



# Bear Fruit!

## Fifth Sunday of Easter

John 15:1-8

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.

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.

April 29, 2018

## Thought for the Week

### COLOSSIANS 2:14: GOD NAILED OUR SIN-LIST TO THE CROSS OF CHRIST

*'He forgave us all our sins, having cancelled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.'*

Here we are told *how* God forgave all our sins, *how* he cancelled all of the law's accusations against us, *how* he took it away:

*'he nailed it to the cross'.*

When criminals were crucified it was the custom to nail to their crosses a written list of the crimes for which they were being crucified. When Jesus was crucified Pilate ordered that 'This is Jesus, the king of the Jews' be nailed above Jesus as the 'charge' against him.

God, however, in his mind, in his purpose, nailed above Jesus a different list: my list of sins, and your list of sins. Jesus died on the cross taking the full and final punishment in his own body, for my list of sins and for your list of sins.

Everything for which God's law can accuse us - every sin we have committed, are committing and will commit with our minds or our hearts or our bodies, and every good thing that we ought to do but fail to do - everything in which we fall short of God's perfect standard: all of this is on our list that God nailed to the cross of his Son. Jesus Christ died taking the punishment for that list of mine, and for that list of yours.

In this cross of Christ, God's justice and God's grace meet: our sins are justly punished; God's just law is upheld; yet we go free - no accusation or condemnation of God's law ever stands against us again. We are, in fact, as far as the legal penalty of the law is concerned, dead. It can never touch those who are united by faith to Christ.

This message of salvation puts a deep peace in the hearts of those who have received Jesus Christ: no more condemnation, no more fear of God's judgment, nor more anxiety or lack of certainty about one's final destiny.

Instead: peace, joy, assurance, confidence, thanksgiving - and an overwhelming sense of love and commitment to this God who has saved us in this amazing and incredible way.

*[Scriptures: Colossians 2:14; Matthew 27:37; 1 Peter 2:24; Romans 3:26; 5:6,8,10; 6:2-11; 2 Corinthians 5:14; Galatians 2:19-21; Colossians 2:20; 3:3; 1 Peter 3:18; Romans 5:1; 8:1; 1 John 4:17-18]*

### COLOSSIANS 2:15: GOD HAS PUBLICLY DISEMPOWERED AND DISARMED THE ENEMY OF OUR SOULS

*'And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.'*

In Colossians 1:13 we read that God 'rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us safe into the kingdom of the Son he loves'. Now we are told that God publicly disarmed and triumphed over 'the powers and authorities' by the cross.

Who or what are these 'powers and authorities'? How does the cross bring about their downfall? And what is the significance of this disempowerment to us?

From Genesis 3 onwards Satan has deceived the human race, enslaving us in his lies about God, and in an inescapable situation of sin, accusation, guilt, condemnation and death.

Jesus Christ, in his living, exposed Satan's lies about God: in Jesus Christ, we see God.

Jesus Christ, in his dying, disarmed Satan and his evil spirits. By taking upon himself the full burden of our sin, guilt and condemnation, Jesus Christ robbed Satan of his right to accuse and condemn, leaving him with no power or authority to ever again separate us from God.

The imagery used in this verse is that of a triumphant victory procession, in which the conquered leaders are marched through their city in utter subjection to the conquering general. The meaning is clear: the death of Christ has totally removed Satan and his regime from power and authority.

The person who truly believes in Jesus Christ has this grand assurance: no accusation, no guilt, no condemnation that Satan tries to impose on us can stand. All just accusations against us, all of our true guilt, all of the rightful condemnation/punishment due to us under the law of God - all of these have been fully met in and by our Savior Jesus Christ on the cross. They are all defused by his death. They have no power, no authority, to ever again sever us from God and from eternal life.

Let us then live with joy and peace in the knowledge of this present and permanent liberation.

*[Scriptures: Colossians 2:15; 1:13; Genesis 3; Galatians 4:3,9; Hebrews 2:15; John 10:30; 12:21; 1 Corinthians 15:55,56; Romans 8:31-39]*

## Union with Jesus

*John 15:1-27*

In themselves believers have no life, strength or spiritual power. All that they have comes from Jesus Christ. If he is likened to a vine, they are likened to the branches, which means that they can bear spiritual fruit only as they are united in him. As they allow the Father to remove the hindrances of sin from their lives, they will bear even more fruit. John 15:1-5

Those who bear no fruit are like the dead branches of a vine. Though attached to it, they receive no life from it. They say they are disciples of Jesus, but they have no spiritual union with him and in the end they will be destroyed. Such a person was Judas Iscariot (John 15:6).

If people are true disciples, they will prove it by the fruits that their spiritual union with Jesus produces. Among those fruits are obedience, love, joy and effective prayer (John 15:7-11). Jesus wants his disciples to serve him willingly, lovingly and with understanding. For this reason he chose the twelve apostles and trained them to know God's ways. If their service is based on a true knowledge of God and the true exercise of self-sacrificing love, they can expect it to result in lasting fruit (John 15:12-17).

Union with Jesus, however, will bring some suffering, because disciples, like their master, will be hated by the world. Loyalty to Jesus will bring persecution (John 15:18-20). Jesus' teaching and work showed clearly that he came from God. Those who heard and saw him had no excuse for not believing him. In fact, their clearer knowledge increased their guilt. They may have claimed to be worshippers of God, but if they hated Jesus they hated God (John 15:21-25).

The apostles also had heard Jesus' words and seen his works, but they had believed. Therefore, they could be assured of the Spirit's help as they witnessed to Jesus during the difficult time that lay ahead (John 15:26-27; cf. Acts 4:8-12; Acts 5:32).