

Branches and Clean Ones

by R. Edward Miller

The sermon explores the profound union between Christ and believers, emphasizing the necessity of being clean and abiding in Him to bear spiritual fruit.

Duration: 28:11

Scripture: John 15:2

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the parable of the vine from the book of John. Jesus describes himself as the true vine and explains that every branch in him that does not bear fruit will be taken away, while those that bear fruit will be pruned to bear even more fruit. The preacher emphasizes that the fruit being referred to is the fruit of the Spirit mentioned in Galatians 5:22-23. The sermon also highlights the importance of having a personal revelation of God and a longing to know him, as well as the need to abide in Christ in order to bear fruit.

Transcript

We're going to look for a little while, it won't be long, in the book of John. The lovely words of Jesus in this capture are far too extensive to try in any way to fill it tonight, but we'll take two or three things. One is the definition through the parable that Jesus gave of the union of Christ and the branches in the parable of the vine.

He said, I am the true vine, my father is a husbandman, every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that bears fruit he prunes it, that it may bear more fruit. And that fruit he is talking about is the fruit of the spirit that you read in Galatians chapter 5 verse 22-23. But then the next thing he said, verse 3, he defined who are those branches, who is he talking to that has that unique wondrous union with Christ.

He's talking about the branch that bears fruit, and I never did see a cherry tree or an apple tree or a peach tree or a walnut tree. I never saw one strained to bear fruit. I never saw anyone work at it.

I've only seen them relaxed and rest in the vine, in the tree, in the source that they're connected to. But I have seen a branch get disconnected to a storm or to some other accident, and it will never bear fruit. All it is is connection, isn't it? Is to maintain that vital connection.

The fruit will be automatic. The fruit will be spontaneous. The fruit will be the source, it will be from the source and the kind of fruit that it's made.

The fruit doesn't choose to be what it is, it just is. We try to be spiritual, we try to bear spiritual fruit, and all we usually end up doing is bearing a strange fruit which is called hypocrisy. We put on a cloak of a goodness that doesn't come from inside, it comes from pride and what people think of it.

But the true fruit of the spirit comes from the spirit, and there's no way I can produce it for you, or I can produce it for myself. But then he went on to say, he inserted it in verse 3, and it was very interesting he inserted it there. He said, you are clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

In other words, before he went on with a parable, he inserted this. As if he couldn't go any further without this being clarified. He didn't say, now you are saved.

He didn't say, now you are converted. He didn't say, now you're filled with the spirit. He didn't even say, now you're sanctified.

He said something that I think is the most beautiful, beautiful word that can ever exist in a human language, vocabulary. You are clean, clean. That's such a beautiful word.

The angels don't know that word, because they never know what it was to be dirty. They're just always clean. So they never think of clean or cleanliness.

They just are always there, always in perfection and purity. But he said, you are clean because I have spoken a word a divine fire, a divine command that the Holy Spirit and the angels of God have obeyed and made you clean. If you've never felt the beauty of cleanliness, you have never really known the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

If you've never felt the wonders, the beauty of being clean, then you've never known the filth and the dirt that you once were. Until the Holy Spirit has revealed to you the ugliness, the filthiness, the repugnance of sin. Until from the depths of your heart you cried out just one word, God wash me, cleanse me and I shall be clean.

Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. And he said this beautiful word to the disciples. He said, you are clean because I've spoken the word for you to be clean.

In other words, he was saying you are the branches and that's the one way you can know or the one way you become a branch connected into that mystical, marvelous union with God in Christ. As much as a branch is an actual part of the vine, as much as a branch is united, as much as it breathes back and forth the very sap, the very life of the vine, but it takes cleanliness. It takes one that is cleansed.

He defines that before he goes on with the rest of the discourse. Before he goes any further, he defines this is not just for everybody. This is not for anybody that wants to to become a branch.

No, we don't become a branch. I never yet saw a branch become a branch because it jumped from another tree or jumped from the ground and was a piece of stick and decided they want to be a piece of grape. It doesn't work that way.

It's a birthing. It's a coming forth out of the vine, isn't it? And these have come forth out of the vine, and yet somehow they needed a cleansing. One that takes care of gardens and things knows that cleansings are

necessary.

There's all kinds of pests. There's all kinds of bugs. There's all kinds of insects.

There's all kinds of diseases, and that branch will never bear fruit until it is cleansed. Is that right? And so before he went any further, Jesus stopped and said, now you are clean. Oh, what a beautiful way.

What a beautiful way. The first time I heard it, I was filled with joy. So filled with joy that instead of having shouts of joy, I had tears of joy.

It was so wonderful to be clean. Have you ever felt that way? So wonderful to be clean. So now you are clean.

Now you're ready to go on with the union. Now you're ready to go on in what I'm going to say to you. He said, now that you're in the vine, and now that you're clean, ready to bear fruit, he said, stay there.

Stay there. Abide in me, and I in you. He said, I'm going to abide in you, and I want you to abide in me, because if we don't, if we don't stay locked into union, if we let things come and tear us apart, if we let a tornado or a hailstorm or a squirrel or anything else separate us, we cannot bear any fruit.

