

7656

SILVER STAR BIBLE SCHOOL 1994

IN THE UPPER ROOM

Speaker: Bro. John Ullman

Study #4

I am the True Vine

Reading: John 15:1-10

Once again, my dear brethren and sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ.

You'll recall that chapter 14 ended upon the note and the Lord's command, to the eleven who were left in the room with Him, 'Arise, and let us go hence'. Of course, there's a wonderful lesson there which we endeavoured to conclude our study with yesterday, because basically we should align ourselves with the Lord, and with His faithful disciples, and together with them, we should arise and go hence! Out to meet the prince of this world and out to manifest the glory of our Father, through the Word that is being spoken unto us.

And so, we find with the beginning of chapter 15, that it's very much the same as the end of chapter 13, that in actual fact, there is no break in the narrative at all. Chapter 14 verse 31 carries straight on into chapter 15, and so therefore, we can read it in this way, 'that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence. I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman' and so forth. So, in actual fact, with the beginning of chapter 15, we actually left the Upper Room, but the Lord does not cease speaking. They have left the Upper Room and have come out into the darkness of the night, and the Lord is not content to silently make His way through the darkened streets of the city. Together with the disciples, He makes His way down from the Upper Room and out into the darkness of the night. And the night air would have been very chilly at that time of the year, and no doubt, as the little group made their way through the darkened city streets, toward the east, the disciples would have drawn closely together around each other and around the Lord, for a protection against the cold and the darkness of the night, and as a defence against their puzzled and bewildered state of mind, that they were feeling at this time, not really knowing what was exactly going to happen. The Lord was the only One, who knew. At the same time, he did not remain silent. He took advantage of every last moment at His disposal. So that, as they made their way toward the garden of Gethsemane, the Lord kept talking to them quietly, in His firm, clear voice, a voice which always carried an air of authority, and yet unwavering conviction. And so as well as in chapter 14, the Lord had comforted the disciples with a promise of His continuing presence amongst them, that He would be looking upon

them; that He would be guarding, guiding, and directing them, and that through the Holy Spirit power, that would come upon these men in particular, they would remember the things that He had taught them; hence the gospel narratives came to be written and the other works of the New Testament scriptures as well.

So He continues to speak of His presence among them, but now He does so, under the analogy of the vine and the branches. He has spoken of Himself as the tabernacle, and the temple, and has said, 'we will come and make our abode with the one that receives My word and takes it into his heart'. And now, in chapter 15, the theme virtually remains unchanged. He emphasizes the need for Christ's continuing influence upon His disciples, even though He would be physically absent from their midst. And He is also emphasizing the great need on their part, to remain and to continue in His teaching, and to continue walking in the Way that He has set before them. You'll notice in chapter 14 and verse 28 the words, 'I go away, I go unto the Father' and so therefore, the beautiful discourse that now follows in chapter 15, concerns the relationship which must now exist between the physically absent Christ and His disciples who remain upon the earth. So this teaching is now set forth by the Lord, in the beautiful symbology of the vine and its branches.

Everything that the vine stood for must soon be continued through the branches, because the vine was soon to disappear physically from the face of the earth, but His connection with the branches must remain. And it would remain, if they had listened carefully to the things that He has told them in chapter 13 and chapter 14, and the other things that He has taught them. And they would have to learn, to remain attached completely to the vine, even though they might be denied the physical presence of the vine itself, the Lord Jesus Christ. But He assures them, that the branches would remain, to represent what the vine stood for, because we must always remember, brethren and sisters, that the branches are but an extension of the vine. They grow out of the stem of the vine, and so they are identified with the vine. They are a part of the vine, and the vine, is very much a part of the branches, because without the vine itself, the branches cannot exist. So, the disciples would become the branches of the vine, and they were to declare and to manifest God's purpose to everyone, to one another and to the world. And so, in that sense, the vine would remain, whilst physically it would be taken away, in spirit, it would be there. The vine would remain in them, and of course, all of this is very beautifully illustrated in the words that follow. He is telling them that soon the branches would become a means whereby, the vine would continue to exist and continue to manifest those divine attributes and commodities which He has demonstrated in His own life. And though He would be physically removed from them, and taken away into the presence of the Father in heaven, they must continue to remain a part of the vine, because for the vine, there would continue to follow, the sap. And that sap would continue to flow through the vine, on into the branches, giving the branches life. And continuing to flow, that they, themselves, the disciples, might manifest the fruit which was that which was required of the vine.

