

The Great I AM: The Vine

During Old Testament times God's people were referred to as a Vine that God planted in the vineyard of the Promised Land. He looked for good fruit, but it only produced bad. Israel became a wild, corrupt vine, deserving to be cut down and thrown into the fire.

In like manner, God wants you and me to produce good fruit. Unfortunately, because we inherited a sinful flesh at the time of our conception, it's impossible to produce the fruit God demands. Paul wrote in Galatians 5, "The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery;²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions²¹ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God." (Galatians 5:19-21) We must confess, like God's Old Testament people, we are by nature wild, corrupt vines.

That's why we need the true and genuine Vine whose life flourished with fruits of perfection. From the moment of his conception by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary he was a choice Vine of sound and reliable stock. He always and only produced the good fruit the heavenly Father seeks. Nevertheless, at the end of a life that produced a bumper crop of holiness, he was cut down and thrown into the fires of hell in our place, being considered guilty of our fruits of godlessness. On the third day he sprang to life as the living Vine.

Jesus says, "I am the true vine and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he trims clean so that it will be even more fruitful." Branches that are "in Christ but bear no fruit" are those who appear to be Christians but they are not. They might have some sort of a visible association with the church, or they might have their names on the church rolls but never attend worship. Nevertheless, they consider themselves Christian. These are the fruitless branches the heavenly Father will cut off and throw into the eternal fires prepared for the devil and his angels.

The branches who bear fruit are Christians who confess their sins and look to Jesus alone for forgiveness. The heavenly Father prunes these Christians so that they will be even more fruitful. Someone wrote, "When it comes to pruning grapes, the most common mistake people make is not pruning hard enough. Light pruning doesn't promote adequate fruiting whereas heavy pruning provides the greatest quality of grapes." How does the Lord prune and clean us? Jesus said, "You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you." Through the Word the Lord exposes our sins, leads us to confess our iniquities, and directs us to the genuine Vine for forgiveness and life.

Jesus says, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." Remaining in him, the true Vine and Source of life, and in his Spirit-filled Word, will cause our lives to flourish with the good fruit that God desires. Paul wrote, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness and self-control." (Galatians 5:22-23)

May this good fruit continually be produced in our lives. Jesus says, "This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples." Remember, it's never, "Glory be to me on high!" but, "Glory be to God on high!"

Amid the world's bleak wilderness A vineyard grows with promise green,
The planting of the Lord himself.

His love selected this terrain; His vine with love he planted here
To bear the choicest fruit for him.

We are his branches, chosen, dear, And though we feel the dresser's knife,
We are the objects of his care.

From him we draw the juice of life, For him supply his winery
With fruit from which true joys derive. Vine, keep what I was meant to be: Your branch, with your rich life in me. Amen.

After sharing this devotion with your family, take the time to read John 15:1-17.

Pastor Zuberbier