

John 15:3 – 27

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~ Studying the Gospel record of John is a tremendous thrill to my heart; and I hope it is to yours, too. Frankly, we're highly privileged to have this information in our life. Consider living in a world that had no Word of God. The last leg of our Spiritual Safari brought us the enlightening statement from the Lord Jesus Christ that He is the Genuine Vine. We saw how the Lord stressed our critical need to be joined to Him and identified with Him - because He is the True Vine. We are joined to Him through the new birth, and by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. When we are joined to Christ, we're selected for a purpose. That purpose is because the True and Living God wants us to produce fruit in our life. The last two chapters have emphasized the grace of God and what He has done, is doing, and will do for us in the future. In this passage, however, John is talking about our responsibility of being joined to Him and producing fruit - here and now. God wants fruit, more fruit and much fruit; so, the Father is glorified by obedient lives as we allow Him to live through us. He in us and us in Him.

We have already seen how fruit is produced in us by the Holy Spirit. We can no more produce fruit by our own volition than a branch cut off from the tree can produce fruit. It must be joined to the vine, of course. So, three things can be done if a branch will not bear fruit: one, God purges the branch by pruning or washing. We have already examined very carefully the cleansing and washing power of the Word of God. I hope I have highlighted the emphasis God places on the washing power of the Word of God. If you have not read our previous report and, indeed, all twenty-seven reports from this Gospel, then I highly suggest you go back and do so now. Well, whether the branch is pruned or cleansed, it is done by the Lord Jesus Christ and no one else. The third option God has, of course, is the branch may be cast into the fire. Jesus said some shall be saved, so as by fire. I don't know how that works or what it means - and I don't want to find out. What I do know is that it sounds bad.

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2 Peter 1:8 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 ~

God wants fruit in your life, friends; that's His design. If we aren't fruitful, we will be removed. That means removed from fruit bearing - not losing salvation. Here, however, we need to deal with the cleansing aspect of the Word of God first. The information given in this section of Scripture is of utmost importance to anyone who says they love God.

1 Peter 1:22 Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: 23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever ~

I hope that passage and its power is as wonderful to you as it is to me. The Psalmist asked, "... wherewithal shall a man cleanse his ways?" The answer is by taking heed to the Word of God. I cannot stress this enough. Paul said to the Corinthians, "...having these promises...." – what promises? – The promises of the Word of God. Let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit and perfect holiness in the fear of God.

Many believers believe, erroneously, that we can live any kind of a life we want to live as long as we say we are fundamental and saved by grace. Well, believe me, God uses His Word to reveal to us that we are naturally in darkness; and, my friends, I learned a long time ago that the super pious saints who carry the biggest Bible mankind prints really aren't interested in the Word of God. Most of them have no sense of humor and they never attend a structured Bible study, although they talk about it all the time. What they do not realize is that deep in their hearts, they resent and even hate the Word of God. My personal estimation is the only thing that reveals if a man or woman is genuine is whether they love the Bible properly, correctly and completely. We can tell everything about an individual when we discern how the Bible is working in, affecting and changing their life. God demands obedience - and He demands fruit.

Psalm 119:67 Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word. 68 Thou art good, and doest good; teach me thy statutes....71 It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes ~

I can't make it any clearer that God cleanses us, and that God uses afflictions to bring us unto obedience. God only desires that we might be made serviceable to Him. There is no possible way you will ever stay clean before God outside of coming to and studying the Word of God – impossible. That's why I maintain so dogmatically that these people who refuse to study the Bible while being as active as a termite in a church are more dangerous than a natural born killer. They are the single most dangerous element in our society today – and I know that is not a popular statement – too bad it happens to be true. This kind of so-called Christian is the one who destroys the cause of Christ. If you say you love Jesus, then you are going to want to get close to the Word of God; or something is just not right – if you say you love Jesus and you don't love the Word of God, then you are just a common liar....

3 Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

~ To "abide" in Christ means to be cleansed continually, first and foremost. Cleansing occurs by the supernatural power of the Spirit of God working through Holy Writ. Cleansing is required daily, and if you're not washed daily then, not only are you spiritually dirty, but you are simply not abiding in Him. We also need to recognize that we are to keep His commandments – notice verse ten and fourteen. We have a lot of talk, and even songs about how "the lowly Jesus is a friend of mine;" no, that is where you're tragically misunderstanding. The Lord Jesus is the Glorified Christ today; and if He isn't that to you, then He isn't anything to you.

I'm not impressed when someone says, "... Jesus is a friend of mine." It isn't a wonderful statement when they make that claim, it's merely sentimental rot. If you say Jesus is YOUR friend, then you bring Jesus down

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to your level. You better make sure Jesus is saying that YOU are His friend, friends – otherwise, you have no idea what you are saying. When Jesus declares you to be His friend, that brings you UP to His level. We're friends of Jesus if we do what He commands us to do. If you claim Jesus as a friend, you better make sure you are in complete and total obedience to the direct will God or you border on blaspheme. Instead of all this sentimental refuse, let's try some heart-searching today – to see if we're His friends – or not. This little matter of abiding in Christ just happens to be one of supreme importance....

5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

6 If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

8 Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

9 As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.

~ This speaks of constant communion. If you're out living like the devil and pretending to serve the Lord on Sunday - you're woefully misguided. I happen to know you can't do that, because I tried it for many years – it doesn't work for anyone. Never has. Never will. Running with the world on Saturday night and then teaching a Sunday school class the next morning is not blessed nor is it used by God. If you wonder why you are so spiritually dead – maybe now you know why? The branch doesn't jump off and run around the field and then come back and join itself to the vine. Someone says, "that's absurd." It sure is; it's as absurd as some of the so-called Christian living I see claimed today. It's never going to work like that, and you will never have constant communion with God living that way.

