SMITH FOR CHRIST

TEACHING THE WORD · WATCHING THE TIMES



DEEP DIVE

John

Chapter Fifteen, Verses 1–27

The True Vine — abiding in Christ, loving one another, and standing in a world that hates Him

NASB 1995 | VERSE BY VERSE | FOUR VOICES | WITH DIAGRAMS

On the walk from the upper room toward the Kidron, Jesus calls Himself the true vine and His disciples the branches: abide in Him and bear fruit, love one another as friends He has chosen, and expect the world's hatred — with the Helper testifying beside you. Read through four teachers — **David Guzik**, **R.C. Sproul**, **C.H. Spurgeon** and **Matthew Henry** — with the Greek behind John's key words.

THE PASSAGE

John 15:1–27

vine · friends · hatred · Helper

THE METHOD

Verse by Verse

Color-coded by teacher

WHAT'S INSIDE

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Four movements: the Vine, the friends, the world, and the Witness

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"Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends." — John 15:13

SECTION I · THE PASSAGE

John 15:1–27

The True Vine — Abide in Me, love one another, testify to a world that hated Me first

† How to Read This Study

This study walks John 15 in 4 movements, in John's own order. Each movement opens with the full NASB 1995 text of those verses, marked with the Berean colors and shapes; then the Greek behind the key words; then the teachers, each in his own color — **David Guzik**, the pastor who walks the text verse by verse; **R.C. Sproul**, the theologian who presses every word for its doctrine; **C.H. Spurgeon**, the preacher who turns the doctrine into a call to the heart; and **Matthew Henry**, the Puritan commentator who gathers it into plain, practical counsel. The figures draw the passage so you can see where John is going. Read the Scripture first; then let each voice add its angle.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's
C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED God — His character & actions Command / instruction Key repeated word Sin / warning Promise / blessing Time / place / contrast

KEY VERSE · JOHN 15:5

"I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing."

† Before the Passage

John 13–17 is the Upper Room Discourse — the last teaching Jesus gave the Eleven on the night He was betrayed. Judas has gone out into the night (13:30); Jesus has washed their feet, given the new commandment (13:34), promised the Father's house (14:2) and "another Helper" (14:16). Chapter 14 ends with the words, "Get up, let us go from here" (14:31), and 18:1 says that only after chapter 17 did He go "over the ravine of the Kidron." So chapters 15–16 were spoken either at the table as they rose, or on the walk through the city at night. Many readers picture them passing the vineyards on the slopes, or the temple, whose gate carried a great golden vine — Israel's emblem.

That emblem runs deep in the Old Testament. Israel was the vine God brought out of Egypt: "You removed a vine from Egypt; You drove out the nations and planted it" (Psalm 80:8). Isaiah's song of the vineyard ends in grief: "For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel … Thus He looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed" (Isaiah 5:7; see Jeremiah 2:21). The vine is never praised for its fruit in the Old Testament; it is rebuked for the lack of it. So when Jesus says "I am the *true* vine," He is claiming to be what Israel was called to be — the faithful Son in whom God's people finally bear fruit.

This is the seventh and last of the "I AM" sayings with a predicate in John: the bread of life (6:35), the light of the world (8:12), the door (10:7, 9), the good shepherd (10:11, 14), the resurrection and the life (11:25), the way, the truth and the life (14:6), and the true vine (15:1, 5). Each of them points back to the name God gave Moses (Exodus 3:14), and each one says what Jesus is *for* His people.

The chapter moves through three relationships. Toward Christ: abide (vv. 1–11). Toward one another: love (vv. 12–17). Toward the world: expect its hatred and testify (vv. 18–27). The word "abide" (Greek *menō*) appears nine times in the first ten verses; "love" ten times in verses 9–19; "hate" eight times in verses 18–25. The chapter turns on that hinge — the love of the branches inside, the hatred of the world outside — and the Helper, the Spirit of truth, testifying through both.

