

=BIBLE PROMISES=

Lesson 4

Bible Promises About God's Giving

AIM: to instill in my pupils the desire to be fruit-bearing Christians.

POINT OF CONTACT: Picture a vineyard—a field full of grapevines. It is harvest time. We see the farmer looking closely at the branches of the vines. He is looking to see whether there are any grapes hanging on them. Some of the branches bear grapes; others are bare. Would you say that the bare branches are of any value? They seem to be healthy, for they are covered with beautiful green leaves which are free from harmful insects or disease. Why do you suppose that the grapevines were planted there in the first place? Unless the branches on the vines produce grapes, they are of no use to the farmer who has planted them and cultivated them. The farmer is now examining the vine and decides that the stock—the main trunk from which the branches grow—is healthy and strong; it is that some of the branches are unhealthy and unfruitful. By chopping away the unproductive branches and grafting in new ones, the farmer has an excellent chance of having a good crop of grapes when the next harvest time comes.

INTRODUCTION: This week's Bible lesson contains a promise which is given as a result of an allegory spoken by Jesus to His disciples. (An allegory is a form of speech which gives personality and action to symbolic figures, thereby illustrating a truth.) Jesus taught great truths by using objects and figures which were familiar to His hearers. Since His disciples were familiar with the plant on which grapes grew, He discussed the vine and its parts to illustrate a teaching which His disciples had to know. On the occasion when He spoke the word which we will study, He had just eaten the last supper with His disciples. He had reserved this time for some last-minute instructions. It would not be many hours before He would be standing trial before Caiaphas prior to the day when he would be sentenced to death in Pilate's Hall. There was something which Jesus' disciples still needed to know: each one would be accountable to God for doing or leaving undone that which Jesus expected him to do. Jesus had instructed His disciples to get up from the table and to walk with Him to the Garden of Gethsemane, John 13:2 - 16:33. On the way He gave them the promise which we will study in this week's lesson. As usual, whatever is related in the Bible is for every Christian to learn and to apply to his own life. Let us learn from this lesson which Jesus gave His disciples so that we can meet the condition of the promise and claim it for our own lives. The promise is found in John 15:7.

I. JESUS SPOKE OF THE VINE.

1. The literal grapevine.

- 1) In the grape plant, the main stem or the trunk of the vine is called the stock. Through the trunk flows the sap. The sap contains nourishment and carries this nourishment to all the branches which are a part of it.
- 2) Grapevines grow in a wide range of soils. Surveys of soils used successfully in grape production in many different localities show a great variety of types. The soil ranges from blow sands to clay loams, from shallow to very deep soils, soil which is rich in lime to soil which contains no lime, and from very low to high fertile soil.
- 3) There are about 8,000 varieties of grapes grown in many different parts of the world. As new lands were colonized, the grape was taken along. Today the grape is cultivated on all continents and islands where the climate is favorable.

2. The True Vine.

- 1) Jesus said that He Himself is the True Vine. (This is not to be confused with the figure used of Israel. Israel is called God's vine in many places in the Old Testament, and again in some places in the New Testament. Because the nation of Israel rejected Jesus, that vine has been cut down, Psalm 80:8-19; Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 2:21; Matthew 21:33-44.) It is He Who gives life. In the beginning, Jesus was the Creator; He gave physical life. At the new birth, He gives spiritual life, John 1:3, 4; 5:24; 10:10; 14:6. It is Jesus Who sustains life—physical and everlasting, Colossians 1:17; I John 5:12.
- 2) Jesus wanted His disciples to understand that wherever they were they could have close relationship with Him, and that they should have close relationship with Him. Further in the discussion, He warned of how that close relationship could be broken—not that eternal life

would be taken away, for it would never be taken away—but that a full, joyous standing in Him could not be possible if His instructions were not followed. He wanted them to do His work; they should understand that whatever they could accomplish for Him was because of His power working through them.

II. JESUS SPOKE OF THE BRANCHES.

1. Description of the branches in the literal vine.
 - 1) The branches of a vine definitely have a union with the main vine—the trunk, the stock. It is from the nourishment of the sap which runs from the stock that the branches receive and retain life.
 - 2) Whenever it is desirable for the vineyard to be enlarged, cuttings from other vines are very often grafted into the stock. In fact, the best way to propagate the vineyard is by this grafting process. There is an incision made into the stock, the cutting is put into the incision and then there is rubber budding strip wound around the cutting. The cutting is carefully nourished and watched by the husbandman until it is obvious that a union has been formed.
2. Description of the branches in the True Vine.
 - 1) The branches of the True Vine are those people who have been born again. Those who trust Jesus as their Saviour are the only recipients of eternal life, John 3:16-18. They become a part of His body, Ephesians 5:30. They are rooted and grounded in Him, Ephesians 4:12-16. They are nourished by Him, Colossians 2:19. “The creature is raised up to partake of the divine nature.”
 - 2) They have been given to Jesus by God the Father, John 17:11. Jesus said that His Father is the Husbandman, John 15:1. They have been “grafted” into Jesus, I Peter 2:2, 3; I Corinthians 3:1-3. They have become “babes in Christ” and are to be nourished with the “milk” of the Word until they can take the “meat.”
3. Function of the branches in the literal vine.
 - 1) They grow. As they grow, they produce leaves and tendrils. They live by “abiding” in the trunk—they would wither if they were taken out of the trunk.
 - 2) They are expected to produce their fruit—that is, grapes. Their fruit is to be of the type and quantity expected of that type of vine. For example, if the grapes are to be seedless, plump and juicy, they do not meet requirements if there are seeds found in them or if they are dry. If the grapes are to be dried for raisins, they cannot be the kind which individually drop off the vine as they ripen, and they must not become bitter as they lie in the sun for the drying process. There must be a good number in each bunch and on each branch. If the crop is sparse, the branch will be taking up more room on the vine than it should; it will limit production for the entire vineyard.
4. Function of the branches in the True Vine.
 - 1) Branches in Jesus’ vine are to grow. They are to grow in grace and in knowledge of Jesus. They are to increase their knowledge of God’s Word and to develop good Christian character, II Peter 3:18.
 - 2) Branches in Jesus’ vine are expected to bear fruit. The fruit which Christians are to bear is more Christians—all Christians are to be soul winners, John 14:12; 17:18. They are expected to do the work which Jesus did on earth—that of winning men to Him. How soon should they produce a good crop? God knows that time. Read Luke 13:6-9. They should get busy now. Proverbs 11:30, “The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.” They must abide in Jesus in order to do His work, John 15:4. Paul said that he wanted some fruit among the brethren in Rome—he wanted a chance to tell the Gospel there, Romans 1:13-16.

