

Vine Branches

by Roy Hession

We are to abide in Jesus, the true vine, and let His life and sap flow through us, bearing the fruit that He produces.

Duration: 43:08

Scripture: Psalm 118:22-23, Mark 12:1-10, John 15:1-4

Topics: "True Vine"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the disappointment of God and others with the fruit produced by humanity. He references the parable of the vineyard in Mark 12, where tenants refuse to give the owner his share of the fruit. The speaker emphasizes that Israel, as the vineyard, could only produce fruit characteristic of its fallen nature. This disappointment is seen in our own lives as well, as we try to produce fruit for God but often fall short. The speaker encourages the audience to recognize their fallen nature and rely on God's grace for true fruitfulness.

Transcript

Whereby I now offer you... I'm an enthusiast for tape recording myself, and it's tremendously important to get a good recording, and you can't do that unless you have a close-up microphone. That's about as close as you'll ever get. I'm so happy to be with you.

We've already had a sweet fellowship with the pastor and his wife yesterday, and we want to thank those who helped greet us in our room with gorgeous flowers and fruit. We appreciate that very much. And we realize that we've come at the guidance of God onto what I think is prepared ground, prepared hearts.

The whole story of how it came about is quite remarkable, how a certain telephone call reached me from across the other side of the Atlantic. That's the only time it could have reached me in a whole month, when I happened to be at home when I really ought to have been far away. And so God has guided, and I'm sure He intends great good.

And it's not going to be a result of us trying to do something. Let God fulfill the purpose that He had when He called us together. And we are looking to Him, and I imagine the things that the Lord has taught Pam and me over these last years are just the things that you need to have shared with you.

And He will give the increase. He will interpret them each to your own heart. We're now on a little tour.

It will have lasted two months, and we would have done nine such week conferences as this. Two more after this, and we return home. But we've appreciated this time tremendously in the South.

And we praise God for evidences of the work of His Spirit among His people in all walks of churches. Most, of course, have been among Southern Baptist churches. But it's a marvellous thing to see God working among the Southern Baptists.

Well, like a little girl in the railroad carriage, and a bishop in his bishop's gaiters of the Episcopal church got in. And she was a Christian, a little girl, and she wondered whether she ought to give a little tract to this bishop. And her mother said, yes, if you would like to.

So she passed him this little tract, and he looked at it benignly and smiled at her. And he said, you know, my dear, I'm a bishop. Oh, she said, God can save even bishops.

And you know, I believe that God can bring revival, even to what is one of the largest denominations in the world. It needs revival. So they tell me.

The Southern Baptist friends of mine, they tell me. And they've got the vision, and they're seeing that vision from heaven implemented in this great work across the land. And we have had the privilege of visiting some of the churches where there's a new hunger and a new response to Jesus, where the pastors are being stirred and revived, and the people too.

And we've been so privileged to have a little share in contributing to this fresh moving of God. And I know that what's happening here is all part of that same stream. I call it the Gulf Stream.

You know, across the cold Atlantic, there flows from the Gulf of Mexico what is called the Gulf Stream. And the water in that stream is of a completely different temperature all the way, right across the Europe, and it washes the shores of Great Britain and gives us the temperate climate we have. It's a bit too temperate sometimes for us.

We'd like a little more heat turned on sometimes. But we certainly don't want any more cold. But we don't get the cold.

Actually, we're on the same latitude as the Hudson's Bay, but we don't get Hudson's Bay weather, mercifully, in the winter. It's the Gulf Stream that has these far-reaching effects right across to Norway and beyond. And I like to think that's a picture of revival.

That in the cold waters of our denominations and our churches there is flowing a new Gulf Stream of love and fellowship and response and rejoicing and repentance from Calvary. And the great thing is, be sure you get into the Gulf Stream and become part of it. And I'm sure that Gulf Stream is flowing in this church and, well, you'll ask yourself, am I in this Gulf Stream? Am I rejoicing in a new way? Is something happening in my life? Is it coming my way? Well, God bless you and may it do so.

Now this morning, I want to turn you to John's Gospel, chapter 15. John's Gospel, chapter 15. And I want to read the few verses of that beautiful picture that Jesus gives us of our relationship with himself.

The picture of the vine and the branches. Here it is. Jesus says to them, I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman, the vine dresser.

Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away. And every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

Abide in me, and then I will abide in you. I believe that's how it's meant to be. Not as a translation, but it's true.

It's a condition and a promise. If you abide in me, I will abide in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide or remain in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me.

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.

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. If ye abide in me and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be my disciples.

Seven times in John's Gospel, Jesus says, I am. And he follows those words with a distant picture word. In order to reveal to us who and what Jesus is meant to be to us.

You know some of the I am's. I am the door, I am the way, I am the bread, I am the resurrection, I am the good shepherd, etc. Seven of them.

And here's one of the most important. In fact, perhaps it's not right to think of one being more important than another. They're all pictures of Jesus himself.

And here the I am is I am. What? The true I am. And here's another revelation of Jesus to our souls.

Now this one is important because it comes in John's Gospel exactly where it does. Chapter 15 follows chapter 14 and precedes chapter 16. Quite obviously.

But those three chapters, 14, 15 and 16, are the three chapters where Jesus prepared them for his going to the Father that the Comforter might come to him, the Holy Spirit. They were sad to think of him going to the Father but he said it's expedient that I go to the Father for if I go not to the Father the Comforter will not come to you. And so he gives them very important teaching about this great change in relationship with himself after the Holy Spirit's coming.

Yes, there is going to be a change in relationship. Utterly different. Three times in these Gospels, in these chapters, it says at that day, take one for instance, 14, 20, at that day there's going to be such a change.

You will know that I'm in my Father and you in me and I in you. And so he's telling them about the coming of the Holy Spirit and of the great new relationship with himself which will be experienced from that day onward. No longer will the believer be one person and Jesus another but rather they'll be joined together in him and he and us.

And the best picture of what that relationship is going to be is the picture of a branch and a vine. Just as the branch is to the vine. I'm joined to Christ.

I know he's mine and this is the new relationship that we are called upon to enter into all the time. Between Jesus and ourselves. We're not merely followers.

We're not to regard ourselves as separate persons. We are as much a part of him as the branch is of the vine. And we share the same life that he lives.

And so in the middle of all this teaching in 14, 15 and 16 the Lord gives us this simple picture which I believe is the most complete picture there can possibly be of our relationship to Jesus. I've been living in this. I've been seeing this as fixing my relationship very much these last days.

And when I'm praying and expressing things I find myself going back especially rapidly to the terminology that we have provided for us in the picture of the branch and the vine. It begins with Jesus saying I am the true vine. And Campbell Morgan I think it is that points out that the order of the Greek word I am the vine, the true vine seems to suggest that Jesus was contrasting himself with another vine that wasn't the true vine.

What vine could Jesus be contrasting himself with? Well there was a vine in the Old Testament. It was the way in which Israel was spoken of. They were spoken of as a vine.

In Psalm 80 verse 8 it says Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt Thou hast cast out the heathen and planted it Thou preparest room for it And it caused it to take deep roots and it filled the land. What was the vine that God brought out of Egypt? It was Israel. And Israel is often spoken of under the picture of a vine.

And then of course there is a famous passage about Israel as the vine in Isaiah 5 because that vine proved a big disappointment to the Lord. Not for lack of him giving it privileges and spending much time on it and working on it, but in spite of all that, this vine that Jehovah brought out of Egypt proved to be a great disappointment. And in Isaiah 5 you have a little Hebrew poem that Isaiah composes and inserts here.

Now will I sing to my well beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill and he fenced it and gathered out the stones thereof and planted it with a choicest vine and built a tower in the midst of it to watch over it and also made a winepress thereof. He was anticipating much fruit from this vine which he had planted in such a fruitful hill.

And he looked that it should bring forth grapes and it brought forth wild grapes. And now oh inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah judge I pray you betwixt me and my vineyard what could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it. Wherefore when I looked that it should bring forth grapes brought it forth wild grapes.

Yes this vine was a disappointment to God. He had given Israel prophets and priests a great liturgy ceremonial law much else and yet it brought forth only wild grapes. Now this really is a picture of our story.

You have, I have been brought out of Egypt the land of our nativity. We were born in sin and in sin did our mothers conceive us and we grew up that way. We were true sons and daughters of fallen Adam.

And we were living down there in Egypt not satisfied under the heel of the tyrant Pharaoh Satan. But God heard our cries and did not spare to send his son. God did not spare thine only son but gave to him for a world undone and freely with that wretched blessed one thou givest all.

