



Wallpaper77.com

*The Vine
And The
Branches*

Compiled By Dr. Harold Bellinger

The Vine and the Branches

Summer is here, and many of us have planted gardens. Why do we plant a garden? For the yield of produce, the production of fruit.

Why does a farmer plant his crops? There is a commercial that I often see for corn seeds. The commercial is designed to tempt the farmer with the slogan, "Strong roots, strong stalks, and strong yields!"

The goal of the whole farming enterprise is the yield, the produce, the fruit.

And if gardens did not produce fruits and vegetables, how many of us would go through all the trouble?

The goal of the vineyard is the fruit. And so it is with God.

John 15:1-25

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

The grapevine is a prolific plant; a single vine supports numerous branches and bears many grapes.

In the Old Testament, grapes symbolized Israel's fruitfulness in doing God's work on the earth (Psalm 80:8; Isaiah 5:1-7; Ezekiel 19:10-14).

In the Passover meal, the fruit of the vine symbolized God's goodness to his people.

Christ is the vine, God is the gardener who cares for the branches to make them fruitful.

The branches are all those who claim to be followers of Christ. The fruitful branches are true believers who by their living union with Christ produce much fruit.

But those who become unproductive—those who turn back from following Christ after making a superficial commitment—will be separated from the vine. Unproductive followers are as good as dead and will be cut off and tossed aside.

Unproductive branches are cut or pruned.

He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.

You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

Two kinds of pruning:

- (1) Cutting off and
- (2) Cutting back branches.

Fruitful branches are cut back to promote growth.

In other words, God must sometimes discipline us to strengthen our character and faith.

But branches that don't bear fruit are cut off at the trunk not only because they are worthless but also because they often infect the rest of the tree.

People who don't bear fruit for God or who try to block the efforts of God's followers will be cut off from his life-giving power.

-

⁵“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

⁶If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

⁸This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

"Fruit" is not limited to soul winning.

In this chapter, **answered prayer, joy, and love are mentioned as fruit (15:7, 11, 12).**

Galatians 5:22-24 and 2 Peter 1:5-8 describe additional fruit: qualities of Christian character.

Galatians 5:22-24

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, [23] Meekness, temperance:

Against such there is no law. [24] And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

2 Peter 1:5-8

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; [6] and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; [7] and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

[8] For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁹ “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.

¹⁰ If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love.

¹¹ I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

When things are going well, we feel elated. When hardships come, we sink into depression.

But true joy transcends the rolling waves of circumstance. Joy comes from a consistent relationship with Jesus Christ.

When our lives are intertwined with his, he will help us walk through adversity without sinking into debilitating lows and manage prosperity without moving into deceptive highs.

The joy of living with Jesus Christ daily will keep us levelheaded, no matter how high or low our circumstances.

¹² My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.

¹³ Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.

¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command.

¹⁵ I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. ¹⁷ This is my command: Love each other.

But true joy transcends the rolling waves of circumstance. Joy comes from a consistent relationship with Jesus Christ.

The joy of living with **Jesus Christ daily will keep us levelheaded, no matter how high or low our circumstances.**

The Work of the Holy Spirit

²⁶ **“When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me.**

²⁷ **And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.**

Once again Jesus offers hope. The Holy Spirit gives strength to endure the unreasonable hatred and evil in our world and the hostility many have toward Christ. This is especially comforting for those facing persecution.

Jesus uses two names for the Holy Spirit—

1. **"Advocate" and "Spirit of truth."**

The word *Advocate* conveys the helping, encouraging, and strengthening work of the Spirit.

2. ***Spirit of truth***

The Spirit of truth points to the teaching, illuminating, and reminding work of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit ministers to both the head and the heart, and both dimensions are important.

God is a farmer.

God has planted people. We are his garden, and he wants to produce fruit for his own pleasure. You and I were created by God for a purpose—to produce fruit for God.

But what kind of fruit is God looking for?

He is looking for **obedience**. To obey is better than sacrifice.

He is looking for **righteousness**. Righteousness exalteth a nation,
But sin is a reproach to any people.

