

The Husbandman

by Paris Reidhead

God's process of grafting a branch from a wild vine into the true vine requires the husbandman's work of intercession and witnessing, and the believer's responsibility to pray in an intercessory manner and share the gospel with others.

Duration: 1:01:24

Scripture: Proverbs 6:16-19, Matthew 6:33, John 3:16, John 15:1-3, Romans 1:29-32

Topics: "Husbandman"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of personal witnessing based on one's own experiences with God. He asks the audience if they have ever seen themselves as lost and sinful, and if they have recognized the holiness of God's law and the truth in His words. The speaker encourages the audience to witness to others about their own transformation and salvation, as a witness tells what they have seen, heard, and experienced. He also mentions the need to use Scripture as a mirror to identify areas of sin in one's life and take action to repent and seek forgiveness.

Transcript

John chapter 15. I'd like to read the first three verses of this very important scripture. Years ago, when I was a student in Bible school, I prepared a message on John 15, showed it to my homiletics professor, asked him what he thought about it.

He said, well, about 50 years from now, after you've brought several hundred messages on John 15, you may begin to understand the marvelous significance of that portion of the Word of God. And I think I have arrived at that place, and I'm beginning to understand, not having completed it, but I'm beginning to understand the riches of this wonderful portion of God's Word. Our Lord Jesus is speaking, it's His Word, and here is what He said.

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 purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

Now you are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you. Shall we bow in prayer? Our Father, how grateful we are that the very Holy Spirit had brought to John's remembrance that which the Lord Jesus had said, probably 50 years after it had been spoken. He is here tonight to take of the things of Christ and make them real to us.

Find us where we are, show us the next step in our spiritual pilgrimage, and put into our hearts, we ask Thee, that hunger and desire to be everything that the Lord Jesus died that we might be, that in turn we may bring honor and praise to His worthy name, in which name we pray, Amen. My wife and I moved to Florida in 1953, Orlando, Florida. We bought a little home built in an orange grove.

The city had moved out, and where there had been an orange grove, now they were growing bungalows, and we bought one of those. We had 11 fruit trees in the yard, and three large grapefruit trees and some orange trees. Down three houses from where we were after we moved in, they were building a house.

I always enjoyed seeing carpenters, builders work, and so I went down to watch what they were doing and learned as much as I could. There in the yard, right near the corner of the house in the inside of the lot, was a stump from an orange tree that had been cut down. The stump was gray, and it had been there for some time.

But from the roots of that stump had grown a shoot. The shoot was probably eight or ten feet high, and the shoot had put out some branches, and on one of these branches was growing a little green, gnarled, knobby-looking thing that I assumed to be citrus of some kind, but I wasn't sure what. And so I went over.

It was ripe on one side, a little bit of orange, so I thought, well, I'm going to pick it and see what it is. So I took my penknife and peeled back part of it, cut a little piece off and put it on my tongue and immediately spat it out. It was bitter.

Oh, it was past sour to bitter. And one of the workmen had seen what I was doing, and he said, don't like it, do you? No, I don't know what it is, but I'll tell you this, it'll never sell. You'd just better figure on that.

Well, he said, now you've found out something about Florida orange industry. What have I learned? He said, well, all of the orange groves in Florida are put onto this original stalk. Usually you don't have any of that fruit, but this happens to be a shoot that came out of that root stalk.

Now the nurserymen grow that root stalk because it resists fungus and disease in the soil. But when it gets to be a certain size, they cut off that shoot and graft in a small piece from the kind of tree they want. They may want a pineapple orange or a navel orange or some other type.

And so they take shoots from the tree they want, and they graft it into that root stalk. And the tree that forms, they're very careful to prune, that the tree that forms is going to bear the kind of fruit that characterized the tree from which the shoot had been taken. In fact, Sid, we've done a trick on it once in a while.

We've put in a shoot from a pineapple orange, then we put in a shoot from a navel orange and a third kind of orange, and we've had three trees grow up. And from the same stump, there'll be a navel orange and a pineapple orange, another type of orange. And people wonder at it, but it's just a trick.

In a grove, you don't do that. You have the tree, the particular fruit that you want to grow. But he said, that's a law of nature, that the shoot that forms the tree will bear the kind of fruit that characterized the tree from which the shoot was taken, and will not, I say will not, bear the kind of fruit of the root into which it's come.

