

=FAVORITE BIBLE CHAPTERS=

Lesson 47

John 15

INTRODUCTION: John 14 ends with the words of our Lord, “Arise, let us go hence.” Undoubtedly at that point, He left the disciples and went away from the upper room. Some believe that He led the disciples to the temple and gave them John 15 and 16. There are others who believe that He and His disciples left the city and went somewhere to the slopes of the Mount of Olives and there, Jesus gave His final discourse.

In considering John 14, we find that the disciples concerned themselves with heavenly matters in view of the approaching death of their Lord. They were told about Heaven and the second coming of Jesus Christ. In John 15, the Lord sharply brought them back again to earth’s level and their responsibilities on earth. He reminded them that their job was to stay here and carry out the ministry that He had begun. The whole burden of this message in John 15 is to remind them that if they are going to carry out the commission of spreading the Gospel in His absence, as He told them in John 14:12 (*Please read this to the class*), they are going to have to have a close relationship with Jesus. He is going to talk about fruit bearing. Before He does so, He reminds them that He is the vine. We cannot bear fruit unless we have a close relationship with Him. In thus calling them to this consideration, He uses a great figure of speech, that of the vine. This is no new figure of speech, for it has been used again and again in the past. During the time of our Lord’s ministry, on the gates of the temple there perhaps could be seen a golden vine. Maybe He pointed to this, for the vine had become the symbol of the national life of Israel. Certainly at the time of our Lord, they were at the point that the figure of the vine emerged in Biblical literature and probably, as a result of Psalm 80, had become the symbol of the nation. See Psalm 80:8-15. Hence, the disciples were certainly acquainted with the vine, and the figure of speech was no new one to them. Let us notice several vines in the Bible.

- I. THE LUXURIANT VINE. See Hosea 10:1. In this book, Hosea is reminding the Israelites of their luxury and the fact that they had turned from God. God does not mind His people having luxury. It is when that luxury takes the place of God and when we trust things instead of the Lord that God is displeased. He wants His children to have good things, but He wants His children to depend upon Him. Sad, but true, is the fact that we seem to depend upon the Lord more when we have less, and we depend upon the Lord less when we have more. What kind of vine are we today? Are we the vine of luxury? Are we unable to depend upon the Lord because we feel we can make it on our own?
- II. THE DEGENERATE VINE. Jeremiah spoke about this kind of vine. In other words, it is a bad vine. Ezekiel spoke about it three times. This is the vine that is getting worse and worse all the time. The fruit may look good for now, but the wood is deteriorating, and the vine is going down and drifting farther and farther away from bearing fruit. The Lord is reminding us here that we should not slip away from Him and from bearing fruit. It is so easy to do so—a step at a time, an inch here, an inch there, a little bit here, a little bit there—and before we know it, we are not usable by God. (*Teacher, remind the class members to take stock here to see if they are becoming a degenerate vine or a deteriorating vine.*) This is neither a good vine nor a bad vine; it is a vine on the way from being a good vine to becoming a bad vine.
- III. THE TRUE VINE. You will notice in John 15:1a that our Lord is called “the true vine.” What does this mean? He is reminding Israel that He is the source of all fruit bearing. A successful nation must have Jesus as its source. A successful church must have Jesus as its source. A successful preacher must have Jesus as his source. A successful Christian must have Jesus as his source.
- IV. THE WILD VINE. Several times in the Old Testament, we have the wild vine mentioned. This kind of vine did not bring forth good grapes; it brought forth sour grapes. Our Lord is reminding us here that we are to bring forth good fruit, not just fruit. So many Christians bring forth bad fruit. Their influence is bad, their habits cause others to have bad habits. Each of us has an influence, and each of us influences other people. This influence in the lives of other people causes our fruit. (*Teacher, ask the pupils if they are bringing forth fruit for Jesus or wild fruit, sour grapes.*)
- V. THE BRANCHES. Jesus says in John 15 that He is the vine and we are the branches. Let us notice several things about the branches.

1. Every branch is a part of Jesus. If He be the vine, then the branch becomes part of Himself. So to that first group of men, He declared that they were to be so bound up in His life as to be one with Him in order to fulfill their divine purpose of winning folks to Christ. This shows us the sweet relationship that we have with Jesus. We are as much a part of Jesus as the branch is of the vine.
2. Hence, we can do nothing alone. John 15:5c, "For without me ye can do nothing." We alone can do nothing. We must abide in Jesus if we bear fruit. We must abide or live in Jesus if we are to bear fruit. The word "abide" means "to live." No Christian can bear fruit if he is severed from Christ.
3. If this be true, the vine can do nothing without the branches. Let us say with reverence that this implies that if the branches can do nothing without the vine, the vine can do nothing without the branches. Our Lord has so ordained it that we are a part of His ministry. He has ordained that men reach men, men help men, men win men, etc. He cannot accomplish His purpose without us. In other words, He needs us! Isn't that a blessed thought!
4. We must prevail in prayer to bear fruit. This is what it is all about. We have to walk with God. We have to have prevailing prayer. Now bear in mind, such a relationship with Christ was what He wanted the disciples to have after He was gone. He reminds them that this means that if they are going to be a part of the Vine, they will look like the Vine, smell like the Vine, act like the Vine, be hated like the Vine, be treated like the Vine, and be considered a part of the Vine. He is reminding them and us that we are to bear His reproach. People will treat us like they treated Him. They will persecute us because they persecuted Him. They will hate us because they hated Him. They will curse us because they cursed Him.
5. It was better that He go away. This is very interesting. Maybe the disciples would be too heavenly-minded if He were there. Maybe His presence would cause them to dwell too much on Him and fellowship with Him rather than carrying out His commission. So He goes away, reminding them that they should continue to fellowship with Him, but that they must be busy carrying out His commission. Their job is not one that is only heavenly; it is also earthly. They are to receive power from fellowship with the Lord and then they are to go into all the world and spread the Gospel to every creature.