

The Gospel of John

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Chapter Fifteen

John 15:1-3 NASB

"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 it so that it may bear more fruit. (3) "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

The vine is used in the OT as symbolic of Israel such as in Psalm 80:8-19 when God brought Israel out of Egypt, cleared the ground to make room for it, and planted it. John records the words of Jesus as He states that He is the true Israel represented by the main vine to which every branch must remain attached to be alive. Jesus is the vine, His disciples are the branches, and the Father tends to the branches. The Greek words contain fuller meanings than can be attained with English translations but "He prunes it" can be translated "He cleans it" as an echo of John 13:10 when Jesus states "you are clean, but not all". In that context Judas is an unclean branch that must be removed. In verse 3 Jesus is recorded as saying again that the other disciples are clean (John 14:23) since they have His word. It may be inferred that the word of Jesus is used by the Father in pruning the entire plant.

John 15:4-6 NASB

"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.

If a branch is disconnected from the vine then it will die and certainly not bear fruit by itself since the source of its life is removed. Christians must then remain attached to Jesus to derive their life from Him. Paul stated this same principle: *"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me."* (Gal 3:30) If we try to live according to our selfish desires we are disconnecting ourselves from Jesus for a person cannot serve two masters: *"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."* (Matt 6:24) When Jesus states that apart from Him we can do nothing He means that, on our own merits, we can do nothing of eternal value. Paul lived through many different life situations and he could be content in any of them because of his abiding in Christ: *"I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. (13) I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."* (Phil 4:12-13) Because many people use verse 13 improperly, I think it best to translate it as "I can endure all life situations as long as I stay devoted to Jesus, the Vine. In the OT a vine branch not producing fruit can only be

used for fuel (Ezek 15:1-8). Similarly Jesus states that any branches that do not abide in Him will be gathered and cast into the fire for burning, which is a statement of the End Times when the sheep will be separated from the goats. Jesus is recorded by Matthew similarly regarding the Judgment: *"So it will be at the end of the age; the angels shall come forth, and take out the wicked from among the righteous, (50) and will cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."* (Matt 13:49-50)

John 15:7-8 NASB

"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. (8) "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.

However Jesus has a great statement for those who abide in Him. Of course Jesus is the personification of all of His teaching so there is actually no difference between abiding in Him and His words abiding in us. Some people have used this promise of Jesus to mean that they can ask any selfish thing of Him and it will be done. Of course that is not the meaning of this statement. If we truly abide in Jesus with His words abiding in our minds then anything that we wish for ourselves will be what Jesus would want for us and that would probably not be a new car every year! Not only will all that we, as true disciples of Jesus, be done for us, the Father will be glorified in this action as our entire motive should be the glorification of Him. This total abiding will result in much fruit being produced and will prove to ourselves and to others that we are indeed disciples of Jesus Christ.

John 15:9-11 NASB

"Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. (10) "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full".

What a marvelous picture Jesus paints for us! There is a mutual indwelling of the Son, the Father, the Holy Spirit, and the true disciples of Jesus with a basis on this great love! All the Greek words for love in verse 9 are conjugations of the Greek word for love, *agape*. Jesus demonstrated His love for the Father by His total obedience, even to death on the cross. A measure of our abiding in His love is the way in which we keep all His commandments. Jesus is our divine example of this total obedience.

In verses 10 and 11, Jesus adds "my love" and "my joy" to "my peace" as already stated in John 14:27. John also records this message of joy in *"And these things we write, so that our joy may be made complete."* (1 John 1:4) Jesus knew what bewilderment they would face at His trials and crucifixion so these statements were designed to help them deal with the coming events.

John 15:12-14 NASB

"This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. (13) "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. (14) "You are My friends if you do what I command you.

These verses are an expansion of the new commandment given in John 13:34. There is no procedure that allows us to properly measure the love that Jesus has for His disciples and we can never match such a love. However that is our standard for measure as we walk in this world. We prove our love for Him and we are His friends if we obey all of His commands. He states this great love will be shown as He lays down His life for His friends.

John 15:15-17 NASB

"No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. (16) "You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. (17) "This I command you, that you love one another.

The relationship between Christian friends is a mutual partnership of love for each other and a desire that all such friends have their needs met. Jesus has been bringing His disciples into His inner relationship with the Father and sharing with them intimate details of what is going to happen to Him. He states that He has revealed to them everything that He heard from His Father so they are now in His inner circle.

