

I Am the Vine

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[0 : 00] We start chapter 15. It's a full chapter. Fortunately, I only have 11 verses. And we're going to read that passage. So, it should be the next slide.

And there's going to be several slides through this. Because I am the format. And he wouldn't let me change it. So, here we go. I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He takes away every branch that does not bear fruit in me. He prunes every branch that bears fruit, so that it will bear more fruit.

You are clean already because of the word that I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it remains in the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me.

I am the vine, and you are the branches. The one remains in me, and I in him bear much fruit.

Because apart from me, you can accomplish nothing.

[1 : 12] But if anyone does not remain in me, he is thrown out like a branch and dries up. And such branches are gathered up and thrown into the fire and are burned up. And if you remain in me, and my words remain in you, ask what you want, and it will be done for you.

My Father is honored by this, that you bear much fruit, and show that you are my disciples. Just as the Father has loved me, so I have also loved you. Remain in my love.

If you obey my commandments, you remain in my love. Just as I have obeyed my Father's commandments and remain in his love. I have told you these things, so my joy may be in you, and your joy may be complete.

Now, what I wanted to... Matt said he loves this passage. He would love to preach this. I almost said, good, it's yours.

Because I did not want to preach this. Because the problem is, when we preach this, what we normally do is you get the... I'm the vine, and you are the branches sticking me in this, you know.

[2 : 15] And I didn't want to go there. You don't need me to tell you that already. You know that. I mean, that's probably one of those verses that everybody knows. I am the vine, and you are the branches.

Remain in me. You know, we know that. So I was trying to figure out what to do, and I mean, I struggled. I've had like three weeks. I've been struggling. And finally, I decided I needed to catch up on my reading in the Weber book, our devotional.

And guess what? He said something in there that I had not thought of before. And I'm going, that's something I can work with. And that was, it flipped the whole idea upside down.

He said, we need to remember where the source of life of the branches comes from. Because we often think about it in terms of the, I'm a branch, so, you know, I'm going to do this, and I'm going to bear fruit, and I'm going to...

And we're going on and on. And we forget it's not us. We're just, we're the branch. We're the worker end of the thing. But we're not the source of life and power and nourishment and all that that comes from the vine.

[3 : 27] It's the vine that's rooted in the ground and draws up the nutrients and water that nourishes us as branches. It's the vine that supports the branches and pushes life up into them.

In fact, I was thinking, this is sort of an aside. I don't know what to do with this. There's a, this sermon has about 10,000 pieces you're going to hear fragments of and not get the whole story. So you're going to have to do some work on your own.

But you know what vine dressers do in the off season after the vines produce and everything? You know what they do to the vines? They cut all the new growth off.

Why would they do that? I mean, you go out and look at it. We lived in California, so you drive by fields of vines when they were not growing and producing.

They trimmed it back to the stock. I mean, the old woody part of the vine. They do that because the vine needs to regenerate its strength and push out new growth because it's a new growth that's going to produce the grapes.

[4 : 29] If you don't, I had a grape vine in Fayetteville. I never pruned it. It never produced grapes. Someone said, you need to cut it back and then it'll put out new growth and it'll produce grapes.

I'm going, I hate to cut things back. Ask Teresa, I hate to prune. Ask Pat, she came to my house and moved hostas because they were overgrown. I hate to do that. But if we don't get pruned, we don't grow, we don't produce grapes.

Without the vine, we as branches can do nothing and in fact end up dying. So what's the job of the branches? That's the question. What is the job of the branches? Well, it's to take what the vine supplies and turn it into fruit and to grow the vine.

That's our job. We take what we're given and we cause growth and we produce fruit. And that fruit or that what we do makes the whole vine stronger and larger.

But we can't do it on our own. We need everything that the vine supplies. Now that's not a hard concept to grasp, but I think it's a hard one to live out.

[5 : 38] I want to go back and look because the vineyard and the vine is really an important thing in the Old Testament, especially amongst the prophets. It turns out that Israel is God's vine.

God's vineyard. And Jesus even talked about that. Remember the guy, the owner bought a piece of land and he built a wall and he cleared the land, he planted the vineyard, he put a wall, a tower in it. And he hired servants to take care of it. And the servants eventually kept throwing his prophets out and then finally threw his son out. So, I mean, it's such an important picture that even during the Maccabees, which is 100 years or so, that they revolted against the Greeks and got their freedom, that they minted coins with a vine on it.

That is a symbol of Israel. Well, Isaiah talks about a vineyard, God's vineyard. Next slide. And this, we're going to read this passage.

