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THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES
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Author of:
Inbred Sin
A Clean Heart
A Living Sacrifice
Old Wine In New Bottles
Saved and Kept
Wesley Birthday Book
Commentary on St. Luke
Commentary on St. John's Gospel

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PREFACE

Two reasons are given by the writer for the existence of this book:

The first is a conviction that he has not been able to shake off that the book ought to be written. And as he does not know of any one else who is willing to do it, he has attempted it himself. Usually when God gives a conviction to a soul, it means that He wishes him to carry it out.

A second reason is the favor which the other little books on devotion have received from the public. These reasons with a desire to do all the good possible have led to this new venture.

If one soul shall have been blessed and helped, it will fully compensate the author for all his time and effort.

G. A. McLaughlin

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01 -- A BEAUTIFUL FIGURE

"I am the true vine." -- John 15:1

"Without a parable spake he not unto them," says St. Matthew. The discourses of our Lord abounded in parables. Our Heavenly king rules over two realms -- nature and grace, and there are many points of resemblance in his government of the two kingdoms. Many of his methods in the natural kingdom clearly illustrate his methods in the spiritual realm.

Consequently we find Jesus holding up nature as a glass through which we may more clearly see the divine workings in the kingdom of grace. With what aptness he makes his comparisons! When we see how clearly he made himself understood to those who had an eye to see and an ear to hear, we are struck with the appropriateness of his parables, taken from God's every day operations, familiar to all classes of people.

The parable is not only a convenient and natural method of imparting truth, but a most apt means of making truth clear and convincing. The natural heart is dark and ignorant of spiritual things and needs the simplest and easiest methods of explanation. The natural man

needs to be dealt with in the explanation of spiritual things much as a child in learning the elements of language. The simplest methods are the best.

Another use of the parable is in bringing people to a common ground of understanding. Much of the controversy on different questions among good people in the world arises from the fact that they do not understand each other. The same word or term means one thing to one party and has an entirely different meaning to another. Consequently there is much strife about words.

Still another use of the parable is to bring unwelcome truth to the attention of parties who are unwilling to receive it, and cause them to admit it, even when it condemns their theories or practices. This was the case when God sent the prophet Nathan to rebuke David for his great sin. The prophet relates the parable of the poor man defrauded of his only lamb by his rich neighbor. If Nathan had commenced his attack directly upon David's sin, he might have been expelled from the royal presence. So by means of the parable he gets the truth fully before David. Then he allows David to pronounce unwittingly his own condemnation and brings the startling accusation, "Thou art the man."

Jesus spoke to the Pharisees, who had rejected him, by means of the parable of the vineyard and the wicked husbandmen, who abused and killed the servants and finally murdered the son of the lord of the vineyard. When he had finished, the record is, that "they knew he had spoken the parable against them."

The parable of the vine and branches contains the great doctrines vital to spiritual religion, which are as stoutly denied in society and in many so-called churches to-day, as in the days of Christ. The meaning of Jesus is simple and plain, and "he that runneth may read," if he is anxious to do so.

The figure of the vine is not new. It had frequently been used by the Old Testament writers. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, the Psalmist, and others had made frequent use of it. "Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt," says the Psalmist. The prophet Hosea says, "Israel is an empty vine." Usually Israel had been likened by them to a vine. But now Jesus likens himself to the vine, saying: "I am the true vine." It is a pleasing thought to a child of God as he looks upon the beauty and luxuriance of a thrifty vine that it symbolizes Jesus and his people in many particulars. The figure must have been especially beautiful to a people who lived in a country that abounded in vines, whose hillsides were thickly covered with vineyards, whose beauty almost made Judea of that day a paradise to look upon. He who knew how to draw spiritual lessons out of the soil, trees, flowers, sparrows, grass, storms, winds, fields, clouds, earth and heaven, holds up before the world the relation of himself and his church, under the beautiful symbolism of the grape vine. Can we ever gaze upon the vine again without thinking of the True Vine?

It has been conjectured by some that Jesus was on his way from the last supper in the upper room to Gethsemane, and that some vine hanging on the wall of a garden, or house, suggested the figure. Others think his eyes rested on the representation of a vine carved on the city gate. We think this is incorrect. We believe he was still at the table in the upper room, for in

John 18:1 it says, "When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples." This shows that the conversation of Chapters 15, 16, and 17. were carried on in "the upper room."

We have heard of eloquent discourses abounding in figures, tropes, metaphors, etc., to such a degree that the hearers were bewildered and unable to decide where divine truth began and human imagination left off. It was impossible to tell the artificial from the natural flowers of speech. But this is not the case here, for when we have a parable which Jesus not only spoke, but also interpreted, we know we are on solid ground. Let us then lay aside all prejudice and seek to discover just what Jesus means by this beautiful figure of The Vine and The Branches.

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02 -- THE RELATION BETWEEN CHRIST AND CHRISTIANS

"I am the vine. Ye are the branches." -- John 15:5.

Matthew Arnold says that "religion is simply morality touched with emotion." When he said that, he betrayed his ignorance of divine religion. True religion is a life -- the life of God in the soul. Spiritual life is as real as physical life, and as distinct from it as the life principle in a blade of grass from the life of an archangel.

Jesus says his true followers are branches of himself -- the vine. The relation between a branch and its vine is one of life. The branch grows out of the stock of the vine and exists because it is united to it. Severed from the vine, it dies. Jesus says, "without me ye can do nothing." The same sap that courses through the veins of the vine, flows through the branch also.

In like manner the life of Jesus flows through the spiritual nature of the Christian. He is "a partaker of the divine nature." He is born of the Holy Spirit. He is possessed of the same life that Jesus possessed -- not a similar nature, but the same divine nature. Being of the royal family of heaven, he is an heir of God and a joint-heir with Jesus Christ.

There is as much difference between him and the world as between a healthy man and a corpse. "He that believeth on the Son hath life. He that believeth not on the Son hath not life," says St. John. Jesus himself declares "that which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

This truth of "Christ in you," which Paul declares to the Colossians, is "the mystery which hath been hid from the ages and from generations," and is as truly hid from the unsaved world today, as in the days of the past. Heart experience is ridiculed and denied today by formalists as really as in the past.

The world says it is delusion and enthusiasm. Its adherents have been called "mystics," fanatics, etc. It is said, "give us something tangible, something we can see, and not a mere fancy."

To which we reply that the sap is as truly flowing from the vine out into the branches as if it could be seen by the natural eye. The leaves and fruit prove it.

When Bunyan's pilgrim went into the house of the Interpreter (the Holy Spirit), among other wonderful sights, he beheld a fire burning brightly in a fireplace in the wall of the house, notwithstanding the fact that a man was turning water upon it. Unable to understand this phenomenon, he was taken by the Interpreter to the other side of the wall, and there beheld another man turning oil on the same fire. Then he understood how it was that the fire could not be quenched. In the same manner the divine Jesus is in his church, which has passed through persecution and opposition that would have destroyed any other institution long ago.

This is the cause of the triumph of the individual Christian, over trials and all sorts of difficulties. The world looks on in amazement as he lifts his head above the waters in triumph, and fails to understand it. All this is simply because they cannot see the unseen Jesus, who is pouring in the oil of divine life and grace.

Through ignorance of this fact of the divine life, men have sought to manufacture Christians to order in many ways.

Some have attempted it by ordinances. Water baptism has been considered the great Christianizing process by many. But water can never make a saint out of a sinner, no matter how it be applied, and no matter who applies it, be he ever so orthodox or descended ever so directly from the apostles.

We read of Simon in Acts 8:13-23, who was baptized with water by the proper mode, who was yet "in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity." Water never yet made a man a Christian. Unless he repents and God breathes into his soul spiritual life, he simply goes into the water a dry sinner and comes out a wet sinner.

Church membership is thought by many to be all there is in religion. Joining the visible organization will not give the new birth. If it did, a sinner might have many spiritual births, according to the number of churches he chose to join. Some of the worst specimens of hypocrisy with whom Jesus had to deal and whom he had to denounce were church members -- members of the only church existing. A church may be so devoid of spiritual life that its membership roll may resemble the register of a cemetery, showing who lies buried there. No matter how elegant its ritual, how beautiful its architecture, how sweet its music or how gifted its ministry, without divine life it is all like the beautiful monument in the cemetery. The godless world may declare the whole establishment to be on the road to heaven because of its eminent respectability, but without spiritual life it is on the road to hell.

