

# True Vine

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] starting again to the Gospel of John in chapter 15 you can read at verse 1 John 15 and at verse 1 I am the true vine and my father is the husband of mine and he branching me that bear not fruit he take it away and I branch that bear fruit he perturbed it that he may bring forth more fruit and so on from a reading in the Old Testament we can see that this passage finds its background in a crisis in the experience of the Old Testament church and the crisis was one of their own making they had great privileges from God they had sent away these privileges and the judgment of God had fallen upon them and we read that song in Isaiah chapter 5 with regard to the people of God in the Old Testament as God's vine whom he had planted and whom he had nourished and whom he had given every opportunity to to bear forth fruit and yet she did not turn out to be what she was meant to be when we look at this chapter itself in the Gospel of John it's in the middle of another crisis and there's a crisis going to be in the experience of the Son of God but at this stage the crisis is in the experience of the disciples and the crisis is quite simple he has told them he is going to leave them and they cannot get their heads around that they have given up everything for him and they have followed him and now he is telling them not only that he is going to go away but he is telling them that it is for their benefit that he should go away it's a crisis in their faith and Jesus speaks in these chapters to the disciples at this time of crisis in whose life and in theirs and he does so in order to help them understand the cross in the light of what he is saying and to understand what he is saying in the light of the cross and in all of these chapters we could see that he is focusing in particular on the understanding of their relationship with him and whose relationship with them and if they understand these relationships then everything will come together and they will be able to rejoice in his death in his departure and also in his resurrection and I want us to look at these two verses tonight in that context and to remind ourselves as we do so that we are in a place where Jesus wants you and me to understand a relationship with him for an encouragement and for learning and for development as those who are the children of God what does Jesus say about grace and the relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ what we know is first of all that we see in the passage a Christ-centered grace and we see that in the proclamation that Jesus makes it's one more of his great

I am sayings he designates himself in this particular way he uses the name of the Lord in the Old Testament as God spoke to Moses in the burning bush he takes that name to himself this is who he is this is who he is conscious of being and he says I am the true vine now we have as I said we saw the way of which in the Old Testament the children of God the people of God they were the vine in the Old Testament they were God's vine in Psalm 80 we see the way in which the vine was brought together God brought the vine out of Egypt he rooted the vine with his right hand and planted it prepared a room for it and we see that the development of the people of God in the Old Testament coming out of Egypt planted in the promised land with the glory of him Sinai following them God is with them and God is with them in his promises and he does everything possible for them and he describes them as those in Isaiah 5 who are his beloved people this is my beloved vineyard he placed it on that fruitful hill he was looking for it to develop he fixed it around he put a tower in it he put a winepress in it everything was there for it to develop and to bear fruit but alas we saw that instead of grapes there were thorns we saw that because of the judgment of God everything that was put in place to protect this vine was taken away it was burnt down there was nothing left of the vine that was the people of God and what is to happen to God's purposes and plans what is to happen to the church of God what is going to happen to the covenant people of God and here is the answer that Jesus has for his disciples

I am the true I and true perhaps in two ways through first of all in the sense of of being the genuine vine of being the real vine that was only foreshadowed in what happened the way God worked in

Israel he is the true genuine vine he is the reality of what what God was speaking about here he is now the present of the son of God and also in the sense that he is true in the sense of being faithful and reliable and what a contrast that makes it to be with regard to the people of God in the Old Testament they were unfaithful they were unreliable they failed to follow the covenant God and here is Jesus now I am a true vine I am the reliable one I am filled with steadfast love

I am going to follow this covenant God I am going to do everything that the people of God did not do he is going to stand where they stood he is going to follow their footsteps in the sense of being called to obey and to serve God but he is going to be so different to them he is going to be loyal he is going to be faithful and because of that he will bear the fruit that they did not bear I am the true vine and when we think of the grace that is Christ sent we cannot think of the true vine without the gardener my father is the husband man he is the one who cultivates the garden he is the one who prepares the place for the vine to be planted he is the person who is going to like the proverb and the way which Jesus speaks in the parable of the person who the householder went to plant a vineyard so God is the husband man who is going to plant this vine in the vineyard and we see the way in which