Now, a law of nature, multi-billion dollar fruit industry in this country is based on that principle, not only with oranges, but with other trees as well. And so, we would expect that possibly that would carry on over into

spiritual truth. Well, let's look at what happens.

Here we have our Lord Jesus say, I am the true vine. My father is the husbandman. Every branch in me.

Now, the branches that are going to come into the vine are going to be grafted in. They're going to be cut out by the father. He's the husbandman.

It's the husbandman that takes the shoot from the orange tree and puts it into the root stock. And it's the father who's the husbandman who takes the shoot from the wild branch, if you please, and puts it into Christ. Well, if it were to follow the laws of nature, then it would be that the branch would characterize, that the fruit of that branch would be the same as from which the shoot had been taken.

But that's not so. Here we're seeing a miracle happen. A branch is cut out of a wild vine, and it's grafted into a true vine, and the nature of the fruit of that engrafted branch has changed, so it's no longer the same as the fruit from which the vine, from which the branch came, but it's the kind of fruit that is in the root to which the branch has been grafted.

That's a miracle. Now, in order to understand the significance of this miracle, let us look at some of the scriptures that tell us what we are by choice, the kind of people we are. For the scripture says, all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

Now, I believe that that implies character, character that's been affected by choice. I want you to turn to Mark chapter 7 and look there at some of the scriptures that we have, some of the statements from the heart of the Lord Jesus that describe you. This is your biography I'm reading.

It's my biography, and it's imperative, therefore, that we give close attention to it. In verse 20, he said, and that which cometh out of a man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, and evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness.

All these things come from within and defile the man. This is a description of the character of the sinner. This was my biography.

This was your biography. This is what came out of us, and we understand, therefore, that if we follow the law of nature and someone with that kind of fruit is grafted into the true vine, and it were just the law of nature, we would bear the fruit that characterized the vine from which we came. But is that going to be of any help? No, not at all.

Well, let's look at another verse. There are a few verses that describe what we were, and at this time I'm asking you to turn to Romans. I think in Romans you're going to find that he had something to say about you, and if you're thoughtful, you're going to recognize it.

Romans 1, verses 29 to 32. Here we are told that the people did not like to retain God in their knowledge. Such were we.

God gave them over to a reprobate mind to do those things which are not convenient. Because we had sinned, here now is a description, if you please, of the kind of moral fruit that we bore. Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things,

disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful.

Who, knowing the judgment of God that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them. Such were you. Such was I. By that choice we made to govern and rule and control our own lives.

Now you're beginning to see something of the problem he has. Why God has to be the husbandman. Last night I talked to you about a dear, loving, tender-hearted pastor that tried to graft me into the vine, into the church, and did such a miserably poor job of it.

I was just doubly damned. I was lost, but I was a church member who was lost. And that was the best he could do.

He couldn't do better. I remember Dr. Robert McQuilken, I was told that one time he was walking down the street and a drunkard was sitting there on the curb holding his head and moaning with a headache. And he looked up and he saw Dr. McQuilken coming.

Oh, he said, hello, doctor. I want you to know I'm one of your converts. And Dr. McQuilken says, yes, I take the blame and you represent just about the best that I can do, I'm sorry to say.

Well, that's about the best that you can do. It's the husbandman, the father, that has to do the work of taking the branch out of the wild vine and putting it in the true vine. Well, here we find that we have a description of that kind of fruit.

I'm a little bit surprised there to the 29th verse. Look at it again for a minute. Have you ever realized how God does not see shades of gray? We have different shades of sin.

For instance, if I would ask the average person what are the worst sins, I think you could find them here if you looked hard enough. But do you think the list of the worst sins that people commit would be covetousness or envy or argumentativeness or, well, look here, did you notice that they were whisperers? Have you ever heard anybody's list of sin that had whisperers high up on the list or back biters? Someone said whispering and back biting was the favorite indoor sport of the church. I don't believe that because I don't believe people that have been grafted out of the wild vine into the true vine by the husbandmen are going to be willing to do that.

But look what we have here. Here you have murder. On one side of murder and then you get down a little ways and you have haters of God.

