

Christ, the True Vine

by Paul Washer

God's purpose in us is to bear fruit and stand in His presence clean and without spot, and we must seek Him with joy and focus on things above where Christ is seated.

Duration: 58:26

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Luke 6:20-23, John 15, Romans 3:19-20

Topics: "True Vine"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on John 15 and explores the purpose and means by which God achieves His glory through believers. The text emphasizes that God has called believers to bear fruit and stand in His presence without spot. The sermon highlights that no human or human institution can provide spiritual life, and that persecution actually strengthens the church. The preacher also discusses the importance of finding strength and power in Christ rather than in external events or circumstances.

Transcript

I'll be preaching from John 15, the text that Brother Anthony read. This sermon I prepared actually for a meeting, a series of meetings in Rhode Island two weeks ago. And it was supposed to be the first sermon.

It ended up being all five. So I don't think I'll get through my notes today unless you're willing to stay for about ten hours. Now the reason why it took so long to get through this text is that it's like looking through a keyhole.

I want you to think about this. It's like looking through a keyhole into an entire universe. Because in this text is summed up exactly the purpose and the means that God is using to achieve that purpose in you for His own glory.

That God has called you to bear fruit. And you can bear fruit. You will bear fruit.

He has called you to stand in His presence clean and without spot. Jesus Christ did not shed His blood for you so that the very first thing you see when you walk into glory is a scowl on His face because of all your failures. I want you... well, let me put it this way.

As a servant of Christ, I will not have you condemned. As a representative of Jesus Christ, I will not tolerate a believer walking in condemnation. Why? Because of what Christ has done.

There is a true humility in Christianity. A true humility. There is a true recognition of our sin.

A true brokenness. A true repentance. But it is not unto death.

It is not unto defeat. It does not drive a believer to wallowing in some mire. Those who claim to know Christ and bear no fruit are unconverted.

I'm not speaking of them. I'm speaking to you. Many of you who've come to know Christ, your lives have been changed and you are bearing fruit, but when you look in the mirror, you feel so dark.

You feel like such a shadow. You feel so dirty. And there is a voice.

There is always a voice. Taking everything you think about yourself and using it to drive you away from Christ. Any voice that under any circumstance drives you away from Jesus Christ is the voice of the deceiver.

Every aspect of your life, every victory and every failure has an intention and that is to drive you harder to Christ. You're walking in victory? Then know that it's not your own. Let it be a reminder to you that it would drive you to Jesus Christ.

You're sensing a defeat? You've been swallowed up in a besetting sin once again? Do not stay there. Let that drive you to Christ. Because you have been bought with a price in order to bear fruit.

Now I say bear fruit instead of saying do great things. Do great things has become a cliché in western evangelism. It means all sorts of unbiblical things for the most part.

God has not called you probably to do great things as the world sees it or called you to do great things as most evangelicals would see it today. God has called you to bear fruit that when He walks by your tree, it is a beautiful aroma. It pleases Him.

And that's really all you're concerned about, isn't it? Pleasing Him. And if you're pleasing to Him, what more do you need? If He loves the fruit on your tree, let every other person turn up their nose and walk away. It should not diminish your joy.

It's for Him. It's for Him. Now when we look at this text, He says in verse 1 of chapter 15, I am the true vine.

Now, I'm not going to get finished with this. I can see that right now. I am the true vine.

Here comes these statements, these I am statements. Why are they so important? Well, I know that those I am statements identify Him with deity, identify Him with the Yahweh statements, I am who I am. But let's put it a little bit lower on the shelf.

Why is Jesus saying I am so important? Because you're not. Because I am not. You see, every time you look in the mirror of God's Word, if you're an honest man, if you're an honest woman, you have to sit there and go, I am not.

Paul even said it in Philippians chapter 3. He had not attained it. He had not come to perfection. He had not come to be exactly like Christ.

Even in His own life, to the very end, there were some deficiencies. He was not. But that's okay when He is.

When Christ is. That I am is another one of those keyholes, isn't it? You look through it. You think it's just two tiny words.

But then all of a sudden it opens up into the full revelation of who Christ is. See, one of the things that I believe that Anthony has been seeking to do over this last year is to get you to look through a keyhole. Because there's really only one thing that can fill you.

Can feed your hunger. And it's not a thing. It's a person.

It's Christ. Let me put it this way, in the way the Puritans used to speak. Since you have been converted, you have become a creature.