[ 8 : 19 ] God speaks with regard to the vine in the Old Testament in Sanavariti the vineyard which thy own right hand has planted as a mound that same branch which for yourself you have made strong the hand of God that was working in the experience of the church of God in the Old Testament to plant it in that place of opportunity is now the hand of God that is working in the experience of the son of God to prepare him to make him the vine to plant him in this world and to plant him in the garden which is this world to plant him here where the original vine failed to flourish and I hear Jesus say in Hebrews chapter 10 with regard to himself and to his own coming you have no desire in sacrifice or in peace offerings but you have prepared a body for me my father is the husband man he takes his son the word which was with God the word which was

God and the word which became flesh and tabernacled amongst us and here we see the child Jesus in the manger the handiwork of God planting the vine in this world in the womb of the virgin may emerging from from that source which had behind it the life of God himself the Holy Spirit will come upon you the power of the most high will overshadow you and that holy child that will be born from you will be the son of God my father is the husband man and Jesus never lost sight from the moment that he had consciousness he never lost sight of the fact that God had sent him into the world that he was the handiwork of God that he was planted in the midst of humankind in all of its darkness and in all of the darkness of this world that he was planted there by God Christ centred grace listen the marvellous thing the way in which the son of God comes into the world in that way and John the Baptist sees him and he says with regard him behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world the vine is here to bear fruit and Jesus himself recognising exactly who he is and why he is here unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies it remains alone but little dies there shall harvest it will bear much fruit and Jesus goes to the cross and he is deeply conscious of the fact that he is under the hand of God and in the hand of God and in the time of his crisis on the cross he will know once more that it is the will of the Lord to crush it he has taken him the grief the vine of God the handiwork of God the fruit of the person who is crushed on Calvary's cross the cup that the father has given to me will I not drink it let me go let us go from here the time is at hand and he goes willingly and lovingly to Calvary's cross bearing your sin and mine in obedience to the will of the father with love for God and love for you and for me and he does so because he is the true genuine reliable vine of God the handiwork of God and I hear the prophet

Isaiah saying with regard to this vine when you make a soul a nothing for sin what's he going to do he's going to see a harvest he will see of the travel of the labour of his soul and be satisfied there's a harvest coming from the death and the cross of Christ and the resurrection of Christ it's a harvest that's going to spread through the whole world as the vine which is Jesus Christ spreads its branches and that picture of beauty that we see in Isaiah 5 and in Sam number 80 spreading its boughs spreading its leaves and growing to overshadow the whole earth and reaching to the end of the sea and to the end of the river the limitations of the world as it was in these days but a vine that's going to bear fruit to the ends of the earth and don't we not tonight worship

God because of the marvel of his gracious intervention and the beauty of his handiwork and the marvel of Jesus Christ the marvel of his life and all of his beauty the marvel of his death and all of his darkness and all of his trauma and suffering and anxiety the marvel of the glory and the power

of the resurrection that there is life emerging from death and that he is the source of life for the church of God and what was going to fail because the people of God failed in the Old Testament now has a marvellous beginning and everything depends not on the poor sinners of the Old Testament or the poor sinners of the New Testament but that the church of God is life it's development depends entirely on what

[ 14 : 49 ] God has done Christ and when Jesus sits at God's right hand in Acts chapter 2 and he receives from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit and he pours him into the world there is the beginning of the movement the development of the good of Christ's church that grows out from him that has its social pin that has its roots firmly fixed in the one who is nothing less than God himself the son of God Christ centred grace Christ secondly we see that the grace that is Christ centred is Christ connecting why are we here tonight because there is a connection because something that God has done has connected you and

