

THE VINE

In this week's article, we are going to reinforce the depth of our identification with Christ.

John 15:1-8 (The Message) *"I am the Real Vine and my Father is the Farmer. He cuts off every branch of me that doesn't bear grapes. And every branch that is grape-bearing he prunes back so it will bear even more. You are already pruned back by the message I have spoken. 4"Live in me. Make your home in me just as I do in you. In the same way that a branch can't bear grapes by itself but only by being joined to the vine, you can't bear fruit unless you are joined with me. "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. Anyone who separates from me is deadwood, gathered up and thrown on the bonfire. But if you make yourselves at home with me and my words are at home in you, you can be sure that whatever you ask will be listened to and acted upon. This is how my Father shows who he is --when you produce grapes, when you mature as my disciples.*

Many of us read this passage, and focus on the bearing of fruit, but how many of us truly meditate on its relevance to us and more importantly the significance of Jesus' having declared that we are identified with Him in a most intimate way? In Verse 1 of the same chapter Jesus identified Himself as "the true vine". We cannot dare to even imagine who this "vine" really is unless we are connected to Him. No amount of study or thought can help us. Jesus only becomes real through experiencing His presence through the Word and most importantly, time spent in His presence, in praise and worship, and listening to Him.

Jesus did not stop there, but He lets us know that God the Father is the one in charge of Him. The Father is the one who cares for Him. The vine depends on the husbandman for its very existence, the direction of its growth, and the quality of fruit that is produced through careful nurturing and pruning. Frequently in His ministry, Jesus referred to His dependence on His Father for all He said and did. Jesus knew who He was, and identified Himself with the source of His power (John 14:10 AMP) *Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in Me? What I am telling you I do not say on My own authority and of My own accord; but the Father Who lives continually in Me does the (His) works (His own miracles, deeds of power).*

The branches are the part of the vine that produces the fruit. It is interesting to note that Jesus tells us that the Father is the farmer and that it is through **the Word** that we are pruned.

Grapevines can become wild, and if left to grow at will, the vines will grow rapidly leading to an overgrowth of leaves and a low crop of fruit. Pruning determines the shape of the vine which allows the optimal distribution of air and

light which affects the quality of the grapes and susceptibility of the fruit to disease. The pruning process must be perfect in order to optimize the harvest. Our focus at this time however is not on the pruning, but on the relationship of the branches with the vine. The branches of the vine are also connected to each other through the vine. The branches bear all the attributes of the vine and the fruit produced is as the result of the branches remaining connected to the vine so those attributes can flow into the fruit.

To put it simply, the branches and the vine are one. They have the same purpose - to produce fruit. To produce a top quality, bumper harvest! That is the desire of the farmer!

Since we are the branches, and Jesus is the vine, He therefore expects us, through the application of the Word in our lives, to produce top quality fruit both in terms of our own spiritual growth and in terms of bringing in a harvest of top quality believers that He can be proud of.

Unfortunately, many Christians do not see themselves as being of the same quality and on the same level as Jesus, not only on His earthly walk, but also to identify with Him in His post-resurrection state. They still see themselves as being defeated by the devil and under the curse of the law. In other words, they are not believers.

“Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,” Hebrews 2:14 (NASB)

The Phillips translation of Colossians 1:14 -15 reads *“Christ has utterly wiped out the damning evidence of broken laws and commandments which always hung over our heads and has completely annulled it by nailing it over his own head on the cross and then, having drawn the sting of all the powers ranged against us he exposed them, shattered, empty and defeated in his final glorious triumphant act!”*

Before He ascended Jesus handed this power over officially to us. *“These signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues; they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.”* Mark 16:17-18 (NASB)

We need to see ourselves as extensions of Jesus, just as the branch is an extension of the vine. That means - anything Jesus did, we can do. More than that, He has commissioned us to do what He did and even greater things than He did.

John 14:12 (King James Version) *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.*