Good language. You have become a creature of such a sublime nature that you can no longer be satisfied with anything other than God. And if you can be satisfied with something other than God, you ought to tremble because that may be an evidence that you are not converted.

You see, when you begin to understand this, it changes everything. You go, my life's not complete. Of course it's not.

You live in a fallen world. My job doesn't fulfill me. And if it could, you'd be lost.

The ministry doesn't fill me up. It doesn't feed my hunger. Moses had the biggest ministry any man's ever had, and yet he said, show me your glory even if it kill me, because ministry's not enough.

You say, well, my wife doesn't complete me. If she can, you're an unbeliever. You see, you've been recreated.

And the only One who can satisfy you is Christ. And that's why it is useless to go to these other things. But let me let you in on something about the Christian life.

Because sanctification is progressive, you will spend the greater part of your life chasing other things. And those other things will leave you empty. And that is why the why of trials.

That is the why of winds stronger than you can handle. They're all intended to blow you back to the one keyhole. To Christ.

To looking at Him. He says, I am the true vine. As opposed to what? You see, we have an opposition here.

Now, if He just said, I am a vine, the world wouldn't have a problem with Him. Even if He said, I am the vine. But He says, I am the true vine.

And here He is drawing a contrast. You see that? A great contrast. Jesus is telling us there's a bunch of vines out there that aren't true.

You have found many of them, haven't you? You may be, even right now, tangled up in a whole bunch of them. Always looking for fruit. Always looking for life.

Always looking for meaning. You will not find it in any vine except Jesus Christ. And that's what's so dangerous about Western evangelicalism.

They're giving you more than Jesus. They're giving you entertainment. They're giving you seminars.

They're teaching you how to do things right. How to get your best life now. All sorts of things so that you think you're being filled, but you're being filled with things that cannot fill.

You're being deceived. You need to be left alone. You need to be given Christ.

And you need to learn to feed from Him. He says, I am the true vine. Now, in the earlier part of the service, in the prayer service, Anthony read from Isaiah 5. We could also read from Psalms 80, because there's something very important that we see there.

When Jesus says, I am the true vine, His Jewish listeners were understanding something that maybe we wouldn't understand. You see, in Isaiah, we are told that God went to Egypt and He brought out a vine. That vine was Israel.

And He did absolutely everything imaginable. For Israel to prosper as a vine. But in the end, we see in Isaiah and we see in Psalms 80, in the end, what happens? The vine is destroyed.

And it's destroyed not just by opposing forces, but the vine is destroyed by God. And there's some things that we can learn. Many things, but we're not going to touch them today.

There are some things that we can learn from this. Number one, there is no human or human institution that will ever be able to supply your need of spiritual life. Israel was the best of the best.

So many times people misjudge the whole biblical presentation of the nation of Israel, especially when we get to Romans chapter 3. Let me just give you an example. Let me turn there real quick. You don't have to turn there.

But just let me read a text to you. Now, we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God. Now, you read that and you think it's talking about you.

Well, not directly. Directly, it's talking about Israel. Israel was the one under the law.

And what it's basically saying is this. Israel was a people called out by God. They were given the oracles of God, the revelations of God, the temple service, everything else from God, everything God could do.

He gave it to them and they were under the law. They weren't like us vicious pagan Gentiles. They were under the law and they failed in every part of it.

So what is he saying? Gentiles look at the best of the best and they failed. Now put your hand over your mouth because you would do even worse. You see, there is no human institution.

There is no man that you can lean on. No person, no thing of this human fabric that is going to fill you, that's going to be able to provide life. Only Jesus Christ and Him alone.

He's the true vine. That's what He calls Himself here. But also, He's the bread of life.

Listen to what Jesus said. Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life. Right there is enough to stop any accusation against the deity of Christ.

Jesus Christ is God in the flesh or He just blasphemed with that statement. Do you hear what He's saying? People say, well, I'm not sure there's a lot of references in the Bible to Christ's deity. Here's one right here.

You just need to understand. Any man who stands up and says, I am the bread of life, is taking the place of God. And in this case, it is a man claiming deity.

And rightfully so, because He is. He's the bread. Believers.

I always hear believers. I'm so hungry. I'm so thirsty.

You go into a supposed Christian bookstore today. I mean, it's absolutely, it'll make you weep. Most of the most of the bookstores are filled with so-called Christian pop psychology.

