

**THE SERMONS, LECTURES, AND SONGS OF
SIDNEY EDWARD COX**

CD 91-1
Sermon - Gospel of John
Chapter 15
The Evidence of Fruit Bearing

Editorial Note: On many occasions, Sidney Cox delivered what were a series of either sermons or Bible lessons on the Gospel of John.

This appears to be a Sunday morning sermon; however, I do not know the date or place where it was delivered. It does not appear to have been a part of a larger series of lessons.

J. Douglas Cox, grandson of Sidney and Violet Cox. August 10, 2010

...the privilege of bringing here. It's been just wonderful to be with you. Thank you so much for your loyalty and the way in which you have listened to me. I appreciate it more than I can tell you.

This morning we're going to talk about a very serious(tape goes blank)...

“I am the true vine and Thy father is the husbandman. 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. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. 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 much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing. 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. If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples.”¹

The opening verses of the fifteenth chapter of John.

(Prayer)

Our Father, we feel that we are stepping on sacred ground, holy ground, as we listen again to these wondrous words. We remember that within a few hours of the time these words were spoken, our Lord was upon the cross. We thank Thee, our Father, that Thou doest give us the occasional privilege of studying them once more. Make them real and beautiful to our hearts, we pray Thee. And may the message of it be such that it shall grip our hearts so that as we look into it and the Holy Spirit leads us down into the depths of God's Word, that we may never be the same again. And so we pray this for each one of us, for the cleansing of the Word, the illumination of the Word, the fruitfulness of the Word. We pray for it, our Father, in Jesus precious name, Amen.

¹ John 15:1-8

If I should ask you this morning, “Are you a Christian?” it would be comparatively easy to give the answer. We should, I expect, with one voice say, “Yes, of course, I am a Christian.” But if I should add another question to that and say, “Can you prove that? Have you got definite proof of the fact that you are a Christian?” then that might not be quite so easy as the first question. It's easy enough to say yes to the first one; it's not so easy to say yes and to give the reason in the second one.

Now, that second question is quite scriptural, isn't it, because one of the things that we are enjoined to do is this: We are to be ready at all times to give a reason for the hope that is within us, so that we should not only be able to say, “I am a Christian” but we ought to be able to give the reason why. That's one of the things that is incumbent upon us.

If you belong to some organization, no matter what it was, a lodge for instance, and somebody asked you if you, “Are you a member?” and you would say, “Yes,” and then if somebody added the question, “Well can you prove it?” you could prove it again. Most certainly, you could. Now, in the matter of our being a Christian, we ought to be as intelligent as we are in any other realm and to be able to give the reason why we claim that title of Christian, follower of the Lord. We ought to be able to give the reason for that. Now, the reason why I've mentioned that is that in this chapter that we have before us is one of the unanswerable reasons given - the evidences of our discipleship.

Now you can look in two different directions for the evidence of discipleship. For instance, there's a lot of folks outside of the church, if you asked them, “Are you a Christian?” they'd say, “Why, certainly.” And then if you asked them, “How do you claim that?” they'd say, “Well, I do this and I do that and I do the other and I go here and I do something else and so on and so on.” And they'll give you the usual long lingo about what they do and what good folks they are. And it is quite obvious that that, beloved, has nothing whatever to do with being a Christian - nothing whatever to do with it. And it's quite obvious, so that if you can't look on the outside for the answer, and you can't, then you must look on the inside to see what the book says.

What is the evidence of discipleship according to this book? And immediately, there are a number of those blessed statements, some from the lips of our Lord, and some from others, that give us the right to claim discipleship. For instance, “Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit, so by this token shall you be My disciples.”² Another one is, “If ye have love, one for another.”³ If we love the brethren, that's one of the evidences of discipleship. If we have the fruit of the spirit, that's another one. His spirit answers to my spirit, that I am born of God. I'm just simply paraphrasing there, a great statement in the writings of John. But there are a number of them.