It will be seen, when we understand that true religion is spiritual life, that all human striving to make ourselves Christians is in vain. It is a question of nature.

We hear people sometimes say: "I am trying to be a Christian." We have heard the test put in revival meetings thus: "All who are trying to be Christians, please arise!" What folly! It is of no use for a Hottentot to think to become a Caucasian by trying. This is the unanswerable

question that is asked in the word of God: "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" Men cannot change their physical natures by trying. Much less can they change their spiritual nature by striving. "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit to his stature?" said Jesus.

We once knew an earnest soul who had been seeking the Christian life for several weeks. Every evening we saw her bowed at the altar, but her seeking was in vain. We said to her one evening: "What is the matter with you?"

"I do not know," was the reply. "I have been trying to become a Christian the best I know."

"That is probably the trouble," we said. "If we were you, we would stop trying and let the Lord do it."

"I will," was the answer, in a very decided and abrupt tone of voice. "Do you mean that you will now trust God to make you a Christian and quit trying to do it yourself?"

"Yes," was the reply.

We turned and left her. She left the church. As she passed through the door she received the witness that she was a child of God. One minute of trusting God to make her a Christian was better than years of trying to do it by her own efforts.

If we have nothing more in our nature than we obtained at our first birth we are not Christians, for "that which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." -- John 3: 6.

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03 -- THE PRODUCT OF LIFE -- FRUIT

"Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit." -- John 15:8.

The great object of the vine dresser or husbandman is the production of fruit. For this purpose he plants the vine, waters, enriches, prunes, trains and cleanses it.

The Heavenly Husbandman has the same object in view in his methods with his church and individual Christians. Paul says to the Corinthians: "Ye are God's husbandry." The grace of God was intended not merely to save us "from the wrath to come," but to produce in us "the peaceable fruits of righteousness" -- to develop holy character.

How they have missed the grand purpose of the gospel, who have made it consist only in being "a fire escape" or an "insurance policy."

The common idea of many religionists is to rest satisfied when they think the soul is "saved" from hell. In so doing they have missed the great purpose of God, which is to produce holy living.

The vine bears all its fruit upon the branches. This is a great fact. Jesus is limited in his fruitage in this world to what fruit his followers produce. His limitation is in his church. No one ever saw a bunch of grapes growing on the trunk of a grapevine. The grapes always grow on the branches. All the fruit that Jesus produces in this world is through his church; through just such people as we.

This is a great responsibility. It is also a great privilege. It seems to us that the angels would covet such an opportunity as we have. How gladly they "would yield themselves to become the examples before men and devils of what Jesus Christ can produce in life and character. If we all realized our opportunity and responsibility, what a great sense of the nobility of life would fill our souls. This great idea would make trials appear light and would gild with glory the irksomeness and drudgery of the most uneventful life, and sweeten every bitter cup.

In Galatians 5: 22-23, Paul explains more particularly this fruitage, viz.: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." This verse is almost invariably misquoted, as if it were the plural "fruits," when it is "fruit."

A glance at the only other time Paul speaks of the fruit of the Spirit shows the same thing, viz.: "The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness." -- Eph. 5:9. "The fruit of the Spirit" is one and indivisible. It is not a number of fruits, some of which are found in one life and some in another. If it were plural number, we might suppose that the whole fruitage was not found in any one person, but in different persons. For instance, one person might have love; another joy; another peace, etc. So the man who had no long-suffering might try to excuse himself by saying we do not all have the same fruit.

He who has the fruit of the Spirit has the whole of it. He lacks neither love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness nor temperance. This constitutes the experience of regeneration, a great experience. The man who has it has all the elements of this fruitage. Let no man tell us that we belittle the experience of regeneration. Would that the whole church were living in this delightful experience.

Dr. R. F. Horton says: "We may get at the apostle's meaning concerning the indivisible fruit of the Spirit if we indulge in a little imagery. These nine features mentioned are the qualities of the fruit. Here we have the fruit before us: Love, which is the core, the very heart, of the fruit; Joy is the juice; Peace is the pulp or flesh of the fruit; Long-suffering is the stalk by which it hangs; Goodness or Beneficence is the taste; Gentleness is the scent; and Faith, or rather Faithfulness, or Trustworthiness, is the shape of the fruit; Meekness is the skin; Temperance -- which means the completely balanced moral nature -- may be the color of the fruit. The fruit of the Spirit is a beautiful growth combining all the qualities; we do not find them separate. If there is no joy, the juice is gone, and the fruit is dry and wizened; if no love, the core is gone, and the fruit is destined to be worm-eaten before long. So with each; we cannot separate them. This means that when we receive the Spirit into our hearts, we receive the germ of this fruit. The

Spirit is the root or principle on which the fruit grows, and it grows without any effort of ours to produce it. It becomes our own, simply by receiving it by faith."

It will be noticed, too, that this fruitage is in character rather than works; in states of heart rather than great exploits. Many have misapprehended this point. They have substituted works for fruit. They have supposed fruit was the power to go forth and be great soul savers or mighty preachers, or "Sons of Thunder," or workers of wonders. But all that is works and not fruit. Works are external, but the fruit is internal experience. God has not given everybody the evangelistic gift, the peculiar power to sway large crowds. He has not made everyone a "Son of Thunder" or a worker of miracles. He says that love is greater than all miracle working or gifts of tongues. He does not expect every man to be an apostle, with the special gift of persuasion to immediate decision. But he does call us all to have "love, joy, peace," etc.

We live in a time when a certain boastful glamour has been thrown over deeds, while states of heart have been relegated to the shade. But God is seeking character. It counts more than conquest with him. "He that ruleth his own spirit is greater than he that taketh a city," in his estimation. He declares that he delights to look to that man "who is poor and of a contrite spirit."

Here is the test as to our being really regenerated: Let no one think himself a Christian until he is sure he has this fruitage.

The branch always bears its fruit on that part of itself that grew this year; never on last year's growth. Watch the putting forth of the vine and notice that the blossom and fruit set on the green shoot that came forth this year. Last year's growth has become hard and wooden. It bears no fruit. So we bear all fruit on our fresh experience; not on the moldy past.

We would think, to hear many people talk, that there was a great revival forty years ago and that the Lord had done nothing for them since. They have nothing fresh to talk about. It reminds us of a man we once saw whose only testimony was that the Lord converted him "many years ago in Deacon Beetle's pasture, beside a great rock." He never seemed to get out of Deacon Beetle's pasture. There are many such.

If we had the fruit years ago, that is not enough. Have we it now? Jesus says, "every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away." It must be constant fruit bearing or spiritual death. The branch that does not fruit is cut off.

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04 -- THE PRODUCT OF LIFE -- LEAVES

The branch not only bears fruit, but also leaves. These are necessary to the life of the vine. All thrifty vines are known by their leaves as well as by their fruit.

Jesus rebuked the fig tree not because it had leaves, but because it had nothing else -- no fruit.

The leaves are the lungs of the vine. Through them it inhales certain gases necessary to the life of the plant. Strip off the leaves and the tree, vine or shrub thus denuded will soon die.

In the warm season of the year, when the sap is freely circulating, to find a vine without leaves is to find it dead.

As far as we can see a vine at that time of year, we know it is alive when we see the green branches waving in the breeze, saying, "there is life here." The leaves profess life and are a symbol of the profession, which every live branch of the True Vine makes. Profession is just as reasonable and essential to healthy life as fruit. It is often said that it is inconsistent to talk religion and not possess it. Do the objectors ever stop to think that it is equally inconsistent to have it and not talk it?

The idea of having the best thing in the world and saying nothing about it, when men all about us are dying for the need of it! Such a sentiment is not of God. It is dishonoring to the religion of Jesus, which makes us love all mankind and seek to do them good. The man who has the fruitage of love feels impelled to let it be known. The vine puts out its leaves that those who need the fruit may know where it may be found.

We live in a day when the sentiment, "live your religion, but do not say much about it," is very popular. But it is unScriptural and unphilosophical.

It is unScriptural, for God says: "Ye are my witnesses." Jesus while on earth declared: "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," and Paul says: "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." God has wedded the heart and the mouth, and "what God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." A great controversy is going on over the fact of spiritual life, and it is our business to tell with the mouth and not leave it wholly a matter of inference.

It is unnatural to keep still when good news has been received or some good fortune has reached us. The very telling increases the joy of possession. It is precisely so in the matter of salvation. The grace of God never does violence to this or any of the innocent instincts of the soul.

In fact, it would be very unnatural to keep still about so great a matter as personal salvation. We were once pastor of a church and requested the members who had an experience that they could keep still about to keep quiet until they obtained one they could not keep still about. There is ground for believing that those who make objection to testimony have an experience that they can keep still about.

It is unphilosophical to talk about living religion and saying nothing about it. Is not the talk a great part of the life and the living? Do not people live all the religion they have? Are not many trying to live more than they have, and as a result are having a hard time?

If this world is to be taken for God, it will not be taken by great sermons, but by the testimony of living witnesses.

The enemy of all good would like to have it appear that the strength of Christianity depends upon big sermons. He would like to have it appear that the Christian religion is so difficult to believe that great arguments must be produced every Sunday by the pulpit to induce men to accept it and retain it, and hence this is to be the great business of the minority -- to keep reasoning over the matter.

But the strength of Christianity is in its witnesses. God has called a few to be ordained preachers, but he has called all -- both preachers and laymen -- to be witnesses. He wants every pulpit as well as pew to be a witness box. Testimony in the pulpit is getting to be too rare. Paul said Jesus commissioned him to be both "a minister and a witness."

The witnessing Christian is the strong Christian, and the witnessing church is the winning church. "The gates of hell shall not prevail against" such a church. A so-called church that has no testimony is only a religious club. Woe to the church that allows its class meetings and love feasts and testimony meetings to die out, for it is itself dead! Testimony has always been the invincible weapon of the church. This was the great commission of Jesus to the Pentecostal church: "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost has come upon you and ye shall be witnesses to me." When he said this the outlook was anything but encouraging, for this little band of witnesses. Everything human and devilish was against them. The Jewish churchmen were their bitter enemies. The pagan priesthood were arrayed against them. The scholars and philosophers sneered at them. The secular power persecuted them. The devil hated them. The passions and prejudices of the corrupt heart burned against them. It was under these circumstances that the little band of witnesses went forth against the world.

Men believed their simple story and accepted Jesus as their Saviour, and the number of living witnesses increased. The fires of martyrdom could not quench the voice of their testimony. The more they put them to death the greater the number that arose to take their places, until their very numbers overwhelmed opposition, and in about three centuries the cross of Jesus had triumphed over the throne of Caesars, which ruled the world. The testimony of Jesus had changed the history of the world.

Whenever the men of the church have a like testimony they will be felt similarly again.

Clear testimony from real experience is the mightiest weapon that the Holy Spirit wields in this world. In the last verse of this beautiful chapter Jesus declares that true branches of the vine are leagued with the Holy Spirit in the work of testifying. Notice: "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me; and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning." -- John 15:26-27. The Christian witness is in the same business with the Holy Spirit. They who oppose testimony betray both their own lack of experience and ignorance of the Scriptures.

We are commanded to hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering. We have seen many times the bright light of a locomotive, as its rays swept down the track hundreds of yards ahead. What caused those rays to shoot out so powerfully into the darkness? It was but a

small kerosene lamp. Why so much more powerful than other lamps? Answer: Behind it was a highly polished reflector which gathered up and concentrated and then threw that pathway of light far out into the night.

Just such a reflector is a genuine experience. It gathers up and concentrates and gives the words of testimony their irresistible power that has again and again overthrown the powers of darkness.

Have you both the testimony tongue and the believing heart, or are you expecting people to infer that Jesus has saved you?

Two years after you got well and sound from the attack of typhoid fever, would you tell one similarly sick to infer as to whether you had ever had it and got cured and how? To let people infer in the matter would bring no credit to the physician.

To let people infer as to your salvation brings no credit to the great physician. The trouble is they will not infer. They will say you were naturally good and did not need to have the aid of 'the physician.

Can you not see where the opposition to testimony springs from? The enemy of all good seeks to spike the guns of the church, for it is a principle in both carnal and spiritual warfare to subvert the greatest power of the enemy. There is nothing the devil hates more than real testimony, for it pulls down his kingdom.

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05 -- THE PURGING

"Every branch in me that beareth fruit he purgeth." -- John 15:2.

The Revised Version translates the passage thus: "Every branch in me that beareth fruit he cleanseth."

It is evident to every candid mind that by the term "branch in me," he refers to a Christian, for he says in Verse 5: "Ye are the branches."

It is also evident that the Christians of whom he is talking are fruit-bearers, for he says, "every branch in me that beareth fruit." He is therefore talking about those who had "the love of God shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost;" who had "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," and were possessed of supernatural joy, for love, peace and joy are the fruitage of the Spirit.

It follows, then, that a man may be a Christian and have love, peace and joy imparted by the Holy Spirit and yet need the cleansing. There is no escape from this conclusion. Nor do we believe that candid souls will desire to escape from this conclusion.

It remains, then, to inquire what the figure is and what it signifies.

Some have thought that it refers to the annual pruning of the vine, when all dead and superfluous branches were cut off. But this supposition is evidently incorrect, for Verse 2 clearly speaks of pruning as applied to the backslider, "every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away," and again in Verse 6, "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." Here we see that a Christian may have been in Christ and become unfruitful and be cut off.

Backsliders are pruned away. Christians are to be cleansed.

Other people have thought it referred to clearing the vine of insects, spiders, etc. This is too trivial to need much notice. Who has ever heard of grapevines being so sorely afflicted by vermin as to need any great or special work of clearing them away! If such an operation is ever necessary it is an exceptional case, and not ordinary procedure as here.

Jesus refers to a very common custom among the culturists of the grape of his day. It was called "Bleeding the vine." It became necessary at that time of the year to let out impurities in the sap, so that the fruit would be better.

McClintock and Strong, in their Encyclopedia, under the article, "Vine," say this: "The purging of the vine is effected by making incisions in it with a knife, which requires to be done with great skill and delicacy. In this way the infected sap is drawn off, and the diseased vine, which otherwise would die, is preserved. This is what is called bleeding the vine."

We have among our acquaintances a man who makes a specialty of raising choice fruit. His skill and knowledge of the nature of trees, shrubs and vines has placed him at the front in this particular.

Among many other interesting facts which he told us is the following: In the month of August, when it is exceedingly hot and the grapevine is pumping moisture from the earth in great quantities, by capillary attraction, some days the flow of the sap is so great that the vine fails to properly utilize it. The result is that the superfluous sap is liable to get sour and hurt the fruitage of the vine. It sometimes becomes necessary to make an incision in the branch back of a cluster of grapes to prevent them from rotting.

This fact from Central Illinois is in exact correspondence with the universal custom in Palestine, in our Saviour's time, of "bleeding the vine."

In other words, Jesus here illustrates the work of cleansing the Christian from his sinful nature, which is here likened to sour sap.

This nature is called by several names in the Bible, such as "The Flesh," "Our Old Man," "The Old Leaven," "Sin that dwelleth in me," etc. In theological terms it is called "Depravity," "Carnality," "Inbred Sin," "Original Sin," etc. Paul called those at Corinth who had not become

free from it, "Carnal." In writing to the Galatians he says, "the spirit lusteth against the flesh and the flesh against the spirit, so that ye may not do the things ye would." (Rev. Ver.)

Wherever the Bible speaks of its being cleansed away, it always declares that the work is done in the hearts of Christians and never in recovery from backsliding or in conversion. All works on theology recognize this evil principle as still in the heart of the believer and needing a purgative at some time.

