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## Are You Cleansed, Clipped and Christ-like?



Part 28 (020127AM)

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Someday each of us who are born again and members of Christ's family have an accounting to face. We each get the awesome responsibility of standing alone in front of the nail-scarred hands of the One who loved and purchased us. At that meeting He will evaluate our lives on the basis of two tests: what was "good" in our lives and what was "bad" in our lives.

In God's Word we know what the definition of good and bad are in this context, right?

Good is that which was variously described in the New Testament as 'gold, silver, precious stones', 'walking in the Spirit', and as we are currently learning about -- 'fruitfulness'.

Bad is what was worthless, earthly, and fleshly in our lives.

Fruitfulness and fruitlessness are not separate ideas or concepts. The Bible is one integrated divine message. From cover to cover God has watched over His children and sought for them to invest their desires in HIM. He still watches this morning.

God has a plan to make us fruitful for Him. It is simple, there are two parts: clip and prune! In the New Testament these two parts are called chastening and sanctification. These two Biblical truths are set forth side by side more clearly here than anywhere else in God's Word. If we can see them, learn them, and respond to them in our lives - God has great plans ahead for us, plans for lifelong fruitfulness. In the context of John 15 listen to the direct intervention God the Father has declared He wants to make in our lives. This morning follow along with me first with Christ's description of what He is doing. Then with the amplified picture we draw from the rest of the New Testament.

**John 15:1-8** "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.

2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit **He takes away**; and every branch that bears fruit **He prunes**, that it may bear more fruit.

3 You are already **clean because of the Word** which I have spoken to you.

4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

Eugene Peterson <sup>[1]</sup> paraphrases this passage along these lines:

"I am the Real Vine and my Father is the Farmer. He cuts off every branch of me that doesn't bear grapes. And every branch that is grape-bearing he prunes back so it will bear even more. You are already pruned back by the message I have spoken. "Live in me. Make your home in me just as I do in you. In the same way that a branch can't bear grapes by itself but only by being joined to the vine, you can't bear fruit unless you are joined with me.

Are we cleansed? Are we clipped? Are we Christlike? Let's pray!

Remember, we urgently need to understand fruitfulness because everything we ever have will turn to rust and ashes except for what was transformed by our ABIDING in Christ into Eternal Fruit. Christ's rewards to us are based on what was GOOD or fruitful, all else attached to our lives Jesus Christ has promised He will burn away at the BEMA SEAT JUDGMENT.

Now the question we need to ask ourselves is, how is my fruitfulness coming. Do you have fruit already sent up? Are you bearing fruit today? Are you living to protect your future fruitfulness?

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Over the last weeks we drove by the great orchards and vineyards of NY and New England. It was amazing to see the lengths they go to insure fruitfulness. There was evidence of cultivation, pruning, new plantings and so on. In Florida we saw the smudge pots to protect from fruit loss to frost. Earthlings are focused on fruit bearing, are we for Heavenly fruit?

### # 1 GOD WANTS TO MAKE EACH DAY OF OUR LIFE FRUITFUL

We are looking at the seventh and final of Christ's great titles: **I AM THE TRUE VINE** (15:1) - Jesus is all I need to be fruitful to the last day of my life, apart from Him is only continual withering. We already learned that because of the grape's tendency to grow so vigorously, a lot of wood must be cut away each year. Grapevines can become so dense that the sun cannot reach into the area where fruit should form. Left to itself, a grape plant will always favor new growth over more grapes. The result? From a distance, luxurious growth, an impressive achievement. Up close, an under-whelming harvest.

- Jesus says I am the Vine, your source of life and health. The state of your health is all in my hands.
- I will provide for you living grace, enduring declining life grace, and dying grace. Each just when you need them!
- If the vine speaks of all of life as one growing season, then we should get more fruit filled the older we get (ala Psalm 92), if it is many seasons then life is a succession of growing /pruning /bearing /resting and then growing/pruning...

### # 2 ALL BELIEVERS BEAR FRUIT

A true branch <sup>[2]</sup>, united with the vine, will always bear fruit. Not every branch bears a bumper crop, just as not every field has a bumper harvest (**Matt. 13:8, 23**), but there is always fruit where there is life. If there is no fruit, the branch is worthless and it is cast away and burned <sup>[3]</sup>. The main <sup>[4]</sup> truth Christ is teaching in this parable is the importance of abiding in Him in order to bear fruit. The word "fruit" is used six times, and "abide" at least fifteen times (but it is not always translated "abide"). The main point of the teaching here is fellowship, not sonship..

