

# How Does the Believer Think of Himself in Christ?

*John 15:1-11*

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**15** *“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.  
<sup>2</sup> Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. <sup>3</sup> You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup> Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.*

*<sup>5</sup> “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup> If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. <sup>7</sup> If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. <sup>8</sup> By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.*

*<sup>9</sup> “As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. <sup>10</sup> If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.*

*<sup>11</sup> “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.*

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- This is the last of Jesus’ seven **I am** sayings in this Gospel.
  - **True** contrasts Jesus with OT Israel, reinforcing John’s theme that Jesus is the true Israel.
  - The **vinedresser** refers back to Isaiah’s first vineyard song, where God is depicted as tending his vineyard, only to be rewarded with wild grapes (Isa. 5:1–7; cf. Ps. 80:8–9).
  - Isaiah 5:1–7 - God’s Disappointing Vineyard

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**5** *Now let me sing to my Well-beloved A song of my  
Beloved*

*Regarding His vineyard:  
My Well-beloved has a vineyard  
On a very fruitful hill.*

<sup>2</sup> *He dug it up and cleared out its stones,  
And planted it with the choicest vine.  
He built a tower in its midst,  
And also made a winepress in it;  
So He expected it to bring forth good grapes,  
But it brought forth wild grapes.*

<sup>3</sup> *“And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah,  
Judge, please, between Me and My vineyard.*

<sup>4</sup> *What more could have been done to My vineyard  
That I have not done in it?  
Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes,  
Did it bring forth wild grapes?*

<sup>5</sup> *And now, please let Me tell you what I will do to My  
vineyard:  
I will take away its hedge, and it shall be burned;  
And break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down.*

<sup>6</sup> *I will lay it waste;  
It shall not be pruned or dug,  
But there shall come up briars and thorns.  
I will also command the clouds  
That they rain no rain on it.”*

<sup>7</sup> *For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of  
Israel,  
And the men of Judah are His pleasant plant.  
He looked for justice, but behold, oppression;  
For righteousness, but behold, a cry for help.*

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- The fruitfulness of those in Christ contrasts with the fruitlessness of Israel.
- Psalm 80:8–9

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<sup>8</sup> *You have brought a vine out of Egypt;  
You have cast out the nations, and planted it.*

<sup>9</sup> *You prepared room for it,  
And caused it to take deep root,  
And it filled the land.*

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- *I am he, I who am talking with you* appears in *NEB* as “I am he, I who am speaking to you now,” and in *JB* as “‘I who am speaking to you,’ said Jesus, ‘I am he.’”
  - Most other translations are similar, though *Mft* has “‘I am messiah,’ said Jesus, ‘I who am talking to you.’”; and *Phps* has “‘I am Christ speaking to you,’ said Jesus.”
- In the Gospel of John “I am” is used by Jesus in three different ways.
  1. It appears as a simple statement of identity here and in 6:20; 18:5.
  2. Most often it is followed by a predicate nominative (6:35, 51; 8:12; 10:7, 9, 11, 14; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1, 5).
  3. In several places it is used absolutely (8:24, 28, 58; 13:19).
    - It is necessary to look closely at the absolute use of the “I am” phrase.
- Although there is evidence of a similar use of this term in religious literature outside of the Old Testament,
  - the Old Testament itself offers the best background for understanding its use in this Gospel.
    - In Exodus 3:14, the passage in which God reveals his name to Moses, the Greek Septuagint translates the Hebrew phrase as “I am the Existing One.”
  - This rendition of the divine name in Greek is paralleled elsewhere in the Old Testament.
    - In several places “I am” (literally Hebrew “I [am] he”) is used as a divine name.
    - Isaiah 43:25 is a striking example.

