



*<sup>1</sup> I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. <sup>8</sup> Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. <sup>9</sup> As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. <sup>12</sup> This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup> Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. <sup>14</sup> Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> 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 (John 15:1-16)*

If DaVinci's Last Supper were being shown at the local art gallery, the grounds would be packed with art lovers seeking just a glimpse of that Masterpiece; however, if the art exhibit were flooded by the works of Raphael, Michelangelo, Van Gogh, and Durer, the greatest painting of all time (Last Supper) would attract less attention. Humankind has a tendency to become bored with routine labors, but they also become bored with great beauty which is presented in abundance. The Gospels of Christ are full of the most beautiful and meaningful Words of Truth ever written by the inspired pen. If we are not very careful, we may become bored with their incessant and constant beauty of expression. The best means of avoiding such distraction is to begin every Bible Study with prayer and a mind that is eager to learn more and more. We can never learn all that we need to know from Scripture, else we would definitely become bored with its readings. God gave us appetites for food so that we would not starve to death. The aroma of food will remind us of that hunger. The heart that belongs to Christ must likewise have an appetite for beauty and truth so that it hungers for the daily Bread of Heaven. I pray that we shall all have the hunger today to see the beauty of Christ veiled in the truth of His Holy Word, and allow the aroma of His Word in the beauty of nature and barrenness of the soul arouse our heart's taste buds.

1 *I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.* In the first three Gospels, we read the heart-rending story of a certain man, or householder (meaning God), who planted a vineyard and went into a far country. That vineyard was the Old Testament Israel. The keepers of the vineyard treated harshly all that he sent to collect the increase of the vineyard. Finally, He sent His own Beloved Son, and they treated Him with great dishonor, cast outside the vineyard, and murdered Him. Now the vineyard has been enlarged to accommodate the Gentile nations, and Christ is illustrated here as the Vine. The Father is the Husbandman (Gardener). A vine cannot produce sap that is not consistent with its nature. The nature of Christ is Truth, and all who are attached to the Vine will be beneficiaries of that Truth.

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.* My wife is an avid gardener. She tends to her flowers, her vegetables and her fruit trees which comprise her own vineyard of sorts. If a branch of the persimmon tree ceases to bear fruit, she prunes it from the tree. The nutrients that were going to waste in the severed branch will now nourish other branches that will, indeed, produce fruit and that more abundantly. When the roses become too small and puny, she prunes the rose bush and the roses will become more vibrant and large when they bud. God often finds it necessary to prune back our rapid and unfruitful growth when we become 'too big for our breeches. Quite often, another rose plant, or persimmon treelet will spring up in the close proximity of another such plant. My wife calls these odd sprouts 'runners.' She always digs them up. They have separated themselves from the parent plant and grow independent of it. They will never produce fruit. How many churches do we have today that have abandoned the True Vine and have shot up in close proximity to appear genuine, but are really counterfeits of the real plant?

3 *Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.* There is a saying in Persia that when flowing water crosses over seven stones, it will be pure. That may be an exaggeration, but flowing water definitely is pure where it emerges from the spring. Christ is our Fountain of Water. His Word is the pure water of life which purifies. As it courses through our heart's chambers and vessels, it will carry away the dross and deceit and fill those organs with purity and truth.

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.* If we are attached to the Vine, we cannot help but derive our nourishment from it. We are in Christ by being the branches of the Vine, and He is IN us because His nutrient Word is flowing in our branch in the form of purifying water and truth. If we are severed from the Vine, our branch will not only fail to produce fruit, but it will wither and die. If we look about us on Sunday morning, we can see many withered Christians dressed as fruitful branches, but their core is dying for lack of the Water of Life. The only manner in which we can ABIDE (live) is to have our source of nutrition from the Vine.

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.* If we have no fruit, we are not joined to Christ. Some have forgotten that they are the branches of the Vine and have come to believe that they, themselves, are the Vine and not the branch. They find their waters from the dirtied streams of the world, and their fruits are bitter and unwholesome. Men who preach a Gospel not in strict accordance with the Gospel of Christ are such false vines. Men arose in the Old Testament Church who added many burdens to the Word of God – so much so that they could not be born of men. They began to believe that they were the essence of truth and were the vicegerents of God on earth. Do we not see the same corrupted views being erected in churches today?

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. How is this possible – that we may ask what we will, and it shall be done? If the Words of Christ have the Sovereignty over our hearts, our hearts will be brim full of grace and mercy mingled with love – so much so that whatever thing we ask will not be our own desire to do, but that desire of God reflected in a heart sold out to Him.