It's not even good psychology. It's not even good, wrong psychology. You go into a Christian bookstore.

Most of the books are written about how empty we are, how thirsty we are. And then someone's contrived some new system of Christian thought in order to fill you. You know, Jesus was never empty.

He was never thirsty in the sense of inwardly. Why? Because He knew God. As a man, He knew God, not just because He was deity, but because He knew God and He had always set Himself to do the Father's will.

Why are Christians so empty? And why will all those silly little books never fill you? Because you need more than a book. You need more than four points or five ways or ten steps. You need Christ.

You need Christ. He's the bread of life. He's the fountain of living water.

Now, listen to this. Now, on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out saying, if anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Every time you're thirsty, where do you run? Usually to someone else to complain how thirsty you are.

Or maybe even you run to Scripture to try to find a verse. Or maybe you look for a certain aspect of propositional truth in systematic theology. That's not necessarily bad, but it can be.

Why? Because if you run to Scripture and stop there, you've missed the entire point of Scripture. The point of Scripture is to send you on to Christ in a correct fashion that you might feed from Him. Do you not understand all those texts, my beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, that speak to you about Him being jealous about you? Being zealous with regard to His love for you? Don't you understand that? He really is jealous.

He really will not allow anything to compete with Him. That's why Jesus says, blessed are the pure in heart. The idea there is an unalloyed heart.

The idea is, blessed are those who have no competing loyalties within them, who belong wholly unto God. You see, that's the reason for this tearing of the fabric in your life, this being tossed to and fro. You may think it's the world and you may think it's Satan and they might be instruments, but behind it all, it is God tearing you and shifting you and sifting you until you come to realize, maybe battered and sore, that He's

the only one.

He's it. He's it. One of the reasons why I respect what's being done here through the elders is they could give you a lot more things that they're not giving you to tantalize your flesh and to draw in a lot more people.

They're seeking to give you Christ. And that's what you need. The question is, is that what you want? Christ.

He's the fountain of living water. Now, in the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out saying, if anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the Scripture said, from his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.

I don't know how to describe you. A giver up or too soon, if that's a word. Could that be a word? A giver up or too soon? I think I've just made a word.

I know this about you. You're a giver up or too soon because so am I. You don't fight. You quit.

I mean, it's just like the king cried out in the Old Testament saying, we're at the point of giving birth and yet there is no strength for the baby to be born. Look at this promise. He says from your innermost being will flow rivers of living water.

He's not talking about some age to come after some age to come. He is talking about now. And so what should you do when you notice that there is no sense of living water flowing in and out of you? Do not be condemned.

Do not drop your head. Do not run to the dark. Do not run away from God.

Just say at this moment, it is not the reality it should be in my life. I will run boldly to Christ with the biggest bucket I can find. And I will wait and wait and wait and wait.

I will give him no peace until he fills me. You see, that's very hard for us, isn't it? We live in a day of microwaves and instant coffee and instant this and instant that. We have no sense of what it means to tarry and wait upon the promises of God to grab a hold of the horns of the altar.

Bless me to fight like Jacob, to fight like Jacob. I will not let you go. See, you can't grow.

Well, I guess you could. But in most churches today, this type of language has no place at all. No one wants this.

They just want, I did my thing on Sunday. Leave me alone. Now I can go play.

I've earned it. Brothers and sisters in Christ, don't, don't, don't ever give up. Take him at his word and wrestle with him.

Be like a watchman on the walls of Jerusalem. God loves this kind of boldness. I will give you no peace until these things become growing realities in my life.

Growing realities. But listen to me. Do this with joy.

I've heard people say this. I've heard people say to me, you know, Brother Paul, the church began in the upper room agonizing that the Spirit would fall upon them and the church will probably die in America around the fellowship table stuffing itself. Well, the second part may be true, but the first part's not true.

My dear friend, those apostles and the early disciples were not in the upper room agonizing in prayer. Why would they be agonizing? Jesus promised, didn't he? They weren't agonizing, trying to wrench something out of his hand as though he was a miserly sovereign who said, I'll only give you this if you afflict yourself. No, they were waiting in that upper room, waiting and waiting many days in one mind, waiting, but waiting joyfully.

