

59. Jesus Explained How to Bear Much Fruit

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to teach us all things. We also saw that Satan could not hold Jesus in death because Satan had no sin of which he could accuse Jesus. In our topic today, we are going to see that Jesus explained to the disciples as they walked to the Garden of Gethsemane how they and all future followers can be fruitful in their spiritual lives.

John 14 concluded with Jesus saying it was time for them to leave the Last Supper. As a result, Jesus and the disciples were walking from Jerusalem to the Garden as Jesus explained to the disciples the lessons given in John 15 and 16. A vineyard of grapevines along the road from Jerusalem to the Garden probably provided the illustration that Jesus used in John 15 to explain to the disciples how to bear spiritual fruit. Jesus began this illustration by another “I AM.” Jesus said that He is the true vine. His Father is the One who cares for the vineyard. In the Old Testament, a vine was often used to describe the nation of Israel. Israel had often been an unfruitful vine. In contrast, Jesus made it clear here that He is the One who is the true vine (John 15:1-4).

Jesus went on to describe two types of branches on the vine. Some branches do not bear fruit while others are fruitful and some even bear much fruit. Jesus began by talking about the branches that do not bear fruit. Jesus said that the Father takes away the branches that do not bear fruit. John 15:6 tells us what happens to those branches, ““If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw *them* into the fire, and they are burned.”” This judgment will include all non-Christians, including those who are professing Christians who have never experienced true repentance and faith. Jesus compared such professing believers to tares. Matthew 13:30 says, ““Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.””” Here, we see the judgment of those who are not genuine.

In contrast, we see what the Father does in the lives of all genuine believers. We see that the Father prunes every branch that bears fruit so that it may bring forth more fruit. When a vine or a tree is pruned, it means that small pieces of the branch are removed because they will hinder the development of fruit on that branch. In the same way, sin in our lives will hinder the bearing of spiritual fruit. As a result, God works in our lives to transform our lives as we yield to Him. At times, this happens when God speaks to us as we examine our own lives. That is why 1 Corinthians 11:28 says, “But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.” Here, we see that as we prepare for a communion service we are to examine our own lives and confess anything that hinders fruit bearing. When we fail to examine our own lives, God will use loving discipline to cleanse our lives. Hebrews 12:11 says, “Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.” God wants us to bear fruit.

Jesus told the disciples that their lives had been made clean by the very fact that they had placed their faith in Jesus. John 13:10-11 says, “Jesus said to him, ‘He who is bathed needs only to wash

his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.’ For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, ‘You are not all clean.’” Judas was still in the room at that time and Jesus showed that He knew the condition of the heart of Judas. Our sins are blotted out at the moment of salvation and we are clean. However, we continue to sin and so we need cleansing moment by moment so that our lives can be fruitful. That is why 1 John 1:9 says, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” We need that continuous cleansing as Christians so that our lives can become fruitful. That is why it is so important to continually abide in Jesus. We will not bear fruit through our own efforts. That is why Jesus reminded the disciples that they would not bear fruit unless they were continuing to abide in Him. The same thing is true for each of us.

Jesus then went on to explain, in John 15:5-6. “I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw *them* into the fire, and they are burned.” The word translated “abide” means *to continue to be* and is used 120 times in the New Testament. In fact, it is used eight of those times in just verses 4-16 in this chapter to show that we are to continue to abide in Jesus moment by moment if we want to see our lives bear fruit. Jesus promised that if we are learning to continue to abide in Him our lives will bear more fruit. However, Jesus also told the disciples that if they tried to serve the Lord in their own strength that their lives would bear nothing. That is why Jesus told the disciples in Luke 24:49, “Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.”

We are also given a wonderful promise if we will continue to share our lives with Jesus so that He abides in us and we abide in Him. Jesus said that then we will bear much fruit. In this passage, we see three levels of fruit bearing: fruit, more fruit and much fruit. Jesus wants our lives to be very fruitful so that He will have many things for which to reward us when we stand in His presence. Those who bear no fruit are taken away because they lack spiritual life. Every person who has spiritual life will bear fruit. However, God will prune our lives so that we can bear more fruit. Here, we see that when we make the choice to abide in Jesus He promises that we will bear much fruit. Nothing of eternal value can be accomplished through our own efforts.

We also see the judgment of those who do not put their faith in Jesus. Jesus said that such a person is like a branch that is cast out and is withered. A branch not attached to the vine or tree can only do one thing and that is wither and dry up. In Romans 11, Paul used the illustration of a wild olive branch that is grafted into an olive tree to describe the Gentiles. Once the branch is grafted into the tree, it will be fruitful. In contrast, a branch that is not grafted into a tree will wither because it is already dead since it has no source of life. That is why Jesus warned that the branches that wither will be gathered and cast into the fire and will be burned.

Jesus also gave a wonderful promise about prayer to those who abide in Him and have the things that Jesus taught abiding in them. John 15:7-8 says, “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.” Here, we see that this promise is based on two

things. First, we are to continue in Jesus. Second, the teachings of Jesus are to be continually in our thoughts. This results in the process of transformation. Romans 12:2 says, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” Our thinking determines our actions. As we allow the Word of God to be continually in our minds, we are being transformed in our thinking and the result will be that we begin to act according to our thoughts.

That is why Jesus could tell the disciples that if they were abiding in Him and His words were abiding in them they could ask whatever they desired. Jesus knew that the purpose that they would have for their own lives would be to carry out the will of God because they were meditating on the teaching that Jesus had given them. The same is true in our lives. Galatians 5:13 says, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not *use* liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” Jesus said, in John 14:15, “‘If you love Me, keep My commandments.’” As our lives are being transformed by the Word, we have a desire to please Jesus and we want Him to give us His strength to serve one another in love.

We will desire the will of God for our lives so we will ask for the things that will make it possible to carry out the will of God in our lives. 1 John 5:14-15 tells us, “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.” This desire to carry out the will of God in our lives gives us a purpose for life. As we learn to yield more and more to the Holy Spirit, the Spirit causes our lives to bear fruit. Galatians 5:22-23 says, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.”

Love abiding in our lives causes us to be motivated by the love of Christ. In 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, we read, “For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.” We see here that we develop a desire to live for Him who died for us. The result of living for Jesus is that we bring glory to God because of the fact that our lives bear much fruit. Jesus said, in John 13:34-35, “‘A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.’” We want to show our physical and spiritual children by our example that our lives are motivated by the love of Jesus for us. They will see that our lives experience greater and greater peace as we learn to take root in His love with the result that our lives bear even more fruit. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to bring glory to God by bearing much fruit.