This is Isaiah 5. It's going to be pretty long, but I want you to get the story of this. So, here we go. I will sing to my love a song to my lover about his vineyard.

[6 : 51] That sounds pretty erotic, doesn't it? My love had a vineyard on a fertile hill. He built a hedge around it and removed the stones. And he planted a vine.

He built a tower in the middle of it and he constructed a wine press and he waited for it to produce edible grapes. But it produced sour ones instead. So, now, the residents of Jerusalem, the people of Jerusalem, you decide between me and my vineyard.

What more can I do for my vineyard beyond what I've already done? When I waited for it to produce edible grapes, why did it produce sour ones instead? Now, I'll inform you what I'm about to do to my vineyard.

I will remove its hedge and I will turn it into a pasture and I will break down its wall and allow animals to graze there. I will make it a wasteland. No one will prune its vines or hoe its ground and thorns and briars will grow there.

I will order the clouds not to drop any rain on it. Indeed, Israel is the vineyard of the Lord who commands armies. The people of Judah are a cultivated place in which he took delight.

[7 : 59] He waited for justice, but look what he got. Disobedience. He waited for fairness, but look what he got. Christ for help. You see, Israel understood that they were God's people planted in the land that God had promised them.

And he made them prosperous and gave them everything. I mean, they moved into it. When they moved into Canaan and conquered it, they got houses and vineyards and fields and animals that weren't theirs.

They just moved in. And then God blessed them and they were our prosperous people. Here's where they went wrong. If you don't know, if you think about it.

They forgot who was their source and started living for the provision. You understand what I'm saying?

They forgot who gave them all that and sustained them and made and nourished them and protected them and did all that stuff for them. Instead, they turned and focused on, wow, look at all this stuff we got.

[9 : 05] I got a house. It's a nice house. I got fields. They're nice fields. I got a vineyard. It's a nice vineyard.

And I didn't have to work for it. They started thinking they were entitled to the provision of God. That God was going to bless them no matter what.

And they slowly turned and stopped thinking about God within a generation. You know, Joshua's generation was the last one that was faithful to God. After that, they forgot who God was, what he had done.

They only focused on what they had and they expected it to continue. Even later, when they, you know, they carried on the religious rites, if you want to call it that.

They did the tabernacle stuff and later they had the temple. They did the temple stuff and they did all the religious ceremonies and they did all the festivals. But they really were just walking through the process.

[10 : 03] They weren't really engaged. Because when they were not there, when it wasn't Sunday morning, to say it in modern terms, they were out doing their thing.

And their thing was not godly. It was not God-oriented. It was not God-honoring. And so the prophet Isaiah says, what am I going to do?

God's saying, what am I going to do with these people? I'm going to tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to devastate them. I'm going to send them to exile. I'm going to destroy everything that I've given them. And they'll know where it came from.

They forgot what was the source of their life. Now you say, well, what they ended up with when they do that is they, as they sought other gods, material wealth and comfort, knowing God, the things that he really wanted from them, was justice and fairness and community.

And what they got instead was disobedience and violence and oppression. You read the prophets, it says, what do I require of you but justice and fairness?

[11 : 20] What do I want of you? If not, in fact, I just finished a series on Ten Commandments by the Bible Project on their podcast. And they said, do you understand that the Ten Commandments are not laws that are designed to regulate life?

They were actually designed to bring harmony in the community, first between God and then amongst the people in the community. They were designed to make life rich and full and good. And people would love one another and care for one another. And they would also honor their God and follow him. Well, Isaiah records later, God says, you know, it's not always going to be like this. I'm not always going to put up with this. I'm going to judge it. But if you go down, I think it's the next slide. There we go. You get to Isaiah 11, which is only a few chapters, you know, six chapters away. Here's what you get. And you should be familiar with this. A shoot will grow out of Jesse's root stock. A bud will sprout from his roots.

[12 : 30] The Lord's spirit will rest on him. A spirit that gives extraordinary wisdom. A spirit that provides the ability to execute plans. A spirit that produces absolute loyalty to the Lord.

He will take delight in obeying the Lord. He will not judge by mere appearances or make decisions on the basis of hearsay. He will treat the poor fairly.

He will make right decisions for the downtrodden of the earth. He will strike the earth with his rod of his mouth and order the wicked to be executed. Justice will be like a belt around his waist. His integrity like a belt around his hips.

