

In The Garden of Eden

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciple.” (John 52:1-8)

What is in the scene? We come to one of the big cities of the chosen nation which was inhabited mainly by the chosen people of God. But, in addition to these people were other nations like the Moabites and the Edomites who used the word ‘god’ with the same pronunciation as the word GOD but of different content. And there were also the rulers of the land (the Romans) who conquered Judea and the city of Jerusalem. You may imagine now the city 2000 years ago how the people were and how the buildings were arranged, and then we will move through to reach a room in the upper story where we find a physically ordinary man speaking to the group of men. His name is Jesus, speaking to his disciples. One of them and through his pen we and the whole world come to know what Jesus was saying. And for sure as you glance and hear the first verse above you will continue to listen to Jesus. He said: **“I am the true vine and my Father is the gardener.”** From here we will find some spiritual facts as the following:

1) I am: It is an ordinary thing nowadays to say or to hear the word ‘I am’. But to Jewish custom ‘I am’ is of great importance. “I AM” is the name of God that Jews are not allowed to speak. **(I am who I am. Exodus 3:14)** This is how God presented Himself to Moses in the Old Testament. The concept that Jesus started with the words ‘I am’, he was declaring his divine nature, authority, and his equality with God the Father.

2) The true: The word ‘true’ spoken by Jesus to his disciples was proven to be really true. Jesus showed them his authority and power by driving out demons, calming the wind, multiplying the bread and fish, and raising the dead. Jesus is the true Messiah that the Israelites have been waiting to deliver them from their enemies. Many people came before and after Jesus proclaiming about God, but no one of them courageously say, ‘I am true’.

3) Vine: When you enter a vineyard one thing will strike you: Whether the vineyard produces fruits or not. In the Old Testament the Israelites were often compared to a vine. From the book of Isaiah, that vine only yielded bad fruit (read Isaiah 5:1-7), while the true vine that Jesus proclaimed bears good fruit that is acceptable to God. Jesus said, **“I am the vine, you are the branches”**. He did not say I am the shaft and you are the branches. The branches attached to the vine indicate unity, intimacy, and direct communication of every disciple to Jesus. And, from the figure of the ‘vine tree’ we find a divine relationship:

a. The branches receive cleaning: (You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.) This demonstrates the sanctification or the cleansing power of the word of God and its purging effect on the life of the disciples.

b. The branches remain in the vine: (If you remain in me and my words remain in you ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you.) The physical union of the branches to the vine, translated to the divine language, will emphasize the importance of prayer in the life of every disciple. As the branch is connected to the vine, it continuously receives sap that is keeping it fresh and alive. An unceasing prayer is a divine communication with Jesus and will lead to receiving the Holy Spirit, the sap of the vine.

c. The branches bear fruits: The real contact between the vine and the branches will result to fruit production. The vineyard is the kingdom of God, and the fruits are the saved souls who believed in Jesus and are attached to Him. The fruits describe the meaning of the Holy Spirit in the life of the disciples who remain in Jesus. They receive from Him love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. In addition, there are fruits of the spiritual gifts to those who are attached to Him. But apart from Jesus the human lives by his own strength and will produce the perishable fruit of the world and those of the sinful nature which are the sexual immorality, impurity, debauchery, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, greediness, factions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and the like. These are all harmful fruits and are not the grapes of the vine. As He said, **“apart from me you can do nothing.”**

4) My Father: Again, Jesus here emphasized His divine nature. He called God His Father, and the Father gave the son who bears the Spirit of the Father. So God is the Father of the vine, the Father to Jesus, and to all other disciples (the branches). Essentially, the Father has the love and from his love the branches bear much fruits, and in return they give glory back to God the Father. **“This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”**

5) The Gardener: He is the one In charge of the vineyard. He is God, He is the Father, and He is the Gardener. *The gardener cuts off* every branch that seems externally attached to Jesus but internally not connected and gave no good fruit. (Jesus here is pointing to Judas Iscariot who left them early before this scene and went to betray Jesus.) To any disciple who may betray Jesus by his behaviour He said, **“He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit... if anyone does not remain in me he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers. Such branches are picked up and thrown into the fire and burned.”** *The Gardener prunes* the branch that bears fruit so that it will be more fruitful. God the Father who is the gardener corrects, disciplines, allow trials, and refines those who love Him and are attached to Him, and who delight in serving Him.

My Dear and Beloved: If you find yourself attached to Jesus, rejoice and continue to do the same. If you find yourself about to fall from him, wake up and take your right position in the vine. And to those who are not attached and still wondering around a false vine, this is now the right time for you to come and join the true vine and bear much fruit. Today, the Lord Jesus Christ declares to you, **“I am the true vine and my Father is the Gardener”**.

My Prayer: *Father God I come before you in the name of Jesus who died on the cross for my sins to give me eternal life. Lord I commit my life into your hand to live my life for you to serve you and to do your will. Lord cleanses me and prune so that I will be more fruitful and effective in my service and life unto you. This is mu prayer in Jesus name Amen.*