

"The Wood of The Vine!"**1. Intro:**

- 1.1. Remember this phrase: “God wisely designed the human body so that we can neither **pat our own backs nor kick ourselves too easily!**”
- 1.2. In Scripture we talk about: the fruit of the vine(the grapes); it’s leaves; the vineyard; the owner of the vineyard; the vinedresser(tends/prunes); the vine; the True Vine; the branches; the vine/branch connection(abiding); wine from the grapes; how it creeps on the walls(Tendrils= threadlike plant part attached to support); etc.
 - 1.2.1. Here the focus is specifically on **the wood** of the Vine!
- 1.3. Q: Describe for me what **the wood** of the grapevine looks like? [show grapevine wood]

2. THE WOOD OF THE VINE! (1-8)

- 2.1. **THE PARABLE!** (1-5)
- 2.2. The Vine...a **symbol** of **Israel**.
 - 2.2.1. Is.5:7 **For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel**, And the men of **Judah** are His pleasant plant.
 - 2.2.2. **The Vine symbolized prosperity, blessing, & happiness in the nation.**
 - 2.2.3. **The Vine had one purpose**, to be **productive & bear grapes**.
 - 2.2.3.1. Or for 2 things: **Bearing** or **Burning**!
 - 2.2.3.2. So **Israel** was to bear the fruit of righteousness.
 - 2.2.3.3. They were to **bear witness** in the world to the **true God**.
- 2.3. To **illustrate** Israel’s **unfaithfulness & worthlessness** in failing to bear the fruit of righteousness, the Lord revealed the **uselessness** of a vine...as **wood**.
 - 2.3.1. **The vine could not be used for construction or even as a peg to hang pots in a house.** [It has twisting, gnarled branches]
 - 2.3.1.1. It does not lend itself to being **cut & shaped**.
 - 2.3.1.1.1. This was the **condition of God’s people** in Ezekiel’s day.
 - 2.3.2. If a vine ceased to produce fruit, there was **no point in leaving its roots in the ground**; it would be far better to **cut it down** and **burn it**.
 - 2.3.3. The vine is **even less useful** when it had been **charred on both ends & plucked from the fire**!
 - 2.3.3.1. This suggested **Israel’s suffering** at the hands of Neb. (See 2 Kings 25:9)
 - 2.3.4. Jer.2:21 I had planted you **a noble vine**, a seed of highest quality. How then have you turned before Me into the **degenerate plant of an alien vine**?
 - 2.3.5. Again, the vine was only useful for **producing grapes**!

- 2.4. The Vine - **Cut**, it is nothing, but **Growing**, the vine can do what no other tree can do, namely produce a harvest of grapes. And from grapes, wine can be made!
- 2.4.1. Jn.15:4,5 **Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.**
- 2.4.2. (Message) I am the Vine, you are the branches. When you're joined with me and I with you, the relation **intimate** an **organic**(developing gradually and naturally, w/o being forced or contrived), the harvest is sure to be abundant. Separated, you can't produce a thing.

2.5. **THE INTERPRETATION!** (6-8)

- 2.6. The Lord clearly interpreted the parable.
- 2.6.1. As the pruned vine limbs that bore no grapes were cut off & thrown into the fire, so God had delivered the inhabitants of Jerusalem to destruction by Nebuchadnezzar.¹ (6)
- 2.6.1.1. The people would not escape the invading Babylonian hordes, who would pillage & burn the city.
- 2.7. The Lord again reminded the people of the necessity of the judgment...“because they have **persisted in unfaithfulness**”.

2.8. **APPLICATION TO THE CHURCH!**

- 2.9. The ancient parable continues to apply to **the church**.
- 2.10. Like Israel, the church has a **single mission**: it is to convey **the love of God** to the world.
- 2.10.1. Love is in the **roots** of the church, just as it must be in the **fruits** of the church. For the members of the church must **love God** (1st com) & they must **love one another** (2nd com)
- 2.10.2. Only then can love **flow through** the church in the fulfillment of its mission to the world.
- 2.10.3. But there is a constant tendency for the church to forget that it is a **vine**; it seeks instead to become an **oak** or a **cedar**.
- 2.10.4. It exchanges the **mission of love** for a **multitude of worldly pursuits**, all honest enough in themselves, but not the purpose for the church's existence.
- 2.10.5. And when it has **failed** in its function, it is **good for nothing else**.

2.11. **APPLICATION TO THE INDIVIDUAL BELIEVER!**

- 2.12. But it is always too easy to **criticize an institution**, yet fail to see the parallels in the lives of **individual persons**, indeed in our own lives!
- 2.12.1. For we each have a calling, **the ministry of love**; it may be exercised in a multitude of different ministries, yet its central concern remains the same.
- 2.12.2. But **we**, like **Israel**, may be **side-tracked** from our calling.