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<sup>25</sup> *“I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions  
for My own sake;  
And I will not remember your sins. (Isaiah 43:25)*

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- There the Hebrew reads *“I, I am he, who wipes out sin.”*
  - The Septuagint translates the first part of this statement by using the Greek expression *“I am”* twice.
  - The Septuagint actually reads *“I am I am who wipes out sin”* and the second *“I am”* becomes the equivalent of the divine name.
  - The Greek translators of Isaiah 51:12 followed the same procedure.
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  - In later Judaism the expression *“I am”* is definitely used as a name for God.
  - Thus in those passages in John’s Gospel where Jesus uses *“I am”* in an absolute sense, he is identifying himself with God.
  - *TEV* attempts to indicate this divine title by the use of capitals (in 8:24, 28; 13:19 *TEV* has ‘I AM WHO I AM’; in 8:58 ‘I AM’).
- In some languages the closest equivalent to the response of Jesus is

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*“I am that very person, I the one who am talking with you”*

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- or

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*“I, as the person talking to you, am that very individual”*

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- or

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*“I am just that person, the same one who is talking to you.”*

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- As indicated in an historical document called “Excursus 9”, a *mashal* is a powerful symbolic or figurative vehicle for

communicating in an extended parabolic manner an important message concerning Jesus.

- This Gospel contains two such *mashals*: the *mashal* of the Good Shepherd in chap. 10 and the *mashal* of the Vine here.
- Also, as I indicated earlier, I have chosen the term because of the impact of Jülicher's concern that a parable has only one point, a definition I definitely regard as too restrictive.
- I also have avoided calling it an allegory for a number of reasons including the negative associations today with the idea of allegory.
- If you prefer to refer to this text as an extended metaphor, that also seems acceptable.
- The *grapevine* and the vineyard traditionally represented God's people, planted and tended by him in Israel (Ps 80:8–18; Isa 5:1–7; Jer 2:21; 12:10–11; Ezek 15:1–5; Hos 10:1–2).
  - When Jesus used this image, he made an important departure:
  - He declared that he is *the true grapevine*, and that a relationship with God requires attachment to him.
- Three types of believers are named or inferred in this first part of the chapter:
  1. Those Who Bear No Fruit,
  2. Those Who Bear Some Fruit And, Later In Verse 5,
  3. Those Who Bear Much Fruit.
- The fruit-bearing branches, it would appear from the text of this verse, represent true believers.
  - But to whom does the text refer when it says, **he cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit?**
- **A. This passage is capable of dangerous interpretation,**
- especially when the idea of fruit-bearing centers in evangelism.
  - Some people teach that those who do not win others to Christ will themselves be snatched out of the vine.
  - Such an idea is alien to the teaching of the New Testament.
  - Perhaps Galatians 5:22–23 helps us here:

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*“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”*

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- Viewing the removed branches as unregenerate professing Christians is not the only possible way of handling the text.
  - Westcott says,
    - “*Even the unfruitful branches are true branches,*”
    - but then he chokes on the later reference to being thrown away and notes, “*It is not perhaps necessary to attempt to determine the mode of this removal*” (Westcott, p. 217).
    - Perhaps it is best not to force every reference in this parable any more than any other but to focus on the pruning.
- There are numerous OT passages which refer to Israel as a vine:
  - Psalm 80:8–16

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<sup>8</sup> You have **brought a vine out of Egypt**;  
You have cast out the nations, and planted it.

<sup>9</sup> You prepared room for it,  
And caused it to take deep root,  
And it filled the land.

<sup>10</sup> The hills were covered with its shadow,  
And the mighty cedars with its boughs.

<sup>11</sup> She sent out her boughs to the Sea,  
And her branches to the River.

<sup>12</sup> Why have You **broken down her hedges**,  
So that all who pass by the way **pluck her fruit**?

<sup>13</sup> The boar out of the woods uproots it,  
And the wild beast of the field devours it.

<sup>14</sup> Return, we beseech You, O God of hosts;  
Look down from heaven and see,  
And **visit this vine**

<sup>15</sup> *And the vineyard which Your right hand has planted,  
And the branch that You made strong for Yourself.*

<sup>16</sup> *It is burned with fire, it is cut down;  
They perish at the rebuke of Your countenance.*

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- David, with the bringing of the Nation of Israel out of the loins of Abraham, and thus, ultimately from out of nowhere, describes them in terms of a vineyard...
    - A vineyard that produces nothing, even though God has gone to great lengths to see that it is “planted” and tended rightly, even to the point of being “brought out of Egypt”.
    - Isaiah 5:1–7 - God’s Disappointing Vineyard
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**5** *Now let me sing to my Well-beloved A song of my  
Beloved regarding His vineyard:  
My Well-beloved has a vineyard  
On a very fruitful hill.*

