



Weekly Inspirations

By Pastor Pat Thompson

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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! (Isaiah 5:7).

It's a familiar story: the stockbroker, the engineer, the medical researcher (you name the profession) who longs for a less stressful life and decides to take the plunge by retiring to Oregon or California or Tuscany to become a vintner. But s/he soon learns that cultivating grapes and making wine is not that easy!

Risks involve the price of grapes, the price of the land, regional weather patterns, frost and winter freezes, the cost of water and sprays and a return on investment that might take 10–15 years to realize. In addition, disease is a constant threat.

And then there's *grape shatter* — when a grape cluster fails to develop into a fully-grown cluster of healthy grapes. Instead, the cluster appears two-thirds the size of a normal cluster, and some grapes may even fall off the vine.

This is a highly metaphorical text, so let us not be confused by the imagery. The prophet utilizes the metaphor of the vineyard as representing God's people, Israel. If one reads the passage from the beginning, we see just what it is that the Lord of Hosts has done to prepare the grape vines to ensure their productivity. It turns out that they were anything but, as *all the prophets*—not just Isaiah—point out.

God was disappointed, to say the least. All that preparation, all that love and care, all that faithful husbandry—only to have a vineyard that is not worth maintaining. Too much grape shatter, it seems.

What about us? Are we permitting *our lives* to wither because of spiritual neglect? Do we persist in disappointing our Creator by our own apostasy? “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?” (v. 4). The LORD seems truly perplexed at the outcome.

But you and I know that neither grapes nor our lives can grow to their God-given capacity if they are not properly cared for. Just sayin'...

Faithfully and fraternally,

Pat