¹ Shepherd's Notes; pg.30

- 2.12.2.1. Ambition may become the focal point of our lives, or luxury, or money, or power, or the various forms of evil!
- 2.12.2.2. Some side-tracks seem innocent enough and some are clearly sinful, yet ***all become wrong*** in that they have led away from the 1st calling, namely to love.
- 2.12.2.3. And like the **wood** of the vine, we can make ourselves useless; failing to provide fruit, we can always be **bundled for firewood**.
- 2.13. One of the greatest tragedies in life is **wasted opportunity**, not making the most of what God has given us.
- 2.13.1. We all came into this world with **certain abilities**. (athletic, musically inclined)
- 2.13.2. When God saved us, He gave us **gifts** & the **grace** to exercise those gifts to **help others** & to **build our own lives** to the glory of His name.
- 2.14. Q: Are you fulfilling what **you** have been **designed for**?
- 2.15. He has planted us in specific & strategic places(environments) so we'd **take deep root**, so we'd **bear much fruit**.
- 2.15.1. Challenge: Bloom where you are planted & bear fruit to the glory of God & the enrichment of others.
- 2.15.2. Use your **God-given talents** & draw from **God's spiritual resources** & let Him use you to enrich others. ☺
- 2.16. APPLICATION TO THE HUMBLING OF GOD'S PEOPLE!**
- 2.17. These words are for the **humbling** of God's people.
- 2.17.1. They have the title **God's vine** but what **R** they by nature more than other?
- 2.17.2. Only by **God's goodness** have they become fruitful by: being planted in **good soil**; the Lord **trained** them upon the walls of the sanctuary; they bring forth **fruit** to His glory.
- 2.17.3. Q: But what are they/we w/o their/our God?
- 2.17.4. Q: What are they/we w/o the continual influence of the **Spirit**?
- 2.18. Learn to reject **pride**, because we don't have any ground for it.
- 2.18.1. The **more we have** the **more we are indebted to God**.
- 2.18.2. **How many times have our hearts wandered?** (Are we even worthy to still be called his son/daughter?)
- 2.18.3. The word **humble** comes from *humus* translated "earth" or "dirt".
- 2.18.3.1. Humility is coming to grips with our **humanity**.
- 2.18.3.2. When we're humble we are **down to earth**!
- 2.18.3.3. Phil.2:3 **Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.**
- 2.18.3.4. (Message) Don't push your way to the front; don't sweet-talk your way to the top. Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead. Don't be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand.

- 2.18.3.5. If you're still asking, "How much can I keep" or "How much do I have to give up"...you're still at the pool of Narcissus!
- 2.18.3.6. **Narcissus** – Gk mythology. Patron saint of Humanity! ☺
- 2.18.3.7. **Rejected the love of others, never found a suitor worthy of himself.** 1 day passing thru the forest bent down to get a drink & saw an image so beautiful, 1st time found himself wrapped in love. Reached down to place his lips on his newfound love, image shattered into a thousand ripples.
- 2.18.3.8. **Another twist** - The lake (he fell into & drowned) was silent for some time (then talking to Echo, the beautiful nymph friend was in love w/Narcissus). Finally, it said: "I weep for Narcissus, but I never noticed that Narcissus was beautiful. I weep because, each time he knelt beside my banks, I could see, in the depths of his eyes, my own beauty reflected."
- 2.18.4. Bethlehem church illustration: **Submission** came before **admission & admission** was necessary for **communion**. [Equally true in our relationship w/God]
- 2.19. If He has made you anything, it is only **GRACE** that has made you different!
- 2.19.1. You have **not one thing** to call your own,...except your **sin & misery**.
 - 2.19.2. Interesting, we have **borrowed** everything, **why do we exalt ourselves?**
 - 2.19.3. Spurgeon, "**We are poor pensioners** upon the bounty of our Savior. We are **completely dependant** upon the fresh water from the streams of life, **yet proud?** Oh, silly heart!"
- 2.20. Look at Paul's 3 descriptions of himself, dating from around A.D. 59, 63, and 64.
- 2.20.1. As the years pass he goes **lower**; he **grows downward!**
 - 2.20.2. **I am the least of the apostles.** - 1 Corinthians 15:9
 - 2.20.3. **I am the less than the least of all the saints.** - Ephesians 3:8
 - 2.20.4. **I am the worst of sinners.** - 1 Timothy 1:15
- 2.21. **Humility** and a **passion** for praise is **a pair** of characteristics which together indicate growth in grace.
- 2.21.1. **The Bible is full of self-humbling** (man bowing down before God) **and doxology** (man giving praise to God).
 - 2.21.2. **The healthy heart** is one that bows down in **humility** and rises in **praise** and **adoration**. [The Psalms strike both these notes again and again]
 - 2.21.3. **As Paul's self-confidence sinks**, so his rapture of *praise & adoration* **rises**.
- 2.22. Really great people know that the greatness is not **in them** but **through them**; that they could not **do** or **be** anything else **than** God made them.
- 2.22.1. **William Carey** [father of modern missions]. The man who spent his early years as a cobbler became one of the greatest linguists the church has ever known. It's reported that Carey translated parts of the Bible into as many as 24 Indian languages. When he first went to India, some regarded him with dislike and contempt. At a dinner party a distinguished guest, hoping to humiliate Carey, said in a loud voice, "I suppose, Mr. Carey, you once

worked as a shoemaker." Carey responded humbly, "No, your lordship, not as a **shoemaker**, only a **cobbler**."

2.22.1.1. Carey didn't claim to **make** shoes, only to **mend** them.

2.23. "God wisely designed the human body so that we can neither **pat our own backs** nor **kick ourselves too easily!**"