

Branch Life - John 15 - Sermon 2 of 5

by Roy Hession

The sermon emphasizes the importance of learning to be branches in the vine, Jesus Christ, and the futility of trying to bear fruit of ourselves.

Duration: 1:01:47

Scripture: Zechariah 3:8, Zechariah 6:12, John 15:2-4, Romans 7:15-20, Romans 7:24-25

Topics: "Christian Living", "Repentance"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of living a life in cooperation with Jesus. He highlights the need to wait on God's timing and learn to rest in Him. The preacher refers to Romans 7, where the apostle Paul expresses his struggle with sin and the inability to do good on his own. However, the preacher emphasizes that through the blood of Jesus, repentance is not enough, but it is essential to see the power and wonder-working ability of the blood of Jesus to completely reconcile us with God. The sermon encourages believers to be quick to recognize when they have become disconnected from the vine and to seek unity with Christ through repentance and reliance on His blood.

Transcript

Let us bow our heads in prayer. Lord Jesus, our hearts are drawn to Thee this morning. There has been fulfilled surely in many of our hearts that word which says, draw me and we will run after Thee.

And Thou art drawing us, drawing our hearts out to Thee. We have many needs, Lord, but Lord, though we hardly know all they are, we know they are somewhere, somehow, to be met only in Thee. And Lord, we make confession to Thee of our inner battles, this cruel self, O how it works within our breasts, to come between our souls and Thee, and keep us back from rest.

It helps us, Lord, to express these battles we know, between Thee and the cruel self within our breasts. But Lord, one of old wrote those words, he found his answer in Thee, although the self was as cruel in him as in anybody else. And we have hope that we shall find Thy sweet way of living this new life into which Thou hast called us.

We ask, Lord, that Thou would open Thy holy word Thyself. We ask that the Holy Spirit shall Himself give us a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Thee. Lord, may the penny drop for many of us along this line or that line, may we have revealed to our hearts that which perhaps we hadn't seen before.

So we thank you in our Lord Jesus Christ. I would like you to read just once again those eight verses in John 15. John 15, to illustrate to us what life in the Holy Spirit is meant to be.

With Jesus up there, at least corporeally, and the Holy Spirit down here. This is the new relationship with Jesus which it is ours to enjoy. I am the true vine, he says.

My Father is the husbandman or vinedresser. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away. And every branch that beareth fruit, he purges or cleanses 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 then will abide in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, although we've tried to do just that, 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 or beareth much fruit.

Literally it's beareth rather than bring forth. And bring forth does rather give the idea of something we've got to do. But as we said yesterday, the branch simply bears the fruit which the vine produces.

And the one who abides in me, said Jesus, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit. For without me, literally apart from 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 on the other hand ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, what a carte blanche promise this is. Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit. So shall ye be my disciples. Amen.

Now our subject is branch life, branch life. And our section of the subject this morning is the branch trying to bear fruit of itself. Fruitless attempt.

But that's where we're going to begin. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, but does it try? Do we not try? And the result is ever the same. We just don't seem to be able to do it.

And as we shall see, we aren't expected to be able to do it. Now just a little look back, we saw yesterday that we have experienced a wonderful grafting into Christ if we have come to him and have believed on him. Contrary to nature, we've been taken out of the old stock of Adam whose life and nature we share, and we've been grafted into Jesus the living vine whose life and nature we now share.

Now this is something positional, something which God tells us is a fact, which is true of every born-again believer of the Lord Jesus. He has been taken from one stock and he has been grafted into the other. And Christ now is the vine and he is a branch in Christ.

Just a little illustration that fills out the picture of Christ our vine and we but his branches. I have a friend in California who has a big vineyard and he took me around it once and he showed me that around the central stem there were two scars. They'd been produced by a little pronged instrument and they went round every vine and they cut into the bark of that central vine.

And he told me why. The sap arises in the centre of the vine and then goes down normally to earth on the outside just under the bark and in the process feeds the branches with the sap which in turn is the

procuring cause of whatever fruit is produced and born on those branches. But by doing what they did, they impeded the return of the sap to earth.

Not, I imagine, entirely but very considerably which meant the more sap went into the branches and therefore produced more fruit. And he said, isn't that an illustration of Jesus wounded for me? Wounded for me there on the cross. He was wounded me that life and more life should be provided and supplied to us helpless incapable branches.

So you and I once again under this figure receive life through his death. Not only forgiveness but life. Life which is going to be the procuring cause of any fruitfulness in our life.

As I say, this great grafting is something which is true positionally. True of every one of us. But what we have need to do on our part is to learn how to be day by day a branch in the vine, branch life.

Now this learning usually begins by the branch trying to bear fruit of itself. I say begins, I'm not sure that it only is in the beginning. All the time there's the tendency for you and me, you and I to try to bring forth fruit of ourselves.

So often now that we are saved we are reminded from pulpit and elsewhere of our responsibility as Christians. And you know it doesn't bring any joy to the congregation. My responsibility as a Christian.

And we're not sure we're going to rise to it. But dear me I didn't have much responsibility about anything until I became a Christian. And now I'm a Christian I'm faced with all sorts of heavy responsibilities which I didn't have before.

And it puts the onus on our shoulders. It puts the ball squarely in our court. And it assumes we can meet that ball.

We can rise to those responsibilities. And we try to do so. We try to be the Christians now that we ought to be.

The fruits of the spirit, sweet lovely fruits which are delineated in Galatians 5 and we shall look at them in a moment. Well we ought to be those sort of sweet loving gracious Christians that don't flow off the handle, are gentle to all and are full of testimony to others. And so we try to produce those fruits.

And we don't make it. We ought to be effective in God's service. And we try to make ourselves such.

Who can tell the struggles that go on for instance in a minister's study as he tries to measure up to what he conceives a minister of the gospel should be. As he seeks to produce some sort of message that's going to be adequate. You little know what moments of great despair the Christian worker whether he's full time or otherwise goes through.

Trying to bring forth fruit of itself. And it just doesn't work. And instead of fruit and victory we so often have ignominious defeats.

And instead of becoming, in becoming a Christian we lose our burdens. And there's no doubt we do lose some of those other initial burdens. It's meant we take on ourselves additional burdens.

And becoming a Christian has not necessarily meant more peace and joy. And it's all because with the best will in the world the branch is trying to bear forth, bring forth fruit of itself. And Jesus tells us you just

can't do it.

As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself. It can't. Separate from the vine it can't do a thing except become withered.

No more can ye. And then he goes on to say for apart from me, the vine, you as a branch can do nothing. We've got to learn it.

And we usually learn it by many defeats. Paul had to learn this lesson. And he learnt it in the same way of many defeats.

He tells you how he learnt this lesson. In Romans 7, you must look at that sometime if you're not familiar with it. The good what I would, I do not.

And the evil that I would not, that I do. I find a law that when I would do good, evil is present with me. Bringing me into captivity to the law of sin and death.

He said to will is present with me. I'm great at making promises. I'm great at making resolutions.

But how to perform that which is good, I find not. And he really reached a place of despair. Oh, wretched man that I am.

Who should deliver me from this predicament? Oh, wretched Christian I am, we've said. Oh, wretched preacher that I am. Oh, wretched Sunday school teacher that I am.

Oh, leader of the young people that I am. What a wretched man. Who is going to see me out? Well, we know the answer is going to be Jesus somewhere, somehow.

But we've got to learn how to avail ourselves of his way out. And it is not by making the branch a better branch. Any old bush will do.

We heard last week when we were thinking of Moses facing God through that burning bush. And any old branch will do. Provided it's prepared to take the true position of a branch.

But the trouble is, when the branch is trying to bear fruit of itself, it is virtually making itself the vine, and has forsaken the right position of the branch. I say it again. If you are trying to bring forth fruit of yourself, you have actually, for the moment, forsaken the position of a mere branch.

And if you have assumed the place of the vine, it's going to come from me. I've got to do it. And I don't think I've got it, but if I try harder I might find it.

And the vine can only produce what is characteristic of itself. A vine doesn't produce figs, it produces grapes. And a crabapple produces only crabapples.

And if I'm the vine, at least in the realm of my intentions, I will find that I can only produce what is characteristic of the fallen me. And instead of the fruits of the Spirit, which I hope for, I find I'm producing only the works of the flesh. And Galatians 5 contrasts those two things, the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit.

And the works of the flesh are what is produced when the branch tries to bring forth fruit of itself and is virtually seeking to be the vine. Perhaps you would like to look for a moment at that important chapter,

Galatians 5, Galatians 5, verse 19. Now the works of the flesh are manifest.

The authorized version gives us 17 works of the flesh. Other versions, I think, give only 15. I think I prefer the larger number.

I can list more than 17 of the works of the flesh in me. And these unpleasant works of the flesh are being produced in a person who wants the best and is trying so hard. And though he may appear at first sight to produce some sort of outward goodness, it isn't going to be long before that flesh which was trying to be so good ends by producing that which is rarely characteristic of it.

Holiness is not characteristic of the flesh. By the way, let's define the flesh. This may help someone, as said, drop off the last H and spell it backwards and you've got self, the natural self.

And the natural self cannot bear the fruits of the Spirit, but it can, with the greatest of ease, produce the works of the flesh. You divide them up, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, and assiduousness. Those four words describe sex sins.

May I have an aside here? I read some articles, even in a Christian magazine, where the writer said that self-abuse, masturbation, is not forbidden in Scripture. Well, those are pretty broad terms, uncleanness and assiduousness. I don't know what the other versions describe assiduousness, it's rather an old word, but it's pretty all-inclusive.

And I'm sure it includes that. There are four sex sins. We know the difference, do we not, between adultery and fornication? They're not the same.

We didn't go into that. We're informed people. And this is one of the works of the flesh.

This is what comes natural to the eye, even though it's trying to be a good Christian. And this is what will be too often produced. And then there comes, too, idolatry and witchcraft.

I think we can call those, very broadly, the occult practices of one sort or another. Did you know occultism is one of the works of the flesh? And the flesh can indulge very easily in those forbidden things. And then there come some works of the flesh which are a little more respectable, but nonetheless hateful to God.

Hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies. Well, I think you need to sort that out a bit. I've got the revised version of 1881 in the margin of my authorised, and it will probably be the same in some of your other versions.

Because hatred, anything that isn't love is hate. And that's characteristic of the flesh. Even when the flesh is trying to be a good branch, or trying to be the vine.

Hatred, variance, is to be translated as strife. Strife among brethren, one of the characteristic works of the flesh. Emulations, well, for a moment you needn't change that.

Because a lot of emulating amongst us, that's one of the works of the flesh. But actually I think it is better translated jealousy. My goodness, don't we know that? I would say the man who hasn't begun to see jealousy in his heart has hardly begun.

Because the flesh is there, and how quickly thoughts, reactions, and sometimes words, prompted by jealousy, come from us, the flesh. And then there come, there's wrath, well, losing your temper. That's

quite evident, a work of the old Adam in us.

And then there come a number of words, seditions, heresies. Now obviously they must be looked at. And may I give you the meaning as I understand them, from the Greek? Factions, divisions, heresies.

The margin of the old Revised says parties. It doesn't mean Christmas parties. A party spirit, and there can be parties in our church.

The whole thing is the work of the flesh in the participants. There it is, factions, divisions, parties. Yes, I agree with you, I didn't like it very much as you know I didn't.

And very often the minister is caught in it all, in the crossfire. And then when he talks about the church, he doesn't talk about we, he talks about they. And all this is the work of the flesh.

I think the flesh in the service of God is an abomination to it. Right in the church of God, the flesh can be operated. And just because we are supposedly dealing with spiritual things and standing up for something we think is right, we can imagine that gives the flesh the right to say and do what it likes.

But it's a porridge to God. Endings, murders, drunkenness, that's pretty obvious. But there they are.

And the strange thing again I say is, this is what happens when the branch tries to bring forth fruit unto God of itself. Instead of even approximating to that. Well it may a little, but only temporarily, ultimately, this other thing is what is produced.

It is only when Jesus is the vine, and we only branches in him, that something other is seen, the fruits of the spirit. For as I say, the vine produces that which is characteristic of itself. And if he could be the vine, in practical experience to me, and me, no vine at all, simply a helpless branch abiding in him, there will soon be seen and felt the fruits of the spirit.

And if there are seventeen works of the flesh, there are nine fruit of the spirit. Interesting, nine Beatitudes in Matthew 5, and nine fruit of the spirit. And if you look at them, they are so similar.

They are what you call soft fruits. The green graces say, sell soft fruits. And the fruit of the spirit are tender and soft and loving.

I don't know, have you got your Bibles open at Galatians 5? Not sure where I left you. Well, just have a little look at those fruits. And they are all characteristic of Jesus.

It says, the fruit of the spirit is love. Now, I've said there are nine fruits. But the word is in the singular, the fruit of the spirit is love.

And some, and I think rightly so, have said that is the all-inclusive fruit, simply love. It fulfills the law, it does everything, if love is the fruit, the soft fruit upon the branch. And the other eight qualities are simply, is it right to call them concomitants of love? Well, that's what Ken Moynihan thought.

And he's got a lovely poet on this very verse. And to my joy and delight, I was able to pop into the book's room just before I came up. And they have it here.

It's love. Who for? The other fellow. Oh, love for Jesus, yes.

But love for Jesus and love for the other fellow always go together. And they are the direct opposite of the self-centred, self-indulgent works of the flesh. And they're not characteristic of me.

I know what's characteristic of me. They're characteristic of him, the vine. As I'm learning to be a true branch in him, I have the privilege of bearing that fruit on the branch.

Well, you see the nine, they've often been spoken of. But here is Ken Moynihan's lovely poem. Joy, that's the second one.

No, he starts off with the text. The fruit of the Spirit is love. And then he has this lovely verse.

Joy is love-exalting. And peace is love at rest. Patience, love-enduring in every trial and rest.

Gentleness, love-yielding to all that does not sin. Goodness, love in actions that flow from Christ within. Faith is love's eyes opened, the living Christ to see.

Meekness, love not fighting but bowed at Calvary. Temperance, that's self-control. Love in harness and under Christ's control.

For Christ is love in person and love, Christ in the soul. So we see, when the branch bears, trying to bear fruit of itself, the works of the flesh. But when it takes its true place again as only a branch.

Christ the vine, we find that which is characteristic of him being produced in us. So one of the great essentials of branch life is to understand when you're trying to be the vine. And forsaken the place of the branch and to return in penitence to that vine and be but a branch again in him.

And this, of course, does mean repentance. And I think here is an essential part of branch life, this repentance. And it needs repentance in two things.

First, we must learn to repent and recognize as sin the works of the flesh. And that's pretty obvious, the spirit will surely convict us of those attitudes, words and works which are from that old self-centered eye. I must repent to them in detail, confess them to God.

But more than that, I must go and make a second repentance, it's all done together in practice. That is all resulted of me being the vine. I woke up as if the day was my day.

I had my plans, everybody's got to do what I tell them. And I mustn't be interfered with. And I slipped into the place of being the vine.

That's why I reacted as I did. So it's not enough to repent of the reactions and confess those to Lord. But go to him, to Jesus himself.

And say, Lord I've taken your place. I have been the vine in that matter. Otherwise you don't get to the root of it.

And it doesn't issue in peace and rest and fruitfulness. And you know you don't have to ask Jesus to be the vine. Don't ask him to be the vine, just confess that you've been trying to be.

You'll find it all comes in. You always, it seems to me, at least for me, I enter into the positive by confessing the negative. Piously saying, Jesus you be the vine, doesn't do a thing.

But say, Lord I've been the vine. I've been real beastly today because I thought I had rights. And you weren't in control.

I thought the responsibility was on me. That's why I be as I have. And as you go to him that way, without any more do.

You're in your right place. You've judged ahead of it. And you know that your soul is now united with Christ the living body.

Actually, you were already united, but you've forsaken in practical experience. The place of a branch and tied to the penalty. As an illustration, all these things we say catch up on us.

I tell you they do. On Sunday we had Sunday night around the piano. And there was a gap, as you will remember, between the end of the evening service and the beginning of Sunday night around the piano.

When David Peacock and I had planned to go through the various contributions and put them in order and to discuss them. And we were to meet in a certain room and have a cup of coffee together to get this straight. And David was busy with many other things.

All sorts of people wanting to try over a bar or two of what they were going to do, you see. I didn't quite know quite why he was delayed. But it was, I don't know how he manages to get it all in.

And I was waiting for him. And I grew impatient. And I looked out of the door, he wasn't there.

So I said to somebody, if you see David, tell him I'm waiting for him. I was impatient. Then Pam came in and I was shocked with her.

And I knew I was shocked with her because it was a little tiny reaction from her. You know, you can always tell when you're wrong by how the other person takes it. So don't blame them.

What do they react against in you that makes them that little bit off? I had to repent of two things. I had to repent of impatience and confess that to Jesus. To be cleansed and forgiven and cleansed.

And also being shocked with Pam. But that wasn't enough. I had to see I was in control.

I was a bit anxious about things. I was the vine. I wasn't carefree and resting in Jesus who had the whole thing under his control.

And it was all so needless. David came in due course. I don't know how he managed to do all he had to do.

And we were able to do what had to be done all in good time. But I had fallen. And I had confessed.

But even that wasn't enough. How can a man whose manifested attitudes of the flesh hope to lead Sunday night round the piano? I'll tell you how. There is power.

Wonder-working power in the blood of Jesus. Repentance won't give you peace. But repentance is essential.

Having repented, you must see the blood of Jesus puts that thing completely right with God. And it couldn't be more right as if it had never happened. And we have boldness through the blood.

And so this is an essential of branch life. Branch life. Being quick to see when you have become the vial.

Shown by the fact in your reactions. Which in turn are shown by the fact of other people's reactions. Get right back to the source.

Sorry Lord. But you don't go through the day being just sorry. If you know the power of the blood of Jesus.

A place where sins are washed away. To put the sinner into perfect relationship to God when he's repented. You'll be praising.

And bold in him. As if the thing had never been. An essential part of branch life.

Seeing where you haven't been the branch. In practical experience. Now, I want us to go a little further into this matter of branch life.

There's so much really. And I want to say something that may surprise you. You can learn much of branch life from Jesus himself.

For he who is divine to us was once the branch to the Father. There's the perfect example of a branch. Did you know he's called by that very name? There are five places in the Old Testament.

Where he's called the branch. Only look for a moment at Zechariah chapter 3. That's very near the Old Testament. To help you find it quickly.

Near the end of the Old Testament I mean. Sorry. Near the end of the Old Testament.

Just before Malachi. Chapter 3 verse 8. The last part of verse 8. For behold says Jehovah I will bring forth my servant. The branch.

And in the authorized version of some reason. They put that word branch in capitals. I like it.

I bring forth my servant. The branch. And he was a branch in the Father.

As you are required to be a branch in him. Chapter 6 verse 12. In the same book.

Verse 12. Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts saying. Behold the man whose name is the branch.

And he shall grow up out of his place. And he who is the branch in me. Shall build the temple of the Lord.

Prophetic of Jesus. And there are three other places. We won't look at it.

If you are interested in jotting them down. Isaiah 4 verse 2. Jeremiah 33 verse 5. And Jeremiah 33 verse 15. So he who is divine to us.

Was once divine to the Father. And you can see what branch life was to Jesus. In this very gospel of John.

Turn if you will to John again. Chapter 14 verse 12. Verse 10 I'm sorry.

John 14 verse 10. Believest thou not that I'm in the Father. And the Father in me.

Why the very relationships. Relationship which we have to Jesus. He had with the Father.

Believest thou not that I'm in the Father. And the Father in me. The words that I speak unto you.

I speak not of myself. But the Father that dwelleth in me. And you know that word dwelleth is abided.

Same word. As you get in John 15. He doeth the works.

I'm not doing them. He could have done them. By virtue of his own life.

But he said I'm not going to. I can lay aside my own personal power. To live and work on the same principle that you've got to.

It's the Father that dwelleth in me. He doeth the work. And then there's a wonderful passage in John 5. I must confess I've lived on this.

I think Pam has heard me quote this. As we prayed together again and again to the Lord. And I commend it to you for your consideration.

John 5.19. Then answered Jesus. And said unto them. Verily, verily I say unto you.

The Son can do nothing of himself. But what he sees the Father do. For what things whoever he doeth.

These also doeth the Son likewise. The Son initiated nothing. Nothing of himself out of himself.

But only what he saw the Father do. And when he saw the Father beginning to do something. He tagged on behind and did likewise.

And the works that were seen in him were the Father's works. He could have acted otherwise. Of course he could.

But he didn't choose to. It's part of his coming down to be a man among men. That he chose to live and work on the same basis that you are.

