**Lesson 26**

**John 15:1-8 Inductive Bible Study**

1. The parable of the vine (1-8)
   1. Jesus is the vine (1)
   2. The Father is the gardener (1)
   3. The branches need to be pruned (2)
   4. His word makes us clean (3)
   5. We must abide in Him to bear fruit (4-5)
   6. The useless branches will be burned (6)
   7. If we abide in Him we will bear fruit (7)
   8. If we abide in Him the Father will be glorified (8)

Questions:

Who is the vine?

Who is the vinedresser?

Who is the branch?

What is fruit?

What is the duty of each?

Does verse 2 mean we can lose our salvation?

How does verse 3 fit into the parable?

What dos it mean to abide in Him?

What is the fire?

What is a branch that dries up?

So what is the warning for us here?

What does it mean that He will prune us?

Why should we bear fruit?

Should we be satisfied with a little fruit?

Who gets the credit if a garden or field is very fruitful?

Practically, how can we ensure that we are abiding in Him?

Are you bearing fruit? What fruit are you bearing?

Have you experienced God’s pruning? How? Is pruning comfortable for us?

How can we ensure that God gets the glory for any of “our” fruit? (btw, the fruit belongs to the vine, not the branch)

Cross references:

Hebrews 12:7-11 (2) – Discusses God disciplining us.

Matthew 25:31-33 (1-7) – Jesus will separate the sheep from the goats.

Isaiah 5:1-7 (1-7) – God made a great vineyard, but it didn’t bear fruit and so He neglected it.

Luke 13:6-9 (1-7) – The owner of the fig tree is patient to let it bear fruit and fertilizes it, but destroys it in the end if it doesn’t bear fruit.

Matthew 3:10 (2) – Every tree that does not bear fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

Matthew 15:13 (2) – Every plant that God didn’t plant will be uprooted.

Matthew 3:12 (2) – The winnowing fork is in His hand. He will burn up the chaff.

Romans 5:3-5 (2) – Tribulations bring more perseverance and character.

Revelation 3:19 (2) – Those whom He loves, He disciplines.

John 17:17 (3) – His Word is truth and sanctifies us.

1 John 2:6 (4) – Those who say they abide in Christ should do what He says.

1 John 2:24 (4) – If what He said abides in us we will abide in Him.

Acts 4:13 (4) – They recognized the disciples as having been with Jesus.

Philippians 4:13 (5) – We can do all things through Him who gives us strength.

2 Corinthians 3:5 (5) – We are not adequate through ourselves; our adequacy is from God.

Verse by Verse Commentary:

1-8

This is the seventh time Jesus used the “I am” structure to identify Himself as divine and show what is His role. He shows His deity. He is the provider of strength. He is the one who gives the nutrients so that we can bear fruit. Apart from Him we can do nothing. At the same time His claim to deity demands a response from us. He doesn’t make this claim so we can say, “Oh, Jesus is a vine. That’s cool.” It is not just head knowledge, but it is meant to stimulate us to rely on Him.

In the context, Jesus is talking to the disciples. The fruitful branch represents the 11 faithful disciples, while the unfruitful branch represents Judas. However, it also applies to all believers throughout history as well. Sadly, there are many professing believers who seem to be saved. They go to church and seem to be connected to the vine. Their appearance is very similar to a true believer, but Jesus makes it clear that they are not true believers. How can we tell the difference? The apostate “believers” don’t bear fruit while the true believers do.

Let’s go through and examine each symbol here.

Vine – Who is the vine?

Throughout the Old Testament God used a vine or vineyard to picture Israel. Isaiah 5:1-7 for example. He planted it and watered it and nourished it. But Israel was the unfruitful vine. It was the false vine. It didn’t fulfill the commands of God or the plans of God. Here, I believe Jesus is contrasting Himself to the failed Israel. Israel rebelled against God. Israel disobeyed God. Israel was unfruitful. But Jesus obeyed God. Jesus was fruitful. Jesus fulfilled the ultimate purposes of God for saving the world. Therefore Jesus is the TRUE VINE. He is the Messiah, the fulfillment of the promise to use Abraham’s seed to be a blessing to the world.

What does a vine do? A vine provides the nourishment, the energy, the food to the branches where the fruit grows. So Jesus is saying, “I am the nourishment-giver. I am the supplier of strength.” While I don’t want to stretch the parable too far, the vine is kind of like a mediator between the soil and the branches. It’s job is to take the water and food to the branches. Jesus does this for us. He talks continuously in the book of John about His role as serving the Father. Jesus brings the grace, strength, and joy from the Father to us. He is the mediator.

Verse 7 tells us that the as the vine Jesus will give whatever we wish for. There is a condition to that which we will discuss later, but the point is that the vine gives whatever the branches need. There is nothing that the branches need that they can’t get from the vine. As people sometimes we go the false vines in this world for strength. We go to our unbelieving friends, unbelieving teachers, unbelieving government, etc. and think that these can give us what we need. But they can’t. At best they will give no help. At worst they will bring poison. Jesus has everything that we need for life and godliness. 2 Peter 1:3.

Vinedresser – Gardener.

Who is the gardener? How many duties does He have? What is His duty?

