

Wild Grapes

“What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?”

Isaiah 5:4

Preliminary Reading: Deuteronomy 32; Psalm 74; 78; 106; Isaiah 1; 5; 63; Jeremiah 2; Ezekiel 16; Malachi 1.

Introduction:

1. We exist to fear and love the Lord our God in word and deed. What kind of grapes are you to Him?
2. The blessings of God, which are many of all kinds in our lives, bring obligations and consequences.
3. From a positive perspective, we should rejoice and be exceeding glad for all God has done for us.
4. From a negative perspective, we should fear and make changes, if we are not returning our very best.
5. The sermons today are simple: using God’s pleading with Israel as our lesson and example, we must examine ourselves to measure our affection, attention, fidelity, separation, and service back to God.
6. Less than your best in obedience and worship to God is wholly unacceptable and will bring judgment.
7. The sermons relate closely to what was taught a few weeks ago about the Holy Spirit (I Cor 6:19-20).

The Context (Isaiah 1-7)

- A. Isaiah used the rest of chapter 5 to tell Judah’s many sins and coming captivity by enemies.
- B. He used chapter 1 to call them Sodom, to condemn their hypocrisy, and to warn of judgment.
- C. He used chapter 2 to foretell a time of gospel prosperity and to warn of divine judgment.
- D. He used chapter 3 to describe His judgment against men and the character of their women.
- E. He used chapter 4 to describe mercy after judgment upon the few that would escape.
- F. He used chapter 6 to describe Isaiah’s ordination and the hopelessness of his message.
- G. Following chapters further describe the coming judgment if Israel and Judah do not repent.

The Text (Isaiah 5:1-7)

- A. God inspired Isaiah to witness against Israel and Judah by a song that justified God (5:1).
- B. God, Isaiah’s beloved, had a vineyard in a fruitful place, Israel and Judah in Canaan (5:1).
- C. This is not the first inspired song in the Bible with such words and lesson. See Deut 32.
- D. God made every possible provision for Israel by protection, provision, and prosperity (5:2).
- E. Consider the metaphors and Israel’s blessings naturally, nationally, and spiritually (5:2).
- F. Count wells, vineyards, victories, houses, walled cities, laws, scripture, prophets, etc., etc.
- G. But when harvest arrived for the Lord to receive some fruits, He found wild grapes (5:2).
- H. The prophet addressed Judah in the second person as the ambassador of God Himself (5:3).
- I. The issue at stake is the righteousness of God or the nation. God alone is righteous (5:3).
- J. God provided all that could be desired, but yet Judah brought forth wild grapes to Him (5:4).
- K. Since I did all that could be done, I am righteous, and they are wicked for their fruits (5:4).
- L. If you reason rightly, there was nothing God could have added to produce faithfulness (5:4).
- M. The consequence of this inequity will be resolved by God punishing their wickedness (5:5).
- N. The harsh, severe, and certain judgment described here is against His own children (5:5).
- O. In graphic, prophetic, and severe detail, God will do evil to Judah as He had done good (5:6).
- P. The explanation of the song indicates that Israel and Judah were the vineyard and vine (5:7).
- Q. Rather than literal grapes, the fruit that God sought was judgment and righteousness (5:7).
- R. This passage is not mere diatribe against ungrateful Philistines or Hittites, but His own Israel.

