**The True Vine**

*John 15:1-6*

**Context**

Scripture gives us a number of word pictures to help us understand the relationship between the eternal God and His people: Father/children, King/subjects, Shepherd/sheep, Builder/building, Master/slaves, Husband/bride, Head/body. In this text, there is yet another: Vine/branches.

Just as a branch depends entirely on the vine for life, sustenance, growth, and fruit, so believers depend completely on the divine Lord as the source of their spiritual life and effect.[[1]](#footnote-1) There is no ability for a vine to bear fruit unless it is connected to the branch. Likewise, in the life of the true believer, one must be connected to Christ to bear any spiritual fruit.

**John 15:5**—*I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.*

Always the master storyteller, Jesus uses an analogy that the disciples would have been very familiar with to identify types of people/responses to the gospel message—from that very night all through redemptive history. Jesus is the vine. His Father is the vinedresser. The eleven faithful disciples are abiding branches. And false disciples (i.e. Judas) are non-abiding branches. There is a challenge here to all who claim to be Christians to demonstrate the sincerity of their belief by enduring faith.

The characters

1. **The Vine**

**John 15:1a, 5a**—*I am the true vine…I am the vine*

1. **I AM—**the last of the seven “I AM” statements in John’s gospel. The purpose of each is to affirm His deity (**6:35; 8:12; 10:7, 9, 11, 14; 11:25; 14:6**)

	* 1. Christ is the vine
		2. He is God incarnate and the source of spiritual life
2. Israel is represented in the OT as God’s Vine

**Psalm 80:8**—*You removed a vine from Egypt; You drove out the nations and planted it.*

**Jeremiah 2:21**—“*Yet I planted you a choice vine, A completely faithful seed. How then have you turned yourself before Me Into the the degenerate shoots of a foreign vine?*

**Hosea 10:1**—*Israel is a luxuriant vine; He produces fruit for himself. The more his fruit, The more altars he made; The richer his land, The better he made the sacred pillars.*

**Isaiah 5:1-7**—Let me sing now for my well-beloved A song of my beloved concerning His vineyard. My well-beloved had a vineyard on a fertile hill. **2**He dug it all around, removed its stones, And planted it with the choicest vine. And He built a tower in the middle of it And also hewed out a wine vat in it; Then He expected *it* to produce *good* grapes, But it produced *only* worthless ones. **3**“And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, Judge between Me and My vineyard. **4**“What more was there to do for My vineyard that I have not done in it? Why, when I expected *it* to produce *good* grapes did it produce worthless ones? **5**“So now let Me tell you what I am going to do to My vineyard: I will remove its hedge and it will be consumed; I will break down its wall and it will become trampled ground. **6**“I will lay it waste; It will not be pruned or hoed, But briars and thorns will come up. I will also charge the clouds to rain no rain on it.” **7**For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel And the men of Judah His delightful plant. Thus He looked for justice, but behold bloodshed; For righteousness, but behold, a cry of distress.

(Cf. **Matthew 21;33-43**)

* + 1. Her apostasy made it an empty vine
		2. She was disqualified as God’s channel of blessing
		3. The blessings now come only to those connected to Christ
1. The True (i.e. what is real) vs that which is false
	* 1. Perfect vs imperfect
		2. Genuine vs counterfeit

**1 Thessalonians 1:9**—For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God

**1 John 5:20**—And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

**Revelation 19:11**—And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it *is* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war.

* + 1. True light

**John 1:9**—*There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.*

* + 1. True bread from heaven

**John 6:32**—*Jesus then said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven*.

1. **The Vinedresser**

**John 15:1b**—…*and My Father is the vinedresser.*

* + 1. God the Father is the Vinedresser

			1. Vinedresser—refers to one who tills the soil; farmer

**2 Timothy 2:6**—*The hard-working farmer ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops.*

**James 5:7**—*Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains.*

* + - 1. Vine grower

**Matthew 21:33-35**—“*Listen to another parable. There was a land-owner who planted a vineyard and put a wall around it and dug a wine press in it, and built a tower, and rented it out to vine-growers and went on a journey.****34****When the harvest time approached, he sent his slaves to the vine-growers to receive his produce.* ***35****The vine-growers took his slaves and beat one, and killed another, and stoned a third….*

* + 1. Two primary roles

			- 1. Removed the branches that were not fruit-bearing
				2. Prune the ones that bore fruit to bear even more fruit
1. **The vine branches**

**John 15:2-6**—*Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so 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, so 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, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.****6****If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.*

* + 1. Abiding branches

			1. Bear fruit (**vv 2, 4, 5, 8**)
			2. Abide or remain/continue in Christ’s love (**v 9**)
			3. They keep His commands (**v 10**)

**John 8:31**—*So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, “If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine;*

**John 14:15, 21, 23**—“*If you love Me, you will keep My commandments….* ***21****He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.” …****23****Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.*

* + - * 1. They confess their sins

**1 John 1:9**—*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

* + - * 1. Obey Him

**1 John 2:3**—*By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.*

* + - * 1. Demonstrate love for others

**1 John 2:11**—*But the one who hates his brother is in the dark-ness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.*

* + - * 1. Live in patterns of righteousness

**1 John 3:6**—*No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him*

* + - 1. Fruit bearing branches get pruned
				1. Necessary for cultivation
				2. Necessary for greater fruit productivity

That includes removing anything that would sap spiritual energy and hinder fruitfulness

Anything that limits righteousness

Ways we experience pruning (including but not limited to: trials, difficulties, suffering, persecution, sickness, etc)

**Hebrews 12:7-11**—I*t is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?****8****But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.* ***9****Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?****10****For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness.****11****All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.*

**1 Corinthians 11:32**—*But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world.*

* + - 1. Suffering is merely the handle of the Father’s knife; the blade is the Word of God.[[2]](#footnote-2)

**Hebrews 4:12**—*For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

**Ephesians 6:17**—*And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*

* + - 1. They were clean because of the word that was embraced

**Romans 1:16**—*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*

* + 1. Non-abiding branches

			1. The Father removes the unregenerate false branches away
			2. They have an appearance of attachment but it is superficial
			3. These are not true Christians who “lose their salvation”
				1. True believers are eternally secure

**John 6:37**—*All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.*

* + - * 1. There were many who outwardly attached to Jesus

**Matthew 13:20-22**—*the one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy;****21****yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away.****22****And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.*

(Cf. **Rom 9:6-8; 11:16-24; 1 John 2:19**)

* + - 1. They are thrown away and burned

**Matthew 13:49-50**—*So it will be at the [*[*y*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=mat+13&version=NASB1995#fen-NASB1995-23589y)*]end of the age; the angels will come forth and take out the wicked from among the righteous,****50****and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

**Conclusion**

Believers who abide in Christ are His genuine disciples and will produce fruit (righteous behavior) and the result in eternal joy and blessing. Those who do not, as reflective of Judas, will not and ultimately will suffer the horrible consequences of their rejection.

**2 Peter 2:20-21***—For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first.****21****For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them.*

1. John MacArthur, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, John 12-21, 142. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ibid, 148. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)