

9.23.18 ~ John 15:1-11, The Vine and the Branches...

Read John 15:1-2... This is the seventh and last of the I AM statements in the book of John, every one of which speaks to the deity of Christ, as God the Son (John 6:35; 8:12; 10:7, 9, 11, 14; 11:25; 14:6)

Jesus was God in human flesh, the eternally existent Creator, the Light and Life from God (cf. **John 1:1-4**).

Throughout God's Word we find a variety of analogies expressing the relationship God the Father has with those who belong to Him: they are created and He is the Creator (Psalm 119:73; 139:13; Ecclesiastes 12:1); they are His children (John 1:12; 1John 3:1-2); they are members of His household (Ephesians 2:19; 1Peter 4:17); they are His slaves, He is the master (Romans 14:4; Colossians 4:1); Christ is their husband and they are His bride (Isaiah 54:5; 2Corinthians 11:2; Revelation 19:7); Christ is their head and they are His body (Colossians 1:18; 2:19); Christ is the Shepherd they are His sheep (Psalm 23:1; Isaiah 40:11; John 10:11-14).

Here in John 15, we find an analogy taken from the Old Testament, illustrating the relationship God had with Israel who He protected and provided for (Psalm 80:8; Jeremiah 2:21), just as a branch is entirely dependent upon the vine it is connected to for sustenance; likewise, believers are dependent upon the Lord for all that they need to grow and to bear fruit (cf. 2Peter 1:3-4).

Jesus says He is the "true vine," i.e., the blessings of God come through Him, not through Israel, although Jesus came through the ancestry of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, salvation has come through Jesus Christ, God's Son, not through Israel the nation, that showed itself to be hardhearted, disobedient, unfaithful, and fruitless.

Jesus is the true vine just like He is the true Light (cf. John 1:9), the true bread from heaven (cf. John 6:32), and the only source of spiritual life, as the revelation of God, and the way to God (cf. John 14:6).

Jesus says the Father is the vinedresser [gardener, farmer] who cares for the vines by removing the branches that don't bear fruit (so they don't needlessly use up the water and nutrients), and by pruning [trimming back] branches that do bear fruit, in order to stimulate growth, so they will produce more fruit.

In the same way, the Father cares for genuine believers by removing anything that would hinder their spiritual growth (cutting it away), the idea of pruning or cutting away sounds unpleasant, and sometimes we experience this through trials and persecution, which God will use to ultimately strengthen us, so that we grow spiritually. This type of "pruning" might more accurately be considered as discipline (see **Hebrew 12:7-11**).

Read John 15:3-5... The Word of God is likened to a pruning knife, to cut away dead branches and stimulate growth. The disciples were already cleansed, in reference to salvation, but the ongoing work of the Word of God is to purge us of all ungodliness, to prune the dead works and associations from our lives, for God's Word is (Hebrews 4:12), "living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

See John 13:10... Their response to the Word of God, makes them [and us] eternally acceptable to God, He says, "you are clean," i.e., you are saved, but you need to continue with daily cleansing [pruning, tending]; just like your feet get dirty and need to be washed, but the rest of you is already clean if you have bathed, and so you clean that which is dirty.

Through obedience to God's Word we are continually cleansed [pruned] from the daily effects of sin in our life; we have been granted forgiveness and eternal life through Jesus Christ, but we need to be "cleansed" daily, not for salvation, but because bad behaviors, beliefs, and associations, render us unfruitful. The word translated *prunes*, in verse 2, literally means *cleans*; and so, "*You are already clean,*" in verse 3, means "*you are already pruned like a branch.*"

God uses struggles in our lives to get our attention, so that the truth of God's Word will be desired by us (Psalm 119:67, 71), "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your word." "It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes."

Christians cannot bear fruit on their own (**verses 4-5**), for only by holding fast to the Word of God will the fruit of the Spirit be produced (Galatians 5:22-23), "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control."

Paul's prayer for the Colossians (Colossians 1:10), was that they would be "bearing fruit in every good work," exemplifying the truth that we are (Ephesians 2:10) "created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them."

Read John 15:6... Like non-producing branches on a vine, those who do not belong to God through Christ cannot produce fruit, and are therefore cut away and thrown into the fire to be burned.

The branches that are cut and burned aren't believers who have somehow lost their salvation, for that is totally impossible (cf. Romans 8:38-39; 11:29). These branches are unbelievers who superficially attach themselves to God by assembling with God's people; they believe they are on their way to heaven but in reality they are on the broad road leading to hell (cf. Matthew 7:13-14, 17-20).

Matthew 13:49-50, "At the end of the age; the angels will come forth and take out the wicked from among the righteous, and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Read John 15:7... To those who genuinely abide in Christ and His words abide in them, Jesus says, "ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you."

God will answer the prayers of those who our His, those demonstrating obedience to His Word; but God has no obligation to answer any prayer of an unbeliever except this one, "God forgive me for my sins."

Jesus' promises to answer our prayers, but as we studied previously, our prayers have to be pleasing to God. Please turn to **John 14:13-14**. This is not a promise that you can pray for whatever you want by simply tacking on Jesus' name at the end of your wish list. To pray in Jesus' name is to pray in accordance with the will of God, in alignment with the Word of God, as exemplified in the very character and nature of God.

Jesus gave us an example of how we are to pray in **Matthew 6:9-13**, often called the Lord's Prayer, it is more correctly, the Disciple's Prayer, for it shows us how to pray in total submission to God, in a manner that praises and glorifies Him.

To pray in Jesus name is to pray in accordance with God's plan and purpose as fulfilled and exemplified in the life of Jesus Christ, God's Son, Savior and Lord: Crucified, Resurrected, and Coming Again!

Back to **John 15:8...** Notice that the intent of our prayers is so that we might live in a manner that honors God and stimulates good works in us, so as to bear much fruit; for this shows that we are indeed believers and followers of Christ.

Read John 15:9-10... Those who belong to God will obey His Word, showing their love for Christ, and they will experience His love (see **John 14:13-15, 21, 23**).

Our love for God and our experience of God's love cannot be separated from our desire to obey God's Word.

Read John 15:11... Experiencing God's love should stimulate and compel us to exhibit our love for God by earnestly seeking to obey His Word; and in doing so, our joy is made full, for it is the joy that comes from God and is expressed deep inside our hearts, as we experience intimate communion with God through Christ.

Romans 12:1-2, "Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

There is joy that only God can give, and it comes only to those who love and obey God's Word. When we are disobedient to what we know God wants us to do, when we elevate ourselves, seeking our own pleasures, instead of earnestly desiring to bring praise, honor and glory to God, we sacrifice our joy.

David experienced the absence of God's joy when he committed murder and adultery in order to feed his own passions (Psalm 51:10-13), "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and sustain me with a willing spirit. Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners will be converted to You."

David is in sense saying, "Lord prune me, cleanse me of anything that is not pleasing to You, so that I can know Your joy, do Your will, and bear fruit that will lead unbelievers to repentance and salvation."

May that be the desire of our hearts - today, tomorrow, and until we are face to face with God in heaven.