<sup>2</sup> *He dug it up and cleared out its stones,  
And planted it with the choicest vine.  
He built a tower in its midst,  
And also made a winepress in it;  
So He expected it to bring forth good grapes,  
But it brought forth wild grapes.*

<sup>3</sup> *“And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of  
Judah,  
Judge, please, between Me and My vineyard.*

<sup>4</sup> *What more could have been done to My vineyard  
That I have not done in it?  
Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes,  
Did it bring forth wild grapes?*

<sup>5</sup> *And now, please let Me tell you what I will do to My  
vineyard:  
I will take away its hedge, and it shall be burned;  
And break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down.*

<sup>6</sup> *I will lay it waste;  
It shall not be pruned or dug,  
But there shall come up briars and thorns.  
I will also command the clouds  
That they rain no rain on it.”*

<sup>7</sup> *For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of  
Israel,  
And the men of Judah are His pleasant plant.  
He looked for justice, but behold, oppression;  
For righteousness, but behold, a cry for help.*

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- Jeremiah 2:21
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<sup>21</sup> *Yet I had planted you a noble vine, a seed of highest  
quality.  
How then have you turned before Me  
Into the degenerate plant of an alien vine?*

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- Ezekiel 17:5–10
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<sup>5</sup> *Then he took some of the seed of the land  
And planted it in a fertile field;  
He placed it by abundant waters  
And set it like a willow tree.*

<sup>6</sup> *And it grew and became a spreading vine of low stature;  
Its branches turned toward him,  
But its roots were under it.  
So it became a vine,  
Brought forth branches,  
And put forth shoots.*

<sup>7</sup> *“But there was another great eagle with large wings and  
many feathers;  
And behold, this vine bent its roots toward him,  
And stretched its branches toward him,  
From the garden terrace where it had been planted,  
That he might water it.*

<sup>8</sup> *It was planted in good soil by many waters,  
To bring forth branches, bear fruit,  
And become a majestic vine.” ’*

<sup>9</sup> *“Say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD:  
“Will it thrive?  
Will he not pull up its roots,  
Cut off its fruit,  
And leave it to wither?  
All of its spring leaves will wither,  
And no great power or many people  
Will be needed to pluck it up by its roots.*

<sup>10</sup> *Behold, it is planted,  
Will it thrive?  
Will it not utterly wither when the east wind touches it?  
It will wither in the garden terrace where it grew.” ’ ’*

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- Hosea 10:1 - Israel’s Sin and Captivity
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**10** *Israel empties his vine;  
He brings forth fruit for himself.  
According to the multitude of his fruit  
He has increased the altars;  
According to the bounty of his land  
They have embellished his sacred pillars.*

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- The vine became symbolic of Israel, and even appeared on some coins issued by the Maccabees.
    - The OT passages which use this symbol appear to regard Israel as faithless to Yahweh (typically rendered as “Lord” in the OT) and/or the object of severe punishment.
    - Ezek 15:1–8 in particular talks about the worthlessness of wood from a vine (in relation to disobedient Judah).
      - Ezekiel 15:1–8 - The Outcast Vine
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**15** *Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying: <sup>2</sup> “Son of man, how is the wood of the vine better than any other wood, the vine branch which is among the trees of the*

forest? <sup>3</sup> Is wood taken from it to make any object? Or can men make a peg from it to hang any vessel on? <sup>4</sup> Instead, it is thrown into the fire for fuel; the fire devours both ends of it, and its middle is burned. Is it useful for any work?

<sup>5</sup> Indeed, when it was whole, no object could be made from it. How much less will it be useful for any work when the fire has devoured it, and it is burned?

<sup>6</sup> “Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: ‘Like the wood of the vine among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so I will give up the inhabitants of Jerusalem;

<sup>7</sup> and I will set My face against them. They will go out from one fire, but another fire shall devour them. Then you shall know that I am the LORD, when I set My face against them.

<sup>8</sup> Thus I will make the land desolate, because they have persisted in unfaithfulness,’ says the Lord GOD.”