And so in verse 1, He says, 'I am the true vine', and in a few minutes He says, 'I am the vine; ye are the branches'. We might wonder why, having left now, the comfort of the

Upper Room, and now out in the darkened and chilly streets of the dark city, walking toward the garden of Gethsemane, why the Lord should chose to use this particular allegory, at this great moment in history? And the answer is, of course, because in His great feeling, His intense feeling of love and compassion, toward these men, His disciples, and those that would follow afterwards, because we need to remember, brethren and sisters, that whilst John 15, the parable of the vine and the branches, was a very personal and a very intimate message, between Christ and those eleven men, it has come down to us, in the annals of scripture, in the inspired Word, and so therefore, to us today, it is just as much a personal and intimate message from the Lord Jesus Christ, to everyone of us, as it was, in the day when the words were uttered. You see, at this time, only He understood, the agonizing drama that was about to unfold. Let's bear that in mind, as we consider the disciples listening intently to these words as they were uttered to them. It's a little different to us, because that agony is now all over, and it's nearly 2,000 years of history ago, and we are aware of what happened after these words of John chapter 15. We know what happened, we know the subsequence of it, we know the development of the early ecclesias, we know the way in which Christ ascended to the Father. We are aware of those things, but at this time, the disciples were not aware of the things that were about to unfold. So, only He among them, understood the agonizing drama that was about to unfold. That He did know the effect it would inevitably have upon His disciples. He knew that they were going to be scattered, that despite their protestations of loyalty that they would all leave Him, and desert Him. He knew that they, themselves, would feel lost; they would feel deserted; they would feel alone; they would feel without strength or support, like the branches of a vine, when the support has been taken away, and the branches simply fall and wither on the ground. It was a most appropriate analogy to draw at this time. So, what does He tell them? 'I am the vine; ye are the branches', so He says in effect, you will not be lost, so long as you remain a part of Me. And that same message applies just as powerfully to everyone of us. You will not be deserted, says the Lord, because I am a part of you. You will not be alone, because the vine is made up of many parts and many branches, and they all cling together. You will not be without strength or support, because as the vine, I will continue to support and strengthen the branches, which grow out of Me, and are therefore, an extension of Me. Why didn't He simply say, 'I am the vine'? Why does He say, 'the true vine'? And the answer to that is, because the Old Testament scriptures abound with allegories concerning the vine, as a symbol for the nation of Israel.

But, consistently, in Old Testament scriptures, when identifying Israel under the symbol of the vine, it is to draw attention to their waywardness. But, Christ was not wayward, and therefore, in a very real sense He was the true Vine, but in all probably, the Lord's primary illusion, is to the prophecy of Psalm 80 and verse 14 and 15, which says, 'Return, we beseech thee, O Elohim Zebaoth: look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine; and the branch that Thou madest strong for Thyself.' The vine was Israel, and the Father looked at this withering vine; spiritually virtually dead, but in that vine He sees a promising branch, and He takes that branch, from the vine of the nation, and He plants it, and like most branches from a vine, it readily took root, in the dry ground, as Isaiah 53 and verse 1 tells us. And this vine became the branch, that

Yahweh had made strong for Himself, and therefore, the Lord could say, 'I am the true vine'.

In looking at that passage in Psalm 80 verse 14 and 15, significantly, the word that is translated as 'branch' is the Hebrew word, 'ben' which probably means a 'son' as a builder of the family name. Not just simply a son, but a 'son in Israel' was always very important, especially the firstborn, because the father depended upon that son, to extend and propagate the family. And so, that Hebrew word, has a very important meaning, partly because of the importance that Israel placed upon the family life, and the continuation of their family. And God places the same importance upon the establishment and the spreading (the propagating) and the continuation of His own family. And so, here we have one who was a Son, as the builder of the family name, and therefore, was a branch. And the word is rendered 'branch' in that sense, so that this prophecy is stating, that Yahweh would return to His vine, Israel, and from it He would take a branch, and with that branch, He would produce, not only a vine, but a Son, who would become the builder of Yahweh's Name, to be manifested in a family, of sons and daughters.