And on one side of haters of God you have back biters and on the other you have those that are spiteful. It's a terrible sandwich, isn't it? The lower slice haters of God and the upper slice murder and the peanut butter mixture in the middle is envy and debate and deceit and malignity and whispers and back biters. That's some sandwich.

But you notice how that God seems to get things all mixed up. He puts the not so bad sins in with the really bad ones. Or maybe we better decide to take his way of looking at it and decide they're all pretty bad.

I think that's the way to go, don't you? Well this, this is what we were. This is what we were. Now I want you to turn over to Galatians chapter 4, chapter 5 rather, in verse 19 through 21.

And here we find the works of the flesh. Well that's a full length portrait of us as we were in our state of rebellion against God. Listen to it.

The works of the flesh are manifest, that is they're publicly known, no secret about it, which are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, and now look at those next two, idolatry and witchcraft. Well we don't have a great deal of that around us, do we? But you remember what Samuel said to Saul? Stubbornness is his idolatry, and rebellion is his witchcraft. And how many times we see stubbornness and rebellion in the home and with the family and elsewhere.

So we have it here, idolatry, witchcraft, stubbornness, rebellion, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like, of the witch, I tell you before, as I've also told you in times past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God, worthy of death. We read in Romans 1, worthy of death, and here shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Now you understand, therefore, something of the problem that God has.

If it's a law of nature when you cut a branch out of a vine, graft it into another vine, it's always going to carry, have the fruit that characterizes the branch tree from which it came. Now God has to cut that kind of a branch out, and graft it into the true vine, and have a miracle take place so that the fruit that's born on the engrafted branch is going to be the kind of fruit that characterizes the vine into which it has been put, which is contrary to nature. It's a miracle.

Now how does God go about doing it? There are several things that God does, several procedures that he uses when he wants to take a branch out of a wild vine, out of a true vine. First thing he does is to put a sample of his grace and of his power up next to that person that he wants to bring out of death into life. Did you know that to someone you are born of God, you are the very best child of God, follower of Jesus Christ, no? You're a sample of God's grace.

Oh, I trust you're a good sample, because if you name the name of Christ, you're a sample, good or bad. And if they ever come to the Lord, it may be in large part because they knew you, or it might be that they're kept away from him because they knew you. I don't know what it will be.

You and God know. That is, when God wants to bring somebody out of death into life, first thing he does is to put a sample of his grace up next to them. That's why you moved where you live.

That's why you live in the town where you do, and work where you do. You thought it was an accident. No, no.

You thought it was coincidence. No. There's somebody there he wants you to exhibit the second thing he has done when he wants to bring somebody out of death into life is to get one to intercede for that person.

Intercession is the legal work that the court of heaven has ordered. You see, we have twice in Revelation in just a few chapters. Unto him who loved us, who washed us in his blood, and who made us to be kings and priests unto God.

The function of a priest is to go from the presence of the person in need into the presence of God and legally represent that person before God. If you are the one that God chooses and points to become the

intercessor for a sinner, it's your responsibility to know that sinner. Of course you understand the justice of God's condemnation.

And like a court-appointed lawyer, when you go before the judge of all the earth in behalf of that sinner, you have to say, oh God of grace and wisdom and justice, this person is a sinner that deserves your wrath, your anger and punishment. I cannot excuse him. He has chosen to live and to walk as he lives and walks.

And therefore, he deserves your wrath. Well you have to do that because it's true. And so then the next thing you do is to say, but Father, he is no worse than was I. He doesn't deserve your wrath any more than did I. And your mercy and your grace found out me.

You moved upon me. Now I entreat you as a kinsman to this sinner to move upon him or upon her. That's the function of intercession.

To legally represent the sinner before God. It's imperative that this be done. When D.L. Moody was asked to go to St. Louis for what would have been the third citywide campaign in St. Louis, because of age and declining health, he had to say he couldn't come.

But he wrote in that letter this interesting statement. In the 40 years that I've been in evangelism, I have seen multitudes of people profess faith in Christ but every person that I have seen who have made a profession of faith in Christ and lived two years thereafter as a consistent believer had someone that interceded for them and witnessed to them before I ever came to town. I conclude, said D.L. Moody, the important thing is not the coming of an evangelist by the name of D.L. Moody or any other evangelist.

