

"A Lesson from the Vine"

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E. J. Waggoner

We have learned from the grass that we have no reason to be proud; from the flowers, that God cares for us and is able to clothe us with the purity of the lily; from the tree, that we should be rooted and grounded in Christ and bring forth fruit unto God.

But what can we learn from little vines that cannot even stand alone? We see them creeping along the ground, twining around a string or stick, climbing into trees, and clinging to anything that they can reach with their curly little tendrils or claspers. By noticing carefully see that even they are beautiful and useful, and have a work to do that no other plant or tree can do. We find them clambering over the dull city houses, and hanging graceful festoons down their bare walls. We observe them creeping slyly up the trunk of some dead tree, and throwing over it a mantle of living green. We see them decorating our porches and walls and fences with bunches of fragrant blossoms and bright berries. In the heat of summer we sit beneath the shade in the cool arbour, and in the days of autumn we feast upon the clusters of pink and white and purple grapes that hang from their fruitful branches. No, no, this earth would not be what it is to us without the beautiful vines. The more we look at them and study them the more we see in them to admire, and the more we feel like praising God for this another token of His love.

The grape-vine does not die down every year like the morning-glory and many other vines. It loses its leaves, but the largest stalk that is rooted in the ground remains, and in the spring it puts out new leaves and new branches, and then how fast they grow!

What makes those young branches grow so fast? What makes them bear such lovely fruit? If you would look just inside of the hard bark which covers the stalk and branches, you would see. There are many little hollow pipes or tubes there, through which a thin watery juice, or sap, goes up from the roots to the leaves, and then from the leaves back again to the roots. It is the sap that runs from the vine into the branches that gives food to the branches, and keeps them alive and makes them grow and bear fruit. It really is the sap that forms the fruit.

You have noticed how quickly a branch withers and dies, but it is broken or cut off from the main vine. It cannot live, or grow, or bear fruit alone, for when it is not united to the vine the sap cannot run into it.

Jesus says that without Him, you are just as helpless as that little branch is without the vine. You cannot bear the fruits of His Spirit alone, any more than a little branch can bear the fruits of the sap alone; for do you not see? you cannot have the Spirit without being united to Jesus, any more than the branch can have the sap without being united to the vine.

Listen to what Jesus Himself says about it: "I am the vine, ye are the branches. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me." John 15:4.

We learned in our lesson from the trees, that the fruits of the Spirit which we should bear, are named in Gal. 5:22, 23. They are, "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance." They are loving thoughts and looks and actions, kindness to those about us, and doing as Jesus does in all things.

Now "who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one." In other words, Who can make these pure, good actions come out of an impure, wicked boy or girl? Not one. It is impossible. There is no good spirit in their heart, so of course there can be no fruits of the good Spirit come out of their hearts.

But if that bad child comes to Jesus, and allows a good Spirit of Jesus to come into his heart and take the place of the bad spirit that fills him, then he can do right and bear all the good fruits of the Spirit, for then he is united to Jesus, the True Vine, and the good fruit-bearing spirit of the True Vine is running through him.

Jesus says, "He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit," and "herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples."

But when a child tries to do right and bear the fruit of the Spirit alone, without believing in Jesus or allowing the good Spirit of Jesus to come in, he is just as foolish as a little branch would be if it should try to bear grapes alone, without allowing the sap to come into it from the vine.

It is the Spirit of God alone that can do good actions, and we can obtain it only through Jesus the True Vine. Therefore you and I cannot do one good act or overcome one temptation without keeping close to Him and allowing His Spirit to use us as it will. Jesus says, "Without Me ye can do nothing."

Now, my child, are you willing to be kept near to Jesus, and willing to let Him use you? Are you willing to give up your own naughty spirit, and allow the Spirit of God to use your hands and feet and tongue and eyes and ears and the whole body? If so, you may be a fruitful little branch of the True Vine and bear much precious fruit to glorify God. If not, the heart of the good Master will be sadly grieved when He comes and finds after all His loving care, that you are bearing nothing but bad, bitter fruit, and that you must be gathered with the bad branches and cast into the fire.

But He is "not willing that any should perish"; He says that He has no pleasure in their destruction. He loves His little branches, and longs to see them all connected with the True Vine, and bearing good fruit so that they never shall need to be cut off. He sees you, and knows how you have been trying to live without Jesus, the Vine. He knows that without Him you will wither and die. He therefore pleads with loving tones, "Turn ye, turn ye; for why will ye die"? Come to Jesus, and then you can live and bear good fruit. Oh, will you come?

The fruit tree teaches you to bring forth fruit unto God; the vine teaches you how.

1. What does the grass teach us? 1 Peter 1:24.
2. What may we learn from the flowers? Matt. 6:28-33.

3. What do the fruit trees say to us? Rom. 7:4, last part.
4. Did you ever see a grape-vine?
5. What makes its branches grow?
6. What causes its branches to bear fruit?
7. Could they not live and bear fruit just as well without the vine? Why not?
8. What soon happens to a branch when it is taken away from the vine?
9. Of whom should the grape-vine always cause us to think? Of Jesus.
10. Why? Because He says, "I am the True Vine." John 15:1.
11. Of whom should the branches make us think? Of ourselves.
12. Why? Because Jesus says, "I am the True Vine; ye are the branches." John 15:5.
13. How is Jesus like a grape-vine? John 15:4.
14. How are we like branches?
15. What can a little branch do without the vine?
16. What can we do without Jesus? John 15:5.
17. But what can a little branch do when it is united to the vine?
18. And what can we do when we are united to Jesus? John 15:5.
19. What kind of fruit does Jesus, the True Vine, bear? Gal. 5:22, 23.
20. Then what kind of fruit will we bear when we are as closely united to Him as the branch is to the vine?
21. What will happen to all the branches that will not allow the True Vine to give them life and strength?
22. Whose fault will it be?
23. What is done with dead branches?
24. Do you and I need to be burned up among the dead branches?
25. What does the loving Father in heaven plead with us to do? Eze. 33:11.
26. Tell, now, what the grape-vine says to you?