

# That You May Continue to Believe...



## AN EXPOSITION OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

### The True Vine John 15:1-16:4

They were in the throes of grief and they did not even know it. He had told them He was going away and when He did their one, unified heart dropped like a stone. His words had frightened them but more than that His words had filled their heart with a dark cloud of overwhelming despair. They did not cry, of course. They were men's men but they loved Him so much that their collective heart groaned under the weight of the thought of life without Him. He had tried to reassure them but even that had not gone very well. He had tried to teach them something with the basin and the towel but Peter had objected to the whole idea and Jesus had had to embarrass him just to wash his feet.

After that, there had been the utterly bizarre incident with Judas and the uncertainty of what all that had that meant. Then when Peter, really speaking on behalf of the others, tried to tell Him how much he loved Him and that he would never leave Him Jesus had embarrassed him again by telling him that even he would deny Him...would deny Him before sunup.

And then, right when they could go no further, His voice softened and He began to speak the most gracious words they had ever heard. He had said, **“Don’t let your heart be troubled. In my Father’s house are many rooms. I promise you, it is all perfectly true. I’m going to prepare a place for you and I will come back for you and in the end you will be where I am.”**

For a moment, that had made everything all right and then He started talking about leaving them again and their hearts could not keep pace with their ears. It was true that He had promised them another Comforter. Of course, they weren’t sure what that meant but it didn’t really matter anyway because they did not want another Comforter. They wanted him. Still, when they could focus long enough to listen to what He was saying they knew He was promising them something extraordinary; they knew He was promising them something that better saints than them had longed to see and they knew He always kept His promises. Finally, He promised them peace. He promised them His peace and then they began to sing. They sang the Hallel.<sup>1</sup>

There in the dark stuffiness of the Upper Room they sang four Psalms (Psalms 115-118). They were familiar, of course, because they had been singing the same Psalms every Passover since they had been boys. But that night as they sang the great Egyptian Hallel the words seemed particularly sweet<sup>2</sup>. Jesus, in particular, seemed to be praying the Psalms as He led them with His strong masculine voice. They always loved to listen to Him sing but that night there were phrases in particular that caught their notice. Their hearts almost stopped singing as He sang...

<sup>NIV</sup> **Psalm 115:1**...Not to us, O LORD, not to us but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness. <sup>2</sup> Why do the nations say, "Where is their God?" <sup>3</sup> Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him.

And...

<sup>NIV</sup> **Psalm 116:1** I love the LORD, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy. <sup>2</sup> Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live. <sup>3</sup> The cords of death entangled me, the anguish of the grave came upon me; I was overcome by trouble and sorrow. <sup>4</sup> Then I called on the name of the LORD: "O LORD, save me..." <sup>7</sup> Be at rest once more, O my soul, for the LORD has been good to you. <sup>8</sup> For you, O LORD, have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling, <sup>9</sup> that I may walk before the LORD in the land of the living... <sup>13</sup> I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD. <sup>14</sup> I will fulfill my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people. <sup>15</sup> Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.

And...

<sup>NIV</sup> **Psalm 118:1** Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever. <sup>2</sup> Let Israel say: "**His love endures forever.**"... <sup>5</sup> In my anguish I cried to the LORD, and he answered by setting me free. <sup>6</sup> The LORD is with me; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me? <sup>7</sup> The LORD is with me; he is my helper. I will look in triumph on my enemies. <sup>8</sup> It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man. <sup>9</sup> It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in princes. <sup>10</sup> All the nations surrounded me... <sup>11</sup> They surrounded me on every side... <sup>12</sup> They swarmed around me like bees... <sup>13</sup> I was pushed back and about to fall, but the LORD helped me... <sup>19</sup> Open for me the gates of righteousness... <sup>20</sup> This is the gate of the LORD through which the righteous may enter... <sup>22</sup> The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone... <sup>24</sup> This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it... <sup>26</sup> Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD. From the house of the LORD we bless you.