The important thing is the intercession of and the witness by the people that are now in St. Louis. Let them do what God has ordered them to do and the lost will be saved whether D.L. Moody ever comes or not. Well, that's what the husbandman does.

He gets a sample of his grace to live salvation before the sinner and then he gets somebody to intercede for the sinner. You see, God gives men the right to go to hell. He has given them the power of choice and he has said, as we hear from the prophet, as I live, say of the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked as I live.

Turn ye, turn ye, for why will you die? All right. God gives people the right to go to hell and if they choose to rebel against him, he permits them to do it. But you see, he doesn't move on that person in grace until either the sinner asks him to or the sinner's representative asks him to.

Do you understand why? God gave to them the power of choice. They've exercised it. Now God says to his own, to the redeemed, to the one that are washed in his blood, made to be kings and to be praised, intercede for sinners.

And they play church or carry banners for the blind, as Pastor Fred Brodine said in an introduction to a message I was privileged to read. Many of us are carrying banners for the blind and they can't see it because the God of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not. How are they then going to be brought out of death into life? Are you praying in an intercessory manner for lost people, family and friends and neighbors? Are you? He's made you.

He didn't ask you if you wanted to be a priest. He made you to be a priest. You're going to give an account of whether you did it effectively or whether you did it at all when you see him face to face.

But intercession is a responsibility of God. The third thing that we can do is to witness to the believer. A lot of people are frightened by this word witness.

They get the wrong idea. Somebody once went out into the book of Proverbs and picked up a statement there that has absolutely nothing to do with people being born of God and called it soul winning. It doesn't make sales.

But he never said that. He didn't say after that the Holy Ghost has come upon you, you'll be soul winners. He said after that the Holy Ghost has come upon you, you'll be witnesses.

And there's a lot of difference between selling Jesus or trying to persuade someone against their will to make a decision they don't want to make in a bargain basement special. We'll go on doing as we've done through the years past and fill our churches with the unconverted if we resort to such tactics as that. No, he said you'll be witnesses.

Now what's a witness? A witness is a person who tells what he has seen and what he has heard and what he's experienced. And if he goes beyond that it's hearsay and it's inadmissible. A witness tells what he's seen.

Hey listen, have you ever seen yourself the way these scriptures described you? Have you ever seen yourself lost? Have you ever seen the fruit of sin? Have you accepted Mark 7 and Romans 1 and Galatians 5 as a full length portrait of you? Have you seen yourself lost? Well if you've seen that then you've got something to witness about. I saw! I asked the company of about 100 people once how many of you are saved? And every hand went up. Then I said how many of you have ever been lost? And four hands went up.

I couldn't help but Jesus Christ came into the world to seek and to save that which was lost. Four people had been lost. Have you ever seen yourself like that publican down in front of the temple standing there beating his breast and saying God be merciful to me a sinner? Have you? Well you've got something to witness to.

Seen God high and lifted up? Seen the holiness of his law? The righteousness of his judgments? The justice in his condemnation of you? Have you heard God speak and have recognized the truth in what he said? The soul that's in it it shall surely die. Well if you've seen the holiness of God, if you've heard God's word and it's spoken to your heart, if you've heard the invitation, come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. And you can say I came a world of uncleanness and iniquity deserving nothing from him but his wrath.

But I came in and gave my sin. He gave me a new heart and a new spirit and witnessed to me that I had passed from death to life. You see that's what a witness does.

Tells what he's seen, tells what he's heard, and tells what he's experienced. Has God's spirit born witness with your spirit that you're a child of God? Then you witness what everything is. That's the work of the spirit that you have as the responsibility to the lost.

Live Christ before them, intercede for them, and witness to them. Now when we do that effectively there are some things that God does. The first thing he does is to awaken the sinner.

That's to stir him up and realize that what he isn't right, that his life isn't sweet and blessed, that all that he may have or not have has left him with emptiness and with pain. He's awakened to his need. And then through the word applied and by this witness he's convicted of his sin as you were of yours.

And then there's repentance in his heart where he changes his mind about who's going to be bossed and he's going to change. From that time on he's going to do what God wants him to do. A change of mind and intention and purpose.

And then heart faith that reaches 2,000 years into the past and savingly embraces the Son of God. For with the heart man believes under righteousness. Then God witnesses to them.

