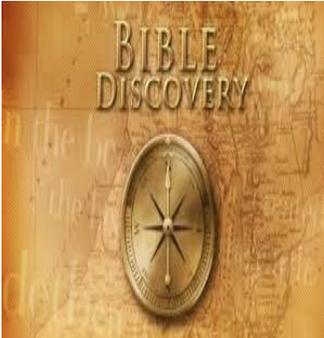


August 31, 2014

Psalm 80:7-19

Living in the Vine

“Restore us, O LORD God of hosts! Let your face shine, that we may be saved!” [vs. 3, 7 & 19]



Country artist, Sonny James had a country hit back the '60's with "*cling to me, clinging vine*". This old classic has a chorus which includes the lyrics... "***Cling to me clinging vine just to me clinging vine; How I wish those arms you're clinging to were mine; Please come back and cling to me clinging vine...***" While a cute song, it fails to measure up to what we're seeking in today's study of Psalm 80 - the message of *hope*, of *revival*, of *restoration*, from our Lord as the Vine – such songs fail to meet our need of finding real answers. *What about in real life?* Can we find a picture of the vine transplanted and giving new opportunities for life amid the sands of time called human history?

It's said that the currently famous wine regions of the world were started by Italian immigrants and the grape vines they brought with them. As early as the mid-1800's, millions of Italians immigrated to the U.S. and to Canada. Many brought grapevine cuttings with them. "We can't replicate the wines exactly," says Joe Benziger, owner & winemaker at California's Imagery Winery, "but we can plant them at higher altitude...just like they'd get in their home country." Transition is the name of the game but it begins with what has remained the same; with what was brought out of the land of their ancestors. A great lesson!

But no! That still does not reach the height of blessing found in the Psalmist's song of praise to the God who "*brought the vine out of Egypt; drove out the nations and planted it in the Promised Land.*" [vs. 8] We're drawn to Israel is as a vine which God found in Egypt, which with His own hand He resolved to transplant to a land He had chosen. In the midst of his own despair, the psalmist looks back to how good it was being led by the Lord, how wonderful to have been led by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire at night so the presence of the Lord was always visible before them, how great to ponder his nation planted by God Himself as a vine – first planted under the sun of Egypt, then in a land given them by God. But now the enemies had trampled that vine, the fences had been broken; the walls had been allowed to fall, the '*wild boar of the wood*' had trampled it down! A blight had come, not from heaven but from across the earth. The skies were still as blue, the showers as frequent yet there was despair in the land. We too can look at our situation in despair – (vs. 12-13). Yet no one feels the sadness as much as our Lord God. Can we pause & reflect on how we bring pain to the Lord our God when we chose to live desolate lives allowing our spiritual roots to be trampled & destroyed? Yes there are times when life does not go well – the rain falls on both the good & the bad, and so too the barren times come upon those who are in God & those who have wandered far from Him. O that we, like the Psalmist, would turn remembering that it is the Lord we need! May we call out during times of grief, sorrow & troubles seeking that the Lord God Almighty would look down from heaven and see our need. **He does see; He's always there!** What our calling out does is bring our attention back to that fact acknowledging God is present in **our** lives. Then we can see the hope that is in the vine, Jesus – the root God's right hand has planted, the Son He has raised up (vs. 17-18) and call on the Lord to restore us and make His face to shine upon us that we might be saved (vs. 19).

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Imagine yourself a first-century Jew. You recall these OT references hearing for the first time Jesus is the true vine, His people are the branches; hear the words later recorded by John, "*I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. I am the vine; you are the branches. If anyone remains in me and I in them, they will*

bear much fruit." [John 15:1, 5] During His earthly ministry, perhaps only steps from where Jesus spoke, Herod's Temple displayed a tremendous vine overlaid with gold, an estimated worth of \$12 million. Though Israel had been God's vine, it had become unproductive, so a new vine was established.

On one hand, you're quite familiar with comparing people to vines and vineyards – grapevines are a familiar sight in Palestine. The Old Testament frequently refers to Israel as being a vine God planted. You may have recited Psalm 80 in your morning prayers. In verses 8 & 9 the Psalmist says to God, *"You brought a vine out of Egypt; you drove out the nations and planted it. You cleared the ground for it; it took deep root and filled the land."* You'd know how God brought Israel out of Egypt and planted it in the Promised Land. You would have read the words of the Hebrew prophets who likened Israel to a vine or vineyard. You'd recall the words of Hosea who said that *"Israel was a luxuriant vine that yields its fruit"* [10:1]. Hosea meant that Israel increased in prosperity. But he went on to say that Israel's prosperity unfortunately led to increased idolatry: *"The more his fruit increased the more altars he built, as his land prospered, he adorned his sacred stones."* The prophet suggests further, *"Their heart is deceitful, and now they must bear their guilt."* [vs. 2] You'd have been haunted time with the words of God spoken to His people through Jeremiah: *"I planted you as a choice vine, from the purest stock. How then did you turn degenerate and become a wild vine?"* [2:21] You might recall how Ezekiel portrays Jerusalem as a useless vine *"because they have been unfaithful"* [Ezekiel 15:8]. You'd be reminded of his chilling words spoken against Judah: *"Therefore says the Lord God: Like the wood of the vine among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so I will give up the inhabitants of Jerusalem"* [15:6].



