

THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES

By Don Krider

Father, we thank you for the love of God, and Your precious Spirit. We are excited about coming into Your presence once again to concentrate on Your Word. How important it is that the Word of God dwells richly in our hearts. By that Word we can fight the good fight of faith.

In the 14th chapter of John, Jesus speaks something new into his disciples' hearts that they haven't yet grasped, and He continues in the 16th chapter. They hadn't understood much before that He taught them, and this is something entirely new. It is called the teaching on the Holy Ghost.

God knows when to teach what He wants to be taught, and the Church needs to apply the simple principles to our lives. The simple principles, not trying to understand things that we are not able to understand. David said, "*I do not exercise myself in things that are beyond me*"(Psalm 131:1). We should find where our calling is, and where our realm is, and take that and press on into greater things. But until we live what we know, there is no sense in asking God for more.

So here, in the midst of this 14th chapter of John, He is talking about the Holy Ghost.

(John 14:26 KJV) But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

Jesus is teaching that the Holy Ghost is going to be their Comforter, He will teach them all things, and bring things into focus for them. This is something entirely new to them. It is going to be as new as the teaching He is going to be giving them on the vine and the branches. Did you know there are two vines in the Bible?

Let's look at Revelation 14:18-20:

And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the

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space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

We are not of that vine. We are of the vine of the blessing. Now let's look at John chapter 15.

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

Here we see that there are two vines. He identifies Himself as the true vine, so anything that comes from the true vine has to be true. If I am a branch off of the true vine, anything that comes out of me should be truth. There is not going to be a lie. That vine does not produce lies, and the branch is nothing more than what the vine is. It doesn't live of its' own strength. It doesn't live of its' own ability. It lives by what the vine produces through it. So we are totally dependent upon the Lord, aren't we?

Jesus says in John 15:5 that without Him we can do nothing. Without Christ we cannot live, for in Him we have our living and our being in Christ Jesus. The first thing we find is that He identifies Himself: ***"I am the true vine, and My Father is the husbandman."*** The husbandman is the one who prunes the vine. The one who takes care of the orchards and the vineyards. We will be talking about the orchards too, because there is an olive tree that is wild, and an olive tree that is sweet. We were by nature the wild olive branch.

Read Romans chapter 11. It talks about the wild olive branches that were broken off and grafted into the tree of life, and became the sweet branches. That is the Church of Christ. The Jews were broken off, but we are not to boast against them, because the Lord is able to bring them back in again. Always remember in your mind that you only live because of Christ. You do not live because you decided to live. You lived because Christ has given you life.

The source of that vine is as abundant as we want it to be. Jesus says He is the true vine and His Father is the husbandman, and then He says:

(John 15:2 KJV) 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.

Israel did not bear fruit. We find in Hosea 14th chapter, the renewing of the backslider. Hosea's cry is that he is restored back again, and the fruit of God is found in him. That is where the fruit of the Holy Spirit is. It is in us. The vine of the earth has counterfeit fruit. The vine of the earth has what they call joy for a season. We have eternal joy.

The counterfeit vine looks exactly like the true vine, and only the Father knows the real one. When that one doesn't bear fruit, it is cut off. Someone said, "God wouldn't do that!" Yes, He did do that, because He wants life in the vine. If you get a dead branch, it doesn't do anything but detract from the vine, so you cut it all off.

Not everybody can prune. If God turned us loose with the pruning shears, we would try to prune the body of Christ. We would look at something that was dormant, and we would call it dead. It isn't dead. It is dormant. There is a difference. Do you know there is a difference between dead wood and dormant wood? Dormant wood goes into a cycle. Dead wood is never any good, and never will be any good, except to start a fire with it.

He said that every branch in Him that beareth not fruit, He taketh away, and every branch that bears

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fruit, He purges it. He cuts off all our little favorite things. All of our little carnal things, all the things we highly esteem more than we esteem God, He begins to cut them off.

We wonder, "Why in the world is this happening to me. I am bearing fruit. What do you want out of me?" The reason is that it may bring forth more fruit. God is not glorified in you having fruit. God is not glorified in you having more fruit. He keeps working on us, doesn't He, taking out the dead wood, taking out the dead things that really don't help to grow anything.

