



Jesus, the Vine

Lesson 22 John 15:1-27

REVIEW

1. In last week's lesson, Jesus continued to prepare His disciples for His impending death by assuring them of the hope found in Christ, the hope of heaven and the hope found within the disciples.
2. He further prepared them by answering their questions related to His death and departure from the world and assured them that He was the way, the truth and the life.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. In this lesson, we will study the fellowship that the disciples were to have with Christ in the eighth and final "I Am" statement of John.
2. We will also revisit the new commandment given previously in John 13:34 as Jesus taught His disciples about the fellowship that should be enjoyed between disciples.
3. We will also learn about the fellowship the disciples had with the Holy Spirit in the midst of a world that hated them.

FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST (15:1-11)

A. The context of this teaching

1. Jesus had been preparing His disciples for His departure for quite some time
9:4; 10:11; 12:7-8, 24-28, 32, 35; 13:36; 14:2-4
2. Possible Locations
 - a. Upper Room. Some believe this teaching was given in the upper room where Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper. They contend "as they had made use of the wine, Jesus took occasion from that to say that he was the true vine, and to intimate that his blood was the real wine that was to give strength to the soul."¹
 - b. Walking through the city. "If Jesus were walking through the city, He may have seen the vines growing on the walls."²
 - c. Temple. "The Temple had doors at the entrance...[which] were adorned with embroidered veils, with their flowers of purple, and pillars interwoven: and over these, but under the crown-work, was spread out a golden vine, with its branches hanging down from a great height, the largeness and fine workmanship of which was a surprising sight to the spectators, to see what vast materials were there, and with what great skill the workmanship was done."³
 - d. We know for certain
 - i. Not in the upper room - **14:31**
 - ii. Not at Mount of Olives - **18:1**
3. Jewish understanding of the vine imagery - **Isaiah 5:1-7**
 - a. The Jewish people were compared to a vine which the Lord planted - **Isaiah 5:1, 7**

¹ Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament*, Luke and John (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2005), 335.

² Elmer Towns, *The Gospel of John: Believe and Live* (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2002), 150.

³ Flavius Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews* 15:11:3, trans. William Whiston (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1987), 424.

- b. God was the husbandman of the vineyard, *“And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein”* - Isaiah 5:2a
- c. God’s desire for the nation was that it would produce good fruit, *“It should bring forth grapes”* - Isaiah 5:2b
- d. The nation did not produce the grapes as He desired, *“It brought forth wild grapes”* Isaiah 5:2b
- e. God had done everything right to yield the right fruit - Isaiah 5:4
- f. God’s judgment against his unfruitful people would be severe - Isaiah 5:5-6

15:1 “I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. **2** Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. **3** Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. **4** Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. **5** I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. **6** If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. **7** If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. **8** Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. **9** As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. **10** If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. **11** These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.”

B. The purpose of this teaching - 15:11

- 1. *“That my joy might remain in you”* speaks of Christ’s happiness and pleasure in His disciples’ obedience and fruitfulness
- 2. *“That your joy might be full”* means the fullness of joy for disciples of Christ is found in fruitful living
- 3. To show the disciples how to glorify God - 15:8

C. The keys to a joy-filled, God-glorifying life - 15:1-11

- 1. Key 1. Understand the true vine - 15:1-5
 - a. Who He is: Jesus Christ, *“I am the true vine”* - 15:1
 - b. His role
 - i. He is the source of everything within His disciples that can produce fruit - 15:4-5
 - a) You *“cannot bear fruit...except ye abide in me”* - 15:4
 - b) *“Without me ye can do nothing”* - 15:5
 - ii. He answers prayers in accordance with His will - 15:7
- 2. Key 2. Understand the vinedresser - 15:1-11
 - a. Who He is: God, the Father- 15:1

