

Gamma – Gospel of John

Book	Gospel of John
Topic	Grape Expectations: Fruitfulness
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Speaker	Dr Peter Ng

Today we are going to learn about how we actually grow as a Christian. We have a metaphor that's being used here and the first metaphor in our study is a metaphor of the vine. The other metaphor is friendship. When you become a Christian, the first thing that you need to look at is actually how you grow. It is a spiritual process, is a process that takes us and this is John 15 and Jesus says

John 15:1-3 (ESV) 1 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. 2 Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. 3 Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you.

Here Jesus is saying that he is the vine. Where is this background come from?

BACKGROUND:

Isaiah 5:1-7 Let me sing now for my well-beloved A song of my beloved concerning His vineyard. My well-beloved had a vineyard on a fertile hill. 2 He dug it all around, removed its stones, And planted it with the choicest vine. And He built a tower in the middle of it And also hewed out a wine vat in it;

Is 5:2b Then He expected it to produce good grapes, but it produced only worthless ones. it;

5 "So now let Me tell you what I am going to do to My vineyard: I will remove its hedge and it will be consumed; I will break down its wall and it will become trampled ground. 6 "I will lay it waste; It will not be pruned or hoed, But briars and thorns will come up. I will also charge the clouds to rain no rain on it."

God is going to destroy the vineyard. What is God looking for, the metaphor explained as:

Isaiah 5:7 (ESV) For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are his pleasant planting; and he looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; for righteousness, but behold, an outcry!

So, this is a metaphor. The owner of the vineyard is God and the vineyard is the people of Israel and the fruit that God is looking for is justice and righteousness. So the grapes are the metaphor for a change lifestyle, a lifestyle obedient to God to reflect God's justice and God righteousness. Instead, God got bloodshed and outcry.

Isaiah 5:8 (ESV) Woe to those who join house to house, who add field to field, until there is no more room, and you are made to dwell alone in the midst of the land.

God is describing in real estate term that when you will purchase all the land, then you will only have one house that's my house, I am staying in the middle of this house. This is called economic oppression.

*Isaiah 5:11-12 (ESV) Woe to those who rise early in the morning, that they may run after strong drink, who tarry late into the evening as wine inflames them!¹² They have lyre and harp, tambourine and flute and wine at their feasts, but they **do not regard the deeds of the Lord**, or see the **work of his hands**.*

A lot of Christians are like that.

Isaiah 5:18-19 (ESV) Woe to those who draw iniquity with cords of falsehood, who draw sin as with cart ropes,¹⁹ who say: "Let him be quick, let him speed his work that we may see it; let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw near, and let it come, that we may know it!"

So basically these people are full of lies and they challenge God to judge them.

Isaiah 5:20-23 (ESV) Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter

This is a perversion of value, where evil becomes right. God was really upset with the vine; my people are not worthy of it anymore then he waited a few thousands year then Jesus Christ came. When Jesus Christ comes, he says

John 15:1-3 (ESV) 1 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. 2 Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. 3 Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you.

In the context of Isaiah 5, last time this is what God did with human beings and they all produced crap, now Jesus is saying, I am the true vine that means that Jesus is the one that produces true righteousness, godliness, love and care, everything, all the fruit that God wants comes out of Jesus. So, the metaphors here are parallel. In Isaiah 5, men of Judah are the vine, the vinedresser is God. In John 15, the vinedresser is still God but Jesus is the vine, the metaphor shifts.

Fruit is the metaphor for the transformation of spiritual growth that pleases God

*John 15:1-3 (ESV) 1 "I am the **true vine**, and my **Father is the vinedresser**. 2 **Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away**, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. 3 Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you.*

The question is, every branch that does not bear fruit he takes away?