Vineyards take the leaves off so the sunlight can come through, and ripen up the bunches of grapes. Armenians eat those grape leaves. They think they are wonderful. I ate some one time, and they weren't bad. They tasted kind of like stuffed cabbage. God knows when to take off our leaves.

Have you ever felt like you were plucked naked, like everything was gone? You think, "Nothing is working and I don't know why people don't appreciate me, and I don't know why people don't understand me. I don't have any fellowship. Everything is gone." It is because God is doing a work so you can produce more fruit.

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

Underline the word 'now'. You are clean through the word that He has spoken unto you. It means He has given you the ability now to produce. A graft has to be clean. Have you ever grafted a bud into a tree or a vine, or anything? You have to clean it really good, and then put it in there and seal it so the dirt won't get in. Then it begins to have the ability to grow. It has the ability to produce. It has the ability to come alive.

Do you understand what I am saying? When they make a graft it is usually ugly. They put black stuff, called tree wax, on there and seal that little bud in, and it looks horrible. But when that thing begins to grow, it becomes a beautiful growth. God said that now we have the ability without an excuse. Now we are clean through the word which He has spoken unto us.

(John 15:4 KJV) 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.

In verses 1-10 abiding in Him is mentioned eight times. Producing is mentioned four times. To continue is mentioned once. This is the abiding and producing portion of the chapter.

He said we are clean through the word which He has spoken unto us. When the Holy Spirit speaks something to you it is entirely different than when a natural man speaks to you. When we speak, we need to speak as oracles of God. We need to speak words that bring challenge, words that bring cleansing, words that bring healing, not words to condemn and judge others, but words that heal.

God said, "I speak words and they cleanse you, and now you are ready. Now you have the ability to begin to produce. Abide in Me, and I in you." The word 'abide' means to dwell or to live. We live and move and have our being in Christ (Acts 17:28). We should be that way every hour of the day and night. Our whole life should become consciously aware of this, that without Him we have nothing.

We should want the branch that we are, to be just like Him. We should want good fruit produced. We can't produce the fruit of the Spirit. Carnality stops the fruit of the Spirit. What we have to become is yielded branches, vessels, the temples of the Holy Ghost that the Holy Spirit can flow right through us.

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He has been talking about the Comforter, the Teacher, the Guide, the one who is to going to come, and they are standing there scratching their heads. He said, "I will show you how it is going to work. I am the vine, the true vine, and you are the branches. That is the order in which it works. My Father is the husbandman. Nobody else can prune you. Only My Father can prune you. You don't need to be afraid of the devil pruning you; he can't cut you off. He is a part of the ugly vine, the vine of the earth. Now you are clean through the word that I have spoken unto you.

Abide in Me and I in you. The branch cannot bear fruit of itself. There is no way it can. You cannot produce the things of God. You can produce things that look like God. You can produce things that sound like God, but when they are tested and tried, they are empty."

I have known lots of good Christians that just quoted scriptures and quoted words, but they weren't quoting them from the heart. They were just quoting them from their minds, and pretty soon they quit serving God. Why? Because it was not the Holy Spirit producing. They weren't asking God to produce through them. They were producing in their own ability. That is why people get tired of being Christians.

It is tough producing a Christian life. It is tough living up to the expectations of what others think about you, but if you are a branch nobody expects anything out of you. If you grow crooked, so what. If you grow straight, so what. If you grow long or short, so what. The important thing is not how long you are or are crooked or straight you are. The important thing is what that fruit tastes like when people bite into it.

Peter says in 1 Peter 2:2-3:

As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

We are to taste and see that the Lord is gracious. After all, when you go to a vineyard do you just want to look at the fruit or do you want to eat it? If it is just little bitty green things, you aren't even tempted to eat it; but when it gets full grown, big long clump of grapes, you can just feel it and taste it. You want to eat it, don't you? But when you produce your own stuff, you don't even get that little clump of stuff. You don't get anything that has any value to it. So without Him, you can do nothing.

He goes on to say there is only one way that there is going to be production. It is abiding in the vine; living, dwelling, continually, not moving in and out. You can't be grafted in and out of this vine, you know. You say, "Well, I don't want to be a Christian for about a month now. Cut me out of here while I go and do my own thing."