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- A branch cut from a vine is worthless except to be burned as fuel.
- This fits more with the statements about the disciples (John 15:6)
  - than with Jesus’ description of himself as the vine.
- Ezek 17:5–10 contains vine imagery which refers to a king of the house of David, Zedekiah, who was set up as king in Judah by Nebuchadnezzar.
  - Zedekiah allied himself to Egypt and broke his covenant with Nebuchadnezzar (and therefore also with God), which would ultimately result in his downfall (Ezek. 17:20–21).
  - Ezek 17:22–24 then describes the planting of a cedar sprig which grows into a lofty tree, a figurative description of Messiah.
  - Ezekiel 17:22–24 - Israel Exalted at Last

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<sup>22</sup> Thus says the Lord GOD: “I will take also one of the highest branches of the high cedar and set it out. I will crop off from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one, and will plant it on a high and prominent mountain. <sup>23</sup> On the mountain height of Israel I will plant it; and it will bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a majestic cedar.

*Under it will dwell birds of every sort; in the shadow of its branches they will dwell. <sup>24</sup> And all the trees of the field shall know that I, the LORD, have brought down the high tree and exalted the low tree, dried up the green tree and made the dry tree flourish; I, the LORD, have spoken and have done it.”*

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- But it is significant that Messiah himself is not described in Ezek 17 as a vine, but as a cedar tree.
  - The vine imagery here in Ezekiel applies to Zedekiah’s disobedience.
  - Jesus’ description of himself as the *true vine* in John 15:1 ff. is to be seen against this background,
    - ...but it differs significantly from the imagery surveyed above.
    - It represents new imagery which differs significantly from OT concepts; it appears to be original with Jesus.
- The imagery of the vine underscores the importance of fruitfulness in the Christian life and the truth that this results not from human achievement, but from one’s position in Christ.
- Jesus is not just giving some comforting advice, but portraying to the disciples the difficult path of faithful service.
  - To some degree the figure is similar to the head-body metaphor used by Paul, with Christ as head and believers as members of the body.
  - Both metaphors bring out the vital and necessary connection which exists between Christ and believers.
- The believer’s relation to Christ is here prefigured as that of union (position) and abiding (experience).
  1. The union would be brought into being by the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ,
  2. and the advent of the Spirit (Acts 2)
  3. to baptize the believer into Christ (Rom 6:3–4),
  4. and into His Body, the church (1 Cor 12:13).
- Chapters 15 and 16 of John contain what is called “The 2<sup>nd</sup> Farewell Discourse.

- In chap. 15 are the themes of fruit-bearing and the hatred of the world for Christ's disciples.
- The theme of persecution is continued in chap. 16 along with teaching concerning the ministry of the Holy Spirit.
- The Spirit came at Pentecost to accomplish this (Acts 1:5 with Acts 11:14–16).
  - The experience of abiding, 4, 5, 7 (Rom 6:11), is the result of knowing and reckoning that the position of union is reality (Rom 6:1–10).
- The result is
  - 'fruit,' 2, 4;
  - 'more fruit,' 2;
  - 'much fruit,' 5, 8.
- As 'the true vine,'
  1. Jesus was the true Israel, fulfilling the vocation in which the nation Israel had failed (Isa 5:1–7; Jer 2:21; Ezk 19:10–14).
  2. The branches are the new people of God, the church, issuing from union with Christ by the baptism of the Spirit.
  3. Fruit springs from abiding, or reckoning on that union, and living our lives in the light of that union. We do that:
    1. In faith, 5, and
    2. Is manifested in prayer, 7, and
    3. Loving obedience, 9–10;
    4. Resulting in joy, 11,
    5. Love toward fellow believers, 12–14, and
    6. A new intimacy as friends, not merely servants, 15–17.
- As the Father loves the Son, in the same manner Jesus loves his people.
  - What is that divine method?
  - He loved him without beginning, and in the same fashion Jesus loves his members.

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*"I have loved thee with an everlasting love."*

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- As an interesting sidelight, you can trace the beginning of human affection;
  - you can easily find the beginning of your love to Christ,

- but His love to us is a stream whose source is hidden in eternity past.
- God the Father loves Jesus without any change.
  - Christian, let us take this for your comfort,
  - that there is no change in Jesus Christ’s love to those who rest in him.
- Yesterday you were on Tabor’s top, and you said,
  - “He loves me:”
  - today you are in the valley of humiliation, but he loves you still the same.

