



THE VINE & the Branches

Part 2: The Father's
Passion for Fruit

John 15:1-2

“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that does bear fruit, He prunes it, that it may bear more fruit.”



Four Keys for Understanding John 15:1-2



1. The Vinedresser's love for, and commitment to, producing fruit in His vineyard.
2. Jesus' audience when He gives the allegory.
3. The proper interpretation of the Greek word *airo*.
4. Jesus' use of the phrase "in Me."



The First Key: The Vinedresser

- The Greek word commonly translated *vinedresser* is the word *georgos*, from which we get the English word, George (“one who tills the soil”).
- From one of Jesus’ parables, we learn that “there was a landowner who planted a vineyard and put a wall around it and dug a winepress in it, and built a tower, and rented it out to vine-growers to receive his produce” (Mt. 21:33ff.; Mk. 12:1ff.; Lk. 20:9ff.).
- As the Vinedresser, the Father loves all the branches on the vine, watches over them, tends to them with great interest, ensures that no branch runs to waste, and never delegates their care to another.

From *Grape Grower's Handbook*

- “Growing high-quality grapes for premium wine requires the grower to fully understand the principles of viticulture.”
- “It takes several years to develop and establish a vineyard and for the vines to produce a regular crop of grapes with the vineyard remaining productive for many decades.”



Blue Mountain Vineyard

Oliver, (Okanagan Falls) British Columbia, Canada

The Father's Initiative & Oversight

“The whole thing is of His planning and planting. He sent His Son. He sent His Spirit. He is the Great Owner, Proprietor, and Cultivator.”



Dr. Frank M. Barker

Pastor Emeritus
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The Father's Main Interest: Fruit

- “By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples” (Jn. 15:8).
- “You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain; that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He may give to you” (Jn. 15:16).





One Solitary Purpose of the Vine

“The one purpose in the vine is fruit-bearing. See, here, how the Divine Teacher accentuates it. ‘Fruit,’ ‘much fruit,’ ‘more fruit.’ Nothing less will content Him in any one of us. For this we were taken out of the wild vine, in which we were by nature, and grafted into Him; for this the regeneration of the Holy Spirit and the discipline of life; for this the sunshine of His love and the dew of the Holy Ghost. It becomes each seriously to ask, ‘Am I bringing forth fruit unto God?’ There may be orthodoxy of doctrine, correctness in life, and even heartiness of service; but is there fruit, much fruit, more fruit?”

- F.B. Meyer, *Love to the Uttermost: Expositions of John XIII-XXI* (1808)

[Note: F.B. Meyer (1847-1929) was a lifetime friend of D.L. Moody and wrote over 75 books]



F.B. Meyer

“Nowhere does the Lord contemplate a *little fruit*. A berry here and there! A thin bunch of sour, unripened grapes! Yet it is too true that many believers yield no more than this. He comes to us hungry for grapes, but beholds a few mildewed bunches not fit to eat!”

The Second Key: Jesus' Audience

- The Eleven disciples left the Upper Room in the moonlit air with Jesus. As they walked toward the Kidron Valley and Gethsemane at the foot of the Mount of Olives, He turned to them and taught the allegory of *The Vine and the Branches*.
- His address was not to unbelievers, nor to the curious, nor to a mixed audience. He was speaking to His beloved friends who were all believers.



The Meissen Apostles

The Third Key: Union with Christ

- “He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides **in Me** and I in him” (Jn. 6:56).
- “In that day you shall know that I am in My Father, and you **in Me**, and I in you” (Jn. 14:20).
- “Abide **in Me**, and I in you” (Jn. 15:4).
- “He who abides **in Me**, and I in him, he bears much fruit” (Jn. 15:5).
- “If you abide **in Me**, and My words abide in you...” (Jn. 15:7).
- “It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives **in me**” (Gal. 2:20).
- “God is faithful, through whom you were called into **fellowship with His Son**, Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor. 1:9).