We're talking about being in communion with God at the workbench, at the computer terminal, on the phone and on the streets. We have been joined to the Living Christ through the baptism of the Holy Spirit, but we still have our free will intact. It is entirely possible for us to break fellowship with God. When we don't abide in Him, or if there is unconfessed sin in our lives, we can easily step out of the will of God. Any form of worldliness will prevent the production of any fruit in our lives at all – and God wants MUCH fruit, friends. Remember, the sower sowed some seed that fell on good ground. On that good ground some brought forth thirty-fold – some sixty – and some a hundred-fold; well, that's what we call fruit, more fruit and much fruit.

Jesus is speaking exclusively of fruit bearing, as we learned in our previous report. This is not speaking to our salvation. Paul said, "... no foundation can any man lay than that which is laid, which is the Lord Jesus Christ. If any man shall build upon this foundation....every man's work shall be made manifest." This refers only to the works of believers. The fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is - but that person must be saved first. If you're building with gold, silver and precious stones, then the fire purifies or has no effect on the building materials. Naturally, everything else we do will go up in smoke. When Jesus says, "men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned" – our works outside of Christ are what He is speaking of.

The only rewards we can expect to realize are those from the fruit that we didn't even produce in and of ourselves. We receive a reward for the fruit that we allow GOD to grow through us in our lives by the exercise of a gift that HE gave us to begin with. That's what it means to bear fruit in the life of a believer. Well, it says, "if any man's works be burned he shall suffer loss..." - but that doesn't mean loss of salvation. The next passage says that man shall be saved, so as by fire and, friends, there will be many damaged goods at the judgment seat in Heaven. Everything those people who were saved so as by fire did down here is going to create one major bonfire. Their branches that should have been fruit bearing branches are ALL going in the fire - but that person is still saved. Well, guess what? – that person will need washing again and a major clean up restoration. What we need is to

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assess this section of Scripture so we can figure out how to get much fruit for the Lord in our life. That's what God wants: for us to be fruit bearing Christians.

Moreover, one of the saddest Christian misconceptions I know of is that "Christian living" means failure. Most Christians live on the absolute lowest plane of defeat possible. Whatever fruit they manage to produce is second or third rate. They never quite produce the blue-ribbon award-winning stuff; and producing much fruit is simply out of the question. The Lord will produce fruit only when we are truly abiding in Him. Abiding in Christ means being obedient to the commands of God. That's when we may ask what we will of Him, and it will be done. This is also what we considered in our last report as "Prayer Effectual." The entire purpose is to bring glory to God – not getting our selfish and lustful prayers answered....

10 If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

11 These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

~ God provides us a way to be happy in this life, friends. One of the fruits of the Holy Spirit, of course, is to have joy in our lives. These pious Christians who carry a Bible so big it makes them walk at an angle and who have no sense of humor whatsoever – well, they scare me, and they are dangerous creatures. You will do well to beware of them, because if you are a fruit bearing Christian, you should be having a whole lot of fun down here in this life. Do you find it fun to go to a Bible study? Is the joy of your life serving the Lord Jesus? Is fellowship with God the Father a thrill to you – or an obligation? All of these things should be wonderful to your heart – and they should be all-important, or something is radically wrong in your relationship with God....

12 This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

~ God is speaking to believers here. The worst thing a Christian can do is tear down and gossip about another. When you see that, the Lord is not working in that place or person – or church. Many of them have had some Bible training, and what they reveal about themselves is that they have completely rejected the Lord Jesus Christ. We need to love other Christians as Jesus has loved us. That takes this all to a very high level on which only the Spirit of God can produce these things in our lives. Jesus laid down His life for us and He asks that we obey Him if we love Him. Jesus proved He will be our friend when He died on the cross for us; but we cannot call Him friend unless we're keeping His commandments. Jesus isn't asking us to die for Him – at least, He hasn't asked me to do that for Him - yet. I don't think I have dying grace but, when the time comes, I pray I will have it....

13 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

14 Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

15 Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.

16 Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

~ The servant in verse twenty is the Old Testament saint; and God says we aren't that anymore. The fact that God has chosen us means He is responsible for us, too, by the way – we're His children now. The reason He chose us is so that we might bring forth fruit for His glory. The answering or non-answering of prayers can be an excellent barometer of our spirituality, I might add....

17 These things I command you, that ye love one another.

18 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

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~ Loving one another should be the relationship of believers, but if you're a child of God, the world is going to hate you. Most people who say they are Christians are not born-again believers, friends. Those people will tear you to shreds if you give them half a chance. The Christian that is popular in the world and with the world is the most dangerous wolf around you. A child of God cannot be popular with the world. This is the great litmus test of ANY preacher or teacher. If the world loves you for what you do in the world then, my friends, you are not a child of God. Impossible. We see a lot of Hollywood types who claim to be converted; well, they adore the love of the world – they aren't born again. This world will NEVER love – cannot love – a TRUE child of God....

19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

20 Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

21 But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.

22 If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin.

23 He that hateth me hateth my Father also.

24 If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.

25 But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.

26 But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:

27 And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.

~ When the Lord turns on the light in verse twenty-three, things get strong and abrasive really quickly. People hate God without cause or reason naturally. The way we can tell if a man is saved is if he is glorifying Christ with his life – or not. It’s really simple, actually. The apostles bore a particular witness that no one else could bear concerning the Lord Jesus Christ and the Word of God. And, with that, our Spiritual Safari expedition through the entire Word of God will resume in chapter sixteen in our next report ~

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