I hope you're keeping up with me. The wolf will reside with the lamb. And the leopard will lie down with the young goat. And the ox and the young lion will graze together. And a small child will lead them along.

The cow and the bear will graze together. And their young lie down together. The lion, the ox will eat straw. A baby will play over the hole of the snake or the nest of the serpent.

[13 : 25] An infant will put his hand. They will no longer injure or destroy my entire royal mountain. There will be universal submission to the sovereignty of the Lord.

Just as the waters completely cover the sea. So what is he talking about? He's talking about the end times. New earth.

God says, look, I am going to accomplish my purpose. My purpose is to have a people that I can dwell with in a land. And they will be my people and I will be their God.

Israel failed. Jesus comes. And he says, I am the vine. In other words, I am the true Israel.

Jesus did everything that Israel failed to do that God asked them to do. Did you ever wonder why he was 40 days in the desert fasting? It has to do with the 40 years that Israel spent in the wilderness. [14:26] You go through all the things. You know why he had to be sent to Egypt? Herod wanted to kill him, right? He went to Egypt. Why? Where did Israel come from? Egypt.

He had to come out of Egypt. And come into the land. You go back through Israel's history. If you know Israel's history and you compare it to Jesus' life, you're going to find that he fulfilled the things, especially those things that Israel failed to do.

Where they failed, he succeeded. He was the true son of God. God called Israel his son. We're talking in Exodus. Where we're doing our Sunday school stuff. Jesus was his son.

Israel as a son failed. Jesus as a son succeeded. Now that brings us to the question. What does this have to do with John 15?

Well, actually, it's pretty simple. We are the branches. Everything we need to be fruitful is provided.

[15:32] Do you realize that everything you need to be fruitful for the Lord is provided? You've been given it already. And should you come to a new situation and need something additional, guess what?

He will give it to you. Now, what's not provided is the application of those provided resources to do what God has called you to do.

In other words, it's like a boss saying, I got a job for you. Here's all the equipment and supplies you need. You need to do this. I want you to build a structure.

Here's the wood and the tools. And when I come back, I expect to see a structure. We have to do the work. Now, he's going to empower us to do that work and not on our own, but it's still up to us to use this stuff to produce the fruit.

He provides us everything we need for life and fruitfulness in Christ. Everything has been given to us. Eternal life, new life, hope, grace, provisions for our needs, community, peace with God.

[16:44] You know, one of the biggest gifts he's given you is community. Did you know that? That when you belong to a community like a church, that's what a church is. It means those called out and they're gathered together.

That's a place where you belong. And by the way, the church has long recognized, I'm talking about the universal church, has long recognized that you can't do it on your own. You can't be a Christian on your own.

It won't work real well. In those rare cases where that happens, God is gracious, but it's not what he designed. He made us social animals for a reason.

That we should gather together. Because Glenn's one of the phrases, as iron sharpens iron, so one brother sharpens another. Where two are better than three, if one falls down, the other can pick him up.

I mean, yeah, pushing the refrigerator throughout the steps and in the house. Try that alone. It doesn't work. I mean, that's what we have. God has given us all the things we need.

[17:47] All the things we need to be obedient. And be fruitful. See, Jesus Christ is our vine and he provides the things that we can't provide for ourselves.

Did you know that, despite, we don't often think about it, we sing about it a lot. That he alone was the sinless son of God and we are nothing but sinners. He alone was the one raised from the dead. And if we in ourselves are facing death. Physical death. He alone has been completely obedient to God. And we haven't hardly even scratched the surface of obedience.

Everything that we've been given or promised comes through him or from him. And that, from those things that the Father gave him. We get nothing on our own.

That's the thing that we need to remember. We get nothing on our own. If it was just me and I went to God and I didn't have Christ. And I said, I need this.

[18:56] God would look at me and say, and who are you? Who are you that I should do this?

Well, as a Christian, when I go to God and say, I need this.

He looks at me and what does he see? He sees Jesus Christ. He says, my dear, beloved son, I will give you everything you need. All creation is yours.

The kingdom is yours. You know, it's all yours. And I go, wow. That little piece of him that's me enjoys the benefits.

He says, we get what we deserve. Yes, Sandy's right. It's not good, is it?

Death and the fires of hell. Because we, and I am in particular, I'm a sinner deserving God's judgment. Christ Jesus is our only hope for salvation.

[19 : 52] And that's salvation from condemnation and judgment. Because he's righteous, not me. You know me very well. You know I'm not too righteous. My righteousness is worse than filthy rags.

