

## JOHN 15 | *The True Vine*

### *Abide in the Vine*

1 I am the true vine (ἡ ἄμπελος), and my Father is the vinedresser (ὁ γεωργός). 2 Every branch (κλῆμα) in me that does not produce (φέρω, pres.) fruit he takes away (αἶρω, pres.),<sup>1</sup> and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes (καθαίρω, pres.),<sup>2</sup> that it may produce more fruit. 3 Already you are clean (καθαρός) because of the word (λόγος) that I have spoken to you. 4 Abide (μένω, aor. imper.) in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot produce fruit by itself, unless it abides (pres.) in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide (pres.) in me. 5 I am the vine (ἡ ἄμπελος). You are the branches. Whoever abides (pres.) in me and I in him, he it is that produces (pres.) much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If (ἐάν) anyone does not abide (pres.) in me, he is thrown out (ἐβλήθη ἔξω, aor. pass.)<sup>3</sup> like the branch and dries up (ξηραίνω),<sup>4</sup> and they gather (συνάγω, pres.) them and throw (βάλλω, pres.) them into the fire, and they are burned (καίω, pres. pass.). 7 If (ἐάν) you abide (aor. subj.) in me, and my words abide (aor. subj.) in you, ask (aor. imper.) whatever you desire (θέλω, pres.), and it will be done for you. 8 By this my Father is glorified, that you produce much fruit and so prove to be (γίνομαι)<sup>5</sup> my disciples.<sup>6</sup> 9 As the Father has loved (ἀγαπάω, aor.) me, so have I loved (ἀγαπάω, aor.) you. Abide (μένω, aor.) in my love (ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ μου). 10 If you keep (τηρέω, aor.) my commandments, you will abide (μένω, fut.) in my love (ἀγάπη), just as I have kept (τηρέω, aor.) my Father's commandments and keep abiding (μένω, pres.) in his love. 11 These things I have spoken to you, that my joy (χαρά) may be in you, and that your joy may be made complete (πληρόω, aor. pass. subj.).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “[T]o raise to a higher place or position, *lift up, take up, pick up*...to lift up and move from one place to another...to take away, remove, or seize control without suggestion of lifting up, *take away, remove*” (BDAG, 28).

<sup>2</sup> “[T]o cause someth. to become clean, *make clean*, lit., of a place that has been swept...to remove superfluous growth from a plant, *clear, prune* of a vine” (BDAG, 488).

<sup>3</sup> “[T]o cause to move from one location to another through use of forceful motion, *throw*...to force out of or into a place, *throw (away), drive out, expel*...*thrown away/out*, i.e. expelled fr. the fellowship J 15:6” (BDAG, 163).

<sup>4</sup> “[T]o stop a flow (such as sap or other liquid) in someth. and so cause dryness, *to dry, dry up*” (BDAG, 684).

<sup>5</sup> “[T]o come into a certain state or possess certain characteristics, *to be, prove to be, turn out to be*” (BDAG, 199).

<sup>6</sup> See *Discipleship*.

<sup>7</sup> **Jn 3:29** 29 The one who has the bride [the Church] is the bridegroom [Jesus]. The friend [John the Baptist] of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete. **Jn 15:11** 11 These things I [Jesus] have spoken to you [disciples], that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be completed. **Jn 16:24** 24 Until now you [disciples] have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be completed. **Jn 17:13** 13 ...Now I [Jesus] am coming to you [the Father], and these things I speak in the world, that they [the disciples] may have my joy completed in themselves. **1 Jn 1:4** 4 ...We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. **2 Jn 12** 12 Though I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink. Instead I hope to come to you and talk face to face, so that our joy may be complete. **Php 2:2** 2 ...Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

*Love One Another*

12 This is my commandment, that you love (ἀγαπάω, pres.) one another as I have loved (ἀγαπάω, aor.) you. 13 Greater love (ἀγάπη) has no one than this, that someone lay down his soul (ψυχή) for his friends (φίλοι). 14 You are my friends (φίλοι) if you do what I command you. 15 No longer do I call you servants (δοῦλος), for the servant does not know what his master (κύριος) is doing. But I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have revealed (γνωρίζω, aor.) to you. 16 You did not choose (ἐκλέγομαι, aor.) me, but I chose (ἐκλέγομαι, aor.) you and appointed (τίθημι, aor.) you that you should go and produce fruit and that your fruit should abide (μένω, pres.), so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. 17 These things I am commanding (ἐντέλλω, pres.) you, so that you may continue to love (ἀγαπάω, pres. subj.) one another.

