

The True Vine

John 15:1-8



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FOCAL John 15:1-8 KJV¹ I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. (2) 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. (3) **Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.** (4) **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.** (5) 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. (6) **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.** (7) If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. (8) **Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.**

Introduction: In order to understand and apply this parable to our lives, we need to identify *each Person* mentioned in it. We see *first* of all, **Jesus Christ, our Eternal Savior.** It is He Who says **I am the Vine.** Next we see **God the Father,** He Who is the **Master Gardener,** the One Who *chastises, corrects, or cares for* His children. Of course there are **the Children of God** by faith in Christ. The Christian is **clean through the Word Christ has spoken,** cleansed by the Gospel. In contrast to **the Eternal Godhead** and the **Children of God,** we also see the **world of the unsaved beings.** These are the **men who gather the non-productive Christians** and burn them.

¹ all texts are King James Version, unless otherwise noted

Jesus is going to tell us some wonderful truths in this teaching. I pray that you will hear the words of this message. I pray that God will cloak my shortcomings, and give you eyes to apply this Word to your lives.

Prayer Precious Savior, Holy Father, we come to You now and ask that you open our eyes so that we can see wondrous things from Thy Word. Dear Lord, times without end I have stood before You, my sin heavy on my soul, and have been overwhelmed with the ways in which I have offended you. I have cried out with the Apostle, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death (Romans 7:24)?" As agony encompassed me, and guilt like a deluge has soaked me to my marrow, You reached out to me. You, Blessed Savior, touched me with that nail scarred hand. You, dear Father, provided the only Way to salvation through the terrible scream of Calvary.

Precious Lord, ²give us all a deeper repentance, a horror of sin, a dread of its approach. Let it's voice frighten us, as the hiss of the snake would speed the heart of the hiker. Without You we can do nothing. Give us power to quickly flee from sin's ugly face. Give us the strength to guard our hearts from it, and to surrender wholly to Thee in this precious moment.

As we come to worship You through this Word, help us lose ourselves in Thee. You are the ground of our rest and the spring of our being. Give us a deeper

² The following is modified from *Valley of Vision, a collection of Puritan Prayers*, edited by Arthur Bennett

knowledge of You, dear Lord, through the power of that Blessed Spirit. Glorify Thyself as Savior, Master, Lord, and King. Give Thy Bride more sweetness in Thy Word, and a stronger more steadfast grip on its holy truths. Change our lives, we pray, this very day. Plow deeply, let the blade of Thy Word pierce to our innermost being. Then, dear Lord, we pray that You plant the Grace of God in our lives. May the roots of grace spread far and wide, until Thou alone art seen in me, Thy beauty golden like summer harvest, Thy fruitfulness as autumn plenty.

We have no master but Thee, no law but Thy will, no delight but Thyself, no wealth but that Thou givest, no good but that Thou blesses, no peace but that Thou bestows. We are nothing but that Thou makest us. Quarry us deep, dear Lord, and then fill us to overflowing with living water. In Jesus' precious name we pray. Amen!

1. Planting: What Soil Is The True Vine Planted In?

FOCAL John 15:1-2 KJV I am the true³ vine, and my Father is the husbandman. (2) 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.

The Lord makes the statement:

FOCAL John 15:1 KJV **I am the true vine**

³ G228, ἀληθινός, alēthinos, *al-ay-thee-nos'*, From G227; *truthful*: - true. (Strong's Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries)

This is the third title our Lord has been given in the Book of John that uses the word **true**. We are told that Jesus is the:

True Light - John 1:9
True Bread from heaven - John 6:32
True Vine - John 15:1

In Greece, the leaves of the grape vine can be cooked and eaten, and in some areas the grape vine is woven into wreaths or ornaments. This notwithstanding, the **True Vine** has only one purpose. The **True Vine** transmits life and nourishment from the soil to the branches, so the branches can produce grapes, so the **Gardener** can profit. In this text **God the Father** is the **Gardener**, and Jesus Christ lived with one purpose in mind. He lived to *do the Will of God, so that God the Gardener could be glorified.*