They expected, when they had finished singing, to get up and leave the room but Jesus seemed to be in no hurry. He lay there, still reclined at the table, and

waited gently rocking as most Jewish men do when they pray. Finally, He opened His eyes and said...

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 15:1**... "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 does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. <sup>3</sup> Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup> Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by 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. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup> If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.

It must have been an extraordinary moment, don't you think? It is such an extraordinary passage. It is at the same time simple and profound, rustic and elegant. It has always been one of the church's favorite passages. Now, this morning I wanted to relate the background of this passage in a story form because I wanted us to review the events that led up to this part of the Upper Room discourse. But beyond that I wanted you to **"feel"** the setting. Of course, the real question is, **"What did He mean when He said..."**

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 15:1**... "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser."<sup>3</sup>

It is funny when you read the commentaries, how even the most intelligent godly commentators have their knees buckled by this section of John.<sup>4</sup> I want you to know that I am not any different. My own inabilities and my own clouded thinking are more transparent here than in any part of John we have covered thus far. Oh, it is not that I don't get the general drift. For me, the difficulty exists in defining **"one word"**. You'll see what I mean in a minute.

Now, the first thing you ought to notice is that Jesus is not just saying that He is the vine. He is saying that He is the **“true vine”** and that implies that HE is the **“true vine”** as opposed to the **“false vine”**<sup>5</sup>. In one sense, it is a little like what happened in chapter 6 when Jesus spoke of Himself as the **“true bread of God”**. He was obviously contrasting Himself there to the manna the Israelites had eaten in the wilderness. It is a little like when He said His body was **“true food”** and His blood was **“true drink.”** He is doing the same kind of thing here. Throughout Scripture and especially in Jewish Rabbinic literature, the nation of Israel is often referred to the vine or even vineyard of God<sup>6</sup>. Now what is remarkable is that almost every time Israel is called a vine it is almost always negative. That certainly is the case in Isaiah 5.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Isaiah 5:1**...Let me sing for my beloved my love song concerning his vineyard: My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. <sup>2</sup> He dug it and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines; he built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it; and he looked for it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes. <sup>3</sup> And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah...I will tell you what I will do...I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down.

And though we won't turn there it is the also the case in Ezekiel 15.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Ezekiel 15:1**...And the word of the LORD came to me: <sup>2</sup> "Son of man, how does the wood of the vine surpass any wood, the vine branch that is among the trees of the forest? <sup>3</sup> Is wood taken from it to make anything? Do people take a peg from it to hang any vessel on it? <sup>4</sup> Behold, it is given to the fire for fuel. When the fire has consumed both ends of it, and the middle of it is charred, is it useful for anything? <sup>5</sup> Behold, when it was whole, it was used for nothing. How much less, when the fire has consumed it and it is charred, can it ever be used for anything! <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 have I given up the inhabitants of Jerusalem. <sup>7</sup> And I will set my face against them. Though they

escape from the fire, the fire shall yet consume them, and you will know that I am the LORD, when I set my face against them. <sup>8</sup> And I will make the land desolate, because they have acted faithlessly, declares the Lord GOD."

Perhaps the most important passage in which Israel is referred to as a vine is Psalm 80.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Psalm 80:8**...You brought a vine out of Egypt; you drove out the nations and planted it. <sup>9</sup> You cleared the ground for it; it took deep root and filled the land. <sup>10</sup> The mountains were covered with its shade, the mighty cedars with its branches. <sup>11</sup> It sent out its branches to the sea and its shoots to the River. <sup>12</sup> Why then have you broken down its walls, so that all who pass along the way pluck its fruit? <sup>13</sup> The boar from the forest ravages it, and all that move in the field feed on it. <sup>14</sup> Turn again, O God of hosts! Look down from heaven, and see; have regard for this vine,

