

We Are Required to Bear Fruit

I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 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. **—John 15:1-2**

It is necessary to remember that as God's field, the true vine, we have the responsibility to be obedient. For if there is no obedience, there will be no fruit to grow on that field. We are told in John 15:8 what the gardener wants: "This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit." What is required is abiding or remaining in Christ.

Remain in me, and I will 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. **—John 15:4**

We cannot do things our way and still abide or remain in Him. Abiding in Him means obedience. So you can see why the mystery of God's sovereignty is not limited to His saving work. He alone makes things happen in the work of sanctification, but without my obedience there will be no sanctification. It is, as I say, a mystery.

The second aspect of the believer's responsibility is observation of what we are within ourselves. The crops in a field are observable, are they not? What is required, therefore, is that I examine myself. Is there fruit?

If I examine myself, it means I must have objectivity about myself. It is as though I stand back and look at myself; I observe myself. And if I see something that is not right, I deal with it. Paul calls this "judging" ourselves. He says, "But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment" (1 Cor. 11:31). If by the Word of God or by external chastening I judge myself, I will not have further chastening. Yet Paul does say that when we are judged, it is chastening:

“When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world” (v. 32). Even when God steps in like that, it proves the person is a Christian.

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