Jesus did not say this in a hap-hazard manner. He was an exact teacher. He meant to teach without doubt that only Christians (fruitbearing branches) are candidates for cleansing from inbred sin.

Adam Clarke says on this passage, "He who brings forth fruit to God's glory, according to his light and power, will have the hindrances taken from his heart, for his very thoughts shall be cleansed by the inspiration of God's spirit." According to Christ, therefore, there is a second washing whereby the heart is purified.

We notice that the act of the husbandman in cleansing the vine was instantaneous. It was not a long drawn out process of years. It was done by one stroke of the knife. A study of all the symbols of cleansing in the Bible will show that it is an instantaneous affair. Circumcision, the type of heart purification, was not a process of years. It was instantaneous. Naaman did not have to remain in Jordan a number of days or years. He was some time getting to the point, but when he arrived, divine power did it at once.

The moment the year of jubilee dawned every slave and debtor was instantaneously set free. The year of jubilee was a type of the salvation wrought by Jesus. When Jesus spoke the leper, clean, "immediately his leprosy was cleansed."

On the day of Pentecost, when their hearts were purified by faith (Acts 15:9), the sacred writer says it occurred "suddenly." We have always been glad since we had an understanding of the matter that it said "suddenly." If it had said gradually, we should not have known how gradually to have expected it.

We can find no place in the Bible where God worked gradually or by a long process in either pardoning or sanctifying a soul. Adam Clarke says: "We are to come to God for an instantaneous and complete purification from all sin, as for instantaneous pardon. In no part of the Scriptures are we directed to seek the remission of sins seriatim -- one now and another then, and so on. Neither in any part are we directed to seek holiness by gradation. Neither a gradation pardon nor a gradation purification exist in the Bible."

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06 -- MORE FRUIT

"He purgeth it that it may bring forth more fruit." -- John 15: 2.

The divine husbandman is not satisfied that we bear fruit; he wants us to bear much fruit. "Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit," said Jesus. In order that we bear much fruit, he desires to purge us that we may "bring forth more fruit."

Consequently after the purging takes place there will be other fruitage besides the "love, joy, peace," etc., of our regenerate life. The great hindrance to the "more fruit" is the sour sap of sin.

We are told what this further fruit is in several verses of John 15. The first is the experience of abiding in Christ.

The great mistake in church effort has been to hold up regeneration as the goal of Christian experience. There seems to be a great effort to get men "saved" and receive them into the church, and then leave them there. Some pastors seem to have a passion for "joiners," without much regard for their welfare after they are "joined."

A good deal of religious effort seems to be like some of the sickly, wishy-washy, cheap literature called "love stories" -- a thousand miles from love -- that have much to say about behavior before marriage. It would be refreshing to have a few books to tell people how to behave after the marriage ceremony. The church is full of people who ought to be told that they have only begun when converted, and that regeneration will never satisfy the longings of the soul, for it is not the standard of Christian life, any more than babyhood is the standard of citizenship. The leading religious editor of the United States once said in a preachers' meeting "a great many ministers are so busy getting sheep into the door of the fold that they fail to see the gap at the other end where as many are getting out."

Bishop Phillips Brooks well said: "As to the nature of the value of the human soul, notice, I beg you, that it is something more than the mere sense of the soul's danger. It is a deliberate estimate set upon man's spiritual nature in view of its possibilities. The danger in which that nature stands by sin intensified and emphasizes the value which we set upon it, but it does not create that value. I think sometimes we are apt to let our anxiety for the salvation of souls degenerate into a mere pity for the misery into which they may be brought by sin; and the result of such a low thought is that when we have been brought to believe that a soul is as we may say 'safe,' that it has been forgiven and will not be punished, we are satisfied. The thought of rescue has monopolized our religion and often crowded out the thought of culture."

It is certain that if we hold up nothing definite for the soul after conversion, that soul will find it difficult to obtain anything definite and will be weak. Wesley says: "How grievously are they mistaken who imagine that as soon as the children are born they need take no more care of them. The chief care then begins." The result of making regeneration an escape from hell, the chief motive of religion, has produced a church of weaklings.

In war a fortress is often captured, the enemy turned out and the whole premises turned over to the use of the victor.

God proposes not merely to snatch the city of Man-soul from the hands of King Diabolus, as John Bunyan puts it, but to make a temple of the captured soul in which He can dwell and we in him. The whole object of the atonement is that we shall become temples of the living God -- cleansed, filled and empowered. Consequently the cleansing of the soul is only another step in the direction in which we started when regenerated. The first of the "more fruit" after sanctification is abiding in him and he in us.

Very much is said about abiding in John 15. "Abide in me and I in you," "He that abideth in me," "If a man abide not in me," "If ye abide in me," "Ye shall abide in my love," are frequent repetitions here used to emphasize its great importance.

The word "abide" means to get somewhere to remain. A man's abode is his headquarters, his domicile. There is a great difference between abiding and visiting. A visit is brief in its duration and comes to an end. Abiding is constant.

There are many of the Lord's dear people who have many delightful visits, but do not have the faculty of continuing in that blessed relation. They are intermittent in their devotions. They do not will or wish it to be so, but in spite of their good resolutions the visit is cut short. We are not slandering anyone, for this is in the hymn book. Many earnest souls have voiced this heart-cry.

"How tedious and tasteless the hours
When Jesus no longer I see.
Sweet prospects, sweet birds and sweet flowers
Have all lost their sweetness to me.
The midsummer sun shines but dim,
The fields strive in vain to look gay,
But when I am happy in him,
December's as pleasant as May."

And then the bewildered soul still farther says:

"Dear Lord, if indeed I am thine;
If thou art my sun and my song,
Say why do I languish and pine,
And why are my winters so long?"

The poet seems to be astonished to think the winters, or the intervals between visits, are long.

The reason for such a state of experience is that the Comforter has not yet come to abide. Every Christian has the spirit in a measure, but while in a regenerate state does not have him in his fullness. This was the experience of the disciples at the very time that Jesus uttered these words. A reference to John 14:17 will show this, "Even the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him, for he dwelleth

with you and shall be in you." Notice, they already knew the Holy Spirit as the world did not. and he already dwelt with them. But he was to be in them in a different sense from ever before.

Why does not the Holy Spirit come to many Christians so that he abides in them and they in him? Because he will not come in until he is allowed to purify the temple. He cannot abide in an unclean habitation. To change the figure the sour sap must be eliminated in order to a constant abiding in him.

This work of getting rid of the carnal mind is called entire sanctification. When this is really accomplished, the soul does not sing:

"I need thee every hour,"

but instead it sings:

"I have thee every hour, most gracious Lord."

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07 -- MORE FRUIT (CONTINUED)

"Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." -- John 15:7.

The scriptural doctrine of prayer is much misunderstood and misrepresented.

Some years ago Prof. Tyndall proposed a prayer test. It was this: That an equal number of sick persons were to be placed in two different wards of a hospital. The patients of one ward were to be prayed for that they might recover. The others were to be left to the skill of physicians and nurses, without any prayer being offered for them.

Such a proposition shows that the great professor was ignorant of the true doctrine of prayer. He but voiced the general widespread misunderstanding on the subject.

The Scripture nowhere teaches that God will unconditionally hear the prayers of all men. The doctrine of prayer has certain conditions and limitations. This is the teaching of the word of God. There are certain people only, whose prayers find audience with him. He refuses to hear all others.

1. We read that "the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination unto the Lord" (Prov. 15:8), and again, "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination" (Prov. 28:9). The Psalmist says: "If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me" (Psalms 66:18). All this shows that it is of no use for impenitent men to pray. God hears the prayer of penitent sinners only-those who forsake sin.

2. Prayer to be successful must be offered at the right time. There is a time when prayer will not be heard. "When once the master of the house is risen up and shut the door, and ye begin

to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us,' and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are."

3. God will not forgive the sins of the unforgiving. "If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt. 6:15).

According to God's word there must be a certain attitude of heart if our prayers are to be heard. It is "the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man that availeth much" (Jas. 5:16).

Then there are certain conditions that must obtain.

1. We must pray in faith. "Whatsoever things ye desire when ye pray believe that ye receive and ye shall have them" (Mark 11:24).