And as a result of the redemption of our Lord Jesus you and I have been brought out of that old land. And how much he's done for us what privileges he's given us. We could go through each of the things that God says he did for Israel, tempting Israel, taking out the stones, building that watchtower, the wine press and we've had all that treatment.

God's been good to us. He's saved us. You haven't been exposed to all the terrible dangers.

The young people, you grew up as a younger person. You were spared much. There was a fence around you.

And stones were taken out of your way and you didn't stumble into terrible things as many another life has. And he's built a watchtower over us, determined to save he watched all my path while Satan's blind slave I thwarted with death. And most pathetic of all he devised a plan, a wine press, for the good fruit that he intended to come from our lives but that wine press has not been filled.

And we have proved disappointment to God. In spite of all that's happened to us, in spite of all that he's done for us we have brought forth wild grapes, the works of the flesh, rather than good grapes, the fruit of the spirit. That was his intention.

In bringing us that vine out of Egypt, it was that it should bring forth the fruit of the spirit, chief of which fruit is love, the all-inclusive fruit. He brought us out in the hope that we would love as we've been loved. That we would forgive as we've been forgiven.

That we would lay down our rights for the brethren and for others as he laid down his rights for us. But we haven't done it. We've often done the very reverse.

And those ninefold fruit of the spirit, which are mentioned in Galatians 5, all of them by the way what the green grocer called soft fruit, love, joy, peace, gentleness, meekness, and so on. We've not been marked by those. And we've been a disappointment.

And instead of the fruit of the spirit, we've manifested all too often the works of the flesh. And Galatians 5 not only lists the fruit of the spirit, but it contrasts another list, the works of the flesh. And there are 17 of them.

The King James has 17, the other versions have 50. I prefer the 17. In fact I could easily add to their number.

There's just a selection of the most unpleasant things in the world, the works of the flesh. And if the chief of the fruits of the spirit of love, and if all the other fruits are simply derivatives of love, that which is at the heart of the works of the flesh is self. Someone has said, if you want to know what the flesh is in Paul's writings, drop off the last H and spell it backwards and you've got it, S-E-L-F.

And that is the heart of the works of the flesh. They're there in Galatians 5, starting with the grossest form, adultery and fornication, and that sort of thing, going on to what you might call the refined form, but they're no less sinful, of party spirit, and competitiveness, and jealousy, and so on. I've often thought that you can summarize the three, the various forms that self-life takes under three heads.

I think you can really include them all, self-will, self-effort, and self-glory. But we won't go into details of that just now. But this is what's come out of this vine, on which so much trouble had been spent.

But not only is God disappointed with the fruit of His labour in us. He's been made to serve with these bitter, wild grapes of the flesh. But others are disappointed too.

You remember in Mark 12 there's the parable Jesus told of the vineyard, and it was let out to husbandmen on the understanding that at a certain season each year he would send for a proportion of the fruit which

would serve in lieu of rent. And you remember, in the absence during that first year, the tenants decided they'd become landlords so that when the appointed servants came to receive the rent, they weren't welcome. Indeed, they were treated very wickedly.

They were sent away empty, with nothing for their loss. So he sent others, and they were sent away wounded, having been stoned. And when he said, get others, several of them were actually killed.

And this was how it was. You see, when Jesus comes to us, seeking fruit, He doesn't come direct. He wants to receive the fruit, but He sends others to collect the fruit.

And how have we treated others? I want to tell you, many a one has been sent away empty. I believe that's been my experience. He says he's a Christian.

He treated me very coldly. I got all too little sympathy and love for him, and I know there have been occasions when I've sent people away empty. It was Jesus coming to the vine for the fruit, and He came via somebody else.

And sending them away empty is the least of the treatment that we've accorded some people. We've reacted to them, looked upon them as interference with our liberty, and a limitation on our rights, making demands on us with which we have no need to meet. And we've reacted in resentful, harsh, critical ways.

And some of them have gone away really wounded. And they've been disappointed at this vine. And not only has God been disappointed, not only have others, but we've been disappointed with ourselves too.

You thought it was going to be very different from this. And you've tried to be different. And it's made no difference.

And we're disappointed. Now this is common Christian experience. It's all part of the process by which the Lord is bringing us to see something better.