*On the hill Mizar, and among the Hermons, you heard his voice, which spake so sweetly with the turtle-notes of love; and now on the sea, or even in the sea, when all his waves and billows go over you, his heart is faithful to his ancient choice.*

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**A. The Father loves the Son without any end,**

- and so also does the Son love his people.
- Brothers and sisters, you do not need to fear the loosing of the silver cord, for his love for you will never cease.
  - Rest confident that even down to the grave Christ will go with you, and that up again from it he will be your guide to the celestial hills.

**B. Moreover, the Father loves the Son without any measure,**

- and that same immeasurable love the Son bestows upon his chosen ones.
  - The whole heart of Christ is dedicated to his people.
  - He “*loved us and gave himself for us.*”

**C. His is a love which passes knowledge.**

*Ah! we have indeed an immutable Savior, a precious Savior, one who loves without measure, without change, without beginning, and without end, even as the Father loves him!*

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- There is much food here for those who know how to digest it.
  - May the Holy Ghost lead us into its marrow and fatness!
- We must ask ourselves and, better, ask the Bible just how is it that we are to think of ourselves once we are redeemed and “in Christ”?
  - The Scripture gives us quite a good guide for us to use to lay out a path for us to use to guide our steps
  - as we walk and as we arrange and pattern our thoughts about the One Who died for us
  - and stands as the best example of One Who pleased the Father totally and completely.
- Pruning was also an essential part of first-century viticultural practice, as it is today.
  - The first pruning occurred in spring when vines were in the flowering stage.
- This involved four operations:
  1. The removal of the growing tips of vigorous shoots so that they would not grow too rapidly;
  2. Cutting off one or two feet from the end of growing shoots to prevent entire shoots being snapped off by the wind;
  3. The removal of some flower or grape clusters so that those left could produce more and better-quality fruit; and
  4. The removal of suckers that arose from below the ground or from the trunk and main branches so that the strength of the vine was not tapped by the suckers.
  - Spring pruning did not involve the removal of wooden branches or their subsequent burning.
- The second pruning occurred in autumn after the grapes were harvested and the vines were dormant.
  - This involved the removal of unwanted branches, those that had produced fruit in the previous season but would not produce fruit in the ensuing season.
  - It also involved cutting back the desired branches (the shoots from the year-old branches that would produce fruit in the coming year) to ensure maximum fruit production.

- After the autumn pruning the cuttings, including many wooden branches, were gathered up and burned.
- We can best think of ourselves if we use the analogy that John laid out for us in John 15.
  - We must view ourselves like:

## ***1. Like the Fruit on the Best of Vines (v1-2)***

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<sup>1</sup> *“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.*

<sup>2</sup> *Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.*

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### **A. Christ Was the True, Genuine Vine**

- “True vine” is best translated as “vine, the genuine or true one”
  - It is actually a kind of double statement and, as we mentioned, is playing on the portrayal in the OT of Israel as the false vine of God, one who did not function and feed the attached branches so that they could produce fruit.
  - THIS vine is genuine, a vine that came from God, and THIS vine does feed and grow the branches attached
  - That’s the reason for the language and terms used, and for the emphasis on the fact that THIS the Genuine vine.

### **B. Our Heavenly Father is the Vinedresser**

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<sup>1</sup> *“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.*

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- As we said, the Vinedresser was the One who had responsibility (and desired) to keep the vineyard in workable shape.
- Notice the personal nature of the verse - Jesus doesn’t refer to “the Father”, but to “My Father”
  - It indicates that the Father and Christ are intertwined in the service to the branches as will be shown in a bit...

### C. Given the true “identity” of the vine and the vinedresser

- We are led inexorably to conclude that this is undoubtedly the best vineyard ever!
  - The Spirit brought forth the braches and enable them to function as they ought
  - Christ provides the nurture and strengthening, as well as a sturdy and functional connection.
  - The Father does whatever is needful to keep the branches clear of any harmful thing.
- This all is a key thing for us to keep in mind and focus on as we walk with and serve our Lord.