2. Again, we must present our petitions in the name of Jesus if we would be heard. "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (John 14:13). In John 16:23 Jesus says also: "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." To ask in Jesus' name means more than to repeat the words, "for Christ's sake," at the close of our prayers.

When an ambassador goes to the court of St. James in the name of the United States, it means that he is a loyal citizen of that government, qualified to act by their authority, and to represent them for that reason. When a man comes in Jesus' name to the court of heaven, it means that he is loyal to Jesus, in hearty sympathy with Jesus and acting with his authority, because he has come into heart loyalty with Jesus and has the same great love, aim and purpose of life that Jesus had, and therefore Jesus allows him as a friend to use his name in his prayers.

3. Prayer must be unselfish. A grain of selfishness will spoil a prayer. St. James says: "Ye ask, and receive not because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts (Jas. 4:3).

We are quite sure that the reason many prayers are only sounding breath is because the conditions are not fulfilled.

We are quite sure, too, that the above is not the popular notion of the doctrine of prayer. The popular notion seems to be that anyone can drop down anywhere, without heart preparation, and expect answer to any kind of prayer.

All this being true, we come now to consider the experience where our prayers are answered, as indicated by Jesus when he said: "If ye abide in me and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:7).

We have noted in the preceding chapter that the condition of abiding in him is to have the sour sap of sin cleansed out of the heart. When this state is reached we shall pray in the Holy Ghost, for the things God designs to give us.

There will be no discord between our will and the divine will.

When the tuner takes the piano in hand, he seeks to "drive out the wolf." That is, to get rid of the discord and bring harmony. When a soul is really converted, he yields his will to God. He surrenders unconditionally; gives up sin and turns right about face for heaven. But although he has yielded his will, he finds that he sometimes has a struggle to be obedient -- to say, "Thy will be done." He is sometimes governed by "I must" rather than "I want to do it" in the performance of duty.

But when the cleansing of the heart has become a reality, then the discordant element -- the wolf, tiger, bear, serpent and all the cage of unclean animals -- have been cast out. Then the whole nature is in full accord with the will of God. The friction is all gone.

In this state of heart faith becomes mighty. For faith is the power and act of the soul to receive God and his truth. Faith freed from all tendency to doubt is quick to see and hear what God stands ready to give. Faith is here of a double nature. It is that which helps us when we first begin to pray and then it grows as we pray into an insight into the things God intends to give.

"Praying in the Holy Ghost," says St. Jude. This is a remarkable expression. It indicates that we must be in the Spirit to pray spiritual prayers. St. Paul says that the Spirit helps us when we truly pray. "We know not what we should pray for as we ought," but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

The regenerate man, not yet wholly sanctified, often prays against his unbelief, or his tendency to evil words or deeds, or his lack of harmony to the will of God, or his incomplete consecration, and thus hinders his own prayer.

But when sin is cleansed away, he has no hindrances in himself to his prayers. He prays in the Holy Ghost. And it is a common experience to begin prayer with a faith in God's promises that increases and seems to get a wireless dispatch from headquarters that the petition is granted, and he believes because he abides in Jesus, who has given advance information of what is coming.

This is the faith that Jesus gives only to those who are his most intimate friends -- who abide in him. Andrew Murray, in his great book, "With Christ," says: "It is in prayer that these 'all things' are to be brought to God, to be asked and received of him. The faith that receives them is the fruit of prayer. In one aspect there must be faith before there can be prayer; in another, the faith is the outcome and growth of prayer. It is in the personal presence of the Saviour, in intercourse with him, that faith rises to grasp what at first appeared too high."

True abiding means true praying, helped and led by the Spirit who inspires the faith that gets its desire. And no man can pray thus until his heart is pure.

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08 -- MORE FRUIT (CONTINUED)

"That my joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full" -- John 15:11.

The joy of doing good is great; but the joy of being good is greater. One is the joy of works; the other of fruitage; of character. God might have caused the earth to bring forth seed for the sower and bread for the eater without a blossom to delight the eye with its beauty or to please with its fragrance. But he has seen fit to give us the flowery spring, with its beauty and fragrance, as well as the golden autumn, with its fruits.

Just so in religion, his goodness does not stop with saving us from sin and hell. He gives us joy on our way to heaven. His grace not only saves from future woe, but he throws in joy as a bonus.

Many do not seem to appreciate this part of religion. They seem to think that religion is nothing but a fire escape, in which we must live, with no joy except the joy of self-congratulation that we have escaped hell, with an expectation of going to heaven through a vale of tears.

This is not the doctrine of the Bible. It everywhere tells of a "joy unspeakable and full of glory." The Psalmist speaks of a supernatural joy above all the fading joys of the world. "Thou hast put gladness in my heart more than in the time that their corn and wine increased" (Psalms 4:7). Paul enjoins, "Rejoice evermore." Says the sainted McCheyne: "Some people are afraid of anything like joy in religion. They have none themselves, and they do not love to see it in others. Their religion is like the stars, very high, and clear, but very cold. When they see tears of anxiety, or tears of joy, they cry out, Enthusiasm, enthusiasm! 'I sat down under his shadow with great delight.' Is this enthusiasm? 'May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing.' If it be really in sitting under the shadow of Christ, let there be no bounds to our joy. Oh! if God would but open our eyes and give us simple childlike faith to look to Jesus, to sit under his shadow, then would songs of joy arise from all our dwellings."

In our boyhood we had a dear old pastor who was a good man, but we think mistaken on this very point. We remember to have heard him say: "Brethren, it is not possible to sing the hymn truthfully,

"He taught me how to watch and pray,
And live rejoicing every day."

So he mended the hymn and sang it thus:

"He taught me how to watch and pray,
And live religion every day."

His reason for this was that there are dark days of trial and temptation, when we cannot rejoice.

We have no objection to the hymn as mended if the right construction be put on the term "religion." To live the real religion of Jesus is to rejoice every day -- to "Rejoice evermore." No

Christian is in darkness. "If we say we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth" (I John 1:6).

Many make no distinction between heaviness and darkness. There is a great difference. Peter says: "Ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in 'heaviness through manifold temptations" (I Pet. 1:6). We may rejoice even then. And St. James says: "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations" (Jas. 1:2). The most trying day a true Christian saw, he could rejoice in God when he could not find occasion for rejoicing in anything else.

This was the experience of Habakkuk. When the crops had all failed and the flocks and herds were dying and it looked as if only starvation awaited him, he said: "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls, yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

Anyone can rejoice when everything goes right, if they have no religion. But it requires the supernatural religion of Jesus Christ to enable us to rejoice when things do not go right. Paul says: "In everything give thanks." He does not say FOR everything give thanks. There are evil things all about us that we see every day which we are not required to be thankful for, but we can rejoice and be thankful in spite of them.

We once heard an illustration of this point given under peculiar circumstances. A Quaker was giving his personal experience in a lovefeast. He said: "God is putting a wonderful joy into my soul. But at the same time I am passing through the greatest trial of my life. My only son is in jail as a common drunkard. On the one hand my heart is broken. On the other, God is giving me wonderful joy in him."

A Pharisee arose and said: "I cannot see how a man can rejoice under such circumstances."

The good Quaker arose to explain and said: "Sometimes people dig a well. They go down only until they come to surface water and stop there. The well is all right until there comes a drought, and then it dries up. Others, when they dig a well, go down below surface water until they reach a water vein. When a season of drought comes they do not suffer any for lack of water, for they are not affected by the conditions on the surface. Some people have only a surface joy. It depends on surroundings and circumstances. Others go down deep and strike the flowing well experience of which Jesus speaks in John 5:4."

Madame Guyon, who spent a good deal of her time in prison for Jesus' sake, and suffered much persecution, says:

"My Lord, how full of sweet content
I pass my years of banishment.
Where'er I dwell, I dwell with thee,
At home, abroad, or on the sea."

This joy of the spirit is a debt we owe not only to ourselves but to the world about us.

Everywhere we go we are surrounded by a sorrowing, unsatisfied, heartsick world, that is seeking joy in every direction and finding it not. We owe it to them to furnish evidences that Christ can bind up the wounds of the soul and pour in the oil of joy.