I with the work that he has done and achieved in the cross and resurrection of Jesus and that's how Jesus uses this whole idea of the vine to illustrate and to show to us that union that exists between himself and his people in verse five I am the vine you are the branches every branch in me they are not branches lying on the ground disconnected from the life of the vine the people of God the disciples of Jesus and the church of Jesus are those who are in Christ they are the branches who are so united to him and so as we think of this vine spreading its branches to cover the whole earth we see the way in which there are shoots and young branches emerging in this vine here in your own heart and here in this island and here in different parts of the world the branches are growing out of

Christ and it's a marvel that when you have no connection with Christ and no desire to be connected to him that suddenly by the grace of God you become a person that grows out of Christ that finds your roots in Christ and Paul in Romans he spoke about the way in which branches are grafted in to the olive thing grafted in in the sense of inserting something a branch making a cutting or a puncture in such a way as to slot the branch in the marvel of the grace of God that you and I belong to as wild branches in the world that by the spirit of God and by the power of Jesus Christ that he takes us in this mysterious way that he connects us to the vine which is Jesus that he cuts us into the vine which is full of life and which is rooted in God which has the life of God in it and if you want to continue that whole metaphor that whole picture you can take it all of the way to the cross itself where it pushed aside and there flowed out water and blood because he was already dead and here we are engrafted into the personal Christ as he is the crucified Christ so that Paul is able to say I am crucified with Christ nevertheless I live and there is the marvel of the union that the God who has brought Jesus into the world in order to build this church is the God who in his kindness is

God is doing that marvel of grace and connecting people to Jesus to God who says with regard to the church in the promises of Isaiah chapter 60 that the church is the branch of my planting and the work of my hands what a man that is what do you think of yourself tonight what do you think of yourself as a child of God should you not marvel at what you are that the finger of God is over the whole of your life and that he has worked in such a way as to connect you to himself so that you are not what you were but you are now in Christ and that when he sees you he sees not you on your own but he sees you through the lens or through the beauty of the sun that's a remarkable change another cause for for worshipping this great

[ 20 : 38 ] God who has this Christ connecting grace so that in a marvellous way tonight no matter where we are in the face of the earth in God's eyes we are in Christ that's the umbrella that's where he sees us united together in that beautiful way and Paul speaks in 1 Corinthians 15 as in Adam all die because of sin so in Christ all are made alive and divine you are the branches and that Christ connecting grace is something that gives the sinner now a status and the presence of God already he says in verse 3 now you are clean to the word which

I have spoken to you and of course he's not speaking about being clean outwardly of physically washing themselves Jesus spoke in that marvellous way in John 13 when he went to wash the disciples feet he's not speaking about cleanliness in that sense but he is speaking about cleanliness that qualifies us to be part of the church of God and to be part of the service of God and to be part of the church of God in the sense that we have access into the presence of God I hear God saying to Moses in Exodus chapter 19 sanctify the people set them apart let them wash their clothes and wash themselves and be ready on the third day why because the Lord is going to come down into

Zion there's going to be a marvellous encounter between God and Israel and for that they have to wash themselves they have to prepare themselves they have to be pure and set apart for this God and theologians will speak to us about sanctification and definitive sanctification and all these things but here is the status because we're in Christ we go from being unclean to being clean we now have access to God we're able to stand before him as the writer says in Hebrews 10 we have confidence to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus we have that assurance that we can draw near to God with a pure clean heart and no matter tonight how much you are aware of your uncleanness don't let that cloud your thinking and don't let it erase from your mind and your thought process the very fact that you are set apart in Christ and because of that you're in the place where God meets what you and you meet with God and nothing that you are will stop that from happening because it all takes place in the oppression of Jesus Christ who is the true vine and in whom you are a branch and Jesus did say that in John chapter 13 the way Peter was resisting until it dawned on Jesus made it clear to him Peter said you shall never wash my feet horror of horror is Jesus going to wash his feet Jesus answered him if I wash you not you have no part with me Jesus washes and makes clean and gives that status of standing before God and once that takes place that means an ongoing process Peter says Lord not my feet only the dots are my hands and my head and Jesus said him he that is washed may not say to wash his feet but is clean every foot and he are clean but not all we already had the bath of being cleansed by the blood of Jesus in our union with him and yes there is a need for another process but nothing can be fresh the status that you have tonight as someone who has been prepared by God for you to live in communion with God and to live with the life that there is in Jesus in your soul in your own heart in such a way that you will have a sense of his power and of his life running as it were through your spiritual veins in such a way as to give you that energy that you have but perhaps don't realise it and how often that's the case how often we dishonour [26:16] God by not acknowledging what God has done and how often we dishonour him by blaming him for the way that we are when we should have the faith to learn from his word to understand what he has done for us no where are resources about ■■■ there are not■■■ to remember the death of the Lord and we have every reason to do so if we understand anything about these relationships we have every reason to rejoice, to give thanks and to worship this great God and thirdly there is the Christ conforming place once the sinner is in Christ there is huge potential potential for development potential for growth potential to grow into the beauty of Christ himself and that's what God ensures for this husbandman, this gardener that's what he ensures in verse 2 every branch in me that beareth not fruit the branches in the vine are expected naturally to bear fruit if they are in the vine and the vine is the true vine the genuine vine we expect the branches to bear fruit and if we want to trace the source of that the very root of this vine finds its root in God itself the root that sustains the vine that sustains the branches is found in God the life of God in the soul of the sinner through this marvellous connection in Jesus and of course we expect the life of God the spirit of God in your heart and in my heart to bear fruit and the Jesus who says that he says it because he understands the whole idea he understands the picture of the vine and he understands the way in which the vine is to develop and grow the branches need the trellis need the framework which ensures that the branches are pointy upwards towards the sun which ensure that the branches are together on the trellis in such a way as to guarantee the fruit bearing of the vine there's a process there's a support structure there's that necessary way which God works in order to ensure the fruit bearing of the vine and of course in the church of Christ in the world there is that support structure in order for us to share in the life of the vine

God has given to us the people of God he has given to us the word of God he has given to us prayer he has given to us communion with one another he has given to us all of these privileges in his church in the world they are there for our good they are the trellis and as long as we're part of the church in that meaningful active way we are bearing fruit in his vine the fruit of the spirit is love and joy and peace and so on it's that energy of God that keeps breaking into the open and showing itself in our eyes every branch and meal that bears fruit fruit and the husband guarantees that and guarantees it so that all of the support structures that they work for of good every branch that bear a fruit he purges it that it may bring forth more fruit there is the sense of a painful engagement on the part of the gardener as he lays his hand upon the branches of the vine there is a process where things that are not helpful must be cut away there is a process through which growth in the wrong direction must be removed there is the handiwork of God to ensure that this branch and these