Consider all the furniture of the Temple of God. Look throughout every verse and every context of the Holy Scripture. Do you ever see *grape vine* used for anything other than to produce grapes? We know that *Noah's Ark* was made of *gopher wood* (**Genesis 6:14**), and the *Ark of the Covenant* was made of *shittim wood* (**Exodus 25:10**). We see *cedar wood* used in the burned offerings (**Leviticus 14:4**), and instruments were made of *fir wood* (**2 Samuel 6:5**). We see all types of wood used in worshiping God throughout the Scripture, but not once do we see the *wood of the vine* used for anything of lasting value.

The **True Vine** was not used in the Temple, for **it has no value apart from the soil**. Jesus Christ is the **True Vine**, and He is firmly planted in the Will of God.

Jesus Christ did not come to be used as either ornament nor furniture, but He came to give life to all who believe.

Jesus said:

John 12:27-28 Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but **for this cause came I unto this hour. (28)** **Father, glorify thy name.** Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.

Jesus is **The True Vine**, for He is *Very God of Very God*, pure and Holy Son of God come to redeem all who believe in Him. Listen Beloved: the *foundation* of the vineyard must be good. If the fruit of the vine is to have any value, it is imperative that it be *planted in good soil*. The soil cannot be made better - it *must be naturally better*, else it has no value. Jesus Christ is the **True Vine** Who is planted in *the good soil of God's Will*. As a young child growing up Jesus said:

Luke 2:49 ... that **I must be about my Father's business?**

From the beginning, Jesus' life was grounded in the business and Will of God. Jesus *lived* to do the Will of God, and *died* to do the Will of God. As He knelt in Gethsemane, just prior to His crucifixion, Jesus prayed:

Matthew 26:39 ... O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.

Jesus Christ is the True Vine, and He always remains in the good soil of God's Will.

One of the most shocking things I read this week was from the Barna Research Group. Barna⁴ stated:

"... a large minority of Americans believes that when Jesus Christ was on earth He committed sins.

Currently, slightly less than half of the public (42%) holds this view, while half (50%) say Jesus did not sin. The people groups most likely to contend that Jesus sinned include people under age 38 (49%), notional Christians (51%), and atheists and agnostics (62%)."

In an earlier study⁵ Barna reported:

"Although two-thirds of all teenagers say they know all the basic teachings and principles of the Christian faith, two-thirds of them reject the existence of Satan, three-fifths reject the existence of the Holy Spirit, and

half believe that Jesus sinned during His lifetime."

It doesn't bother me that *unbelievers* and *fools like atheists*⁶ say that Jesus is a sinner like a mortal man. It does bother me, however, that anyone professing to be *Christian* could claim that Christ was a sinner. Even the *enemies of Christ* said:

John 9:16 ... How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them.

Illustrate: If Jesus, the **True Vine**, is planted in sin like us, how can He possibly heal the sinner? How can he that is drowning save those who are drowning? Humanity literally *chokes* in sin, breathing it in, swallowing it, chasing it, doing it, seeking happiness through it and never finding happiness. The next time you're standing in line at the supermarket counting your toes and trying not to be bored, try reading the *covers of the magazines* that are always there. Have you ever seen such a mess in your life? We see how some television star has lost his or her current live in love, and has now bounced to another bed for happiness. We see who the *sexiest man alive* is, and wonder how a magazine named **People** polled *every person on the planet* to find out this man is the *sexiest man alive*. I wonder how this helped the actor, Mathew McWhoCares, who received such a coveted title. The world is *desperately* seeking happiness, peace, joy, and cannot find it because the world is chasing after sinners to receive salvation.

