

“Bearing Fruit”

Jack C. Whytock

Do you have any vines growing in your yard? Have you examined them lately? About two years ago I had the privilege of visiting Graaff-Reinet, South Africa and seeing what is believed to be the largest Black Acorn Grape vine in the world. I was told that it was but a remnant of its former glory of about three metres in diameter, yet this 150-year-old vine is still bearing fruit! That magnificent vine made me think of the famous vine chapter in the New Testament - John 15.

In this chapter there are three noteworthy points clearly being made: first, the identity of the vine; second, the necessity of remaining in the vine; and third, the command to bear fruit. Jesus, the Masterful Teacher, employs a grand picture as His teaching device (and builds on Psalm 80 and Ezekiel 15).

Jesus directly identifies the Vine as Himself. Of course, what He means to tell his disciples and others is that He is the source of spiritual food and life. A vine stock is the conduit of life to all its branches, so Jesus Christ is the conduit of spiritual life to all the branches in Him (vs.5). However, Jesus powerfully states that He is not just *a vine* but He is the “*True Vine*” (vs.1). This is an astonishing statement and claim by Christ. He is saying that true spiritual life can only be found by being a branch that is attached to Himself, the True Vine, by faith. Look at the branches on a vine this summer and think about how each branch depends on the vine for life. Jesus Christ is the True Vine.

Jesus, then proceeds to explain the importance of remaining in the Vine, that is in Him (vs.4,5,7). What a great lesson Jesus is making to all who are in the vine— remain in Him by faith. Continue to seek spiritual nourishment from Jesus through the Word and the Spirit and continue to be watchful and diligent over your faith. Many begin by clinging to the Vine, Jesus, but they either fall away or grow cold to their First Love, Jesus. Some have no vital union with Him yet to others Christ says, “Come back now— feed on Me and remain with Me the Vine”.

Finally, Jesus gives a command to each branch to bear fruit. What kind of fruit? A grape vine bears grapes. The branches united to the vine of Christ bear six distinctive fruit according to John 15. These are the fruit of prayer – the life of asking and calling upon the Father, a sign of spiritual life (vs.7); the fruit of obedience to the commandments of scripture – the life of conformity to Christ-likeness (vs.10); the fruit of joy (and the other fruits of the Spirit) (vs.11) – deepening Christian character; the fruit of love to fellow believers (vs.12)– displaying unity with His children; the fruit of acceptance when you are pruned by the Gardener (vs.2b) – the way we are changed through the trials, afflictions and realities of life; and finally the fruit of going and being witnesses in the world (vs.8,27) – the call to others to be engrafted into the True Vine, Jesus Christ.

John 15 is the great vine chapter of the New Testament. It is about the identity of the Lord Jesus as the True Vine of spiritual life, it is about a call to remain in the Vine, and it about a call to ask, “Am I bearing these particular fruits in the Christian life?” This summer as you see the grapes appear on the vines around the island, ask yourself, “Is my life bearing the fruit of being united to the True Vine, Jesus Christ and feeding on Him?”

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