Obviously, Isaiah, Ezekiel and Psalm 80 present Israel as an unruly, disobedient vine. It seems to me that John 15 is another place where the idea of replacement is clearly being used in John. You will remember that earlier in John, Jesus was presented as fulfillment of the ceremonial law. Later, He was presented as the new temple, the new Moses and the new manna. It seems to me that He is being presented here as the new Israel. I think it is particularly important that in this Psalm's passage, the Psalmist actually calls the nation of Israel the son of man. Now think about that. It is important because that what was Jesus really like to call Himself. You can see what that would mean, of course. It would mean that in regard to Psalm 80, at least, that He is saying He is the fulfillment or more likely the replacement of Israel. Now that means, of course, that Jesus is now the representative people of God on earth. It means that His disciples, though they Jews, have to attach themselves to Him as the "**true vine**" in order to be a part of God's covenant community.

Now, let me say one other thing about John 15:1. Not only is Jesus said to be the true vine but also the Father is said to be the vinedresser. Verse 2 fleshes out what that means.

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 15:2**...Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

Now the only point I want to make about verse 2 is that verse 2 makes it clear that the Father has no intention of leaving the branches attached to the vine alone. You see the Father is driven by His desire to see fruit. Where there is no fruit He cuts the branch away. Where there is fruit, He prunes, strips and cleans the branch. Now what is interesting about the two words that are used here for “**remove**” and for “**prune**” is that they are not the words customarily used with reference to vines. The first word is the word ἀίρει and it usually means “**take away**” or “**lift up**”.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 1:29**...The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

The second word, the one used for prune is καθαίρει and it usually means “**to clean**”. The noun form of the word is used in John 13.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 13:11**...For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, "Not all of you are clean."

Now there is a sense in which the two words are used because of the way they sound. They, more or less, rhyme with each other. But I have to say that only concerns me incidentally. What I want to know is whether this is as solemn as it sounds. It sounds to me that Jesus is saying there are two kinds of branches

attached to Him. One kind, the kind that does not bear fruit, will be ferreted out by the Father and cut away. The other kind, the kind that does bear fruit, will be pruned so that it grows even more fruit. Of course, I suspect that the same question entered the disciples' mind that has entered ours this morning, **"Which kind of branch am I? Am I the kind of branch that bears no fruit and will be cut away or am I the kind that will bear fruit and therefore just be pruned? If I am a fruitful branch, what does it mean when it says I will be pruned? Will that hurt?"**

Jesus answers that question for His disciples straightway. Look at verse 3.

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 15:3**...Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you.

You see Jesus tells His disciples right off, **"You are fruitbearing branches."** You can see there why Jesus used the word that He did to mean, **"prune"**. He wanted to use a word with a broad enough range of meaning that it would work when He was talking about **"pruning"** branches and yet would still work when He was talking about being **"cleansed from sin."** Of course, it easy to miss here in the ESV because in one place they translate the word **"prune"** and in the other place they translate it **"clean."** But it is the same word in Greek. Still, I want you to think about what He is saying to them. HE is saying, **"You are clean. You are clean because of the word, which I have spoken to you. The Father has taken my word and stripped away the excess branches and growth and already prepared you to bear much fruit."**

That causes us to want to reflect for a minute on the nature of being pruned. Listen to what Spurgeon says here. It is marvelous.