### # 3 ABIDING IS THE KEY

To abide <sup>[5]</sup> in Christ is to continue to draw from His fullness. It is not enough that I turn from myself in disgust; I must turn to Christ with delight. I must seek His presence; I must be occupied with communing with Him. It is no longer a question of my sufficiency, my strength, or my anything. It is solely a matter of His sufficiency. The branch is simply a conduit, through which flows the fruity-producing juices, which result in the lovely clusters of grapes. Of course the key to this passage <sup>[6]</sup> is the word *abide*: it is used eleven times in **John 15:1-11** ("continue" in **John 15:9** and "remain" in **John 15:11**). What does it mean to "abide"? It means to keep in fellowship with Christ so that His life can work in and through us to produce fruit.

### # 4 BUT -- WHAT IS FRUIT?

God's Word describes no less than seven different, yet closely related types of fruit. These are:

1. **SOWING AND WATERING FRUIT**: One type of fruit are those we win to Christ. We were commissioned to "go and make disciples" **Matthew 28:19-20** Go therefore and **make disciples** of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20 teaching them** to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen. **Romans 1:13** Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might **have some fruit among you** also, just as among the other Gentiles. **1 Corinthians 3:8-9** Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor. **9** For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building.
2. **FLESH DENYING FRUIT**: Growth <sup>[7]</sup> in holiness and obedience, we are bearing fruit. **Romans 6:22** But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your **fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.**
3. **GIVING (MONEY AND TIME) FRUIT**: Stewardship is fruit from a dedicated life. **Romans 15:27-28** It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also **to minister to them in material things.** **28** Therefore, when I have performed this and **have sealed to them this fruit**, I shall go by way of you to Spain. **Luke 12:21** "So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not **rich toward God.**"
4. **SPIRIT WALKING FRUIT**: The fruit of the Spirit <sup>[8]</sup> in **Gal. 5:22-23** is the lifestyle that glorifies God and makes Christ real to others. **James 3; Col 3; I Cor 13**
5. **SERVING FRUIT**: Good works of serving others is a fruit in an abiding life. **Colossians 1:10** that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being **fruitful in every good work** and increasing in the knowledge of God; **Hebrews 13:16** But do not forget to do good and to share, for **with such sacrifices God is well pleased.**
6. **SPEAKING FRUIT**: Words of worship and praise to God that comes from our hearts and lips is a wonderful fruit to the glory of God. **Hebrews 13:15** Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, **the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.**
7. **FASTING AND PRAYING FRUIT**: When all else fails, sleeplessness, ill health, strength, eyesight, hearing, mobility, finances, independence – there is one fruit bearing, Christ honoring ministry we all can do as aged Anna showed in **Luke 2:37** and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, **but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.**

**Lesson One: come to Christ for salvation.**

If you are empty, call out to Christ. Do not let yourself go through another day without coming to him. Be born again, receive life, be filled, be delivered, and join the victory parade! If you are spiritually dead—without resurrection life—under sin—under guilt—empty, Christ invites you to come to him: Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. (**Isaiah 55:1, 2**) The Spirit and

the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life. (Revelation 22:17)

### Lesson Two: look only to Christ for satisfaction.

Cultivate human relationships, but do not look for ultimate fulfillment in them because they will disappoint you. Energetically pursue your career, but do not imagine that you will find transcending fulfillment in it. In Christ we have everything. May our prayer be: I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death. (Philippians 3:10)

### Lesson Three: be filled with Christ's spirit.

Our lives can be victorious. Jesus has been there before us; He has met the worst Satan can give and has been victorious. The most important factor in victorious Christian living is to be filled with the Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9). Christ is the victor over temptation and sin. His very words to us are, "[T]ake heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). When Martin Luther was asked how he overcame the Devil, he replied, "Well, when he comes knocking upon the door of my heart, and asks 'Who lives here?'" the dear Lord Jesus goes to the door and says, "Martin Luther used to live here, but he has moved out. Now I live here." When Christ fills our lives, Satan has no entrance.

### Lesson Four: stay filled with Christ's word.

The other factor in the victorious Christian Life is to be filled with God's Word. In response to each of the three temptations, Christ answered with Scripture (Deuteronomy 8:3, 6:16, and 6:13). He knew the truth of, "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you" (Psalm 119:11). Why is this so? God's Word reveals God's mind, and God's mind cannot be subject to sin. Therefore, if we fill our hearts with his Word, sin and temptation cannot dominate.

### PRIDE INVITES CHASTENING

How much does God want to remove pride <sup>[7]</sup> in our life? Immensely! The Bible says, "God resists the proud. ..." James 4:6 NKJV) and "These six things the LORD hates. ...a proud look" (Prov. 6:16-17 NKJV). Pride was Nebuchadnezzar surveying his kingdom and saying, "look what I've done." The result of pride was Nebuchadnezzar on his hands and knees eating grass in a cow pasture.