## 2. *Like a Newly Cleaned Vessel (v3)*

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<sup>3</sup> *You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.*

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- The “already clean” reference, first of all, is looks back at the statement about what the Father does in the prior verse

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<sup>2</sup> *Every branch in Me that **does not bear fruit He takes away**; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.*

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- This is why He immediately emphasizes that the redeemed are “already clean”
  - Whereas many of the branches are, indeed, of need for radical pruning.
  - BUT, the ones to whom He is speaking, are ALREADY clean because they are in Christ.
- But, as indicated here (and elsewhere in the NT) there are many branches that do need some action by the Vinedresser.
- All of this together, and given the identities of the ones involved and the implicated work that they do, makes this NOT just another vine - but the absolute BEST of vines.

### **3. Like a Well-Nurtured Branch (v4)**

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*<sup>4</sup> Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.*

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- Just to pick up the idea we already mentioned...
  - Because of all that is identified here - We have to assume that the matter made available to nurture and feed the branches would be lacking nothing and, in fact would be abundantly provided for
- We might, with no ridicule involved and no putting down of those thought of, that we could think of the different between those who have adequate food and those who do not...
  - Those who do not have that condition affect all of their living...
  - Those who do, likewise, but in a positive way.
  - WE are a “well-nurtured” branch - we have all that we need to prosper and grow.
  - Additionally, there is never any shortage or lack...
  - And note, we are not just, or even primarily, talking about food
  - We are talking about spiritual provision, all we need to prosper and produce fruit and to give God glory!

### **4. Like a Well-Connected and Productive Vine (v5)**

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*<sup>5</sup> “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.*

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- Given what we have already spoken of it is logical for John to go on and talk about the fact that there is a result to all of the provision, all that they have coming in via their connection to the vine...
  - We need to recognize this fact
  - The connection we have, combined with the actions of the Vinedresser, doesn’t just give us barely enough.

- It gives us abundant provision and that, in turn allows us to produce fruit, and not just a bit!
- We need also to make abundant use of this truth in the way in which we live and conduct ourselves as members of His body.
  - We can bear “much” fruit!
  - “Much” literally refers to this abundance.
- We need to NOT be so concerned with what we need, but rather...
  - Convinced both that there is and will always be, enough as well as well as even ABUNDANT provision for all that God desires for us to do and be!

### ***5. Like One Who Knows Well What I Necessary For Fruit Production (v6)***

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*<sup>6</sup> If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.*

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- We should also move toward greater and more productive service to the Lord if we not only realized and put into place the truth that we are well connected and well-nurtured; but also that this nurture and connection provides all I need for the required “fruit” production that the Scripture requires and prescribes for God’s children.
- It is important that we realize that fruit production revolves around the ministry of God to us as described in this passage.

### ***6. Like One Who Knows and Has What Is Needed For Prosperity (7)***

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*<sup>7</sup> If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.*

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- I hate to be a picky word splitter, but notice that this verse starts with an “if”.

- As we have said before, many times, “If” is used to suggest and either/or situation.
- Most often, the fulfillment or failure of the end result stated is dependent on the accomplishment of the conditions that are a part of the “If” statement.
- John is deliberately leading us in such a way as to cause us to ponder this matter and see what its’ inclinations are.
  - That leading is NOT to set up and conditional statement that suggests that this part of this conditional idea is one that puts into our minds that we might NOT realize the promised reward.
- Its’ purpose is to cause and give us material to evaluate whether we are indeed actually connected to the vine or not?
  - The point, at least one of them, is to suggest that there are those who, though giving the appearance of being connected to the vine, are not actually connected!
  - It is THIS that John (and the Holy Spirit) has in mind.
- He desires for us to consider just what a genuine branch (a real believer) is and to see to it that the manifestations of being truly connected to the True Vine are present so that we are, as so many do, deceiving ourselves or being deceived.

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*<sup>7</sup> If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.*

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- That necessity is Three-fold:
  1. Abiding in Him
  2. Allowing His Word to Abide in You
  3. Turning to Him in Prayer for Our Needs and Wants
- John’s intention here is to cause us to evaluate our lives and to see to that these things are present.
  - If they are NOT, there is reason, according to John, to wonder if we are, indeed connected to the Vine at all!
  - This is NOT intended to suggest that a connection to the Vine that was once certain can at all be lost.
  - That is NOT John’s intent in any of this chapter.
- We know, from the rest of the NT that a New Covenant believer is secure.

