

Dwelling in the True Vine

John 15:1-17

June 6, 2023

1. An Illustration of the Vine, the Farmer, and the Branches (1-8)
 - a. The Work of God in the Disciples – The Disciples Identity (1-3)
 - i. Jesus is the True Vine – “I am the true vine” (1a).
 1. Throughout the OT Israel was depicted as a vine (cf. Psalm 80:8-16; Isaiah 27:2-6)
 2. Though Israel was planted to bring forth fruit, it had become degenerate (Jeremiah 2:21).
 3. Jesus has now fulfilled the role that Israel was to fulfill; He is the True Vine; what Israel could not do, Jesus has accomplished.
 - ii. The Father is the Vinedresser – “and my Father is the husbandman” (1b).
 1. The Father plants and tends the vine (cf. Psalm 80:8-16).
 2. The Son has now become the Vine that the Father tends.
 - iii. The disciples are the branches (2-3).
 1. The branches are “in the Vine” – “Every branch in me” (2a).
 - a. The branches can only bear fruit by being *in* the Vine (Jesus).
 - b. The Vine produces fruit *through* the branches (disciples).
 2. The branches are pruned to become more fruitful (2b-3).
 - a. Branches that don’t produce fruit are “taken way/lifted up”; as vinedresser lifts branches away from the ground and ties them to the trellis, so the Father draws us from this wicked world to a place conducive to fruit-bearing.
 - b. Branches are pruned to produce more fruit.
 - c. Branches have a relationship with the Vine because they have been cleansed through faith in the Word (3; cf. 13:10). Jesus emphatically restates that the disciples are already (“even now”) clean. They have been declared righteous, and are completely clean (“every whit”). This relationship with the Vine is critical to understanding the following explanation.
 - b. The Work of God through the Disciples – The Disciples Purpose and Function (4-8)
 - i. Believers are to learn to dwell in Christ (4).
 1. Remain means to “dwell, stay, or continue to live.”
 2. Believers are urgently commanded to abide in Christ and are reminded of the fact that Christ abides in them.
 - ii. Believers cannot bear fruit without the agency of the Vine (4b-5).
 1. The branch cannot bear fruit by itself.
 2. The branch that is in fellowship with the Vine can bring forth much fruit (5a).
 3. Without Jesus, we can do nothing (5b).
 - iii. Those without a relationship with Christ have no prospect but destruction (6).
 1. Since believers are already clean, they do not fear eternal destruction.
 2. But anything that believers do apart from the vine will be burned up (1 Corinthians 3:11-15).
 - iv. Those who have a relationship with Christ have the opportunity for active communion with Jesus (7).
 1. The basis for our communion with Jesus is the relationship we possess through the new birth.
 2. The basis for our communion with Jesus is His Word which we must learn to dwell in.
 3. As we understand the Word and the Word informs our prayers, we will learn to ask what we will (according to the will of God), and Jesus will answer us (cf. 14:10).
 - v. Fruitful Christians glorify God (8).
 1. The more believers learn to dwell in the Vine and bear fruit, the more the Father is glorified.
 2. The more believers learn to submit to the fruit-bearing process, the more the Father is glorified.
2. A Command to Remain in the Love of God (9-11)
 - a. Disciples are to dwell in Jesus’s love (9).
 - i. Jesus loves us as the Father loves the Son – “As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you” (9c).
 1. Jesus is God’s beloved Son (Matthew 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22)
 2. John 3:35 “The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.”
 3. As the Father loves the Son, Jesus loves His disciples.
 - ii. Believers are to learn to dwell in Jesus’s love for them (cf. Ephesians 3:14-19).
 1. Jude 1:21 “keep yourselves in the love of God...”
 2. Romans 5:5 “And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.”

3. 2 Thessalonians 3:5 “And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.”
 4. Romans 8:38-39 “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
- b. Disciples dwell in Jesus’s love by keeping His commandments (10).
 - i. We grow in our love for Jesus as we learn to keep His commandments.
 1. Obedience should be the loving response to God’s love for us (cf. 1 John 4:19).
 2. Just as God’s love for us is active (Romans 5:8), so our love for God is to be active.
 - ii. We grow in our love for God by following Jesus’s example of active love.
 1. Jesus obeyed His Father’s commandments, even unto death (cf. Philippians 2:8).
 2. In so doing, Jesus lived in perfect fellowship with God.
 3. Wholehearted service and devotion to the One Who loves us supremely is our reasonable service (Romans 12:1-2).
 - iii. As we dwell in this active love, we experience joy (11).
 1. Jesus wants us to experience His joy (Hebrews 12:2).
 2. Not just a momentary happiness, but an abiding joy.
 3. Psalm 16:11 “Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures evermore.”
3. The Love Commandment (12-17)
 - a. Love one another as Jesus loves you (12).
 - i. Our love toward God is to be expressed in love for one another (cf. 13:34-35).
 - ii. Jesus’s love for us is our pattern for loving one another.
 - b. Jesus demonstrated His love for us by laying down His life for us (13).
 - i. Laying down your life for another is the ultimate expression of love.
 - ii. When Jesus laid down His life for us, He treated us as if we were the dearest of friends, and yet we were his enemies (cf. 3:16; Romans 5:8).
 - c. We are to respond to this ultimate act of friendship with obedience to Jesus’s commands (cf. 12).
 - i. Just as God loved the world so much that He gave His Son, we are to love God so much that we would love and serve one another.
 - ii. As we attempt to love and serve one another as Christ has loved and served us, we grow in our friendship with Jesus.
 - d. Though we are to obey, our primary relationship with Jesus is friend rather than slave (15).
 - i. Jesus has set us free to serve Him as sons (cf. 8:35-36).
 - ii. It is this new relationship as sons of God that motivates our devoted service to God and one another.
 - e. We were chosen and appointed to bear fruit that remains (16).
 - i. Jesus emphatically commissions the disciples to the task of fruit bearing.
 - ii. Jesus wants us to bear fruit that remains now and through eternity; this is done by becoming a disciple who makes disciples.
 - iii. Jesus authorizes us to take the initiative to ask and receive; the ministry God has given us is infinite in it’s potential; God is waiting for us to ask!
 - f. In summary, Jesus restates the command to love one another to underscore its importance; believers bear fruit by loving one another as Jesus loves us (17).

Conclusion:

1. What is your relationship to the Vine? Are you trying to produce fruit without nurturing a growing relationship with Christ?
2. Are you learning to dwell in God’s love for you? Is your love for God active, or merely emotional?
3. Are you striving to love others as God loves you?
4. Are you experiencing joy in your Christian life? Could a lack of joy indicate a shallow understanding of God’s love for you? Could a lack of joy indicate a misunderstanding of how to love others as Christ loves you?