8 Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. Do we dishonor Christ with our little fruitfulness? Yes, we do! If the truth of God is powerful, and we seem anemic in our walk, we discredit the Person of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ takes pride in His Elect. He would have be abundant producers of fruit for the sake and glory of His Father just as I would have my grandchildren be successful in their walks to satisfy the dreams of my own Father.

9 As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. Can you even begin to imagine the love of the Father when it is equated by Christ with His love for us? He gave His humanity, His broken Body. His life's Blood for us, and He tells us that such love is akin to the love the Father has for Him. Do not err in your appreciation of the love that God, too, has shed abroad in our hearts. It was of greater pain for the Father to observe our horrific treatment of His only Begotten Son than perhaps even for Christ in His own suffering. I cannot resist sharing again this lovely hymn that fairly describes the Love of God:

The love of God is greater far  
Than tongue or pen can ever tell;  
It goes beyond the highest star,  
And reaches to the lowest hell;  
The guilty pair, bowed down with care,  
God gave His Son to win;  
His erring child He reconciled,  
And pardoned from his sin.

*Refrain*

O love of God, how rich and pure!  
How measureless and strong!  
It shall forevermore endure  
The saints' and angels' song.

When years of time shall pass away,  
And earthly thrones and kingdoms fall,  
When men, who here refuse to pray,  
On rocks and hills and mountains call,  
God's love so sure, shall still endure,  
All measureless and strong;  
Redeeming grace to Adam's race—  
The saints' and angels' song.

*Refrain*

Could we with ink the ocean fill,  
And were the skies of parchment made,  
Were every stalk on earth a quill,  
And every man a scribe by trade,  
To write the love of God above,  
Would drain the ocean dry.  
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,  
Though stretched from sky to sky.

*Refrain*

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.* Is there any means by which we can perfectly obey God in view of the Commandments which are also those of Christ? There is only ONE way of which I know: "*Love covereth all sins.*" (Proverbs 10:12) The love of Christ for the Father was of such magnitude that He simply could not sin against Him. How about our love for Christ? How great is that Love?

11 *These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.* Do you remember the joy we had in small victories won in school? When we studied diligently and aced the exam, do you remember the self-satisfied joy and peace of mind that attended that small victory? Or do you remember the times that you parents may have gone on a trip from home and you completed faithfully all of your chores prior to their return? Do you remember smiling eagerly as they observed what an obedient child you were? Christ has told us all things needful for our joy and production of fruit. Have we listened and have we obeyed? Unfortunately, the prevailing notion of joy in the world is to enjoy life as much as possible apart from the moral restraint of God. But Jesus desires that we know that only true joy comes in abiding in Christ and loving and obeying the Father.

12 *This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.* Herein lies the mystery of obedience! If we can keep this one commandment of love, - love of God, and love for one another - then the obedience to all commandments of god seem natural and desirable. We are not even tempted to disobey when the apple of our eye and desire of our hearts is to please the object of our deep affection.

13 *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.* What Man has laid down His life for you? If you know that Christ has had the grace to do this, then are you His Friend. What an honor, privilege, and blessing to be called the Friends of Christ - not as an empty title, but in complete reality! Christ laid down His life for you. You are His friend, and He is more than a friend to you!

14 *Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.* Friends try to accommodate one another. Christ has made the ultimate accommodation for you by providing the means for you to be adopted into the family of God. Does He ask that we also die for the prize? No, He wants our **UNDYING** love. If He is our best friend (and if we have any wisdom at all, He IS), we shall do all in our power to deserve such a Friend by our loyalty, faithfulness, and love. We shall do nothing to bring shame or disgrace on such a friend. Sin does bring such disgrace and He tells us that we are better than that!

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.* Why are we not servants or slaves? Because servants and slaves have no choice but to follow and obey their masters. We are friends of Christ because we come freely to Him and we love Him with a love akin to that divine love which He imparts. He has shared with us His choice truths which we alone can comprehend. The world cannot comprehend because they have chosen darkness and not Light.

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.* Here is a profound truth that, could we fully grasp it, offers the greatest possible comfort to us. To know that we are weak and hopeless to improve our lot is easy enough. But to know that our place in the heart of god is not subject to our feeble ability to earn the same is a great benefit. We may

have a calling, but ultimately not be chosen in Christ. But to know that he has chosen us (and all who are chosen KNOW it without doubt) is such a blessed comfort. "*...many be called, but few chosen.*" (Matt 20:16).

If we be chosen in Christ, He makes no bad choices – we will definitely bring forth fruit, and our prayers shall rise to the very ears of God. He will answer when we call – no wrong numbers, no hold buttons, no ‘out of my office’, no delays.

Have you that privilege, friend?