

## “God Grapes”

### I. **INTRO:**

- A. **Illustration:** A **pair of scissors** consists of 2 single blades. Yet, the blades, regardless of how sharp or shiny, are useless w/o one essential element - the *small metal screw* that holds them together.
1. In our relationship w/God, **abiding in Jesus** is the screw that holds everything together & makes us useful to Him.
  2. Jesus now uses a similar homespun illustration.
- B. **Setting:** *Arise, let us go from here*(14:31). The last supper being over they are still in the room preparing to leave, **or** they have just left & are on the way to Gethsemane. **Maybe passing a vineyard** when this subject came up.
1. **Josephus** the Historian (Wars of The Jews 5.210) describing the Temple said, “**but that gate which was at this end of the first part of the house was, ...all over covered with gold, as was its whole wall about it; it had also golden vines above it, from which clusters of grapes hung as tall as a man’s height;**”
- C. **Bird’s-eye view of chapter:** Our Relation to Christ - Our Union & Fruitfulness(1-8);  
Our Relation to Christians - Our Love & Fellowship(9-17);  
Our Relation to the World - Our being Hated & need to remain Faithful(18-27).
- D. **Worm’s-eye view of chapter:** Submit to the Pruning & Keep on Abiding for Jesus’ secret to a fruit-bearing life.

### II. **GOD GRAPES! (1-8)**

- A. **SUBMIT TO THE PRUNING!** (1-3)
- B. **Read** Psalm 80:8-19 *The vine is the people of Israel* (note also the chorus in 3,7,19)
- C. Different Views of “*takes away*”(or lifts up):
1. Not **taken away** but **lifting** grapes back onto the trellis;
  2. Or, **taken away**(killed) - but just their flesh, soul/spirit being saved;
  3. Or, only works/fruit being judged (bad works/fruit being burnt up, but not the person)
- D. I think, **in me** represents 2 classes of “*Christians*” that are being set forth(**real** & **professing**)
1. For instance the branch that was just **lopped off** in ch.13...**the Judas branch**.
  2. Or like the **seed** of Abraham that **weren’t children** of Abraham in Rom.11:16-20  
**If the root is holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree(Gentiles), were grafted in among them(Jews), and with them became a**

*partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, "Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in." Well said. Because of **unbelief they were broken off**, and you stand by **faith**. Do not be haughty, but fear.*

#### E. 4 preliminary observations:

1. **F.B.O.**(*for believers only*) - Jesus is talking intimately w/His disciples(not multitude).
  - a) His words are to those who **already established** a relationship w/Him(3).
2. **It's a Metaphor** - The visual picture of the vine & branches tells us that the *central idea* is a vital **union**.
  - a) It is important to remember that not everything in a **parable** must mean something!
    - (1) A parable teaches 1 main truth, & to try to make a parable "*stand on all 4 legs*" is often the first step toward misinterpretation.<sup>1</sup>
3. **The main subject is Abiding** - Jesus uses the image of **fruit**, **not** that of a **seed** taking **root**.
  - a) His thrust is not on **becoming** a Christian **but** on becoming a **productive** Christian.
4. **The result of Abiding is Fruit** - A branch is good for 1 thing...bearing fruit.

#### F. 3 Symbols:

1. **Vine** = [**Jesus**] He identifies Himself as the genuine vine, the only source of spiritual fruit!
  - a) Not as a result of evangelism; but refers to **character qualities** of **Christlikeness** (i.e. The fruit of the Spirit)
2. **Vinedresser** [**Father**] God the Father is pictured here as a *busy, active, faithful* gardner, working in His vineyard.
3. **Branches** [**Genuine Believers**] Here He distinguishes between our **position** in the Vine(Christ) & our **production**.

#### G. **Main Truth:** the importance of *abiding in Him* in order to bear fruit.

1. **Fruit** is used 6 x's & **abide** at least fifteen times (not always translated "abide").
2. The main point of the teaching here is **fellowship**, **not sonship**.

