

and that the instruction of chapter 15 and 16 was given, and the prayer of chapter 17 offered either in the courts of the Temple, or in some retired spot on the way to Gethsemane. It is more probable, however, that they did not at this point withdraw, but simply arose; and that, while standing, He continued His discourse and offered the prayer, and then went out of the house and out of the city to Gethsemane, as stated in ch. 18 : 1.

EXPOSITION

1. The True Vine, 1.

V. 1. "*I am the true vine*"; genuine, or ideal, or perfect Vine, as He is the perfect "Bread" and the perfect "Light." Israel should have been a true vine, but it had degenerated (Isa. 5; Jer. 2 : 21). In the figure of the vine Jesus sets forth His relation to His disciples. It is the closest union possible (14 : 20). There are many conjectures as to what suggested the figure of the vine. (1) The fruit of the vine as used at the Last Supper. (2) A vine trained over the walls and windows of the room in which they were. (3) The great golden vine that hung over one of the temple gates. (4) A vine which He saw on the way to Gethsemane. But there is no need of conjectures. Vines abounded everywhere in Palestine; and the figure of the vine was familiar in Old Testament teaching. (See passages just referred to and Ps. 80 : 8.) "*My Father is the husbandman*"; the owner of the soil who tends His vine Himself. The Father sent the Son and founded the Church; and He takes the same deep interest in the welfare of His people as the vine-dresser does in the vineyard.

V. 2. "*Every branch in me*," i.e., "united with Me by the profession of faith" (Godet). "*That beareth not fruit*," fruitless, because not vitally connected with Jesus as the branch is connected with the vine; the connection merely external and mechanical. (Fausset.) "*Take them away*," as the vine-dresser cuts off all useless branches; more fully described in v. 6. "*Purge it*." "He cleanseth it" (Rev. Ver.); cuts off all excrescences and useless shoots, which are a drain on the branch taking away the strength from the fruit. Perplexity, disappointment, suffering, sorrow; such are some of God's pruning knives.

II. Fruitfulness, 3-5.

V. 3. "*Now ye are clean*," carrying forward the thought of cleansing in v. 2. "*Through the word*"; Christ's whole teaching. There may be

special reference to the sharp pruning process through which Peter, Thomas, Philip and Judas (not Iscariot) had just been put (13 : 36, 38, and ch. 14). God's word abiding in the heart will make it sweet and pure and clean. (Ps. 119 : 9.)

V. 4. "*Abide in me and I in you*." The life of Jesus becomes the life of the disciple, as the sap of the vine becomes the life of the branch. "*Except ye abide in me*." The consequence of abiding in Christ is life and fruitfulness. There must be union and communion of the soul with Jesus Christ or there cannot be holiness of heart or life.

V. 5. "*I am the vine, ye are the branches*," showing the entire dependence of the disciple upon Jesus for spiritual life. "*Without me*," better, as Rev. Ver., "apart from Me." Separated from Him we have no spiritual life; we are mere dead branches, "unable to do anything which is glorifying to God, anything which can be called fruit-bearing." It is an awesome thought, too, that, whilst the branches cannot live without the vine, the vine bears fruit only through the branches. It is through His own that Christ shows Himself to the world.

III. Fruitlessness, 6.

V. 6. "*If a man abide not in me he is cast forth as a branch*"; because unfruitful and therefore useless. The penalty is rejection. "*Cast them into the fire*." Fire here is an emblem of judgment. "The vineyard fires burning up the pruned branches may have been visible from the room where they still were." (Reith) "But the cast-out branch may be grafted in again (Rom. 11 : 23) and the dead branch may be raised to life again (John 5 : 21, 25)." Camb. Bible.

IV. Privilege and Duty, 7-11.

(For classification of privileges and duties see Lesson Plan.)

V. 7. "*And my words abide in you*." This throws light upon the meaning of their "abiding" in Him. They are to have His words, His teaching, within their hearts, governing their