*Expect the World's Hatred*

18 If (εἰ) the world (ὁ κόσμος) hates (μισέω, pres.) you (pl.) [and it does], understand (γινώσκω, pres.) that it has hated (μισέω, perf.) me before you. 19 If [for the purpose of argument] you were of the world (ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου), the world would be befriending (φιλέω, imperf.) you as its own. But because you are not of the world (ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου), but I chose (ἐκλέγομαι, aor.) you out of the world, therefore the world hates (μισέω, pres.) you. 20 Keep remembering (μνημονεύω, pres.) the message (λόγος) that I said to you: A servant (δοῦλος) is not greater than his master (κύριος). If (εἰ) they persecuted (διώκω, pres.) me [and they did], they will also persecute you (pl.). If [for the purpose of argument] they kept (aor.) my message, they will also keep yours. 21 But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know (οἶδα) him who sent me. 22 If [for the purpose of argument] I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have (ἔχω, imperf.) sin. But now they have no valid excuse (πρόφασις) for their sin. 23 Whoever hates (pres.) me hates (pres.) my Father also. 24 If (εἰ) [for the purpose of argument] I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not have sin. But now they have seen and have hated both me and my Father. 25 But the message (λόγος) that is written in their Torah must be fulfilled:

They hated me without reason (δωρεάν).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> **Ps 35:19** 19 Let not those rejoice over me who are wrongfully my foes, and let not those wink the eye who hate me without cause. **Ps 69:4** 4 More in number than the hairs of my head are those who hate me without cause. Like Joseph's brothers hating him, Israel hating Moses, and Saul hating David, the Jewish leaders hate Jesus. **Ps 119:161** 161 Princes persecute me without cause, but my heart stands in awe of your words. **1 Sa 19:5** 5 ...He [David] took his life in his hand and he struck down the Philistine, and Yahweh worked a great salvation for all Israel. You [Saul] saw it, and rejoiced. Why then will you sin against innocent blood by killing David without cause?

*Witness to the World*

26 But when the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who comes forth (ἐκπορεύομαι, pres.)<sup>9</sup> from the Father, he will testify<sup>10</sup> about me. 27 And you also will testify, because you have been with me (μετ' ἐμοῦ) from the beginning (ἀπ' ἀρχῆς).

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<sup>9</sup> “[T]o be in motion from one area to another, go...come forth from, *come/go out, proceed*, in imagery, of things, words, or thoughts” (*BDAG*, 308).

<sup>10</sup> See *Witness Testimony*.

## Commentary

### 1. John 15.

- a. Jn 13-14 take place in the upper room at a home in Jerusalem. Jn 15-17 take place east of Jerusalem in a vineyard.
- b. Repeated concepts are:
  - (1) Keeping Jesus' commandments.
  - (2) Loving one another.
  - (3) Abiding in Jesus.
  - (4) Producing fruit.

### 2. Abide in the Vine (Jn 15:1-11).

- a. In the metaphor, Jesus is the true vine (ἡ ἄμπελος) (vv. 1, 5), the Father is the vinedresser (ὁ γεωργός)(v. 1), and believers are the branches (κλήμα) in Jesus (vv. 2, 5). The purpose of the branches is to produce fruit. Branches that do not produce fruit, the Father lifts up (off the ground) or takes it away (αἶρω)(v. 2). The term αἶρω can mean either. The Father prunes/cleans (καθαίρω) branches that do produce fruit in order that they may produce more fruit (v. 2). The disciples are clean (καθαρός) because of the message Jesus has spoken to them, which they have believed.
  - (1) In the context of *John*, the unfruitful branches are probably the bad disciples, including Judas Iscariot, who did not believe in Jesus. The eleven, by contrast, are the good disciples who did believe in Jesus and who remained with him to the end. See Jn 6:60-70.
  - (2) The pruning process refers to phase two sanctification, when the Christian becomes more and more like Jesus over time. The world, the flesh, and the devil are pruned from the believer's life.
    - (a) **Mt 13:22-23** 22 As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. 23 As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.
- b. It is the job of the branches to abide in the vine, and the vine in them (v. 4, 6). In other words, the disciples are to live in connection with Jesus as Jesus lives in connection with them. The disciples will not be able to produce fruit if they do not live in connection with Jesus (v. 4). Apart from Jesus, the disciples can do nothing (v. 5). The result of living in connection with Jesus will be the production of much fruit (v. 5). The fruit is:
  - (1) The fruit of the Spirit.
    - (a) **Ga 5:22-23** 22 ...The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control.
  - (2) The multiplication of disciple makers.
    - (a) **Mt 28:19-20** 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

