

John 15:1 I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

John 15:2 Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

This chapter starts right in on a discourse with no clue as to where they are. One would assume that He is talking to them as they walked toward the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus compares Himself to a vine and the Father to a gardener and His followers to branches on the vine. The Father gets rid of the branches that bear no fruit, and He prunes or cleans the branches that are bearing fruit so that they will be even more fruitful. How does He purge us? Through chastening and testing.

Revelation 3:19 "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten...."

Hebrews 12:6 "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth...."

James 1:12 "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him."

Temptation = putting to proof (testing)

Tried = approved

Israel was often symbolized by the vine in scripture.

Psalms 80:8-9 "Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it. Thou preparedst room before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land."

Isaiah 5:1&7 "Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill....For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry."

Hosea 10:1 "Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself: according to the multitude of his fruit he hath increased the altars; according to the goodness of his land they have made goodly images."

Observation from JVMcGee: "Their identification with the Jewish nation and the Jewish religion is not the essential thing....The important thing now is for the disciples to be related to Jesus Christ."

Jesus represents the "true vine." He represents the Father to the world rightly—as Israel was intended to do.

John 15:3 Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

John 15:4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

John 15:5 I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

Jesus tells the disciples that they are already ready to bear fruit because of their faith and the time spent with Him being fed by His word. As long as they remain obedient to Him and function as part of the vine, they will bear fruit. They cannot bear fruit in their own wisdom, strength, or power—they need nourishment and provision from the vine (Jesus through the ministry of the Holy Spirit).

I just skipped over verse 3 in my previous studies through this journal. It seems out of place at first reading. Finally, it dawned on me that the word “clean” was connected to one who had been purged. In fact, the word for *purge* in Greek means “to cleanse”; Webster adds, “purify by separating and carrying off whatever is impure.” Although I believe chastening and testing are part of the purging process, I realize now that it is the “washing of water by the word” that is most important.

Ephesians 5:25-26 “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word....”

Purging is an ongoing process according to these verses. It is done as needed to ensure the fruitfulness of the branches—you and me.

John 15:6 *If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.*

If the branches, those who follow Jesus, choose to be disobedient and separate themselves from the vine, the source of nourishment, they cannot bear fruit. This branch or person will become like the branch that is thrown away because it is not producing fruit; it withers from lack of nourishment; it is useless.

John 15:7 *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*

John 15:8 *Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.*

The key word here is *abide*; this indicates a continuing close relationship. Those who remain obedient to Him will be able to ask for whatever they need to produce fruit, and it will be given to them. It brings glory to the Father when we are producing fruit (obeying the commands of the Father/Son, winning other souls and loving and serving one another). Obedience is what proves that you are His disciple. If we are abiding in the Father and His words abide in us, our will and desires will mirror the will of the Father. We would not knowingly ask Him for things that would go against His will. John supports this truth in his first epistle.

1John 5:14 “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us....”

John 15:9 As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.

John 15:10 If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

John 15:11 These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and *that* your joy might be full.

Now Jesus tells them that He has loved them in the same way the Father has loved Him. "*Continue ye in my love.*" I think that this is saying that He wants them to love others as He has loved them; follow His example. Next He tells them how—by keeping His commandments (again as He has set the example for them by obedience to His Father's commands). Then He tells them why; He gives them a motive—that their joy may be full/complete.

Note the word "remain" in verse 11. The new believer is always full of joy and enthusiasm. Jesus is saying that we never have to lose that first joy. I think that is the very thing He is addressing in His letter to the church at Ephesus in Revelation 2 when He speaks of their leaving their first love. It was their choice to leave. Keeping His commandments is the key. Once we begin to compromise or take back control of little sections of our life, we begin to lose joy; we begin the process of leaving our first love.

In verse 10 Jesus is making a direct connection between obedience and abiding in the love of God. I think we have a hard time with this concept because obedience carries a negative connotation today. It is associated with rules that we don't necessarily like and forbidden pleasures. We haven't been taught that obedience to one who loves us and establishes rules for our benefit and protection actually gives us more freedom to enjoy life. The commandments of the Lord Jesus are an expression of His love for us. The fact that He has established boundaries around us by giving us those commands proves that we are important to Him. It's like He has erected a fence of protection for us. By staying in the fenced-in area established by His commands we are protected from experiencing the consequences that accompany actions outside that fence. We can enjoy complete freedom without fear inside those boundaries. When you get a vision of that word picture, you can better understand how keeping His commandments equates to abiding in His love.

A second thought that hit me was that Jesus the man lived within those same boundaries and knew from experience the truth that He was teaching. As always, He was teaching truth revealed to Him by the Father. He was not telling His disciples to do one thing and then doing something different Himself. He was lived the truth He taught.

The third thought that jumped out to me is that our joy is directly connected to His *joy*. The closer we stay to the heart of God through our willing obedience to His commands, the greater will be the joy that we experience in life. I believe that *joy* is an attitude of heart that comes from knowing we are loved and watched over by a Father who is in complete control of all that is allowed to touch our lives. When we go outside the "fence," He allows us to experience the

consequences of that action so as to teach us not to do that again; but He also willingly takes us back into the fold and makes something good come out of that something bad.