4 October 8, 2002 report

5 Barna.org, December 12, 2000

6 see Psalm 14:1; 53:1 which states, "the fool hath said in his heart there is no God"

The cry of the lost, of the unsaved, is all around us. I was sitting at a restaurant just yesterday with some of my brothers in Christ *trying* not to hear that nauseating mess they call music blaring through the air. As I sat there I heard these:

**Some believe in destiny, and some believe in fate
I believe that happiness is something we create
You best believe that I'm not gonna wait
'Cause there's gotta be something more⁷**

There *has* got to be something more - but it cannot be in a happiness that I create. If the *something more* the singer was looking for is *something she created* then, sooner or later, like all things human, it would cease to be a blessing. You can **believe that happiness is something we create**, but you might as well believe that you can kiss a frog and get a prince (or a princess). Keep chasing that dream without Christ. In time you'll discover the truth, that

1 Peter 1:24-25 For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: {25} But the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

Jesus Christ is the **True Vine**, for He is planted in God's Will. Not only that, Jesus is sinless perfection Who took our sins on Himself on that cursed Cross of Calvary. If Christ is a sinner then we are yet cursed, for the only hope the Scripture offers for us is salvation by faith in Him. **He is the True Vine, we are the Branches**, and life runs from Eternal God to us through Jesus. Jesus Christ is the *very righteousness of God*. The Bible tells us that we who believe are to *cling to the True Vine*. We read:

Romans 3:21-26 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; {22} Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: {23} For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; {24} Being justified [that is, declared righteous] freely by his grace through the redemption [that is, the payment for sin] that is in Christ Jesus: {25} Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation [satisfactory payment for sin] through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; {26} To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

⁷ Sugarland lyrics, "Something More"

Could Jesus Christ have been a sinner?

No (**Hebrews 4:14-16**), not once but a *thousand times no!* If He is a sinner, you are yet lost in sin. He is the **True Vine**, set forth by God *because He is Perfect Sinless God*. He is the payment for our sin. When we believe on Him for salvation we *are grafted* into the Vine. We are *identified* with the Righteousness of Christ - we share the benefit of the sap of that Wondrous Vine. Attached to Christ, we are now *branches of that Vine*. Even if we pursue sin and disobey Him unto the point of physical death, even if the **Master Gardener, God the Father** prune us from that Vine, we are still *branches of the Vine*. A Branch cut from an oak tree remains an oak branch, its nature cannot be changed. A believer in Christ, cut from the Vine because it *would not bear fruit*, is yet a product of the Vine.

Let's look further in our text.

2. Purging & Pruning: Abide In The Vine If You Will Serve The Living God

FOCAL John 15:2, 4, 6 **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. {4}** 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. {6} 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.

Illustrate: As our Lord Jesus spoke the disciples could look out the window onto the many vineyards and see the piles of burning vines. This brought what Jesus said *home to His disciples, and should bring it home to you.*

In the Holy Land, the gardener pruned his vines after harvesting them, carefully marking the branches that were poor producers. The branches that produced *were pruned back* so that they would bear more fruit in the coming year.

The branches that *produced nothing* were cut off, tossed into the fire, and burned. This was done so that producing branches would have room to grow in the coming season. The *pruning* in the life of the branch is likened unto *trials* which come, drawing us closer to Christ in this life. Just as the branch is *cut back*, and by being cut back it is now closer to the grape vine, the Christian who is under trial draws closer to the Master Vine. Praise God for the **Master Gardener's knife!** As He carves us, the Father strengthens us to draw us closer to Jesus. It is certain that

FOCAL John 15:4-5 ... **the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. (5) 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.

Jesus Christ is the Vine, the **True Vine** Who gives us strength and sustenance. Jesus Christ is the **sole means** of power to the Christian. He said, **apart from Me, you can do nothing.** Read that again: **APART from Me you can do NOTHING.** The branch apart from the Vine produces no fruit, the branch close to the Vine provides much fruit. As Jesus said:

FOCAL John 15:5 ... **He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.**

The **Master Gardener, God the Father wills that we bring forth much fruit.** This is what He wants of us. No gardener in the vineyard cut the Vine's branches willy-nilly. The **gardener wants the fruit of the Vine,** and **God the Father wants fruit from the Vine.** The Vine itself does not produce fruit, but the *branches* produce the fruit.

