

Chapter 33: The Lesson of the Bradford Pear Trees

Life Application Verses:

John 15: 1-17. **1** “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. **2** Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every *branch* that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. **3** You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. **4** Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither *can* you unless you abide in Me. **5** I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. **6** If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. **7** If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. **8** My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and *so* prove to be My disciples. **9** Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. **10** If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. **11** These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and *that* your joy may be made full. **12** “This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. **13** Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. **14** You are My friends if you do what I command you. **15** No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. **16** You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. **17** This I command you, that you love one another.

The first of this week (actual day, month, and year not vital to this chapter), our Bradford Pear trees had grown so low to the ground, they were actually blocking out the sun. As a result, the grass beneath the trees was beginning to thin and look pale in comparison to the healthy grass. So, I got out in the 95 degree weather and with the electric chainsaw, set about to raise the canopy of the trees. I was told that this would help the grass *and* the trees. I suppose I was sentimental about those familiar trees because they were over 20 years old and had never been cut or pruned before—except for some very small ‘limblets.’

This morning (actual day, month, and year not vital to this chapter), as I was loading my stuff into the car for work, I looked at the limbs that I had pruned from the trees. Seeing those fertile limbs, now brown and withered, actually made me feel a little sadness. You might be wondering why? I’m glad you asked because it helps me feel better about what I did to those beautiful trees! I felt



sadness because it was my chainsaw that ‘buzzed’ those limbs clean-off those strong Bradford Pear trees. Two days ago, those limbs and their leaves were strong, attached, vibrantly green, and still growing; now, they were by the curb, turning brown, drying up, and ... yes, dead! ☹️ My sadness was that I had done this to these limbs and those healthy green leaves. Then God gave me a lesson that He wanted me (and all of us) to learn.

By necessity, and as unpleasant as it was, I needed to prune those limbs to salvage the grass and the trees. It was a *very* fruitful tree and its branches were exceptionally productive; yet, it was necessary. In the Life Application Verses, Jesus tells us that God is the Master Gardener of our world and lives. Jesus further explains that if a branch is not producing fruit, God will remove those branches from the vine. However, “every branch that does bear fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.” And, “If you do not remain in Me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers.” The words of Jesus are what I saw when I looked at those brown and withered Bradford Pear tree limbs. I saw what Jesus meant as clearly as anything I had ever experienced. I saw my life and my relationship to God in Christ. In essence, I visually witnessed what my disobedience “looked like” to God. It made me realize that through His eyes, our falling away or disobedience is not a pretty sight.

Those limbs, so withered and hopeless and destined for destruction, were just like me at various times in my life. I was Heavenly Minded because God granted me Salvation at 11 years of age; yet, He never let go of me, even when I was rebellious. His Love was always available as was His help, if I would only ask. But I was being Earthly Good, as I defined it! My Bible collected dust, my prayer life was much like, ‘come to my rescue in my foolishness’, and when trouble did find me, it was, “God, please help me get better or help this pain go away.” When I recovered, I was off at ‘light speed’ to the next event where I would call on Him when the pain or troubles once again set in. I was one of those Bradford Pear tree limbs! I was drying up—but not severed from the vine—withering, and working towards self-destruction. Do you know anybody like this? Have **you** ever been in this sort of situation? Maybe once or more than once? When we leave God’s Vine of Love, Prayer, and Truth, we become precisely like those Bradford Pear tree limbs—withered. We aren’t removed from the vine as born-again Christians, yet the Love of God is always within the reach of Confession, Repentance, and Prayer. You can see it in the

lives of Christians—their smiles are frowns, their joy is in the minus column, and life has become a rote exercise in simply existing.



Compared to those limbs on the Bradford Pear trees, let's magnify the concept. God created General Sherman (left image), one of the largest giant sequoias in the world. It rises to a height of 275 feet (84 meters), has a 102 foot (31 meter) circumference, and weighs an incredible 2.7 million pounds (1.2 million kilograms). God also created Hyperion (right image), a giant of a Redwood which is the tallest tree in the world. It tops out at 379.7 feet (115.7 meters), with a diameter of \pm 24 feet. These two trees were made by the Hand of God. If one of the branches were to be damaged so that that the nutrients no longer flowed from the tree to the branches, it would turn brown and eventually fall to the ground. The point here is that if you again review the Life Application Verses, particularly v5, you will see that these massive trees symbolize what Jesus is to us: "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing." Without Jesus, no matter what we accomplish, it will be for naught. Without God, in Christ Jesus, our lifeline is missing. Think of it this way:



Take any natural thing that grows on

Earth. Keep water and sun from the item and what happens to it? It wilts, falls over, looks like it will not survive much longer, its blooms begin to show signs of stress, and eventually, it dies. Now, remember that this book is for we ordinary Christians, I don't know about you, but, I've been to the valley where I wilted, fell over, looked like I would not survive much longer, my blooms began to show signs of stress, and ... at the end of my rope, God threw me a life preserver. That's how I think of it; now, let me caution you about something. I don't think that if I had continued to simply go my own way, day-after-day, month-after-month, year-after-year, decade-after-decade, and perpetually ignored God's calling and warnings, that God would have forever persisted after me. I think that at some point, He would have said something to the effect, "Ken, Hear Me: I have been patient with you, I have offered you My Love in Jesus, I have given you so many blessings, and you still walk in disobedience to me. Apart from Me you can do nothing; you believe in My Son, yet you continue to dabble with a sinful attitude. This cannot continue. Listen to the words of My Son in John 15: 1-17. Heed their warning." Then, I went through a physical issue that caused me to consider that I would not be long on this Earth. With every fiber of my being, I believe that what I just quoted was what God was saying to me and He gave this illness to get my attention one final time. Jesus is the vine, we are the branches, and our fruit must be acceptable to God.

There's no grey area here folks! We can't continue to call on the name of God Sunday, and on Monday be out drinking, partying, and cussing like Sailors. We must remember that our Christianity is not a one-day event—it is an everyday event, it is a 24-hour expectation, and a life outcome that will result in our Eternal Soul with God, with Jesus seated at the Right Hand of the Father. Like those giant Sequoia and Redwood trees, they tower above the Earth; their strength is made evident to all who see them; they are the vine to the branches; and, they give life to those branches attached to the stem of those massive timbers. Jesus made it very clear in the Life Application Verses. Read them again here and take it one word, then one phrase, then one sentence, then one group of sentences, then one paragraph, then the entire reading—let it soak into your pores, permeate your Heart, fire the synapses of your brain—the left and right hemispheres—and, absorb its meaning do deeply into your Soul that you cry out to God: GOD HEAR ME! OPEN MY EYES AND HELP ME TO LIVE FOR YOU! ***Please, read it:***

1 “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. **2** Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every *branch* that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. **3** You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. **4** Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither *can* you unless you abide in Me. **5** I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. **6** If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. **7** If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. **8** My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. **9** Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. **10** If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. **11** These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and *that* your joy may be made full. **12** “This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. **13** Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. **14** You are My friends if you do what I command you. **15** No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. **16** You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. **17** This I command you, that you love one another.

There is a song in the Hymnals that we often sing, *Wonderful Words of Life* (used with permission). Look at these words and consider the words of Jesus as the vine, the Source of our Salvation. The Bible is replete with the Wonderful Words of Life. God, through the Son of God, is the Vine. We are the Branches, yet we must heed His Wonderful Words of Life to be fruitful in all that we do. I plead with you to consider that what Jesus is saying is that if we Believe in Him, we will be fruitful. What fruit must we produce? Heavenly Minded, Earthly Good fruit. We love because God loves us; we give because God gave to us; we help our neighbors, because Jesus lives in our Hearts; we take care of our aging parents because in our old age, God will be there with us; we care for our children, because Jesus said “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these” (Matthew 19:14). The lesson of the Bradford Pear Trees pointed me to these words to share with you. Let the Wonderful Words of Life point you to Jesus, so that we might live more abundantly, attached to the Vine, and serving our God in our every waking moment.

Wonderful Words of Life

Sing them over again to me, wonderful words of life;
Let me more of their beauty see, wonderful words of life;
Words of life and beauty, teach me faith and duty.
Beautiful words, wonderful words, wonderful words of life.
Beautiful words, wonderful words, wonderful words of life.

Christ, the blessed one, gives to all, Wonderful words of life;
Sinner, list to the loving call, Wonderful words of life;
All so freely given, Wooing us to Heaven.
Beautiful words, wonderful words, wonderful words of life.
Beautiful words, wonderful words, wonderful words of life.

Sweetly echo the gospel call, Wonderful words of life;
Offer pardon and peace to all, Wonderful words of life;
Jesus, only savior, Sanctify forever.
Beautiful words, wonderful words, wonderful words of life.
Beautiful words, wonderful words, wonderful words of life.

Question of Curiosity:

If Jesus is the Vine, are you His branch? If you are, be a Strong, Kind, Courteous, Sincere, Honest, Faithful, Loving, Thoughtful, God-fearing, Giving, and Repentant Branch.

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"He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit." ~ Jeremiah 17:8 ~

"I looked at my hands to see if I was the same person. There was such a glory over everything. The sun came up like gold through the trees, and I felt like I was in Heaven." ~ Harriet Tubman ~

"The trees are God's great alphabet: With them He writes in shining green, Across the world His thoughts serene." ~ Leonora Speyer ~

**I think that I shall never see, A billboard lovely as a tree.
Perhaps, unless the billboards fall, I'll never see a tree at all.
~ Ogden Nash, "Song of the Open Road," 1933 ~**

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My Prayer For You:

Father God, I am unworthy to add to your words. In humbleness, I minister to my brothers and sisters in Christ by offering these words of Jesus: I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every *branch* that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither *can* you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and *that* your joy may be made full. This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. This I command you, that you love one another. ~ To you O Lord, we give all Praise, Honor and Glory, Amen. ~

Notes:
