

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, THE BRANCHES, AND THE FRUIT

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

Throughout the pages of the Bible, we read of many names and descriptive phrases, by which the LORD is pleased to refer to that ONE who is said to have a NAME which is above every NAME. HIS preeminence is seen from the very beginning, as we read "*In the beginning GOD created the heaven and the Earth.*" (Gen.1:1) John refers to this same beginning when HE says, "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.*" (John 1:1-3)

The verse in Genesis is the carnal description of HIS work which cannot be denied by any of that creation as Paul says, "*For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.*" (Rom 1:20) That which John records (on the other hand) is a SPIRITUAL description of the same event which can only be received and understood by those whom the LORD is pleased to awaken from the deadness of their sins. HE testified of this to Nicodemus when HE said, "*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*" (John 3:3) If there is any doubt about the origin and application of this "new birth", John clarifies it quite straight-forwardly when he said, "*Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*" (John 1:13) The LORD JESUS used an illustration of the wind to describe this "birth from above" as HE instructed Nicodemus, "*The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*" (John 3:8)

Thus, we can see that there is a contrast and comparison, between those who rebel openly against the plainly revealed truth; "*Because that, when they knew God, (in the incontrovertible facts of creation) they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.*"(Rom 1:21-23); and those who are given eyes to see the glory of GOD revealed in the face of JESUS CHRIST. Instead of open rebellion, they are caused by the SPIRIT of GOD to fall upon their faces in worship of HIM whom they not only believe in, but desire to express their affection for. "*And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.*" (John 6:69) "*Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.*" (Rev 4:11)

So, it is quite a delightful exercise for the awakened sons of GOD to peruse the scriptures and find CHRIST on every page. HE is that SEED of the woman which would bruise the head of Satan. HE is that COVERING given to Adam and Eve which hid their nakedness. HE is that

OFFERING made by Abel, with which the LORD was pleased. HE is that ARK which delivered Noah and his family from the destruction that enveloped the world, demonstrating GOD's purpose to save the world and its inhabitants. HE is that BOW which is set in the clouds as a testimony to the grace and mercy of GOD and as a TOKEN of the everlasting covenant which brings salvation to those for whom it is appointed. HE is that PROMISE given to Abraham as the LORD called him out of darkness and into the LIGHT, where he confessed that he was a stranger in the earth, yet looked for a CITY which hath FOUNDATIONS whose BUILDER and MAKER is GOD.

Time, space, and human weakness would preclude us from delineating every revelation of CHRIST which can be found in the Bible. Therefore, we turn our eyes to one of the most descriptive and delightful NAMES which HE is pleased to call HIMSELF by as HE walked among the sons of men, teaching those to whom HE had given ears to hear. Even as HE teaches those in whom HE works at the present time.

HE said, *"I am the VINE"*. We notice that HE began the chapter with an even more descriptive phrase, saying *"I am the TRUE VINE"*, which is in contrast to every other impostor which would seek out a following, teaching any other message than that which fell from HIS lips and is designed to give HIM all glory. The VINE is the SOURCE of all LIFE which can be found in the branches of the VINE. Without the VINE the branches wither and die. The branches have no power to remain attached to the VINE, but the VINE maintains the branches.

There are many "branches" which wither and die and are cast off to be burned. Even as there are many who for a season appear to be true branches but ultimately fall away even as that seed which fell on the stony ground and among the thorns. Natural Israel, appeared to be attached to the Vine, but were manifested not to be such as they went about to establish their own righteousness and rebelled against the HUSBANDMAN and the VINE itself. They are like those foolish virgins which had oil in their lamps which burned seemingly as bright as those of the wise virgins, but ultimately "went out" because they had no oil in their "vessel". *"For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."* (Rom 2:28-29) *"And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."* (1John 5:11-12)

So, the "branches" which HE refers to as those which *"bring forth fruit"* are the true sons of GOD. These "branches" are faithfully tended to by the VINE-KEEPER (HUSBANDMAN), who "purges" (i.e.; prunes and trims) them that they may bring forth *"more fruit"*. *"For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons."* (Heb 12:6-8) The sons of GOD have not yet "arrived" and need constant care which HE is pleased to supply. Paul recognized this condition when he said, *"Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."* (Php 3:12-14)

The "fruit" which appears on the "branches" is not produced by their ability or perseverance but rather because of HIS constant supply of those things needed to produce fruit. *"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."* (Php 2:13) *"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."* (Eph 2:10) *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."* (Gal 5:22-25) Have we not seen these things in their perfection, in the LIFE of HIM who would have us to follow *"HIS steps?"* (see I Pet.2:21) mam