

The Gospel According To John

The Identifying Marks of Those in the True Vine

John 15:1-8

The Concept of the Vine

Picture/Fulfillment

- Old Covenant Vine = Israel

In the Old Testament, the vine is a common symbol for Israel, the covenant people of God.

Psalm 80:8-16; Isa. 5:1-7 (see also Isa. 27:2-6; Jer. 2:21; 12:10; Ezek. 15:1-8; 17:1-10; 19:10-14; Hosea 10:1-2). In all these images Israel's failure to produce good fruit is emphasized.

- New Covenant Vine = Jesus Christ

Jesus is the true vine. Israel was only a temporary picture or type. Jesus is the true vine or true Israel in the same way as He is the true temple (2:19-22), the true manna (6:30-66), the true shepherd (10:1-18) etc. Jesus is the better!

The Vinedresser's Two Actions

1. Cutting off fruitless branches to be burned

- Israel is cut off, for they are not the true people of God. *Rom. 9:6-7* (see also Matt. 21:33-45).
- Illustrated in Judas Iscariot, who is not a true Israelite. He is not clean. *Jn. 15:3; 13:10-11*.

This is not illustrating "higher-life" teaching. The fruitless branches are unbelievers who go to hell. To abide in Christ means simply to be a believer. On your worst day, if you are a believer you are abiding.

2. Pruning fruit-bearing branches to produce more fruit

- The church of Jesus Christ is the true people of God who have received life in Christ. *Gal. 3:29*
The essence of Christianity is the believer's union with Christ, apart from whom they can do nothing.
- The Father prunes every fruit-bearing branch so it will be even more fruitful. God uses all sorts of things to cause us to grow. *James 1:2-4, Heb. 12:10*

How wonderful to realize that every trial, problem, and suffering is purposeful and lovingly designed by God for good! He knows what he is doing as the gardener and this provides us with much comfort.

The Marks of True Believers

1. Bearing fruit

- Salvation is by grace through faith. We cannot earn a right standing before a holy God by any number of good works. *Ephesians 2:8-10, Romans 3:28*
- But, we do show that God has saved us when we do good works. If there is no fruit in your life, then Jesus didn't die for you. *Philippians 2:12-13, James 2:24*

2. Perseverance

- Warning passages are very helpful to the church because they force a response. The response demonstrates if the person desires to obey Jesus Christ no matter what the cost. A true believer will respond in obedience. *Hebrews 10:36-39, 1 John 2:4-6*
- Believers will take to heart the warnings that are given and will respond in godly repentance if necessary. *Matthew 18:15-20*, (see also 2 Corinthians 7:8-13)

A true believer's fruit-bearing and perseverance is guaranteed, for the fruitfulness of believers is one of the ways the Son glorifies His Father. Let us press on for His glory!