I
MOVEMENT

JOHN 15:1–8

The True Vine

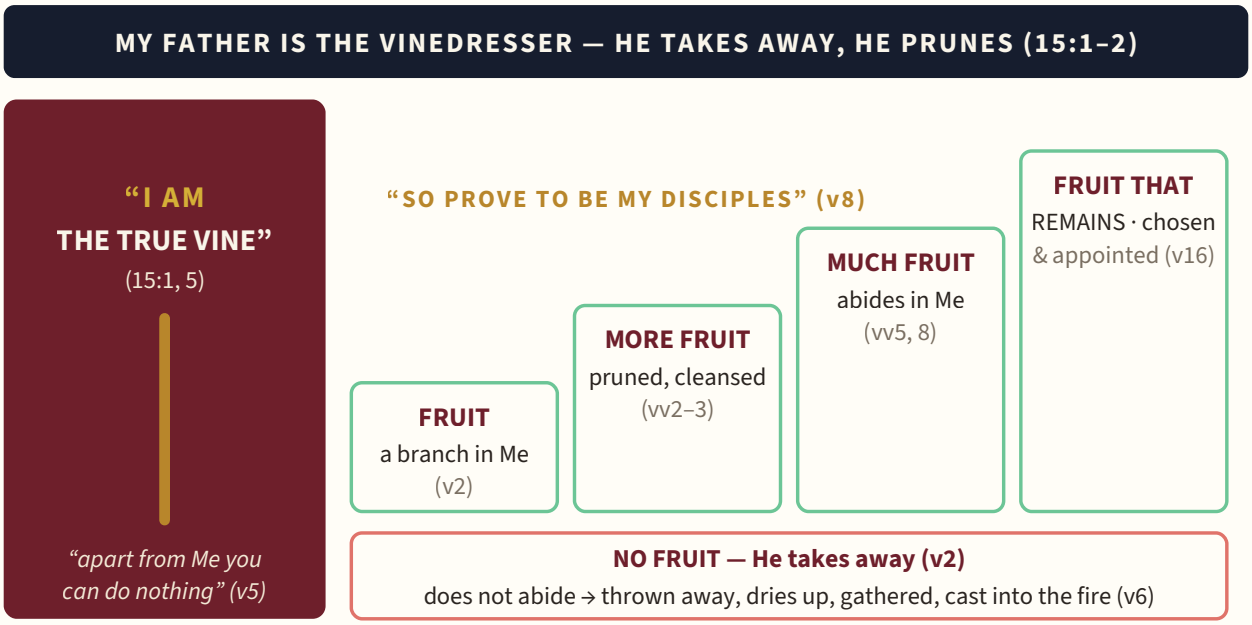
The Vinedresser prunes, the branches abide, and apart from Him — nothing

> 1 "△ *I am the true vine*, and △ *My Father is the vinedresser*. 2 "*Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit,* ⚠ *He takes away*; *and every branch that bears fruit,* △ *He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit*. 3 "☆ *You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.* 4 "▤ *Abide in Me, and I in you*. *As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it* ⟲ *abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you* ⟲ *abide in Me.* 5 "*I am the vine, you are the branches; he who* ⟲ *abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for* ⚠ *apart from Me you can do nothing*. 6 "*If anyone does not* ⟲ *abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and* ⚠ *cast them into the fire and they are burned.* 7 "*If you* ⟲ *abide in Me, and My words* ⟲ *abide in you,* ☆ *ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you*. 8 "△ *My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.*
>
> JOHN 15:1–8

> *"You removed a vine from Egypt; You drove out the nations and planted it."*
>
> PSALM 80:8

> *"For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel And the men of Judah His delightful plant. Thus He looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; For righteousness, but behold, a cry of distress."*
>
> ISAIAH 5:7

FIGURE · THE VINE, THE VINEDRESSER AND THE BRANCHES



Read the steps left to right: fruit, more fruit, much fruit, fruit that remains — every step comes from the Vine, and the only branch that is lost is the one that bears nothing because it does not abide.

ἡ ἄμπελος ἡ ἀληθινή

HĒ AMPELOS HĒ ALĒTHINĒ · "THE TRUE VINE" · G288, G228

Alēthinos is one of John's words: not "true" as opposed to false so much as "genuine, real" as opposed to a copy or a shadow — the true light (1:9), the true bread out of heaven (6:32), and here the true vine. Israel was the vine God planted (Psalm 80:8; Isaiah 5:1–7), but it yielded "worthless" grapes. Jesus is what the picture was always pointing to. The Father is the *geōrgos* (G1092), the farmer or vinedresser who works the soil — the KJV's "husbandman."