#### H. (2) **2 Actions of the Vinedresser:**

1. [**1**] He does something w/the branch **that isn't** bearing **any** fruit **at all!**
  - a) **Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away**

<sup>1</sup> Warren Wiersbe; Outlines of the NT; Jn.15.

2. [2] He does something w/the branch **that isn't** bearing **enough** fruit!
    - a) Every branch that bears fruit He **prunes**.
  3. One He **takes away**; one He **prunes**. [**cut off** vs. **cut back**]
- I. In **viticulture** 2 principles are generally observed: **First**, all dead wood must be ruthlessly removed; & **Second**, the live wood must be cut back drastically.
1. **Why? Dead wood** harbors insects & disease & may cause the vine to rot (plus, it's unproductive & unsightly).
  2. **Why? Live wood** must be trimmed back in order to prevent such **heavy growth** that the life of the vine goes into the **wood** rather than into the **fruit**.
  3. We know that we are abiding when the Father **prunes** us.
  4. He cuts away **the good**, so that we can produce **the best!**
    - a) Which helps to explain why a **dedicated Christian** often has to go through suffering
    - b) Sometimes He cuts back so far that His method seems **cruel**. Nevertheless, from those who have suffered the most, there often comes the greatest fruitfulness.<sup>2</sup>
      - (1) **Q: Is God pruning your life now?** - **Yes**, the pruning knife is sharp. **Yes**, it will be painful. **Yes**, you'll probably bleed more sap. **But**, fruit is coming. [Illus: **Rubber Trees** at GFA College, in Kerala, India]
        - (a) Each night a rubber tapper must remove a thin layer of bark along a downward half spiral on the tree trunk. If done carefully, this tapping panel will yield latex for up to **5 years**. Then the opposite side will be tapped **allowing this side to heal over**. The spiral allow the latex to run down to a collecting cup. The work is done at night so the latex will run longer before drying out.
      - (2) The branch that is **good for something** gets the **special privilege** of the pruning knife. :-)
- J. There is a **productive vine** (pruned for greater production) & A **non-productive vine** (cut off for destruction). [The **key...one's relationship to the Vine!**]
- K. To **abide in Christ** means to be in communion with Him so that our lives please Him.
- L. To abide in Christ **does not mean** to keep ourselves saved.
  1. **It means** to **live in His Word & pray** (7), **obey His commandments** (10), & **keep our lives clean** through His Word (3,4).
- M. **You are already clean/pruned** - *cleaned, justified, & grafted in* (Rom.11)
  1. Our prayer: **"Lord, clean my thoughts & prune my motives!"**

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<sup>2</sup> Merrill Tenney; John; pg.227,228.

- N. **KEEP ON ABIDING!** (4-8)
- O. Ok, Jesus's 1st **secret** to a *fruit-bearing life* was *Submit to the Pruning*. The 2nd is to *Keep on Abiding!*
1. **Abide** = "dependence on, rely on, wait for, draw strength from."
  2. **How did Jesus live out His *abiding life* with the Father?**
    - a) He had **constant contact** w/the Father.
    - b) He often took deliberate steps to **withdraw to be alone** (Spurgeon said, "Be not content w/an interview now & then, but seek always to retain His company.")
- P. Christ said 4 things to us: [1] *Come to Me* (as Savior) [2] *Learn of Me* (as Teacher) [3] *Follow Me* (as Master) [4] *Abide in Me* (as Life).
1. So, **to abide** is the highest requirement of Christ & therefore applies to His faithful disciples.
- Q. (5) **Stretch your branch** far from the root, & bear your strength & sweetness to those who stand *outside the wall!*
1. In Jacob's last words to Joseph (Gen.49:22) he said, **Joseph is a fruitful vine, a fruitful vine near a spring, whose branches climb over a wall**. (niv)
- R. **3-Fold** progression of *spiritual productivity*:
1. **Action: Abiding** (1) **Result: Fruit** (2);
  2. **Action: Pruning** (2) **Result: More Fruit** (2);
  3. **Action: Continued Abiding** (5) **Result: Much Fruit** (5).
- S. **What Fruit?** Well probably the **9 grapes** that form the cluster in *Gal.5:22,23a*.
1. **Jesus** didn't indicate the **nature** of the fruit here, but **Paul** expounded on it.
    - a) *Love, Joy, Peace - Patience, Kindness, Goodness - Faithfulness, Gentleness, Self control.*
- T. **Slowly evaluate** each one, **savor** each fruit! - Think of Christ-likeness!
- U. **How would you express each one? Here's how I did:**
1. **Love is:** When we become transparent, & Jesus shows through very Apparent!
  2. **Joy is:** An attitude cultivated when the heart smiles!
  3. **Peace is:** Enjoyment of Godliness & Contentment!
  4. **Patience is:** The discipline to stop & pray before any decision. Not feeling the worlds pressure to hurry through life.
  5. **Kindness is:** What is shown even to those who bend us the wrong way!