Now why should it be that we are a disappointment to God, others, and ourselves? Well I'm going to suggest for one simple reason. And it is that we have been trying to be the vine. That's certainly why it was with the case of Israel.

In Isaiah 5, when it goes on after those verses I've read, the speech of the, what God's going to do, He's going to judge it and lay it waste. And then in verse 7, For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah His pleasant part. That was the simple trouble.

Why is there only wild grapes and not true grapes? For the simple reason that Israel was the vineyard. Israel was the vine. And as long as Israel was the vine, Israel couldn't produce any more than was characteristic of Israel.

Israel was part of a fallen race. I would say the best part of it, the most privileged part, if the fallen race can produce fruit for God, it's going to be done in Israel. God was putting the whole of human nature on trial there.

And it only produced wild grapes. And I would suggest that's the reason why God is disappointed in us and we're disappointed in ourselves. That with the best will in the world, we've been trying to be the vine.

And we could only produce what is characteristic of us. And the works of the flesh are characteristic of fallen men whose center now is themselves. And this is how it was when Jesus spoke these words.

He was standing in the midst of that vine on which God has bestowed such trouble and love. He was standing in the midst of the ruins of it. And now he says in a great change, I am the true vine.

And this was the vine that Jesus was contrasting himself with when he said those words. He was contrasting himself with Israel as the vine. He was contrasting himself with you as the vine.

You had been a disappointment all around, even since our new birth. But Jesus says historically you're out of date. Since I came into the world, died and rose again, God no longer expects man to be the vine.

I am the vine. From me is God's fruit to be found and from nowhere else. And you are no longer to try to be the vine.

The days when man was the vine put on trial are over. Now there's a new day dawn. With the coming of the Holy, my coming and the coming of the Spirit, I now am the vine.

You are not to be the vine. From you no good fruit is expected. What in the world? Where do I come in? I haven't got a place in this.

Never as the vine. But you are given a place as a branch. And of course that's all different.

So different. Because the branch isn't expected to produce the fruit at all. It simply bears the fruit which the vine produces.

Not only is the branch in the vine but the vine is in the branch by its sap. And it's the life and sap of the vine in the branch that produces the fruit and the branch simply bears that fruit which the vine is producing. And that fruit is characteristic of the vine.

When I'm the vine, I could only produce that which is characteristic of me. It's not very pleasant. But it somehow could really be an impactful experience that I wasn't the vine.

That what's happening in me is not derived from me but from Jesus. He was the vine. What is produced would be characteristic of Him.

So this is the great change. And since the day of Pentecost, you may know, I may know that He's in the Father, we in Him and He in us. And we're joined to Him as the branches to the vine.

Now in saying this that He's the vine not us what is it but a setting aside of us as the vine? It implies that. And there's many a place where it says quite clearly that God has judged us as the vine. And we need to see that in the cross of Jesus.

Jesus didn't only die for us but He died as us. Died in our likeness. The likeness of that man who's trying to be the good Christian and never making it.

Trying to produce the fruits of the spirit and always producing the works of the flesh. God says that man's doing the wrong thing. As the vine, I judge it.

And Jesus died in my likeness. The likeness of sinful flesh it is said. And at the cross I see that I'm ended not mended as the vine.

I don't have to try to be the vine. And He set me aside as the vine. But He's given me a place in Christ as the branch and of all the difference of the world.

I believe this is something you probably didn't know but it's a basic which we'll build on this and go on further. In Galatians 2.20 you have that phrase I live not yet I. I have been crucified with Christ nevertheless I live yet not I Christ lives in me. I have been crucified and yet I'm alive and yet I live.

I've been crucified as the vine but I live as the branch. There it is. And I'm to accept quite simply, God's estimate on this thing that as the vine I'm ended.

And He set me aside. What a relief that I haven't got to try to be the vine. What a hard time I've had trying to do that.

And the harder I try the very opposite are the results. But God wants us to see Jesus as our all sufficient vine, the one in whom all fullness dwells. The one who stands over Satan.

The one who's in control. He's the vine of each day that comes. You can get up and you start making your own schedule for yourself and you know what you want to do and He's only to interfere with it and you're upset.

You see it was your day. You were so to speak the vine of it. And what a wonderful difference it is when He's the vine.

And I'm only a branch. Let Him do what He likes with His own day. I'll take it as coming from Him.

And I find He's sufficient. He's adequate. But we haven't been doing that.