How then does the Lord prune his people? *Most people say* by affliction; but even that must be explained. It is generally thought that our trials and troubles purge us: I am not sure just how true that is. If it is true, it certainly seems to be lost upon some. Our Lord tells us what it is that prunes us. "Ye are clean (or pruned) through the word which I have spoken unto you." It is the word that prunes the Christian, it is the truth that purges him, the Scripture, made living and powerful by the Holy Spirit, effectually cleanses the Christian. "So then, what does affliction do?" you ask. Well, if I may say so, affliction is the handle of the knife; affliction is the grindstone that sharpens up the word; affliction is the dresser which removes our soft garments, and lays bare the diseased flesh, so that the surgeon's scalpel may get at it; affliction makes us ready to feel the word, but the true pruner is the word in the hand of the Great Husbandman. Sometimes when you lay stretched upon the sickbed, you think more upon the word than you did before. Sometimes, you better understand the application of that word to yourself. So, ask that your affliction may be sanctified, beloved, but always remember there is no more tendency in affliction in itself to sanctify us than there is in prosperity. It is the word coming to us while in affliction that purges us; it is God the Holy Ghost laying home divine truth, and applying the blood of Jesus, and working in all his divine energy in the soul; it is this that prunes us, and affliction is nothing more than the handle of the knife...<sup>9</sup>

Finally, Jesus tells the disciples in verse 4...

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 15:4...** Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by 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. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

Now remember, He is talking to His disciples and He has already told them that they have been cleansed through His word. Now is reminding them to "**remain in Him.**" He is reminding them that their fruitfulness is totally dependent on

their abiding connection to Him. He even tells them that apart from Him they can do nothing.

Now having said let me ask you three questions.

First, **“What does it mean to ‘remain’ in Him?”**

I hope you can see that it is a question that has to be answered and yet it is a question that is really hard to answer simply. Now, you could say, **“It means to stick to Him. It means to cleave to Him.”** I agree with that. What I want to know is, **“What does that mean?”**

Secondly, once we know what it means to “remain” we’ll need to answer the question, **“What does it mean to bear fruit?”**

Thirdly, we’ll want to ask, **“What does it mean when it says that those who do not remain in Him are picked up and thrown into the fire?”**

Now before we try to answer those three questions let me ask you one other question from the immediate context of this passage. In the Upper Room when Jesus washed the feet of the disciples, He told them they were clean though not all of them. In verse 3 of this chapter, He told them they were all clean. Who is the one person that was there in chapter 13 but is gone here in chapter 15? The answer is, of course, Judas Iscariot. Judas is the one who was not clean.

Now, if you use the figure of the vine that Jesus has introduced here who would say are the fruitful branches that have been cleansed and who is the fruitless

branch that has been cut away? That answer seems to me to be fairly simple. The disciples who have stayed with Jesus are the branches that have been cleansed by the Word and Judas is the branch that has been excised or cut away.

Now, let me ask you what is the principal difference between Judas and the eleven? It seems to me that the principal difference between Judas and the others is that Judas was not a true believer. He had seen the miracles of our Lord and He had heard our Lord's gracious words but there was no life in Judas. The love and affection Judas felt for Jesus was superficial and temporary. At the very minimum, then, I think you could say that **"to remain"** in Jesus means to **"keep on believing in Him."**

Now since we started our study, of course, I have been making the point that the Gospel of John was written to encourage those straddling the fence between the synagogue and Jesus. It was written to encourage first century Jewish believers to continue to believe in Jesus. They were under enormous pressure by those in the synagogues to forsake Him. John wrote his gospel to encourage them to continue to believe. If I could say it another way, he wrote his gospel to get them to abide in Jesus.<sup>10</sup>

That is one of the reasons this passage has caused so many commentators so much trouble. On the one hand, it says that these branches were **"in Jesus."** On the other hand, it says that these branches fell away or they were cut away by the Father because they were fruitless. Does that mean that believers can lose their salvation? If this were Paul, it would mean that. In Paul, to be **"in Christ"** means to be eternally related to Him in heavenly places. In Paul, you could never be in Christ and lose your salvation because that would mean you could be pulled out

from the place where you are hidden in Christ with God. But remember this is John. In John, you cannot always tell. You will remember that there were disciples that became troubled at His words in John 6. They became so troubled they stopped following Him. They believed and they stopped believing. You will also remember that Jesus turned to the others and said...

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 6:67**...So Jesus said to the Twelve, "Do you want to go away as well?"