b. His role

- i. He takes away every branch in Christ that doesn't bear fruit - 15:2
 - a) "*Take away*" means "to lift up, elevate, to raise from the ground"⁴
 - b) Though some translations render this word "cuts off" (NIV) and thus read this to mean either 1) a branch falling away and losing salvation or 2) a false professor of Christ being cut away, "the Greek word...normally is rendered 'lifts up.' To conserve moisture in a dry land, vines were allowed to run on the ground until the blossoms began to appear. It was then necessary for the gardener to lift the vines off the ground so that the blossoms could germinate. Vines were lifted up either on sticks or on stones. The vines were thus put in a place where they could produce fruit."⁵
 - c) "The focus here is fruit-bearing; the vinedresser does not cut away a branch because it has no fruit but gently lifts it up to the sun so it has the opportunity to bear fruit. The first step of Christ is not judgment but encouragement."⁶
- ii. He purges every branch that bears fruit - 15:2
 - a) "*Purgeth*" means "to cleanse"⁷
 - b) The Father does the purging - 15:2
 - c) He purges by the words of Christ - 15:3
 - d) "The cleansing of the vine required...the removal of insects that would consume the vine. This had to be done tediously by hand. In the dry climate in which the vine would grow, the leaves would accumulate a thick layer of dust. This dust would weaken the branch. It was necessary for a gardener to sponge the leaves to remove the accumulated dust so that the vine could remain healthy. When Christ spoke of the Father as cleansing the vine so that it would be fruitful, He had in mind the Father's work of removing from the branch anything that would interfere with the production of fruit."⁸
 - e) He purges the branch so it will bring forth "*more fruit*"
- iii. He casts non-abiding branches into the fire - 15:6
 - a) These branches are "*cast forth as a branch...withered...and they are burned*"
 - b) Four major interpretations of this verse
 - 1) The one who does not abide (therefore, doesn't produce fruit) is to lose his salvation and is "*cast*" into hell
 - 2) Some focus on the word "*if*" and see this as a conditional clause which warns against presuming to be saved
 - 3) This is a believer who loses his reward. "The verse begins with "anyone" (singular) but ends up with "they are burned" (plural), which is a reference to his rewards being lost. The fire is not a reference to hell, where the unsaved are punished, but to the fire of the bema judgment where Christians are judged."⁹
1 Corinthians 3:12-15, Romans 14:10, 2 Corinthians 5:10

⁴ Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), 16, ref. 142.

⁵ J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 441.

⁶ Towns, 151.

⁷ W.E. Vine, *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1968), 498.

⁸ Pentecost, 441.

⁹ Towns, 152.

- 4) This is a believer who suffers a premature death who does not abide in Christ. The fire is a reference to the bema judgment as well.
Acts 5:1-11, 1 Corinthians 11:28-30

- iv. He receives the glory from the fruit of the vine - 15:8
 - v. He loves the Son - 15:9
 - vi. He gives the commandments - 15:10
 - c. Key 3. Understand the branches - 15:1-11
 - i. Who they are: The disciples - 15:5
 - ii. Their role
 - a) Abide in the vine - 15:4-5, 7
 - 1) “Abide” means “to remain or stay”¹⁰
 - 2) The language implies “maintaining a vital spiritual connection with Christ”¹¹
 - 3) “Remain united to me by a living faith. Live a life of dependence on me.”¹²
 - b) Ask in accordance with the will of God as they abide in the vine - 15:7
 - c) Bear fruit by abiding in the vine. Fruit is not borne by our efforts. It is borne by abiding in the vine. - 15:8
 - d) Continue in His love. “Continue” in verse 9 is the same word translated “abide” throughout this passage - 15:9
 - e) Keep His commandments - 15:10
 - f) Please Christ with their lives, “That my joy might remain in you” - 15:11
 - g) Experience fullness of joy in Christ, “That your joy might be full - 15:11
- D. The natural flow of this teaching. Fullness of joy is experienced when you are completely satisfied in the vine.

FELLOWSHIP BETWEEN DISCIPLES (15:12-17)

15:12 “This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. **13** Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. **14** Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. **15** Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. **16** Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. **17** These things I command you, that ye love one another.”

