

Intro: The Gospel Coalition Trip; The Grand Story of God

1. God's Vine is to Produce His Fruit for His Glory

- a. This image of vine was dominant in Jewish culture
 - i. One of the most dominant figures in Jerusalem was a golden vine with a cluster of grapes as big as a man
 - ii. In the first Jewish revolt against Rome in AD 60-70 the first coins minted had a vine and branches on them
 - iii. Israel was God's vine planted in the world to bear fruit
- b. Israel was chosen not for her own well-being, but rather to bear the fruit of God's life within the world: righteousness, covenant love, and truth
 - i. She was to bear such a contagious worship of YHWH that the nations would stream into the city of God to dwell, to abide
 - ii. This life, that of dwelling with and praising YHWH, was supposed to dominate the people
- c. But she was not fulfilling that purpose for which she was created
 - i. Isaiah 5
 1. Israel was supposed to produce good fruit
 2. But it produced only worthless grapes
 - ii. Hosea
 1. Success bred instead self-reliant religion
 - a. Trusting in the temporal "saviors" rather than the Eternal Savior
 - i. Job or employer rather than God
 - ii. Love of spouse rather than God
 - iii. Honor of achievement rather than God
 - b. Sacrifices of self-effort
 - c. Expectations of success due to our offerings
 - i. Fruit increased = altars increased
 - ii. Country improved = pillars (religious) improved
 2. Israel became as sinful as Sodom and Gomorrah who were judged by God
 - a. Sin of Gibeah (v9)
 - b. Judges 19 – where Israel became Sodom and Gomorrah
 - c. Evil beget more evil
 - i. Double iniquity of the horrors of evil done to the woman and the evil of the priests response (cutting her body into 12 pieces and sending them throughout the land to incite vengeance)
 - ii. Civil war between tribes

d. Psalm 80

- i. Israel is seen as the vine planted by God from Egypt, who He cared for and cultivated
- ii. But it has been destroyed and the Psalmist cries out for God to restore it

2. Now is the Time to Seek the LORD

a. Instruction: Sow to righteousness

- i. Plant among yourselves that which is right
- ii. What is right?
 1. That which is in accordance with the Righteous One
 - a. Consistent with His character, His Promises, and His Word
 2. The vine that produces Godly fruit is the vine that comes from the seed of God

b. Instruction: Reap in accordance with kindness

- i. When what is sown is in accordance with God's character, His works, and His Word, then covenant love is upon them
 1. There is biblical love that is conditional (there is also unconditional love) upon our obedience ("keep yourselves in the love of God" Jude 1:21)
 2. Like children who receive the wrath of their father from getting caught disobeying, there is unconditional love of the father, but it is not experienced as love but as wrath
- ii. "kindness" is the covenantal word, chesed, meant to remind the Israelites of the covenant that they made with the LORD to be His people and He their God (Deut 8:18-20) and that He would punish them if they strayed after other gods

c. Instruction: Till according to your untilled ground

- i. This is the key!
- ii. Break up your hardened heart and return to ME!
 1. This is the point of turning away from trusting in our idols or our pseudo-saviors and repenting (breaking up ground), coming to Him
 2. There is a promise attached to this repentance

d. Promise: that He might come and rain righteousness upon you

- i. Do all the things listed above *until* He comes near and until He rains righteousness upon you
- ii. This righteousness from God comes from God, not from man
 1. The word for "rain" is properly "throw, or cast upon"
 2. This righteousness is the goal, the promise, the purpose

3. It is God's righteousness that satisfies God and that brings the water of life to produce the fruit. Without it, there is only famine and dried up fruitless vines
- e. Psalm 80:17-18
 - i. Restore it by the True Vine, the "son of man" and "son of your right hand" and "give us life"

3. How Do We Produce the Fruit of God's Life for God's Glory?

- a. Jesus is the True Vine
 - i. Where Israel (and we) failed, God came Himself to succeed
 - ii. Jesus is the True Vine, planted in the world to bring the life of God and the fruit that exemplifies His glory
 1. And wonder upon wonders, He has called you and I to be branches in that Vine through whom He bears fruit to the Father
 2. Much fruit (6 times)
- b. We abide in the True Vine (John 15)
 - i. By abiding in Christ, we produce the fruit of the Source
 1. 1 John 2:6 – "whoever says he abides in Him ought to walk in the same way He walked."
 - a. The life, character, deeds of Jesus are produced in the branches because the vine is Jesus
 - i. Grape vines bear grapes, apples to apples
 - ii. The Jesus vine bears Jesus
 - b. The Father expects the branches to bear fruit that is from the vine
 2. By abiding in Christ we produce fruit *that exemplifies the glory of Christ*
 - ii. "if my words abide in you..."
 1. Abiding means to have Him take root in your life, functionally believing His words as the words of life and truth
 - a. It is more than merely memorizing Scripture, for even Satan memorizes Scripture, the Pharisees were well-versed in the memorization of Scripture, yet His Word did not "abide"
 - i. John 5:38 – "You do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He has sent."
 - ii. Satan – see Matthew 4
 - b. It is to believe, not merely in head knowledge, but deep within the soul to become the controlling functional reality of one's life
 - i. I believe they are TRUE and REAL and ETERNAL