Today may we have the understanding enjoyed as a first-century Jew who was very familiar with the symbolic meaning of the vine and vineyard. In fact, in one of His parables Jesus expressly makes use of the vineyard as symbolism for Israel. Recorded at Mark 12:1-12 Jesus concludes by saying, *"the owner will destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others."* In response, the religious leaders wanted to arrest Jesus because *"they realized that he had told this parable against them."* The symbolism of a vineyard was not lost on them. Whenever the prophets, as well as Jesus, made reference to a vine or vineyard, they demonstrated the imminent judgment God would bring upon His disobedient people. In short, the image of the vine wouldn't bring positive images to mind. For this reason, the Gospel of John refers to Jesus not simply as a vine but more specifically as the true vine. The contrast is of Israel which became unfaithful and incurred the judgment of God to Jesus who remains faithful *truly* fulfilling the call to be the vine of God. No longer would mankind receive blessing through a covenant relationship to Israel, but through the new vine, who is Christ. With the coming of the New Covenant established **by** Christ, **in** Christ, mankind has to be intimately connected **to** Jesus Christ to receive spiritual life & bear fruit. The cry by the oppressed & downtrodden is to *"restore us, O LORD God of hosts! Let your face shine, that we may be saved!"* It's only the Lord, it's only through His strong right arm; it's only in Jesus as our vine that we can be saved, set free, lifted up, and confirmed in the Lord!

If we seek to understand the Vine planted by God, let us see clearly the true vine is Jesus. Let us place our hope entirely in Him knowing we will not be forgotten. Let us follow the Lord's own teaching to, *"Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me."* [John 15:4] A branch may lay apart from the vine for a little while and still demonstrate life – but its end is sure; it will be a dried out twig ready to be cast on the fire! The Lord has planted Christ as the perfect vine. All that the branch requires – life giving water & spiritual nutrients - comes to fulfillment in Christ. Perhaps that's why Paul said in Colossians 2:7 that Christians are *"rooted and built up in Him."*

And so let this be our call to revival to live in the vine which is Christ! Let us call for God's face to shine upon us – the face of His Son who saves us and gives us life in the vine. Let us recognize that the hand of God *"rests on the man at His right hand – the Son of Man which He has raised up"* [fm verse 18]. Let us remember it is Jesus, not Israel nor the Church that is the true vine. Jesus is the true vine who fulfilled God's seeding of a people onto Himself. The Church shares

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that destiny only as branches in the vine, but, the Church fulfills nothing without Christ. Apart from Christ the Church is no more than dead twigs cast into the fire.

It's amazing how many people claim to be Christians yet have other vines in their lives from which they seek their resources. I've prayed God would show if there are any vines other than Christ in my life. You too must ask, "*How many things do I attach myself to for my wellbeing?*" Some must answer their vine is their bank account, education, sexual relationships, popularity, skills, connections, possessions, or social relationships. Some people even think the church is their vine - they attach themselves to a system of religion. But their vine



**Attending
Church not
evidence of a vine-
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must be Jesus, not the possessions, or worldly pursuit, not the church. Merely attending church is not evidence of a vine-branch relationship. In fact, it can be a parasitic relationship--sometimes people are like parasites as they attend church only for

what it will do for them. Yet as we now understand, you as *a branch* must grow with Christ as your one and only vine. No Bible-study group or church can substitute for Jesus Christ as your sustenance for living. Only in Jesus Christ will fulfillment be ours; the fulfillment to which was looked for by the Psalmist, by Israel, and sought by each of us today, as the prophet Zechariah has promised, "*For the seed shall be prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things.*" [Zechariah 8: 12]

Israel was referred to as a degenerate vine. Through God's matchless contrast, Jesus Christ is the only vine, the true vine which is "*the same yesterday, and today, and forever*" [Hebrews 13:8]. This vine to which we would cling if we are to enjoy life everlasting, find revival, be restored, have the light of God upon us, & be saved for all eternity, set free from sin having them washed away, is Jesus. YES! Jesus is *the* vine that never withers--the kind of vine I want to be attached to forever, the kind of vine that will give this lowly branch life abundantly. When we cry out "*Restore us, O LORD God of hosts!*" let it be Jesus who we seek to shine upon us and let us know He is the only vine through which we will be saved! That is my cry, ***how about you; and you and you...?***



If we can borrow the words of Sonny James but call out to Jesus "*Cling to me, clinging vine*" then we will have life and have it abundantly and we will enjoy a life filled with God and will spend eternity with Him. Please give us a call at ***Mt Brydges Baptist Church*** if you would like to know this vine - JESUS! Pastor Dave can be reached at **1-519-317-8659** or by email office.mbbc@explornet.com.

May you be blessed this week! Praise the Lord!



**You must ask...
"How many other vines
do I attach myself to
for my wellbeing?"**

**You as a branch must
grow with Christ as your
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