Jesus makes it clear that He chose them and He also appointed them so that they would not be unfruitful, which means from His previous comments, that they would continue to abide in Him. Christians persevere because God preserves them. He also guaranteed them that their desires would be in agreement with His desires so that they would not ask outside of His will. He then again commands them to love one another for in their zeal to obey His commandments and accomplish His goals they might slip in their devotion to each other.

John 15:18-20 NASB

"If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. (19) "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. (20) "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.

Here the word “kosmos” refers to the unbelievers who either are indifferent to God or directly hate Him. The tense of the word is perfect indicating that this hatred of the world is unchanging and will apply also to His disciples. The world hates God because He will not conform to their standards but insists that they conform to His standards. Even if they believe in a god, they hate God because of the exclusive nature of the way to Him: “*Jesus *said to him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.*”(John 14:6) Jesus states that He chose His disciples out of the world so they no longer are of this world:

Eph 2:19 “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household,”

Phil 3:20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;

Since Christians are no longer being conformed to the world, the world hates them. Certainly a disciple of Jesus is not greater than his master and so they will persecute His disciples and will even accuse them of actions against their god. The second sentence of verse 20 could be a bit confusing because of the use of several “they” words. Jesus is saying that if they persecuted Him then they will persecute His disciples but if they kept the words of Jesus then they will affirm the words of the disciples also as long as such match with the words of Jesus.

Jesus knew that His disciples would suffer because of their belief in Him so He is consoling them with the knowledge that such suffering is not directly at them but at Him. Similarly today, Christians are suffering because of their allegiance to Him. Some of the suffering today is physical and much is psychological as the “separation of church and state” is applied in ever more stringent manners because the world hates the real God.

John 15:21-25 NASB

"But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me. (22) "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. (23) "He who hates Me hates My Father also. (24) "If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well. (25) "But they have done this to fulfill the word that is written in their Law, 'THEY HATED ME WITHOUT A CAUSE.'

Jesus reveals two reasons for having the adversity of the world. One is ignorance for they have no understanding of the Father although they may even state such an allegiance as the Pharisees did and Jesus said they were of their father the devil (John 8:44). Since they have no knowledge of the One who sent Jesus, they cannot know Him either. Paul also wrote of this lack of acceptance of the knowledge of God:

Rom 1:28-32 “And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, (29) being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, (30) slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, (31) without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; (32) and, although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.”

Their ignorance is chosen rather than submitting to the authority of God. In verse 22 Jesus states that they resent His words, and since they reject His words, they now are openly sinning against God. Their hatred of Him extends to a hating of the Father also since the Father sent the Son. The unity between the Father and the Son is total so that rejection of one leads to rejection of the other. His works brought accreditation to His message but they refused to believe in Him and so will always suffer the wrath of God (John 3:36). Jesus then states a fulfillment of a prophecy that He partially quotes: “*Those who hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head; Those who would destroy me are powerful, being wrongfully my enemies, What I did not steal, I then have to restore.*” (Psalm 69:4) His point is that those who claimed to be champions of the cause were fulfilling the prophecy about the enemies of God’s servant.

John 15:26-27 NASB

"When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me, (27) and you will testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning.

Jesus then tells them that He will send the Holy Spirit from the Father and He will testify about Him (Jesus) and those who have been with Him from the beginning of His ministry will also testify. To have the ability to testify about Jesus, the person must have an experiential knowledge about Him to convey to others. There will then be a partnership between the Holy Spirit and the disciples and so the ministry of Jesus will be spread throughout the world. When the disciples decided to choose a successor to Judas they chose the same standards of personal knowledge of Jesus: *"It is therefore necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us-- (22) beginning with the baptism of John, until the day that He was taken up from us--one of these should become a witness with us of His resurrection."* (Act 1:21-22). Later Saul was chosen by Jesus to be another of His disciples and his name was changed to Paul. We read that Paul also was taught so that he could effectively testify of Jesus:

Act 9:3-5 "And it came about that as he journeyed, he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; (4) and he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" (5) And he said, "Who art Thou, Lord?" And He said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting,"

Act 9:15-16 "But the Lord said to him, Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; (16) for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake."

2Cor 12:2-4 "I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago--whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows--such a man was caught up to the third heaven. (3) And I know how such a man--whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows-- (4) was caught up into Paradise, and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak".

Paul then became an apostle to testify of his Lord Jesus Christ.