That means you have got a vine, you got branches and this branch no fruit one, a lot of leaves. He throws it away. It means that it looks like a vine, stuck to the vine but not one grape before. God will take that vine out. It means that, a Christian or disciple must be transformed otherwise you are not. So therefore if you are not bearing fruit, you can have a formal relationship with God. A formal relationship with God is like Christian written on my IC, going to church on Sunday but the rest I don't care. For this relationship the branch is in the vine but there is no fruit.

Jesus is saying that there is a difference between having a formal relationship with God and a vital relationship with God. A vital relationship with God must produce fruit. So he is not saying that you will lose your salvation but he is saying that if you are a Christian you will have a vital relationship, God will come in and change your life. If God doesn't change your life, you are not a Christian that is what he is saying.

Isaiah 5 :25 Therefore the anger of the Lord was kindled against his people, and he stretched out his hand against them and struck them, and the mountains quaked; and their corpses were as refuse in the midst of the streets.

*...every branch that does **bear fruit he prunes**, that it may bear more fruit.*

Here you actually have a situation where pruning is necessary for fruit. Pruning spiritually means that if you are showing some fruit that means your life is being transformed, you are a nicer person than you were used to be then God comes and bring suffering into your life, because God will then use that suffering He will grow more fruit, this is something that nobody wants to hear. Churches who preach prosperity gospel will never teach you this, but John is telling us that the secret to fruitfulness with God is actually suffering. This is an independent action by God. Pruning is actually a sign of love.

Hebrews 12:5-6 (ESV) My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him.6 For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives."

Discipline is for the people who are loved by God, so therefore pruning is a process. So the question is when you are actually suffering, it means that God is doing something in your life. He is actually producing more fruit.

God prunes these away

- Areas of selfishness
- Stubbornness
- Impulsiveness
- Anger-Temper
- Pride
- Insensitivity

Those things cannot be dealt with nicely. God uses trials to take these things away. It is an involuntary process, entirely within God's control.

Romans 8:28 (ESV) And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

God doesn't work primarily to bad things, He uses good and bad both, He will use whatever it takes but he will change you to be like him.

3. ABIDING IN JESUS IS NECESSARY FOR FRUIT

John 15:4-5 (ESV) Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. 5 I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

Here you have a whole bunch of useless vines like Isaiah 5, they all produce stinky fruit, they produce evil, unrighteousness, selfishness and greed, Jesus says I am the true vine, so now therefore if you stuck onto me, if your branch drawing vital nutrients, support, identity from me then you will bear fruit. This is what God expects.

Alexander Pope said, "*Blessed is he who expects nothing, for he shall never be disappointed.*"

Mohammad Ali said, "*With everything I do,*" he says, "*I ask myself, Will God accept this? One day you'll wake up and it'll be Judgment Day, so you need to do good deeds. I love going to hospitals. I love sick people. I don't worry about disease.*"

He is not sure, he is like a grape, trying to produce good grapes by himself. If you look at what he reads,

Surah 28:67 "But any that (in this life) had repented, believed, and worked righteousness, will have hopes to be among those who achieve salvation."

According to him, you get salvation by working really hard and even that he is not sure that he is going to get salvation, he hopes only. So in this kind of situation how you are going to survive.

Jesus said, *John 15:6-8 (ESV) If anyone **does not abide in me** he is **thrown away like a branch and withers**; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.*

He is not asking us to try, do your best to do good works. He is saying that you have to abide in me because I am the vine, I am the good vine, I am the real authentic vine, so you don't have to do it, I will do it, you just join my gang, abide in me.

In abiding we decide to love God, we read the word of God, it's the Holy Spirit takes it and he marinates it into your brain and when that happens, it changes your feelings, it changes your belief system, you understand who he is and once you understand who he is you respond with emotion and action. Abiding in God means allowing his word to come into your life and for you to marinate that in meditation and have it to transform your thinking and when your thinking is transformed, your values are transformed, it will automatically transform your action.

Our value system determines how you live.

*John 15:9-10 (ESV) As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. **10** If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.*

So this is a paradigm, abiding is loving and loving Jesus is obeying him. Obedience is the expression of true love.