αἴρει … καθαίρει … καθαροί

AIREI … KATHAIREI … KATHAROI · "TAKES AWAY … PRUNES … CLEAN" · G142, G2508, G2513

A wordplay the English cannot keep: He *airei* the fruitless branch, He *kathairei* ("cleans, prunes") the fruitful one, and "you are already *katharoi*," clean (v. 3). *Airō* can mean "take away" (as the Lamb "takes away the sin of the world," 1:29) or "lift up"; some teachers read v. 2 as the vinedresser lifting a trailing branch out of the dirt, though most translations, NASB included, read "takes away," which fits v. 6. "Clean" reaches back to the foot-washing: "you are clean, but not all of you" (13:10) — said while Judas was still at the table.

μείνατε ἐν ἐμοί

MEINATE EN EMOI · "ABIDE IN ME" · G3306

Menō is "to remain, stay, dwell, continue" — the verb of John 1:38–39, where the first disciples asked Jesus "where are You staying?" and "stayed with Him that day." It is one of John's great words; the NASB renders it "abide" nine times in vv. 4–10 and "remain" in v. 16 ("your fruit would remain"). Verse 4 is an aorist imperative — a decisive command — joined to a promise: "and I in you." The branch does not manufacture fruit; it stays where the life is.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes that "God repeatedly used a vine as a symbol of His people in the Hebrew Scriptures (one example is Psalm 80:8-9)" — and Israel's vine disappointed. "In contrast, Jesus is the true vine." Pruning is mercy: "Left to itself a vine will produce a good deal of unproductive growth," and "The word of God is a cleansing agent." "Abiding was something they must choose," yet "they and we could do nothing of real, eternal value without Jesus." On v. 2 he keeps "takes away" but says the "lifts up" reading "bears some consideration." On v. 6 he lays out three views — true believers who are lost, those who only appeared to be disciples like Judas, and wasted lives — and he leans toward the second: "The branches that are taken away were never properly abiding in the vine."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul preached these verses at St. Andrew's on 18 May 2003 ("I Am the Vine"). Ligonier's summary says he shows how Jesus "identifies Himself with the true vine and His Father as the vinedresser," gives "a lesson on fruit production," notes "the difference between branch removal and pruning," and argues that "the pruning is a cleansing and that our productivity is directly related to our abiding in Christ." In his *Knowing Christ* series he takes up the hard question head-on: if fruitless branches are cut off, "how does this affect the doctrine of perseverance of the saints?" — the question every Reformed reader of v. 6 must answer.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

In "Without Christ—Nothing" (No. 1625, 23 October 1881) Spurgeon says only one who is more than man could say "Without me ye can do nothing," and he limits the "doing" to fruit-bearing. Union must be real and steady: "You can do nothing if there be not constant union." "Unless we have the Lord Jesus ourselves we cannot take him to others." "The power lies with the Master, not with the servant; the might is in the hand, not in the weapon." In "A Sharp Knife for the Vine Branches" he turns to v. 2: "Pruning is the lot of all the fruitful saints," worked by the Word and by trouble — "Affliction is the handle of the knife." "What a mercy it is to the believer that it is pruning with him and not cutting off!"

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry begins, "Jesus Christ is the vine, the true vine," and the Father the husbandman who owns and tends it. Those who bear no fruit are cut away: "Unfruitful professors are unfaithful professors; professors, and no more." But the fruitful are not left alone either: "Even fruitful branches, in order to their further fruitfulness, have need of purging or pruning." The Word is the knife: "There is a cleansing virtue in that word, as it works grace, and works out corruption." Abiding is possible because "the communion between Christ and believers never fails on his side," and its fruit includes prayer: "Those that abide in Christ as their heart's delight shall have, through Christ, their heart's desire."

II
MOVEMENT

JOHN 15:9–17

Friends, Not Slaves

Abide in My love — keep My commandments, love one another, and know you were chosen

9 "△ *Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you*; ⟲ *abide* in My love. 10 "▤ *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. 11 "These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and ☆ *that your joy may be made full*. 12 "This is My commandment, that you ▤ *love one another, just as I have loved you*. 13 "Greater love has no one than this, that one △ *lay down his life for his friends*. 14 "You are My friends if you do what I command you. 15 "No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but ☆ *I have called you friends*, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. 16 "△ *You did not choose Me but I chose you*, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that ☆ *your fruit would remain*, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. 17 "This I command you, that you love one another.