He had promised. Had he ever lied to them? And see what the devil will do. He will intervene in your life and you'll hear a sermon like this and you'll get excited about wanting more from Christ and you'll go there for a half an hour and nothing will happen and you'll just think it's impossible or something's obviously wrong with you.

You become disgruntled. No, joyfully wait. And when all the horde of hell comes to you and says, you fool, why do you wait at his door? He promised.

You fool, you're a beggar. Why should he open the door? Because he died. I will wait.

I will seek him. I will go to his word. I will be with him in prayer.

I will wait upon the Lord because he will not grant me less than what I ask for. He will only grant me greater than what I can even conceive in my mind. Now, when a lot of these TV preachers say that, they're talking about houses and cars.

What do we care about houses and cars? Talking about the presence of Christ, him using us, his pleasure. Do you see that? Oh, brothers and sisters, there's so much for you, so much, so much to those who will enter in, to those who will fight, to those who will tarry, to those who will study his word and pray. Now, I want to talk for a moment about the counterfeit cisterns.

One of the great hindrances in our lives are counterfeit cisterns, things that are brought into our life that hold no water, cannot quench our thirst. They're like mirages that will dry up. They're everywhere.

They're everywhere. Even good things that are a gift from God can be nothing but mirages if seen outside of his presence and his will. Let me give you a couple.

Children, marriage, a good job. They can all be temptations. To do what? Turn your eyes from Jesus.

Blessings, health. I'm not saying these things are bad. These things are wonderful.

I have some of them and I'm glad they can be temptations. That is why you will see, and Jowett points this out very good in his little book, School of Calvary, it seems that it requires a greater degree of suffering to bring a man to a greater degree of the presence of Christ because we are somewhat hard headed and calloused. And the good things, even the gifts can become things that we think of more than the giver.

Listen to Jeremiah chapter two, verse 11 through 13. Has a nation changed gods when they were not gods? But my people have changed their glory for that which does not profit. Be appalled, O heavens, at this and shudder.

Be very desolate, declares the Lord, for my people have committed two evils. They have forsaken me, the fountain of living water, to hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water. Now, even though this appears in Jeremiah in this exact form only here, we see this tendency always, don't we? We see it in the garden.

We see it even in God dealing with Egypt, showing his mighty power. We see it in Israel. We see it in the wilderness.

We see it in the land of Canaan. We see it in the days of the prophets. We see it in our own lives.

We have a tendency to seek out things other than God. And I think that the reason for that is the reason why we have the admonition in the book of Colossians chapter three, that we need to keep focusing on things above where Christ is seated. The problem is, even though we have been renewed in our spirit, we have been regenerated.

We are still physical beings who long to touch, long to see with the eyes. I am convinced that the men and women who have made the most progress in the Christian life have been those who have seen more of the other world. Now, I don't necessarily mean dreams or visions.

I just mean that they have a deeper sense of what is to come. They've caught the apocalyptic vision of the prophets of the Old Testament that saw lambs lying down with lions. They see in the book of Revelation a crystal clear water.

They join with Ezekiel in looking at that new temple. They see things that are to come. Moses was the same way.

He could leave the riches of what? Of Egypt. Why? Because he saw him who was unseen. And that's why it is so important not only to saturate your mind in the Word of God.

That is essential. But I want to tell you something. You can have ninety nine percent clean water, but you put a drop of filth in there and it'll kill you.

My dear friend, especially you young people, you will never catch a vision of God while you're filling yourself up with much of what even Western Christianity says is acceptable today as far as what you see with your eyes. I'm telling you, if you want a vision of God, you need to get the screen cleared. I am just astounded at what Christians, supposedly evangelicals, watch today.

The things that they will view. You know, I can't even look at people on my Twitter account. Sometimes I think, well, who's following me? I'll look and I'm thinking, well, I need to start preaching the gospel because obviously some of them are lost.

Look at the way they dress. You see, we need to be a holy people. So that we might truly know him, be filled with him, have a greater vision of him.

But we're always, always in danger of these false cisterns. Always. I've seen so many young men hot after God.

I mean, just following God with everything. And then all of a sudden, a young lady appears. There's nothing wrong with that.

A young lady appeared in my life, but distracts him from the things of God. Young man's in college, going to do great things. I remember so many were going to be missionaries, missionaries, missionaries.

And when it came the last year, I found out most of my friends had gone for interviews in all these big companies. I didn't go to any because I thought we're all going to go to China and die for Christ. And I'm like, what? Yeah, well, Paul, you know, you've got to be realistic.