We must make the world see that the religion of Jesus Christ is something more than a good thing. Many rate it with the institutions of the world. They say religion is a good thing; so is the lodge, the social organization, the club, etc. We must make the world see that true religion is more than a good thing. It is the best thing; the essential thing; that which men must have. to be happy in this world and in the world to come. And in no way can we make them believe it as we can by an exhibition of genuine holy joy.

Genuine salvation is a wonderful smother of the face and tongue. God never intended religion to make men gloomy.

Man is the only animal that laughs. And God has given the man who has salvation the only thing worth laughing about. Holy laughter is as much a means of grace as song or prayer or other ways in which the Spirit manifests himself through human nature.

A genuine shout welling up from the inmost soul will produce more conviction among sinners than a torrent of denunciation mixed with fire and brimstone.

The Psalmist tells us how it worked in his day, as follows: "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing." He goes on in the next sentence to tell the results: "Then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them." It works that way today. The world will surrender only to that kind of a religion. The devil cannot stand before it. So he does all he can to make it unpopular. We owe this manifestation of joy to the world. A joyful religion is a winning religion.

But there are souls who rejoice with trembling. Their joy is intermittent. They often try to force it, because their joy is not full. Their cup does not run over. So they try to make it run over by tipping it. They try to work themselves up into an ecstasy sometimes. A spoonful of water can be spilled out of a great measure, if the latter is tipped enough. It takes a full cup to run over. An overflowing heart runs over spontaneously.

The reason their joy is not spontaneous and constant is because of the sour sap -- inbred sin. If they feel like rejoicing in the Lord, they do not have the confidence to do it. If God wants to put a shout into their hearts and out through their lips, they remember the dry spell they had for weeks previous, and have no courage in the matter, and joy soon dies down for lack of expression.

Notice that this is the point of the whole parable; the reason it was spoken. Jesus wanted to have a band of joyful followers, therefore he speaks of the vine, the branches and the purging. "These things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you and that your joy might

be full" (John 15:11). With the removal of inbred sin by the "purging," they were to have this constant joy and cease from intermittent, "up and down" seasons of joy. The so-called "up and down experience" is occasioned by the presence of indwelling sin. Free from that, our joy will be full. And no Christian can fulfill the apostolic injunction to "rejoice evermore" until he is purified from all sin.

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09 -- MORE FRUIT (CONCLUDED)

"And that your fruit should remain." -- John 15:16.

We have had occasion in a preceding chapter to note the frequency of the idea of "abiding" in our Lord's discourse concerning the vine. We notice some other instances of his use of the term.. In Verse 9 he says: "Continue ye in my love." The word "continue" is the translation of the same Greek word, translated "abide" in the other verses. In Verse 10 he says: "If ye keep my commandments ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love." In Verse 16 we read: "That ye should go and bring forth fruit and that your fruit should remain." In this verse the same word is rendered "remain." This whole parable is full of "abide," "continue," "remain" -- different meanings of the same Greek verb. The parable may therefore be well named "The Abiding Parable."

In the verse before us we see outlined the two experiences of grace -- regeneration and entire sanctification. "Ye should go and bring forth fruit." This is the experience of regeneration. "And that your fruit should remain." This is the result of the experience of entire sanctification. Every regenerate soul brings forth fruit, but a great deal of it does not keep.

If we study scripture carefully we shall see taught these two degrees of grace as regards our fruit.

As regards love: "When regenerated the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost," because we are born of God. But this love is antagonized by a certain condition of heart. This often puzzles the convert who loves God and yet feels that he does not love him as he should or his neighbor as he ought.

This mysterious, perplexing something that antagonizes divine love, we have been denominating as the "sour sap," is called by Paul "the flesh," "our old man," "the carnal mind," etc. It hinders our love from being perfect and often spoils it entirely for the time being when we are under great pressure or sudden temptation.

The love of many will not keep through wash day. The prayer meeting glow is dampened by having to eat a cold dinner. The zeal of love goes into a decline because of evil treatment of others. So love is hindered and imperfect.

But the word of God not only speaks of love, but of perfect love. "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment" (I John 4:17) Again he says:

"Perfect love casteth out fear" (Verse 18). We have therefore the two degrees -- love and perfect love, which is love remaining, abiding, constant and pure.

So, too, of joy. It is one of the many characteristics of the fruit of the spirit, possessed by every child of God. But we showed in the previous chapter it is not "full" while the heart is uncleansed. It comes and goes. It does not constantly abide.

Two degrees of peace are also mentioned in the word of God. Every Christian has peace. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1). But the word also speaks of "perfect peace." "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee" (Isa. 26:3).

Some people have peace all the time except when there is something that disturbs it. Some have peace except when some one says something they do not like. Then their peace is disturbed and they sometimes lose it. The reason they lost it was because it was not perfect. It was diseased. They need to get rid of the sour sap in order to have perfect peace -- to become so anchored in God that nothing can disturb them.

This was the experience of the Psalmist. He declares: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed."

Again, long-suffering is another characteristic of the regenerate life. Every true Christian is of such a nature. He bears and forbears. This is the victory of grace over human nature.

But the apostle speaks of a higher degree of long-suffering. He says in Colossians 1:11: "Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness." Long-suffering is one experience and long-suffering with joyfulness is quite another.

Most people think it a mark of great grace to suffer and not whine or grow fretful. But it is long-suffering come to perfection when we can be joyful at the same time. No man can do this until he gets rid of the sour sap. Then "patience has her perfect work" and we become "perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

And so on, through the list of the fruitage of the Spirit, the indwelling sin taints the fruit and sours it. We think this is what Paul meant when he said: "Purge out the old leaven" (I Cor. 5:7). If this fruit is to remain, "must go through some process to take out the evil principle that causes decay and rot.

This is what has to be done in the natural world. No fruit will remain long unless something is done to destroy the germs of corruption that are in it and to keep others from entering.

If there were no scriptural teaching on the subject of indwelling sin, we would almost be led to believe in it, because we notice that an antagonistic element exists everywhere in every fruit and flower, and even our own bodies.

The great effort not only of the housewife but everybody else in this world is to keep things fresh and clean and free from decay.

The process of preserving the fruit of the Spirit is not dissimilar to some of the processes of preserving the fruit of nature. It is dissimilar to some others.

For instance, some things are put up in vinegar. How sour they are! Some Christians seem to be preserved in vinegar.

Another way to preserve things is to keep them on ice. Dead things only are kept that way. Some churches seem preserved on ice. They never have any trouble. They are united, because frozen together.

Still another way of preservation is by fire and sugar. The housewife cuts out all the bad matter visible to the eye as she prepares the fruit. Then, in order to kill whatever corruption is remaining and invisible, she puts it over the fire until the evil germs have been destroyed. Then she stirs in sugar, "pound for pound, that it may keep the year around."

This is a good illustration of the divine method of preserving the fruitage of the Spirit. We read in Galatians 5:17: "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and they are contrary the one to the other; that ye may not do the things that ye would" (Revised Version). The struggle which is here mentioned can take place only in the experience of a regenerate man, for unsaved men have not the Spirit (Jude 19).

The "flesh" is the disturbing element in the regenerate man. It poisons his love, blights his joy, disturbs his peace, sours his long-suffering, interferes with his gentleness, taints his goodness, weakens his faith, runs his meekness and antagonizes his temperance (or self-restraint). It requires a struggle to keep the fruit at all, and the unhappy victim often gets tired of the struggle and allows the fruit to spoil on his hands, feeling it is too great a struggle to keep up the contest.

The divine method of relief is twofold.

1. He sends fire to destroy the flesh, the evil germ. This is all provided for where John the Baptist declared of Jesus: "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and fire." Here fire symbolizes the work done in destroying sin.

2. The filling of the Spirit. This is genuine "sugar cure." Hence the experience of entire sanctification is often called "Perfect Love," in the word of God.

The soul is embalmed in the sweetness of divine love. This is a far different experience from being "sugar-coated." Some people are like sugar-coated medicine, very sweet on the outside, but, O! the bitterness within! At church, in society, they are sweet, but at home they are bitter indeed. Sugar coating is all on the outside. "Sugar-cured" strikes clear through. And this latter condition is the result of the fire and sugar process.