JOHN 15:9–17

FIGURE · THREE RELATIONSHIPS IN JOHN 15

TOWARD CHRIST vv1–11 · ABIDE	TOWARD EACH OTHER vv12–17 · LOVE	TOWARD THE WORLD vv18–27 · TESTIFY
THE CALL "Abide in Me, and I in you" (v4)	THE CALL "love one another" (vv12, 17)	THE CALL "you will testify also" (v27)
THE GIFT much fruit, prayer, full joy	THE GIFT friends, not slaves (v15)	THE COST hated, persecuted (vv18–20)
THE WARNING apart from Me — nothing (v5)	THE MEASURE "just as I have loved you"	THE REASON they do not know the Father (v21)

Love among the branches, hatred from the world —
and the Helper, the Spirit of truth, testifying about Christ through both (vv26–27)

The chapter moves outward — from the branch's union with Christ, to the branches' love for one another, to their witness in a world that hates them.

φίλοι … δοῦλοι

PHILOI … DOULOI · "FRIENDS … SLAVES" · G5384, G1401

Philos is a friend, one who is loved (from *phileō*); *doulos* a slave, owned and under orders. The difference Jesus draws is not obedience — friends obey too (v. 14) — but knowledge: "the slave does not know what his master is doing," but "all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you" (v. 15). In the Old Testament only Abraham is called God's friend (2 Chronicles 20:7; Isaiah 41:8; James 2:23), and the LORD spoke with Moses "as a man speaks to his friend" (Exodus 33:11). Now the title is given to eleven ordinary men around a supper table.

ἐξελεξάμην … ἔθηκα

EXELEXAMĒN … ETHĒKA · "I CHOSE … APPOINTED" · G1586, G5087

Eklegomai is "to pick out, choose for oneself" — the middle voice stresses Jesus' own choice: "I know the ones I have chosen" (13:18; compare 6:70). *Ethēka* is from *tithēmi*, "to set, place, lay down" — the same verb as v. 13: "that one *lay down* (*thē*) his life for his friends." The One who lays down His life for them is the One who lays them down where they will bear fruit. "Remain" in v. 16 is *menō* again: the fruit of abiding branches abides.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik ties abiding in Christ's love to the plain path of obedience: "This is not some mystical experience. It is simple obedience." "Jesus connected true discipleship with obedience to His command and honoring His word." Joy follows, but "The joy of Jesus isn't the same as what is commonly understood as happiness or excitement." The measure of the new commandment is the cross: "His love is complete and of surpassing greatness, laying down its life." Calling the disciples friends is "a love that treats servants as friends," and everything rests on Christ's initiative: "They were all rooted in the fact that Jesus chose them, not that they chose Him." He quotes F.B. Meyer: "We are in Christ, not because we hold Him, but because He holds us."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

In "The Fullness of Joy" (adapted from *Can I Have Joy in My Life?*) Sproul reads v. 11 closely. "First, the joy that Jesus wants to see in us is His joy" — not a mood we work up. "He wants us to have a permanent joy, not a roller-coaster ride of moods shifting between joy and misery." The branch-and-vine picture explains how: "If we want to be consistently joyful, we need to abide in Him." And Christ's word is "made full," not half: "We do not want a partial cup of the fruit of the Spirit." "That fullness of joy comes from Christ." His sermon of 25 May 2003 ("The Cost of Discipleship," vv. 9–27), per Ligonier's summary, takes up abiding in His love, keeping His commandments and what it means to be called His friend.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's "The Friends of Jesus" (on v. 14) calls friendship with Christ the highest dignity a man can hold — and a mutual one: "friendship needs something from us." That something is obedience, active, continuous and universal, down to the smallest command: "Obedience is better than wealth and better than rank!" Sin cools the friendship: "Familiarity with Jesus ceases when we become familiar with known sin." No ritual, vow or gift can stand in for doing what He says. Yet the friendship is for ordinary men in ordinary callings, and it is sweetest under pressure: "Jesus is never nearer His friends than when they bravely bear shame for His sake."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry marvels at the measure of v. 9: "As the Father loved him, who was most worthy, he loved them, who were most unworthy." That love is our pattern: "Christ's love to us should direct and engage our love to each other." Christ takes joy in His people — "Fruitful and faithful disciples are the joy of the Lord Jesus" — and gives the highest proof of love: "Greater proof of love hath no man to show than this." Servants who do their duty are "admitted and advanced to the dignity of his friends," and the whole of it began on His side: "Christ's choice is prior to theirs and directs and determines it."