I mean, you've gone a little wild here. I mean, we said those things, and then all of a sudden the things just start grabbing them. Cars, homes, homeowner associations.

Now, I'm not saying everyone's called into the ministry. But what I am saying is if you begin to pursue Christ, what will happen is there will come detour after detour after detour, things that come into your life from which you will attempt to draw joy, strength and life. And in the end, they will be as bitter as gall in your mouth and in your belly.

Be aware, not just of the things that are obviously bad, but be aware of the things that are even good and gifts from God. In Peru, we have a saying, Salvo me de las aguas mansas, de las aguas bravas me salvo yo. What it means is save me from the calm waters.

I'll save myself from the rough waters. And what it means is I can recognize the rough waters and I can prepare for them. It's the smooth waters that are dangerous, that are deceptive.

We want to go hard after Christ. Now, I want to look at some of these really quick before we come to an end. Like I said, I'm not even going to get through the introduction today.

But I just want to look at some common counterfeit cisterns. First of all, religious ritual. When Jesus was coming down probably from the upper room through the Kidron Valley, it's possible that he could see the front because I've been through there.

And when you turn around, you can look at the temple mount there in the Kidron Valley. It's way up there, but you can see it. And it's possible that from where he was standing, you could see the upper gate of the temple.

And over it, Herod had created this magnificent golden vine that represented the nation of Israel. It's really possible that Jesus looked at that vine and he said, no, I am the true vine. All the ritual of the temple, all the things that you see there, all the sacrifices, everything, that is not the true vine.

It's not your tradition. It's not your heritage. It's not the fact that you're linked to someone who knew me.

You must be united to me, not ritual, not religion, not tradition, not heritage. You must be linked to me. Now, I want us to put that in a kind of a contemporary perspective.

A false cistern can be the congregation. The congregation. You know, it's amazing.

I'll go to church websites and I'll click on a website and what's most amazing to me, you see all these absolutely beautiful people smiling at you. Now, I know that Jesus said they will know you are my disciples by your love for one another. But as you look at the website, there's something very troubling in many of these websites.

What is it? You see beautiful faces of beautiful people willing to serve you, affirm you and meet your felt needs. And you have to go all the way through that website to find something about Jesus. It's the congregation, the congregation promoting the congregation.

No, no. If you go to a congregation because the congregation is meeting all your needs, there is some good in that. There is something very, very distorted.

It must be Christ. If we are to be known in this community, it is not how wonderful of a congregation we are. It is how wonderful a Savior he is.

But a bunch of smiling, affirming people that will take you as you are. That's not scandalous. What is scandalous is the Savior we just sang about who died for the sins of men.

Congregations can be a false cistern. Also, the church event itself. As I travel around and I'm in different churches and sometimes really big churches, and I see the preparation these people make for Sunday.

Oh, I'm not talking about several hours of prayer. I'm talking about lights, music, greeters. Chairs have to be a certain way.

Screens have to be a certain way. Everything is ready. Everything is choreographed.

Everything is done. It is like being in Madison Square Gardens. And people come in and they get wrapped up in the event.

And their strength comes from the events. That is wrong. It must come from Christ.

That is why oftentimes you see believers who have so much of God, who are rotting away in prison with absolutely nothing but Jesus Christ. One saint who spent many, many years in an Eastern European prison. They kept him in there winters and summers.

No heat. No air conditioning. Freezing to death in the snow.

Burning up in the summers. Kept him in there oftentimes without clothes. Wouldn't let him even sleep in a normal bed.

They made him sleep on the floor because they said he was a dog. Someone asked him a question. What was it like to be there for so many years? He said a 13-year honeymoon with Jesus Christ.

You see that? Now, we ought to be a congregation that is loving. Biblically loving. We ought to adorn the gospel with our lives.

But people should not be coming to this church because of the church. Or the event. But because of Jesus Christ.

Another cistern that's very, very common. Not so much now, but back in the 80s and in the 70s. Most some of you weren't even born.

And that was discipleship and quiet time. You had your quiet time. You had your quiet time.

You've done it, man. You've got your quiet time. You're walking with God.

It's all about your quiet time. You read your chapter. You prayed your prayer.

You went down through the list. Maybe worked to a workbook. Your quiet time.