The Lesson

- A. God's choice to show kindness to Judah should have brought thankfulness and righteousness.
 - 1. When an investment is made, a return is expected. God invested; what did Israel return?
 - 2. When a man is favored, appreciation and loyalty is expected, how much more to God?
 - 3. When countless blessings are given to the unworthy, how should he treat his benefactor?
 - 4. God could not have done more for Israel, but they treated Him as trouble and an enemy.
- B. Even infidels have a natural law of requiting parents, which our God requires (I Tim 5:4,8), so what law guides our thoughts, speech, and conduct to rightly requite our Father in heaven?
- C. The lesson had been clearly stated with strong metaphors of children, oxen, and asses (1:2-4).
 - 1. We can easily grasp the grief that wild children cause parents (Prov 10:1; 17:25; 19:13).
 - 2. We are more offended by wild conduct by adopted children, for despising their benefit.
 - 3. Even animals can detect their owners and barns and show recognition and appreciation.
- D. Moses gave another song to Israel much earlier along the same lines (Deut 32:5-6,10-15,32).
 - 1. He taught earlier that God's love and choice should provoke obedience (Deut 7:7-11).
 - 2. He taught earlier that the consequences for unthankfulness were great (Deut 28:47-48).
- E. Jeremiah repeated the lesson under a similar metaphor of a vine and plant (Jeremiah 2:21).
- F. Ezekiel repeated the lesson under a metaphor of a daughter saved at birth (Ezekiel 16:1-15).
 - 1. This and related chapters are some of the most graphic and sexual sections of the Bible.
 - 2. The easiest way to get a man's attention is to compare his conduct to a wife's adultery.
- G. Malachi repeated the lesson by the example of Jacob and Esau, Israel and Edom (Mal 1:1-5).
 - 1. The lesson here is strict and powerful, God made a great difference between two twins.
 - 2. The language here is powerful, for borders dividing people reveal God's discrimination.
- H. Malachi repeated the lesson under metaphors of a son, servant, and a governor (Mal 1:6-14).
 - 1. The prophet's words, "In that ye say," identify what Israel's actions were in fact stating.
 - 2. We instinctively act respectfully and honorably to governors, but we fail to do so to God.
- I. God is sovereign. God created us. God adopted us. God dwells within us. We are debtors.
 - 1. God has a right to good grapes. He has a right to a return, yield, or harvest from planting.
 - 2. God rightly punishes for bad grapes. He is God, and He rightly chastens or damns for sin.
 - 3. God will repay, so you should repay very carefully and according to His terms (Deut 7:9-10; II Kgs 9:26; Ps 10:14; Is 59:18; Jer 51:56; Rom 12:19; Heb 10:30-31).
 - 4. God does not owe you anything; all you have is a gracious gift (Job 41:11; Ro 11:35-36).

Some Excuses

- A. Blaming their fathers with the sour grape proverb ... when the just shall live (Ezek 18:1-4).
- B. Justifying rebellion by virtue of their safety as God's people ... when it was a lie (Jer 7:8-10).
- C. Justifying procrastination to get serious later, yet putting their things first (Haggai 1:1-5).
- D. Excusing themselves without hope of recovery to their habits, desires, and plans (Jer 2:25).
- E. Defending themselves as comfortable and well situated in their carnal lifestyle (Jer 2:31).
- F. Justifying themselves as not all that horrible and not deserving of judgment (Jeremiah 2:35).
- G. Excusing lukewarm and lackadaisical religion as clear of real profanity (Mal 1:6-8,12-14).
- H. Justifying their sins of omission by thinking only of sins of commission (Malachi 3:7-12).

Some Examples

- A. Saul did not repay the Lord with obedience for making him Israel's king (I Sam 15:17-19).
- B. David did not always repay the LORD for the benefit of his promotion (II Samuel 12:7-9).
- C. Asa did not repay the Lord with faith for the benefit of a great victory (II Chron 16:7-13).
- D. Hezekiah did not repay the LORD for the benefit of 15 added years (II Chron 32:24-26).
- E. Paul was constrained, pressed into zealous action, by the love of Christ (II Cor 5:13-15).