Then we can keep all the year around under all conditions.

We have known fruit that had to be scalded over frequently because the germs had not been destroyed. We have known Christians who had to be fixed over at every winter's protracted meeting or every camp meeting. The evil germ had not been killed. Let us all get the "sugar cure."

* * * * *

10 -- WHEN?

"He purgeth." -- John 15: 2.

There has always been a controversy over the doctrine of cleansing from inbred sin. The controversy is not a small one in our day, by any means. Books and papers, periodicals, tracts and pamphlets by the thousands have been published in this contest. Sermons, arguments and testimonies are heard in every quarter.

Criticism, ostracism, wit and sarcasm have all been employed. Mr. Wesley says in a letter to Hester Ann Rogers [H. A. Rogers' Journal, p. 177.]: "Those who love God with all the heart must expect much opposition from professors who have gone on for twenty years in an old beaten track and fancy they are wiser than all the world. These always oppose the work of sanctification most."

Says Bishop Peck: "There is opposition to holiness of which its professors must become the direct objects."

All this might brand holiness as a dangerous doctrine. But we must remember that spiritual religion has always met with opposition in every age of the world. It is only worldly religion that is never opposed. "The offense of the cross" will never cease as long as "the carnal mind" exists.

In every generation this battle has been waged over spiritual religion. The focal point has not always been the same, but it has always been somewhere. In Jesus' day it was over his deity. In Paul's day it was over Jesus' resurrection. In Luther's day it was over justifying grace. In Wesley's day it was over the doctrine that we may know our sins forgiven. In our day it is over the doctrine that his blood "cleanseth from all sin."

There is no controversy over any other doctrine. "The contest of the ages" now rages over this. Those who might hold aloof because of the opposition ought to remember that this battle of spirituality will go on after we are dead, and must, from the nature of things. We are called to battle for the truth.

Our business is to find which side the devil is on, and then take the other side. We are commanded to "Earnestly contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints" (Rev.

Version). "All they that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (II Tim. 3:12). To shrink from this doctrine and experience because there is opposition is both weak and cowardly and brands us as unworthy to be the successors of that immortal company of the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, "of whom the world was not worthy," "who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens." When we hear ministers utterly ignoring the question as to whether holiness is right or wrong, say they let it alone because it makes trouble, we almost feel ashamed of our calling.

We have dwelt at some length on this question of controversy to make more emphatic this astonishing fact, namely: All the controversy on this question is over the time when the work of cleansing takes place.

All denominations of Christians believe we must be free from all sin in order to enter heaven. There is no controversy -- absolutely none -- on this point.

Since purity of heart is a necessity if we want to gain heaven, this becomes a question of the most tremendous and far-reaching consequences. There is no question so important. We cannot see how any serious-minded man can sneer at those who emphasize such a question or call them "Specialists," "One Idea People" and "Fanatics." According to the laws of common sense this is the question of all questions: "How shall I be fitted to live with a holy God and holy angels?" No serious-minded person will be satisfied until he knows just what the Scriptures teach on this momentous theme of when we may have this meetness "to be partakers of the inheritance with the saints in light."

We ought not to be swayed by our prejudices or warped by our theology and biased by our sinful hearts, or influenced by what others say, but seek to know what God has revealed as to the time when he is willing to purify our hearts.

Candid men whose eyes have been opened to the tremendous import of this question will not rest until they know what God says about it.

There are four principal theories among Protestants as to when the heart may be purified. We say among Protestants, for Catholicism teaches the purification of the soul after death. Protestantism teaches soul purification before or in the article of death.

1. The theory that the heart is made pure in regeneration. There are many advocates of this theory.

We cannot accept it for several reasons. 1. It makes superfluous and meaningless much of the Bible. All the commands of the Bible to holiness are addressed to Christians -- not one to unconverted people. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). "Having these promises dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit" (II Cor. 7:1). "Be filled with the spirit" (Eph. 5:18). "For this is the will of God even your sanctification" (I Thess. 4: 3). "For God hath not called us unto uncleanness but

unto holiness" (I Thess. 4:7). "Wherefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection" (Heb. 6:1). "Lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset you" (Heb. 12:1).

"Follow peace with all men and holiness without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). "Cleanse your hands ye sinners and purify your hearts ye double-minded" (Jas. 4:8). "As obedient children" (not sinners), "not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance; but as he who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written be ye holy; for I am holy," are examples, and the chief, if not all, of the commands to holiness in the New Testament -- and are all addressed to the children of God.

Any candid man of ordinary intelligence will see by reading his Bible that all these and every other command to holiness in the Bible that we have not quoted are commands to the people of God. And not one can be found addressed to a sinner.

2. The Scripture tells us of some who were true children of God who were not cleansed from all sin. In I. Cor. 3:1, St. Paul says: "And I, brethren, could not write unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ." Again in Verse 3 he says: "For ye are yet carnal." Notice they were "brethren." They were "babes in Christ." In Chapter 1, Verse 2, he says he is writing the epistle to "the church of God which is at Corinth."

We believe Paul was a good judge as to their spiritual condition, and that they were regenerated men. Yet they had the element of carnality, and therefore needed the cleansing.

Here surely were genuine Christians who were not entirely cleansed when "converted."

3. The prayers for cleansing in the Bible are always on behalf of regenerate people.

"The very God of peace sanctify you wholly" was the prayer for people whom he calls "The Church of the Thessalonians," a church so stable in the faith and enjoyment of salvation that he calls them "ensamples," and says they were his "hope" and "joy" and "crown of rejoicing." (Read I Thess., Chapters I and II) He was not praying here that unsaved men might be sanctified wholly, but that saved men might be sanctified wholly.

Jesus' declaration that the candidates for the purging are "branches" in him, therefore, is in harmony with all the Scriptures. "Every branch in me," he says. Certainly he was not talking about sinners, but about those who had divine life. "That beareth fruit." Certainly that means a living Christian, not a backslider. Some people say that "the second work" is all a mistake and that the people who profess a clean heart as a second work of grace were simply backsliders returning to God. But Jesus says: "He cleanseth" branches now bearing fruit. To argue with people who will make a stand here is useless.

Some years ago somebody wrote Mr. Spurgeon a letter inquiring the meaning of a certain passage of Scripture. Mr. Spurgeon replied, quoting the passage: "It means just what it says. Yours truly, Charles Spurgeon." That is the case with this saying of Jesus. It means just what it says: "Every branch in me that beareth fruit, he purgeth it."

Another theory is that we are not purified at conversion, but we grow into it by degrees. This is a very popular notion. It is very pleasing to the carnal nature. Our Unitarian friends have been great champions of the development idea, although they deny the sinful nature. Many in orthodox churches have really gone over to them in embracing this notion of purification by growth.

One may now hear the changes rung on "character building," "development" and "evolution" in "evangelical pulpits" that rarely ever make any positive statements as to what divine power can accomplish in a trusting heart.

We cannot accept this theory of eradication by growth for certain very good reasons.

1. Nobody ever claims to have been purified by growth. Those who contend for it never witness it in their own experience. They make us think of a medicine peddler who extolled the virtues of a certain remedy, but who knew nothing about it experimentally. We have yet to hear of anyone who ever was purified by growth. There are many who have this theory, but do not claim to have experienced heart purity. Nor have they ever produced a single witness to heart purity by growth.

The question of a pure heart is most important. It is no secondary matter. It has to do with our admission to heaven. It is such a serious matter that we ought to be most certain that we are seeking it in the right manner. We may be mistaken on every other question and get to heaven, but mistake here is most serious. We cannot afford to be mistaken here. We must therefore not go by our prejudices or opinions, or the dictates of "the carnal mind," but by the word of God, which nowhere teaches that we outgrow sin.

There is no ground for the growth theory in the parable of Jesus. Notice, it is not a growth from within, but an act from an outside agent. "He purgeth." We delight in the modern "Holiness movement" because it gives glory to Him, our Heavenly Father.

