

A Pruned Branch and a Fruitful Bough

by E.A. Johnston

The sermon emphasizes the necessity of divine pruning in our lives to bear spiritual fruit through abiding in Christ.

Duration: 19:31

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 14:31 - 15:8, Hebrews 5:7-9

Topics: "Fruitfulness"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on a passage from John chapter 15, where Jesus speaks to his disciples before his arrest and crucifixion. Jesus uses the metaphor of a vine and branches to teach them important truths. He emphasizes the need for believers to abide in him, to remain close to him and have a daily intimate relationship with God. The preacher also highlights the concept of pruning, explaining that God prunes believers to make them more Christlike and fruitful. He concludes by referencing Hebrews chapter 5, emphasizing the importance of obedience and learning from suffering.

Transcript

I believe one of the richest passages in scripture in the New Testament is found in the Gospel of John in chapter 15 about the vine and the branches. It is so deep, so multi-layered with truth that to meditate upon this chapter is to enrich our very soul. I have entitled our message today, A Prune Branch and a Fruitful Bough, for it is the prune branch that bears fruit as we will see in our passage today.

Regarding this passage in John chapter 15, scholars disagree on the location where the discourse was given. Some scholars believe that this discourse took place while Jesus and his men were still in the upper room and the vine spoken of, the vine of the cup they were drinking, was the illustration used. Other scholars say that perhaps a tendril of creeping vine came up the trellis by the open window where they sat and this was the reference made to the vine.

Other Bible scholars point to John 14:31 where Jesus says to his disciples, arise, let us go hence, inferring that they had left the upper room while this discourse was made along the way to Gethsemane where as they crossed the brook Kidron, they saw the bright fires lighting up the nighttime sky from the vine cuttings which were being burned. I like that, it's striking imagery isn't it? I like to think this discourse occurred while they were walking along in their little band with Jesus leading the way and the disciples keeping up with him and hanging on every word that fell from his lips as they made their way to Gethsemane where Jesus would be taken from them and arrested and they would each flee like cowards each deserting him. Jesus

knows this is one of the last moments he will have with them as a group before his arrest and crucifixion and he wants to impart to them some vital truths which will get them through this trying and difficult time ahead where he will be taken from them as he has just informed them in the upper room.

Allow me to read this passage in John chapter 15 beginning in verse 1 and following to verse 8 which is our framework for our message today. I am the true vine and my father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away and every branch that beareth fruit he purgeth it that it may bring forth more fruit.

Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you abide in me and I in you as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine no more can ye except ye abide in me I am the vine ye are the branches he that abideth in me and I in him the same bringeth forth much fruit for without me ye can do nothing if a man abide not in me he is cast forth as a branch and is withered and men gather them and cast them into the fire and they are burned if ye abide in me and my words abide in you ye shall ask what you will and it shall be done unto you herein is my father glorified that ye bear much fruit so shall ye be my disciples well verse 1 of chapter 15 is very interesting in the greek language where Jesus says I am the true vine and my father is the husbandman in the

greek it reads I in contradistinction to anyone else am the genuine vine isn't that rich Jesus is announcing his distinguishing and utter difference from mankind no one else is quite like him all others are fakes compared to him he is the genuine vine the one true god the living god he is the real messiah he is the savior there is no other way to heaven but through him all others who make that claim are false prophets he alone is the genuine vine he is also stating that he is entirely different from us his thoughts are not our thoughts nor his ways our ways his ways are in contradistinction to our feeble human means now notice what Jesus says about the father he states my father is the husbandman in the greek it is translated and my father is the tiller of the soil this entire passage

speaks of agriculture and farming growth and fruit production god the father as the husbandman as the tiller of the soil it is god himself who holds the divine pruning knife with skilled hands which perform the masterful work on the branch the sovereign tiller of the soil the husbandman performs his work on the branch pruning it making it more productive turning it into a fruitful bow that others can enjoy and derive benefit from and whereby he receives all the glory is that not striking imagery is that not true of how god deals with us his children now look at the wording in verse two and every branch that beareth fruit he does what to it he purges it he prunes it why that it may bring forth more fruit we see that for a branch to bear more fruit it must be pruned pruned god the father is

the one who yields the knife of pruning upon us through affliction suffering trials and tribulations all to prune back the dead wood the unproductive in us to bring forth the green produce of a fruitful bow he does this for our good and his glory but we shy away from the pruning knife for who wants pain i remember preaching this sermon to a group of pastors one evening at a bible institute i had brought with me two men whom i was discipling at the time with the instructions that they were to sit at the back of the room and pray their hearts out while i preached to those ministers i believe in the power of prayer and the operations of the holy spirit don't you well that particular evening god must have heard the prayers of those two men because suddenly the atmosphere changed in that

little room while i was preaching the faces of those pastors became serious as they were gripped with eternity and the god of eternity i was hitting home hard this message of the divine pruning knife after the

meeting an older pastor approached me and hugged me and he looked me in the eye and with solemnity in his voice he said tonight brother i'm going home and i'm going to get down and kneel by my bed and i'm going to ask god to get out his pruning knife on me and my ministry did that take courage you bet it did will god bless the desire of that man's heart to get serious with him you bet he will how badly do we want god how badly do we want usefulness for him how desperate is our prayer to him to make us fruitful boughs which he can use if you want the fruit of a vibrant vital ministry

