

I AM THE VINE

Lessons: *John 15*

In John 15 you are told that you *are* something, and the great part is what that something can *do*. You are a branch. And that branch can bear fruit.

Here is a memorable picture. What we are, and what the Lord is. Remembering this picture we know how much we need the Lord. A branch can't live without its vine. This is the last of the seven "I AM"s in the Gospel of John.

The Lord said, "I am the bread of life." "I am the light of the world." "I am the door." "I am the good shepherd." "I am the resurrection and the life." And finally, "I am the Vine, you are the branches."

Let there be no doubt about what bearing fruit means. It means doing something useful. The Lord's kingdom is a kingdom of uses.

One of two things you should know about uses in heaven is how *many* of them there are, many more even than there are in this wide world. They are "infinite in number" (*Conjugal Love* 18), and the uses of this world are few in comparison (*Heaven and Hell* 393).

Notice what is said about the many uses which the angels have. "But all these employments of angels are employments of the Lord through the angels, for the angels do them from the Lord and not from themselves" (*Heaven and Hell* 392). The Lord says, "Without Me, you can do nothing." A branch cannot bear fruit if it is separated from the Vine.

The other thing to know about angel uses is how *enjoyable* they are. If you asked angels what thing in life gave them a happiness that made other things enjoyable, they would say the joy of being and feeling useful. Once, when people were learning about uses in heaven, some maidens in heaven broke into song, and by their singing they expressed "the affection for works of use together with their pleasantness" (*Conjugal Love* 207).

It is interesting that in the book *Heaven and Hell*, two chapters that go together are the chapter on WHAT ANGELS DO, or THEIR EMPLOYMENTS, and the chapter about HAPPINESS. The chapter on the employments of angels says that "they are all in the delight of their work and labor from a love of uses"—and the chapter ends by saying that entering into use in heaven gives a deeper inner happiness than people knew before. In their doing of good things, they become receivers of the great feeling of heavenly blessedness.

Then comes the chapter about happiness, in which it is said that the Lord longs to give everyone happiness (*Heaven and Hell* 397). "I am the vine, you are the branches, He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit." And He says to us, "These things I have spoken to you that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full."