

I Am the True Vine – John 15:1 & 5

Scripture Reading: John 15:1-17

We have been studying the “I Am” statements of John’s Gospel. We have seen a progression of thought that starts with Christ’s deity and leads to more and more intimacy with Him. When Jesus said “Before Abraham was, I am...” (John 8:58 cp. 18:3-6), Jesus revealed His power and authority. Jesus is the eternal Son of God, equal with the Father. Our study then examined other times Jesus said “I am”:

- **I Am the Bread of Life – John 6:35**
- **I Am the Light of the World – John 8:12**
- **I Am the Door of the Sheep – John 10:7, 9**
- **I Am the Good Shepherd – John 10:11, 14**
- **I Am the Resurrection and the Life – John 11:25-26**
- **I Am the Way, the Truth and the Life – John 14:6**

Along with power and authority, each of these statements reveals Christ’s purpose to be intimate and benevolent with His people. We eat **bread** and live. We walk in the **light** and bask in its warmth. As sheep we follow the **Shepherd and Door of the sheep**, who protects and feed us. Christ gives us **resurrection** power and new **life**, so that we do not have to fear death or anything in this sinful world. “**The way, the truth, and the life**” summarizes the totality of Christ’s sufficiency to bring us into an eternal relationship with the Father.

Now, John chapter fifteen brings us to such intimacy with Christ that we can see that we are one with Him. A vine is not just the root stock. When you look at a vine, you see its branches and call it a vine. The roots are not visible, but they have a vital connection with the branches. Christ’s bond with His people is so united that, when Saul of Tarsus was persecuting the church in Jerusalem and headed to persecute the church in Damascus, Jesus intervened and said “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute **me**?” (Acts 9:1-5). So, when Christ says “I am the vine, you are the branches...” (**John 15:5**), He is telling us that we are an inseparable one. The branch is dependent on the rest of the vine for survival and fruitfulness. Christ, who is seen as the entire vine (roots and branches), is complete and self-sufficient. He only depends on the Father, who is the husbandman / vinedresser / gardener.

Bread must be eaten. Light requires walking. Sheep must follow the Shepherd. The statements in John 11:25-26 and 14:1-6 require belief. So, there is also a requirement of the branches in John fifteen: they must be fruitful. An unfruitful branch will be cut off dried and burned (**John 15:2, 6**). That thought should bring us to solemn consideration. Let’s examine the prospects of a branch.

This is a branch, which usually grows at the base of a vine, or shoots up from the root, separate of the vine. It will never produce fruit. It takes strength away from the vine and can impede its fruitfulness. The vinedresser will have it removed and burned. The sucker branch represents those who attach themselves to the name of Christ and/or Christ's Church, but they do not have a true relationship with the Father through His Son, Jesus Christ. They are not born again by God's Spirit. They are religious, but not right with God. They will perish, despite their religious affiliation and/or efforts. See **John 15:2, 6**; Matthew 7:13-27; John 3:3; 6:44, 63; Ephesians 2:8-10; II Timothy 2:19; 3:1-5; Titus 1:16 – 2:15.

The Fruitful branch

This is a healthy and productive branch. It is to be noted that the fruitful branch receives pruning. Cutting the branch back after a fruitful season, can look very severe. However, this is the way to make the branch even more fruitful. Sometimes in our life we think that we are being punished or corrected by God because of difficulties that have come upon us. God is not punishing. He is pruning. He has seen fruit in our lives and He wants to develop us more, to become like Christ. See **John 15:5**; II Corinthians 12:7-10; James 1:2-4.

What is the fruit for which God is looking?

- Fruit is that which, in our lives, glorifies God. See **John 15:8** cp. I Corinthians 10:31; Ephesians 1:12.
- Fruit is believing, obeying and declaring the truth of Christ. See **John 15:3, 7** cp. John 3:16, 21; II Corinthians 5:17-18; I Thessalonians 1:2-10; I John 5:1-5; III John 3-8.
- Fruit is a life controlled by God's love. See **John 15:9-17** (vs. 13 cp. I John 3:14-19) cp. II Corinthians 5:14-15; I John 4:7-21.

How do we become fruitful?

- We need to abide in Christ. It depends on our personal and intimate relationship with Him. See **John 15:4-5** cp. Galatians 2:20; Philippians 1:11; 4:13. Note Galatians 5:22-23. It is the fruit of the Spirit [of Christ] – not the fruit of the Christian's fleshly efforts! Nevertheless, the Christian is responsible to appropriate the things of Christ in their life. See II Peter 1:2-11.
- We need to hide Christ's word in our hearts. See **John 15:7** cp. Colossians 3:16; Psalm 1:1-3.

What are the results of a fruitful life?

- A powerful prayer life. See **John 15:7** cp. I John 3:22; 5:14-15; Psalm 66:18
- Glorifying and pleasing the Father. See **John 15:8** cp. Hebrews 11:6.