Of course, because the Word of Christ had already cleansed their hearts, they could not go anywhere else. Listen to Peter.

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 6:68**...<sup>68</sup> Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life,"

Do you get the point? To **"remain"** in Jesus means to continue to believe in Jesus.

Hendrickson writes this:

"In no sense whatever do such passages as 15:2 and 15:6 suggest that there is a falling away from grace, as if those who were once actually saved finally perish. **This allegory plainly teaches that the branches, which are taken away and burned, represent people who never once bore fruit, not even when they were "in" Christ.** Hence, they never were true believers; and for them the in-the-vine relationship, though close, was merely outward. The true believers of chapter 15 are represented by those branches, which abiding forever in the vine, bear fruit, more fruit, much fruit. **These never perish!**"<sup>11</sup>

Now here's the problem. **"To remain in Jesus,"** probably means more than to just believe. **"To remain in Jesus,"** means that there is a special intimacy with

Jesus that reflects the intimacy that Jesus had with His Father<sup>12</sup>. I think that is true because of what Jesus says in verse 7-10.

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 15:7**...If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. <sup>8</sup> By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. <sup>9</sup> As the Father has loved me, so have I 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>13</sup>

Here's what that intimacy means.

It means that our prayer life will reflect an intimacy with Jesus that begins to be as concerned about glorifying Jesus as Jesus was about glorifying the Father.

It means that our affection for Jesus will reflect an intimacy that begins to show that we understand that Jesus loves in exactly the same way He loves the Father. Think about the awesome weight of that. Jesus loves you and me the same way the Father loved Him. Brothers and sisters, if we could incorporate the truth of that into our souls don't you imagine that it would put an end to much of the pettiness we experience in our lives.

Finally, it means that our obedience to Him will reflect an intimacy that begins to show that we want to obey Him the same way He obeyed the Father.

D.A. Carson says:

There is a danger in stressing this parallel between our intimacy with Jesus and his intimacy with the Father. The danger is that the responsibility to remain in Jesus' love can sound so severe, so humorless, so stark, as to evoke fearful and

even frenzied compliance, but not love and not joy. Perhaps it is because he recognizes this danger that Jesus says what He does in verse 11.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 15:11...** "These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

The joy Jesus promises is not some cheap glow that depends on outward circumstances. It is the profound delight of the godly person who **"delights in the law of the LORD"** (Ps. 1:2). It is the gladness of wholehearted obedience. Any Christian who has traveled very far knows this to be so. His deepest joy springs from periods in his life when he obeys Christ with unreserved commitment.

**There is nothing more miserable than a half-hearted Christian.**<sup>15</sup>

Now, that raises the second question, **"What does it mean to bear fruit?"**

Now I came from a tradition that says that **"to bear fruit"** means to evangelize.

Now, I want to make it clear that I do believe that **"to bear fruit"** includes do the work of an evangelist.<sup>16</sup> Certainly in verse 16, where it says, "go and bear fruit" it sounds like evangelism. My prayer is that God will continue to develop in each of you a holy passion to share your faith with your friends and family. Still, the context of John 15 demands fruitbearing include more than just evangelism.<sup>17</sup>

Fruitbearing almost certainly includes prayer. (15:7-8)

Fruitbearing almost certainly includes continued affection for Jesus. (15:9)

Fruitbearing almost certainly includes obedience to His commands. (15:10)

Fruitbearing almost certainly includes a sense of joy. (15:11)

Fruitbearing almost certainly includes affection for other believers. (15:12)

Because the context of John 15 includes all these ideas many commentators see the fruit spoken of here as the fruit of the Spirit. I think that that is a very real part of what is going on here.

But it is more than that. Look for a minute at the structure of this passage. You see there is clearly an element in which Jesus is saying fruitbearing includes affection for the people of God. Isn't that what He is saying verse 12.

