

MUCH MORE FRUIT IS NEEDED

page1

Pastor Jack Jones

Jesus gave one of the most interesting and important parables to His disciples that you'll ever find in God's word. In **John 15** Jesus portrayed Himself as a grape vine and His followers as the branches that grow off that vine. And as He talked with His disciples, no doubt He literally drew their attention to a nearby grape vine and said, "I'm giving you this lesson so you might understand my relationship to you, and yours to Me." And so, there was no way for them to misunderstand his words, and afterward, every time they came near a vineyard, guess what? They would always be able to recall the lesson He taught them. That's the power of parables.

In *Review and Herald, September 18, 1900*, it says, "Christ's connection with His believing people is illustrated by this parable as by no other. We should study the lesson, that we may know what the parent stock is to the branch, and in what light the Lord regards those who believe and abide in Christ." I used to think the parable of the wheat and tare and the ten-virgin parable were important, and they are, but this parable is even more important, because it's basic Christianity as to how we connect and remain connected to Christ. And so, since there is no other parable that so clearly illustrates our connection to Jesus, let's take a look at it to see what we can learn.

In **John 15:1** Jesus said to His followers, and that includes us, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman," or the One who takes care of the vineyard. So right from the start there are several important points to consider. When Jesus said, "I am the true vine," that's an indication that there is also what? a false vine, and I think we all know who that is, don't we? Speaking of Satan and his followers, **Malachi 4:1** says, "Behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." And of course, Satan is the root and his followers the branches.

And I think it's worth mentioning also that Jesus said, "My Father is the Husbandman." Our Father in heaven isn't the mean God as many people think, but He's also involved with our salvation, seeing to it that we are branches that bear fruit, because He wants us to live and not die and end up being burned. Remember what Jesus said to Phillip? "He that has seen me has seen the Father." And in **John 16:27** He said, "For the Father himself loveth you." And so, a loving Husbandman not only loves the vine, but He loves us, the branches, and this becomes extremely important in fruit bearing since the Father Himself is employed as the vinedresser.

Another lesson Christ wanted His listeners to grasp was that there are both true believers and unbelievers that would claim to be connected to Him. In other words, just because someone joins a church somewhere and claims to be a Christian, that doesn't mean they have a vital connection to the vine. There's a big difference between a pretended union and a real connection with Christ by faith. And Jesus gave a rule by which the true disciple might be distinguished from those who claim to follow Christ but have no faith in Him. The true believer is fruit bearing, and the other is fruitless, or is at least lacking in some of the various types of fruit that should be hanging from their branch.

That's why, in **John 15:2** Jesus said, "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it (or prunes it), that it may bring forth (what?) more fruit." Just because a person accepts Christ as Lord and Saviour and gets grafted into the vine doesn't mean that they can't spiritually wither and die, which means we are not once saved always saved, because spiritual death can come upon us if we don't produce the fruit. That's why the Father prunes us, and

that pruning process is not usually a pleasant process to experience, but nonetheless it's necessary if the branch is going to produce an abundant crop.

Sometimes this pruning process consists in permitting some kind of loss or trial to come upon us for the purpose of driving us to earnestly seek the Lord, especially if we've allowed our devotional time to be crowded out by other things. And so, we shouldn't think it strange or feel rebellious when trials come. Like, "why is the Lord letting this happen to me. I don't deserve this; God must hate me; if that's the way He's going to treat me I might just as well live a worldly life and quit trying to be a Christian." No friend, rather we should have a peaceful trust when seemingly bad things happen, and I know that may be hard to do and perhaps seem like an oxymoron, but we should be glad in the knowledge that every branch that bears fruit, the Father prunes that it might bring forth what? More fruit. If He didn't love us He wouldn't bother taking care of us. God corrects and chastens those He loves, and if He didn't, that would be proof that we're not His children. The parent that truly loves his child is not going to allow that child to get involved with things that he knows will ruin his future. And so he does everything possible to warn, to persuade, and to compel that child to not do certain things.

Now notice what Jesus said in **verses 4, 5** "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. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth **(what)** much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."

