

PathLights

*"Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path"
Psalm 119:104*

February 10, 2019

A Branch

by Frank Himmel

Jesus told His disciples, "I am the vine, you are the branches" (John 15:5a). He then used that analogy to emphasize three points.

A Branch Needs Attachment

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

Just as a branch gets its nourishment, its life, from the vine, our spiritual life comes from Christ. Apart from Him we are dead. God makes us alive through faith (Ephesians 2:4-9), specifically when we are buried with Christ in baptism (Colossians 2:12-13). We must then continue walking by faith. Christianity does not consist simply of church membership or attendance, though it includes those things. Christianity is Christ in us, shown in every aspect of our lives: "abide in Me and I in you." "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me" (Galatians 2:20).

"If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned" (v. 6).

A Branch Needs Fruitfulness

Ornamental plants may have their place, but not in a vineyard. There, branches need to bear fruit! In Jesus' illustration the Father is the vinedresser (v. 1). "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples" (v. 8).

The Bible identifies a variety of fruit we may bear. In Galatians 5:22-23 it is building character to be

like God. In Matthew 3:8 it is putting away sin. In Philippians 4:17 it is supporting gospel preaching.

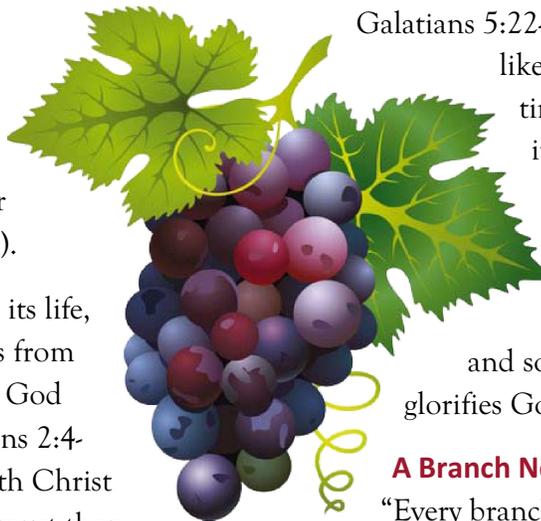
In 1 Corinthians 16:15 it is converting the lost. In Romans 1:13 it is building up brethren.

In Hebrews 13:15 it is prayers and songs of praise. Such fruit not only glorifies God, it brings us joy as well (v. 11).

A Branch Needs Pruning

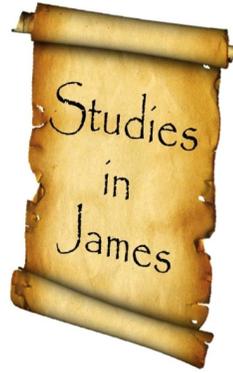
"Every branch in Me that does bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit" (v. 2). Pruning shapes plants, cuts away unproductive or infected areas, and promotes growth and fruitfulness. We need all of that!

Much of God's pruning is done through His word: "You are already clean [lit., pruned] because of the word which I have spoken to you" (v. 3). His word is indeed a precision cutting tool (Hebrews 4:12). He may prune through other means as well. Whatever the means, and despite any momentary pain, it is for our good and to His glory. Are you abiding in Christ? ■



I Am Responsible For My Sin

by Frank Himmel



Eternal life is for those who persevere under trials (James 1:12). But what if I fail? What if I succumb to temptation? Who is responsible? James’s emphatic answer is, I am.

I Cannot Blame God

“Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am being tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone” (v. 13).

Some say, “God made me that way,” with reference to their bad temperament or their sexual immorality; and nowadays they are looking to genetics for validation. Others are not so brazen, yet they blame sin on factors that relate to God’s providence, hence they are at least indirectly blaming it on Him. Adam said, “The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate” (Genesis 1:12). Saul said his circumstances forced him to disobey God’s instructions (1 Samuel 13:11-12).

James has no sympathy for such excuse-making. God’s righteousness is so complete that evil can have no appeal whatsoever to Him. How, then, could He force us or prompt us to do evil? It is unthinkable.

I Cannot Blame the Devil

Elsewhere the Bible reveals that the devil is the source of temptation to do wrong (Matthew 4:1ff; 1 Peter 5:8; etc.). Interestingly, James makes no reference to him in this paragraph. While he is involved, I do not have to act on his suggestions. Therefore...

I Am Responsible

“But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren” (vv. 14-16).

James explains the process of sin by using two figures. First, in fishing or hunting terms, sin begins when one’s lust carries him away or lures him from safety, then entices or baits him. Shifting to a birth picture, James then observes that lust conceives; the desire to do wrong merges with the will. The child thus conceived is sin, and the outcome is death. In other words, the chain is desire ► deceit ► disobedience ► death.

It is not a sin to be tempted. Sin occurs when we allow our minds to dwell on Satan’s bait long enough to decide to take a bite.

Understanding this process is useful. Common sense says we need to stay alert. We need to avoid places or activities where others routinely succumb or where we have failed in the past. And we must never try to nibble the bait off the hook without getting caught! “Abhor what is evil” (Romans 12:9b). “Abstain from every form of evil” (1 Thessalonians 5:22). ■

Service Leaders for the Week

	Sunday	Wednesday
GREETER	Bruce Williams	Adam Gibson
SONG LEADER	Gary Hagler	Albert Lee Harrison
OPENING PRAYER	Josh Baucom	
LORD’S SUPPER		
BREAD	Jason Chandler	
CUP	Steven Turner	
CONTRIBUTION PRAYER	Justin Candella	
SERMON/INVITATION	Frank Himmel	Sam Walters
CLOSING PRAYER	Adam Gibson	Greg Winget