You did your thing. No. Now, we have always said, the pastors here, I myself, in personal conversations, we need to be alone with the Lord.

We need to study the Word. We need to pray. But you organize this thing into some sort of a mechanical quiet time that you can check off your task list.

My friend, you're missing the point. You're totally missing the point. No.

Another cistern. And honestly, you could dwell an hour on each one of these points. But another false cistern.

And this is one of the most destructive elements in the church today and in contemporary Western evangelicalism. Worldly wisdom, philosophy and traditions of men. And you say, Brother Paul, how does this apply? Well, first of all, many people today have not even heard of what we call a normative or regulative principle.

And what that means is just what can you do in a church service? Now, I disagree with people who try to strictly fight back and forth on this matter. Some people splitting hairs. But the whole point of this debate is simply this.

How are we supposed to have church? Can we just do what we think is right in our own eyes or should we follow the dictates of Scripture? Worship. Should we just do what is most appealing to contemporary man or should we go to the dictates of Scripture? Everything about church. Are we just left out there on our own to do what we want or the latest psychological fad that is passing through Christendom? Or does the Scriptures teach us what we are to do? And the Bible is clear on the matter.

Paul told Timothy, in case I don't come, I'm writing to you about all these things so you will know how to conduct yourself in the household of God. That we're not left to the baptized secular psychology. We are not left to study contemporary trends and then see how we ought to change the church of Jesus Christ in order to fit the desires of carnal man.

You see that the church today is filled with this type of thing. Let me give you another one. Churches that almost seem entirely built around.

And again, I have no problem with these ministries. Some of them are wonderful ministries, but if they get out of order, they're wrong. And that is, well, financial peace or marriage.

Why are you in this church? It fixed my marriage, keeps my marriage healthy. Well, I learned some great principles here about how to conduct my life and my business and this and that and everything else. My dear friend, may all that rot with you.

That's idolatry. Now, a person who comes to know Christ and is known by him, a person who has been transformed. Yes, these areas of their life will be transformed, but I do not want Jesus Christ riding in on the coattail of some plan of how to get you solvent economically.

Or even to fix your marriage. It is all about Christ to the point that we can say even the good things are rots compared to him. It's all about Christ.

And I'll tell you this. I'm not speaking as a prophet, but more as a student of history. You mark my words and it won't be long when persecution begins in this country.

And it won't be long and it strips everything from you. And most of the evangelical church goes totally apostate and little groups are left. To be berated, then you will see that Christ is enough when you have nothing else but Christ.

Another is supernatural experiences. We're praying for revival. We're praying for the spirit of God to fall down upon this place.

And we believe that the spirit of God can so manifest himself here that it could lay us low, not praising God for a new Mercedes, but lay us low with his holiness, with his love. We believe God can manifest himself. But I want to tell you something.

Some people spend their entire life jumping from one experience to another. Their desire, their cistern is experience. I know some people who started out well and have gone astray because all they talk about now is revival.

They want revival, revival, revival, revival. I don't want revival. I want Christ.

And if we have Christ, there will be a revival. There will be revival. Another.

And I want you to listen to me very carefully, especially those of you who are parents, especially with children. There is a cistern that is false and deadly. And I see it growing and I see it growing, especially among homeschoolers.

And this is what it is. Moralism. And I want to read to you something I've written written here.

Those who delight in the ethics, rules and principles of Scripture. Their Christianity is primarily a list of whys, do's and don'ts. They react to the demise of Western culture by trying to rebuild its foundations, the foundations of founding fathers.

By means of teaching ethics and oftentimes they'll quote Deuteronomy six. Teach these things when you go out of your house, you come into your house, when you sit down, when you stand up and they miss the entire point of Deuteronomy six. What are they supposed to be teaching? Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.

You see, principles are not enough. Not even biblical principles can save your soul. Biblical principles cannot change your inner man.

What we're talking about here is looking unto Christ to be saved and continue looking unto Christ. And yes, study the Scriptures, study the principles, learn the wisdom of Proverbs and all these things. But all these things point to the master and the true changer of men.

I would rather have my household, well, as it is, rather wild, but children knowing there is a passion for Christ there. Yes, taking holiness seriously. Yes, raising up our children in fear and admonition of the Lord.

But yes, letting them see a real passion for Christ. These Scriptures talk about Him. These Scriptures send us to Him because an honest man, when he looks at all those principles and Proverbs and everywhere else and he sees he doesn't match up, where is he to go? He must go to Christ, must go to Christ.

