in our lesson is generic, and includes the graces which make the Christian character, good works, and the winning of souls. In other words, our Lord here lays down the conditions which result in fruitful Christian lives. It is well to note, before leaving the word, that three degrees of fruit-bearing are mentioned; "fruit," "more fruit," "much fruit," and not until we bear much fruit is our Father glorified. The reason is that up to a certain point the graces of the Christian character may be, and are, imitated by persons who are naturally gentle and amiable, kindly and cultured. The ideals of Christ are universally known and approved, and, in so-called Christian lands, the behavior of respectable people is based upon them. But the winsomeness of the gentle and amiable worldling never goes so far as the winning of souls, and the Christian's "love, joy, and peace" cannot be counterfeited.

What, then, are the conditions of fruit-bearing? They are two, and two only. That is part of "the simplicity which is in Christ."

And first, there must be such a vital union to Christ as is implied in the figure chosen by Him to express that union-- a vine and its branches. I have called it a "vital," that is living union. Let us try really to grasp that fact--the fact that the believer is as really a part of Christ as the branch of a vine is a part of the vine. Do not think of our Lord's words as a mere figure of speech. He uses, indeed, a figure drawn from nature, but He uses it because it exactly expresses His meaning; the believer is an actual part of Christ.

This is the truth taught even more vitally in the revelation concerning the Body of Christ. "For, by one Spirit have we all been baptised into one body, and have all been made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Cor. xii:12). "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

For every believer, then, the primary condition exists. We are the branches of Him who is the Vine. We have not to make it so; it is so.

The second condition, therefore, is the one upon which our Lord puts the emphasis. He does not say: Become members of my body--branches in me--but, "I am the vine, ye are the branches." It is upon the maintaining by us of a continuous experience according to that fact that Christ insists. That is the force of the word abide. To "Abide" means to live. The fruit-bearing branch; the branch that does not bear fruit, and the "man" who takes the place by profession of a branch, but who not abiding proves that he is not a

branch, must be discriminated. The first is "purged" (cleansed, pruned) that he may bear more fruit; the second, a true branch but fruitless is taken away." The Greek here is very sweet. It is, literally, "taken up out of"; and is the Husbandman's gentle way with a true vine so circumstanced as not to bear fruit. The third is, "Cast out as a branch"; disowned.

What is it, then, to abide in Christ? It is best expressed in Paul's great testimony already quoted: "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me, and gave himself for me."

Practically, it is the continual attitude in all the scenes and experiences of life of, "yet not I, but Christ." It is to oppose to every temptation, "not I but Christ"; to summon to every opportunity "not I but Christ"; to win men by the manifestation of "not I but Christ"; to depend in every emergency on "not I but Christ."

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