

Healthy Branches

1. Remain Connected to the Vine 2. Bear Fruit for the Gardener

Healthy Branches on My Tomato Plant

- This: tom plnt. Like toms & growng thngs, trying. So few days ago went garden center (gc) dwn road, prchsd this tom plnt. On plnt: main stalk/vine; little brnchs; hopflly, if I take care, water, later summer enjoy fruit/plnt: juicy, red toms. Come to find out (forgttn): lot/varieties; this one: “super fantastic” (says on tag). Thght: how go wrng?! Prob: I’ve killd lot hsplnts in my day; plnt in office: artfcl for reasn. So at gc, asked advice; how grow? Explained: keep inside until warm, plant in sun, trim these brnchs, & plnt root sideways. No idea; eager learn, bec I want my tom plnt have hlthy brnchs (HB) & bear lovely fruit.
- What J wants too: not “super fantastic” toms, but HB that bear lovely fruit. Today J talks re HB in Jn 15, famous v/b discs, which J speaks on MT, night before crcfxn. So one of last thngs J tchs discs before dies for them: wants Xians to be HB: who remain con to vine, and bear fruit for gardener.

Healthy Branches Remain Connected to the Vine

- That’s why says **vs. 5ab, 4a**. HB “**remain**” in vine = stay con to their source of life/strngth. Plnts (like this tom plnt) send nutrients out to all their brnchs to keep plnt hlthy/strng – like how our heart pumps bld thruout body to keep us hlthy/strng. That’s how Xianity works, as well. J: vine, source/life/strngth; sends out steady flow of gracious nutrients to his brnchs (to you, me) to make our faith hlthy/strng. And when these gracious nutrients are flowing from J, to us – when there’s a steady stream of God’s grace coursing thru us by faith – then J has HB con to vine.
- As a Xian, you are HB, bec you con to vine. J grew you, out of himself. But there’s strong warning here not to let this happen. Not con. **Vs. 5bc**. This brnch: do nthng; not con to vine; dead. May not look dead; still looks hlthy, green. But pretty soon: shrivel/die bec discon fr vine. J does not want this hap you. Why he urgntly warns you remain in vine. **Vs. 4a**. But prob for so many ppl: this haps. Person: baptzd as child, comes ch w/prnts, maybe goes Luth school, confrmd in Luth ch; undrstd J is Sav fr sin; sincerely bel Gos. But smwhr along way, this haps! I bet ev sngl on you right now can think smone who was Xian at one point/life, but isn’t anymr; discon. Or: smone who’s strayd away fr J; got confrmd but practclly nvr comes ch anymr; they’re like brkn brnch, barely hanging onto vine. On outside, may look hlthy & green; but in reality, in danger of this. If you discon yourself fr J, you become this. And J warns, **vs. 6**.
- So point here today: nthng more imp than faith/J. J wants us be HB who remain con to vine, who are forever attached to one who shed bld/cross & rose fr dead to make us his brnchs. HB remain con to vine.
- How we do that? On own, can’t, anymr than brnchs can. Brnchs don’t: connect selves to vine; stay hlthy on own or produce fruit on own or grow strngr on own. No, they receive life fr vine. So it is w/us: when we receive Gos fr J – by worshpng at ch, paying attn to sermons, coming Bible class, reading Bible at home, persnl devotn time, HC, returning to bap – all these ways we receive Gos fr J – and when that Gos flows thru us (like nutrients thru tom plnt), then J is keeping us con to vine. Why coming to ch is such big deal; and why skipping ch is such big deal. Matter of life & death. **Vs. 4a**. J is going hold onto you. But don’t cut yourself off fr him. HB remain con to vine.

Healthy Branches Bear Fruit for the Gardener

- And HB also bear fruit for gardnr. **Vs. 1**. Here’s what gardnr does: **vs. 2**. So right off bat, can tell: gardnr wants fruit. This whole psg talks re producing fruit: **vs. 4b, 5b, 8a**. So the way to glorify God/Fr, hvnly gardnr: bear much fruit. This plant, I hope: bear much fruit, and later/summer I’ll have some fresh toms. Xians bear fruit, too. How? By doing thngs God loves. That’s what it means bear fruit for gardnr: doing thngs God loves. You can think fruit/Spirit fr **Gal 5: “love, joy, peace, patnc, kindnss, gdnss, fthflnss, gntlnss, & self-cntrl” (5:22)**. Or JB, “**Produce fruit in keeping w/repntnc**” (Mt 3:8). Or J, “**No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree is recgnzd by its own fruit**” (Lk 6:43-44). And of course we remem prbl J told re what haps when you don’t bear fruit: “**A man had a fig tree growing in his vnyrd, and he went to look for fruit on it but did not find any. So he said to**

the man who took care of the vnyrd, ‘For 3 yrs now I’ve been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven’t found any. Cut it down! Why shld it use up the soil?’ ‘Sir,’ the man replied, ‘leave it alone for 1 more yr, and I’ll dig arnd it and fertilize it. If it bears fruit next yr, fine! If not, then cut it down.’” (Lk 13:6-9).

- So it should be very clear: God wants fruit; and not just any fruit, but good/much fruit. God wants us do thngs he loves – which means we have take hard look lives & ask: what kind/fruit am I producing? Am I producing fruits of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness? Or, rotten/nasty fruit, in my attitude, wrds, what I do? **Vs. 1b-2a** – bec it’s dead brnch, dead wood, good for nothing but a brushfire! This: pic/unbelief, and it’s scary, bec I know myself too well; and I know you pretty well, too. And I know we all are very good at producing: rotten/nasty fruit. These wrds/J demand: we do some serious soul srchng & honest repntnc, bec gardnr wants good fruit.
- Frthrmr, **vs. 2b**. Lady at gc gave me pretty good advice: snip off some these buds here, so fruit can grow here. J saying: God may need to snip off some buds here (hearts) so fruit can grow here (hands). That’s called pruning; smtms it hurts. When God snips off things/lives we don’t want lose, like hlth, comfort, security – that hurts. But God always prunes us for our good, to grow faith & increase fruit. You need keep that in mind when smthng bad haps to you. God may just be pruning you, so that your faith (and faith/others arnd you) can grow & produce fruit.
- And I’ll also say this: there are all kinds diff fruits you can produce, bec we’re all diff types/brnchs. Some brnchs produce toms; other brnchs: grapes, wtrmlns, pmpkns, ppprs, appls, orngs, even flwr ptls. And diff Xians produce diff kinds/fruits, as well. Some fruits you can see: like when you show love to those arnd you, w/genersty, compssn, voluntrsm, kndnss – these: fruits you can see. There’s also fruits you can’t see: like when fight vs a tempttn/sin, or patiently bear a cross, or when quietly do right thing w/o being recgnzd for it – all these: fruits can’t see. But gardnr does. When you put faith into action, out of love for J, that’s God-pleasing fruit. **Vs. 8**.

Simple Illustration, Profound Truth

- It’s beautifully simple illstrtn J makes today, but profound truth: Xians are like brnchs. Brnchs on this tom plnt look pretty hlthy: con to vine, and this summer I hope they bear fruit. So it is with us: HB remain con to J/vine, and they bear fruit for Lord/gardnr. Apart fr vine we shrivel/die; separated fr J, we can do nothing. But by God’s grace, J has made us HB, and the nutrients of his grace are flowing thru us by faith. So remain con to J, and keep bearing fruit. **Vs. 5**. God, help us all to be & remain HB.

John 15:1-8

¹ “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.
² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. ³ You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴ Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

⁵ “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”