If I could abide in him, Jesus. As he abode so fully in the Father. He would abide in me.

In the same way that the Father abode in him. And there be fruit. The like of which we couldn't think of.

Of course our remaining in him. But his was perfect. He did not have the old Adamic nature to contend with.

And though it's a sense in which our abiding in him can never be. All that his abiding in the Father was. But if it could be.

The principle would hold too. To that extent he would abide in us. But the ever increasing degree.

In which I may remain in the vine. As a helpless branch. And which he then in answer will abide in me.

And there's no other way of living the Christian life. Isn't that nice? I want to tell you I'm learning that this son. Could do nothing of himself.

He tries. He does initiate things. Never come to anything.

What I've got to do is to see what the Father's doing. To see what he's doing. And simply tag on behind.

And do what he does. I mean how many. Who are you going to witness to? Who are you going to start on? You don't know where to begin.

It isn't haphazard. Seek to see what the Father's doing. Then you dare.

Concentrate on what he's doing. Concentrate on everything. And you see the works of God being made manifest.

So this life of being a branch is not passive. It's active. But, but, but, let's say it.

It is not the activity of initiating. We want him to do the initiating. It's his show.

All we need is a little hint of what you're doing. And I'll do likewise. It's not initiation but it is cooperation.

Sometimes you have to wait. He doesn't hurry. You are.

You're going to learn to rest. But when he works, sometimes he works so quickly, you've got to run to keep up with him. But that's what you've got to do.

Simply keep up with Jesus. Doing the works that the Father's doing. Doing the works that he's doing.

This is the way he lived. And there's so much of branch life. To be learned by these passages in John.

How good of him to tell us how he lived on earth. There's a lot. A lot more than I've mentioned.

And he who is my value, once was content to be branch to the Father. And I now can learn a little more how to remain in him. How to be a branch in him.

Now this leads us to have a little more light on this word that I suggested can defeat us. Abiding in Christ. As we go through these various aspects, we shall all the time be building up a more an easier picture of what it means, this thing that Jesus said was so important.

Abiding in him. As I said yesterday, the same Greek word is translated dwelling in him, continuing in him, remaining. You have been placed as a branch in him, the vine, then for goodness sake remain where he's put you and don't forsake that position.

And when you do, and being what we are we may, one of the essentials of remaining or abiding in Christ is returning to the vine again. And confessing, Lord I've got wrong. I've been trying to do the vine.

I've got wrong. And back you come to the cross. There to praise, you're not only forgiven, but the position is back where it should be.

He the branch. He the vine. You but the branch.

Now, here's something that's important. All this is based on a great work of the cross. There's so many aspects to what Jesus did for us on the cross.

And Paul tells us of what is sometimes called the deeper meaning of the cross. Not only that Jesus died for me, that he died as me. Not only that he was crucified by himself, but that in God's sight I was crucified with him.

That is the meaning of the great text. You can turn it if you like, Galatians 2.20. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I that live, but Christ that liveth in me.

In what sense have I been crucified with Christ? Now this is something positional. This is something God's done. You don't have to ask him crucify me.

He said I've done it already. What does it mean? It means he has judged you when he judged Jesus Christ as the vine. It's only as the vine you've been judged.

Ended, as someone has said, not mended. You live, I live, yes. But no longer the vine.

I'm living as the branch of the vine. And here's the rationale in which I repent. Trying to be the vine.

To push people around, have it my way. And reacting. Me as the vine has been ended at the cross.

So you just agree with God. And you're happy to know you're ended. You're happy to know that God doesn't expect anything from you but failure.

I mean if you, trying to be the vine produced holiness, you'd contradict God. Your failures only prove God to be right. Well that's one good thing out of failure.

That's what David said. Against thee, thee only have I sinned and done this evil that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest. There's the rationale.

This great work of the cross. Not only he bore my sins, but he wore my likeness as the vine. But I live.

My personality isn't distinguished. But I've ascended to this judgment on me as the vine. And I take my place as that weak helpless branch.

And you can afford to be weak. Branches don't have to be big. They don't have to be beautiful.

And we shall see the smaller the branch, the greater the fruit. And the trouble is we get too big to be a fruitful bough. And God has to take some hands in cutting us down to size.