So, the special Son, became the true vine, and now he adds, having established that, 'My Father is the husbandman'. Yahweh is therefore, the owner of the vine, and if He's the owner of the vine, He is also the owner of the branches, and He is the owner of the fruit that is produced thereon. He is in charge of its care, and is therefore, the overseer of the entire operation involving the objective of nurturing this vine, so that it will produce fruit. And the husbandman has got to care for the vine through every stage of its growth and development. He has got to nurture it, even before it springs roots and takes root in the ground. He has to care for it to that end, and He watches it very, very carefully, as He oversaw the whole life and ministry of His Son, nurturing Him, loving Him, seeing that angels were there to minister to Him at every time of need. And as He has done that for the vine, that it might grow into a strong vine, to produce strong branches, to produce the most acceptable and desirable fruit, so it must always be remembered that the entire operation of planting the vine, and tending it, is the work of the Father, it is a work of God, and therefore, the Son could say that 'I do nothing of mine own self, but that which I do, is that which the Father tells Me', and it is also needful, brethren and sisters, to remember, that the entire operation of planting the vine and tending it, and caring for it, will prove valueless unless it produces fruit.

So the Lord says in verse 2, 'Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit', a wonderful analogy in these wonderful words. He, of course, here, is the husbandman, so it's referring to the man or woman in the truth, who are the branches of the vine, who eventually, during the course of their probationary life in the truth, decide to reject the character of Christ in their life, or they fail to develop it, placing other priorities in life as more important than the development of fruit to the glory of God, and so therefore, if they fail to produce that which the husbandman requires, then, He will sever them from the vine. Perhaps the great drama of this statement is that only a matter of minutes or hours before this, a major branch had been removed from the vine. Judas Iscariot, as

though taking the knife of a husbandman, had been severed from that vine, and of the twelve, who were so intimately concerned with the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, as His friends, one has already gone from the vine. What a lesson for the other eleven! But, every branch, says the Lord, 'that beareth fruit', every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit', so, therefore, these branches must be purged that they produce more fruit. And we know that Paul uses similar language in quoting from the book of Proverbs, when he says, 'that every son and daughter for that matter, that Yahweh loveth, He chasteneth'. In other words, he will put our faith to the test, and we need always to remember that, that that is the chastening of the Lord, which is never, says Paul, for the moment, 'pleasant or nice to have to go through'. But you see, as the husbandman, he has every right to examine those branches and to see their need, and to see their requirements, and to see what must be done for their own best welfare, as well as His own interests, which is to see the production of fruit. And so therefore, these branches must be pruned and purged by the action of the Word upon them, to say nothing of the circumstances of life that God will bring us into, from time to time.

Well, I don't know if any of you have heard me make the point before, but I do make it often, and that is, that when we claim to 'have faith', when we claim that we believe the things of God, we believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, and is the means of attaining eternal redemption, when we make the claim that we have 'faith' in all the things of God, God has every right to come to us now and again, and say, 'if you say you have faith, prove it!', and He brings us into circumstances of life, in which our faith is put to the test, and He has every right to do that, because otherwise, our claim is merely 'a claim', and it is not 'put to the test'; it is not put to the proof that the Father will do that, and therefore, we need pruning. And the Word is the great influence that will do that. And when the Word makes us feel uncomfortable, brethren and sisters, or when it makes us feel somewhat unhappy, and the way in which we receive that Word into ourselves, then that Word is acting upon us, because it is like a pruninghook or a pruning knife, and it is touching us, and it is touching us in our spiritual conscience and its upon us. And we know from nature, in this analogy that the Lord is drawing here, that this is exactly the case, so far as pruning is concerned.

In my own backyard at home, I've a very beautiful muscat vine, which produces a lovely green grape. And every year, come around about July, and that reminds me that I'm not home at this time to prune the vine. My, son, a horticulturist, I hope has done that for me, if not I shall have a few words to say to him, God willing, after we arrive home. But I'm sure that he will do it, because it was one thing that I mentioned to him, 'come July, remember to prune the roses and prune my vine'. And we know from our own experience each year, when it comes to pruning that vine, our minds go automatically to John chapter 15. And this we know, when we're taught many years ago by a brother of wisdom in regard to these things, that grapes are only produced on the vine every year from the new wood, that is formed from the original shoot. So we prune the vine back, we don't cut the branch right off, but we prune it right back, and then that branch will put forth new wood, and from that new wood, will come the fruit. And so, in the analogy, if we are submitting to the pruning of the husbandman, we are in effect, constantly