Romans 8:28 "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

John 15:12 This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.

John 15:13 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

John 15:14 Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

John 15:15 Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.

Jesus seems to say that this command is THE command; it embodies almost all of the other commandments. *"Love one another, as I have loved you."* Follow my example in every way. Now He goes on to explain the measure of that love—that one be willing to lay down his life for his friends—which is what He is about to do for them (and the rest of the world). Then He says that those who follow this command are His friends. This is an important distinction from one who is a slave or servant, one who obeys because he has to, not because he is intimate with the master. It is different because He is not just issuing orders as a master without giving explanation as to why. The desire of Jesus is to encourage them. Obedience to His commands will bring joy to their lives. He is being careful to make sure they understand and can be confident about the future. He has shared with them everything He learned from the Father—as His friends.

I found an interesting quote in the Believer's Bible Commentary by MacDonald: "Someone has pointed out that as branches, we receive (v5); as disciples, we follow (v8); and as friends, we commune (v15).

John 15:16 Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

In this verse I think it is important to remember that Jesus is talking to His disciples whom He "hand picked" to personally train in the truth received from the Father so that they in turn would be prepared to carry on these teachings when He returned to the Father. Isolating this point in time and trying to see through the eyes of the disciples and hear through their ears is enlightening. From a human perspective, the thought that they were chosen for a special service/task by someone they admired/trusted/revered so much was an honor. Now they must start shouldering the responsibility. He is trusting them to go out and "bear fruit"—teach others so that they would have faith in Jesus and in return act in obedience themselves. Their faithful obedience would result in provision by the Father of anything that they needed in the process. This provision would be provided through the obedience of the Son (Jesus), so they

were to approach the Father through the Son. These same truths are applicable to every believer today.

John 15:17 These things I command you, that ye love one another.

A key focus of His teaching is that His disciples should love one another. Again, Jesus is emphasizing the importance of what He is saying by repeating it so many times.

John 15:18 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before *it hated* you.

John 15:19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

John 15:20 Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

John 15:21 But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.

Now the Lord begins to warn them that life won't always be easy. He reminds them that the world in general has rejected Him, hates Him, and will treat them as His followers in like manner. He explains how the world is comfortable with those that are like them. They have been chosen to be different from the world, and this will cause many to hate them. He reminds them of a truth He had taught them earlier — "*The servant is not greater than his lord.*" So they shouldn't expect to be treated any better than He has been treated. Those who persecuted Him would persecute them, and those who obeyed Him would obey them. It ultimately was a reflection of their belief/unbelief in the Father that sent Him.

Sadly, it seems the true body of believers in America is rapidly coming to a time of just such hate and persecution because of their obedience to the Lord. Tolerance and acceptance are the buzz words for the day. The true body of believers will never tolerate or accept what goes against the Word of God.

John 15:22 If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin.

John 15:23 He that hateth me hateth my Father also.

John 15:24 If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.

John 15:25 But *this cometh to pass*, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.

Jesus states that if He had not come and declared the truth to them, they could deny their sinful condition. Now, they were without excuse. Those who hate Him, hate the Father. If He had not done among them what no one else had done (lived a sinless life and performed miracles as proof that He was the Son of God), they might still deny their sin. Even though His life was beyond reproach,

they still hated Him and His Father. Then He explains that their response had been in fulfillment of the scripture—*“They hated me without a cause.”*

Psalm 35:19 “Let not them that are mine enemies wrongfully rejoice over me: neither let them wink with the eye that hate me without a cause.”

Psalm 69:4 “They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head: they that would destroy me, being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty: then I restored that which I took not away.”

After thinking about it, I think He is saying that if He as God in flesh had not come and not only spoken the truth, but lived the truth before them without flaw, not even a tiny lack of obedience, then there would be no standard from which to identify sin. But He did fulfill the whole law—not only that, He performed miracles to further testify of who He was—and they still chose to reject Him.

John 15:26 But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:

John 15:27 And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.

Then Jesus reminds them that He will send the Comforter (advocate, intercessor, helper), the Spirit of Truth from the Father, who will testify of Him. He will speak to the conscience of man. They (the eleven) are also to testify of their personal knowledge of His identity since they had been with Him since the beginning of His ministry. The resulting scripture that forms our New Testament is a result of their obedience to this command through the ministry of the Spirit.

I think it is important to note that Jesus declares that the Holy Spirit will testify of Jesus—not Himself.

John 16:13-14 “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.”

There is a lot of emphasis given to recognition of the Holy Spirit today. I’m not saying that it is wrong to recognize His ministry in our lives, but I think it is a big warning sign for possible false teaching when more emphasis is given to knowing and relating to the Holy Spirit vs. knowing and relating to the Savior. According to the scripture, any person being led by the Holy Spirit will be drawing attention to the person of Jesus Christ—not the Holy Spirit.