III
MOVEMENT

JOHN 15:18–25

Hated Without a Cause

The world hated Christ first — and a slave is not greater than his master

18 *"If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you.* 19 *"If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.* 20 *"Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.* 21 *"But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me.* 22 *"If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.* 23 *"He who hates Me hates My Father also.* 24 *"If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well.* 25 *"But they have done this to fulfill the word that is written in their Law, 'THEY HATED ME WITHOUT A CAUSE.'*

JOHN 15:18–25

"Those who hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head; …"

PSALM 69:4

μισεῖ … μεμίσηκεν

MISEI … MEMISĒKEN · "HATES … HAS HATED" · G3404

Miseō is not mere dislike but settled hostility, rejection. Verse 18 sets two tenses side by side: the world *misei*, "hates" (present), because it *memisēken*, "has hated" (perfect — a hatred begun and still standing) Me "before" you — *prōton*, first. Verse 19 adds the reason with a pun on the chapter's other word: "the world would love (*ephilei*) its own," but these are no longer its own, because He "chose" them *out of* (*ek*) it. "World" (*kosmos*) here is humanity organized against God (compare 1:10; 3:19).

δωρεάν · πρόφασιν

DŌREAN · PROPHASIN · "WITHOUT A CAUSE" · "EXCUSE" · G1432, G4392

Dōrean is the accusative of *dōrea*, "gift": "as a gift, freely," and so "for nothing, without reason." The same word says we are "justified as a gift by His grace" (Romans 3:24) and "freely you received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8). They hated Him *for nothing*; He loved them *for nothing*. The quotation is from Psalm 69:4 (also 35:19), David's cry under unjust enemies. In v. 22 *prophasis* is a pretext, a cover story — the KJV's "cloke." Light has come; the cloak is gone.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik sets the warning plainly: "Jesus told the disciples that the world would often hate them," and the reason is that the world hated Him first. Crowds followed Jesus for a time, "yet as a whole, the world hated Jesus." A disciple should not expect better treatment than his Master. Verses 22–24 do not mean that those who never heard Jesus are sinless, but that rejecting Him who spoke and worked as no one else did leaves no excuse. The hatred is "without a cause," fulfilling Psalm 69:4 and probably Psalm 35:19, and he cites R.V.G. Tasker that such unreasonable hatred of the Son and the Father is itself a confirmation of who Jesus is.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

In "Hatred without Cause" Spurgeon is struck that opposition to Christ came from every rank at once: "Most men have to meet with some opposition; but then it is frequently a class opposition." He walks through Jesus' life and finds no rank to envy, no pride, no selfishness — nothing to justify it. The cause is in us: "man naturally hates goodness, because he is so evil that he cannot but detest it." There is no neutral ground — "Indifference with regard to Christ is a clear impossibility" — and hatred of His people is hatred of Him: "Ah! sir, if you loved Christ you would love His members." His counsel to the persecuted: "Take care, if the world does hate you, that it hates you without a cause."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry treats the world's hatred as the common lot of the faithful: "Whom Christ blesseth the world curseth." Believers are hated because "they swim against the stream of the world, and are not conformed to it." Verse 20 binds the servant to his Lord's path: "Christ is our Lord, and therefore we must diligently attend all his motions." The hatred is groundless: "Those that hate Christ hate him without any just cause; enmity to Christ is unreasonable enmity." And it cannot stop at the Son: "Hatred of Christ will be construed and adjudged hatred of God."

IV
MOVEMENT

JOHN 15:26–27

The Helper Will Testify

The Spirit of truth testifies about Christ — and so will those who have been with Him

> 26 *"When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is* △ *the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me,* 27 *and* 🖹 *you will testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning.*
>
> JOHN 15:26–27

ὁ παράκλητος

HO PARAKLĒTOS · "THE HELPER" · G3875

Literally "one called alongside" (*para* + *kaleō*) — an advocate, counselor, helper, the friend who stands with you in court. The word appears five times in the New Testament: four times in Jesus' farewell (14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7) for the Spirit, and once in 1 John 2:1 for Jesus Himself: "we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." That is why Jesus calls the Spirit "another Helper" (14:16) — another of the same kind. The KJV's "Comforter" once meant one who strengthens (Latin *cum* + *fortis*).

ἐκπορεύεται · μαρτυρήσει

EKPOREUETAI · MARTYRĒSEI · "PROCEEDS" · "WILL TESTIFY" · G1607, G3140

Ekporeuomai, "to go out from," gave the Nicene Creed its phrase "who proceeds from the Father"; the Western church later added "and the Son" (*filioque*), which the Eastern church rejected — one of the causes of the split of 1054. In this verse Jesus also says "whom I will send to you from the Father," so both truths stand in the text. *Martyreō*, "to bear witness," runs all through John (John the Baptist, the works, the Father, the Scriptures — 5:31–39). Now the Spirit testifies, "and you will testify also" — the Spirit's witness does not replace the disciples'; it fills it.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik reminds us that "Jesus previously spoke of the sending of the Helper" in chapter 14, and now connects that promise to the world's hatred: the disciples will not face it alone. "Everything the Holy Spirit does is consistent with the testimony of the nature of Jesus." He quotes Tasker, "The witness of the Advocate and the witness of the apostles are in effect a single witness," and Leon Morris, who warns that the disciples "cannot simply relax and leave it all to the Spirit." He notes the old controversy over whether the Spirit proceeds from the Father alone or from the Father and the Son, without staking his commentary on it.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

In his *Essential Truths* devotional "The Holy Spirit as Comforter," Sproul presses the word "another": "there had to be a Helper before the Spirit." "The New Testament clearly identifies the first Helper, or Paraclete, as Jesus Himself." The Spirit takes Christ's place beside His people after the ascension, and He works in the world the way an advocate does in court: "The Spirit defends us against the world by convicting it of sin." His comfort is strength more than sympathy — "The Spirit comes to us when we are in need of strength"; "He empowers us with courage and boldness." In *Who Is the Holy Spirit?* he makes the same point from the KJV's choice of "Comforter."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry sees the Spirit as the One who takes up Christ's cause in a hostile world: "Christ, when he was reviled, committed his injured cause to his Father," and the Father sent the Spirit to plead it. The Spirit's witness does not make the disciples idle: "The Spirit's working is not to supersede, but to engage and encourage ours." And the best witnesses are those with first-hand acquaintance: "Those are best able to bear witness for Christ that have themselves been with him, by faith, hope, and love."

V
THEME

CROSS-REFERENCES

The Passage in the Whole Bible

From Israel's vine to the fruit of the Spirit — where John 15 reaches back and forward

"Yet I planted you a choice vine, A completely faithful seed. How then have you turned yourself before Me Into the degenerate shoots of a foreign vine?"

JEREMIAH 2:21

> *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, …"*
>
> GALATIANS 5:22

> *"All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness."*
>
> HEBREWS 12:11

> *"We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."*
>
> 1 JOHN 3:16

> *"and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS," and he was called the friend of God."*
>
> JAMES 2:23

> *"Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."*
>
> 2 TIMOTHY 3:12

> *"My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;"*
>
> 1 JOHN 2:1

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik reads "I am the true vine" against Psalm 80:8–9 and the other Old Testament vine passages: God planted Israel as His vine, and Jesus now claims to be the genuine article the picture anticipated.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry reads the world's causeless hatred (v. 25) as the fulfilment of David's complaint in the Psalms: "Those that hate Christ hate him without any just cause."

SECTION II · STUDY HELPS

At a Glance

Four voices, one chapter

Four teachers, four movements. Guzik walks the text and lays out the options on hard verses like 15:2 and 15:6; Sproul's voice comes mostly through Ligonier's summaries of his 2003 sermons and two short pieces on joy and the Comforter; Spurgeon preaches union, pruning and friendship to the heart; Henry gives the Puritan's plain counsel. Where one of them is not sourced for a movement, the cell says so.