If you are under trials, be aware that this may be pruning to bring forth more fruit.

God wants you to produce fruit, to be a Light in this world, to lead others to salvation by faith in Christ, to be a partner with God in *grafting others into the Vine.* You cannot graft - only the Master Gardener can graft - but you can tell them about the Vine, you can live for the

Vine. The **Vine** wants you to bear **much fruit.** The **Master Gardener** wants you to bear **much fruit.** Who doesn't want you to bear much fruit? *Only Satan and the lost world, dear friends, desires your failure.* Jesus warned:

FOCAL John 15:6 **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.**

The Christian apart from Christ is a sheep apart from the Shepherd - the *wolves of Satan* will get you! Those who are *outside of the Vineyard of God* will gather you, will burn you, will seek your destruction.

Some have taken this passage to mean that salvation is lost if you refuse to abide in Christ, yet this would be untrue to the story line of the parable. Those who cast the branch into the flames *are men.* In the Holy Land workers who were neither owners of the vineyard nor members of the family were often hired to gather up and burn the branches that the gardener took from the vines. These were *hirelings* doing the menial tasks. This is the illustration our Lord gives.

If you fall away from Christ the Vine then it is **men who will gather you to burn you.** The henchman of Satan, the unregenerate unbeliever, will *delight* in drawing you into the same snare of evil that they are in. It is said that "misery loves company" - but so do those who follow after the angel of darkness.

Jesus lay down a simple but effective truth:

No abiding - No fruit
Little abiding - Little fruit
Much abiding - Much fruit

Men shall gather you to burn you because they wish to find proof that our faith is useless. They will point to you and say, "See there, I told you it was all a sham", just before they go merrily on with their sin. The Christian who does not abide in Christ is like salt that has lost its saltiness. He is of no value in this world. The Scottish preacher **Alexander MacClaren** said⁸:

How many of us are there about whom people will say, 'There must be something in the religion that makes a man like that'? How many of us are there, to look upon whom suggests to men that God, who can make such a man, must be infinitely sweet and lovely? And yet that is what we should all be — mirrors of the divine radiance, on which some eyes, that are too dim and sore to bear the light as it streams from the Sun, may look, and, beholding the reflection, may learn to love. Does God so shine in me that I lead men to magnify His name? If I am dwelling with Christ it will be so. I shall not know it. 'Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone'; but, in meek unconsciousness of the glory that rays from us, we may walk the earth, reflecting the light and making God known to our fellows.

⁸ *The True Branches of the True Vine*

Illustrate: Please bear in mind that the branch, even when burned, is yet of the Vine. In West Tennessee we have so many beautiful trees, and every Fall we have so many beautiful leaves fall from these beautiful trees. When a leaf falls from a tree it withers, it dies, and in time it returns to the soil. When we gather these leaves to burn them, the oak leaf is still the oak leaf, the maple leaf is still the maple leaf. It is still of the same composition as it was at its birth. The maple leaf, falling to the ground, does not become a pine needle, nor does the oak leaf become that of the sycamore. The leaf and the branch, if detached from the tree, still came from that tree. It can be nothing else.

If you bear no fruit the **Master Gardener, God the Father** will eventually trim you from the Vine. The affairs of this world will overtake you - you will leave this life. Yet even so, you are yet of the Vine. The Master has said:

John 10:28-30⁹ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish--ever! No one will snatch them out of My hand. {29} My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all. No one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. {30} The Father and I are one."