*John 15:12-13 (ESV) This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. **13** Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends*

*John 15:11-14 (ESV) These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. **12** "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. **13** Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.*

So basically when this happens, when we love each other because we are obeying him, like he obeys the father, we will get joy, so basically that's the connection. So abiding in Jesus means letting Jesus word sit in our lives, loving him enough to have his word transform us, so that we follow him and when we obey him we will have joy.

Dallas Willard writes, ***Failure to attain a deeply satisfying life always has the effect of making sinful actions seem good. Herein lies the strength of temptation***

A lot of people are tempted because they don't have a satisfying relationship with God, so much so that it fills their heart with joy. How do you get the joy? If you are being tempted, the only thing that will keep you falling is joy and you get the joy by loving other people, serving other people, because you love him. You don't get the joy apart from loving other people.

If you find satisfaction in God by serving others, you get the joy and that joy you cannot exchange and that joy protects you from temptation, that joy protects you from leaving God, that joy transforms your life and people see that joy. The worst thing is to come and see Christians who are not joyful.

Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., was a member of the U.S. Supreme Court for 30 years. His mind, wit and work earned him the unofficial title of "the greatest justice since John Marshall." At one point in his life, Justice Holmes explained his choice of a career by saying: "*I might have entered the ministry if certain clergymen I knew had not looked and acted so much like undertakers.*"

When we are asking you to abide in Christ, we are asking you to uncover true joy in your life. So what we do is we meditate and pray over God's word and then that will result in serving other people with joy. You serve because you love God and because you love God you will love other people, it is actual natural organic fruit, not make believe fruit.

If you want a supernatural power in your life, you plug onto to Jesus Christ and that will make a difference.

THE RESULT OF FRUITFULNESS

*John 15:7-8 (ESV) **If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.** 8 By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.*

*1 Chronicles 4:9-10 (ESV) Jabez was more honorable than his brothers; and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, "Because I bore him in pain." **10** Jabez called upon the God of Israel, saying, "Oh that you would bless me and enlarge my border, and that your hand might be with me, and that you would keep me from harm so that it might not bring me pain!" And God granted what he asked.*

Bruce Wilkinson took this prayer and wrote a book,

- We are not talking simply about land, but any area of our life that we might want God to expand.
- If Jabez had worked on Wall Street, he might have prayed, "Lord, increase the value of my investment portfolios" (p. 31).

- the key to a life of extraordinary favour with God" (p. 7).

That is how he interpreted it.

The problem is:

- You cannot use prayer as a mantra - he has been praying it every day for 30 years
- Ignores the fact of our current blessing in Christ
- Ignores motive of the prayer and context of the promise of land
- Jabez prays for protection which we all should but we leave the Sovereign God to act

Paul said,

2 Tim 4:18 The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom.

So the protection from pain is not necessarily physical, protect me from every evil deed, so bring me safely into the kingdom of heaven.

John 17:11 (ESV) And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.

John 17:15 (ESV) I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.

When Jesus teaches his disciples to pray, he is not like Jabez. So here we have a prayer of Jabez, which is totally misused. Now when you pray there are four conditions

1. You must abide in me and my words abide in you then only ask whatever you wish it will be done.
2. By this my father is glorified. Glory of God or Greed of man. Whatever we want is it for God's glory.
3. Bear much fruit. Results in spiritual transformation that God desires in your life. unselfish love.
4. Prove to be my disciples. The answer and result of the prayer will prove that you are following Jesus and have His will as paramount in your life

A great example is:

2 Thessalonians 1:11-12 (ESV) 11 To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, 12 so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul always prays for spiritual transformation. So this prayer of ask whatever you want is to increase the fruit. When God says, ask whatever you want to increase your fruit then only God will answer.