That is foolishness, that carnality that you need to get rid of. You need to say, "Lord, speak the word and let the word cleanse me. Let me begin to read and study and meditate and pray. Let me find out what Your word says about the situation that I am in now."

He says the branch cannot do anything of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can you except you abide in Me. These are all terms that they had never heard before. Paul expounds on them, calling us the dwelling place to the most high God, the temple of the Holy Ghost.

Look at 1 Cor. 3:16-17:

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Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.

We understand that today, but they did not have the Holy Ghost yet; so He takes something they could understand: the vineyard. They could understand that and the principles of growing fruit. If we get hold of that principle, we realize that we can produce nothing for God. It has to be produced by God. That is why the Galatian Church got into so much trouble.

Look what Paul said to them:

(Gal. 3:1-3 KJV) O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified

among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

You cannot produce holiness by going back to the law. What you have to do is give up and quit resisting the flow of the Holy Spirit in your life, and begin to abide in that vine. Begin to let Him abide in you until that connection is just a portion of whatever is going on. It is part of your life now. He wants us to realize that. The disciples are having a hard time getting hold of this, but He goes on to tell them:

(John 15:5 KJV) 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.

'Much fruit!' He is saying this to the person who realizes that he has to have the vine; he has to have a connection. The one who realizes that there has to be more to being a Christian than just coming to church. We don't come to church to prove that we are Christians. We come to church because we are Christians. The more we grow in Christ, the more we want to be in church. We want to be in the house of God, because that is where the vine is. That is where the branches are together.

He goes on to say, "Without Me ye can do nothing." He is still talking about the branch and the vine. He said, "Don't lose the understanding here. You don't have a life without Me. You have the religious activities without Me, but you don't have life. You cannot produce the things of the Spirit without Me."

We need the fruit of the Spirit, but we can't produce it. That is what frustrates us. We try to love people when we can't, then we get upset. We say, "I tried to love them." The Lord said to love your neighbor as yourself, but it is impossible unless the vine gives you the love to do it with. You can't produce the fruit without the vine.

He is bringing this in the simplest terms that He can bring it. There is no way you can love your enemies and forgive those who despitely use you, but the vine can. When you let the vine become your life, and you quit trying to live a life separate from the vine, all that is in the vine will be produced in you.

When this happens, it won't be that you are trying to go to church. You are going to church. I'm not going to try to go to prayer meeting. I am going to go to prayer meeting. That is where I belong. I belong where the life is being produced.

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There are many branches that are unhappy, because they are trying to produce a Christian life when it is impossible. You can produce a religious life, and what a bummer that turns out to be. It is always saying, "don't do, don't do, don't do." It never says, "do," but through Christ I can do all things (Phil 4:13).

Jesus says: "If they get this relation right with Me as the vine and them as the branch, they will realize that they don't support the vine, but the vine supports them." Lord, I want to bring forth much fruit. God said, "You just read the scripture. I am going to do a little purging here." I wonder what happened to those people who used to like me so much? I wonder what happened to those people who always slapped me on the back?

Your language changes when the vine begins to do the living. Your desires change when the vine begins to do the living. When you do the living, it is religion. When He does the living, it is salvation. We have a relationship between the vine and the branch. When the branch finally gives up struggling and says, "Lord, produce what you want to produce. Produce as much as I am able to produce, whether 30, 60, or 100 fold, it doesn't make any difference."

It takes 100 percent to produce 30 fold. You can only produce what God has given you the ability by His grace to be produced through you. People may say they can tell you how to be a 100 fold, but if you are a 30 fold you are already 100 percent maximum and you aren't going any higher. That is all that the vine has made you able to produce. That is okay.

If you produce 30 fold, and you did it with all your heart, you get the same reward as the 100 fold. It doesn't take any more work for a 100 fold to produce than it does for the 30 fold. It takes 100 percent maximum for all of us. Most of it is to quit fighting God. I want to be a producer.

Now look at this in the 6th verse:

(John 15:6 KJV) 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.

