EZEKIEL 15

The Useless Vine: Fruitless Wood for the Fire

> *“As 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 15:6

Where Ezekiel has brought us

1. Ezekiel is still among the exiles in Babylon, in the undated stretch between the sixth year (8:1, about 592 BC) and the seventh (20:1, about 591 BC).

2. The people tell themselves that God's chosen vine could never be cut down.

What Is Vine Wood Good For?

Not for beams, not for tools, not even for a peg.

EZEKIEL 15:2

"Son of man, how is the wood of the vine better than any wood of a branch which is among the trees of the forest?

DAVID GUZIK

Guzik suggests Ezekiel is answering a protest: surely God would spare His own vine? His answer is that Israel's privileged status brought greater accountability, not less.

WHAT IT MEANS

God asks two plain questions. How is vine wood "better than any wood of a branch which is among the trees of the forest?"

Vine (גֶּפֶן)

GEPHEN · "VINE, GRAPEVINE"

Gephen is a vine, a grapevine — the plant God uses again and again for Israel: brought out of Egypt and planted (Ps 80:8), tended and expected to bear good grapes (Isa 5:1–7), 'a choice vine' turned wild (Jer 2:21).

Good for One Thing

What Is Vine Wood Good For? (Ezekiel 15:2–3)

Trees of the forest		Wood of the vine	
Beams for a house	yes	Beams for a house	no
Tools and work (melakah)	yes	Tools and work	no
A peg for a pot (yathed)	yes	A peg for a pot (v3)	no

useful even without fruit

Fruit — its only purpose
never mentioned in the parable

"Can wood be taken from it to make anything, or can men take a peg from it on which to hang any vessel?" (v3)

Forest wood can become beams, tools and pegs; vine wood is good only for fruit — or for the fire (vv2–3).

Charred at Both Ends

Useless before the fire — how much less after it.

EZEKIEL 15:4

"If it has been put into the fire for fuel, and the fire has consumed both of its ends and its middle part has been charred, is it then useful for anything?

DAVID GUZIK

Guzik, quoting Block, makes the point that the fire does not improve the wood: 'Unlike metal, firing wood does not enhance its intrinsic value.'

WHAT IT MEANS

Here the argument tightens. "Behold, while it is intact, it is not made into anything. How much less, when the fire has consumed it and it is charred, can it still be made into anything!"

Charred (חָרַר)
CHARAR · "SCORCHED, BURNED"

Charar means to be scorched or burned. God pictures a vine branch thrown into the fire for fuel (oklah, literally 'food' — what the fire eats).

Out of One Fire, Into Another

Charred at Both Ends (Ezekiel 15:4–7)



605 BC	Jerusalem	597 BC
first deportation	scorched but standing	Jehoiachin, Ezekiel

a common reading of the burned ends and middle

586 BC — the final fire
"yet the fire will consume them" (v7)

"Though they have come out of the fire, yet the fire will consume them."
Surviving one fire is a call to turn, not proof of safety.

Two earlier deportations burned the ends; the final fire of 586 BC would consume what was left (vv4–7).

Out of One Fire, Into Another

The parable explained: the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

EZEKIEL 15:6

"Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, 'As 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;

DAVID GUZIK

Guzik notes that God gave this warning in advance, so that when judgment fell the people would know the LORD had spoken: "Then you will know that I am the LORD, when I set My face against them" (v7).

WHAT IT MEANS

God now drops the picture and names the people: "As 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" (v6).

Consumed (אָכַל)
AKAL · "EAT, DEVOUR, BURN UP"

Akal means to eat, devour, burn up. The fire in this chapter is pictured as eating: the vine is its "fuel" (oklah, food, from the same root) and it "consumed" the ends (v4).

Because They Acted Unfaithfully

Persistent unfaithfulness makes the land desolate.

EZEKIEL 15:8

'Thus I will make the land desolate, because they have acted unfaithfully,'" declares the Lord GOD.

DAVID GUZIK

Guzik draws out the force of the doubled Hebrew: 'It wasn't only the sin of Israel that brought God's judgment, but their persistent sin.' God had given centuries of warning through prophet after prophet.

WHAT IT MEANS

One verse gives the reason for everything: "Thus I will make the land desolate, because they have acted unfaithfully" (v8). Not one bad day, but a pattern of broken faith.

Acted unfaithfully (מָעַל)
MAAL · "ACT TREACHEROUSLY"

Maal means to act treacherously, to break faith. In v8 the Hebrew doubles it — maal maal, literally 'trespassed a trespass.'

What to carry from this chapter

1

A vine is for fruit.

Its wood cannot even make a peg “on which to hang any vessel” (v3).

2

The missing word.

Guzik, quoting Morgan, notes the parable never mentions fruit — because Israel had none to show.

3

Grace raises the bar.

Guzik, quoting Block: ‘Grace places high demands on its recipients.’

4

Fire does not refine wood.

Guzik, quoting Block: ‘Unlike metal, firing wood does not enhance its intrinsic value.’

More to carry

5

Fuel is food.

Oklah, the word for fuel, means food — what the fire eats (v4).

6

Out of one fire, into another.

“Though they have come out of the fire, yet the fire will consume them” (v7).

7

Trespassed a trespass.

Maal is doubled in v8 — persistent, repeated unfaithfulness, not a single slip.

8

The True Vine never fails.

Guzik links the chapter to John 15: where Israel failed to bear fruit, Christ does not fail.

Talk it through

1. Why does God compare His people to a vine and not to a strong tree like an oak?

2. What privileges or titles am I tempted to lean on instead of a faithful, fruitful life?

3. What “fire” have I already come through, and did it change me or just scorch me?

4. What does it mean that Israel “acted unfaithfully” again and again, and where do I see a pattern rather than a slip in my own life?

5. How does Jesus as the True Vine (John 15) answer the hopelessness of a man who feels like charred, useless wood?

CLOSING

A vine is not judged by how sturdy its wood is but by its fruit, and on our own we have none. Jesus is the True Vine Israel could not be; stay connected to Him, and let the fires you have already survived turn you toward Him rather than harden you.

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

O·I·A study, slides and reflection journal: see the Ezekiel study page.