Even if it's understood that we've been set aside as the vine. Even if we've understood ours is only the place of the branch. We haven't been doing it.

And as of now all sorts of works of the flesh have become apparent in our lives. In my life, your life. The thing is what are we to do? Because you always come into the positive in spiritual things through confessing the negative.

You don't get the fruits of the Spirit by praying for them. But only by confessing the works of the flesh. Have you got that? You don't get the fruits of the Spirit by asking for them.

Asking for the positive. But rather confessing the negative. You don't get love by asking for love.

Is that sin? Forget the positive. Let's deal with the sin. You've been hating.

You've been resentful. You've been jealous. And you can pray as long as you like for love for that difficult person.

Nothing is likely to happen until you see the works of the flesh which have really been there. The opposite to love is hate. And if you're not loving you're hating.

Well confess that. And this is the great way of coming into liberty. Going back to Calvary.

To Jesus. That old rugged cross. And confessing whatever it is that's coming up.

Calling it sin. And not only confessing the particular unpleasant work of the flesh was manifest. And by the way you've got quite a good summary of the works of the flesh in your bulletin this morning.

And when I saw that I said that'll save me a lot of applying it. There it is. You don't get victory by asking for the fruit.

But confessing those things as sin and taking them to Jesus. And I want to tell you it's never vain thus to do. At that place called Calvary you come right into that one in whom all fullness dwells.

And as you confess the negative and are washed and made clean by the blood of Jesus from those things you confess grace gives you the opposite. This is certainly true with this love for other people. I'm thinking of a case in the evangelistic society with whom I used to work.

I was just on the evangelistic staff and I was all the time criticising to my wife and to nobody else the leader of that society. I can see now that it was because I was jealous. I'd like to be the leader.

And nothing he did was right. And then when the Lord began to work in my life in revival he showed me. Here was one thing amongst many others that I needed to put right.

My relationship with him. I don't think he knew too much but God knew what was in my heart. And I confessed this to the Lord and I felt that at the first opportunity I should open my heart to this brother and ask his forgiveness too.

Well I was in a meeting when the staff evangelists were all there and the Holy Spirit began to work and people began to confess things and put things right. And I would have preferred to have spoken quietly on my own to this brother. But as this was happening I thought well this is the opportunity.

And I did. I shared with the folks there that I'd had this wrong critical attitude toward my brother and I asked the Lord forgiveness and his too. And afterwards he talked to me.

He said, Roy, he said you know referring to this critical spirit I confessed, he said I'm not above receiving criticism. Do understand that. In other words he was inviting me to tell him what I was critical about.

And I couldn't think of a thing. Instead of which I looked at him and I said what a dear man he is. And I found my criticism which was really a form of hate at Calvary had been turned into love.

Where the works of the flesh were, lo and behold the fruit of the Spirit. Because when you confess and repent of the works of the flesh where you have been the vine, he becomes the vine. I want to say again, don't ask that Jesus should be the vine.

Confess where you've been the vine. Don't ask for the work, the fruit of the Spirit. Just let God show you the whole list of the works of the flesh where they've been appearing in your life and take those to counsel.

And I enter into the positive through the confession of the negative. He becomes the vine when I confess I've been taking his place. He gives the fruits of the Spirit of his own life.

He becomes the vine when I confess I've been and certainly so I bring the works of the flesh. I do think of course in going to the Lord there's got to be almost a twofold confession so they're all wrapped up in one. Not only the particular work of the flesh which I'm having to bring to him.

But I need to recognize it all because on that occasion at least I'd assume the place of the vine. Self rule. Of course you don't know which comes first.

I mean in your confession. The self that lies at the back of it or the actual eruption that took place as a result. Doesn't matter.

And maybe they all get bundled up but it doesn't mean they've got to be there. And back to Jesus I go. As a man who'd be pathetically been trying to be the vine.

Insisting he was the vine. Insisting on his right. And I bring to him all that came as a result.

And the blood of Jesus cleanses me from all sin. And he then assumes the place of the vine. And I find that which is characteristic of him is taken place.

It's been my privilege to live in a growing fellowship and team of men and women and others young as well as old going this way in Britain. And we've been with one another for a long time. There are pastors all over the country.

We only meet once a year perhaps for a conference. But all the Lord's bound us together with great love. And I've seen such a change in my friends.