- Despite the wording of the verse, no verse ought to be taken to state otherwise.
- If rightly and clearly understood, no verse says otherwise.

## ***7. Like One Who Knows His Place and Does It Well, Fulfilling Its' Function (8)***

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<sup>8</sup> *By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.*

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- Another of the matters that ought to be at the front of our minds is that our salvation and our attachment to the Vine was put in place in order that God might be glorified.
  - We can actually say that John puts forth the THREE main purposes for one attached to the Vine:
    1. First, as we said, there is the matter of all that we do, say, and even think and feel, brings glory to the God of all Creation.
    2. That, because we obey and serve Him, we are enabled to bring forth fruit, MUCH fruit.
    3. We are enabled, by all that has been mentioned here and in the prior verse, to show ourselves to be the Disciples of Christ (Remember that the Lord Jesus Christ is the one shown to be speaking).

## ***8. Like One That Is Treasured and Well Guided Into His Place (9)***

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<sup>9</sup> *“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.*

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- A small point here, but a precious one...
  - Christ is an enigmatic God
    - He is the eternal infinite God, already in existence when all things were created and remaining after all things are destroyed.
    - He is the first, He preexisted, He is the last, He will go on forever.

- When other things cease, He does not.
- When some things begin, yes when all things begin He is already there.
  - He is the First and the Last, the eternal One.
    - The idea is that He transcends time,
    - that He transcends space,
    - that He transcends creation.
- And yet amazingly, look back at verse 8, this same One
  - who is eternal,
  - who was before all things and
  - will live forever,
  - who transcends all things
  - was dead and has come to life.
- One last item
  - John is adding to the little list for us...
  - Christ is God and God is Christ's Father (a Paradox again)
  - His point here is that we do not earn the LOVE of Christ - the Vine.
  - He loves us and that love can never and will never change.

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<sup>9</sup> *"As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.*

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- God loved Jesus and John tells us that, in the same fashion, Christ loved us!
  - The sense of the verse is that Christ's love for the branches is of the same nature and duration of God's love for Christ
  - That is a sobering and thrilling statement is it not?
- One other note here - we must realize and cherish this eternal and enduring love for us by the Lord Jesus.
  - Christ finishes the verse by telling us to "abide in 'My' love"
  - Remember that "abiding" speaks of spending time, or remaining in a given thing.
  - We must make the knowledge of God's great love for us, demonstrated in the coming of Christ and His sacrifice.

- Akin to that idea is we need to remember that it was this love for Christ on God’s part and Christ’s love for us on His part that resulted in our redemption is the first place!
  - That ought to a great motivator and a thrilling idea to us!
  - The God of all men and of the entire world saw fit to demonstrate His love toward us in sending His only Son, Whom He loved greatly, to die and redeem us from sin!
  - We can never let that thought just become something that is only a fact to us...
    - It must ALWAYS be special and Marvelous!

**9. *Like One Who Is Well Instructed and Knows What He Is To Do In Order To Be As He Ought To Be (10)***

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*<sup>10</sup> If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.*

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- Built on that idea is the truth that there are things that are very “doable” that can build and heighten our usability to God.
  - In verse 10 John tells us a couple of things:
    1. Obedience contributes (does not earn or enable) to our accomplishing the “abiding in His love” mentioned in the prior verse..
    2. That, then, can be followed, by implication, to a greater “abiding” in Christ’s love.
    3. We ought to be striving to follow after the example of Christ loving His Father and what that meant to Christ’s behavior.
- Just as Christ abode in His Father’s love, so must we make a bold fact of such abiding in God’s love a part of our lives.

## **10. Like One Who Takes Ongoing Joy In Fulfilling His God Given Task**

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*<sup>11</sup> “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.*

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- We just want to take note of what John goes on and points out to us...
  - There is a secondary reason for his speaking to them...
    - He desires that the joy He takes in His (read “the Vine’s) branches might remain in those branches.
    - This is, once again, NOT to be taken to mean that salvation can be lost, only that there is such a thing as:
      - Full joy and joy that is NOT full.
      - We’ve all experienced that I believe...times when we have not enjoyed the FULL joy of our salvation!
    - One (and only one) of the reasons for that is that we have allowed our heart and our minds to become filled with something OTHER THAN the Love of Christ.
- We might see this as “task #1” for us in our Christian living.

