

BRANCHES

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

The late Fred Blakely was once asked what branch of Christianity he represented. He replied: “I am a branch all by myself. I represent the Vine”. Touche! He was right! There is a simple, yet profound truth involved in this. Jesus chose to allow mortal man to participate with Him in the work of God. He didn’t have to do it that way, but He did.. Note that the Vine does not bear fruit, the branches do!

Our Sovereign Creator God did not need the help of man for anything. In His infinite wisdom, however, he permitted Adam to dress and keep the garden. He could have easily done it Himself, or assigned the task to angels, but He didn’t. God chose instead to train Adam and trust him with responsibility. The Bible puts it like this: **“The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it, and take care of it” (Gen. 2:15).**

As a point of interest, God created Adam on the 6th day, and on the 7th day He rested (Gen. 1:26 - 2:3). Even though there is some sense in which God is always at His work (Jn. 5:17), it is still interesting that Adam’s first full day in the garden was on the Sabbath.

But, back to our theme about branches. God is omniscient and omnipotent. He could have created vines to produce fruit any way He wanted to, but He chose to do so by means of branches. In much the same way, He obviously wants to involve man in what He is doing. Consider Noah. God could have preserved seed upon the earth in an infinite number of ways. He chose, however, to allow Noah to build the ark. God created the heavens and the earth in only six days, and it took Noah 120 years to build the ark. God could have built the ark quicker and better, but He permitted Noah to do it just the same. For Noah, it was a wonderful privilege not merely a job.

Paul described believers as “God’s fellow workers” (1 Cor. 3:9). The branch cannot bear fruit without the Vine, and the Vine cannot bear fruit without the branches. God in His infinite wisdom and Sovereign will designed it to be this way. We are laborers together with God!

Unfortunately, not everyone wants to be a fruit bearing branch. Apparently we have a choice. If we chose not to abide in the Vine, we will bear no fruit and ultimately be thrown into the fire and burned (Jn. 15:6). What are you going to choose?

Every parent needs to know that it takes patience to train children. The child’s first effort to use a spoon, for example, invariably creates a mess. Because we love our children, however, we clean up their messes and give them another chance. That, of course, is precisely what God does for us. Involving man in the work of God is not easy !

If a branch is to bear fruit, as you know, it must abide in the Vine and probably will be pruned. We see this principle played out through all of Bible history. God chose Abram, but without God Isaac would never have been born. God chose Moses, but without God the pharaoh would have seen no miracles. God chose Joshua but without God the walls of Jericho would never have fallen. God chose Mary, but without God Jesus would never have been born. Apart from God we can do nothing! The purpose of pruning, of course, is to make us bear more fruit.

In John chapter 13 we are informed that Jesus gathered His disciples in an upper room to observe the Passover. Our text from John 15, however, did not happen in the upper room. The last verse of John 14 quotes Jesus as saying: **“Come now; let us leave” (Jn. 14:31).** So Jesus and His disciples left the upper room and started for Gethsemane. Evidently, they passed through a vineyard on the way. It was then that the Master Teacher used what they saw to teach an eternal truth. The branch cannot bear fruit unless it abides in the Vine. Do you see it?