Let others delight in naturalism, evolution, development, education and all the other efforts in which "the old man" delights and carnal professors seek to bring the glory to themselves, but we delight in this faith method which trusts him and gives the glory to Him.

The late Daniel Curry once said that the modern idea seems to be "Having been justified by faith, we can go on and finish the work by our own efforts." This is entirely foreign to Paul's scheme of salvation, which is: "Not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."

2. People who have been growing all their lives are poor illustrations of the growth theory to remove sin. One of the saddest sights is to see an aged unsanctified Christian whose habits of life have become confirmed. The old temper has not been outgrown. It flashes out as it did generations ago. Willfulness and selfishness crop out as in the days of yore. Vanity -- that can be soothed only by flattery -- betrays itself. Many an advocate of the growth theory is a poor example of his talk of years. Who can gainsay these facts?

"Every branch in me that beareth fruit" he does not have to outgrow its impurity, but "he cleanseth it," by letting out at once the sour sap of sin.

Another theory is that we cannot be purified from sin until death. There are many who hold this view and really believe there is no relief for them. They really believe that God either is unwilling or unable to do it in this life.

If he is unable, then he is not almighty. Who will dare say it! If he is unwilling, then he must be pleased to have sin in us. And if he is pleased to have sin in us, then he is pleased with sin. There can be no escape from this conclusion.

If it be true that he is willing to have in us a trend towards sin, then it ought to be preached. The truth of the situation ought to be preached. But such preaching is not in harmony with and would sound contradictory and incongruous with such passages as "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth from all sin," "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil," "Wherefore Jesus that he might sanctify the people with his own blood suffered without the gate," etc., etc.

Jesus in the parable does not intimate that the branches have to die in order to be purified. He declares that "He purgeth it that it may bring forth more fruit." It could not bring forth more fruit if it were destroyed. He does not say "He destroyeth it" in order that it may bring forth more fruit.

Much of the latter day piety is of the sickly, sentimental kind that we used to find in Sunday school books which killed off the good boys. We used to read about the good little boys -- too good for this world -- who died of quick consumption and went to heaven, until we embraced the idea that it was unhealthy to be very good and that it meant an untimely end.

We meet people who have the same idea. We have heard them say: "If I should become holy, I would be too good for this world. I should go right up to heaven." It seems, therefore, that such people are afraid of going to heaven.

But Jesus did not look at it in that light. He said: "I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil" (John 17:15). He thought that they could stay in the world and be kept from sin.

Zacharias, filled with the Holy Ghost, declared that this was the purpose of Jesus in coming to the world: "That we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life" (Luke 1:74-75). This certainly means purification before death.

We grant that God can and does purify many honest souls in the hour of death, who never saw their privilege and duty before. John Wesley says this is the secret of the wondrously triumphant death bed of many of those who have never sought and obtained this grace, but what God did for them he could and would have done before, had they fulfilled the conditions.

The incongruity of this notion reminds us of a professor in a medical college who had a favorite hobby that all disease is caused by an inflammation. He dissected a corpse in the presence of his students. But no trace of inflammation could be found. But he had an excuse for his hobby by saying: "After all, young gentlemen, my theory is true, for this man died, cured."

There seems to be a good deal of the same reasoning as regards the disease of sin and its cure. Many seem to think the way to cure it is to die. This might be true if sin were in the flesh, bone, nerve, tissue or hair. But as it is not in the body, the life of the body has nothing to do with its cure.

Many Protestants take the same view as the Catholics, that no one is a saint until after he is dead. This is not true, for God speaks of his saints and tells who they are. "Gather my saints together unto me; those who have made a covenant with me by sacrifice" (Psalms 50:5).

It is very singular upon what few alleged scriptural proofs advocates of the death theory base it.

The Westminster Catechism gives only one proof text for its assertion that the souls of believers are perfected in the article of death. It is this: "The spirits of just men made perfect" (Heb. 12:23). But this scripture says nothing whatever about the time when this is accomplished. Catholics could use the same text to prove the doctrine of Purgatory. It is singular that in the face of so many other passages that urge, pray and promise it in the present life, men should have rested their hopes of purity on one obscure passage like this. We suppose it was the best they could do.

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11 -- ACCORDING TO YOUR FAITH

We have discussed all (save one) of the principal theories held by Protestants, on the subject of holiness.

It now remains to speak of the theory that God can and does whenever faith reaches up to it, cleanse the heart instantaneously from sin.

Some years ago a very wicked man was converted under our ministry. He had a violent temper, and when angry was exceedingly profane. After conversion his profanity of course ceased.

Some years later we met him and began to tell him of his privilege to be cleansed from the sinful trend of his nature. For some time he failed to comprehend us.

Finally a new light seemed to break in on him. As his face lighted up, he exclaimed: "Oh, I see it now. I used to swear when my workmen did not please me. I do not swear any more, but I have to struggle sometimes to keep from it. If I only had the faith, God could save me from this

temper that I have to struggle with." He apprehended the great truth that Jesus gave out to the world: "According to your faith be it unto you." There is nothing (next to love) greater than faith in this world.

There is nothing that pleases God more than absolute confidence in his ability and willingness to perform all that he has promised.

There never was a true Christian who did not mourn over and pray against the sinward trend of his nature. Or, in other words, there never was a true Christian who did not pray for a clean heart. The new life in him wrought by the Spirit prompts him to pray against that part of his nature not in harmony with that new life. It is impossible to be a Christian and not pray for a pure heart.

The Holy Spirit is the inspirer of true prayer. And what he inspires us to pray for, he wants to give us, when we truly trust him.

Imagine a genuinely contented soul, hungry for the fullness, sick of his besetting sin. He has never heard a sermon on holiness or known of a person who professed it.

But he feels a something within, he cannot define it, that springs up and prompts him to think thoughts that he hates, or do things he abhors, or to say words that are improper. He sometimes gets overcome by this inward principle so that he gives way, and then he is conscience-smitten and cries to God to forgive him.

He gets tired of such an experience and begins to cry to God in distress and asks him if there is no relief from this inward difficulty, and asks him if this is the best he can do for a soul in this life.

He prays fervently and reads the Bible carefully. He comes to this passage: "My God shall supply all your need" (Phil. 4:19). This encourages him. A few days later he reads: "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God, by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25). His courage rises higher. Hope begins to grow brighter.

Under the light of the Spirit's teaching he cries: "It is so! I see it! God is no respecter of persons. What he did for the early church he is ready to do for the church now, if they believe. I remember Jesus said, 'Whatsoever things ye desire when ye pray, believe ye receive and ye shall have them.' Lord, I believe! Lord, I have read, 'Reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin,' now I reckon myself dead indeed unto sin. Lord, I have read, 'Present your bodies a living sacrifice.' I do now entirely yield my being to thee. I pray the prayers I find in thine own word, 'Create in me a clean heart.' I do trust thee now to do it."

A peace fills his heart such as he never knew before. The fire has fallen from heaven. His face shines so that the neighbors notice it and wish they were like him.

Life goes on as never before. He has as many and perhaps more trials than ever. But they no longer ruffle the inward peace. He no more feels the inward uprising. His prayers have a new unction. There is a ring of victory in his testimony unheard before.

One Sabbath he hears his first sermon on holiness. It strikes him just right. His heart responds to the truth, and he says: "That is my experience. I never heard it preached before, but I got it some time ago. Since that hour in which I yielded wholly to God I have had constant victory."

This in its essential feature is no fancy sketch. Thousands have come into this experience on the line of their needs, without any human teacher. If anyone had told them that the second crisis in their experience was entire sanctification they would have been horrified.

Their idea of holiness was a state where we cannot be tempted, or cannot sin or make any mistakes. These are the bugaboos which the enemy of all good holds up before the people of God to frighten them out of their inheritance.

The Spirit of God leads many people who are sincerely panting for more of the mind of Christ past all these misconceptions into the land of Canaan in this life.

It was not fanaticism, nor the persuasion of men, nor a hobby, but the word of God applied by the Spirit to a hungry soul, who knew no better than to trust God for a recognized need. What is the character of him who would criticize or blame such a soul?

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THE END