

The Branches and the True Vine: Teaching About Prayer

We will discuss the topic of prayer by taking as reference a passage found in the gospel of John chapter 15.

¹ “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. ² Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every *branch* that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³ You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. ⁴ Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

⁵ “I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw *them* into the fire, and they are burned. ⁷ **If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.** ⁸ By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples. (John 15:1-8, emphasis added)

We see how Jesus talks to His disciples about abiding in Him and bearing fruit. He told them they are the branches, and He is the true vine. After telling them some essential things, such as that without Him, they could not bear fruit and could not do anything alone, He also told them that if they abide in Him, they can ask anything they desire, and it will be done. Just think about it – anything we desire. What does it mean to ask anything we desire if the Bible speaks about praying according to the will of God?

We can see these two parts in the New Testament that deal with prayer, and we can compare them. They don't contradict each other; they just complete each other. The first one is in **James 4:2-4**.

“You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive

because you ask amiss, that you may spend *it* on your pleasures. Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever, therefore, wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.”

This verse tells us that sometimes we can ask in the wrong way and not receive. We may ask for something to spend on our pleasures. I think that this kind of prayer that gets rejected has to do with our friendship with the world, as the last part of the passage speaks about. We nevertheless need to keep on praying; then, if our prayer is somehow not right, we trust in God that He will show us what to correct and which is the right way of doing it. It could also be that even praying with the right attitude and for the right things, it is not time for some things to come right now in our life, and we will receive them later on, at another time. Anyway, we need to keep on praying and asking God for discernment.

There is also the example of Jesus’ prayer in **Mathew 26:39**.

“He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.””

From these two passages, we see that prayer does not have to do with what we would like only, but with His will, and we also need to pray for what is right according to Him.

Let’s see other passages that speak about the other part of prayer.

“Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.” (**Mathew 18:19, 20**)

This verse says that if two or three agree on earth concerning anything they ask, it will be done for them. It speaks about “anything” here, but how can we define it? Notice also that it talks about being gathered in His name. It is not a question of only mentioning His name but also honoring what His name represents. The other verse is the one in **John 15:7**.

“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.”

It speaks about something similar to the previous passage we read – “to ask for what we desire.” Again, this invitation comes with something else along – to abide in Him.

Let's look at the passage from the beginning so that we can understand what this exactly means. We need to see something about faith as well—our kind of faith and the faith that can reach God, the one that comes from Him. You ask anyone on the planet, and they will tell you that they have some kind of faith that certain things will happen. People believe in something, and they have placed their hope on something. Many times, it happens that they don't put it in the right place. When, instead, we speak about the faith that leads us to God, the faith that is accepted by God and comes from Him, then we see that this kind of faith is humble and glorifies God. It accepts what comes from Him. There is the example of the Greek woman who was praised for her faith.

²⁵ Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, “Lord, help me!”

²⁶ But He answered and said, “It is not good to take the children's bread and throw *it* to the little dogs.”

²⁷ And she said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.”

²⁸ Then Jesus answered and said to her, “**O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.**” And her daughter was healed from that very hour. (Matthew 15:25-28, emphasis added)

We can see here that she was praised for her faith, but that had to do with her humility, as we see from the previous verses. In those days in Israel, dogs were considered a very low class of animals. They were despised, and yet, we see her comparing herself to those dogs and saying that just receiving a little was going to be sufficient, just by receiving crumbs that usually no one eats. In this way, she showed a humble attitude while pleading with Jesus to help her. This is the faith that pleases Him. Faith, of course, is to be sure, to believe, and to have certainty, but it also has to do with being humble. I believe that this is also a work of God. He is helping us and leading us to be humble, we just need to respond. This is the attitude and faith that pleases Him.

⁸The centurion answered and said, “Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. ⁹For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this *one*, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes; and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does *it*.”

¹⁰When Jesus heard *it*, He marveled, and said to those who followed, “Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel! (Mathew 8:8-10)

Here, we see when Jesus praised another person for His faith. And it was again this kind of particular faith that made that person humble and led him to ask the things that he desired, in this case, for his servant to be healed, but with the right attitude and humility. He, being a great man of power and authority and a centurion, said that he was like one of those soldiers who had submitted to him, ready to do whatever his master was telling him. He had that attitude in front of Jesus and also said he was not worthy of receiving Him in his home. He was such a great person, and as he was used to commanding, he could’ve commanded Jesus to perform a miracle, even if this way wouldn’t work. He understood who was in control and who had the ultimate authority (Jesus) and humbled before Him. We can see that this great faith, which is praised by Jesus and pleases Him, has to do with having the right attitude and humility. We need to pray and ask Jesus to help us have that kind of attitude and create it in us.

Jesus speaks about abiding in Him in chapter 15 of the gospel of John. In the same passage, He also talks about prayer.

“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.” (John 15:7)

To abide in Him also means to desire His presence, to dwell in Him, to submit to His words, to everything He is, and to be prayerful, not only by asking what we would like to be done but also what pleases Him. That’s why we are talking about **abiding in Him**. Not in what we are but in what He is. This means that, in a way, we need to look more for His presence and His person in our lives, not just to ask for things that we wish to happen. Important is what God wants to happen. That’s why one of the things He taught His disciples to pray for was:

“Your kingdom come.

Your will be done

On earth as *it is* in heaven.” (Matthew 6:10)

This is important – His will. What pleases Him is also good for us, as we are His creatures; we are created by Him. We need to be one with Him. We are supposed to be in this way. That’s why this passage in John tells us to abide in Him. To be one with Him. When we understand what is abiding in Him and what pleases Him, we will also change and realize our purpose. Then, I think that our prayers and the things we wish to happen will also change. The more we abide in Him, the more we will realize and desire what pleases Him. We will not ask anymore what can harm us; we will not pray in the wrong way by asking the wrong things to spend them on our desires.

What usually happens is that the statement of asking what we desire attracts everyone at first look. We need to know that what comes first in the passage is not to ask what we desire, but to abide in Him.

“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.” (John 15:7, emphasis added)

We are speaking about abiding in Him and His word to abide in us, meaning what His word is saying, His commandments. Then, we can ask what we desire, but I think that when we abide in Him and have His faith, we will automatically ask what pleases Him.

The secret and what is most important lies in abiding in Him. Then we grasp the true purpose, and we start to know God, which is the ultimate goal and the most important.

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