

"God's Great Patience"

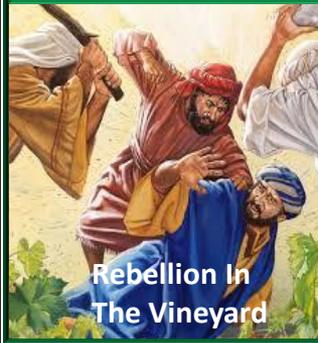
At this point, the parable is not at all like real life. These wicked tenant farmers rough up and send away empty-handed the first servant that the owner sends. Any human owner would not have tolerated that. Any sensible businessman immediately would have thrown these bums out, prosecuted them legally for their negligence and abuse, and replaced them with tenants who would be more faithful in managing his vineyard. But I'm glad to say that this owner, who represents God, was not a good businessman. He sent a second slave, who also was mistreated. After two times, anyone else would say, "That's it! These guys have had more than a fair chance!" But this owner sends yet another, whom they wounded and cast out. Jesus is showing us the unreasonable, illogical, supra-human patience of our gracious God. He sent His prophets to Israel over and over again, looking for fruit. But the disobedient nation ignored, mistreated, and even killed some of these faithful servants. Yet in spite of this, God kept sending them, over and over again, as a demonstration of His abundant patience and grace. If you have been a Christian for any length of time, you should be able to look back at God's extravagant patience and grace in His dealings with you and it ought to motivate you to serve Him more zealously. How many times I have been self-centered, living for my own aims, not to bear fruit for the Lord! And yet He always keeps sending His messengers to get me back on track! God sends us preachers who proclaim the truth of His Word. He gives us the Bible, which we can read for ourselves. We see many other messengers in His church—friends and others who warn us by their lives and words of the need to live fruitful lives.

"God's Great Love"

But in telling the story, Jesus brings out the vineyard owner's "quandary" to show both the depth of God's amazing love and the intractable wickedness of the human heart. The Father's love is so great that He was willing to send His beloved Son after His servants had been so abused. The depravity of the human heart is seen in those who would not only disregard the son, but kill him for their own selfish ends. He stands apart from the other servants whom God had sent. They were servants, but He is the beloved Son. He is uniquely God's Son, of the same substance with the Father, One with Him and intimately related to Him in a way that no one else is. Jesus is God in human flesh. "God demonstrates His own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). Knowing that He would bear the penalty for every sin that we would commit, Jesus still was willing to take on human flesh and come to this wicked world! It is not your church. It is the Lord's church. He's the owner of the vineyard. If He allows us to work in His vineyard, we are blessed. Any work that we do in the vineyard is not for us; it is for the owner. Either we submit to Him and serve Him or we will face His certain judgment. If we wrongly start thinking that we own the vineyard, the stone will fall on us.



Luke 20:9-18



Rebellion In The Vineyard

He began to tell the people this parable: "A man planted a vineyard, and leased it to tenants, and went to another country for a long time. When the season came, he sent a slave to the tenants in order that they might give him his share of the produce of the vineyard; but the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed. Next he sent another slave; that one also they beat and insulted and sent away empty-handed. And he sent still a third; this one also they wounded and threw out. Then the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him.' But when the tenants saw him, they discussed it among themselves and said, 'This is the heir; let us kill him so that the inheritance may be ours.' So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and destroy those tenants and give the

vineyard to others." When they heard this, they said, "Heaven forbid!" But He looked at them and said, "What then does this text mean: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone'? Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls."

"By What Authority Are You Doing These Things?"

Some awful mistakes can happen when those who are tenants begin acting as if they were owners. The more valuable the property they occupy, the more responsibility they have to treat it carefully. Can you imagine tenants in a beautiful mansion who refuse to pay rent and who threaten or beat up those whom the owner sends to collect rent? They argue, "We live here; it's our house now." No one making that claim would stand a chance in a court of law. The owner has the right to receive rent and to have his property treated rightly. To follow up the challenge of the Jewish leaders to Jesus about the source of His authority, He tells a parable about some wicked tenants of a vineyard, who had wrongfully assumed ownership of that which was not their own. It is one of only three parables that occur in all three synoptic gospels (the sower and the mustard seed are the other two). The parable answers the question that the leaders had just asked Jesus: "By what authority are You doing these things?" If God owns the vineyard and Jesus is the Son and rightful heir to it, then He is acting under God's authority. The Jewish leaders have wrongfully usurped the authority of God, the rightful owner.