## **11. Like One Who Recognizes That He Is A Part Of A Larger, Interconnected “Plant” (12-17)**

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*<sup>12</sup> This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup> Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. <sup>14</sup> You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. <sup>15</sup> No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. <sup>16</sup> You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you. <sup>17</sup> These things I command you, that you love one another.*

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- We spoke a bit about this earlier, when we talked about the fact that we need to recognize our real and vital connection to the Lord Jesus, the Vine.
  - Verse 12-17 points out for us that we are not just a single part of what Christ has erected as a part of His “vineyard”.
  - Rather, there are many, many branches with many, many abilities and talent that Christ has grafted into His Vine/Body.
  - Our realization of this truth and our building upon it by, as Christ says here, being obedient to Him and “loving one another”
  - Thus it follows Christ’s example in that fashion.
- But it follows that example in another, larger body kind of a way as well.

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*<sup>12</sup> This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup> Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.*

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- We are to “love one another as I have loved you”. This is a plural concept.
  - We don’t just love the ones we are close to... but all of the ones whom Christ (the Vine) loved.
- Additionally, the implication of the verse is that we are to love (or at least strive to love) them just as Christ loved us!
  - We remember that He loved us as the Father loved Him.
- He goes on in the very next verse (13) and tells us the “degree” in which this is to be accomplished.
  - It is to be pursued and expressed to the same extent and Christ demonstrated His.
  - This not to say that we ought to find a way to be crucified or to die for each other.
  - However, it is the dedication and love for each other, that will go to whatever necessary extent that is in view.
- It is these ideas that demonstrate that, as a part of the group of branches that are each connected to the vine, this is the kind of behavior and feeling for one another, as believers, we ought to seek to cultivate and demonstrate

## **12. Like Who Knows That He Is Placed In A Larger Context (18–25)**

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<sup>18</sup> “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. <sup>19</sup> If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. <sup>20</sup> Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. <sup>21</sup> But all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me. <sup>22</sup> If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. <sup>23</sup> He who hates Me hates My Father also. <sup>24</sup> If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would have no sin; but now they have seen and also hated both Me and My Father. <sup>25</sup> But this happened that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law, ‘They hated Me without a cause.’”

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- Without spending too much time here, these verse are fairly obvious, we do need to say that they speak of the branch/believer/member of the body and vineyard that lives in the world and demonstrates the truth of the Gospel by a godly life.
  - It is very true and accurate to define ourselves, among many ways so to do, as unique individuals that live in a large context than only the part of the vineyard or the vine to which we are attached.

## **13. Like One Who Knows That The Divine Helper Is Essential (26–27)**

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<sup>26</sup> “But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. <sup>27</sup> And you also will bear

*witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.*

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- The last “think or feel like” this as a believer, I think all of would believe is the most important and most significant.
  - John is, obviously, speaking of the Holy Spirit and His essentiality for being all of what the branches are to be.
  - This is another thing we need to see here - the Holy Spirit was not sent until the day of Pentecost... sometime after this...
- The “Helper” is reference to the work of the Holy Spirit, at least a part of it.
  - The Spirit does many things for believers, but this is one that we often do not remember of think of...
  - Here, we are told that He (the Spirit) will bear testimony of Christ, particularly, it seems, in Christ’s ministry as the True Vine.
- What is interesting is that it is clear that the Spirit will bear witness of Christ, and the implication is NOT only to the the branches.
  - The idea is that the Spirit will bear witness of the truth of the Gospel.
  - Note also that the branches are said to be going to bear that same witness.
  - The implication is that, because of the Spirit’s ministry to the Branches, they will also enjoy the increasing of their witness to the world around them.
- Just as a note, the phrase “you have been with me from the beginning”
  - This is aimed at the Apostles - they were with Christ from the very start of His ministry on earth.
  - Because of the witness testifying to the truth of the Gospel, there will be special enablement to the branches by the Spirit.