So that's the thought of the wild vine and grafted into the true vine. But he says the Father is the husbandman. Oh how many evangelists and how many Sunday school teachers and how many pastors and how many parents and friends have tried to do the work of the husbandman and it doesn't work.

Only when God the husbandman does it. Is it going to be effective. And he'll do it if we'll do what we're supposed to do.

The divine husbandman will do what only he can do. But when we refuse to do what God gave us responsibility to do. And then we try to usurp the prerogatives and responsibilities of God we end up with nothing but carnage.

Human sacrifice on the inexperience or of our selfishness or our vanity. No we better do things God way. I am the true vine.

My father is the husbandman. He'll take that branch and cut it out. Then he proceeds to say every branch in me that beareth fruit.

He purges it. Oh you don't need to worry about the branches that are that were put there by pastors and evangelists and teachers and Sunday school teachers and parents and friends. If it wasn't real they're going to be gathered up and they'll be burned.

But oh what a tragedy. What a tragedy. But the ones that are put there by the husbandman he said every branch in me that beareth fruit he purges it.

Well I guess you've got enough fruit trees around here to get an idea. Out where I come from in the Shenandoah Valley they've got a great apple industry as I know you have to the west of you here in Washington maybe around here for that matter. I don't know.

I know you've got a great potato industry but I never knew about purging potatoes except we purge the apple trees. We got a saying out there. What's the best time to prune an apple tree.

You know what it is. When the knife is sharp. It doesn't make much difference spring or summer fall or winter just make have the knife sharp.

And what's the best time to prune a believer every branch in me that beareth fruit he purges it. Now that's not a terribly pleasant experience because God always keeps his knife sharp. But I'll tell you this if you're

put there by him he's going to cut away here and there.

Oh he may get neighbors and friends to work at it a bit and sometimes they go in and cut off a little more than was necessary because it's got to go. And so he said every branch in him that bears fruit he purges it. He does that by experience.

He does that by circumstances. He does that by events. He does that by failures.

He does that by success. He's always doing it. But then there's another that third verse.

Now enough to have God do the purging and all those willing helpers around there. I've often said with friends like mine I've never needed enemies. They were all so zealous about seeing that I got all the things lopped off that needed to be lopped off.

But you'd think wouldn't you that that might be enough. But no. Look at that third verse.

Now you are clean which I have spoken unto you. What's the best evidence that you've been born of God. Let me give it to you carefully.

The best evidence that you've been born of God are the following. Number one a hatred for sin because of you partaking of the divine nature. You feel the same way about sin in your life that the Lord Jesus felt about the temple.

You can't make peace with it. The next evidence that you're born of God is a hunger for God. If you've been made partaker of the divine nature then it's a deep within you calling to the deep in him and you want to be like him.

That little chorus was born there. Oh to be like thee. Oh to be a blessed redeemer.

Pure as thou art. Come in thy pureness. Come in thy fullness.

Stamp thine own image deep on my heart. To be like Jesus. To be like Jesus.

That's the evidence. That's the hunger to know him and to be like him. The third evidence that you're born of God is a heart of compassion. If you've been made partaker of the divine nature you're going to feel the same way about the lost as he feels.

There's going to be a desire in your heart. A great hungering desire to see the lost come to know and love Jesus Christ. So here you are now.

You've been born of God. You've been washed up. He says now you are clean through the word.

Do you remember the tabernacle in the wilderness? When I say tabernacle in the wilderness does it bring a picture to your mind? You remember the courtyard? Quite large. It was about 50 feet wide and 150 feet long and then in the middle was this building outside the gate was an altar of furniture called the altar of burnt offering. You remember that? You studied it in years past.

Well the tabernacle in the center had two rooms in it. The first was the holy place, the table of showbread speaking of Christ the word upon whom we feed. And then there was the seven full lampstand speaking of Christ who is the light of the world.

And then there was the altar of incense speaking of our worship and our adoration of him. But between the altar of burnt offering which speaks of the cross and the place of dwelling there the holy place was another piece of furniture. It was called the laver.

Now the laver is a very interesting piece of furniture because there are no dimensions given for it. Everything else has explicit dimensions. So many cubits high and so many cubits wide.

But the laver it doesn't tell us how big it is. Why? Well I guess it's because God wanted us to know that it was big enough to meet all of our needs. And if we put dimensions on it we might have thought it wasn't big enough.