6. **Goodness is:** So general a term it spans every area of our life, in which we strive for the highest Good in all things.
7. **Faithfulness is:** Trustworthy in words spoken & deeds promised.
8. **Gentleness is:** Not weak but meek; **like** a strong father picking up his new-born for the 1st time
9. **Self-Control is:** learning to say **no to me!**

V. (5-8) **I am the Vine, you are the branches. When you're joined with me and I with you, the relation intimate and organic, the harvest is sure to be abundant. Separated, you can't produce a thing.** (Message)

W. Note, the command is **not** to produce **fruit** but to **abide!**

1. When we're abiding, fruit comes **naturally**.
2. The fruit in view here is **not** produced by the **branch** but by the **Vine** itself!
  - a) **Without** abiding, a branch **cannot** produce even a bud of real fruit.
  - b) The **vital sap** comes from Him alone.
  - c) Nothing, yes nothing of genuine or eternal value. **It's only plastic fruit!**

(1) Dr. Howard Hendricks tells of a small town in Texas where 1 year the school burned to the ground with the loss of more than 200 lives, because **they didn't have a sprinkler system**. They began to rebuild after the initial shock had passed and called in the foremost company in fire prevention equipment to install a sprinkler system. When the new school was opened for public inspection, guides **pointed out the new sprinklers** in each room, to alleviate fears of another disaster. The school operated without incident for **a number of years**, then they needed to **add on** to the existing structure. As work progressed, they made a startling discovery. The new fire extinguishing equipment had **never been connected to the water supply!** They had the latest in technology and equipment, yet it was entirely useless!

3. **W/o Me you can do nothing...Lasting!**
4. **"Nothing, nothing, nothing** you do w/your *talents, gifts, money, or time*, **can** save one soul, **or** can bear even **one little spiritual grape...w/o Christ!**" bb

X. (6) Those that didn't remain show they didn't have a saving relationship w/Christ!

1. 1 Jn.2:19 **They went out from us, but they were not of us; for** if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; **but** they went out that they might be made manifest, **that** none of them were of us.

- Y. If we **abide in Jesus**, we will exhibit the fruit of the Spirit. [But this of course takes time!]
1. These are not superficial character adjustments that happen over night.
  2. They involve a **reshaping** of the *innermost dispositions of the heart*, which is a **lifelong process** of sanctification by the spirit.
  3. **We can't go home & try to pop out a fruit!** – **Remain abiding** & earnestly seek God's Spirit to fill you, reshape you, do an inner makeover!
    - a) **Results?** Our **prayers answered**(7) & the **Father glorified**(8)!
- Z. **End Prayer:** “Flow through me True Vine, let your: *Love, Joy Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, & Self-Control*, burst forth in ripening acts of Christlikeness. In the name of **The True Vine** we pray!”