Except you abide in the vine, he says, you cannot bear fruit, because a branch cannot bear fruit alone by itself unless it stays in the vine. And you can't either unless you abide in me, because I am the vine. I want you to notice he didn't say, I am the trunk.

Did you notice that? He said, I am the whole vine. You're just a branch in me. You're a part of me.

I don't understand that. That's too high for me. I don't know how that can be.

How that, how that you can become a very part of Christ. A part of the whole unit. A part of the whole vine.

Not a separate part, but a part of the whole unit. I am the vine and you're one of the branches. You're a part of me that's in this vine.

I know you can't understand that. I can't either. I just know it's true.

And I know it's true by another way. Because that life force, that life force that comes out of the vine, I can feel it come into me. And if you're alive and sensitive, you can feel it come into you at different times and different experiences.

And then he goes on to say, if you abide in me and my words abide in you, you can even ask what you want and it shall be done. So my father will be glorified. You bear much fruit.

So you'll be to my, you'll be my disciples. And John, 1 John 1.22, I should say 3.22, tells us that that was true for him and was true for the others that were with him, whoever they were. He said, everything we ask, we receive of him.

Because? Because we're abiding. Because we do the things that please him. Because we obey him.

And everything we ask, he gives us. That's a pretty big order, isn't it? But then I want to go to another thing. As before we, before we close.

And that is in verse, we'll just take verse 16. You did not choose me, but I chose you. That follows verse 9, where it says, as a father loved me, I so also have loved you.

This is a love affair, you know. Abide in my love. You didn't choose me.

He's talking about his, to his friends. He called them friends a little bit later. He's talking about branches, clean ones.

But he's talking about something else. He's talking about the ones he loved. He's talking about his bride.

He's talking about those that have that love union with him. Not just a mechanical union, like a bunch of grapes hanging on a vine. No, not that kind of union.

It's a union that goes into the spirit. And it's a union that's a binding of love. It's a bonding together.

He says, I've chosen you. So much for election. I've chosen, you didn't choose me.

I chose you. And I made you a part of myself. I put you in the vine, and I made you a part.

And I ordained that you're going to bring forth fruit. And it's going to be the fruit that I give you, because it's got to come from him. It can't come from yourself.

It can't come yourself. And we read in Romans 7, that the bride of Christ is to bear fruit, to be fruitful. And again, I say, we're talking about the fruit of the spirit.

This is something so, so unique. This is something that Christ was talking about in his last discourse. The last thing he's saying to them, just before his farewell.

One more thing he said about the coming of the Holy Spirit. But he was talking about that union. He says, God is in fathers and me, and I in him.

We will be in you. And then to illustrate it, he tells the parable of the vine. How wonderful that union is.

It's a life union. It is something that life produces. It is not something that religion produces.

It is not something that teaching produces. It is not something that studying. You can be, you can have your PhD in theology, and still not be a part of the vine.

It's got to be something that life produces. Divine life. And makes you a part.

We sang a while back, Zion is calling me to a higher place. To a higher place. You know, I was thinking several times.

I thought about Paul, and he's writing in Philippians, the third chapter. And he said, I count everything but loss. I don't care about anything.

My ministry, my apostleship, my gift. Everything but loss. Just so I might know Christ.

That I might know him. Now, Paul had been a Christian for maybe, who knows how many years. For a good many years, at least.

He'd been a Christian. He'd been an apostle. He'd visited the heavenlies.

He had the anointings. He had some wonderful gifts. And yet he said, I want to get to know him.

Paul, what are you talking about? He's saying, I haven't got high enough yet. And then he goes on to say, I've pressed towards a mark. I can't stay here.

And then he went on to say, he said, I haven't yet got there. I've been apprehended. I've been, I've been chosen.

I've been ordained for a place. And I'm not even there yet. I said, good God, Paul, if you're not there, where am I? Where am I? I think you can find me in the vine.

You take a microscope and find some little bud that's just starting. You'll probably find my name on it, I hope. At least I'm optimistic in saying that.

One of our pastors in Argentina that was not at all happy with the revival that we were in, he was asked by one of his friends if he didn't think that I was a part of the body of Christ. He hesitated. He said, well, yes, I guess he is, like a boil.

But at least I was there. Boils can be healed. So I am calling me to a higher place.

There is that union so beautiful, so wonderful, until that life force is always at your hands, always available, until it's always working. He said, because I've chosen you. Now, there's nothing you're going to choose, so don't even try.

But he says, I've chosen you. How do I know if I'm chosen? Well, if you weren't, you wouldn't want to be. So don't worry about that one.

You have the opportunity if you want it, if that longing's in your heart. Like we were talking about Jacob, all along there was that longing. He just couldn't rest.

There was a place in God. There was a place that Abraham had, that wonderful man of faith, and that man that had direct physical visitation from God himself. And angels came to him.

He knew there was something, and he didn't have it. And at least there was a place he could get to, and that was the birthright. And he figured out a way to buy it.

