

The True Vine and the Deadwood

By Steven Hiebert

In this life, we have many choices. One of the most important choices we have to make is whether or not to remain faithful to those who have been faithful and steadfast to us. I have chosen to be faithful. No one has been more faithful to me than Jesus. I remain a Christian because of what Christ did for me on the cross and the Hope of His everlasting life that He has given me.

He alone is faithful: *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9)*. I recently found in Ezekiel 15 where God asks this question concerning Jerusalem:

“Son of man, how does the wood of the vine surpass any wood, the vine branch that is among the trees of the forest? Is wood taken from it to make anything? Do people take a peg from it to hang any vessel on it? Behold, it is given to the fire for fuel. When the fire has consumed both ends of it, and the middle of it is charred, is it useful for anything? Behold, when it was whole, it was used for nothing. How much less, when the fire has consumed it and it is charred, can it ever be used for anything! Therefore thus 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 have I given up the inhabitants of Jerusalem” (Ezekiel 15:2-6).

Ezekiel explained that the citizens of Jerusalem had fallen into a life of idolatry, prostitution, and killing their children. Jerusalem’s seed became nothing but worthless deadwood in the forest. They were unfaithful to the tireless faithfulness of God. Because of their deeds, they had become like deadwood from the forest, useful only as fuel for the fire. God intended for Jerusalem’s vine to produce fruit for His vineyard that was pleasing in His sight. Instead, they produced bad fruit. I would never want to be part of this deadwood, old "Jerusalem" type of belief or living, which is only useful to burn. This is the bad fruit.

The fruit that God looks for in us is called the Fruit of the Spirit in the Bible (Galatians 5:22). The Apostle Paul explained in the New Testament that among the fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, and peace. How much better than the hate, pain, conflict, and confusion that the world and religions of the deadwood "forest" offer.

Following Christ is not that hard of a road compared to the other choices. He Himself said: *“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30)*.

Jesus told us what His yoke was. He said that there was only one true God and that we should love Him above everything else. He said we should love our neighbors as much as we love ourselves, we should be married to only one person, and we should love little children. He gave the same status to little children as adults when He said *“let the little children come to me”* (Matthew 19:14).

I understand that Jesus is the true vine and that only through Him can I bear good fruit. I wonder why anyone would want to convert to a belief where people are harmed physically with immorality, told lies, cheated, abused, forced to submit, or threatened with death if they seek the truth. Jesus was crucified on the deadwood of the cross that we all might live and have life more abundantly. He died that I might live. I will continue to remain a Christian, a follower of Christ

who is the author and finisher of my faith. I encourage you to choose the Way, the Truth, and the Life that is provided only by the True Vine.