growing. As my vine has grown from the early days when I planted it many years ago, from a little slit around about 18" high, and now reaches with branches on either direction, around about 8 or 9 feet in either direction, with two main branches going up like that and two others down a little lower. And we try to make it look nice when we prune it, and we know that if we look after it, if we care for it, it will produce fruit. But you see, the husbandman must care for that and he must indeed, purge those branches that the following year they may produce fruit, because if the husbandman doesn't prune the vine, if he doesn't care for those branches and trim them right back, then come the next year, there will be just a tangle of branches all over the place everywhere. Totally disordered, as your vine will look of those of you that have a vine, when we come to the start of winter, and all the leaves fall from the vine, and I look at what was previously such a beautiful vine, covered in lovely green leaves and producing its bunches of fruit, when all the leaves are gone, and just the bare, ragged branches are there. It's not a pretty sight and it's all over the place, and the branches have grown whither they want, and I know when I look at that, that it will stay that way until I prune it. But, I've got to wait until the sap is ready, until the sap is dried to its nearest point, before I prune that vine. And when it's pruned, although it will have no leaves, it will look like an orderly and an ordered fruit growing vine.

And so, this is where the Lord draws these analogies, and at the same time, as the branches (ourselves), we know that we cannot grow from our own individual root; Christ must be the root through which we draw our goodness and our food, for our spiritual development, and of course, to stay alive spiritually. You cut off a branch from the vine, and throw it on the ground, and it just slowly withers, and it will die. You have to plant it in earth before it will take root and grow. We don't want to be cut off from that vine; we want to stay on that vine and we don't want to become branches for the purpose of pursuing our own private interests, or to develop according to our own ideas or intentions. We wish to remain branches that we may manifest the one purpose that God has in the true vine of Israel, and that is to produce fruit on our branch, whichever branch we happen to be, to produce fruit on our branch that will be to the glory of God.

And how much more at one, could anything ever be, than a vine and its branches. And in the analogy of the vine and its branches, the Lord Jesus Christ invites us, into the closest possible intimate connection with Himself, with the intention, that we should grown upon Him. And that's exactly what the branches do, they grown upon the vine, and one of the most beautiful aspects of this analogy, the vine and its branches, is that above all else, it honours and elevates the omnipotence of Yahweh, Himself. As He looks at that vine, as He looks at the neatly pruned branches, that He knows in their due season, is consistently bringing forth fruit, and as a reflection to His honour and His glory, that He should so husband that vine, that the fruit will inevitably come.

So, although the vine is the symbol for the Lord Jesus Christ, and although it is indeed, the Lord Jesus Christ, as He says here, we also know that a vine is not in itself, self supporting. The vine may well stand upon a thick stem, as it grows and comes to maturity, but it cannot support its own branches unaided. The branches have got to be trained against and supported by something firmer and stronger than its own branches.

You see, we don't have the firmness and the strength to support ourselves, and so with my own vine at home, I have wires running to two great heavy posts in the ground. And those branches which come each year, some of them will grow, 8, 10, 12 feet long, but they are no thicker than that, they're very thin. The new wood is not very strong, it's not very thick, and imagine a branch just about 2 inches in diameter, less than that, try to support itself, somewhere in mid air, for 10 or 12 feet that it's going to grow during that time. It can't be done, so the branches have to be trained against, and have to be supported by, something firmer and stronger than themselves. And in the analogy before us, it is clear that Yahweh is the strength and the support, which upholds the vine and its branches. And so, with these thoughts in mind, the Lord says in verse 3, 'Now ye are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you', why does He introduce that into the analogy of the vine? because He goes straight back to the vine again. 'Ye are clean through the Word', and of course, He means the Word is the means whereby the branches will be cleansed. The Word is the means whereby the branches will be purified. The Word will act as a pruning influence upon the branch, if the branch will allow it to happen. So the 'cleansing power of the Word' will result in production of fruit. That's the point of verse 3. The cleansing power of the Word will result in the production of fruit.

And so, in verse 4 He says, 'Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me', and they are the most beautiful words that we could ever hope to hear. The invitation from the Lord, saying to us, 'Abide in Me'; in Me; not near Me, not with Me, not beside Me, but in Me, so that our relationship to Christ has got to be close. It's got to be intimate and perhaps, above all else, it has got to be permanent. WE'VE GOT TO STAY WITH THAT VINE, because on our own we're lost. So the vine and the branches must be one. And this gives rise to the words of Paul that we might have referred to the other day, from Galatians 2 and verse 20, when he used these most intimate words when he said, 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me', and so the Lord says to us, 'Abide in Me and I in you'. And this is what Paul says, 'I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me', and they are awe inspiring words because they constituted from Paul, no idle boast. They were words of truth; Paul had so learned to surrender his will to the will of Christ and to the pattern of the Christ character, that he could say truthfully, and without any element of pride whatever, 'that Christ liveth in me', and that is the essence of the teaching concerning the Vine and its branches.