friend then be prepared for the pruning knife there's no escape in it and the more you desire usefulness to god the more pruning you will experience as the divine husbandman makes you more christ-like what is that passage from hebrews it is found in hebrews chapter 5 verses 7 through 9 let me read it to you for fair significance to our subject here today who in the days of his flesh when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death and was heard in that he feared though he were a son yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered and being made perfect he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him yes that's it you see friends this whole matter of usefulness to god is wrapped up in

this pruning of ourselves by the master's hand listen friends a life of usefulness for christ will be a life of suffering for christ beneath the pruning knife do you desire usefulness then be prepared to suffer usefulness arises from the furnace of affliction a fruitful bow will emerge often from the furnace of affliction and pruning one great example of this is found in the life of charles spurgeon i have a photo of spurgeon where the great british preacher is sitting at his desk with quill pen in one hand and the other hand resting beneath his bearded chin spurgeon's eyes are framed by deep circles of wear and fatigue the dark circles beneath his eyes are so prominent in this photograph that they look as though they were made by a black magic marker spurgeon's face reveals a great

atlas-like weight upon him a weariness and burden is written all over his tired face he sits there regally like a tragic king whose kingdom is heavy upon his shoulders he is marred by life and christian service his painfully sad eyes betray a deep manic depression he sits there absorbed in his work yet detached perhaps his mind is off in a more pleasant locale like mint in france his beloved winter retreat he sits there as a object of pity yet how can this be he is the great spurgeon but he looks like a worn out old man yet he is just 56 he carries the weight of the metropolitan tabernacle upon him the pastor's college upon him his orphanage upon him and his theological battles upon him with his peers the burden and care the ministry mark his once cheery countenance he is not the jovial

spurgeon here but one who is acquainted with grief he is a man well familiar with a life lived under the divine pruning knife this knife which cuts away strips away peels away and when one looks at spurgeon's face in this photo his face reveals another visage staring out from behind the human form the face of christ peers out beautifully behind spurgeon's sagging face the man of sorrows is there with him comforting him encourage him on in the work of the kingdom for to be christ-like is not to receive awards accolades or applause rather it is to be deeply familiar with great suffering and emptying to be christ-like is to know what it means to be misunderstood an object of ridicule and a target for enemies to be like christ is to experientially know reproach rejection and even abandonment

of close friends our lord jesus hung publicly in naked humility on a bloody tree he was ridiculed scorned spat upon rejected by his own people and nailed to an ignoble cross like a common criminal he bore reproach the great weight upon christ on the cross would have been too unbearable for us for he bore the sins of the world and he suffered the turned face of the father who cannot look upon sin the photo of

spurgeon reveals just how christ-like he really was well friends as we ponder this passage from john chapter 15 i often refer to it as the pruning chapter yet it is also the abiding chapter this whole matter of our walk with god is tied up in the abiding life wrapped up in it all of our usefulness to god all of our fruitfulness to god flows out of our abiding to the vine the genuine

vine in verse four that word abide in the greek is the word meno which means to dwell to remain to remain under to be patient we are to walk closely with god in a daily quiet time with him a lover's tryst with him so to speak where we meet him in fellowship and intimacy and communion we communicating to him what is on our heart and he revealing to us what is on his heart and we absorbing that experience and getting on what is on the heart of god and eternity we'll look at verse five i am the vine ye are the branches he that abideth in me and i in him the same bringeth forth much fruit for without me ye can do nothing this abiding principle is so true in the fruit of the harvest and it applies to the spiritual fruit in our lives for when we abide in him like a branch in the vine we will

have the constant flow the continual source of the divine sap through the holy spirit coursing through us as a blessing to others and because of our pruning to be more like him are abiding in him through a close walk with him we will bear much fruit for him and when jesus says without me ye can do nothing that means nothing worthwhile eternity wise apart from him oh the church can do much activity in the flesh with money and manpower but without holy ghost power real fruit fruit that impacts eternity flows from our abiding in a close walk with god and a life lived beneath the pruning knife of god have you ever seen a bowl of plastic fruit when i was a little boy a neighbor lady always kept a bowl of plastic fruit on her coffee table in her living room i picked up an apple one day the

fruit looked real until you picked it up and handled it and i've known churches like that they look good on the outside with much activity in the name of the lord but they are empty inside void of holy ghost power and spiritual fruit which impacts eternity and shakes the gates of hell but we have a command from christ here in chapter 15 of john's gospel look at verse 16 ye have not chosen me but i have chosen you and ordained you that ye should go and bring forth fruit and that your fruit should remain that whosoever whatsoever you shall ask of the father in my name he may give it to you fruit that remains friends d.o moody died in 1899 yet his church and bible institute in chicago continues on as a testimony to the fruit that remains from moody's christ surrendered life do you friend

desire more usefulness for god do you wish to be a fruitful bow for god then you must submit to the pruning knife of god and you must walk closely with god in a life of abiding in him in a life of utter reliance upon him then what spiritual fruit that springs forth from you from your life as a blessing to others will be worthwhile and lasting for all eternity the pruning knife and the fruitful bow go hand in hand in the hand of god amen

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