III. THE HUSBANDMAN.

1. The functions of a farmer in a natural vineyard.

- 1) He plants the vineyard and grafts new branches when he wishes to enlarge it or to increase its yield. He protects the cuttings until they take root. He sees to it that it has enough moisture by planting growth in the rainy season to hold the moisture in the soil around the vines and by cleaning out the weeds in the dry months.
- 2) He checks its growth. If a branch is growing too fast and putting out tendrils too soon, he cuts it back. If some insect or disease is bothering it, he sprays or dusts it according to the problem in order to keep it healthy.
- 3) He checks its fruitfulness. If a branch produces fruit, he prunes it, shortening its rank growth that it may ripen and enlarge its fruit better. If a branch does not produce fruit, the husbandman cuts off that branch, lets it wither, gathers it with the other unfruitful branches, and burns it. Pruning is the most important single vineyard operation. It is usually the sole means of regulating crop, largely determining not only the quality of the fruit, but also the quality of the main trunk for the next year. At the annual pruning, from 90% to 95% or more of the year's growth is removed, leaving the spurs or fruit canes, or both.
2. The functions of our Heavenly Father. He is the Husbandman of the True Vine.
 - 1) He "plants" in Jesus all those who will trust in Him as their Saviour. He watches over His children, Luke 12:22-31. He gives them what they need—protection, security, physical needs supplied.
 - 2) He "checks" His children's behavior. He stops His children whenever they are getting out of hand, whenever they reach out farther than he wants them to reach, whenever they are getting out of His will, Hebrews 12:5-11. He cleanses them of their worthless parts. Look at Ephesians 5:26.
 - 3) He examines the fruitfulness of His children. He bends to look at the branches. If a particular branch is bearing fruit, He knows that it should be producing more fruit. He purges it—He instructs that child of His concerning abiding more in Jesus and His love and commandments. If that child yields to His cleansing and pruning, then more fruit grows out of that branch. Our Heavenly Father comes back to that branch in due time, examines it, causes it to abide even more in Jesus and sees later that it is bringing forth much fruit. Some branches, on the other hand, will not yield to God's examination and chastening. They will refuse to bring forth any fruit at all. There is nothing left for the Husbandman to do than, in due time, to take away that branch and to let it dry up and wither and then to subject it to fire, John 15:1-6. That branch is still a branch, but it becomes withered. It goes through the fire of Jesus' judging of His own, and all his work will be burned, I Corinthians 3:11-15.

IV. THE PROMISES MADE TO THE ABIDING BRANCHES.

1. They may have anything for which they ask, John 15:7.
 - 1) Those who are abiding in Jesus, and He in them, will bring forth fruit and more fruit and much fruit. Without Him, Christians cannot be soul winners; with His abiding presence, they cannot help but be soul winners, John 15:4, 5. Jesus told His disciples that this was why he called them—so that they could become soul winners, John 15:16.
 - 2) Those who are abiding in Jesus may ask what they will, and their requests will be granted, John 15:7, 16.
2. They will have full joy.
 - 1) This is one reason why Jesus gave these instructions. He wanted His children to have His full joy remaining in them, John 15:11.
 - 2) Paul said that he possessed this full joy, I Thessalonians 2:19, 20. The Thessalonians whom he had led to the Lord were his full joy and glory. His hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing was the anticipation of seeing those whom he had led to Christ when they would all get to Heaven and stand around Jesus together. There is no greater joy than the joy of leading someone to accept Jesus as his Saviour.
3. They will glorify our Heavenly Father. By bringing forth much fruit, they will show forth His power and His glory. (Consider this: One does not become more proficient or productive in soul

winning by practice nor by habit, but by continual abiding in Jesus, John 15:5. The continual abiding in Jesus makes the person habitually set aside times to go soul winning and makes him to be soul conscious.)

4. They will be His disciples, John 15:8. The dictionary says that a disciple is “one who accepts and assists in spreading the doctrines of another.” The disciples became Apostles as they went out where Jesus sent them with the Gospel.

CONCLUSION: We who are “soaking up” God’s goodness and His mercy and His blessing should constantly be on guard to do His work and His bidding. If we do not reproduce into others the faith which is in us, then we will be cut off from the mainstream of Jesus’ life—we’ll be cut off and wither. Our works will then be burned. We will be saved, but so as by fire. Romans 11:17-36 warns us to “behold therefore the goodness and severity of God.” See Romans 11:22.