And you know, brethren and sisters, there will be times when we feel in ourselves, that our leaves are fading. If we feel that our leaves are fading, if we feel as though we are becoming sapless and without spiritual life, if at times, we have little heart for the truth and the work of the truth, and the study of the Word and the responsibilities that God has placed upon us, there is only one remedy. I AM THE TRUE VINE, ABIDE IN ME, in other words, renew our intimate relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and with the Husbandman. Renew our commitment and the sap will begin to come back into the branch, and the leaves will reappear and the growth will continue. And therefore, we must seek out more fervently and more fully, the mind of Christ. We must draw nearer to Him in the spirit of the Word. Everything else in life is absolute vanity, by

comparison with God's purpose in us, through Christ as the vine. And being a part of that vine is the only thing in life that really matters, there's nothing else to be compared with that.

And so the Lord says in verse 4 precisely that, when He says that the branch 'cannot bear fruit of itself'. You see, the vine and the branches are complimentary and essential to one another. The vine cannot produce fruit without the branches and the branches cannot exist independently of the vine. We need the Lord Jesus Christ; we need Him very, very much, we cannot operate independently of that vine, that Yahweh took from the nation of Israel in a state of spiritual collapse and He planted it and nurtured it, and it grew up into His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who became the builder of Yahweh's family name. And we have been honoured and privileged in a way that should humiliate and humble us, that God has looked upon us and drawn us, to become a part of that vine. That we cannot operate independently of Him, so that both vine and branches together, constitute one fruit bearing tree. And the allegory speaks beautifully and graphically of the spiritual union that must exist, between Christ and His disciples. So we know only too well, do we not, that apart from Christ, we can do nothing, and cut off from Christ, we are nothing. So, that we must become a part of Him, in a very real and a very intimate way, is clearly evident. Everyone of the branches needs the vine. They don't need anything else; they need the Vine, because the husbandman does everything else, in that the husbandman provides for the food and the sustenance of the vine, which will flow through to us, if we allow it to flow through from the vine.

And so in verse 5, the Lord stresses this when He says, 'I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me, ye can do nothing'. And the word 'nothing' in the Greek text is a double negative for emphasis, so that the Lord is literally saying, 'without Me ye can do nothing, nothing'. So that we understand the emphasis of that, you'll notice He doesn't say, 'without My doctrine'. He does not say 'without My ecclesia', he says 'without ME', Himself. So that all that Christ was during His mortal existence as the Word made Flesh, we must endeavour to understand, so that He becomes a living person, or can we put it this way, a living vine to which we are attached, built into that vine, a part of it, not just tied on with string or rope or a piece of cloth, but we are growing out of that vine, as a part of that vine, and therefore, we must never be very far away from Christ and the example He has left us to follow.

And so in verses 6, 7 and 8 He says, 'If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples'. And you see in those words, He reminds us that the vine has only one purpose, and that is to bear fruit. It exists for no other reason. That is very important that we should realize that. That, you may say to me, 'well that is very nice to have a vine growing over the exterior of our house, outside the back door to provide a nice area that will be shaded and cool in the hot summer weather, where we can sit'.

That's true enough, but that's not the purpose why we plant a vine, that produces grapes. We plant the vine that it might produce fruit, and that's the only purpose that the vine has; it exists for no other reason. As I said a little earlier, for the greater part of the year, when it's divested of all its lovely green leaves, what does it look like? It has no appearance whatever; in some respects we may liken it unto an olive tree. The olive tree - when you've seen the very old olive trees in the land of Israel, and there is one to this day, a very, very, old tree in the garden of Gethsemane, of which it is said that it was there 2,000 years ago, that it would have been there on the night of Christ's betrayal. But to look at an olive tree, it is the most unbeautiful tree; its branches wind and go all over the place and its gnarled and knotted, especially when they get older, and the leaves are nothing in particular to delight in or to take pleasure in. The tree itself has no outward appearance of any great impression, but from that tree comes the oil olive that was beaten out by the Israelites to produce the lights in the Holy place. And the oil olive that produces the light is symbolic for 'the light of God's word' and it will come out of a tree, that from the point of view of the appearance, has no value whatever. You would not plant an olive tree in your garden for beauty. And the vine is much the same most of the year; when you see those branches at the end of summer, and they're all over the place everywhere, and they're thin little things that are going in all directions all over the place, there's nothing beautiful about that. But, the vine can become a beautiful thing, and above all else, it can produce for the husbandman, wonderful fruit, and it exists for no other purpose. And everything that is done to the vine and for the vine, is designed toward that one end, the production of fruit.