In this Scripture, the Gardener has one basic duty. When writing down my thoughts I almost wrote that He had two basic duties. He does do two things in this Scripture. First, He removes the worthless branches. Second, He prunes the productive branches. But both of these are done for the same purpose, that is to get as much fruit as possible. Worthless branches are cut off and destroyed so that they won’t suck energy from the fruitful branches. In the New Testament there are numerous commands on how to treat apostate “believers”. Basically, believers in the church are not supposed to mix with them in worshipping the Lord or maybe we will become like them. This has a two-fold benefit. First, it keeps the fruitful branches (faithful believers) strong and keeps them from being influenced as much by the unfruitful ones. Second, it is a warning to those branches so that they will start bearing fruit. So the Gardener has one duty, to get as much fruit as possible.

So there is one purpose, but two ways the Gardener accomplishes it. First, He cuts off the useless branches. Do you think He does this immediately? No. Normally a gardener will be patient for a while. See Luke 13:6-9. He wants to wait and give the branch or tree an opportunity to bear fruit, but finally if it never bears fruit He will destroy it.

Read:

Matthew 3:10,12

Matthew 15:13

What is the fire?

What is a branch that dries up?

So what is the warning for us here?

The warning is quite clear. Don’t be a worthless branch. Bear fruit! Does this teach us that we can lose our salvation? No! The branches that don’t bear fruit are like the goats. They only appear to be saved. The teaching is that there is a distinction between the real followers of God and the fake ones. The real ones bear fruit.

So God is not just a spectator. He is the Gardener. That means that He is involved with His people. He is continuously weeding out bad ones.

But He is also pruning the good ones. Every good gardener knows that sometimes in order to get the most fruit you have to cut down the plant or bush back. Give rose bush example. When cutting those rose bushes part of you wants to leave them there, not to cut off the pretty flowers. But the other part says, “no pain, no gain”. Pruning must take place to ensure that the rose bush grows stronger.

Read:

Romans 5:3-5

Hebrews 12:7-11

Again, a good gardener doesn’t just leave a plant to itself. What other things does a gardener do for the plants? It waters it, fertilizes it (and yes, God does that for us too though it is not mentioned here), gets out the weeds, and prunes it. Another word for pruning is what? Discipline or trials. God disciplines those who belong to Him and sends trials there way. He does this to make us stronger, to build our character.

Have you experienced God’s pruning? How? Was it comfortable? Was it profitable?

We need to be quick to respond to God’s pruning. If we are stubborn we will need to be pruned more often. There’s two choices. 1. Be pruned. 2. Be burned.

There aren’t any branches that never face either. So if people don’t want to follow Jesus because it is too difficult, or they face too many trials they should realize that the alternative is much worse and that these very trials are for our benefit.

Branch-

Ok. Now we finally come to the branch. Who is the branch? The branch doesn’t only include believers because some are thrown into the fire. The branches are those who profess Christ, profess to follow Him. Some are true. Some are not. We’ve already discussed some about the things the branch should do. But now we’ll come right to the point. What is the duty of the branch?

The branch has one primary duty, to bear fruit! How do we fulfill this duty?

1. Rely on the vine. We’ve already discussed that Jesus is the source of strength for the branch. Apart from Him we can do nothing. We must not try to bear fruit on our own. The result will be nothing. How to connect to/depend on the vine?

The words Jesus uses is to abide in Him and Him in us. How to do this? For the disciples it was somewhat easier. Jesus was physically present. They could live with and be with Him. This greatly strengthened and emboldened them. Acts 4:13. For us we cannot physically live with Him. 1 John 2:6, 24 tell us how we can abide in Him. We abide in Him by letting His words abide in His. We abide in Him if we faithfully drink from His words, and them out practically in our day to life. We are abiding in Him if before every decision we make we ask WWJD and then do it. We are abiding in Him if we obey His commands in every aspect of our life including: our business life, our family life, our personal life, etc. We must be intimately connected with Him if we want to bear fruit. 2 Corinthians 3:5. Are you connected to Him like this?

1. We must be willing to be pruned by the Gardener. As we have discussed, the Gardener helps the branches to bear more fruit by pruning them. Instead of complaining about how hard it is, we need to be grateful for His involvement and help and seek to the learn the lessons He desires to teach us.

Every good business has periods of evaluation. They set goals and then they evaluate. We should do the same. So let’s evaluate how we are doing as branches bearing fruit for God.

A good first question would be, what is the fruit?

Are you bearing the fruit?

If you were a fruit tree how much fruit would you want to bear?

How much are you bearing? What fruit are you bearing?

As branches, should we be satisfied with a little bit of fruit here and there?

The end of verse 2 says that God wants us to bear more fruit and verse 8 says we should bear “much fruit”. Just bearing a little fruit here and there is not the goal. We want to be fruit producing machines. Why?

Imagine there is a garden. The garden is very fruitful. Every year it gets more vegetables and more fruit than all of the other surrounding gardens. Do you think people will go up to the garden and say “good job, you are a good garden?” Will the garden take any credit for its success? Of course not. It’s ludicrous. It is a garden! Everyone knows a plant or a garden is not responsible for the fruit on it. The gardener is! The same way with us. If we do bear fruit, we should not take the credit or glory for ourselves, but give it to the Gardener to whom it rightly belongs. How can we ensure that God gets the glory for any of our fruit?