We Are In Christ

- “Therefore if any man is **in Christ**, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold new things have come” (II Cor. 5:17).
- “For as in Adam all die, so also **in Christ**, all shall be made alive” (I Cor. 15:22).
- “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one **in Christ Jesus**” (Gal. 3:28).
- “Just as He chose us **in Him** before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him” (Eph. 1:4).
- “By this we know that we abide **in Him** and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit” (I Jn. 4:13).



Union with Christ

- **Q. 66:** “What is that **union** which the elect have with Christ?” **A:** The union which the elect have with Christ is the work of God’s grace, whereby they are spiritually and mystically, yet really and inseparably, joined to Christ as their head and husband; which is done in their effectual calling.”
- **Q. 69:** “What is the communion in grace which the members of the invisible church have with Christ?” **A.** “The communion in grace which the members of the invisible church have with Christ is their partaking of the virtue of his mediation, in their justification, adoption, sanctification, and whatever else in this life manifests their **union** with him.”



Union with Christ

- “All saints that are **united to Jesus Christ** their Head, by His Spirit, and by faith, have fellowship with Him in His grace, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory” (*Westminster Confession of Faith*, Chap. 25).
- “The **union between Christ and believers** is effected by the Holy Spirit in a mysterious and supernatural way, and for that reason is generally designated as the *unio mystica* or mystical union” (Berkhof).
- “The call ushers into fellowship of Christ a relationship once for all established. It is a call out of darkness into God’s marvelous light (I Pt. 2:9), into his own kingdom and glory (I Thess. 2:12)....It is into **union with Christ** that the call ushers the partakers of it” (John Murray).



Union with Christ

- In Christ's perfect obedience, "we become the beneficiaries of it, indeed the partakers of it, by union with him. It is this that serves to advertise the significance of that which is the central truth of all soteriology (the doctrine of salvation), namely, **union and communion with Christ**" (John Murray).
- "Sanctification is a process that begins, we might say, in regeneration, finds its basis in justification, and derives its energizing grace from the **union with Christ** which is effected in effectual calling" (Murray).
- "It is calling that is represented in Scripture as that act of God by which we are actually united to Christ (I Cor. 1:9)" (Murray).



Union with Christ

- “Faith **unites us to Christ** in the bonds of abiding attachment and entrustment and it is **this union** which ensures that the saving power, grace, and virtue of the Savior become operative in the believer” (Murray).
- “It is **union with Christ** that binds together all the phases of redemptive love and grace. It was in Christ the people of God were chosen before the foundation of the world. It was in Christ they were redeemed by his blood – he loved the church and gave himself for it” (Murray).
- Our **union with Christ** may be defined as “that intimate, vital, and spiritual union between Christ and His people, in virtue of which He is the source of their life and strength, of their blessedness and salvation” (Berkhof).



Berkhof: Characteristics of Union with Christ

1. It is an organic union: Christ and believers form one body.
2. It is a vital union: the life of Christ indwells and animates believers.
3. It is a union mediated by the Holy Spirit: believers are united to Christ through the Holy Spirit
4. It is a union that implies reciprocal action: union with Christ continues under the influence of the Holy Spirit.
5. It is a personal union: every believer is personally united to Christ.
6. It is a transforming union: believers are transformed into the image of Christ.

The Fourth Key: The Meaning of *Airo*

- “Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, **He takes away**; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it, that it may bear more fruit” (Jn. 15:2).
- The primary question about this Greek word, *airo*, revolves around the phrase “every branch in Me that does not bear fruit.” Does this refer to a true believer or to one who professes to know Christ but who does not have a vital union with Him?
- How are we to interpret “He takes away”? Does God the Father take away, or remove, branches (people) from the vine (Christ)? Can believers lose their salvation if they are not bearing fruit?



The Meaning of *Airo*

- According to Kittel, the Greek word *airo* means “to lift from the ground; to lift with a view to carrying; to carry off or put away.”
- According to Greek scholars Liddell and Scott, the primary definition of *airo* is “to take up, raise, lift up.” Examples from ancient Greek: (1) to lift up or raise one’s voice; (2) to step or walk (to lift up one’s feet); (3) to get the fleet of ships under sail (to lift up the sails).
- The word is used in 7 different ways in 102 N.T. verses.
- The most frequent use is the primary definition, “lift up.” It is found in 32 different passages of the N.T. (6 in Matthew; 12 in Mark; 6 in Luke; 5 in John; 2 in Acts; and 1 in Revelation).