When we look down to verse 16, we'll see something important about this fruit, that is different from the fruit produced on any normal vine. In verse 16, the Lord says, 'Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain'. Now, normal fruit on the vine is not like that! The normal vine produces fruit. And when it is ripened and ready for picking, if you do not pick that fruit at the moment of ripeness, or the time of ripeness, either birds will get it or insects will go to work on it, and ultimately it will fall from the vine and it will rot on the ground. But, the Lord here speaks on a different kind of fruit, a kind of fruit different to that produced by any other vine that has ever existed. It is a fruit that will remain, and the word 'meno' remain is the same word as rendered 'abide in Me' in verse 4. Abide in Me, and you see, this fruit will remain because it is the 'fruit of the Spirit', and that does not fall from the vine and rot on the ground. The fruit of the Spirit is something that is produced in the characters of men and women, that is there to the honour and glory of God. And it is the fruit of the Spirit that is produced in the branches that go out from the vine, that will ensure the inheritance of men and women in the kingdom of God. Because if the fruit is there, when the husbandman comes to examine that vine, if the fruit is there, and it is the fruit of the Spirit, it will live and abide forever, and so it will go into the kingdom of God.

This word 'remain' or 'abide' as applied to the fruit and the branches in verse 4 and verse 16, occurs in verse 4 as we've said, it occurs in verse 6, it occurs in verse 7, it occurs twice in verse 10, it is rendered as 'continue' in verse 9, it is rendered 'remain' in verse 11, so therefore, the word 'abide' or 'remain' occurs 8 times in this chapter. 8

times, and you know, 8 is the symbolic number in scripture to represent the Lord Jesus Christ. 8 is also the biblical number to represent the cutting off of flesh, so by being part of the Lord Jesus Christ and by following the process of cutting off the 'works of the flesh' and producing the 'fruit of the Spirit', have you ever noticed a difference there in Galatians 5? Paul speaks of the 'works of the flesh' and then he speaks of the 'fruits of the Spirit', and what an incredible difference. 8 times that word occurs in John chapter 15; it is virtually the dominant word in this discourse upon the vine and its branches.

And as the Lord left that Upper Room, made His way to Gethsemane, that He might offer His life for the sins of the world, here He is, deeply concerned that His disciples, who are going to be left behind in the world, would remain in Him, despite the pressures of the world. Despite the things that would come upon them, the trials, the tribulations, the difficulties of life, and above all, the pressures that come from an evil and godless and a apostate world, that they might resist all those things and that the husbandman continue to do his work, and that they might remain a part of that vine, glued to that vine. A part of it, growing into the vine, growing out from the vine, that they might remain, and that they might 'abide' and that at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ that they might still be found part of that vine. That's what He wants, that they might remain in Him; that they would abide in His teaching; that they would continue to walk in the way that He had taught them, thus maintaining their oneness with the Father and His Son. And so these are the dominant thoughts in the Lord's mind as He speaks to His disciples concerning the Vine and its branches.

And how powerfully, brethren and sisters, those principles come to us today, because as I said earlier, the Lord is speaking to every one of us personally at this time, out of John chapter 15, and for the very same reasons, that He uttered these sublime and beautiful words, on that fateful night so long ago. Walking through the dark streets of the city of Jerusalem, intent upon fortifying His beloved disciples, for whom He was going to go out and die, that He might fortify them with the power of the Word, that would strengthen them and give them the courage and the faith and the determination to continue on, without turning to the right hand or to the left, but maintaining their intimate relationship with the Vine, that had given them birth.