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 15:12...** "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup> Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. <sup>14</sup> You are my friends if you do what I command you. <sup>15</sup> No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have 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 abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. <sup>17</sup> These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

I don't need to comment on this because it has come up before. But the point it seems to me is that unless you have a genuine affection for the people that united to Jesus you cannot have a genuine affection for Jesus Himself.<sup>18</sup> I especially like the words of C.K. Barrett at this point:

The whole ministry of Jesus, including his glorification in death is summed up as the service of love to those who by it are redeemed; every Christian owes the same service of love to every other.<sup>19</sup>

Of course, it is much easier I think to identify with the other thing. Sometimes we wind up with the same mentality that Dr. McGee used to identify with this little piece of doggerel.

To be above with saints we love  
Ah, won't that be glory  
But to stay below with saints we know  
Well that's another story<sup>20</sup>

Finally, abiding in Jesus will result in, and I can't see any way to get around saying this, the world hating us as it did Jesus.

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 15:18...** "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. <sup>19</sup> If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but 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 also keep yours. <sup>21</sup> But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me. <sup>22</sup> If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. <sup>23</sup> Whoever hates me hates my Father also. <sup>24</sup> If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. <sup>25</sup> But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: 'They hated me without a cause.' <sup>26</sup> "But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. <sup>27</sup> And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning. <sup>ESV</sup> **John 16:1** "I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away. <sup>2</sup> They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. <sup>3</sup> And they will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me. <sup>4</sup> But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you. "I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you.

We don't crave persecution. Still as we abide in Jesus, we are driven by a desperate desire to be like Him. We are not afraid because He loves as the Father loves Him. It causes us to press on in belief and in endurance. It causes us to say with William Borden...

**"No reserve; no retreat; no regrets."**<sup>21</sup>

And it causes us to say with C.T. Studd...

**Some want to live within the sound  
of church or chapel bell;  
I want to build a rescue shop  
within a yard of hell.**<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John McClintock, & James Strong, *Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature*, (Electronic Edition: Ages CDROM) **"Hallel"**, 100-101. "The Egyptian Hallel was also chanted in private families at the celebration of the Passover on the first evening of this feast. On this occasion the Hallel was divided into two parts; the part comprising Psalm 113 and 114 was chanted during the partaking of the second cup, whilst the second part, comprising Psalm 115 and 116, was chanted over the fourth and finishing cup (ליל אה ההלל) Mishna, Pesachim, 10, 7); and it is generally supposed that the singing of the hymn by our Savior and his disciples at the conclusion of the Passover supper Matthew 26:30; Mark 14:26) refers to the last part of this Hallel. (Dean Alford [Greek Testament, ad loc.] strangely confounds this Hallel with the Great Hallel.) In Babylon there was an ancient custom, which can be traced as far back as the 2nd century of the Christian era, to recite this Hallel on every festival of the new moon (Taanith, 28, a), omitting, however, Psalm 115:1-11, and 116:1-11.

The great Hallel (הלל הגדול) was recited on the first evening at the Passover supper by those who wished to have a fifth cup, i.e. one above the enjoined number (Maimonides, Jod Ha-Chezaka, Hilchoth Chawmez t.Maza, 8, 10). It was also recited on occasions of great joy, as an expression of thanksgiving to God for special mercies (Mishna, Taanith, 3,9)."

<sup>2</sup> Geoffrey Bromiley, Gen. Ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia V.2 E-J* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1982), 600. Article on the "Hallel."

<sup>3</sup> F.F. Bruce, *The Gospel & Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1983), 316. Bruce cites in the first endnote at the end of the chapter that some commentators have fancied that Jesus spoke these words as the disciples moved to Gethsemane. As they traveled along they would have been able to see the golden vines and grapes that adorned the Holy Place

in the temple. He cites J. Pickl as one of the first to conceive the setting only to quickly dismiss the idea. He is probably right but it would certainly make for dramatic preaching.