There are only two options that I have here. It is either abiding in Christ or being burned. Jesus only gives us two options. There are only two vines. The vine of the earth or the true vine. One is going to be in the wrath of God, and the other is the blessing of God.

I have news for you; a lot of those people in that earthly vine are producing religion. They have no relationship with Christ. There are a lot of them all over the world today. Billions of them are trying to produce a religious acceptance with God. The fruit they produce is not the fruit of the Spirit. But notice what happens if we abide in Jesus:

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

He says, "It is not just My presence, but My words too." The words are a cleansing power. The words are life. In this verse we are beginning to see the reward stage that God gives to the believer. It is so important for us to be filled with the word of God.

David said in Psalm 119:11: ***"Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee, O God."*** We are cleansed by the washing of the water of the word (Eph 5:26). If that word dwells in us, it

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washes away the resistance of the moving of the Holy Spirit. It washes away self. It washes away things that draw us away from Christ. It begins to be a beautiful revelation of truth to us.

"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Here is the guarantee. Here is the promise to the person who has truly yielded his life to Christ, and allowed the Holy Spirit to mold, to make, to shape, and produce whatever the Holy Spirit wanted to produce.

We short-circuit the Holy Ghost. "This is how I want to do it, Lord. This is the way I want to do it." He says, "You are resisting Me. Besides, I am not listening to you because you are dead without Me. The only life you have is what I have given you, so shape up or I will just cut that part off. I will just

purge off that 'want to do my thing'. That desire to do it your way. I will purge that off so you can begin to produce, and you won't have to spend so much time resisting My Spirit."

Think about that for a minute. If the Spirit says 'fast' we don't jump right into it immediately. We begin to think of the dates we have set. We have a luncheon tomorrow. "About two weeks from now would be a good time for me to start that, Lord."

In the past I have done that, so God had to purge that thing out. I try to be obedient now when He says He wants me to fast. I just start fasting. There is a reward here for faithfulness, isn't there, for abiding in Him and His words abiding in you.

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

You know you are a disciple of Christ by what? By your fruit! They are known by their fruits, aren't they? If I am not producing anything but sour apples, what kind of tree do you think I am? I am a sour apple tree. That is just the way it works. Bitter fruit shows what kind of tree we are in. If it is bitter fruit that is coming out, then we are living in a bitter trunk of a tree.

That is why it was so contrary to nature in the 11th chapter of Romans to take wild olive branches and graft them into the sweet tree. The only thing that changed those wild olive branches was the life that was in that tree. The branches didn't change the tree. The tree changed the branches. What changes your life is not you. It is the vine.

We need to say, "Okay, Lord, I am going to settle in here, and not resist Your will any longer. Help me not to resist it, and help me to be open to Your will, Lord. Help me to fill my life with the word of God so there will be a continual cleansing from the desire to even resist Your will."

What confidence we can have then when we pray. We can believe that it is going to be done. We can also believe that we are glorifying God. That is where God is glorified; not in little green apples. A vineyard is not glorified as long as the bunches of grapes are mildewed or full of garbage.

Up in Napa Valley they have wine country. If you ever looked at those vineyards, they are immaculate. They even put rose bushes around them, and they are beautiful vines. There are men out there working all the time. When they get a bad bunch of grapes, they cut them off. They don't try to save them. They throw them away. We try to save them and produce something good out of nothing. We should just let them go and say, "God, You were right. I was wrong."

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I want to change my life. I want it to be different. I want His life to be abundant in this branch. I don't want to just barely exist. I want the old branch to be leaning over like my nectarine tree. It got so heavy with nectarines it broke a branch off. That is what I want to be like. God has a trellis though, you know. The heavier our fruit gets, the more trellis He ties us to. We just keep growing on out there, producing fruit.

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

Let it be a continuous abiding. Don't let it be just a one time shot and saying, "Oh, that felt good. That was really nice. I can remember when I used to love people. I can remember when I was able to forgive people. I don't know what has happened to me. I have become bitter."

It wasn't the life of the vine that made you bitter. You began to resist the moving of the vine life. You began to resist the moving of forgiveness. You resisted the moving of God's love. You resisted the moving of God's goodness. Instead of producing the things that God wanted, you began to produce what you wanted. Then you began to feel justified to have that fruit on that branch.