- ii. HE is the SOURCE of all of my goodness, my success, and my dreams
 - 2. His words, planted deep within us, take root and produce the fruit of righteousness, life, and truth
 - a. John 6:63 – “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is of no avail. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.”
 - i. The flesh is that which desires to depend upon our own strength, our own power, our own performance
 - ii. The flesh produces nothing of value, only worthless grapes
 - iii. The Spirit produces the fruit of Jesus are life (both source and giving forth)
 - b. John 6:68 – “...You have the words of eternal life.”
 - c. 2 Cor 9:10 – “He...will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness.”
 - 3. His words become life to us when we believe them
 - a. John 5:24 – “He who hears my word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life...”
- iii. It is not in the attempts to produce fruit that we actually produce fruit, but in the abiding in the vine that produces much fruit.
 - 1. We grow in righteousness, love, and truth by abiding, dwelling, feasting upon the Vine.
 - 2. Seeing, Knowing, Adoring, Submitting to Jesus as the Author and Sustainer of Life, the Giver and the Gift just as Jesus loved the Father and responded in same.
 - 3. “Apart from Me you can do nothing” (v5)
 - a. Cf. John 5:19, 30 “I can do nothing on my own. I can only do what I see the Father doing. Whatever He does, I do likewise.” (Jesus)
 - b. We are called to completely submit to and trust Jesus just as He does the Father.
- c. We merely plow up our fallow ground
 - i. Repent: turn away from trusting in our own achievements, performance, worth, or self-assessments
 - ii. To break up our fallow ground is to repent of our own righteousness so that divine righteousness is sown by the Spirit of God
 - 1. This righteousness is rained upon us from above (God’s)
 - 2. See Romans 3:21-26; 2 Corinthians 5:21
 - 3. This righteousness comes through union with Christ (in the Vine)
- d. We simply ABIDE
 - i. Rest in His provision and His work and His power

- ii. Find our source of strength and sustenance by dwelling with Him, dining with Him, completely leaning upon Him
 - iii. If plowing up our fallow ground is to turn away from trusting in ourselves, then its opposite is to abide in Christ and His life
- e. Recognize this: the Father is working in you and upon you to bear much fruit
 - i. He “prunes” the branches that do bear fruit so that they will bear more fruit
 - 1. “Prunes” is the *katharizo*, from where we get the word “cathartic”
 - 2. Means “to clean”
 - 3. The Father “cleanses” all those branches so they bear more and more fruit
 - a. 1 John 1:9
 - ii. This is the Father’s doing, not the branches’ doings
 - 1. Humility
 - 2. Gratitude
 - 3. Worship and Hope
 - iii. The Father is FOR YOU!
 - 1. Sometimes we think that God is simply always disappointed in us, shaking His head in frustration and dissatisfaction in our failures
 - 2. But God is for us, cleansing us, transforming us, rejoicing over us (not in our failures, but in our position as His children) and rejoicing over our successes
 - a. Matt Chandler’s example of baby walking

Conclusion:

Just as Israel failed to be the vine that God desired, so we lived shriveled lives that did not bear the fruit of His glory. But praise be to God that He sent the True Vine, the gloriously perfect Vine in whom there is no fault, in whom there is the sap of life flowing through to produce His fruit through branches among all the nations. He was crushed and shriveled under the searing heat of God’s wrath so that you and I could be grafted into His risen and resurrected life. Now, risen from the dead, He pours out His Spirit of life into all who abide in Him. Let us abide in Him, entrusting ourselves to His work in humble gratitude and faithful obedience to His Word. Not because of mere duty, but because of joyful faith. His words are true and in them we find life. We desire Him because He has redeemed us in such a tremendously glorious way.

And in Him the glory of God spreads farther and more beautifully throughout the entire world as those from every nation and tongue and tribe are brought in to the redemption of God, being transferred from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of His beloved Son by faith. This Vine is spreading. Let us abide, resting and remaining, in Him. Let us trust in His efficacious atoning work on the cross, in His risen life to intercede for us, in His Spirit poured out upon us to produce His fruit. Break up your fallow ground today and sow with a view to the righteousness of Christ so that all might know of the beauty of the Vine as He produces great deeds of faith and righteousness through us for His renown.

Benediction:

2 Thessalonians 1:11-12