A. The command to love - 15:12, 17

- 1. The main idea of this passage is found in the bookends, “Love one another” - 15:12, 17
- 2. Jesus restates His “new commandment” in John 13:34

B. The crowning love of the ages - 15:13

- 1. His love would be the greatest love ever known to man

¹⁰ Thayer, 399, ref. 3306.

¹¹ A.T. Robertson, *Robertson's Word Pictures of the New Testament*, Vol. 5 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1932), 257.

¹² Barnes, 337.

2. His love would serve as their example, *“As I have loved you”* - 15:12b
 3. *“Self-sacrifice is the high-water mark of love.”*¹³
 4. *“The Lord is not speaking here of his death as an atoning sacrifice in which he laid down his life for the sins of humankind, for our redemption. He is speaking of his death as a voluntary surrender for the good and wellbeing of those he loves.”*¹⁴
- C. The complete obedience which results from loving God - 15:14
- D. The changed relationship between Christ and His disciples - 15:15
1. *“Henceforth I call you not servants...for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you”*
 2. *“I have called you friends”*
- E. The call to fruitfulness - 15:16
1. Jesus chose His disciples
 2. He ordained (appointed) them to go and bring forth fruit that remains

FELLOWSHIP WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT IN A HOSTILE WORLD (15:18-16:4)

- A. The world's hatred of Christ - 15:18
- 15:18** *“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.”*
1. The word *“hated”* means *“to detest”*¹⁵
 2. Christ was hated first. He was their example both for giving love and receiving hatred.
- B. The world's hatred of the disciples - 15:18
1. The reality of the world's hatred of them. *“If the world hate you”* is a *“condition of the first class meaning ‘As it certainly does.’”*¹⁶
 2. The reason for the world's hatred - 15:19

15:19 *“If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.”*

 - a. Because you are not of this world
 - b. I have chosen you out of this world
 3. A reminder of an earlier commissioning - 15:20

15:20 *“Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.”*

 - a. Jesus reminded them of His instructions to them in Matthew 10:22-25
 - b. In that commissioning, Jesus told them they would face persecution as they entered various cities - **Matthew 10:22**
 - c. Jesus assured them of the Father's care for them, even in persecution
Matthew 10:30-31

¹³ Robertson, 260.

¹⁴ John Phillips, *Exploring the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1989), 291.

¹⁵ Thayers, 415, ref. 3404.

¹⁶ Robertson, 261.

4. The reason behind the world's persecution. Not their hatred for you, it's their hatred for Christ - 15:21

15:21 "But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me."

5. The rejection of Christ by the world - 15:22-25

15:22 "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin. 23 He that hateth me hateth my Father also. 24 If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. 25 But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause."

- a. They rejected Christ in spite of the fact that He came and spoke to them - 15:22
- b. "They had not had sin". "This is evidently to be understood of the particular sin of persecuting and rejecting him...If he had not come they would have been guilty of many other sins, yet of this, their great crowning sin, they would not have been guilty...They would not have been guilty of this kind of sin...They would have been guilty of the same degree of sin."¹⁷ - 15:22
- c. They rejected the unique relationship of Jesus the Son and God the Father - 15:23
- d. Their rejection of Christ was the fulfillment of Psalm 69:4 - 15:25

- C. The Promise of the Holy Spirit - 15:26-27

15:26 "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: 27 And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning."

1. The surety of His coming, "When the Comforter is come" - 15:26
2. His source
 - a. Sent by Jesus
 - b. From the Father
3. His substance
 - a. "The Spirit of truth"
 - b. "Proceedeth from the Father"
4. His special ministry
 - a. "He shall testify of me"
 - b. "Ye also shall bear witness". The disciples would give their eyewitness testimony in the power of the Holy Spirit - 15:27

LIFE LESSONS

1. Understand your role in the vine. Do not worry yourself with doing the job of the Vine or the Husbandman. You abide, ask in accordance with God's will, continue in His love, keep His commandments, please the Father, and experience fullness of joy in living a Christ-filled life.
2. Love one another with Christ-like love.
3. Rejoice that God's Spirit lives within you.

¹⁷ Barnes, 342.