And if it should happen that we are not bringing forth the fruit of the Spirit, there can be only one reason for it, and that is because there is a flaw in our connection with Christ, the Vine. Something is not right, and the fault does not lie in the Vine, the fault must lie in the branch, not the Vine. Because the husbandman will never, ever destroy a vine unless it is diseased. He will never, ever destroy a whole vine; he will destroy the branches that do not produce the fruit, or the branches that may become contaminated. One reason the branches may not bring forth fruit could be that they become unmanageable, that's another reason. Perhaps they become unmanageable and then that means that they will not go in the direction that the husbandman is trying to train them, and so therefore, the husbandman will put forth his knife and cut that branch from the vine, severing it finally and completely. And once it's been cut off, it's cut off, so the branches of the vine should never have the freedom to grow in any direction that they want to. They should never have the freedom to ever become unmanageable, so the

husbandman carefully trains the branches along a firm frame. In our country, he either ties those branches to that frame, or perhaps he nails them, as with crucifixion, the putting to death of the flesh, that the flesh might be made to submit to the will of the Father, the Husbandman, and thereby it might bring forth fruit. But the husbandman will do everything possible to train every branch, that it might grow in the best possible direction to the advantage of the vine itself, and to the overall advantage of the husbandman, that the vine might produce fruit. And so therefore, the branch, if it has any sense, we're not talking here about literal branches because they don't have brains, but ourselves as the branches, if we had sensibility about these things, we will take the guiding hand of the Husbandman, and even though we might want to go that way, and He trains us to go that way, we will accept that, and He will nail us into place, that we might stay there. That we might crucify the flesh to be guided by the Husbandman, and if we use our spiritual vision and ability, we will grasp that guiding frame, instead of wanting to break away from it, we will grasp the guiding frame that He puts there, and we will cling to it tenaciously, so that we might prove to be good branches and bring forth fruit.

And so in due time, in due time, the branches will be examined by the Husbandman. He will not examine them with a casual glance of a passerby, because He has a particular and personal interest in that vine. And you know, with my own vine, at times when the summer is really at its height, and I know that the fruit should be ripe, I'll go through with my hand, and I'll go through the branches like that, pushing aside the leaves, and I'll find there a bunch, very nice, very ripe, and out will come the shears, I'll cut off the branch that goes inside under the table. But, you know that I've found time and time again, year by year, I'll go through a patch like that, and I'll miss a bunch of grapes, and I may come back a week later and examine it again, and then find it. Perhaps I'm a little late, so what it teaches me is, that I've not been thorough enough in my examination, because with a good healthy vine, it is very, very easy for a bunch of fruit to hang there, and with great big, large leaves that a vine has, to remain hidden among the leaves, especially when they're the same colour. When you have green grapes growing against green leaves, so therefore, the lesson is that the Husbandman will be very, very meticulous. He won't miss anything, not like me. He won't miss anything and He will carefully, when the time comes, which will be at the judgment seat of Christ, He will carefully make His way, His hands through those leaves, among the leaves of the Vine, He will separate them carefully. He will examine every branch and He will be looking for the fruit that is there. That is His one objective, He'll examine that branch, He'll examine branch, by branch with one objective in mind, and that is to collect fruit. And that's what the Lord Jesus Christ is going to do with us at the judgment seat. He wants to see 'the fruits of the Spirit' that have been produced in our characters and in our lives, by the influence of His word upon us, as the vine, and we, as the branches.

And the Husbandman, of course, knows exactly at what time He should examine the branches. He knows exactly what time and effort has been expended on those branches, and He knows exactly what He is entitled to expect from those branches by way of fruit, and so He'll examine them to collect the fruit. And so, by this means, we find that the Lord now says in verse 9, 'that as the Father has loved Me, so have I loved

you: continue ye in My love. Herein is My Father glorified', the verse speaks of course, of God Manifestation and that is why the Lord intimates that by showing us, that in the production of the fruit of the Spirit upon every branch of that vine, therein is My Father glorified.

And now in verse 10, we find the beginning of an intensely explanatory section wherein the Lord now, drops the metaphor of the vine, and goes on to give a broad explanation of His earlier words from the beginning of chapter 13, and He does so with these words, 'these things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full'. And God willing, tomorrow afternoon, we shall take up the narrative at that point, and see the way in which the Lord will now expand upon those earlier verses, drawing again on the parable of the vine and the branches and the husbandman, and He will show us the way in which His joy might remain in us, and that He will share a joy and a rejoicing with us, when the Father comes to examine the vine, and is able to His great honour and glory, pick for the glory of His Name, the fruits of the Spirit, produced by the branches, from the vine that He has planted.