

Dead or Live Branch?

John 15:1-8

East Berlin Community Church

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Introduction

- Most of us desire to live a productive, fruitful life
- Tragedy of climbing the ladder of success, only to find it leaning against the wrong building.
- What evidence in your life that you are a genuine follower of Jesus?
 - John 14:12-- *"Most assuredly I say to you, 'He who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to the Father.'"*

Live or Dead Branch?

- John 15:1-8-- *"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples."*

A. A Live Branch—a productive, fruit-bearing Christian

1. Identification of "fruit"

a. What is it NOT fruit?

- 1) Not equated with successful ministry
- 2) Not necessarily new converts although they are called *"fruit of our labors"*
 - Romans 1:13-- *"I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles."*

b. What is fruit?

1) Christ-like Character

- Galatians 5:22-23-- *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law"*
- 2 Peter 1:5-8-- *"But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. "*

2) Christ-like Conduct

a) Praise and Thanksgiving

- Hebrews 13:5-- *"offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name."*

b) Supporting others in love

- Philippians 4:17-- *"fruit that abounds to your account"*

c) Holy, righteous, God-honoring behavior

- Ephesians 5:9-- *"fruit of light that consists in all goodness, righteousness, and truth"*
- Philippians 1:11-- *"fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the praise of the glory of God"*

- Colossians 1:11-- *“that you might walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.”*

2. Source of Fruit—being grafted into the “true” vine

- John 15:1-2-- *“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.”*
- a. **Israel as God’s vine**
- 1) **As the channel of God’s blessing**
 - Psalm 80:8-- *“You have brought a vine out of Egypt. You have cast out the nations, and planted it.”*
 - Isaiah 5:1-2-- *“On a very fruitful hill, He dug it up, and cleared out its stones, and planted it with its choicest vine. He built a tower in its midst, and also made a winepress in it; So he expected it to bring forth good grapes...”*
 - Isaiah 5:7-- *“For the vineyard of the LORD of host is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are His pleasant plant. He looked for justice, but behold, oppression. For righteousness, but behold a cry for help.”*
 - 2) **Failed to produce good grapes**
 - 3) **As a result, judgment comes upon the nation**
- b. **Jesus Christ as the “true” vine**
- 1) **Fulfills Israel’s destiny**
 - Psalm 80:14-18-- *“Return, we beseech You, O God of hosts; look down from heaven and see, and visit this vine and the vineyard which Your right hand has planted, and the branch You made strong for yourself. It is burned with fire, it is cut down; They perish at the rebuke of Your countenance. Let your hand be upon the man of Your right hand, upon the son of man whom You made strong for yourself. Then we will not turn back from You; Revive us, and we will call upon Your name.”*
 - 2) **We, as branches, were grafted in**
 - John 15:5-- *“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.”*
 - 3) **In this present age, the church is the channel of blessing**
 - 4) **Future age, Israel will once again be the channel for blessing**
 - Zechariah 8:12-13-- *“For the seed shall be prosperous. The vine shall give its fruit. The ground shall give her increase and the heaven shall give their dew—I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these. And it shall come to pass that just as your were a curse among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so I will save you, and you shall be a blessing. Do not fear, let your hand be strong.”*
 - Zechariah 8:7-8-- *“Behold, I will save My people from the land of the east and from the land of the west. I will bring them back and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. They shall be My people and I will be their God in truth and righteousness.”*
 - Romans 11:25-- *“the blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.”*
 - Zechariah 14:4-5-- *“And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, Which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, From east to west, Making a very large valley; Half of the mountain shall move toward the north And half of it toward the south. Then you shall flee through My mountain valley, For the mountain valley shall reach to Azal. Yes, you shall flee As you fled from the earthquake In the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Thus the LORD my God will come, And all the saints with You.”*

- Zechariah 14:9-- *"the LORD shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be—'The LORD is one', and His name is one."*
- Zechariah 12:10-- *"I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication: then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a first born."*

B. A "Dead" Branch—NO fruit!

1. Removed by God the Father, the vine-dresser

- John 15:1-- *"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser."*
- John 15:2a-- *"Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away."*

2. Identification of the "dead" branches

a. Not apostate Christians who have lost their salvation

- John 6:37-39-- *"All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day."*
- John 10:27-29-- *"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give to them eternal life, and they shall never perish (literally, they shall never, no never perish) neither shall anyone snatch them out of my hand. My Father who has given them to Me is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand."*
- John 11:25-26-- *"I am the resurrection and the life. He, who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And he who lives and believes in Me shall never (no, never) die."*

b. Not genuine, fruitless Christians—an impossibility

c. Professing, but not possessing Christians

1) Such will always be present in the church

- 1 John 2:19-- *"They went out from us. but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be manifest, that none of them were of us."*

2) Prime example: Judas Iscariot

- John 6:70-- *"Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil."*

3) Warning about false prophets. Known by their fruits,

- Matthew 7:15-16 --*"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles?"*

4) Ultimate fate

- John 15:6-- *"If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned."*
- Matthew 13:49-- *"So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth."*
- Matthew 7:21-23-- *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name? And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness."*

5) What is important is not "Do you know the Lord", but rather, "Does the Lord know you?"

- 2 Timothy 2:19-- *"Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: The LORD knows those who are His!"*