

188. I Am the Vine, Ye Are the Branches.

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. *John 15, 5.*

The branch receives its sap and vitality from the vine. If a branch is separated from the vine, it withers; and such withered branches are cast into the fire and are burned. Now, Jesus Christ is the true Vine; the heavenly Father is the Master of the vineyard; we are the branches. Through His powerful Word and His Sacraments, God has planted us in Christ by faith. And He wants us to bring fruit in Christ, as the branch brings fruit from the vine. If a man does not bring fruit, God finally takes him away from Christ, for he has received His grace in vain.

Now, God through His Word has planted you in Christ and given you His righteousness. And now you are expected to bring the fruits of that righteousness, the fruits in Christ. The question is: Are you a good and fruitful or a barren and fruitless branch? Were you, in the past, a branch bringing its fruit in due season, or were you a barren branch, not bringing the fruit of the Spirit? If you were a fruitful branch, was it abundant fruit that you produced? Was the branch loaded with golden fruit, or was the fruit sparse and scarce? If you must confess that the fruit was not so abundant as it might and ought to have been, then repent of your lukewarmness and of your tardiness in bringing the fruits of the Spirit. But if you were a barren, unfruitful branch, then be warned; the Lord of the vineyard comes to seek fruit. Will He find it?

Have you been seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness? Did you walk in the fear of the Lord, crucifying the flesh with the affections and lusts? Did you practise charity toward all men? And did you do all this for the love of Jesus? This is the fruit which the Lord seeks. Will He find it? Will He find *much* fruit?

Prayer.

O Lord Jesus Christ, Thou art the Vine, and we are the branches. Let this be to us a cause and incentive to good works and fruits of righteousness, that we, as Thy people, may be willing to worship Thee in the beauty of holiness. Grant that we may daily die unto sin, crucify and mortify the old Adam with his lusts and desires; that, on the other hand, we may arise spiritually, begin to live in righteousness, and walk in a new life. Let us be branches bringing forth much fruit. Amen.

Thou art the Vine, O nourish
The branches graft in Thee
And let them grow and flourish,
A fair and fruitful tree;

Thy Spirit pour within us
And let His gifts of grace
To deeds of kindness win us,
That best may win Thy praise.

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