You know, it is so cliché, but it is so true. It is just all about a person. That's why I always tell people Christianity is not necessarily an ethical or moralistic religion.

If you think it is, you're wrong. Now, it has a moral, it has a defined ethic, but Christianity is not principally a moralistic religion. It is a relational religion.

It's Him being bound to Him. Let's go on. Another horrible cistern.

Powerful preachers are some Christian celebrity. Oh, they're everywhere. Yeah, the Charismatics have their men in white coats that are throwing people to the ground.

The Evangelicals, they have their men with their big buildings and budgets and baptisms. And the Reform guys have their men with really big heads filled with a lot of knowledge. And the smartest guy gets to preach in all the conferences.

One of the men I admire most on this planet is Dr. John Piper. I love him dearly. I respect him, but I cringe and I know he would.

No, he wouldn't cringe, he would vomit. When I hear somebody say, man, I got to turn on my CD player and I got to get me some Piper. I'm just not going to be strong today.

Get you some Piper. What is man? A nose, one nose, one nose full of breath at a time. That's all man is according to Isaiah.

Now, we surely in the last 10 years, God has raised up some wonderful Bible teachers. Just recently having the men here that we had, Richard Owen Roberts and John Snyder, just these people that have walked with God for so many years and things. It's wonderful.

But my dear friend, they must drive you to Christ. They must drive you to Christ. There are no great men of God.

There's just pitiful, tiny, weak, faithless men of a great and merciful God. That's all that there is. It goes on, another is knowledge.

The Scriptures as mere propositional truth. Something you possess and control. You have mastered the Scriptures.

A young man told me one time, Brother Paul, I just want to master the Scriptures. I said, what? He said, I want to master the Scriptures. I said, son, I want the Scriptures to master me.

You'll never master Scriptures with that head of yours, that heart of yours. You're going to master the Scriptures. Let the Master master you.

And just knowledge, knowledge, knowledge, knowledge, knowledge. And oh, my dear friend, knowledge is so essential. There is no divorce in biblical Christianity between the mind and the heart as contemporary

evangelicalism might present it.

No, absolutely not. But it is not about just how much you know. It's not.

It's about Him. It's about Him. The last one is a lay out of saying.

Self-reliance or self-direction born out of Western materialism and a can-do spirit. Pragmatism and church growth. And what do I mean by that? My dear friend, is it not true? Many of you who've been Christians more than a few years, you'll testify to this.

You find some little country church somewhere, just kind of a normal church, some sincere people in it. Love the Lord. And then one day someone who's really beloved in the church falls sick with a fatal disease.

Isn't it amazing the revival that breaks out in that little church? People going to their knees, crying out to God. Why? Because they've finally been put in a situation where they can't do anything. They're Americans.

They can do anything. We can fix it. We can make it right.

Can-do spirit. And then all of a sudden, a strong wind comes that no one can take care of. What Reefy Cheap told Eustace when he was a dragon.

Chronicles of Narnia. He said Eustace was a little boy who was turned into a dragon. It's a long story.

And Reefy Cheap, who's a talking mouse, comes up to him and says, Eustace, extraordinary things happen to extraordinary people. What he's saying is this. In order to become that extraordinary person, you must go through extraordinary things and oftentimes very, very hard.

And in Christianity, that is true. The closest I have seen revival in the United States is when a church gets to a point where church growth isn't going to help. Where no one can help and they only have God.

This is why Jesus says this. Well, let me read this first. Because you say I am rich and have become wealthy and have need of nothing.

And you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. You see, there is a sense in which just being able to meet together without fear of persecution hurts us. I remember in Peru during the war when it was so horrible.

Stand for a couple hours in line just to get a bag of rice. People dead all over the place. Bombs blowing up.

Twenty six thousand people were killed. Our windows of our church blown out. Death threats.

Everything you could imagine. Fellowship in that congregation was so sweet. I remember a thing had come against me put out by one of the terrorist groups that they were going to kill me.

I realized that I could not leave because if I left, I couldn't come back. If the pastors had to suffer it, I had to suffer it. And one day after hiding out for two weeks in this small room, I decided I'm going to church.

And one of the brothers found out about it. I said, I'm going to church and I'm going to preach. I said, I did not come here to hide in a room.