- Pride is an acid that turns the finest fruit bitter.
- Pride is a shallow and superficial weed that grows in all soils, without need of water or care. It consumes and destroys every living thing it overshadows.
- Pride is a swelling of the heart filled with ego and self-importance.
- Pride raises you above others until you look down on them.
- Pride is the basis of racism that divides the church and America. There is no white church, black church, brown church, or yellow church in Scripture. There is only the blood-bought church of Jesus Christ.
- Pride is a cancer that rots the soul. A man infected with pride needs nothing...not even God! **God hates pride because it declares our independence of God.**

### HUMBLING INVITES BLESSING

- Do you want <sup>[7]</sup> God's blessing upon your life? Then hunger and thirst for righteousness! Jesus said, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matt. 6:33 NKJV).
- Do you want God's protection? Live a righteous and pure life! "The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous," wrote the psalmist "and His ears are open to their cry" (Ps. 34:15 NKJV).
- Do you want God to provide for your children? Live a godly life! In Psalm 37:25, the psalmist assures us, "I have been young, and now am old; Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, Nor his descendants begging bread" (NKJV).
- Do you want God to answer your prayers? Live righteously! "The LORD is far from the wicked," Solomon wrote, "but He hears the prayer of the righteous" (Prov. 15:29 NKJV). James assures us that the prayer of a righteous man avails much (5:16), and the psalmist adds a warning: "If I regard iniquity [sin] in my heart The Lord will not hear" (Ps. 66:18 NKJV).

<sup>[8]</sup> The Scriptures show us that a truly spiritual person will be growing in a visible way in each of these areas.

1. **LOVE** is the absence of selfishness. Can others trace my progress in expressing God's love? Am I less selfish and self-seeking than I was last month?

2. **JOY** is the spiritual quality that releases us from circumstances. Do those that know me and watch my life see me as a joyful person?

3. **PEACE** is the internal serenity that only God can give. Has peace become more and more a way of life for you this year?

4. **PATIENCE** is the absence of personal irritation at the actions of others. Ask yourself, am I more patient than I was three months ago? Or less? If we are not increasing in patience it is only that we are not yielding and submitting to the Holy Spirit.

5. **KINDNESS** is a beautiful reflection of God in our lives. It is the absence of an abrasive manner in my dealings with people. Is my character showing an increasing tendency toward personal kindness in my way with others?

6. **GOODNESS** is being Godlike! It is the opposite of fallen humanity. Am I a visibly better person than last year? Do people see me doing good to all those around me?

7. **FAITHFULNESS** is the idea here. A trustworthy and dependable life. The kind of

person that keeps their own life in order so that you can count on them. Like Psalm 15 speaks of, they make and keep their word. Am I making strides in reliability and dependability?

**8. MEEKNESS** is the opposite of asserting yourself. What shape is my personal agenda in? Is it intact and my rights being defended? Or, is it in hopeless shape, crucified with Christ and fading?

**9. DISCIPLINE** is defined by the Greek Dictionary as "a virtue, which consists in mastery of the appetites and passions, especially the sensual ones." The only force that can control or flesh is the Holy Spirit. When yielded to Him we become vessels that are worshipful sacrifices to Him no longer to self. Self cannot control self. Flesh is not able to harness flesh. Only the Spirit can discipline us. Do others see me as graciously under the control of God's Spirit of Discipline? Are you beating under and giving knockout blows to your flesh? Paul was in [1 Cor 9:27](#). Can we do any less?

Well, are they present? Are they growing? The proof is in how we are with our relationships

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[1] Peterson, Eugene H., *The Message*, (Colorado Springs: NavPress Publishing Group) 1997.

[2] Quoted from Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997.

[3] Wiersbe writes: "The Lord isn't teaching here that true believers can lose their salvation, for this would contradict what He taught in [John 6:37](#) and [10:27-30](#). Here Christ's one main truth is the fruitful life of the believer. Just as an unfruitful branch is useless, so an unfruitful believer is useless; and both must be dealt with. It is a tragic thing for a once-fruitful believer to backslide and lose his privilege of fellowship and service. If anything, [John 15:6](#) describes divine discipline rather than eternal destiny. "There is [for believers] a sin unto death" ([1 John 5:16](#)). To use v. 6 to teach that a Christian loses his salvation and is burned in hell if he fails to bear fruit is to twist the meaning of the parable. In the first place, such a teaching contradicts the plain teaching of other verses—[John 6:27](#); [10:27-29](#); etc. Furthermore, note that the branch Christ speaks of in v. 6 withers after it is cast forth! If this branch pictures a backslidden Christian who loses his salvation, he should "wither" first, then fail to bear fruit, then be cast out."

[4] Quoted from Warren W. Wiersbe, *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books) 1992.

[5] Paraphrased from Arthur W. Pink, *Exposition of the Gospel of John Volume 3*. Swengel, Pa.: Bible Truth Depot, 1945, p. 307-309.

[6] Quoted and adapted from Bruce Wilkinson, *Secrets of The Vine*. Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah Publishers, Inc., 2001, p. 39-48.

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