

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

THE VINE AND HIS BRANCHES

I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

John 15:5

There is no more descriptive language, in all of the scriptures, of the relationship of CHRIST to HIS people than our LORD has set forth here. When a vineyard is started the rootstock from which the vine comes is of the utmost importance. The productivity and health of the branches is absolutely dependent on the vine to which they are attached. The branches can add nothing to the vine, rather the branches wait upon the vine for both sustenance and fruit.

The HUSBANDMAN (i.e.; vine-keeper) is that ONE who grafts the branches to the VINE in HIS own time even as CHRIST said, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day." (John 6:44) The rootstock from which these branches were taken was "wild by nature" (see Rom.11:13-24) and though the "branches" had a form of life (carnal) they could produce no pleasant fruit in their natural state and were but worthy of the "burning" to which all "unfruitful branches" are ultimately cast.

These "dead" branches were made to live when the hands of the skillful VINEKEEPER attached (grafted) them to the VINE and the life of the VINE caused them to live. The casual observer might view the branches now attached to the VINE as being the same branch as they were before (or as some might say, the flesh born over, which by the way never occurs, since that which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the SPIRIT is spirit.) but the reality is that these branches (which were dead by nature, unfruitful, and useless) are not the same branches that they once were, because of the VINE to which they are now grafted into. Their outward shape and form are the same but the LIFE of the VINE is that which has made them new. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (2Cor 5:17)

The man who is now a "new creature" is not the same man which he once was, "all things are become new" by the LIFE of the VINE which causes him now to live. "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins " (Eph 2:1) Paul describes this occurrence in this fashion, "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." (Rom 6:6)

This "new man" is manifested as being a fruit-bearer according to the power of HIM who works mightily in him, "But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." (Col 3:8-10)

Now lest these "new creatures" (or branches, thinking that their fruit bearing is a result of their own ability) should be lifted up with pride and forget the source of their life and fruitfulness they have been given a "thorn in the flesh". even as Paul testifies, "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted

above measure.” (2Cor 12:7) Whereas Paul speaks of a specific trial that he was given,(for the specific set of circumstances into which he was called,) all of the children of GOD are still carrying around this body of death (our flesh and its propensities) in which they groan constantly with Paul’s lament, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.” (Rom 7:24-25) Is there anymore common complaint and source of misery for the true sons of GOD than to admit, “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.” (Rom 7:18-19)

This is that spiritual warfare into which all of the sons of GOD are ultimately placed as Paul said, *“For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.” (Gal 5:17)* We should well nigh be overcome and destroyed were it not for the VINE to whom we are now attached and who is the SOURCE of all our help. *“Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.” (1John 4:4)* This is the answer to the prayer of the LORD JESUS in the behalf of HIS people, *“I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.”(John 17:15-16)*

The Psalmist spoke of this very truth when he said, *“Our soul waiteth for the LORD: he is our help and our shield. For our heart shall rejoice in him, because we have trusted in his holy name. Let thy mercy, O LORD, be upon us, according as we hope in thee.” (Psa 33:20-22)* Only the faithfulness of the VINE to sustain the life of the branches keeps them from falling off to be cast away with the unfruitful branches. (see Jude 1:24) *“I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.” (Psa 27:13)* *“Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever.” (Psa 73:25-26)*

This TRUE VINE is CHRIST who is the eternal and only begotten son of GOD. HE is that ONE who has LIFE in HIMSELF (see John 5:26) even as HE told HIS disciples, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” (John 14:6)* To HIM all of the promises of the everlasting covenant of Redemption were made. (see Gal.3:16, Ps. 2:6-12) To HIM the vessels of mercy which would one day be grafted into the VINE, were given before the foundation of the world. HE became their GREAT HIGH PRIEST in the counsels of GOD and their elder BROTHER and KINSMAN REDEEMER before they were ever brought forth, by HIM *“who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.” (Rom 4:17)*

The Branches are the objects of HIS mercy, those upon whom it pleased HIM to set HIS love and bring them forth in HIS own time to manifest the glory of HIS grace in their redemption and deliverance from the bondage of sin. Grace is the only difference between those who are numbered with HIM and those who are unfruitful branches, fit for nothing but to be burned with unquenchable fire. *“Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, by (grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” (Eph 2:1-10) HE is the VINE, we are the branches. www.gracechapelobrien.net <http://wayfarerblog.blogspot.com/> mam*