THE MOVEMENT	GUZIK · the text	SPROUL · the doctrine	SPURGEON · the heart	HENRY · the counsel
I · The true vine (1–8)	Israel's vine disappointed; abiding is a choice; fruitless branches were never truly abiding.	Branch removal is not pruning; pruning cleanses; fruit tracks abiding — and the perseverance question.	Constant union or nothing; affliction is the handle of the knife — pruning, not cutting off.	Unfruitful professors are unfaithful professors; even fruitful branches need pruning.
II · Friends (9–17)	Not mystical — simple obedience; chosen by Him, held by Him.	His joy, not ours; permanent, not a roller-coaster; a full cup, not a partial one.	Friendship needs something from us — obedience; known sin cools it.	Loved by Him though most unworthy; Christ's choice comes first.
III · Hated (18–25)	The world hated Him first; rejecting Him leaves no excuse; Psalm 69:4.	Not sourced for these verses in this study.	No neutral ground; love Christ, love His members; be hated without a cause.	Whom Christ blesses the world curses; enmity to Christ is unreasonable.
IV · The Helper (26–27)	The Spirit's witness always matches Jesus; the disciples can't relax and leave it to Him.	A Helper before the Spirit — Jesus; the Comforter brings strength and boldness.	Not sourced for these verses in this study.	The Spirit pleads Christ's injured cause; He engages our witness, not replaces it.

JOHN 15:1–27 · A COMPARATIVE READING

† Key Insights to Carry

- **Jesus is the vine Israel was meant to be.** Every Old Testament vine passage (Psalm 80; Isaiah 5; Jeremiah 2:21) is a lament over missing fruit. "I am the *true* vine" says the fruit God looked for will finally grow — in Him. THE TEXT
- **The knife is a mercy.** He "takes away" (*airei*) the fruitless branch and "prunes" (*kathairei*) the fruitful one. Spurgeon: "What a mercy it is to the believer that it is pruning with him and not cutting off!" THE GREEK
- **The pruning knife is the Word.** "You are already clean because of the word" (v. 3). Henry: "There is a cleansing virtue in that word, as it works grace, and works out corruption." HENRY
- **Fruit, more fruit, much fruit, fruit that remains.** The chapter climbs a ladder (vv. 2, 5, 8, 16) — and every rung is reached the same way: by abiding, not by straining. THE TEXT
- **Nothing means nothing.** "Apart from Me you can do nothing" (v. 5). Guzik: we "could do nothing of real, eternal value without Jesus." Spurgeon: "The power lies with the Master, not with the servant." SPURGEON
- **Abiding is obedience, not a mood.** "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love" (v. 10). Guzik: "This is not some mystical experience. It is simple obedience." GUZIK
- **His joy, made full.** Sproul: "First, the joy that Jesus wants to see in us is His joy," and He wants us to have "a permanent joy, not a roller-coaster ride of moods." SPROUL
- **The One who lays down His life lays us down to bear fruit.** "Lay down" (v. 13) and "appointed" (v. 16) are the same verb, *tithēmi*. Friends are those He died for and then placed where their fruit will remain. THE GREEK

- **Hated for nothing, loved for nothing.** *Dōrean* — "without a cause" (v. 25) — is the word for "as a gift." The world hated Him for no reason; He loves us for no reason in us. THE GREEK
- **The Spirit testifies, and so do we.** Tasker, quoted by Guzik: the two witnesses "are in effect a single witness." Henry: the Spirit's working "is not to supersede, but to engage and encourage ours." HENRY

† Questions for the Table

1 **Where am I trying to produce fruit by effort instead of by abiding — and what would "staying close to the Vine" look like this week?**

Fruit is the branch's result, not its work. "Apart from Me you can do nothing."

15:4–5

2 **What is the Father pruning in my life right now? Am I calling it punishment when it may be preparation for more fruit?**

Spurgeon: pruning is the lot of the fruitful; it is never condemnation.

15:2–3; Heb 12:11

3 **Verse 6 is a warning. How do I tell the difference between a pruned branch and a dead one — in myself and in the men I walk with?**

Guzik's three views; fruit and abiding are the evidence.

15:2, 6; 1 John 2:19

4 **Jesus says "abide in My love" and "keep My commandments" in the same breath. Which command is He pressing on me right now?**

Not a mystical feeling — simple obedience (Guzik).

15:9–10, 14

5 **What does it change to know that I am His friend, chosen and appointed — not a slave on probation?**

"You did not choose Me but I chose you."

15:15–16

6 **Where am I feeling the world's pressure for following Christ — and is it for His name's sake or for my own foolishness?**

Spurgeon: "Take care, if the world does hate you, that it hates you without a cause."

15:18–21; 2 Tim 3:12

John 15 was spoken to frightened men on the last night, and it gave them one thing to do: stay. Stay in the Vine and the fruit will come; stay in His love and you will love one another; stay in His word when the world hates you, and the Helper will testify beside you. The Vinedresser's knife is in loving hands.

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

† Sources

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