

Christian Life on the Inside - Sermon 5 of 5

by Roy Hession

Roy Hession's sermon emphasizes the necessity of abiding in Christ as the true vine for spiritual fruitfulness in the Christian life.

Duration: 36:45

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 15:1-3, John 15:5-6, Romans 7:4

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by discussing the concept of victory and revival in the Christian life. He then transitions to the Gospel of John, specifically focusing on the idea of being united with Christ as the true vine. The speaker highlights the struggle of trying to live the Christian life in one's own strength, emphasizing the self-will, self-effort, and self-glory that often hinder true spiritual growth. He concludes by emphasizing the importance of recognizing our complete dependence on Christ and his work in us, rather than relying on our own efforts.

Transcript

I want to make just one allusion to what we have been saying in previous mornings. Just for a quick one backward look, just look at that verse in Romans 7, verse 4. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law. It can no longer condemn us by the body of Christ, for we have died to its condemnation in the Christ who bought it for us.

And we have acknowledged it to be true that we are those sort of people. So we can count ourselves dead to the law and dead to the power of syntagamas by the body of Christ. That ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead.

And of course, the result of union in marriage is normally fruit in the form of children. And so there's fruit here, that ye should bring forth fruit unto God. Not merely in spiritual children, but we shall see a little more of what that fruit is.

I said in a previous meeting that sometimes in East Africa there's such joy and rejoicing that you're not always sure whether a certain ceremony or goings-on is a wedding or a funeral. For they praise so much for even the funeral, because their brother is safe in the arms of Jesus. And we saw that for us it is both a funeral and a wedding.

Here it is. We've attended some of us in a deep way, in a deeper measure than before, our own funeral. Seen myself judged at the cross, I said that's me Lord, that's what I deserve, I confess it all.

But it's also become a wedding. We've been united to the Lord Jesus Christ, risen from the dead. And fruit is going to be the result.

The funeral, which is also a wedding. And here it is, in Romans 7, 4. Now we want to move on from there, and this time we're going to turn from Paul to John. We've been looking at Paul's characteristic way of speaking about what the Christian life really is on the inside.

What victory is, if you like, what revival is. Now we're going to turn to John, and this time to his gospel, not to his epistle, firstly, to a very familiar portion. And we will find although John uses his own phrases, which of course is what you would expect him to, because he was still human, and they weren't parrots, they went automatically, they were inspired of the Spirit, but the Spirit used each man's special outlook, you would expect it to be.

Though the same message couched in different terms. Actually it's not John at all speaking, it's Jesus himself. And John is simply reporting the actual words of Jesus.

And here Jesus says, I am the true vine, and my father is the husbandman, I don't know what is the RSV, my father is the farmer, who looks after the vineyard, and tends the vine. Oh I'm sorry, have I not got you, John 15, am I, did I make a mistake, give you the wrong number? I don't know what I've done wrong, but I'm sure I've done something, never mind. John 15, well that's a passage I've got open here, I hope it's the same in your Bible.

And here Jesus himself says, I am the true vine, and my father is the husbandman, or the one who tends the vine, and gathers its product. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away, and every branch that beareth fruit, he purges or clenches it, that it may bring forth more fruit. He's so hungry for fruit, that he wants, that he take all sorts of trouble, to get more fruit, where there's been a beginning of fruit.

But if there's no fruit at all, there's not much he can do but take it away. Seems to me as if the branches never got united to the vine. Now ye are clean, through the word which I have spoken unto you.

And so it is after every new experience of cleansing, and even of discipline, and of pruning, you haven't got to worry, yes Lord, what else? Yes, that's all right to say, but listen, he says, don't worry for the moment about what else. Now, if you've seen what I've shown you, now you are clean. Yes, I may have to show you other things, but get right and get praising now.

I think possibly you took, lived only on that caption above me, I had it put there. You might not get it to the good of this. If I've seen what he wants me to see, there may be much else, but right now he says, you are clean.

Believe it, and rejoice in it, as clean as the blood can make you. But be open to anything further, and then you can quickly come into peace again, as I show you. Now ye are clean, through the word which I have spoken unto you.

Abide in me, and I in you. And I want to suggest to you that you don't know what that means, at least if you're like me. For years I pranked, I used to quote it, you know, but I didn't understand what it means.

Abide, that means remain, yes, that's all right. In me, I can be told to remain in him, but what's this next phase of I in you? What's the grammar of it? And I've seen it this way, it's as if Jesus says, if you will abide in me, I will abide in you. Remain in me, and then you'll find, I'll remain dwelling in you.

As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide, remain in the vine, no more can ye except you remain, dwell, abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He that abideth, remaineth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.

For severed from me, apart from me, as a branch you cannot do anything, ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered, and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words therefore abide in you, for it's not only me that abides in you, but my words too, you shall find yourself asking what you will, because your will will be mine, and as you ask what you will, it shall be done unto you.

Herein is my father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be my disciples. As the father hath loved me, so have I loved you. Abide, remain, dwell, continue in my love.

This parable of the vine and the branches begins with the words, I am the true vine. And I understand, Campbell Morgan points it out, that that word true is emphatic. I am the vine, the true vine.

And that implies that he's contrasting himself with a vine that isn't the true one. And Jesus does this thing more than once. I am the true bread from heaven.

Contrasting himself with one, with a bread that wasn't the true bread, the manna. Your father's ate that, and died, and I'm the true bread, which if a man eat, he shall live forever. And so this sort of formula is found in this first phrase.

I am the true vine, the real vine, in contrast to a vine that isn't the true vine. He's contrasting himself with the vine of the Old Testament. Because the Old Testament speaks quite a lot about a vine.

Psalms 80 verse 8 has a reference to a vine, and there it says, out of Egypt hast thou brought forth a vine. Psalm 80 verse 8, thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt. Thou hast cast out the heathen, and plodded it.

Thou preparest room before it, and cause it to take deep root, and it silled the land. What was the vine that God brought out of Egypt, and which he planted in another land, so that it silled that land? Why, quite obviously, he is referring to his ancient people, Israel. And Israel is consistently spoken of as a vine, and a vine that disappointed the one who planted it.

You turn to Hosea, that's further on after Daniel, you'll find a phrase there that speaks of God's disappointment with the vine which he planted. Reading from the authorised version, Hosea 10.1, Israel is an empty vine. Hosea 10.1, Israel is an empty vine.

He bringeth forth fruit unto himself. I believe the revised has it is a luxuriant vine. And a luxuriant vine is one that's full of leaves, but has not any fruit.

You know, the gardeners often tell us that things can be too luxuriant, there's too much foliage, not enough fruit. And Israel was a disappointment to God. In the words of the authorised, he proved to be an empty vine.

What fruit there was, wasn't for the pleasure of the husbandman, or of other people, but purely for himself. But perhaps there's nowhere where the vine is more spoken of as in a poetic passage in Ivar chapter 5. The song of the vineyard. In fact, if the New Testament has the parable of the vine, here in the Old Testament is the parable of the other vine.

Now will I sing to my well-beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well-beloved hath a vineyard, Ivar 5. My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill. And he fenced it, and gathered up the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vines, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein.

And he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard, what could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes. And now go to, I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard.

I will take away the heads thereof, and it shall be eaten up, and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be torn down. And I will lay it waste, and it shall not be pruned nor digged, and there shall come up briars and thorns. And I will also command the cows that they rain no rain upon it.

For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his present plant. And he looked for justice, but behold oppression, for righteousness, but behold a crime. And so that was the vine of Old Testament days, it was Israel.

And he says, what could have been done more for that nation that I have not done in it? I brought it out of Egypt, I put it in the most fruitful hill, I fenced it, took the stone fell, even went as far as building a wine press, in great expectation of plenty of grapes to put in there. And I expected that I should have found real luscious grapes. But when it came to it, nothing more than wild grapes.

What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done it? And if it's a picture of Israel, it's also a picture of ourselves. He's brought you out of Egypt, out of that old life away from God in the world. And he's planted you in perhaps quite propitious situations, conducive to your spiritual growth.

He's given you a church where the Bible is believed and preached. He's given you Christian friends who can tell how much he's done for us. He's fenced us.

He's spared us from many of the things that have stumbled others from our young days till today. He's gathered up the stones thereof, and you've been spared the stumbling blocks that others have stumbled over. He's built a watchtower in the midst of it, determined to save.

He watched all my path while Satan's blind slave I sported with death. And if he did that before I was saved, how much more has not that watchtower been there over us? And most pathetic of all, he's even made a winepress. He even made a plan for your life and mine in the anticipation that there will be abundant fruitage.

He's given you a field of service. The winepress has been made. And he looked at history, that we should bring forth grapes, the fruit of the Spirit, for the glory of his name, for the refreshment and health of other people.

But we haven't done it. We've brought forth bitter, sour grapes, wild ones. Instead of the fruit of the Spirit, there's been the works of the flesh, about which we've already seen.

What could have been done more? To his vineyard that he has not done of it, can you tell him something more he could have done? For you? I've only mentioned a few superficial things. And he has to say of me, and say of you, what could have been done more for my vineyard that I've not done of it? And yet, instead of the with the bitter works of the flesh and their reactions and divisions and hardnesses and criticisms and compromises and impurities for life. What could have been done more? It is difficult to tell God what he could have done more for Israel.

So we must ask ourselves in view of that, why should Israel have produced such bitter fruit? Why should she have been such a disappointment? And the answer is given in verse 7. The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant. That was the reason. Because Israel was divine.

And Israel was poor. Instead of God being her center, as part of the fallen race, self was her center. And that's the very heart of the flesh.

And just as long as Israel was divine, she could not but produce wild grapes. She could only produce that which was characteristic of her. Let God do what he will for her.

It would not change the situation one little bit. The reason was this. Israel was divine.

And God, in effect, was putting man on trial in Israel, to show what man was. And we see ourselves in Israel's history. And that's the reason why the works of the flesh, instead of the fruit of the Spirit, have been seen so often in our lives, is because we are the vine, or we try to.

And inasmuch as ours is a nature captured by the flesh, we cannot but produce that which is characteristic of us. And inasmuch as us is for them, it matters not what God does for us. It matters what privileges he gives us.

The man in the sound Bible-believing church is producing just as many works of the flesh as the man who never hears the gospel in a liberal church. He never goes to it. I want to tell you, you may change from a liberal church to a fundamental church.

You'll be disappointed. The works of the flesh will be as manifest in the fundamental church as in the liberal church, only in a different way, and sometimes in a more hurtful, grievous way, if we is they are thine. What could have been done more? Lord, it doesn't cut you.

There's no good you doing anything more. I am what I am. Try as I will.

Promise as I will. Struggle as I will. I cannot but produce that which is characteristic of me.

Now that was the background against which Jesus said this great word, I am the true vine. I now am the true vine. The days when Israel was my vine are over.

I am Jehovah's vine. For me, the second Adam is his fruit, Genevieve's hour. He's given up hope of ever finding it in the first Adam.

I am the true vine. In contrast to that great period in history when Jesus said it's check. From now on, I am the true vine, and you're not expected to be it.

For this to be effectual, just two things had to happen. First of all, they have happened. The Lord Jesus went to the cross for us, but not only for us, he went to the cross as us, and that holy one was made an effigy of that man for whom God has nothing but judgment, you, me.

And when he wore our likeness at Calvary, the judgment of God fell on him. That's all that all God had for that vine of the Old Testament, judgment. God doesn't want the flesh improved.

He doesn't want the natural you try to be better and more Christlike. What he wants is for you and me to see our debt with Christ and consent to it. We're to see that God, someone has said, passed the sentence of death on it, and we must trust him to carry out the execution progressively.

That's the end of the old vine. And God has brought to an end in the cross of Jesus, from his point of view, judicially, the old vine. And now, risen from the dead, he says, I am the true vine.

You are not to be the vine. I'm not expecting good fruit from you. I'm not to be the vine, Lord, but surely I was saved, brought out of Egypt to be a good vine.

I'm not interested in you being the vine at all. Well, Lord, if I'm not to be the vine, what am I to be? Never the vine, only a branch in me the vine. That's the situation.

What a picture this is. The parable of the vine and the branch. I'm not the vine.

I've tried hard. Nothing's come of it. And then I want to receive with gratitude the word, he's the vine.

In him all fullness dwells, love, grace, the things that are never in me. And I give up trying to be the vine. And he allows me to be united to him, and I'm a branch in the vine.

A branch doesn't produce any fruit at all. The production of the fruit is ever the work of the parent vine. All the branch does is to bear the fruit which the vine produces.

As long as it's united to the vine, the sap of the vine is in the branch, and fruit comes automatically. If something happens to sever that branch from the vine, although it's still on the trellis, looking in the same position, it'll wither and die, and there won't be the first beginning, the regret. It cannot produce anything.

Sever from me, you can't do a thing! But join to me, I in you, can do what I want, and produce fruit, which then is characteristic of me. Will you turn to Romans 11, 36? This is a doxology of Paul to God. I just want you to look at it in isolation for one moment.

For of him, and through him, and for him, are all things to whom be glory forever and ever. Three things. Of him, through him, for him.

And that's what he means when I'm the vine. What's going to be done is going to be of me. I'm going to be the initiator of that Christian life, and the initiator of that service is what will be left to you.

When you were the vine, it was of you. You thought it up. You conceived what was the right thing to do.

You were doing your own will. Of me, and through me. It isn't that I conceive a plan and let you carry it out.

What is of me is going to be through me. The responsibility is now mine for that very Christian life you've been trying in vain to live. Of me.

Through me, the vine that lives in the seedless branch, is that going to be done which is impossible to that branch. And that branch will expect things utterly beyond itself. Because of him, and through him who lives in that branch, and more than that, for him.

All the glory of that which is going to be done is not going to be shared with the branch because the branch hasn't done it. It's the vine that's done it, and it's all for him. Of him, through him, for him, are all things.

Would it surprise you to know that Jesus, who says, I am the vine, was in turn, and you are the branches, was in turn but the branch in the Father is his vine. In fact, you really only are to come to the same sort of relationship to him as he has with the Father. Turn to John 5, 19.

John 5, 19. Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself, originates nothing, initiates nothing. But what he sees the Father do, for what things whoever he doeth, the Father, these also doeth the Son likewise.

The Son did nothing of himself. He didn't initiate a thing. He could have done.

Had he done so, he would have been untrue to his character of Son. For a true Son, in this sense, lets the Father initiate everything. And he did nothing out from himself.

He only did what he saw the Father do. And when he saw the Father doing something, he cooperated and did the same. So he said, the works that you see are not done by me but by the Father that did it.

Did you know that that was the relationship of Jesus to the Father? And that had been our relationship to him and the Father. This Son can do nothing of himself of what he sees the Father do. He strives.

Oh my, do I strive. It is my great foe. Striving.

I know what it is, what we got to do to do revival, get revival. This, this and this, this and this, that method. Have I done that? One of the things that impressed me when I heard my brother Nick tell me, tell his experiences, and he told me much more in private than he's ever said in public.

He kept on saying, well, what are we to do now? He was a part of doing something. Unexpected, uncalled for. And seeing what the Father was doing, he tagged on behind.

That's what it is. So even the Son was this way. But alas and alas, it's not the way we've been living.

We have been trying in all sincerity to be the vine. And it's nearly killed us. It's all too much for us.

Instead of being of him, through him, for him, it has been of me, through me, and for me has everything been. The three forms of the fallen self-life. Of me, self-will, I, I know what I get to do.

Through me, self-will, self-effort, self-effort. How are those terrible things, struggling away, self-effort, trying to be the good Christian, which God says you never can be. The branch can't make it.

And self-glory, of course. And the motivation about it all is that others should notice, and I should receive, be known, be heard. Of me, through me, for me, are all things.

Please turn the cassette over now. Do not fast wind it in either direction. Of me, through me, for me, are all things.

It isn't always all that deliberate. It's our automatic way of living. We may get up in the mornings, and we regard the day as our day, and we venture out as divine.

That day, we make our plans, they are for God. There has to be some cooperation, and I'm going to hear a word about that in a moment. Of me, and then I try and implement what I want, even for God.

And if I'm successful, it's for me. In a situation, as it comes, automatically, I'm the one. I've got the plan.

And if I get through, I'll get the glory. Of me, through me, for me, are all things. Lovely, this special cooperation.

It's easy to know what's what here. A son can do nothing other than what he sees the father do. Oh, you act.

Oh, you move. But you're only tagging on behind what you see the father doing. I mean, how many things have we got to do? But if you see the spirit working in that way, drop the others, tag on behind there.

So many people that you might try and share with. When you see the spirit working here, that's the one to go after. What you see the father do, you do likewise.

Now, where self-effort of the wrong sort, and a right cooperation with the one who's initiating everything, where they begin and end, I do not know. And nobody can tell you. What is a right cooperation with God, which he calls for, because he's in command.

And what is a self-initiated activity done in your own strength. Only the Holy Spirit can teach us. And you'll learn.