Selected Uses of *Airo*

- “(Satan) said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God throw Yourself down; for it is written, “He shall give His angels charge concerning You; and on their hands they shall **bear you up**, lest you strike your foot against a stone”’” (Mt. 4:6; cf. Lk. 4:11).
- “**Take** My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls” (Mt. 11:29).
- After the feeding of the 5,000: “And they all ate and were satisfied. And they **picked up** what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve full baskets” (Mt. 14:20; cf. Mk. 6:43; 8:19-20). And after the feeding of the 4,000: “...they **picked up** what was left over of the broken pieces, seven full baskets” (Mt. 15:37).

Selected Uses of *Airo*

- “Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and **take up** his cross, and follow Me’” (Mt. 16:24; cf. Mk. 8:34).
- “...go to the sea, and throw in a hook, and **take** the first fish that comes up; and when you open its mouth, you will find a stater (shekel); take that and give to them for you and Me” (Mt. 17:27).
- “And as they were coming out, they found a certain Cyrenian named Simon; this man they pressed into service to **bear** His cross” (Mt. 27:32).
- “Therefore they **picked up** stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple” (Jn. 8:59).

Selected Uses of *Airo*

- “And they came, bringing to Him a paralytic, **carried** by four men” (Mk. 2:3). “I (Jesus) say to you, ‘Rise, **take up** your pallet, and go home.’ And he rose and immediately **took up** the pallet and went out in the sight of all” (Mk. 2:11-12).
- “Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘**Be taken up** and cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen; it shall be granted him” (Mk. 11:23).
- “And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land **lifted up** his right hand to heaven and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created Heaven and the things in it...” (Rev. 10:5-6).



What the Father Does with Unfruitful Branches

- “Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away.”
- John uses the present tense of the verb: “Every branch not bearing.” It is not a branch which **never** bore fruit, but one who is **no longer** bearing fruit.
- Consider what Peter wrote to believers: “For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you **neither useless nor unfruitful** in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (II Pet. 1:8).
- “Unspeakably solemn is this: one who has been bought at such infinite cost, saved by such wondrous grace, may yet, in this world, fall into a barren and unprofitable state, and thus fail to glorify God” (A.W. Pink).



A More Accurate Translation

- “Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, **He lifts up.**”
- What does the Father lift up? Answer: **Procumbent growth.**
- The word *procumbent* is from the classical Latin *prōcumbere* meaning “to lean forward, to fall forward, to sink down” (OED).
- In botany, it is used of a plant, leaf, or stem which is lying flat on the ground, especially without rooting; it trails or grows along the ground.
- Procumbent growth in vineyards means that in some varieties, the vines tends to grow toward the vineyard floor.
- The Father does not allow us to trail or creep along the ground.



Wisdom from an Experienced Vineyard Owner

“New branches have a natural tendency to trail down and grow along the ground,” the vineyard owner explained to Bruce Wilkinson. “But they don’t bear fruit down there. When branches grow along the ground, the leaves get coated in dust. When it rains, they get muddy and mildewed. The branch becomes sick and useless.”

“What do you do?” Bruce asked. “Cut it off and throw it away?”

“Oh, no!” he exclaimed. “The branch is much too valuable for that. We go through the vineyard with a bucket of water looking for those branches. We lift them up and wash them off. Then we wrap them around the trellis or tie them up. Pretty soon they’re thriving.”

Wisdom from a Vineyard Owner

“For the Christian, sin is like dirt covering the grape leaves. Air and light can’t get in. The branch languishes, and no fruit develops. How does our Vinedresser lift us up from mud and misery? How does He move our branch from barren to beautiful so we can start filling up our basket?”



Dr. Bruce Wilkinson

The Secrets of the Vine

How God Lifts Us Up

- “If your life consistently bears no fruit, God will intervene to discipline you” (Wilkinson).
- “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reproved by Him; for those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives...For they (our earthly fathers) disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful (painful); yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness” (Heb. 12:5-11).