Thus the fundamental question that not only these Jewish leaders, but also all who hear the parable, need to answer is, "Who Owns The Vineyard?" Keeping in mind the answer to that question will determine how we live. Since God owns the vineyard, we must live accountably to Him.

"Identify The Characters Of The Parable"

- To understand this parable, we must identify the characters:
 - Owner Of The Vineyard God
 - The Vineyard Israel – Church (New Testament)
 - The Tenant Farmers Religious Leaders Of Israel & The Church
 - Servants Of The Owner The Prophets & The Pastors and Body of Christ
 - Son/Heir Of The Owner Jesus Christ

When they heard this parable, Jesus' audience would immediately have thought about Isaiah 5:1-7 ... "Let me sing for my beloved, my love-song concerning His vineyard: My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. He dug it and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines; He built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it; He expected it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes. And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem and people of Judah, judge between Me and My vineyard. What more was there to do for My vineyard that I have not done in it? When I expected it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes? And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured; I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. I will make it a waste; it shall not be pruned or hoed, and it shall be overgrown with briars and thorns; I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the people of Judah are His pleasant planting; He expected justice, but saw bloodshed; righteousness, but heard a cry!"

"Jesus Is the Chief Corner Stone"



The prophet calls Israel God's vineyard and warns that He would lay it waste because it produced only worthless grapes. Jesus shows that God expects fruit from His vineyard, but He emphasizes God's great patience and love in sending many messengers and finally, His beloved Son. If His people produce no fruit and kill His Son, they will face His terrible judgment. But

even though they kill His Son, He will triumph by becoming the Chief Cornerstone. These things apply not only to ancient Israel, but also to us, Whom God has graciously grafted into His vine (see Rom. 11:17-24). The parable reveals some things about God and those who profess to be His people.

"God Expects Fruit From His People"



Why go to the bother of planting a vineyard if you don't expect fruit? It was a common arrangement for an owner to rent out his vineyard to tenant farmers who would pay him a percentage of the crop each year.

So, at the proper time, the owner rightfully sent a servant to collect what the farmers owed him. We would misunderstand the parable if we thought of these tenant farmers as poor sharecroppers who were being abused by a demanding owner. Rather, they were greatly privileged to be able to work in the owner's vineyard. They did not have to plant it; the owner did that. They simply entered into his vineyard, where they could work and make a sufficient living for themselves and their families. The owner was not a greedy tyrant, who stood over them with a whip, driving them mercilessly. He freely entrusted the vineyard to them and let them work it as they saw fit. But for these privileges, they owed him a certain amount of fruit. Even so, God had done everything to provide for Israel, His vineyard. He drove out the wicked nations and gave Palestine to His chosen people. He protected them from fierce nations around them. He entrusted His people to leaders who, if they had been faithful, would have harvested a bumper crop. Israel should have been a light to the nations, pointing them to God, Who so richly supplied their needs. God, Who provided so abundantly for His vineyard, had every right to expect fruit.

"Living To Bear Fruit For Him"

So with us: We are greatly privileged in that God has given us His Word and has supplied us with everything pertaining to life and godliness. (2 Peter 1:3) "His divine power has given us everything needed for life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him Who called us by His Own Glory and Goodness." He wants us to bear the fruit of Christ-like lives so that the hungry people who do not know Him will taste and see that the Lord is good. All of us are either living for ourselves and our own gratification or we are living to bear fruit for the Lord Jesus Christ. (Galatians 5:22-23) "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." "Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'Execute true justice, show mercy and compassion everyone to his brother. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. Let none of you plan evil in his heart against his brother.'" (Zechariah 7:8-10) We're either laboring for what we can get out of the vineyard or for what we can produce for the owner. Clearly, these wicked tenant farmers in the parable were not working for the owner, but for themselves. The irony is, we always find the most pleasure when we live to bear fruit for Christ, not when we live for ourselves.