- c. Branches that do not live in connection with Jesus will be thrown out (λήθη ἔξω, aor. pass.) and will dry up (v. 6). They will then be gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned (v. 6).
- (1) Does this refer to hell for unbelievers or divine discipline or loss of rewards for believers?
- d. If, as a way of life, the disciples abide (aor.) in Jesus and allow Jesus' words to abide in them, they may ask whatever they desire, and it will be done for them (v. 7). This unity of purpose with Jesus will: (1) lead to the production of much fruit (multiplied disciple makers of Jesus); (2) prove they are Jesus' disciples; and (3) glorify the Father (v. 8). The "much fruit" is the multiplication of disciple makers throughout the world in fulfilment of the Great Commission (Mt 28:16-20).
- e. Just as the Father loves Jesus, so Jesus loves the disciples (v. 9). The disciples, as a way of life, are to abide in Jesus' love (v. 9). This is done by keeping Jesus' commandments as a way of life, just as Jesus has kept the Father's commandments as a way of life (v. 10). Jesus abides in the Father's love by keeping his commandments (v. 10). In the same way, the disciples are to abide in Jesus' love by keeping his commandments (v. 10). The result of this loving obedience will be Jesus' joy in them, a joy made complete (v. 11).
- (1) **Jn 3:29** 29 The one who has the bride [the Church] is the bridegroom [Jesus]. The friend [John the Baptist] of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete.
  - (2) **Jn 16:24** 24 Until now you [disciples] have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be completed.
  - (3) **Jn 17:13** 13 ...Now I [Jesus] am coming to you [the Father], and these things I speak in the world, that they [the disciples] may have my joy completed in themselves.
  - (4) **1 Jn 1:4** 4 ...We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.
  - (5) **2 Jn 12** 12 Though I have much to write to you, I would rather not use paper and ink. Instead I hope to come to you and talk face to face, so that our joy may be complete.
  - (6) **Php 2:2** 2 ...Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.
- f. Cross-references.
- (1) **Is 61:3** 3 ...That they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of Yahweh, that he may be glorified.
  - (2) **Jer 2:21** 21 ...I [Yahweh] planted you [Israel] a choice vine, wholly of pure seed. How then have you turned degenerate and become a wild vine?
  - (3) **Eze 15:4** 4 Behold, it is given to the fire for fuel. When the fire has consumed both ends of it, and the middle of it is charred, is it useful for anything?
  - (4) **Mt 3:10** 10 Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.
  - (5) **Mt 5:16** 16 ...Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.
  - (6) **1 Co 3:9** 9 You are God's field....

- (7) **2 Co 9:13** 13 ...They will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Messiah, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others....
- (8) **Ro 11:17** 17 ...If some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree....
- (9) **Ro 11:22** 22 Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off.
- (10) **2 Pe 1:8** 8 ...If these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Messiah.
- (11) **Mt 13:12** 12 ...To the one who has, more will be given, and he will have an abundance, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.
- (12) **Mt 13:40-42** 40 Just as the weeds are gathered and burned with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. 41 The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, 42 and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.
- (13) **Mt 15:13** 13 ...Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up.
- (14) **Jn 5:20** 20 ...The Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing.
- (15) **Jn 6:56** 56 Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.
- (16) **Jn 8:31** 31 ...Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples....
- (17) **Jn 8:55** 55 I [Jesus] know him [the Father]. If I were to say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and I keep his word.
- (18) **Jn 10:18** 18 No one takes [my life] from me [Jesus], but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.
- (19) **Jn 13:34** 34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.
- (20) **Jn 14:13** 13 Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.
- (21) **Jn 14:15** 15 If you love me, you will keep my commandments.
- (22) **Jn 14:23** 23 Jesus answered him, If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.
- (23) **Jn 17:4** 4 I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.
- (24) **Jn 17:17** 17 Sanctify them in the truth. Your word is truth.
- (25) **Ro 6:5** 5 ...If we have been united with [Jesus] in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