He is looking for **worship**. Worship the creator, not the creature

He is **looking for glory** from his creation.

Do we seek glory for ourselves, or are we willing to give unto God all the glory?

We are God's garden.

But if we are God's garden, and if we are created to produce fruit for him, we arrive at a fundamental question: How can we be sure that God is pleased with our fruit?

Jesus is talking to the Samaritan woman and tells us some important things about worship in his discourse with her.

Jesus told her.

“But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.”

God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”

God is seeking worshipers who will worship him truly from their hearts.

The people must worship God in the way that pleases him,

One of the most destructive weeds that crop farmers must deal with is the Canadian thistle. It has an extensive root system that makes it extremely difficult to eradicate once it is established.

The root structure can reach a depth of fifteen feet, and the roots can also spread out the same distance horizontally. These prolific roots crowd out the plants. Just twenty thistles in one square mile of field can reduce barley yield by a third or alfalfa yield by one half! Canadian thistle is also very damaging to feed crops, as livestock will not graze near it.

In the parable of the sower and the seeds, Jesus described people who are not fruitful because the Word of God that is planted in their heart is choked out by thorns.

He gave us specific thorns we must guard against such as the cares of the world; when we succumb to this particular thorn, anxiety and fear can fill our hearts and minds. We live in an uncertain world, and unless we maintain our faith, it will be easy for anxious care to choke out the Word.

FOLLOW GOD'S CALL

When Adoniram Judson graduated from college and seminary he received a call from a fashionable church in Boston to become its assistant pastor. Everyone congratulated him. His mother and sister rejoiced that he could live at home with them and do his life work, but Judson shook his head. "My work is not here," he said. "God is calling me beyond the seas. To stay here, even to serve God in His ministry, I feel would be only partial obedience, and I could not be

happy in that.” Although it cost him a great struggle he left mother and sister to follow the heavenly call.

Judson’s churches in Burma have had fifty thousand converts, and the influence of his consecrated life is felt around the world.

Partial obedience is not true obedience.

EFFORTS OF MAN AND SPIRITUAL FRUIT

A number of years ago, the Associated Press released a study done by an agricultural school in Iowa. It reported that production of 100 bushels of corn from one acre of land, in addition to the many hours of the farmer's labor, required 4,000,000 lbs. of water, 6,800 lbs. of oxygen, 5,200 lbs. of carbon, 160 lbs. of nitrogen, 125 lbs. of potassium, 75 lbs. of yellow sulphur, and other elements too numerous to list.

In addition to these things, which no man can produce, rain and sunshine at the right time are critical. It was estimated that only 5% of the produce of a farm can be attributed to the efforts of man. If we were honest, we'd have to admit that the same is true in producing spiritual fruit.

ONLY CHILDREN JOINED THE CHURCH

A Philadelphia congregation watched as three 9-year-old boys were baptized and joined the church. Not long after, unable to continue with its dwindling membership, the church sold the building and disbanded.

One of the boys was Tony Campolo, who is now an author. He remembers: “Years later when I was doing research in the archives of our denominations, I decided to look up the church report for the year of my baptism.

There was my name, and Dick White’s. He’s now a missionary. Bert Newman, now a professor of theology at an African seminary, was also there. Then I read

the church report for ‘my’ year: ‘It has not been a good year for our church. We have lost 27 members. Three joined, and they were only children.’”

THE DOMINO EFFECT OF SOULWINNING

Mr. Kimball, a Sunday school teacher, in 1858 led a Boston shoe clerk to give his life to Christ. The clerk, Dwight L. Moody, became an evangelist and in England in 1879 awakened evangelistic zeal in the heart of Frederick B. Meyer, pastor of a small church. F.B. Meyer preaching on an American college campus, brought to Christ a student named J. Wilbur Chapman. Chapman, engaged in YMCA work, employed a former baseball player Billy Sunday, to do evangelistic work. And the list goes on.

The Lord has put each one of us here to produce fruit that will abound more and more unto the coming of the Lord.

Let this be our determination to help gather in the harvest of fruit.

To ask Jesus to come into your heart, please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print