

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

John: Believing On The Christ, The Son Of God, For Eternal Life

Part XXXVIII: Trusting In Christ For His Gracious Edification Of True Believers, John 14-17

E. Trusting In Christ For His Promise Of Producing Righteous Works

(John 15:1-8)

I. Introduction

- A. John's Gospel asserts that the disciples had received of Christ's fullness "grace for grace" (KJV), the "constant reception of one evidence of God's grace replacing another," John 1:16; Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 273.
- B. This truth is explained in Christ's John 15:1-8 promise of producing personal righteousness in believers:

II. Trusting In Christ For His Promise Of Producing Personal Righteous Works, John 15:1-8.

- A. In John 15:1a, Jesus said, "I Myself am the *True* Vine," and that leads us to ask what was the *false* vine!
- B. Since John 15:1-8 addresses spiritual fruitfulness, we note the Old Testament where Israel, repeatedly likened to a gravevine planted by God, had repeatedly failed to produce upright works, resulting in severe discipline, even physical death, Isa. 5:1-14 NIV; Jer. 12:10 and Ps. 80:15; Ryrie St. Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to Isa. 5:1-12.
- C. Thus, where Israel had failed to produce righteous works, and was severely disciplined, the believer through Christ, the **True Vine**, can produce righteous works and also avoid God's severe discipline, John 15:1b-8:
 - 1. Jesus taught that every branch, every believer (cf. John 15:5), who does not yield righteous works, God "takes away" (*airo*, "lift up [or] remove," Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 23-24; U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 390) John 15:2a ESV; *Ibid.*, ftn. to John 15:2. Some take *airo* to mean "lift up" in a nurturing move, but John 15:6 has God disciplining barrenness, and the Isaiah 5:1-14 false vine illustration to which Jesus is here comparing Himself makes unfruitfulness end in death (verse 14), so the removal of an unproductive branch is physical death in the sin unto death, 1 John 5:16; 1 Cor. 11:30.
 - 2. However, every branch or believer who produces righteous works, the Father prunes (*kathairo*, "makes clean; clears, prunes," *Ibid.*, Arndt & Gingrich, p. 387) so he can bear more righteous works, John 15:2b.
 - 3. This pruning or purifying work is performed when one heeds God's Word, John 15:3.
 - 4. The believer must then "abide" in Christ and He in him to be productive, for except a branch "abide" in the vine it cannot produce any fruit, John 15:4 KJV. John 15:7 defines this "abide" action as the believer's remaining in God's Word as directs John 15:3 immediately before the John 15:4 call to "abide" in Christ. Thus, the believer "abides" in Christ and He in him when he obeys God's Word in his daily life!
 - 5. Accordingly, as the believer heeds God's Word in his walk (John 15:5a), he bears much fruit, or is highly productive in righteous works (John 15:5b), for without Christ he can not perform any truly righteous work, John 15:5c. As ancient Israel was an utterly fruitless vine in her own effort apart from the Lord and His Word, the Christian today apart from the Lord cannot produce any righteous works! (Rom. 7:15-8:4)
 - 6. Jesus warned that if a man did not obey His Word, he would be cast forth as a branch and wither, and men gather withered branches and cast them into the fire where they are burned, John 15:6. This verse is often used to teach that a believer can lose his salvation and go to hell, but that counters Scripture: (a) nowhere else are men seen casting men into hell as would be the case if John 15:6 taught the branches were being thrown by men into hell. Rather, Jesus taught that an unproductive believer is judged of God by the physical sin unto death (1 Jn. 5:16; 1 Cor. 11:30). Besides, (b) no true believer can lose his salvation, John 5:24, and (c) even at the Judgment Seat of Christ where a Christian's entire life's works might be burned up due to his lack of righteous works, his soul itself is still "saved; yet so as by fire," 1 Cor. 3:13-15 KJV.
 - 7. A key part of the upright believer's productivity will be God's answer to his prayers as he lives righteously and offers prayer requests that align with God's Biblical will, John 15:7 with 1 John 5:14-15 and 3:22.
 - 8. Jesus added that God the Father, is glorified when His workmanship [as Gardener] in the believer's life leads to the believer's being highly productive in terms of righteous works, and Jesus concluded that a life of many great righteous works is what true discipleship should entail, John 15:8a,b.

Lesson: *Jesus taught that as Israel on her own did not produce righteous works only to suffer severe divine discipline, the Christian on his own is just as fruitless and thus just as displeasing to God, so he must rely on and heed Christ to yield good works or be judged of God by an early physical death.*

Application: *(1) May we trust in Christ for salvation, John 3:16. (2) May we believers rely on Christ and heed His Word to produce righteous works instead of facing the premature loss of our earthly lives in divine discipline.*