But along with this repenting, going to Jesus to accept his verdict upon us, when we are convicted, getting wrong and trying to be the vine. There's to be added, as is always the case, faith. A very essential part in abiding, remaining in Christ as a branch in the vine.

Sometimes I have been able to somehow to overhear some friend of mine counseling another. I wish I could overhear some of this counseling myself. I learn much of how my brothers help other people.

And years ago I was hearing a friend of mine counseling someone who was real down and depressed. And he was almost justifying his downness by certain scriptures. Said this one to my friend.

But he said, it says, apart from him I can do nothing. It's here in this John 15. Yes, said my friend, but you're not apart from him.

Just as the branch is to the vine, you're joined to him. Ah, but he said, it says that I know that in me that is in my flesh there dwells no good thing. But, he said, quoting Romans 8, you're not in the flesh, but in the Spirit.

If so be the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. And there's got to be coupled with this coming back to the cross. That faith that doesn't only dwell on the fact that apart from him I can do nothing.

But dares to assert I'm not a part of him. I am apart from him. I am a part of him.

And you know invariably it isn't repentance that gives you liberty, it's faith. I don't think I've ever got out of my doldrums merely by repenting. There's always been faith that dares to assert.

What God says is a fact. I'm a part of him. I share his life and fullness.

And whatever I see, I'm going to believe it. When I've seen God, from time to time when he's privy to work in a gazing and a mighty way. I knew he was going to do it before we started, so often.

God brought me through the faith. Hallelujah Lord. I know there was a time when a group of us were so taken up with this aspect.

That one of my friends, it was me Samuel. I heard him say, thank you Lord for the souls you're going to save tomorrow. In the meeting we're going to.

Or going to save in an hour. I don't suggest you try and get a formula out of that. But there's got to be this, I'm not apart from him.

The flesh, yes, can do nothing. But I'm not in the flesh, says it. But in the spirit, if so be the spirit of God dwelling in me.

I think we've got to say, taking our place of complete helplessness. And confessing all the wrong reactions. Lord I can't do it.

But for this need I have Jesus. You go home, you're in a difficult situation. You can't cope, yes granted.

But for this need I have Jesus. This was what came to me strongly this morning, in this morning's daily life. Some of you read it.

My soul shall make a boast in the Lord. For that need you've got Jesus. How much you've got.

Who can tell how much you've got. We can afford to boast in the Lord. And what is the effect? The humble shall hither often be glad.

There's some Christians who are a bit down. And they hear you boasting in what you've got in Jesus. Being quite free, what a helpless person you are.

But confident what you had in Jesus. You've got him, and with him all you need. One last thought.

It came to me this morning. That many of our big chain stores have branches. A friend of mine comes here, not here this week.

He was here the other week. He's the manager of a branch of Boots, the chemist. And he's a branch.

That shop is a branch of Boots. People say, I'm going to go to Boots. No, no, you're going to a branch of Boots.

No, I'm going to Boots. And as far as the average person is concerned, that branch is Boots. I tell you, Jesus runs a mighty chain store.

And there are branches of Jesus everywhere. And he's not too particular about discerning between you and the head office. You're a branch of Boots.

You're a branch of Jesus. And people can go to you as if it was the head office. And you can give them the answer.

But as Christ, as he, is abiding in you. And so there's our study. The branch.

Trying to bear fruit of itself, and learning to find, it can't put up. But it is a branch that is completely helpless, but in Christ. And Christ is in us.

And for whatever the need it is, you have Jesus. These are then further elements in this which is said must be our share. Remaining.

Continuing. Abiding as weak, helpless branches in Christ. A friend of mine, years ago, composed a chorus.

I wonder if I can one day recover tune and words. Thou art the mighty branch, O Lord. Thou art the mighty vine, O Lord.

I am the helpless branch. Our cast care aside, in thee I'll abide. Flow through me, O Spirit divine.

Lord Jesus, thank you. Thank you for being the mighty vine. Although we're but helpless branches.

Thank you, Lord, that our helplessness is no hindrance. It rather seems to give thee more room. Thank you we've not got to climb into heaven to bring the blessing down or to the depth to bring it up.

But thou here, our vine, dwelling in us, as we dwell in thee. And so, Lord, we ask thee to interpret these things to us all. For thy dear name's sake.

Amen.

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