

## John 15:1 – 3

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~ Our Spiritual Safari makes a unique move in this report; one that should make each of us bow down and thank the all-powerful and merciful God that He will bring us in grace and truth from this life and this world through our transition into eternity. We are still in the Upper Room Discourse in the Gospel of John; however, this sub-section of the discourse was not given in the upper room. In our last report, we concluded when Jesus said, “arise, let us go hence.” Our expedition knows they did, in fact, arise and go at that exact moment. Some people suppose this chapter could have been given prior to departing from the upper room; but it doesn’t seem likely that was the order of events, or His statement to arise and go was made in the transition of packing up their belongings and departing. Some will see that as splitting hairs, but I do not feel we can examine each and every step Jesus made from here to the cross too carefully. An awareness of the movements He and the apostles made at this point is critical to a complete understanding of the Gospel account. These words are so extremely valuable that we can never know enough about them....

*1 I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.*

~ Many expositors of the Gospel have posited this teaching as having been given in the valley of Kidron or on the side of the Mount of Olives. A great vineyard that covered the entire valley has been documented at this location at the time in which we are studying. We can also know it was a full moon because it was at Passover. However, another suggestion has been made, primarily by the English lineage preachers and teachers, and it is far more plausible. They believe Jesus went by the temple. Following the law as meticulously as Jesus did renders it HIGHLY likely the temple route was the path taken at this time. The beautiful gates would have been open all night long. The gates were a lot like the tourist attraction of the big city. These gates had been crafted in Greece and floated over the Hellespont, now known as the Dardanelles; and then brought to Jerusalem and into Herod’s Temple. These gates were made of bronze; but woven into them

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John 15:1 – 3

+ O + O + O +

was an elaborate golden vine. That vine on those gates was the badge of honor for the nation Israel. The vine was the standing symbol for the nation Israel at that time. I don't think any other allegory, parable or figure of speech is quite as appropriate as that of the vine. So, the vine sets forth the nation Israel. That said, I am sure this is the route Jesus took that night.

*Psalm 80:8 Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it. 9 Thou preparedst room before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land ~*

*Isaiah 5: 7 For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant ~*

*Jeremiah 2:21 Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me? ~*

*Hosea 10:1 Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself ~*

Jesus is speaking of the nation Israel. There is no other way to spiritualize or dodge the fact that the vine speaks of Israel. The Lord Jesus is making one of the most revolutionary statements here that mankind has ever heard. Well, it was revolutionary to these men, but it's probably overly familiar to us today. Jesus says He is the true vine. Truth can be compared against error and falsehood; and it can be tried true against a counterfeit. The best translation we have for verse one is, "I am the GENUINE vine." The people Jesus is talking to now – these disciples in our Biblical account – are BELIEVERS ONLY who have roots deep in the Old Testament. Jesus is telling them that their identification with the nation and connecting that to religion is no longer the essential point. Christ says HE is the genuine vine, and we are to be joined to Him as believers.

It should now be more than clear to you that your association with a people, place, race, religion, rite, organization or cause is irrelevant in this life; the question is: are you identified with Christ as your Savior and Lord? Jesus says He is the genuine vine, and the Father is the Owner of the vineyard. Here, the Father is the One Who also cultivates the garden and

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**John 15:1 – 3**

+ O + O + O +

the vine. God said Jesus grew up as a tender root out of a dry ground. Christ is definitely the vine to which we must be joined in order to bring forth any fruit at all for Him in our life....

*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.*

*3 Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.*

~ Abide in Jesus as Jesus abides in us; and let's look at three words to clarify completely what the Lord Jesus is speaking of now. The first is the little preposition "in." If you are a regular reader of the Spiritual Safari, you'll have noted I place a special emphasis on the word "in." It is particularly important when it precedes the noun of the Lord Jesus - or any pronoun that refers to Him. Here, Jesus says, "...every branch IN Me...."