It didn't cost him much, but he bought it, and he had that. But that still didn't satisfy him. There was more to be had.

He wanted a blessing, but there was more to be had. He got a personal revelation of the reality of God at Bethel. He was allowed to look up that ladder and see see that there was one on the top side, and it frightened him.

He said, God's in this place. Up to that time, God was only words. The words of Abraham, the words of Rebecca, the words of Isaac, the words he'd memorized.

But at Bethel, it was more than words. There was a reality. Why did God do that? Why did he do it to Esau? Why did he do it to others? Because there was that longing in his heart, way back.

Is there a longing in your heart? Is there that desire, I want to know him. I want to come into a higher place. I want to, I'll count everything.

No important. It's not important what happens in my life. If I can just know him.

If I can touch those realms that are beyond my human sight, beyond words, but I know there's something there. My heart tells me there's a reality, and God gave Jacob that reality, the knowledge of God. And it went on and on, as you know, until he got to Nile, and he had that impulse, that impartation of the Holy Spirit that changed his nature, changed his name, changed his lifestyle, changed everything for him.

It all started way back. I want more. I think holy dissatisfaction is a great gift from God.

It's a great gift from God. Whatever I have, oh thank you, but I want more. I want more.

I want to grow. I want to develop. I don't want to be a little, a little quarter-inch bud on the vine.

I want to grow, grow, grow, until, until fruit can begin to come into my life. And not the fruit I have to strain for and strive for, not the fruit of psychology, not the fruit that comes to learn how to discipline yourself, to learn how, how to act holy and righteous and upright. Oh, that's all good.

I'd rather live, live with that kind of person than the other kind. Well, I'm not sure. I think I would.

But that kind is just automatically there. It's automatically there. That that you don't have to fight for, strive for.

It just comes. I remember Ruth Brooks up in Zion, Illinois, is a precious woman of God. I think she's still alive.

She's way up in her 90s. But she was at a, at a train depot, and she asked for a ticket to a certain place, and the ticket agent didn't understand her. And when she finally made it clear what she wanted to do, he'd already written out a ticket.

He was very angry and began to scold her. If you wanted that place, why didn't you say so? And he was really tearing her off. And she apologized for not speaking more clear and louder and making it clear to him and, and pacified him and got her ticket.

But when she came out, she said to me, I'm sure glad he didn't see me 20 years ago. He would have heard another answer. But the change was there.

She didn't have to fight for it. It just came out. That truth that God brings.

But that only comes by abiding in divine. That only comes to those who are clean and who are allowed to stay. They're not pruned out because they don't bear anything, they don't bear anything, they don't bear anything, as though white cumbersome divine, take it out.

It keeps the sunlight away from the rest of them. But to abide in the vine is to abide so intimately related with God. That it's something to be so desired that, as Paul said, I count everything but a nothing.

He used a strong word, but I kind of a tongue. It's not important at all. Just that I might know God.

Just that I might come into that place in God. Just that I might know Christ and be joined with him and know him in his power, his resurrection, his death, and know him so fully that I am Christ and Christ is mine. You say, oh, that's too high.

Well, yes, it's too high for us to reach. But I don't think it's too high to reach for. You know what I mean? Paul said, I haven't got there yet.

But he says, I'm pressing towards it. That's where I'm going. That's what Jacob did.

That's what I want. That's where I'm going. I want to be.

Oh, he never was Abraham, but he was Jacob. He was Israel, wasn't he? And we read later, you know, he said there, he said at Bethel, he said, if you bring me here again and you keep me alive and you keep me in health and you keep me in Raymond, you bring me here again, you will be my God. Twenty some years later, he was at Bethel and he was at Peniel and God called him Israel.

And you know, it's a strange thing that today we know he's a God of Abraham. He's a God of Isaac. And he's a what? God of Jacob.

Hallelujah. He made it, didn't he? If you'll bring me here, you'll be my God. God took him up on it.

And today we know him as the God of Jacob. Is he your God? Is he your God? Father, it's so wonderful, so mysterious and so high. Our poor little mind is trained to try to catch a tiny inkling of what it's all about.

Someday we'll know, as we are known. But I pray, Father, you'll put in the hearts of everyone here a hunger, a desire, a faith that there is a place, there is a God. It's not just words.

It's not just what the preachers tell me. It's not just what my parents tell me. There is a real God, a real, real God.

And Father, I pray that those that have not yet had a personal revelation of the reality of God, that they'll put in their hearts, it can be. Jacob believed in you before he ever saw the ladder, before Bethel. And we can believe, and we can reach for, and we can cry out, take me higher.

Don't leave me here. Don't leave me here. Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.

Lord, lift me up and let me stand by faith in heaven's table lamp, a higher place than I have ever known. Lift me up and let me stand. Don't let me stay here.

This is not my resting place. This is not my dwelling place. You call me higher and I must go.

I hear a call from the top of the mountain, and I know mountain climbing is dangerous, but they call me. I hear a voice that says, come on up. Come on up higher and I must go.

Father, put that in heart. Put a hope and a faith, a desire and a hunger. I ask in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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