But let me remind you of this - that Satan has imitated everything in connection with God's program, and there is an imitation love for the brethren. And there's an imitation witness of the Spirit, and there are any number of folks that are being led astray by these imitation things. There are any number of old sinners around here who like to be in the company of Christian folks. And if you ask them, “Do you love the brethren?” “Why certainly we do. It's a good thing to have Christian friends like that.” Quite content to let his wife be the church member; he has no intention of being that. But it is wonderful to

2 John 15:8

3 John 13:35

have Christian friends, and there's a lot of folks who are not Christians at all who are glad that they have Christian friends, and every once in a while they like to be in their company. There's an imitation love for the brethren.

There are any number of folks that are being led astray by something that passes off as, the witness of the Spirit. And on occasions, and you may not have to look very far to find it, on occasions you will find folks in the midst of some psychological or physical upheaval and you've seen them and so have I, and in the midst of this sort of thing, they would go out with some kind of an experience that is either psychic or physical and not spiritual at all, and they would go out with some kind of an experience like that that they would declare was the evidence of the spirit in their lives. There is an imitation witness of the Spirit. But there is one thing that Satan has never been able to imitate and that is the witness, the evidence, as given in this eighth verse of the fifteenth chapter of John. Watch it. "Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit; so by this token, by this evidence, shall ye be My disciples."

I want to talk to you this morning about 'the evidence of fruit bearing.' Now, immediately again, we ask questions when we think our way into this. For instance, we say, "Well, how do we know whether we're bearing fruit? What kind of fruit are you talking about? When you talk about fruit bearing, what kind of fruit do you mean? What are you talking about? What kind of fruit?" And then some others, possibly even in this room, we have already got in our mind the answer to the question, what kind of fruit are you talking about?

And we may be repeating over, I wouldn't doubt it for a moment that somebody is right now repeating over these words, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, and so on."⁴ But let me remind you of this, that that verse says, "That is the fruit of the Spirit." Now there's a distinction between the fruit that is mentioned in the fifteenth chapter of John when he says, "That ye bear much fruit." There's a distinction between that and the fruit of the Spirit. Now it's quite true that the Spirit has to have a garden in which to grow His fruit, and the fruit that He grows is His fruit, not yours. Those nine graces that are mentioned there are the nine sides of the character of the Lord Jesus Christ. What the Holy Spirit is doing is reproducing the Lord Jesus in the believer. That's what he's doing there. And the evidence of this work of grace going on is that in our hearts the Holy Spirit produces love, joy, peace, longsuffering, and so on.

But there is another fruit that He speaks of as your fruit, not His fruit. Now it's quite true that whatever fruit is borne in your life, the Holy Spirit will bear it. It's His business, it's His fruit. But remember that there is a fruit He speaks of as His fruit and there is a fruit He speaks of as your fruit. Now in this fifteenth chapter of John, He is speaking about, "Ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be my disciples." Now, what then is this fruit by which we give evidence that we have been born into the family of God, joined to the branch? What is it?

Well, now the Lord is using, in the fifteenth chapter of John, an illustration; it's the illustration of the vine and the branches. Now, the Lord never uses an illustration unless it points directly, and has connection with the truth he is teaching. There are some who use illustrations that don't illustrate. But the Lord never did that. When he uses the illustration of the vine and the branches to illustrate

4 Galatians 5:22

Christian fruit bearing, then there must be some relationship between the fruit of the vine on the one side and the fruit of the Christian on the other. There must be a relationship, one must point to the other.

Let's stop a minute and look at the illustration and ask this simple question. What is the fruit of the vine? Because if we can get that answer, then we may be able to find out what the fruit of the Christian is. That's what we're after. What is this fruit that we must bear, that gives evidence of our discipleship? It's like the fruit of the vine. What is the fruit of the vine? Well, if I should ask a group of young folks, you folks know better. But if I should ask a group of young folks what the fruit of the vine is, almost unanimously they would say "grapes" and there is a sense in which that is true. It all depends from what viewpoint you're looking at.