Alright, what does it mean to truly be saved? The modern theologian has uncovered some tremendous Bible words to form a definition, such as propitiation, reconciliation, redemption - and just plain good old-fashioned salvation. Well, each of those words only covers one perspective of a multi-faceted and deeply complex subject. None of them encompass the entire spectrum of what we understand as salvation. What it means to be saved is that we are IN Christ; there are only two groups of people in this world: those who are in Christ and those who are NOT in Christ. Of course, we are taken into Christ by the new birth. The moment we trust Christ as Savior we become a child of God through faith in the Lord Jesus. We are born again at that moment by the Spirit of God Who washes us – but He also does something else. We are, at that moment, baptized in the Spirit and placed IN the body of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When Jesus says "every branch in Me" – as we have said previously - He is talking to believers only. We are not even talking about how people get saved any more. This is not speaking of salvation in this passage in any connection. This speaks of the fruits that are produced AFTER we are grafted into the vine. "In" appears seven times and "fruit" occurs six times; and that's just in the first ten verses. We also see three degrees of fruit

bearing: fruit, more fruit and much fruit. The entire topic throughout is to bear fruit. Well, that means we need to understand exactly what bearing fruit REALLY means. We also have the word "abide" - and Jesus says, "abide in Me." Abide occurs more than any other word - and abiding in Christ is the modus operandi in which we bear fruit today. Most Christians think they are fruit professionals – but most know absolutely nothing, my friends. The comments I read about fruit bearing make me hang my head in silent shame asking God to speak to their hearts.

Jesus says the branch that bears not fruit is taken away, which means He will remove it away from the place of fruit-bearing. The way we remove branches is to cut them off. This sounds a lot like we can lose our salvation, but we have already established that we cannot lose our salvation; and we have established that we are not even talking about salvation in this passage. No, friends, we're talking about fruit bearing in our lives; an outward growth and change through Christ should be happening as the result of being saved. Most people have a total misconception about what Godly fruit is. Many believe it's soul winning – but I don't think so. Soul winning may be a biproduct of the fruit - but the fruit itself is the fruit of the Spirit of God working through us.

One fruit is 'prayer effectual.' If we abide and pray in His Name, it shall be done. 'Perpetual fruit' is another aspect by which the Father is glorified by us bearing much fruit; so shall we be His disciples. Jesus spoke these things that His JOY might remain in us – that would be 'joy celestial!' Those are the things mentioned - and they all happen to be fruit. If you have those qualities in your life, you will be bringing men into the presence of the True and Living God. This can be done just by your life, but more so by your spoken word. God wants fruit in your lives, friends. When you don't produce fruit, you may be taken away from that place of fruit bearing permanently.

Many men have been set aside and are no longer effective for God and their ministry is useless. We have lay people whose lives are the same way. Sometimes, the Lord takes these people away in death. Sometimes He just sidelines them with health issues or financial problems. John says there is a

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**John 15:1 - 3**

+ O + O + O +

sin unto death, you will recall. That speaks of a Christian that goes on in sin until God physically removes them from the world, away from the place of fruit bearing. Ananias and Sapphira are classic examples as God removed them from the early church. They did not lose their salvation; but the early church was a holy and fruit bearing church. God just didn't allow liars to remain in that church at that time. Now, I understand the liar is very comfortable in a church sanctuary today, but they wouldn't have been safe in the day and age in which we are studying. That is what we mean when we talk about taking away a branch that will not bear fruit.

The word for "purgeth" in verse two is very interesting. Some have translated it "pruning." Actually, the Greek word 'catharti' means "to cleanse" - and the vine could simply be washed - with water - if it got aphids, or some other infestation. I think we have the idea of both of those situations wrapped up in this. God washes us as we have seen, but He also prunes out the things in our life that offend others and cause people to question your Christianity. Sometimes, it hurts when He prunes our lives, too, as you may well know. God will remove the things that hinder us, and I could give you two or three different examples of how that is applicable in my own life. I happen to know that pruning is what the Lord was doing and, I'll admit it - it hurts. I think I have personally felt the Lord reach into my heart and cut away spiritual cancer. I'm not complaining; I'm just praying God will keep me around teaching His Word in this life because that's all-important to me. That's my business now - that's my life.

One reason that so many Christians are hurting so badly today is because God is constantly pruning them back down to start over again. Friends, it's possible to watch your life go by before your very eyes and never grow one inch. So many people are so far out of fellowship today that they are cut back to a nub for next spring - they are so far away from God they never branch out. Most of those people usually think they are very close to God - that's what we call Christian Tragedy. Other people move further away when the Lord chastises them, and they begin complaining. What we need to do is get closer to God so He can cleanse us through His Word. Our Spiritual Safari will take that subject so deep in our next report that you may not be able to breath when we complete it ~

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