<sup>4</sup> For example, D.A. Carson cites with some amusement the fact that Barrett writes that in John 15, “no clear story is told we do not hear the fate of a particular vine or vineyard, but rather **certain general observations on viticulture.**” Cf. D.A. Carson, *The Final Discourse and Final Prayer of Jesus: An Exposition of John 14-17* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1980), 90 and also C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to John: An Introduction with Notes and Commentary on the Greek Text*, (London: S.P.C.K, 1967), 393.

<sup>5</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John XIII-XXI*, 2 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1966), vol. 2, 674. Brown thinks this true vine/false vine antithesis is secondary to the meaning.

<sup>6</sup> Edwyn Clement Hoskyns, *The Fourth Gospel V.2* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1942), 560. Hoskyns writes: “The use of a vine as a metaphor for Israel is frequent in the Rabbinic literature, for example ‘as the vine is the least of all trees, and yet is the master of all, so the people of Israel appear insignificant in this world, but in the future (i.e. in the Messianic Age) their sovereignty will extend from one end of the world to the other’ (quoted by Strack-Billerbeck on John xv.1)”

<sup>7</sup> B.F. Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1954) 217.

<sup>8</sup> Walter Bauer, (Rvd. By Arndt, Gingrich and Danker) *A Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 386. ...καθαίρω 1. lit., of a place that has been swept = clear (out] a place): *everything is clean* Of a vine *clear, prune* by removing the superfluous wood john 15:2. 2. fig. =after we have cleansed our souls by the agency of Hellos *those who are purified*

<sup>9</sup> Charles H. Spurgeon, “A Sharp Knife For The Vinebranches” (Electronic Version) No. 774, October 6th, 1867, 694-5. Taken from the Ages CDRom, *Complete Works of Spurgeon*.

<sup>10</sup> Aurelius Augustine, *Confessions* 1.1 He writes: “Thou movest us to delight in praising Thee; for **Thou hast formed us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee?**”

<sup>11</sup> William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953-1954), vol. 2, 296.

<sup>12</sup> D.A. Carson, *The Final Discourse and Final Prayer of Jesus: An Exposition of John 14-17* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1980), 92.

<sup>13</sup> John Calvin, *The Gospel According to John* (Sage Digital Library), 509. “If any one object that, in that case, the security of our salvation depends on ourselves, I reply, it is wrong to give such a meaning to Christ’s words; for the obedience which believers render to him is not the cause why he continues his love toward us, but is rather the effect of his love.”

<sup>14</sup> Carson, 99-100.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

<sup>16</sup> Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John (Rvd.)* (Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans, 1995), 595. Morris writes: "Fruitfulness doubtless includes both the production of Christian character and the winning of others to follow Christ; it includes everything that results from vital union with Christ (see on v. 2)."

<sup>17</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), 610. He writes: "The nature of the fruit-bearing is not expressly stated; it is every demonstration of vitality of faith, to which, according to vv. 9–17, reciprocal love above all belongs."

<sup>18</sup> Aurelius Augustine, *The First Epistle of John*, Homily 7.8, 1104-1005 (The Nicene And Post-Nicene Fathers First Series, Volume 7 Ages CDRom) He writes: "Once for all, then, a short precept is given thee: **Love, and do what thou wilt**: whether thou hold thy peace, through love hold thy peace; whether thou cry out, through love cry out; whether thou correct, through love correct; whether thou spare, through love do thou spare: let the root of love be within, of this root can nothing spring but what is good."

<sup>19</sup> C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to John: An Introduction with Notes and Commentary on the Greek Text*, (London: S.P.C.K, 1967), 397.

<sup>20</sup> I can't remember what book of the Bible Dr. McGee was teaching through when I first heard him utter this bit of wit. It may have been Philippians but it could have been some other book. I know he is the one I heard first use it but it probably did not originate with him. It gave me joy to know that it gave him such joy to quote it.

<sup>21</sup> Carson, 131.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid