

Title: **WARNINGS OR PROMISES?**
Text: John 15:1-27
Subject: *Assurance from the Vine and Branches*
Date: Tuesday Evening — February 7, 2006
Tape # Y-88b

Introduction:

On that solemn night before the Lord of life and glory was delivered into the hands of wicked men, he gave his disciples everything that might be needed to comfort their hearts, as he anticipated the trouble that was before them. His final discourse and his final actions, recorded by divine inspiration in John 13-18, are filled with things that are intended by him to encourage our faith in him, to give us confidence and assurance in him. Throughout these chapters, his word to us is, "*Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*" If ever was a time during the whole of our Savior's earthly ministry in which he wanted to minister comfort and peace to the hearts of his beloved disciples, it was on that solemn night before his sin-atonement death as our Substitute. Like the 23rd Psalm, these chapters are recorded in the Book of God to minister to our souls in times of greatest trouble.

- On that solemn night, he said to those disciples, whose faith he knew must soon be greatly tried, "**I have chosen you**" (13:18; 15:16, 19). — How sweet a pillow that is for my heart!
- He told them that **one of them was a betrayer** and would deliver him up to be crucified. He did so that, when it came to pass, their faith might not be shaken by it.
- He told them again of **his impending death**, assuring them that, by that which he would accomplish in his death, God would be glorified in him and he would be glorified by the Father (13:31-33).
- Then, he told them that **Satan desired to have them**, that he might sift them as wheat, and assured them that their faith would not fail, because he had prayed for them (Luke 22:31-32).
- After that, he **turned to Peter** and told him plainly that before the night was over he would deny him three times. That assertion was immediately followed by the assurance that his faith would not fail, that he would be recovered (converted) from his horrible fall, and encouraged still to believe him. — "*The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice. Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me*" (13:38-14:1).
- Throughout the night, he said to these disciples, all of whom would forsake him, as he anticipated their great fall, "**Believe me! Believe me! Believe me!**" He did not say, Believe in me. He did not say, Believe my doctrine. He said, "*Believe me!*"
- He assured them that he was **going to prepare a place** for them in heaven, and that he would bring them to that place, in spite of all that they would be, and do, and experience in the next few hours (14:1-3).

I remind you, again, that the difference between Judas' sin, which was for him sin unto death, the sin that would be committed by Peter and the rest of the disciples (as well as yours and mine), was not their deeds, or the extent of their guilt, or the aggravating circumstances of their crimes, or even that one sinned against greater light or more persistently than the other. — The only difference between Judas's fall and Peter's, between these disciples forsaking the Lord and Judas betraying him, was this. — The Lord Jesus prayed for Peter, those disciples, and us, that their faith and ours fail not; but he did not pray for Judas.

- He assures us, though we must ever be kept aware of our sinfulness, that we might ever trust him, that he would **hear and answer our prayers** and give us our hearts' desire (14:13-14).
- As he anticipated all the weakness, failure, and sin that those beloved disciples would display in just a few hours, as he anticipated all the weaknesses, failures, and sins we would experience and display in this world, the Lord Jesus **assured them and us that he would never leave us comfortless, that he will come to us, and that he, and his Father, and his Spirit would abide**

with us forever (14:16-20). — What? Does the Son of God intend for sinners saved by his grace to be assured of his grace even when we fall? Indeed, he does (1 John 2:1-2).

- Then, **he assures us of his abiding love** and tells us that he will manifest himself to us (14:21).
- Repeatedly, **he promised that he would give us his blessed, Holy Spirit**, to be our Comforter, assuring us that he will teach us all things.
- Again, he says, I tell you all these things **“that ye might believe,”** that your faith not be shaken, that your confidence and assurance of my mercy and grace may never be shaken.

VINE AND BRANCHES

Then, in chapter 15, the Lord Jesus gives us that wonderful description and assurance of our everlasting union with him. — *“I am the vine, ye are the branches.”*

(John 15:1-6) “I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. (2) Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every *branch* that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. (3) Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. (4) Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. (5) I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. (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.”

The first thing to be learned from this passage is the fact that there is a blessed union between Christ and his people that can never be broken. The Word of God is filled with illustrations of the eternal union of Christ and his church. This union of Christ and his elect is both eternal and vital.

- It is vital to us, because without him we cannot live.
- It is vital to him as our Mediator, because without us he would not be complete (Eph. 1:23).

If you will turn to the Song of Solomon, you will see that when the Bride sang her nuptial love song, she refers to her Beloved as the Vine (Song 1:14).

(Song 1:14) “My beloved *is* unto me as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of Engedi.”

Our blessed Savior is not just a blessing, but a cluster of blessedness (Eph. 1:3-6; 1 Cor. 1:30-31). The word here translated “*cluster*” means, according to Dr. Gill, “the man that is all things,” and according to Hawker, “the man that has atoned, and is all things of blessing.” That is what Christ is to us. — *“All things are yours, for ye are Christ’s!”*

(Eph 1:3-6) “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ: (4) According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: (5) Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, (6) To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.”

(1 Cor 1:30-31) “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: (31) That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”

Our Lord Jesus, when he would sing his nuptial love song to us, his Bride, his Beloved, uses the very same imagery. — *“I am the vine, ye are the branches.”* So real and absolute is this union of our souls and our Savior that we are spoken of in the Book of God as the vine (Ps. 80:8-19; Song 7:11-12; 8:11-13).

(Psa 80:8-19) “Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it. (9) Thou preparedst *room* before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the

land. (10) The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof *were like* the goodly cedars. (11) She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river. (12) Why hast thou *then* broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her? (13) The boar out of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it. (14) Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts: look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine; (15) And the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch *that* thou madest strong for thyself. (16) *It is* burned with fire, *it is* cut down: they perish at the rebuke of thy countenance. (17) Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man *whom* thou madest strong for thyself. (18) So will not we go back from thee: quicken us, and we will call upon thy name. (19) Turn us again, O LORD God of hosts, cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.”

(Song 7:11-12) “Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages. (12) Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, *whether* the tender grape appear, *and* the pomegranates bud forth: there will I give thee my loves.”

(Song 8:11-13) “Solomon had a vineyard at Baalhamon; he let out the vineyard unto keepers; every one for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand *pieces* of silver. (12) My vineyard, which *is* mine, *is* before me: thou, O Solomon, *must have* a thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred. (13) Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice: cause me to hear *it*.”

The union between Christ and believers is just as close, and just as real as the union of the vine and the branches in the vine. In ourselves we have no life, or strength, or spiritual power. All we are and have comes from Christ. We are what we are, and feel what we feel, and do what we do, because we draw a continual supply of grace and help from him. Being grafted into Christ by grace, joined to him by faith, and united in mysterious union with him by the Spirit, we live, drawing the sap of life from him.

And, because we are one with him, vitally joined to him, stand, we bring forth fruit from him and by him. Grace is not a self-operating principle, but the continual operation of God (Hos. 14:8). Of Christ’s fulness we continually receive grace for grace. He declares, “*From me is thy fruit found*” (Hosea 14:8).

The picture before us is delightful and comforting. Believing sinners never have reason to be in doubt of eternal salvation. Our Savior will never leave us to ourselves, to our own strength, or to our own ability. It is God who works in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Our root is Christ, and all that there is in the Root is for the benefit of the branches. Because he lives, we shall live also. Weak as we are in ourselves, our Root is in heaven, and never dies. “*When I am weak,*” Paul said, “*then am I strong*” (2 Cor. 12:10). And his strength is demonstrated to be perfect through our weakness.

In the second verse we see that hat there are many, like Judas, who are in Christ the vine only by profession. They are fruitless branches that appear to be in the vine, but they are not. They do not abide in the Vine. They have not been grafted into the Vine, but are only attached to the Vine in outward appearance. Consequently, they bear no fruit and are useless. They shall be cast forth and burned as useless debris that is found in the vineyard.

THE ASSURANCES

Briefly, let me show you the sweet assurances given to us in this tremendous, instructive passage of Holy Scripture.

(John 15:3) “Now **ye are clean** through the word which I have spoken unto you.”

(John 15:9) “**As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you:** continue ye in my love.”

(John 15:11) “These things have I spoken unto you, **that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.**”

(John 15:13) "**Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.**"

(John 15:15) "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but **I have called you friends**; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."

(John 15:16) "Ye have not chosen me, but **I have chosen you**, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you."

(John 15:26) "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:"

(John 15:27) "And **ye also shall bear witness**, because ye have been with me from the beginning."

WARNINGS OR PROMISES

But there are several things in this chapter that are commonly interpreted as great warnings.

(John 15:2) "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every *branch* that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit."

(John 15:4) "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me."

(John 15:5) "I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."

(John 15:6) "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."

(John 15:7) "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 15:8) "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples."

(John 15:10) "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."

(John 15:14) "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."

Are we to understand these as conditions that must be met by us? Are we to understand that if we fail to meet these conditions we will perish at last? Not hardly! Bro. Rupert Rivenbark made a tremendous statement in a message he preached in Cherokee, NC last October. Be sure you get it. It will help you tremendously. — Bro. Rivenbark said, "**If all the 'ifs' in the Bible hang on Christ, the believer can claim them all as promises.**" That helps, doesn't it?

When our Savior says, "*Abide in me, and I in you,*" and these other things commonly interpreted as conditions that must be met by us if we are to be confident of our union with him, he is not giving us precepts of conditions, but blessed promises of grace. He is assuring us that we shall, by the sealing of his blessed Spirit, as our Comforter, abide in him. When our Lord Jesus "*breathed on them, and said unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost*" (John 20:22). He was not giving a command to obey, but communicating grace. And here, he is telling us that he will continually communicate grace to us by his

Spirit, our Comforter, who will continually testify to the believing soul the things of Christ, constantly affirming them to us and in us.

When he says, "*Abide in me and I in you,*" the Lord Jesus assures us that he undertakes for us, that we shall abide in him, and he in us. How else could we ever hope to abide in him? It is as much as if he had said, "Ye *shall* abide in me; and I *shall* abide in you." And all this is in perfect conformity to that everlasting covenant of grace of which he is the Surety (Jer. 32:38-41).

(Jer 32:38-41) "And they shall be my people, and I will be their God: (39) And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: (40) And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. (41) Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul."

This is blessed, absolute, indestructible security. Our Savior says, "I *will* not and they *shall* not."

Perhaps, you ask, "But, pastor, are we not to look to our evidences for assurance?" Now, be sure you get the answer. — NO! NEVER! The anchor of our souls is altogether outside ourselves (Heb. 6:16-20; 11:1).

(Heb 6:16-20) "For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation *is* to them an end of all strife. (17) Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed *it* by an oath: (18) That by two immutable things, in which *it* was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: (19) Which *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; (20) Whither the forerunner is for us entered, *even* Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."

(Heb 11:1) "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

Our hope is in the Vine! Only in the Vine. Be sure, you are joined to the Vine. Oh, may God the Holy Spirit join you to him!

Amen.