If you're looking from the viewpoint of the man who tends the vine, or from your viewpoint when you want something nice on your table, then grapes would be the fruit of the vine. But if you're looking at it from God's point of view, that's another matter all together. What is the fruit of the vine as far as God is concerned?

Now, let's do a little experiment here. I've got something you didn't know I had right here, and I'm going to pick it up and hold it up before you. I've got a nice bunch of great big grapes. See it? Now, you take a good look at them. They're these big, white green ones, see? Now you look at them, and I'm holding it up before you. You take a good look there, and you will find if you look carefully into the midst of it, there are two or three little black objects right in the middle of that grape. And we all know what they are, of course. They are seeds. As a matter of fact, they are packages as God only can wrap up a package. Now, let's leave that grape alone, shall we? Don't disturb it to put it on your table; let's leave it alone to do what God intended it should. What will it do? After a while, it will ripen and drop to the ground and there the pulp of it will moisten a little bit in the soil. And then the rain will come, the wind will blow a little of the soil over it, and presently it will be disappearing under the surface, those little objects there. And after a while, the usual time, after a while you go back and look and this is what you will find. A little green shoot coming up and another one going down, and out of that grape there comes, listen to it, another grape vine.

Now, that's what God's after. Another grape vine. We're paralleling God's great law of reproduction. There isn't a thing alive that is satisfied until it has reproduced itself. Everything else in connection with it is secondary. That's the great primary object of it all, that - it's the business of reproduction. That's what we're talking about now. The fruit of the grape vine is another grape vine.

Now, dare you go with me? Because you can finish the rest of this, can't you? If the fruit of the vine is another grape vine, then by the same token, the fruit of the Christian is another Christian. "Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit," so by this token, by this token of reproduction, your spiritual life reproducing itself, by this token, "Shall ye be my disciples." Now that gets right down where we live, doesn't it? It doesn't say by how many tickets you sell, or how much work you do, or how much paint you put on a building, these things are all wonderful. But the final test is, has that life of yours been used of God to bring somebody else to new life? Because that's the way God does it. Has it? And that's the test. Has it?

Let me give you two simple illustrations. I went into the loo room of an engineer in a great hospital, not in this city, another city. But he was the man who took care of everything around there. He was the engineer in this great hospital. And I went into the back of it there, into his workshop, and I knew him quite well. And we talked together for a minute or two and then he said this to me, and I've never forgotten it. He said, "Do you know" and I was standing right by the side of his little desk there where he worked. He said, "Do you know that right there on the spot where you are standing 32 people have stood right there and accepted Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord." 32 of them. There was his little testament on his desk. And there among the hammers and saws and everything else was all around, right in the middle there was his little testament. And he said, "32 people have accepted Christ as Savior and Lord right where you're standing." Listen, my dear, I didn't need to ask him for the evidence of fruit in his life, did I? Oh, he did this and did that and did the other, sure. But that was unanswerable, wasn't it? It sure was.

I was conducting a youth meeting one time in a city and it was one of these meetings where there was a big crowd and a lot of young folks who knew the Lord were busy doing personal work in that meeting while the invitation was being given. And I noticed one boy who'd brought somebody down the aisle. In a little while he went back and he brought another one to the altar of prayer and into the inquiry room. And I watched him there as he came down and after a moment when he'd landed this one safely, he stood there beside me as it might be right down here, and he said to me, "That's the sixteenth." And I said to him, "What do you mean?" He said, "That's the sixteenth boy out of my high school that I've led to Christ. The sixteenth." Did I need to ask him? That was his glory, not the fact that he was the honor student in one of the biggest high schools in the United States. Not the fact that it was his play that he had written that had been given on that graduation time by this school. Not these things. This was it, this was it. Sixteen for Christ. I didn't have to ask him, did I? I didn't have to ask him.