- (26) **2 Co 2:3** 3 ...I wrote as I did, so that when I came I might not suffer pain from those who should have made me rejoice, for I felt sure of all of you, that my joy would be the joy of you all.
- (27) **Eph 5:26** 26 ...That he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word....
- (28) **Php 1:11** 11 ...Filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Messiah, to the glory and praise of God.
- (29) **Php 2:8** 8 ...He [Jesus] humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.
- (30) **Col 1:6** 6 ...Which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth....
- (31) **Col 1:10** 10 ...So as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God....
- (32) **Col 1:23** 23 ...If indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard....
- (33) **1 Jn 2:6** 6 Whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which [Jesus] walked.

### 3. Love One Another (Jn 15:12-17).

- a. Jesus' primary commandment, the "new commandment" (Jn 13:34), is for the disciples to keep loving (pres.) one another, just as Jesus has loved (aor.) them as a way of life (v. 12). The greatest love is for one to lay down his soul for his friends (v. 14). Jesus is going to lay down his life for the disciples in less than 24 hours, and he asks the disciples to follow his example. If the disciples love one another by laying down their souls for one another, they will qualify as Jesus' "friends" (φίλοι)(v. 14).
- b. In fact, Jesus no longer calls the disciples servants (δοῦλος) but friends (v. 15). This is because all Jesus has heard from his Father he has revealed to them (v. 15). They know what Jesus is doing. They have graduated from being Jesus' servants to being Jesus' friends (v.15). The disciples are more and more in lock step with Jesus. They are truly becoming Christians, "little Christs."
- c. Jesus, the disciple maker, chose his disciples. They didn't choose him (v. 16). He chose and appointed the disciples to go and produce abiding fruit (v. 16), fulfilling the Great Commission. The production of abiding fruit will be accompanied by prayers answered by the Father (v. 16). Jesus' emphasises again the key to all of this is for the disciples to love one another (v. 17).

### 4. Expect the World's Hatred (Jn 15:18-25).

- a. Observations.
  - (1) The world hates Jesus (v. 18) without reason (v. 25) and persecutes him (v. 20).
    - (a) **Ps 69:4** 4 More in number than the hairs of my head are those who hate me without cause.
    - (b) **Ps 119:161** 161 Princes persecute me without cause, but my heart stands in awe of your words.

(c) **1 Sa 19:5** 5 ...He [David] took his life in his hand and he struck down the Philistine, and Yahweh worked a great salvation for all Israel. You [Saul] saw it, and rejoiced. Why then will you sin against innocent blood by killing David without cause?

- (2) The world also hates Jesus' disciples (v. 18-19) and persecutes them (v. 20).
- (3) The world befriends as its own those who are of it (v. 19).
- (4) The disciples are not of the world, for Jesus chose them out of the world (v. 19).
- (5) Those who keep Jesus' message will keep the disciples' message (v. 20).
- (6) The world does not know the Father (v. 21).
- (7) Because Jesus has come and spoken to the world, the world has no excuse for its sin of unbelief (v. 22, 24).
- (8) The world has seen and hated both Jesus and the Father (v. 23-24).

b. Interpretation.

- (1) Because the Father, Jesus, and the disciples are so unified, whoever hates one, hates the others.
- (2) The message of Jesus and the message of the disciples is to be exactly the same.
- (3) The world is guilty because it has seen Jesus and rejected him in unbelief.

## 5. Witness to the World (Jn 15:26-27).

- a. Jesus will send the Advocate, the Spirit of truth, from the Father (v. 26).
- b. The Spirit will testify about Jesus (v. 26).
- c. The disciples will testify about Jesus, too, for they have been with Jesus from the beginning (v. 27).