

The Parable of the Vine



The color coding method

-  The Father
-  The Son
-  The Holy Spirit
-  The Church
-  Good things that we have
-  Negative things

No perfect translation, only a perfect Gospel

A common idea in Christianity I have come across is that the first translation of the Bible in a language is perfect. The King James Version is considered a perfect translation in the English speaking world. However, if you compare translations in different languages, every once in a while, you find inconsistencies. I compared the Bible of Bucharest (1688) with the King James Bible (1611), and found such an inconsistency in the Parable of the Vine.

Words can have a core meaning as well as other figurative meanings. The context is the one to dictate which meaning is the most appropriate. At the same time, we should always go back to the Gospel of our salvation when trying to understand scripture. If a verse goes against the eternal security we have in Christ, then it is acceptable to check the different meanings of the original Greek word. e-Sword is an excellent resource for this purpose and I have used it in the following study of the Vine Parable. I also researched vine training to help clarify for city raised people, like myself, who never had to care for a vine.

John 6:37-40

Joh 6:37 All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

Joh 6:38 For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.

Joh 6:39 And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.

Joh 6:40 And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

Grace lost in translation

The Parable of the Vine paints the picture of the Christian life. We are in Christ as branches on a vine and He is in us as our source of eternal life, while our Father cares for us, helping us bring forth fruit.

Unfortunately, some translations stray away from Grace and present Christ as a hard taskmaster. In the second verse, the Greek word "aero" is translated in the King James Bible as "taketh away" while the Bible of Bucharest translates as "lifts up". I am not saying any translation in full is better than another but in this case, the interpretation the Bible of Bucharest supports our eternal security in Christ.

John 15

Joh 15:1 I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

Joh 15:2 Every branch in me that beareth not fruit taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

Joh 15:3 Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

Joh 15:4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it be in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

Joh 15:5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abides in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

Joh 15:6 If a man abides not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

Joh 15:7 If ye abide in me, and my words are in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

he taketh away

αἶρω

airō

ah'ee-ro

A primary verb; **to lift**; by implication to take up or away; figuratively to raise (the voice), keep in suspense (the mind); specifically to sail away (that is, weigh anchor); by Hebraism (compare [H5375]) to expiate sin: - away with, bear (up), carry, lift up, loose, make to doubt, put away, remove, take (away, up).

abide

μένω

menō

men'-o

A primary verb; to stay (in a given place, state, relation or expectancy): - abide, continue, **dwell**, endure, **be present**, remain, **stand**, tarry (for), X thine own.

Accordingly, I use “he lifts up” in the second verse because it agrees with our eternal security (and with vine training practices as I will explain in the following chapter). I would also use “dwell”, “be in” or “stand” instead of “abide”, because otherwise the 6th verse makes it appear that departing from Christ would cause a believer lose their salvation.

John 15

Joh 15:1 I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

Exposition

Joh 15:2 Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he lifts up: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

How our Father cares for the Church

Joh 15:3 Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

The Gospel is the beginning of the Christian life

Joh 15:4 Dwell in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it be in the vine; no more can ye, except ye dwell in me.

We dwell in Christ as members of His Body (branches in the vine)
Christ dwells in us as the life giving Spirit, our source of eternal life and it is through Him that we bring fruit

Joh 15:5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that dwells in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

Joh 15:6 If a man dwells not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

Unsaved people

Joh 15:7 If ye dwell in me, and my words are in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

The Gospel is also the remaining of the Christian life.

Understanding the parable through vine training

Another reason I prefer “lifts up” to “taketh away” is that it reflects actual vine training practices. Vine training has been around for millenia. One of the oldest ways of promoting fruit growth is elevating the branches above the ground. Vines require plenty of sunlight to be happy. Elevating vines on a pole (or even a tree!) is a way of promoting photosynthesis. The first brach doesn’t get cut off, but rather the Husbandman elevates it above the ground to aid in fruit bearing.

The second branch is the one that bears fruit. This one the Husbandman prunes (removes some leaves) so there is more space for fruit and to direct more nutrients go to the fruits, making them more flavorful.

In dealing with phisical vines, you don’t want to have too many fruits, as there will not be enough nutrients to be distributed and the fruits will be sour. Our nutrients are the Gospel of our salvation and our new identity in Christ. By constanly filling ourselves with the word we first received, we gain more and more Christ and are able to bear more fruit. Fruit bearing is not a matter of Law keeping or struggling in the flesh, it is a matter of constantly consuming and filling ourselves with Christ.

The third branches described are not part of the vine and represent nonbelievers. They become dry because they are not connected to the source of eternal life, which is Christ, and therefore are thrown in the fire. This is why I prefer “dwell”, “stand” and “be in” to “abide” and “remain”. Salvation is a matter of being or not being in the vine at the time of the harvest. You can’t walk out of your salvation because branches don’t have legs. We have already seen that branches who don’t bring forth fruit are being cared for rather than cut out.

Lastly, vines are plants. They grow slowly. If you track the growth of a vine day after day, it might look like it’s not growing at all. Changes are more likely to be seen from year

5 to year.

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up

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He that dwells in me, and
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The Christian life is all Christ

In the previous chapter, I touched on fruit bearing and how it's all through Christ with Christ. Christ is the entirety of our Christian life. Law-keeping does not have a place in the Christian life because the Law simply describes Christ. Somebody could write a list of 1000 characteristics of yours and people who would try to imitate you based on that list would still not be you. When we fill ourselves with Christ, by reaffirming our identity in Him, we get the real deal.

We start our Christian life by believing the Gospel of our salvation. That's when we are made clean and grafted into the vine (we start dwelling in Christ). That's when we received Christ as our eternal life (he began indwelling in us).

Joh 15:3 Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.

The rest of our Christian life is us receiving Christ as our food, comfort, satisfaction. Unlike a real vine, we are lucky that we can always ask for more food.

Joh 15:7 If ye dwell in me, and my words are in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