So we don't know how big it was but we know how it was made. It had a pedestal and then it had a basin and walls on the basin. The bottom of the basin was lined with mirrors.

That basin was lined with silver that was highly polished and it was filled with water. Now the laver had a two fold effect. The priest before he went into the holy place having ministered around the altar of burnt offering where there was spattering fat and soot and smoke from the offerings made did not dare to go into the laver to cleanse away everything there that would appear as dirt.

And so the Levite would come, the priest would come and he would lean over the laver and it did two things. It showed him where the dirt was and it provided the water to wash the dirt away. Now our Lord Jesus said you are clean through the word.

The word of God is the laver. Have you used it that way? Do you have a list of mirror verses that you've memorized or that you know how to find? Well take the three that I've given you earlier this evening. Those are mirror verses and you come to the word in Proverbs chapter 6 verses 16 to 19 you read these six things doth the Lord hate yea the seventh is an abomination unto him.

And it says he hates a proud look and feet that are swift in running to mischief and then it ends up with he that soweth discord among brethren. And as you look into the word if you see something that God hates in your life what are you going to do about it? Well it's the mirror that shows you the dirt. You're going to wash it away.

Well how do you wash sin away when you're a child of God born into the Father's family and some attitude or action or word or deed comes to you? It says judge yourself that you be not judged. Don't wait until somebody else judges you. Judge yourself.

Go to the mirror. Go to the word. And the spirit of God says you have bitterness in your heart.

A root of bitterness. Oh God bitterness is sin. It's earthly sensual and devilish and I become one.

The second thing it says is let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts and let him return to the Lord and he'll have mercy to our God and he'll abundantly pardoned. But you can't be pardoned as long as you're holding on to your sin. Let the wicked forsake.

Put it away. Father this is sin and I'm through with it and I'm through with it. If we confess our sin he is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

So we've judged it. We've forsaken it. Now we confess it.

And what does confess mean? To call it by its name. Call it by its name. If it's between you and the Lord you say to the Lord Father I've had a bitterness.

If that bitterness is spilled over to your wife or your neighbor or your friend or somebody else or the church you go and say God has convicted me that I've had bitterness in my heart and I've judged it and I've forsaken it and now I want to confess it to you and know the cleansing of the precious blood. You know. But God fixed it in such a way that it was going to cure us of doing those things.

And so he said you judge it and you forsake it and you confess it and then the blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanses us from all sin. I know there were times in my life when I was I didn't want to get too close to God about some things in my life and I got too sleepy to know what I was doing. I touch one knee lightly to the floor and say dear Lord if I've sinned please forgive.

I don't know what that is but I'll tell you this I know what it isn't. That's not judging it and that's not forsaking it and that's not confessing it. That's just playing games with God.

And when you play games with God you're always the loser. He always wins. You always lose.

You can't play games with God. If there's something in your life you know what it is. You judge it.

You forsake it. You confess it and the blood of Jesus will cleanse it from you. Now the evidence that you want to please God he said now you are clean to the word which I have spoken unto you.

Oh how tremendously important it is dear friend for you to keep short accounts with God. Years ago in Africa I was asked by our station head the man who was in charge of the station to supervise down a garage that had been built for the truck the new truck that had come to our station. Our soil was cotton soil.

I don't know if you know what that is but when it gets dry in the dry season the soil cracked and it was like a minor earthquake. It just pulled our houses apart. Outside the house was covered with corn stalks to keep the rain from welding the wood plaster off the wall.

One day I went to the bamboo thicket and I cut the longest bamboo pole I could. It was 14 feet and right just next to our kitchen door that went from our house to the little separate room that was a kitchen I put that there. It went 14 feet down and then I lay down on the ground to add the length of my arm and I got down that far and I still hadn't felt the bottom.

Now that was cotton soil. They tried to dig a well there and they dug 65 feet and never got through the black soil. That was within 150 feet of the edge of the Nile River.

The Nile River was lying like a plastic tank with that heavy clay and it did water and it just never seeped out of it. It just stayed there. Well this garage had been built on cotton soil and in three years it had just been torn apart.