I don't know whether they've seen a change in me. I can't see any change. Perhaps we're not expected to see a change.

Oswald Chambers talks about conscious repentance leading to unconscious holiness. Maybe it's best that way. Conscious holiness certainly isn't very attractive, is it? A man who's consciously holy is daring.

But as I say I've seen such a change in my friends. I've seen grace. Visible growth in grace I would say.

In men who begin to walk this way. I want to tell you I have seen holiness walking about on two legs. But the man concerns.

He's always at the cross. He's quick to be convicted of where the flesh, where the capital I is coming in and going back to Calvary. With the result that Jesus is manifested in him.

And if you were to say words about the immense change, he might be almost the most surprised person. He's the sinner at the feet of Jesus. He's at the receiving end of mercy and forgiveness.

But my! How beautiful the vine is seen in him. And what fruit. In all sorts of ways.

And so whereas this is by no means a complete exposition of the great parable of the vine and the branches. I think this is the picture the Lord seemed to give me. As I was thinking about where to begin our time together.

He doesn't expect your life to be improved. But he is prepared to impart it. But you and I will have to be often at Calvary.

Judging self and praising for the blood of Jesus. I believe growth in grace can be measured by the rapidity with which someone who's had to go to the cross comes into freedom. If a man doesn't see grace very clearly, it will take him a long time to come into freedom.

He'll confess it but he's not rejoicing yet. He's going to have to wait a few days. He feels that God stands him in the corner.

He hasn't grown in grace very much that brother. He doesn't see what grace is. He takes a long time.

He licks his wounds. He doesn't see what the blood is. But as we grow in grace we come freely, quickly into liberty.

Because we see that grace is flowing like a river. Millions there have been supplied till it flows as fresh as ever from the Saviour's wounded side. And grace is good news for bad people even when the bad people have to be converted.

Good news for you if you admit that wrong. And can I dare, can I really step out of that darkness into immediate light? You surely can. For the blood of Jesus has never lost its power.

And I believe that is the way in which our growth in grace is to be met. I love that verse in Romans 4. To him that works is not, but believers on him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. A righteousness that he didn't otherwise possess.

Oh to be a man who believes on him who justifies the ungodly. Oh to be a man who believes on him who declares those to be at right who admit they're wrong. And believing it steps out into freedom.

I want to tell you when you go to Jesus you are, and say you're all wrong. Now Jesus is, now you're all right. You're as right with me as my blood can make you.

To believe it means the sun is shining again. And the break in that sun needn't be any length at all. If I'm quick to go and quick to dare to believe credit him with this marvel of grace.

He delights to declare him to be right with himself who admits he's wrong. And it doesn't matter how often you repeat that blessed step. He's not going to say hey you've been here before along these sort of things.

Rather he's going to say if you say to me I've done it again he's going to say what have you done again. As far as I'm concerned I've got no record of this thing ever happened before. As far as I'm concerned this is the first time you've ever come to me with this thing.

And you're walking in grace and in liberty and taking the place of a branch. I'll ask him specifically to say any old branch will do. Any old branch will do.

In fact if there's anything a branch can do to hinder it it's to be a big branch. That's why there's all the pruning processes. Keep the branch small.

Keep it weak. Because the fruit's not going to come from the branch. It's going to come from God.

And too much dead wood will hinder this thing. So there's many a process of pruning that's a whole other subject and many of you know something about that in your experience. It's good keeping the branch the size it should be.

Any old branch will do. Even you. Even me.

The great secret is the vine. Is he enough? Is he the one in whom all fullness dwells? Or having been to the cross about something have I yet to struggle to something beyond Jesus? I don't have to. He is all I

need.

And so here's this great word of Jesus. I'm the vine. You are not the vine.

I'm the vine. You, branches in me. And you've got a countable reward.

And when you get out of it, and you may well do, there's the way back to God through Calvary. Amen. Let us pray.

Lord Jesus we thank thee for what thou art. Lord we've been struggling to be something ourselves. Most of us it's so natural.

And you've watched our pathetic efforts. And you've watched how slow we've recovered ourselves from our falls. When all the time you were the vine.

And where all the time thy blood had never lost its power, we didn't have to wait to get back. So Lord we pray thee, may some of us find again that wanted place of blessing at the foot of thy cross, just a branch again. In thee the mighty all sufficient vine.

We ask it in thy dear name. Amen.

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