And so I'm walking down through there, walking down the sidewalk and four brothers meet me. And then as we're walking, one of them standing here, one of them standing here, one of them standing here, one of them standing here. And they keep getting in my way.

The little Peruvians. I'm like, what are you doing? I can't walk. Get out of my way.

They said, no. I said, why? They said, we know what's been said. It'll have to hit one of us before it hits you.

You're our pastor. That type of thing is born out of need. That is why in the book of Luke and Luke does something very strange here, because when we get to the Beatitudes in Matthew, Matthew says, blessed are the poor in spirit.

Luke says, blessed are the poor. And don't just think he forgot in spirit. He's trying to do something here using the words of Christ inspired of the Holy Spirit.

Christ was meaning something different. The whole idea is, my dear friend, there's a sense in which when poverty comes upon you, when you have nothing. No one can help you but Christ.

Then Christ becomes precious to you. Persecution has never hurt the church, only prosperity. As a matter of fact, I believe it was what Brother Roberts was teaching, that the very thing that we most try to avoid is the very thing that most makes us holy.

Now, these are false cisterns and we need to be very careful of them. And in order the next part of this, it goes on for about two hours. Let me condense it in about three minutes.

It's this. He is the vine and the father is the vine dresser. Now, the vine provides power and life.

The vine dresser provides direction. He shapes and molds. He makes that vine go where he wants it to go.

And here's the cycle of the Christian life. When you look through that keyhole of John 15, here it is. You have been united with Christ.

He is the vine. You are the branch. But here is where the agricultural metaphor kind of doesn't apply.

Branches do not have to keep abiding. But you are told to abide. And that is this.

As a branch, you have a tendency to distract yourself from Christ. And in distracting yourself from Christ, you lose all purpose and all power. The vine dresser, the father, in his providence, he is working everything to push you back to the vine.

And so you come to the vine and the sap, the divine sap, the Holy Spirit, the life of the vine flows into you. But living in the place we do and still being not totally redeemed, we still have a body of flesh. We have a tendency to be distracted.

And in being distracted, we lose our purpose. We lose the life. And the father, in his providential work, is pushing us back to the vine.

Everything in your life that is shadow, everything in your life that is weakness, everything in your life that is sin, do not allow that thing that's in your life, that sifting to cause you to get over here and separate yourself even further from Christ. Every weakness, every shadow, every darkness is set to show you your weakness, your total inability to live the Christian life. And it is the father pushing you back to the Son, pushing you back to the Son.

This is why, again, that some of the believers that have been most fruitful since the ascension of Jesus Christ were people who experienced extraordinary difficulties, extraordinary problems or in themselves had extraordinary weakness. Why do we kick against the Scriptures and say that they say something they do not say? Let me give an example. I'm going to give you a word and then you just envision in your mind, what do you see when I give you this word? Samson.

You think of an Arnold Schwarzenegger, a Jewish Arnold Schwarzenegger. Well, if that was the case, then how is it that the Philistines didn't know where his power came from? He was probably just like an agricultural, rural agricultural guy in Peru, probably about this tall with really thin sinewy arms. Where does he get his strength? I don't care how many muscles you have.

You can't pull up the gate of a city, carry it on your back up a hill and throw it down. I don't know if anybody's ever told you that, but physiologically, it's impossible. He didn't do it by muscles.

He did it by the power of the Spirit. Paul the Apostle. I'm so tired of going to conferences on Paul the Apostle.

His mighty intellect, his this, his that. Everything they talk about is the very thing he doesn't talk about. He talks about his weakness.

When God made him weak, God turned him over so that he feared for his life every moment. He was basically all his life, Christian life, in the mouth of the lion. Why? So that his confidence wouldn't be in himself, but in He who raises the dead.

You know, Spurgeon, he's my favorite preacher. But boy, when a lot of these biographers get to heaven, Spurgeon's probably going to punch them. Because they talk about Spurgeon's intellect.

They talk about his great photographic memory and all these different things. Spurgeon would have talked about his weakness. Your weakness is a catalyst to push you to grab harder onto Christ so that you might be filled.

Let's pray. Father, I thank you for your word. Lord, I pray that you would use it as an encouragement in the life of your people.

Lord, most of all, that they would run, run, run, always run to you, never from you. In Jesus' name, amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/24/SID24228.mp3>
Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/paul-washer/christ-the-true-vine/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net