In many a humbling way. Oh God, I know. That was just me.

But he'll teach us. But more than that, I don't profess to say. But what I am going to say is this.

When I am divine, all that ultimately issues are only the works of the flesh. It cannot be otherwise. I can only produce that which is characteristic of me, and that vileness, both of the fine sins and gross sins, are characteristic of this particular man.

Oh, when this branch tried to bring forth fruit of himself, all he produces are the works of the flesh, as those that live with me know too often. As Roy tried to be divine again, so jumpy, so tense, so sharp, nursing grievances, having bitterness, being strong, doing it all himself. And when you are divine, I want to promise you, the only thing that's going to come out in one way or another are the works of the flesh.

And what are we to do when this takes place? Go back to the cross, where you belong. Where not only Jesus died for you, but as you, where you have been judged and crucified with Christ. We go back to that fountain open for sin and unpleasance, to confess the works that have just occurred, that hurt other people.

We become aware again the Spirit has lovingly convicted us, and we confess at the feet of Jesus those things. But we go further, and we take a little time to see, Lord, that's all because I was trying to be divine.

I was trying to manage people that wouldn't be managed.

I wasn't letting you take over. I wasn't saying it was your day, not my day. I was accepting responsibility that was never meant to be mine.

It was yours, but I thought it was mine. I was going my own way. And as you go back to Calvary, not only will you know forgiveness and cleansing, but Jesus will live again his life in you, in me.

And I'm in the place of the branch again. Hallelujah! You feel so relieved and relaxed. He's got it all.

Hallelujah! And you're only a simple branch that doesn't bear responsibility. And that love no more is by his Holy Ghost living in you again, expressing himself. And I can tell you, you'll know more of the fruit of the Spirit after a fresh visit to Calvary than you'll ever know by trying to get the fruit of the Spirit.

You come into the positive, I've found, through repenting of the negative. You come into love by confessing hatred. And if you resent, that is hatred.

You come into peace by repenting of unrest and struggle. That's the way. And that's the way, the only way to take your place again, afresh and anew, as a branch in Jesus the Vine, where he shows you, you have forsaken that place.

He takes over again. And as the Vine, he's living again his life through us. And we have things expressed by us which are now not characteristic of us, but of him.

And they're called the fruit of the Spirit. And they take place as I see, where I have wrongfully been, the Vine. And that's the reason why this and that has happened.

I don't mean to say the fruit of the Spirit only comes from when you've been manifesting the works of the flesh. Why? Every day, all the time, it can be well that way. But there are times when old self comes up and becomes the Vine.

That's the way back. And you don't have to tarry a long time and wish for southward all over again. At the place called Calvary, everything is restored.

And Jesus takes his place again. The blood washes. And you're back on course, every bit as you were in the middle of the meetings at St. John's.

Jesus never fails as a saviour when I come to him again as a sinner. The fruit of the Spirit. And this is, of course, what Paul speaks about having enumerated the seventeen works of the flesh.

Now we need to distinguish between the gifts of the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit. The gifts of the Spirit are enumerated, we needn't look at them now because that's another subject, in 1 Corinthians 12. But there are two sort of lists.

In the first list there are eight of them. Beginning with the word of wisdom, what a gift. Wisdom, a wise man, he knows where to put his feet.

And some people know. They know how to handle things, they know how to handle people. It's a gift to the Spirit, it's a charisma.

And there are many charismas, not only those eight. I can see charismas in my brothers. I know God's given them an anointing for certain things he hasn't given me.

So what, that's all right, I haven't got to have anything. It begins with the word of wisdom and it ends, last on the list, the gift of speaking with tongues and the interpretation of tongues. Now not all of us have all the gifts.

In fact, he says again and again, in one very clear place in that chapter, are all apostles? Inference, no. Are all prophets? Inference, no. Do all speak with tongues? Inference, no they don't.

Do all interpret the gift of tongues? No, they don't. Therefore it's completely wrong ever to suggest that the gifts of the Spirit are an evidence of the indwelling and fullness of the Spirit, because he says these things are not possessed by everybody. And I'm afraid there has grown up the sort of thought, unless you have certain gifts, in fact there's one denomination that put it right down as their trustee, that the sign of being filled with the Spirit is you speak with another tongue.

The Paul says you all speak with tongues and the opposite is they do not.

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