

The “I am” sayings of Jesus. 7 - “I am the True Vine” - John chapter 15, verses 1- 10

I remember taking a Family Service when the subject was “The Vine and the Branches”. During coffee time after the Service there were a number of youngsters running around with “vine” branches which I had used as visual aids and shouting “no good if detached!” At least they had got the message!

The word translated as “abide” or “remain” occurs 10 times (in the Greek text) in these 10 verses. The Lord Jesus was insistent on the need to “abide” in him and to bear fruit. A branch cut off from the vine, its source of life, soon withers and dies and bears no fruit.

As we begin the study this week it is worth reading the whole of John, chapter 15.

The true vine and the branches John chapter 15, verses 1 – 3:- Israel was pictured as a vine in a number of passages in the Old Testament: e.g. Psalm 80, verses 8 – 13; Isaiah chapter 5, verses 1 – 7; Jeremiah chapter 2, verse 21 etc. Most of these references speak of the failure of the people of God to fulfil his purpose, that in Isaiah 5 being a good example. *The vineyard of the Lord Almighty is the house of Israel . . . And He looked for justice (‘Mishpat’) but behold, bloodshed (‘Mispak’); for righteousness (‘Zedakah’), but behold a cry (‘Ze-akah’).* (Isaiah 5, verse 7). Our Lord Jesus Christ was the “true vine”. His Heavenly Father fulfils the same role as He did in the Old Testament – He is the “vinedresser, pruning, cleansing and encouraging growth in His people. The disciples (remember that Judas had already left - John chapter 13, verse 30) had been made clean -grafted in- by believing the teaching of Jesus.

The need to “abide – remain” in the Lord Jesus Christ for effective ministry, verses 4 – 6:-

From the vine comes life; from the branches, as a result comes fruit.

Our effectiveness as Christians depends on our continuing relationship with Jesus Christ our Saviour and our Redeemer. If we dwell in him and he dwells in us by the Holy Spirit we can be used by him as workers in his harvest. For an example of this see Acts chapter 11, verses 20 – 24. As individuals, as we abide in Christ we bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, see Galatians chapter 5, verses 22 – 23. These should be present in the lives of all believers. Verse 6, is itself a warning that, as Christians, we must continue to “abide” in him, otherwise we become useless and our lives will not be able to bear fruit.

If we “abide” in Jesus we seek to do his will, and obeying his words we can bear much fruit, verses 7 – 8:-

Those who are the branches of the “True Vine” in this world the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. Obedience to his teaching gives rise to the proper kind of praying. If we pray “in His name” and according to his will, the Father will honour that prayer and answer! Our lives and works should all be to the glory of God the Father. (see Ephesians chapter 2, verse 10).

The love of Christ for us is like the love of God the Father for the Son, verses 9 – 10:- This tremendous love is ours in Christ - “if”! Reading these verses should make us question our continuing obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ. If we are abiding in him and he in us then our obedience to his commandments are out of love for him. Remember that God has promised to bring to completion the good work which He began in us. (Philippians chapter 1, verse 6). Providing we remain in Christ and he in us we will bear fruit for him. In all things we should give him the glory because it is through him working in us that we are enabled to bear fruit!

It passeth knowledge, that dear love of Thine,
My Jesus, Saviour!—yet this soul of mine
Would of that love, in all its depth and length,
Its height and breadth, and everlasting strength
Know more and more.

It passeth telling, that dear love of Thine,
My Jesus, Saviour!—yet these lips of mine
Would fain proclaim to sinners far and near
A love which can remove all guilty fear,
And love beget.

Mary Shekleton, 1883

from Ephesians chapter 3, verses 18-19