

## John 15:1-8 "Our Father, the Farmer"

**John 15:1-8(ESV)** <sup>1</sup>"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. <sup>2</sup>Every branch of mine that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. <sup>3</sup>Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup>Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. <sup>5</sup>I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup>If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. <sup>7</sup>If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. <sup>8</sup>By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

Jesus was speaking and the disciples were listening intently. Jesus was about to leave them. It was only hours before Jesus would be hanging on the cross, dying for our sins. This was to be the last time Jesus spoke to his disciples before his death. He was giving his final teaching which adds to the seriousness of each word. Jesus was preparing these men for his departure from this earth and spoke these words, <sup>1</sup>"I have told you these things so that you won't abandon your faith **John 16:1(NLT)**. The Passover supper was now over where Jesus spoke of the New Covenant and had given to the disciples the bread and wine.

"Ego eimi, "I am the true vine." Whenever Jesus used that special phrase, "ego eimi", he was saying, "I am the God of the Old Testament." Jesus was affirming the fact that He is God. "I Am God". It was an incredible statement, one that the disciples wouldn't really understand until after Jesus' death and resurrection. There are seven such statements in the Gospel of John, "ego eimi," I am.

We do not know exactly where Jesus and the disciples were when he said, "I am the vine." There was a gorgeous golden vine with large clusters of grapes mounted on the temple. The men may have been walking by this when Jesus spoke of himself being the true vine. The walk continued from the city of Jerusalem to the Kidron Valley and into the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives.

The vine was the preeminent symbol of Israel. In the Old Testament, Israel is depicted as God's choice vine or vineyard. Figuratively speaking, the vines produced sour grapes as God's people rebelled against the Lord. The good news is Jesus is the true vine. He is the genuine real thing. He is the Messiah who grew up as a tender plant. He is the true vine from God. He would only bear good and holy fruit that would make possible eternal life for all who are connected to the vine. Yes, the Jews are known as God's chosen people, but in order to have a relationship with God you have to have to be connected to the vine, Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is the true vine, God in the flesh.

Jesus says, "My Father is the vine dresser." Another translation says, "My Father is the Gardner." My translation is My Father is the farmer. God our Father is the Farmer who plants the vineyard, who cares for the vineyard, who cultivates, cleans, prunes, and harvests the vineyard. We are God's vineyard, connected to God through Christ. And if we are God's vineyard through Christ that means you and I belong to God. You are not your own. You do not own yourself. Your life has been purchased by God through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. You belong to God. Your deepest need to have a sense of belonging is met by being rightly related to God through Christ. You are connected to God through Jesus.

We are joined to the vine to bear fruit. We have been created in Christ Jesus to do good works. It is possible that fruit bearing means good works. It is possible that fruit bearing is being used by God to lead people to Christ and see their souls saved by saved by grace through faith. I think that bearing fruit is referring specifically to the fruit of the Spirit. The Bible says, (Gal 5:22) But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup>gentleness, and self-control.

Do you know where I want to display the fruit of the spirit more consistently is in front of my children and my wife. I still struggle with so little patience. "Dad, how come you are so mean?" "Dad, you are so insensitive." And when I hear it I know they are right and I am cut to

the quick. Sometimes my fruit is nothing more than sour grapes. And all you want to do with sour grapes is spit them out.

Back to John 15 verse 1. I am the true vine, and my Father is the Farmer. Friends, for grape vines to bear good fruit, it takes the knowledge, the tender care that comes from the loving hands of the Gardener, our Farmer who art in heaven, God. Most, if not all of the work that is done on the vine and branches is done by hand. It is a lot of careful and tender loving handwork so to speak. God has his hand on your life and his work is to make your life bear fruit, the fruit of the Spirit primarily and as you exemplify Christ in your life you will do good works and God will use you to bring people into His kingdom.

Jesus says, "Every branch of mine that does not bear fruit he takes away." Another way to translate this phrase, "Every branch of mine that does not bear fruit he lifts up." In the Greek, the word take away can mean lifts up. And speaking as a farmer myself, I think that was the intended usage. One of the crops that we grow on our farm is similar to that of grapes in how you tend so very carefully to the crop. If the branch is growing on the ground, it will not bear fruit. Growing on the ground the branch will mildew and die. It can't produce fruit laying on the ground. The elements will destroy the branch. It will rot and die. So as a farmer you bend down and gingerly lift up the branch, you pick it up and string it up so it can receive the sun. Grapevines are held up by hand as they are strung, lifted up so they can abide in the vine and bear fruit.

As Christians we are lifted up by God. You love God because he first loved you. He picked you by hand, lifted you up by hand, and placed you in the vine, in Christ. You are God's handiwork. All you have to do is abide in, live in, remain in Christ and God will cause you to bear good fruit, the fruit of the Spirit. Abide in Christ and you will bear much fruit. The Holy Spirit flows through Christ and into you.

Jesus says, "Every branch that does not bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

One year, one of our crops had branches that grew way to fast. Every plant had to be pruned, cut back to make room for more productive growth. I was the one selected to do the cutting. Fortunately, it was a job that could be done by tractor, but I hated the fact that I was literally cutting back the growth that I thought would make us a lot of money. After the branches were cut, the remaining vine and branches produced one of the best crops we ever had. There was more room for the sun to shine. There was more room for the air. The pruning produced the best of fruit so to speak.

God sees branches in your life and in my life that are not bearing fruit or are hindering other branches from bearing more fruit, and God takes his pruning shears and begins cutting into your life. He cuts this branch and that branch. He cuts out some of your dirty rotten sinful habits. You cut out some of those sinful attitudes that are harming your relationships. He also cuts out some of the branches that are doing the best because He wants them to do even better.

You go to work and your job has been cut out from underneath you. You have been pruned. Your job decides to transfer you to a new location and now you have been pruned of all your familiar surroundings. You started in every game since you were five but now you have been benched. God is pruning you. You used to lead several Bible studies and now you do not for God is pruning you. Your first child moves away to college and God's pruning is taking place. Your best friend decides to move cross country. God has his ways of cutting out of our lives things that are very near and dear to us. It hurts, but God is never closer to you than when he is pruning you. All of God's discipline, all of God's purging is done out of pure and holy love that you might bear more holy fruit and quit bearing sour grapes.

And all you have to do to bear good fruit is remain in Christ, abide in Christ, dwell in Christ, live in Christ.

The gardener, the vine dresser, our Father the farmer cleanses the vine and the branches. He knocks off the insects that destroys the plant. He walks through the vineyard and looks for spots on the branches that means a particular disease has infected the plant and He knows what do to keep the infectious disease from spreading. It takes the constant vigilant work of the farmer to protect the crop.

What cleanses you and I from sin is the blood of Jesus shed on the cross. All our sins are washed away. The word of God is also a cleansing agent. When we meditate on God's word the Holy Spirit convicts us of our sin and leads us to repentance. Sometimes when God's word is being preached you feel so convicted, not so much because of the sermon, but because you are open to the Holy Spirit. God takes his word and shows us where we need to be cleansed, where we need to change so Christ can be more glorified in our lives.

To abide in Christ is to be in fellowship with Christ. It is to walk in union with Christ, communion with Christ, knowing you are so connected with Christ and that without him you can do nothing. Most of your problems and pain are put into their proper perspective as you abide in Christ, day in and day out. You will sense God's tender hand work on your life. When you abide in Christ, enjoying constant fellowship with Christ you even know what to pray for. God answers your prayers for you pray according to the will of the Father revealed as you abide in Christ. And as you abide in Christ for decades, the best fruit to be produced is yet to come. Amen and Amen.