

## THE CONNECTED BRANCH BEARS MUCH FRUIT

Apart from Christ, you can do nothing. Philippians 4:13 reads, “I can do all things THROUGH CHRIST WHICH STRENGTHENS ME” (Emphasis added). Apart from Christ, you can do nothing. “I am the vine, ye are the branches: The one abiding in me, and I in him, the same bears much fruit: because apart from me you can do nothing” (v. 5).

- I. “I am the vine, you are the branches.” Apart from the vine, branches can do nothing. Apart from Christ, you can do nothing.
  - A. The condition for spiritual usefulness is identical with the natural. Abiding in Christ - dwelling in His fellowship and being submissive to His will - yields much fruit.
  - B. Here we have the key verse of the passage, although it only expands what we have already learned in verse 1. Christ identified Himself as the true vine, the believers as the branches, and God the Father as the vinedresser (vv. 1,5). The fruit of the vine is Christlikeness. Although the Holy Spirit is not called a vine, He is a producer of fruit. The analogy could refer to a grapevine or a fruit-bearing tree.
  - C. Εγώ εἰμι: the vine. You the branches – no verb.
    1. Repeated metaphor of verse 1
  - D. Spoken just hours before His death, Jesus in this allegory rightly pointed to Himself as the source of spiritual life, vitality, growth and productivity.
  - E. Christ used the image of the vine and its branches to describe His union with the believer.
- II. “The one abiding in me and I in him bears much fruit.” Fruit comes from abiding in Christ. Apart from Christ, you can do nothing.
  - A. Second time we read about us abiding in Christ and Christ abiding in us.
    1. Ten times we are told to abide in this chapter.
    2. *Abide* means the maintenance of an unbroken connection. It speaks of the necessity of a constant active relationship between the believer and his Lord if the resultant life is to be productive.
  - B. When the believer relies completely and continuously upon his Savior and is obedient to His commands, then the life of Jesus inevitably flows into his life, so that he can truly say with Paul, “I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me” (Gal 2:20).
  - C. The uniqueness of the Christian experience results from the union of Christ and the believer. This is expressed in Scripture as Christ being in the believer and the believer in Christ.
  - D. Ten times Paul uses the preposition *together* to describe this relationship.
    1. Buried - Rom 6:4
    2. Glorified together with Christ - Rom 8:17
    3. The Christian can conquer sin because Christ lives in him - Gal 2:20
    4. Made alive - Eph 2:1-5
    5. Seated - Eph 2:6

- 6. Made alive - Eph 2:13
- 7. Dead - Col 2:20
- 8. Raised - Col 3:1
- E. There may be times when believers have lapses, when they fail to be faithful to their life in Christ. But true branches, through whom the life of the vine flows, cannot ultimately fail to produce fruit (Ps 1:1-3; 92:12-14; Prov 11:30; 12:12; Jer 17:7-8; Matt 13:23; Rom 7:4; Gal 5:22-26; Eph 5:9; Phil 1:11; Col 1:10; James 3:17).
- F. A popular misconception equates fruit with outward success, external religion, superficial righteousness. But the Bible nowhere equates fruit with superficial external behavior or results. Instead, Scripture defines fruit in terms of spiritual qualities. Let me repeat that: "Scripture defines fruit in terms of spiritual qualities. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Gal 5:22-23). Those Christlike traits mark those through whom His life flows.
  - 1. Fruit, more fruit, much fruit is the increase in having the fruit of the Spirit a norm in your life.
  - 2. Going from fruit, more fruit to much fruit is spiritual maturity.
- G. Praise offered to God is also fruit. The writer of Hebrews exhorts his readers, "Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name" (Heb. 13:15).
- H. The Bible also identifies sacrificial love in meeting the needs of others as fruit. Referring to the monetary gift he was collecting for the needy believers at Jerusalem, Paul wrote to the Romans, "Therefore when I have finished this and have put my seal on this fruit of theirs, I will go on by way of you to Spain" (Rom 15:28). Acknowledging the Philippians' financial support of his ministry, Paul told them, "Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account" (Phil 4:17). Supporting others who are in need is a tangible expression of love, which is one of the fruit of the Spirit.
- I. Fruit may also be defined as holy, righteous, God-honoring behavior in general. Such conduct is "fruit in keeping with repentance" (Matt 3:8); the fruit produced by the good soil of a transformed life (Matt 13:23); the fruit of the light that consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth (Eph 5:9); the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God (Phil 1:11); and the peaceful fruit of righteousness (Heb 12:11). Paul prayed that the Colossians would be continually bearing fruit in every good work (Col 1:10); because Christians were created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them (Eph 2:10).
- J. Finally, the Bible defines fruit as converts to the gospel – not the artificial fruit of superficial believers, but genuine disciples who abide in the true vine. Referring to the Samaritans who were coming out to Him from the village of Sychar, many of whom would believe savingly in Him (John 4:39,41), Jesus said, "Already he who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for life

eternal; so that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together (v. 36). He declared of His sacrificial death, “Truly truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit (John 12:24). Paul expressed his desire to the Christians in Rome to win converts in the imperial capital: “I do not want you to be unaware brethren, that often I have planned to come to you and have been prevented so far, so that I may obtain some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles” (Rom 1:13). At the close of his letter, Paul greeted Epaphroditus who is the first fruits of Achaia to Christ (Romans 16:5). In 1 Corinthians 16:15, the apostle referred to the household of Stephanas as the first fruits of Achaia while in Colossians 1:6, he rejoiced that in all the world also the gospel is constantly bearing fruit and increasing. John wrote of the 144,000 evangelists, who will be redeemed during the tribulation: “These have been purchased from among men as first fruits to God and to the Lamb” (Rev 14:4).

- K. A machine can produce results and so can a robot, but it takes a living organism to produce fruit. It takes time and cultivation to produce fruit; a good crop does not come overnight. We must remember that the branches do not eat the fruit; others do. We are not producing fruit to please ourselves but to serve others. We should be the kind of people who feed others by our words and our works. “The lips of the righteous feed many” (Prov. 10:21).
  - L. The fruitful life is a life centered in Christ.
  - M. Do you have fruit, more fruit, much fruit? If not, it could well be that you are apart from Christ and are doing nothing. You are not abiding in the vine.
- III. “For without me, you can do nothing.”
- A. The original text reads: “Apart from me not you can do nothing.” Emphasis is on the *not*. Not good English, but the message is: “Apart from me no not in any way can you do anything.”
  - B. You can’t survive without Christ. Science says that we need water, air, food and light to survive. Jesus says, “I am the Living Water. I am the Breath of Life. I am the Bread of Life. I am the Light of the world.”
  - C. 2 Cor 3:5 - “We are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God.”
  - D. There is nothing for a broken-off branch to do but wither and die.
  - E. John 1:1-5 - “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men and the light shines in darkness and the darkness comprehended it not.”

The first and most important relationship which the disciples should maintain was with Jesus. That is the message here in John 15:5. It was true then. It is true today. As we conclude today’s service, I want you to remember the concluding phrase. Meditate upon it this afternoon. Without Christ, you can do nothing. What does that mean? What difference does that make in your life?