In **verse 2** we read that God wants us to bring forth "more fruit" and in **verse 5** Jesus says, "much fruit," and there's a reason for that. Think about it! "More" could mean just one or two more, but "much" means "plenteous or abundant." What kind of fruit are we talking about here? The fruit of the Spirit as mentioned in **Galatians 5**, right? Don't we need much more love, much more joy, much more peace, much more longsuffering or patience, much more gentleness, much more goodness, much more faith, much more meekness, and much more temperance or self-control?

Do you need much more of these things? I'm not ashamed to say I do, because the more I have, the more I will reflect the character of Christ. Do you know that this is what God is waiting for so that He can send the latter rain of the Holy Spirit and bring this nightmare of sin to an end? We are to have all the fruits of the Spirit without one missing. The sap of the Holy Spirit that flows through the vine is to manifest fragrant fruit on the branches. And so, when we live by faith on the Son of God, the fruit of the Spirit will be seen in our lives; and again, not one will be missing. You can read that in ***The Desire of Ages, page 676.***

Then in **verse 6** Jesus said, "If a man abide not in me, **(what's going to happen? He will bring forth the works of the fallen flesh as they're also described in Galatians 5, and in the end)** he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."

Then in **verse 8** Jesus said, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." It's very plain here, isn't it? Unless we have much more fruit, in other words, all the fruit, we are not disciples of Christ, no matter what we profess. For instance, if we have, let's say eight of the nine fruits, but lack patience, are we Christ's disciple? If we have all but self-control are we His disciples? The answer is no! Why? Because that's not the righteousness of Christ, and the Father isn't glorified with eight out of nine.

If I get mad at my wife or my children and walk out of the house, slamming the door and kicking the dog, am I Christ's disciple at that moment? If I'm driving down the road and I get road rage because there's a slow poke, or someone cuts in front of me and I show them my fist, or worse, am I Christ's disciple at that point? No! When this happens, I begin to wither, and if I don't allow the sap and the water of life to flow through my branch and revitalize me, I will end up getting lopped off with the pruning shears.

The only way the Father can be glorified through us is if we have the same attributes and the same character traits as He has. Does that mean we should give up if we don't have all nine, or when we slip sometimes? No! That's why the Father prunes the branches. He's trying to bring out all the fruit in abundance in our lives. That's why we are not to get discouraged when we fall short. **1 John 2:1** says, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." And so, we are not to give up on ourselves so quickly, because God doesn't give up on us.

Now, I want to get back to this idea that when God has a people who have much more fruit than they now have, then the Holy Spirit will come in latter rain power, the earth will be lightened with the glory of God, and Jesus will come in the clouds to take His people back to heaven with Him where they will inherit the earth made new. Do you want to be there? I know you do, otherwise you wouldn't be listening to me right now. But if we want to be there, friends, much more fruit is needed.

Do you realize that the latter rain began to be poured out in 1888 during the General Conference session that was held in Minneapolis, Minnesota? Through the preaching of Elders Waggoner and Jones a message went out that would have produced the "much more fruit" we've been talking about; had it been accepted, but alas, that was 135 years ago, and we're still here. What happened?

Well, the leading men back then had preached the law, the law, the law until the message became as dry as the hills of Gilboa, we're told. Had they accepted the message of righteousness by faith in connection to the law, none of us living today would have been born. Should we be thankful for that? In a way I guess, because I'm glad I'm here, but the work of giving the gospel to the whole world has to be finished up sometime, and the way this world is going, I say the sooner the better. Otherwise, the bonfire of dead branches will only continue to get bigger and bigger, because Jesus made it clear, in more ways than one, that the majority will take the broad road to destruction, unfortunately.

Turn with me to **Revelation 18**, I'd like to read about the fourth angel's message to see what we can learn. We call this the fourth angel's message following the third angel's message of **Revelation 14:9-12**, but it's not called the fourth in the text itself. That's a designation that came many years ago when the passages we're about to read were beginning to be understood. Sabbath Morning, February 13, 1897, a sermon was preached by H. P. Holser titled "God's Glory", and to my knowledge that's the first time the angel mentioned in **Revelation 18:1** is called the fourth angel.

If you're the kind of person who likes to do research, look up H. P. Holser in the pioneer writings. He was a Seventh-day Adventist minister who managed the publishing house in Basel, Switzerland and was tossed in prison several times for not closing the publishing house down on Sunday. He had fines imposed upon him as a result, and when he refused to pay, he was imprisoned for 61 days, and his household goods were confiscated and sold to pay the fines. Anyway, I just wanted to give a shout-out to Elder Holser for being a faithful Christian man for not caving in to the powers that be. By the way, this kind of thing is going to happen again in the very near future, only on steroids.

But have you ever wondered why the angel in **Revelation 18:1** is referred to as the fourth angel, when there are 3 other angels mentioned after the third angel's message in **chapter 14**, and many more mentioned in **chapters 15, 16, and 17**? Maybe you can study that out for yourself this afternoon and let me know what you come up with.

Revelation 18:1-5 says, "And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. And I heard another voice from heaven (**not another angel this time, but a voice. I wonder who that could be? Jesus? The Husbandman perhaps?**) And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, (**who**) my people, (**that gives us a clue, doesn't it?**) that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities."

This is a fearful message, wouldn't you agree? and it's one that many have emphasized over the past 135 years by speaking of the "power," but not so much about the "glory." It's kind of the same thing that went on back in the day when they preached the law, the law, the law, but didn't see the importance of the righteousness of Christ and how that righteousness is to become our righteousness so we can truly glorify God by keeping the law from the heart.

Doesn't the righteousness of Christ have something to do with bearing much more fruit, even all the fruit of the Spirit? Don't the nine fruits of the Spirit and obedience to the law indicate what Jesus is in character? Yes! And what about the glory of God that is to come down and lighten the earth? Isn't God's glory His character? Again yes! The fruit of the Spirit is the spirit of Jesus. Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance is what Jesus is, and if we would become like Him in character, His righteousness and His fruit must become ours, without one missing. Does that make sense?

Remember when Moses was in the mount earnestly interceding with God? He prayed, and I paraphrase, "I beg you God, please show me your glory." And in answer God said, "I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy," and the glory of God, or His character, was then revealed: "The Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." That is, unless they repent.

Now, in the past the fourth angel's message has been proclaimed as a call to come out of Babylon, and rightly so, but the part that has not been proclaimed as it should have been, is the glory of God coming down to lighten the earth. Let's read **Revelation 18:1** again and analyze it a little more closely. "And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with (**what?**) his glory." Who's glory, the angels glory? No, with God's glory. The Bible translators used a small h here for "his glory", but in **Manuscript Releases, page 212** the Spirit of Prophecy puts a capitol H on "his." Also, in **Review Herald July 14, 1891**, it says, "Christ and his righteousness are to be so blended with the third angel's message that the whole world may be lightened with his glory." That is, the glory of Christ's righteousness, and not that of an angel. But there is a secondary meaning that does fit with the small "h", and that's as angels and men and women reflect the character of Christ, or the glory of Christ.

An angel is a messenger that bears a message, and who do you suppose is represented by all four of the angels' messages? We are, if we are proclaiming them! **Testimonies for the Church, volume 1, page 76** says, "I was shown that the third angel, proclaiming the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, represents the people who receive this message and raise the voice of warning to the world."

So, if the third angel represents people, so do the other three. Does that make sense? Literal angels did not in the past, nor will they in the future, come down here and do the work that we've been given to do. It's people who have all the fruit of the Spirit, not one missing, who will perfectly reflect the righteousness of Christ, or "His glory." And because of this they will receive latter rain power, and the great gospel commission will be fulfilled very quickly when this happens. Jesus said, when this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, then shall the end come." And I want to be a part of that, don't you? But something has to happen in us before the power comes.

Now, what is the loud cry? Or should I say, what constitutes the loud cry? Is it the fourth angel's message? Is it the third angel's message? Or is it some other message? Well, we don't have to guess. In **Colporteur Ministry, page 138** it says, "The proclamation of the third angel's message, the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus, is the burden of our work. The message is to be proclaimed with a loud cry, and is to go to the whole world." So, the loud cry is the third angel's message, but is that all it is?

Notice what it says in *Early Writings, page 277*, “I saw angels hurrying to and fro in heaven, descending to the earth, and again ascending to heaven, preparing for the fulfillment of some important event. **(What could this important event be, the latter rain? I think so, because listen to what happens next)** Then I saw another mighty angel commissioned to descend to the earth, to unite his voice with the third angel, and give power and force to his message. Great power and glory were imparted to the angel, and as he descended, the earth was lightened with his glory. The light which attended this angel penetrated everywhere, as he cried mightily, with a strong voice, “Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.” The message of the fall of Babylon, as given by the second angel, is repeated, with the additional mention of the corruptions which have been entering the churches since 1844. **(And unfortunately, that includes the Seventh-day Adventist church)** The work of this angel comes in at the right time to join in the last great work of the third angel’s message as it **(the third message)** swells to a loud cry. And the people of God are thus prepared to stand in the hour of temptation, which they are soon to meet. I saw a great light resting upon them, and they united to fearlessly proclaim the third angel’s message.” We don’t see that kind of unity right now, do we? But it’s coming, it’s coming, and we don’t want to be responsible for that being prolonged because we’re not producing the fruit.

So, as important as the fourth angel’s message is, it seems clear that the third angel’s message is to be the prominent message, which is what? Justification by faith according to *Selected Messages, book 1, page 372*. Let me read it to you, “Several have written to me **(says Ellen)**, inquiring if the message of justification by faith is the third angel’s message, and I have answered, ‘It is the third angel’s message in verity.’” That’s exactly what it is. And what is justification by faith? It’s pardon, or forgiveness, and includes the new birth. That’s the first step in the born-again experience. But is that all that’s necessary for us to reflect Christ’s character? No, but the most important thing is to get people started, for unless they start, they will never finish.

So, understand, I’m not saying that sanctification and obedience to the law are unimportant, but what will be accomplished without taking the first step? Nothing! First, we must be forgiven and receive a new heart, and once that happens we will want to live a holy life. With a new heart comes a new desire to obey, which makes all the difference in the world, because forced obedience, or obedience from a selfish carnal heart does not and cannot produce the fruit of the Spirit that will lighten the earth with the glory of God.

Now, how is this all connected to the latter rain? Well, referring to the message of righteousness by faith preached by Elders Waggoner and Jones, which cannot be separated from fruit bearing, guess what she said about that message? She said it was the beginning of the latter rain. Let me read it to you from *Early Writings, page 271*. This is in the chapter titled “The Shaking.” The context is just before human probation closes and the latter rain is poured out. Here’s what it says, “I heard those clothed with the armor **(The armor is the righteousness of Christ, yes, but Paul mentions what the armor is in Ephesians 6:13-17 also, and some of the pieces correspond to the fruit of the Spirit he mentions in Galatians 5, so don’t try to separate Christ’s righteousness and the fruit of the Spirit, because they are inseparable)** “I heard those clothed with the armor speak forth the truth with great power **(latter rain power)**. It had effect. Many had been bound; some wives by their husbands, and some children by their parents. The honest who had been prevented from hearing the truth now eagerly laid hold upon it. All fear of their relatives was gone, and the truth alone was exalted to them. They had been hungering and thirsting for truth; it was dearer and more precious than life. I asked what had made this great change. An angel answered, ‘It is the latter rain, the refreshing from the presence of the Lord, the loud cry of the third angel.’”

The loud cry of who? The third angel, the message of justification by faith that has taken complete hold of those proclaiming the message; those who are lightening the earth with the glory of God; those who were exhibiting all the fruit of the Spirit, not one missing. They were the ones experiencing the latter rain, and as a result they were giving the loud cry of the third angel.

Now, put that together with the message of righteousness by faith that was being preached by Elders Waggoner and Jones. The quote I'm about to read to you is taken from the **1888 materials, page 1073**, so we know the time frame was when the message was being given by two young upstarts that were filled with the Holy Spirit, but the older brethren had a hard time believing the Lord would pass them by, by choosing someone of less experience, and that's one of the reasons they rejected it. They thought they were trying to do away with the law, the same accusation the unbelieving Jews accused Paul of doing, but they were presenting the only solution that would enable them to truly keep the law.

Here's what the quote says, "The time of test is just upon us, for the loud cry of the third angel has already begun (**has already what?**) begun in the revelation of the righteousness of Christ, the sin-pardoning Redeemer. This is the beginning of the light of the angel whose glory shall fill the whole earth."

So, what is it that the fourth angel's message does? It comes in at the right time with great power and a strong voice to help swell the loud cry of the third angel. How does it do that? By giving added power to the third message. The third angel's message is a message of separation from personal sin by accepting Jesus as a personal Saviour, and the fourth angel's message is a message of separation from corporate sin by leaving those who continue to transgress God's law. That's as simple as I know how to make it. And when these two messages are combined into one whole gospel, they constitute the last message of mercy this world will ever hear, and again, it will be given by those who have all the fruits of the Spirit, not one missing.

If I don't bring forth "much more fruit," is Jesus abiding in me? We already determined that no, He's not. Look at it another way. When we live in a place, we abide there, don't we? So, we have to ask ourselves a question, is Jesus abiding in my heart, or does He just come to visit me from time to time? Are we just a stop off point for Him, but not a permanent home?

Friends, we need to have all the fruit all the time. And when that happens; when God has a people that can be trusted with the "Power", then the earth will be lightened with His glory. The problem is, the world has not yet seen a people who have all the fruit all the time. A people that are settled into the truth so they can't be moved, ever! Jesus said, "by this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." Love is the first fruit mentioned, isn't it? And there's a reason for that, because without love the rest of the fruit will be missing. **1 John 4:8** says, "God is love." That's what He is, and when people see a living demonstration of God's character, and love is the driving force between brethren instead of all the division we see today, then the message will move the people.

I remember hearing a story years ago about a homeless man who stopped for a minute to listen to a street preacher who was talking about the love of God, and when the preacher was done the homeless man said, "I'm tired of just hearing about God's love all the time; I want to see love with skin on it." And friends, that's what Jesus is, love with skin on it, and when He has a church like that, He will absolutely pour out His Spirit.

The Great Controversy, page 464 says, "Before the final visitation of God's judgments, there will be among the people of the Lord a revival of primitive godliness not witnessed since apostolic times. The Spirit of God will be poured out. Many will separate from those churches in which love of this world has supplanted love for God and His Word. Many ministers and people will gladly accept those great truths which prepare a people for the Lord's second coming."

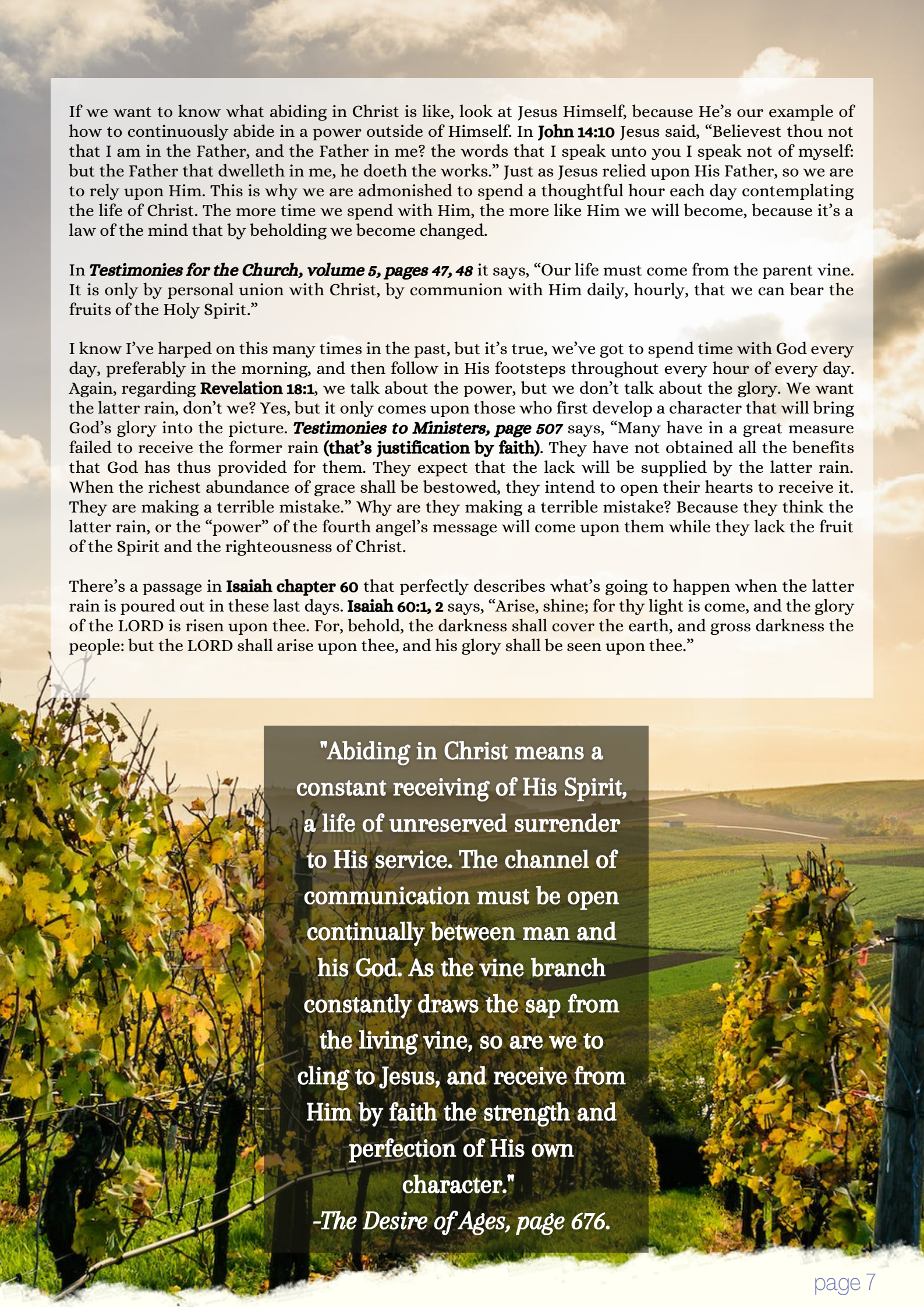
When we receive Christ by faith, we receive His righteousness, and we don't have to work to get it. We ask with a sincere heart, and we receive, and then works will follow as we submit to God's will. Submission is how righteousness is maintained once we get it, and that's also how sanctification progresses. Submission is the way Jesus abides in us all the time. When we can say with David, "I delight to do thy will, O my God, yea, thy law is within my heart," then we will obey because we want to, not because we have to or else, and that will make all the difference in the world as to how our character is formed, and then how God's glory will be portrayed to the world.

If we want to know what abiding in Christ is like, look at Jesus Himself, because He's our example of how to continuously abide in a power outside of Himself. In **John 14:10** Jesus said, "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." Just as Jesus relied upon His Father, so we are to rely upon Him. This is why we are admonished to spend a thoughtful hour each day contemplating the life of Christ. The more time we spend with Him, the more like Him we will become, because it's a law of the mind that by beholding we become changed.

In ***Testimonies for the Church, volume 5, pages 47, 48*** it says, "Our life must come from the parent vine. It is only by personal union with Christ, by communion with Him daily, hourly, that we can bear the fruits of the Holy Spirit."

I know I've harped on this many times in the past, but it's true, we've got to spend time with God every day, preferably in the morning, and then follow in His footsteps throughout every hour of every day. Again, regarding **Revelation 18:1**, we talk about the power, but we don't talk about the glory. We want the latter rain, don't we? Yes, but it only comes upon those who first develop a character that will bring God's glory into the picture. ***Testimonies to Ministers, page 507*** says, "Many have in a great measure failed to receive the former rain (**that's justification by faith**). They have not obtained all the benefits that God has thus provided for them. They expect that the lack will be supplied by the latter rain. When the richest abundance of grace shall be bestowed, they intend to open their hearts to receive it. They are making a terrible mistake." Why are they making a terrible mistake? Because they think the latter rain, or the "power" of the fourth angel's message will come upon them while they lack the fruit of the Spirit and the righteousness of Christ.

There's a passage in **Isaiah chapter 60** that perfectly describes what's going to happen when the latter rain is poured out in these last days. **Isaiah 60:1, 2** says, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee."



"Abiding in Christ means a constant receiving of His Spirit, a life of unreserved surrender to His service. The channel of communication must be open continually between man and his God. As the vine branch constantly draws the sap from the living vine, so are we to cling to Jesus, and receive from Him by faith the strength and perfection of His own character."

-The Desire of Ages, page 676.