"But God, You don't know what they did to me." God says, "Just forgive them. Pray for those who spitefully use you. Bless those who curse you." That comes from the vine. That is what will build the work of God, when the Church quits fighting and resisting the move of God.

I am ready for the great flow of the Holy Spirit. The great flow starts in the vine. It comes into the branch. When that branch starts looking alive, things are beginning to happen. They just have a few leaves to start with, but sooner or later there is going to be fruit on that branch.

He said, "I want you to continue." The work of God has to be a continual work in our lives. It can't be today for tomorrow. I can't read enough today for tomorrow. I can't eat enough of the word today for tomorrow. I don't know about you, but I like to eat every day. I don't try to eat today for tomorrow. Sometimes when I am eating today I am thinking about tomorrow.

It isn't the devil doing anything. We are resisting the Holy Spirit, and He is trying to bring life in our branch. He is trying to bring life from the vine out into the branch as far as it will reach, and produce fruit on every spot of that branch. But it has to be a continuing work. Now look at this:

(John 15:10 KJV) 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.

He says if we keep His commandments, we shall abide in His love. There is nothing wrong with the commandments of God. Then He says that He has kept His Father's commandments and abides in His love. There is the example for us. Even as He has kept His Father's commandments, we are to keep His commandments.

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

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He says, "My joy." Underline that in your Bible. His joy is everlasting. Our joy is temporary. There is a joy for a season, but He is not talking about that kind of joy. He is talking about a joy that will take you through the trials, the tests, the hurting. It is a joy that will bring forth fruit in your life. He is beginning to reveal why He has said all these things to them. He desires that His joy will remain in us, and our joy might be full. The product, the fruit, the joy will be the product from His joy.

Let's look at Matt 10:11-14 and see what the Lord says about our peace:

(Matt. 10:11 KJV) And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence. And when ye come into an house, salute it. And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet.

When you go into a house and they are not ready to receive, He said, "Don't let your peace remain there." In order to have peace, you have to get His peace. We manufacture a false peace. We manufacture a false joy. We put on a funny face and grin and laugh a lot, when we are hurting all over the place. It is not real.

Look what He is saying. He said, "That My joy might remain in you that your joy will be full grown." Don't try to give it away. That is why a lot of people are against the Church. They are trying to give things away that they don't have, so they manufacture something. Instead of witnessing to people because they love people and the love of God is flowing out into their hearts, and the fruit of love is there, they operate because they think they have to. People know when they are just a number or whether you truly care. People know whether that is real, genuine life that is coming out of you. He wants the joy that is Him to remain in us and that our joy might be full.

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

If it doesn't come from the vine, it is not real. I am not a farmer, but they tell me that it takes pressure for that sap to grow up into those branches. What happens is that we begin to feel the pressure and we begin to resist it. We quote scripture like: Resist the devil and he will flee from you," when it is God working in us. We think, "If that is God, I wouldn't be in the shape I am in." Yes it was God, and you are in the shape you are in because God is moving through your life.

That pressure is not always easy to bear. God is pushing things out of your life, and He is bringing things into your life. He says, "You have to continue to abide in Me, and continue in My love, and continue in My word, and the first thing that will happen will be the reward. You will ask for it and I will do it for you. The final thing that will happen to you will be that My joy will remain in you, and your joy, that product, that fruit which is produced, is going to remain in you and be full."

We are not the vine. We are the branches, and what we need to do is be sure that we are good branches. Check the fruit once in awhile. You might not feel like a fruit inspector, but I am, because that is the way I can know. He said, "**By their fruits you shall know them**" (Matt. 7:16). If somebody tells me they love me, and comes and helps me when I am in trouble, then I know that love is real. We are told not to love in word but in deed (1 John 3:18). Religious people love in word. People with the fruit of the Spirit love in deed. There is a difference.

As we conclude this study, I want to pray for all of you who have read this.

Father, speak into our lives through this study the words that will build faith, and bring edification and strength and leave us with a challenge. We need to be challenged every day of our lives, to be changed from one glory to another glory, overcoming more and more until the final overcoming day. In Jesus Name we pray. Amen!!