One of these days we're going to stand before the Lord who loved us and died for us, and it will be wonderful when we can say to Him, "Lord, I helped to paint that building and I helped to do this and I helped to do the other and I helped to do that." But how wonderful it will be if, when you look at Him, you will know that He helped you to win somebody for Christ. And that somebody will stop you one day on those golden streets and say, "If it hadn't been for you, I wouldn't be here." "Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be my disciples."

One of the great names in the Southern Baptist area is that of Dr. John Broadus, who was the great president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary up there in Louisville for many years.⁵ Been gone with his Lord now again for many a year. But he was one of these great Christian noblemen that left their mark everywhere he went. And John Broadus used to tell this story. He said, "When I was a boy I got saved there in a revival meeting and" he said, "when I got back to the farm where I was living, the first thing I wanted to do was to win somebody else." And he said, "I had a friend over there on the neighboring farm, so I called him over and we sat together on a log back of the barn and I told this boy what had happened to me. And when I got through he said, 'John, that's the prettiest story I ever heard.

⁵ John Albert Broadus (1827–1895) was an American Baptist pastor and professor at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, one of the most famous preachers of his day. Charles Spurgeon deemed Broadus the "greatest of living preachers." Church historian Albert Henry Newman later said "perhaps the greatest man the Baptists have produced."

I'd like to be a Christian too.” And right there, back of the barn, John Broadus won his first soul for Christ.

And then time went by and one boy went in one direction and one in another. One went on driving a wagon and after which graduated to a truck. And John Broadus went to college and then to the seminary and became the president of a great college in Louisville. But the strange thing was that the footsteps of these two men were both led to the same city. And John Broadus used to say, “In the mornings when I'd be walking down there to go to the school, to the seminary,” he said, “I'd quite frequently meet my friend, driving his truck down the streets of Louisville.” And he said, “He always used to greet me in the same way. He would say as he would wave his hand at me, he would say, 'Good morning John and thank you.'” And John Broadus used to say, “One of these days when I go to heaven, when I've greeted my Lord, I'll be looking for that man and when I find him I know exactly what he will say. He will say, 'Good morning John and thank you.'”

“Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be my disciples.”

I think this passage of scripture teaches us very loudly one thing. Let's be clear as to what it says and what it doesn't say. I don't think there's anything in here at all that says that unless you have had the beautiful experience of leading a soul to Christ personally, that you have no evidence that you're a Christian. I don't think it teaches that. But I think it very definitely teaches this, that if we have had no desire to lead a soul to Christ, if we haven't cared whether folks were won or not, then in such a heart there is absolutely no evidence of discipleship. None.

How do you bear fruit like this? You don't find a passage of scripture telling you to do a thing and then failing to tell you how to do it. You turn to John 15:16 and you will find this. Same chapter, here's the how of it, there. “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.” Did you notice the big word in the center of that verse? It's the little word with two letters, G O. “Go, and bring forth fruit.”

Seems to me I can hear the same one who spoke these words saying to His disciples, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel and make disciples of every nation.”⁶ That's the fruit of the Christian, my dear. And it isn't my business to measure your life by my little yardstick. Not at all. But I think when the Lord drops a measuring rod right down into our midst, we ought to measure ourselves by it, don't you? Don't you? “Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit.” Not just fruit, much fruit. Three kinds of fruit are mentioned there: fruit, more fruit, and much fruit. Much fruit. “So by this token shall ye be my disciples.”

(Prayer)

Our Father, we pray that Thou will help us to do what we ought to do with this message. Not merely to hear it with our ears, but hear it with our hearts. May it do its own work, we pray Thee, whatever that work is. May it do its own work in every one of our hearts. May it be a cleansing thing, a challenging thing, a strengthening thing. May we find ourselves cleaned by the Word which Thou hast spoken unto us. Wilt Thou use us as vessels **for Thy glory. Help us to win somebody for Christ, somebody who will**

⁶ Mark 16:15

meet us on the golden street with a glad word of welcome. May it be so for every one of us. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

(audio ends)