The **Godhead** wishes you to produce **much fruit**, and if you have believed on Him this is what He demands - **abide in Him**. His threatening to the believer is not a

⁹ HCSB, Holman Christian Standard Bible

threatening that you will lose your salvation. Has He not promised, **I will never leave you or forsake you (Hebrews 13:5)**? Has He not given you of His Spirit *without measure*? Hasn't Jesus Christ (**2 Corinthians 1:22**) "... sealed us, and given [us the down payment] of the Spirit in our hearts"? If you are saved, you are saved to **bear much fruit**. Abide in Christ, and you will bear more. Refuse to abide in Christ, and He will purge you from the Vine in premature death. This is the warning that our Master gives us.

3. Producing: The Fruit and It's Glory Belong To God

FOCAL John 15:7-8 **If ye abide** in me, and my words abide in you, **ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. (8) Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit;** so shall ye be my disciples.

If you are following Him, abiding in Christ to the best of your ability, then *praise God and give Him the glory for it all*. Your salvation is a gift from God. Your sustenance is a gift from God. Your produce comes from that precious gift of salvation.

On any Vine it is true that every branch produces varied fruit based on it's unity with the vine. If you have surrendered to Christ, if you are seeking His face through prayer and meditation on His Word, if you honestly listen to the Word preached and seek to apply this Word to your life, then He has promised that this

will bear much fruit. Bear in mind that the words **much fruit**, do not mean **big fruit**. Do what God has assigned you to do. On any vine the *smallest grapes are often the richest in flavor*. **John Newton** said:

"If two angels were to receive at the same moment a commission from God, one to go down and rule earth's grandest empire, the other to go and sweep the streets of its meanest village, it would be a matter of entire indifference to each which service fell to his lot, the post of ruler or the post of scavenger; for the joy of the angels lies only in obedience to God's will, and with equal joy they would lift a Lazarus in his rags to Abraham's bosom, or be a chariot of fire to carry an Elijah home."

It is Christ Who provides the fruit - we merely cling to or abide in Him. The Apostle Paul said:

1 Corinthians 4:2-4 Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. (3) But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, **I judge not mine own self. (4) For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.**

If you abide in Christ you will bear **much fruit**, but the **much** is based on what God Almighty considers **much**. Trust the Godhead, **abide in Christ**.

While bearing fruit, honor God and not yourself.

Pastors and preachers are often the worst at applying this principle. We must always remember:

2 Corinthians 4:7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

C.H. Spurgeon said:

Who made thy sword sharp and enabled thee to strike home? Remember, thou hast done nothing whatever of thyself. If thou be this day a vessel unto honor, decorated and gilded, — if now thou art a precious vase, filled with the sweetest perfume, yet thou didst not make thyself so. Thou art the clay, and He is the potter. If thou be a vessel unto honor, yet not a vessel unto thine own honor, but a vessel unto the honor of him that made thee. If thou standest among thy fellow-men as the angels stand among the fallen spirits — a chosen one, distinguished from them, yet remember, it was not any goodness in thyself that made thee to be chosen, nor has it been any of thine own efforts, or thine own power, which has lifted thee out of the miry clay, and set thy feet on the rock, and established thy goings. Off with thy crown from thy proud head, and lay down thine honors at the feet of him who gave them to thee. Come with cherubim and seraphim and vail thy face and cry, “Not unto us, not unto us, but unto his name be all the glory for ever and ever.” And when thou art thus bowed down with humility, be thou prepared to learn another lesson, namely, — never to depend on thyself again. If thou hast aught

to do, go not forth to do it leaning on an arm of flesh. First bow thy knee and ask power of him who makes thee strong, and then thou shalt come back from thy labor rejoicing. But if thou goest in thine own strength, thou shalt break thy ploughshare on the rock; thou shalt sow thy seed by the side of the salt sea upon the barren sand, and thou shalt look upon the naked acres in years to come, and they shall not yield thee so much as a single blade to make glad thy heart.

It is the Lord Jesus to Whom I must cling. Not to my ability, nor to my talents, but to Him Who is the Only True Vine. He is our Savior and our Source of Power. Cling to Him, Blessed Redeemer, and you shall bear much fruit. May God touch your hearts with these words.