There was a lot of good timber in it and the roofing and so on so I was asked to clean it and I had a crew working with me, seven or eight fellows in the neighborhood that wanted work and I was wearing shorts. Well there was one big 6 by 12 beam about 10, 12 feet long and it had a 2 by 4 that had been split and came to a point and it had mud bricks that had fallen off the wall on it and we had to clean it and so I took a hold of the end of that and with the help of all the others it broke loose but when it did the point of that

split 2 by 4 just scraped under my knee cap. Now I knew that the flies around us carried a virulent infection and made great tropical ulcers but I was very busy.

I was the boss of the carrying down the garage so obviously I didn't have time to walk about 200 feet over to our house and disinfect this wound and put a bandaid over it. No, I was too busy. So what I did was to tie my handkerchief.

Can you imagine tying your handkerchief under your knee cap? You know how long it stayed there, don't you? About two weeks. And I used a neem tree to brush the flies away. That night when I bathed I put a little sulfur powder in it and it healed up the next day except in four days there was a deep red spot and I knew I had an infection.

Well we put compresses on it, we tried to get it off. The doctor came by and said, Reedhead, you've got an infection. You're going to lose your leg at the worst or lose the use of your knee at the best.

So it opened up and it drained and we syringed it out with disinfectant and put some more sulfur powder and it healed up and then it came back a much bigger red spot. And the doctor was back and he said, put no pressure on it. I want you to keep it open, keep the air to it, keep syringing it every once in a while, maybe two or three times an hour.

It's got to heal from the inside or you're going to lose your knee at the best or your leg at the worst. And it all came about because when I broke the skin I was too busy or lazy or indifferent to do what I had promised to do when I went to the field, to immediately disinfect all breaks in the skin. And I see the people of God that have had breaks in their spiritual life because of envying or strife or bitterness or whispering or backbiting or something else and it's become infected and it's gone deeper and it's gone deeper and it's gone deeper and now they're crippled and handicapped because they didn't deal with it as God's word indicates they should.

You're clean through the word. The moment you break the Holy Ghost, the moment you disobey the word, the moment there's attitude or motive or word or anything that grieves God, that's the very instant to deal with it. Not to wait.

Not to wait till Sunday. Not to wait till there's a special meeting. But that moment to deal with it.

You see, when the husbandman takes place, then you want to be healthy. You want to be holy. You want your life to count for the glory of Christ.

And there are laws and rules with which to do it. Hear the word again as we close. I am the true vine.

My father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away. And every spurgeth it that it may bring forth more fruit.

Now you are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Let's bow in prayer. A few questions rise out of what's engaged us for these minutes past.

One, were you put into the true vine by the husbandman or as I was in that first instance I described by a zealous, earnest, well-meaning pastor who was so mistaken, didn't know what he was doing? Do you know that you've passed from death to life? Do you have a hatred of sin? Do you have a hunger for God? Do you have a heart of sin? If so, then you want to be clean through the word. And anything that the word

of God will show you in your life, in your motivation, in your relationships that grieves God, you're going to deal with it as he's prescribed, judge it, forsake it, confess it, and know the cleansing of the precious blood. Are you his in the vine by the word of God? That's a question.

If you are, then these are the things that are going to happen. And if you aren't, then wisdom dictates that you recognize your need, make it known, sue for peace and come to him that you might meet him in truth and know him in reality. You're wise.

I give you credit for being wise people. If you know that you've been grafted into Christ by the husbandman, rejoice. If you do not, if you're not sure, then take the appropriate steps to make sure.

Father of Jesus, we plead over this company of people and the churches they represent and their homes, the merit and the power and the virtue and the authority of the blood of Christ. Our God, we're asking that here in Jerome and in the churches represented here from other places that there might be such a breaking through of thy spirit and such an outpouring of intercession and of witness that in the days to come there will be many that will be brought to a saving relationship with thy dear son. We thank thee.

We ask that our pillows tonight may become altars as we are awakened by thy spirit and deal with what you show us. This is a good place to deal with it, Lord, but we're on 24-hour call to thee. Our desire is that our lives might bring honor and glory and praise to Christ.

So any time during the night that you come, our minds and hearts can get still enough to hear what you're trying to say to us and show to us. And so we put ourselves in your care and keeping, doing us everything that your love sees need to be done, that the Lord Jesus may be glorified and that we may know that joy of his presence in that day when he would take us in the name of thy dear son. Amen.

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