The Application

- A. Make the application as personal as you can to your life, to your family, to your church, etc.
- B. It is your duty, a basic duty of a Christian, to examine yourself (Ps 139:23-24; I Cor 11:28).
- C. Beware, for the New Testament is so much more glorious, and consequently more severe, than the Old Testament (II Cor 3:6-11; Heb 2:1-4; 6:4-6; 10:26-31; 12:25-29).
- D. Are our blessings, the Israel of God of the New Testament, inferior to or superior to theirs?
 - 1. Consider God's blessings on you, your family, church, nation ... count them one by one!
 - 2. Do not count anything you are or anything you have as an accomplishment (I Cor 4:7).
 - 3. Each of you with some degree of honesty can confess that you are the most blessed of all!
 - 4. If Israel was held liable for the abundance of all things, what about us (Deut 28:47-48)!
 - 5. Israel had the O.T. scriptures (Ps 147:19-20; Rom 3:2). But we have the New Testament!
 - 6. Israel had animal sacrifices perpetually, but we have Christ's own blood (Heb 9:12-14).
 - 7. Consider what we have in Jesus Christ ... how much! ... and how free! (Rom 8:28-39).
- E. The goodness of God, which He has shown abundantly, should bring repentance (Rom 2:4).
- F. The goodness of God should bring thanksgiving (Luke 17:11-19)? But where are the nine?
- G. Our Saviour taught that those who are given much should respond with much (Luke 12:48).
 - 1. Consider that not only the truth, but also conviction and love for truth, is from the Lord.
 - 2. The implications are severe for us who have received so much goodness from His hands.
- H. We are adopted children of God with an eternal inheritance; we should live like it (Eph 5:1).
 - 1. The blessed God of heaven adopted us out of great love – we should serve Him like it!
 - 2. The analogy of an adopted child despising a generous adoptive parent should provoke us.
- I. ***What are wild grapes?*** Rebellion, disobedience, discontentment, fruitlessness, boredom, worldliness, being lukewarm, lack of first love, formal service, heartless service, etc., etc.
 - 1. If you do not train your children in the fear of the Lord, you are wild grapes (Eph 6:4).
 - 2. If you deal treacherously with your converted wife, you are wild grapes (Mal 2:10-16).
 - 3. If you despise the message or messenger of God, you are wild grapes (I Thess 5:20).
 - 4. If you have lost your first love or are lukewarm, you are wild grapes (Rev 2:4 3:16).
 - 5. If you sleep or daydream in church, you are wild grapes (Heb 2:1; Neh 8:12; Acts 17:11).
 - 6. If you even think about fornication, you are wild grapes (I Thess 4:3-8; I Cor 6:19-20).
 - 7. If you are not thankful for every thing, you are wild grapes (I Thess 5:18; Deut 28:47-48).
- J. ***What are sweet grapes?*** Delight, love, joy, peace, praise, unity, righteousness, sacrifice, separation, service, thanksgiving, worship, and zeal.
 - 1. The Lord loves those who glory in Him more than worldly objects (Jer 9:23-24; Ps 37:4).
 - 2. The Lord loves those who forgive and love others (Eph 4:29-31; I Cor 12:31; 13:13).
 - 3. The Lord loves those who despise the world and will not touch it (II Cor 6:14-18).
 - 4. The Lord loves those who love wisdom and pursue it in scripture (Pr 8:17; Acts 17:11).
 - 5. The Lord loves those who keep His commandments (John 14:21-24; 15:10; I John 5:3).
 - 6. The Lord loves those who do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly (Micah 6:6-8).
 - 7. The Lord loves those who are joyful about serving Him (Ps 100:2; I Pet 1:8; I Thess 1:6).

- K. Which music do you choose? Sweet or wild? Music that glorifies God or not (Col 3:16-17).
- L. Which entertainment do you choose? Sweet or wild? With God and saints, or His enemies?
- M. Which friends do you choose? Sweet or wild? There are two sins with worldly friends – you reject friendships with the dear children of God ... for destructive friendship of adulterers.
- N. You must hate and reject any bitter thing that would make you wild grapes (Heb 12:14-17).
- O. The gospel teaches salvation for a cause – a pure people zealous of good works (Tit 2:11-14).
- P. Paul reasons from blessings in Christ to action, which is reasonable (Rom 12:1-2; Phil 2:1).
- Q. Brethren, it is our reasonable service to sacrifice our lives, for we are debtors (Rom 8:10-12).
- R. Ministers may feel this way, when they see little progress (I Cor 4:14-16; II Cor 12:14-15).
- S. God took the kingdom from the Jews for their treatment of it (Matthew 21:33-46; 22:1-7), and we are taught to fear by the apostle lest such a judgment come on us (Rom 11:18-22).
- T. He will purge His vineyard, though it may not occur in the timing we expect (Luke 13:6-9).

Conclusion:

1. In what ways are you wild? Examine yourselves. Where should you repent and reform? Do it now!
2. Your life can get worse ... much worse. Turn to the Lord and bring forth good grapes this very day.
3. God hates the pleasure-loving brand of Christianity (James 4:4 cp II Timothy 3:4). Beware! Repent!
4. There has been such blessings, and more is offered, if we will but ... II Cor 7:1 cp II Cor 6:14-18!
5. A new crop of grapes for God's glory and pleasure is easy (Isaiah 63:7-19; Jer 31:18-20; Hos 14:1-7).
6. [Beside the point, but worth consideration: though God was a perfect parent in every respect, most of His children were wild, in spite of His efforts. Take comfort, ye faithful parents of wild children.]

For Further Study:

1. The sermon outline, "Where Are the Nine?" ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/sermons/pdf/where-are-the-nine.pdf>
2. The sermon outline, "Spiritual Adultery," ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/sermons/pdf/spiritual-adultery.pdf>.
3. The sermon outline, "Vain Religion," ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/sermons/pdf/vain-religion.pdf>.
4. The sermon outline, "The Sons of God," ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/sermons/pdf/sons-of-god.pdf>.
5. The outline, "An Angel with an Inkhorn," ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/sermons/pdf/an-angel-with-an-inkhorn.pdf>.
6. The sermon outline, "Cut It Down!" ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/sermons/pdf/cut-it-down.pdf>.
7. The sermon, "What Doth God Require?" ... <http://www.letgodbettrue.com/sermons/pdf/what-doth-the-lord-require.pdf>.