

John 15:1–8

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.

“The Importance of Abiding”

John 15:1-8

Have you ever gardened? If you have, you will have a better feel for this metaphor Jesus employed here in John 15. Jesus taught His disciples in the precious last moments that He has with them before He was betrayed and then crucified. To augment His teaching, He once again alludes to something in their background to help them understand spiritual truth. This time the earthly story with a heavenly meaning is wrapped around a lesson about the care of a grape vine.

Before we launch into our study, it is important to recognize at the outset that any parable or and analogy will break down at some point. Too often expositors and other folks try to make too much of a one-to-one comparison with the elements of the story and thus are led astray when the

illustration breaks down. This fact is nowhere more evident than in the illustration we will explore today.

I. The Elements of the Illustration Are Introduced (v. 1-3)

II. The Branches of the Vine and the Vine Dresser

I. The Elements of the Illustration Are Introduced (vs. 1-3)

A. If we are going to get the point of the story, we need to identify the elements the story is built around. Jesus began His story in verse 1 by describing the elements of his word picture. He said, *“I am the true vine and my Father is the vinedresser.”*

B. Jesus is the God/Man, He is really not a grapevine. So the Lord here is illustrating something very important to us. He illustrated something theologians call the “mystical union” we enjoy with the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. Although this is called the “Mystical Union,” it is real. Our union with Christ is a supernatural and mysterious union. We cannot fully understand it because we are finite and are anchored to the natural, while this union is supernatural in nature.

2. However, some aspects of this union we can understand. This union has a practical application in our lives. Through this union we have redemption through His blood. We read in ***Ephesians 1:7, “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.”***

3. Many other blessings we enjoy are also ours through our union with Jesus Christ. We will learn more about these blessings as we explore this text together. Louis Berkhof defines this union as “that intimate, vital, and spiritual union between Christ and His people, in virtue of which He is the source of their life and strength, and the source of their blessedness and salvation.”

II. The Branches of the Vine and the Vine Dresser

A. Second, Jesus focused on the branches. ***“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. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.” (John 15:2-3)***

The identity of the branches is not established beyond a doubt until we get to **verse 5**. Jesus says there, ***“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.”*** The branches are formally identified. We know that we who know Him as Lord and Savior are the branches.

B Finally, God the Father is the vinedresser in the picture. God the Father is the one who does the work in making sure that the vine produces the fruit. Now I am not an expert on grape vines. I am not even a novice. The totality of my experience with grape vines was a vine we had growing on an arbor behind the parsonage in Ohio. One thing I learned was that if you are going to produce a good crop of grapes, a lot of work must be done with the grape vine.

1. The first thing God does is to prune the vine. To put this in common English, God the Father clears out all of the dead wood. This picture creates difficulty for some of us because Jesus said “Every branch in Me.” Don’t the words “in Me” suggest union and salvation? Is this person a saved individual whose now loses his salvation?

Remember what Jesus already said in this book. He said in ***John 6:37, “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.”*** Jesus did not change His mind because of this parable. He could not say those who are truly converted can be lost.

Rather, our Lord warned us. Let me quote D. A. Carson’s observation on this verse. He wrote, “The transparent purpose of the verse is to insist that there are no true Christians without some measure of fruit.” If there is no fruit being produced in your life, you better make sure you are connected to the vine.

2 The second activity the Father does is to cleanse the branches which bear fruit. He prunes us to help us bear more fruit. ***“And every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.”*** The Greek word translated “prunes” means to clean. The picture here

is the cutting away of the extra growth and leaves so that the branch will produce the maximum fruit. It is important that we know what is happening so that we can understand what the Lord says next in **verse 3**. ***“You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.”*** One major tool that the Father uses to clean out our lives is His Word. We read in **Hebrews 4:12**, ***“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”*** His Word cuts deep into us and shows us what needs to be done about those questionable things in our lives!

Another way in which the Father cleans the unnecessary out of our lives to make us bear more fruit is through trials. **James 1:2-4** ***“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.”*** We need to add the promise James gives us in **verse 12**. ***“Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.”*** God cleanses us through trials, but He also blesses us for enduring them.

What does all of this teach us? **First**, we need to recognize that this parable is all about union with Christ and living in constant communion with Him. Does this characterize our lives? **Second**, we need to understand that if we belong to Him, we will produce fruit. What kind of fruit? The first fruit we should find would be that which is listed in **Galatians 5:22-25**, ***“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”*** **Finally**, we need to recognize that God is actively working in us so that we will produce much fruit. Sometimes that process is painful, but it is always spiritually profitable. God wants us to be bearing much fruit so that we can accomplish the purpose for which He saved us.

445 Something for Thee