2. INTIMACY WITH GOD

*John 15:13-1513. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my **friends** if you do what I command you. 15 No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you **friends**, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.*

Friends never let you down, they are constant. Friends are open, they let you in, they never let you down, they are the two characteristics of friend.

How are we going to be friends with God?

If we look at the nature of God, if God is a singular God, is all powerful then he creates human beings then he creates them in order to love them. The primary characteristic then is power not love, but God is a trinity from eternity past, relationship is the primary one, so therefore that kind of God can make friends and form relationships. Second problem is that we have got nothing in common with God, the only way we can have common in God is that if God comes to you and you go up to God. Jesus said,

*John 15:16-17 (ESV) You did not choose me, **but I chose you and appointed you** that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. 17 These things I command you, so that you will love one another.*

In friendship with God and man, God has to make the first move, you cannot make the first move, because he is God. A mutual relationship of friendship in the world is not possible. God comes to us and he makes us his friends, can we make God our friend. John rested on the breast of Jesus, later on in Revelation 1, John had a vision of Jesus and then he fell down on his feet. God can make you his friend, you cannot make him your friend, because you are bringing him down to your level, God must always be your Lord, your master. So it is not a reciprocal relationship, which will bring God down to your level.

The Hebrew word for friend is actually secret or intimate counsel.

*Psalms 25:14 (ESV) The **friendship** of the LORD is for those who fear him, and he makes known to them his covenant*

Friends let you come in, they let you share with them something that's the hallmark of friendship. So the more you open up, the more they open up to you. So therefore we have

to go up, God has to come down. So God comes down to be like us in incarnation, became a human being and in atonement he died for us, we go up because we have the image of God and we live towards the image of God, we behave like God. So friends will never let you down. A friend will be with you through thick and thin and the greatest action of a friend in terms of Jesus Christ is that Jesus died on the cross.

*John 15:13. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my **friends** if you do what I command you*

God relates to us by coming down, becoming a human being, laying his life down for his friends.

How do we relate to God?

We relate by obedience. When we relate to God we must be like him, not He like you. So that's the only way we can relate to God. So the more obedient we are, the more we become like him and through his sacrifice we become his friends.

This is the only way we can relate to God as friends, by obedience and for him by sacrifice. We can only relate as friend because of the cross. An employ and employee relationship is based on pay and work. So when you are talking about God and you, there is a big-big problem, the only way is to change relationship,

Psalms 1:1-2 (ESV) 1 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; 2 but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.

If we look at the law,

Matthew 5:22 (ESV) But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire.

Matthew 5:27-28 (ESV) You have heard that it was said, you shall not commit adultery.' 28 But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

The only way you can do that is when you actually got the cross, when Jesus fulfilled the law on our behalf, he is the true vine, he already paid. So it is okay for you to meditate on the law, the law tells you what your friend likes and what your friend doesn't like. It tells you how to maintain your relationship with your friend, Jesus Christ. So the law is different, it is not the usage of the law to condemn you because he fulfilled all the requirements, because whenever you relate to God, you will always relate to God via the cross because if you don't

relate to God via the cross you are finished. The more obedient we are, we become more like him.

Difference between other faiths and Christian faith.

They give you a map, you take this and I will tell you how to go to heaven and then you use the map and then you try to predict what is going to happen five steps ahead, 15 steps ahead, when Jesus says he is going to be your friend, he is not giving you a map, he comes into the car and he guides you, he lives the life for you, but the problem is that when Jesus comes in your life he never tell you 15 steps ahead, Jesus always tells you on the spot, you never know 2 step ahead. That's what a friend does, he reveals to you but is a progressive way in which he reveals.

3. SUCCESSFUL MINISTRY

*John 15:16-17 (ESV) You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you **should go and bear fruit** and that **your fruit should abide**, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. 17 These things I command you, so that you will love one another.*

It is not only having our character transformed but you also sharing the gospel with other people, so that the fruit that you produce which is disciples, converts, that they will also last.