

# I Am the True Vine

## John 15:1-11

“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 does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. **3** Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. **4** 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. **5** 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. **6** 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. **7** If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. **8** By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. **9** As the Father has loved me, so have I 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. **11** These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

John chapter 15 is one of the most loved passages in the entire Bible. According to Sinclair Ferguson, it also teaches one of the most foundational doctrines of the Christian life: our union with Jesus Christ.

To begin this chapter, Jesus uses a theologically rich analogy (vine/branches) that goes all the way back to the Old Testament. From passages such as Psalm 80 and Ezekiel 15 & 17, we learn that “the vine” was a symbol for Israel to identify them as people of God. God rescued Israel from Egypt and planted them like a vine in the Promised Land. They were to bear the fruit of God and be a blessing to the nations. Israel failed. However, God promises that one day He would plant a new vine, the True Vine. The true Vine would have many branches and produce abundant and everlasting fruit! This Vine would fulfill the Father’s will perfectly and indeed be a blessing to the nations, bringing glory to the Father. In John 15, Jesus declares He is the True Vine and by virtue of being indwelt by the Holy Spirit, the Church becomes His branches, the true people of God secured forever.

This would have been of great comfort for the original disciples who were undoubtedly fearful of the fact that Jesus would soon be leaving them. But Jesus in His compassion gave them and the church today a profound comfort, teaching us the nature and beauty of being united to Christ.

### I. **Our union with Christ is by grace alone (chapter 15)**

We see from several verses in chapter 15 the humbling and comforting truth that our relationship with Christ is a gift from God that’s initiated, cultivated, and secured by His grace. From verses 9, 13, 15 and 16 we learn that (1) Jesus loves us with the same love the Father loves Him (2) the nature of His love is sacrificial (3) He views us as intimate friends and (4) all of this is made possible by the Father choosing us before the foundation of the world. Our salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone and every ounce of our relationship with Christ is about Christ. What a humbling truth for our proud hearts and a comforting truth for our poor stumbling faith.

### II. **God the Father, the perfect Gardener, cultivates our union with Christ (v.2)**

There are many ways in which God cultivates the fruit of Christ (see Gal. 5) in our lives. But in this passage, Jesus focuses on just one: The Gardener’s pruning shears. Just like a gardener knows which stems and branches need to be trimmed back in order for the plant to grow more abundantly and become more beautiful than it was before, God knows what needs to be

pruned in our lives in order that we would become more like Christ. He enters into the garden of our hearts and trims away things that prevent the fruit of Christ from blooming and He trims away things that cause the fruit of Christ to bloom. The way in which He does this is usually through trials and suffering. Though God did not intend for there to be suffering, it is here because of man's rebellion in the Garden of Eden. However, the Christian's sufferings aren't wasted. God in His grace uses our suffering ultimately to drive us into a deeper intimacy with Christ and to make us more like Jesus (which is the purpose of our redemption, v.16). Though we may never know in this life why God allows certain things to happen to us, we can trust that He is the perfect Gardener, that He merely prunes us because in love He cut off Jesus from the land of the living so we wouldn't have to be, and that He will bring about to completion the good work He has started in us (Phil. 1:6).

### **III. We are commanded to cultivate our union with Jesus by abiding in Him (vv.4-10)**

This passage is truly a message of comfort. However, in this message Jesus also teaches us how to draw from our relationship with Him for all it's worth. His grace must be "engaged" by us and we are able to do that by abiding (making our home in) His love (v.9) and His Word (v.7). The Gospel of Jesus isn't just for evangelism. It's also for the Church. We never graduate from it. To grow in Christ-likeness and in our love for Him, we must be diligent to abide in Him. First, we must continually meditate on His self-giving, divine, sacrificial love for us. Christian growth never begins by doing things FOR God but by believing what God has done FOR you. We are also called to make our home in His Word and to obey His commandments. Remember, the Bible isn't a means TO grace, it's a means OF grace. We don't earn grace, but by allowing His Word to master us, we draw from His grace more and more. As we behold the beauty of Christ in His Word, the Spirit then begins to transform us into Him whom we behold.

### **IV. By abiding in Christ, we glorify God and receive His matchless joy (v. 8, 11).**

Happiness comes from a sense of being a part of something bigger than yourself and actually feeling like you contribute to whatever that is. We were designed that way and our hearts will always chase after it. The questions we must ask are: is it worth it and is it lasting? The Bible tells us only one thing is worth it and lasting and that is the glory of God. The glory of God is man's chief end and it was the aim and greatest desire of the only perfect man to ever walk this earth, Jesus Christ! Jesus tells us by being united to Him and abiding in Him, not only are we ABLE to glorify God, but it becomes our greatest desire too!

By abiding in Jesus as well, we receive a joy that only a Christian can know—the joy of Christ Himself. Not only do we receive His all-satisfying joy, but we also become the object of His joy! What greater comfort and greater value is there than knowing you are delighted in and have been sacrificed for by Jesus Christ, your Savior and Friend?

Christian, you have been given a gift that truly is beyond comprehension. You have been united to Christ! Abide in Him! Allow Him to speak to you through His Word, to dominate your mind, and to work in your heart all for the glory of God and your joy!