branches and this vine will develop in the right way and sometimes the vine has to take so serious an action that at times there will be nothing left on the vine but the branch but the bare stock that's how serious the intervention has to be but the intervention has to be there in order to secure the potential of this branch to bear fruit and so it is in the life of the child of God the God whose fingerprint is upon our lives when we in that day of grace united us to Jesus is the God whose finger is upon our lives as our father is in heaven to sometimes bring that painful process to commence and to work out in an experience the writer to the Hebrew speaks of the way which whom the Lord loves he chases he scourges every son it's a picture of pain but it's a picture of fatherly involvement in the life of the children of God for their own good and in the Old Testament that whole idea of chastisement God was doing it in three ways he was doing it through his word regularly he was doing it through his wonders and he was doing it through providence and his people were constantly corrected and chastised under his word and so are we as the people of God every time the word is preached it is the chastisement of God it's the finger of God cutting away the things that shouldn't be there speaking into our consciences and driving us away from our sin giving us to realise what's wrong and when that is working we go away and there lies and conform to the image of the son there is that development and that growth sometimes he does it with wonderful works and nothing more wonderful than seeing the cross of Jesus constantly in the lives of the children of God that in itself is the motivation at the hand of God to cut away the things that shouldn't be there but when that fails as David found out to his cost and as many other Old Testament saints found out to the cost when the first two fail God intervenes in the pains of providence and we know at different levels all of this how the hand of God comes unexpectedly in the words of C.S. Lewis time comes when God shouts to us in our pain and he will silence us in such a way that we will know this is the hand of God and when he does that he will show us why the hand of God it's coming this way and the pain will point me to the problem and that's God's purpose in doing it and the pain will point me to the problem so that it will bring me to the solution and here I am going along life's way as a child of God and everything seems to be okay with me and I'm enjoying life and things seem to be so straightforward but without realising it I've lost sight of who I am and where I'm going and I've lost sight of the Christ who has saved me and I ought to be devoted to him and suddenly there comes the hand of God it stops me and it makes me think it makes me look and I don't need to ask who is that

[ 36 : 09 ] I don't need to ask whether there is God in that providence because he is right in it with his providence and is there for my good and that very place and that very process is the point at which God is ensuring me that I will grow that I will leave my sin behind and that I will overcome my weaknesses and my love for any sin that has cropped in my life that I hate that very sin because it's interfering with the life of God and the fruit of that blessing of God in my life and as the writer to Hebrews says no chastening for the moment for the present is joyous but grievous but afterwards it yields peaceable fruits of righteousness to those who have exercised their power and God is doing it so that we might share in his worries that conformity do we thank God for our pain do we lack pain we don't lack the painful problems do we thank God for it we thank

God for ensuring that we don't carry on wandering in our own paths in the world but that he keeps correcting us and keeps realigning us and that he keeps our focus he purges every branch that perish because you shall be holy for I am holy and that conforming grace in closing is also one that reconnects and we thank God for his connecting grace and for his conforming grace we thank him for his reconnecting grace there are times in life when we feel as if everything has broken down and here

Jesus speaks in verse 2 every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away and the number of times that John uses this word taketh away more or less regularly his use of it means to take up and to carry tonight as we think of the reconnecting grace of God we think of the way in which the God that we read of in Psalm number 113 is the God who comes down to the branches that are falling down to the ground and who have fallen away from the brightness of the sun and who have fallen away from the tiles of the people of

God the branch that has stopped bearing fruit God himself comes down and he lifts it up and he lifts it up in the line so that it's once more pointed to the sun he lifts it up so that it's connected to the pillars and along with the branches once more and so that it can grow into the other branches of the vine and bear fruit of the other branches and isn't it marvelous that that's what God does to his people he is the one who will not break the bruised blood he is the one who will not quench the

faintly burning wheat he is the gentle Jesus the gracious

God whose heart never loses people and we are all of us here tonight because of all of these things and at some point in life we will have found ourselves falling down to the ground and we will have discovered there because we thought there was no way back for us we will have discovered there the arm of God and the hand of God and lifting us up and pointing us once more to the son of God the son of righteousness to the Lord Jesus and focusing our hearts once more on all that he has done and he does so by restoring our focus upon him he restores us to the communion of the people of God and so the branches are once more working together and growing together in the support structure of the vine and so that's where we are tonight he lifts up those that are falling down he ensures that those are going through will be for more through it and he ensures that we are all looking to Jesus the author the finishing of the faith before the joy set before endure the cross despising shame so let's go forward to remember his death bearing all of these things in mind the manner of his coming down the manner of God connecting us with him and uniting us to him the manner of God's fingerprint on our lives every day to ensure that the potential for holiness in every child of

[ 42 : 25 ] God will be realised because God is working and he will bring his own work on until the day of Jesus Christ may God bless his word his spirit he hin he