They're all worn out in filthy rags. And because we put ourselves in his hand, by faith, his righteousness and his obedience extends to us.

And he nourishes us with all we need to grow in his likeness. We're accepted only through him and his sacrifice on our behalf. He purchased us from sin and death.

He freed us from bondage to the corruption of the world. So that we could become the people of God. We offer God nothing that he needs.

When you come to him, you have nothing he needs. But he wants you anyway in Christ. He wants a people to dwell with and who will live with him.

[20 : 57] And he will be our God. You know, if you stop and think of that, it makes absolutely no sense. You have this infinite, powerful, all-powerful God who is completely satisfied within himself in the Trinity.

He needs nothing. But together they decide, let us, and they make a creation. And then they say, and let us make a man and a woman, a person, human beings.

Why? So that we can delight in them and they can delight in us. They chose to do this for us. Not because they needed to, but because they wanted to share their love with us.

So we're called the branches. We're fed and sustained by the vine to produce fruit. The problem is too many branches look very healthy and bright, full and leafy and green. You know, they're just wonderful, but they never produce any fruit.

And I was thinking, we were singing the song. About the pruning, that last song. You know, if you don't prune a vine, it won't grow. It won't, you know, if you don't chop it up, what does the vine do if you don't prune it?

[22 : 08] Well, it keeps growing bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger and larger and larger. It puts all its energy, all those resources that it gets from the vine itself, the branches, all just grow bigger and bigger and larger and larger.

And you just have this huge, beautiful vine. But you'll never get a single grape off of it because all the energy and all the material stuff that it's giving is going into growth, not fruit. I have a feeling we have a lot of Christians who, they accept Christ and they walk in and they go, wow, God's provided stuff for me.

Look at this life he's given me. This new life and this joy and this, this, and this, and this, and this. And they forget that this is for a purpose.

And they just keep expanding their life. But they never produce any fruit. They look good. Nothing ever comes of it.

What does Jesus says happen to those vines or the branches that do that kind of thing? They're going to get pruned eventually. They may be those that they're not really Christians.

[23 : 19] I think there are a lot of people who like to get close to the vine and say, I don't really want to get attached, but I want to get close because I'd like to sort of get the benefit of the vine. But I'd surely don't want to be responsible to it.

And those are the ones Jesus said when he was talking. He said, Lord, didn't we prophesy in your name? And he said, away from me. I never knew you.

And I don't want to be the one that shows up there before the throne and he says, boy, you are a beautiful branch. You are just huge.

You grew. Everything you did just prospered. It just got bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger. But I never saw anything come of it. How disappointing would that be?

To think that you spent your life pursuing Christ and what you really were pursuing was your own self-interest. And ended up with nothing.

[24 : 23] You're saved. You're on a new earth. But you have nothing to offer him because you spent your whole life offering it to yourself. Let's do the next slide.

That's it right there. You got it. You're this man back there. We got a new guy back there and he's right on it. Well, what is this fruit that we are to produce?

And I'm going to tell you right now, depending on who you read, you're going to get different answers. What I know is, is not a self-satisfying, self-fulfilled life.

I can guarantee you that it's not that. If it centers around you, you're on the wrong track. Now, some say it's the fruit of the Spirit. Who can quote those?

Say it louder. Say it louder. There you go. Say it's the fruit he's talking about.

[25 : 29] If you see those growing and improving, you know, developing in your life, you're on the right track. Some say it's new believers brought to Christ.

Disciples making disciples through disciple making. And that's a good answer. I say yes to both of them. I think they're both correct.

Because what we should be doing is the fruit of the Spirit is the goal is to make us like Christ. And that's for sure the goal of what we're in this world for.

But also we're supposed to be doing the sharing of the gospel with other people by various means. That doesn't mean you have to stand on the ball field and preach a Sunday sermon every, you know.

It could mean that you just influence your neighbor. Or you influence your children. Or you influence whatever through testimony. There's a song on the radio this morning that says, I'm a living testimony.

[26 : 28] Are you a living testimony? You are a living testimony. It depends on what you're testifying to, though. So, you know, if you're being fruitful, you're going to see people's attitude toward Christ change.

You may even see them come to Christ in your lifetime, in your relationship. When you look down, though, after the discussion of the vine, you find Jesus telling us how we can remain in him.

Because that's how we're going to be fruitful. We have to remain in him. So the next slide says, just as the Father has loved me, I also have loved you.

Remain in my love. He goes, how do I remain in his love? And he gives us the answer. If you obey my commandments, you will remain in my love.

Just as I have obeyed my Father's commandments and remain in his love. I could read the rest of it. I'm not going to. But how do you become, you remain in his love.

[27 : 34] How do you know you're in his love? You're obedient. You're obedient. You do the things he asks you to do. You live the life that he's called you to live.

Just like Israel, God's vineyard was to be obedient and share God's blessing and grace and good news to the nations around him.

So we are to be obedient to the commandments of Christ. Ours and Israel's tasks are essentially the same. To be obedient to what God has asked us to do. To be a witness to him.

To make his name known. That's the thing we're getting out of Genesis. To make his name known amongst the people. That they'll know that he is the God that he claims to be.

The great God of creation and life. And Jesus says here that to love him and to love others is being obedient.

[28 : 32] We're called to be faithful servants. Paul actually puts it this way. He says you've been released from slavery to the world and to sin and been made slaves of Christ.

By the way he uses the same word. You are released from slavery to the world and to sin. And you're made free to be slaves of Christ. Now here's what happens.

When you come to Christ you're already a slave. He frees you. He redeems you. He buys you your freedom. He says you're now free. You have a choice to make at that point.

The choice is try to live your life in your own freedom which will fail. You'll be right back where Paul says. Back into slavery. You're going to be a slave of something. He says submit yourself to Christ. Become his bond servant. If you want to use less than slave. Become his servant. His bond servant. His slave. You don't have a choice. You're going to be a slave to something. Choose something that's going to be gracious and lead to life.

[29 : 43] One other thing I want to share with you. We find life in one of two places. In ourselves.

That is our natural biological life. I was thinking about this. I was talking to Laura yesterday. She fed us dinner which is really nice. To have a daughter that does it once in a while. And we're taking in food.

Why do you eat? To get nourishment. Why do you need nourishment? So that you'll live. Right? So you go. That's the biological cycle.

I eat. I die as the food. I get energy. I live. Until the system breaks. Machinery breaks down. And then you die. Or you can have life in Christ.

Through the infilling of the spirit. You stop and think about it. What does the Bible say about how Jesus was raised. From the dead.

[30 : 42] Hmm. Stop and think. Stop and think. He was raised by the. By his father. By his father. Through the work of the what? The spirit.

The spirit. And his body was changed. Wasn't it? We are also reborn. How did we get reborn? By the spirit. And Paul says in a couple of things. Go to the next slide. He says. All right. Just go to the next slide. There we are.

For those who live according to the flesh. In other words. You live your biological life. And your own biological power. Have their outlook shaped by the things of the flesh.

By the body. By the way. The natural life. But those who live according to the spirit. Have their outlook shaped by the things of the spirit. Spirit. So here he's making a very distinct thing.

[31 : 40] He's saying. You have two ways that you live. You can live by the body. The flesh. The natural life you have. And you're going to pursue the things that the world pursues. Because that whole world is built on that system.

Or. You're going to live by the spirit. Well what does that mean? Live by the spirit. That means being empowered by the spirit. Being energized by the spirit. Being led by the spirit. Being given wisdom by the spirit.

All that you. You take your natural life. And you turn it over to him. And he leads you. And you will not. Do the deeds of the body. Or the flesh. Which leads to death. But you'll be.

Led into life. As the sons of God. Next one. I say. Live by the spirit. And you will not carry out the desires of the flesh. Next one.

Whoops. I had another one. We skipped one. That's all right. For all who are led by the spirit. Yeah. We had them all. Our sons of God. In other words.

[32 : 38] Closer to our original passage. Allow the life giving spirit. To nourish you. So you will be a fruitful branch. You got that? Allow.

The life giving spirit. To nourish you. So you will be a fruitful branch. Stay attached to the vine. That was. That's a given. As you detach from the vine.

You're dead. But stay attached to the vine. And the source of life in it. That is the spirit living in you. So that you can be an obedient servant.

To the true king. And God. And by doing so. Bring him glory. Through the fruit. He makes in and through you. So go and bear fruit.

Let's pray. Lord we thank you for your word. I don't know that I was. Very. Clear. But I just pray that your word. Will have an effect. That.

[33 : 36] We will understand. That as only as you work in us. And we turn our lives over to you. And allow you to be. The one. Who fills us. And leads us. And guides us. That we'll be fruitful.

And that we should not just simply look to your blessings. But we should look to being obedient. To you. In all things. That you might be glorified. And the world would know who you are.

They would know your name. And your name would be glorified. We pray in Jesus name. Amen.