

# Milk & Honey

Vol. XXXI December 2017 No. 12

*Spiritual Food and Encouragement for Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ*

## The True Vine

Steve Hulshizer

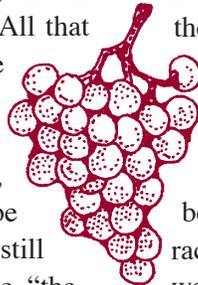
*I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.*

John 15:1

In a “twinkling of an eye” this beautiful world came under a curse. The man who was created in God’s image and placed over His creation rebelled, being dissatisfied with the position and provisions his Creator God had given him. Everything under Adam was affected by his fall. The woman would bring forth her children in sorrow. The earth came under a curse and thorns and thistles marred the beauty of God’s creation. Man now had to labor for his needed bread. (Gen. 3:16-19)

God had designed all things to reproduce after their kind. (Gen. 1:11, 12, 25) This is an important truth which runs through the Bible. Jesus told this to Nicodemus when He said, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” (John 3:3) All that the herbs and trees produced was the fruit of the cursed earth. All the offspring of Adam would reproduce after His kind, and thus sin would run through the human race. (Rom. 5:12-13) As such, there was nothing produced by man that would be pleasing to God. The best efforts of man would still be the product of a fallen nature, called in the Bible, “the flesh.” No matter how intelligent, no matter how zealous, no matter how religious, all the works of man are from a fallen and polluted nature.

All that which was to bring glory to God was now tarnished and polluted. Man would “become unprofitable” to God. (Rom. 3:12) This was proven in the years to follow. Mankind became so wicked and evil that God repented that He had made man, and sent the flood to cleanse the earth. In His grace He saved a small remnant of people from the flood to carry on the human race—Noah and his family. (Gen. 6-9) However, since Noah was a descendent of Adam, his offspring was also produced of the flesh. Despite the institution of human government to control the behavior of man, failure once again came in and God once again brought judgement upon mankind, this time by confusing their language. (Gen. 11)



God then took up a special nation. They were to be His people, and He was to be their God. Beginning with Abraham, God formed the nation of Israel. Certainly such an arrangement would result in glory to God! To have the only God of heaven and earth as your God would no doubt stir the people to bring glory to Him!

God made Israel His personal vineyard (Is. 5:7). He brought them as a vine out of Egypt, and prepared a place for them. (Psa. 80: 8-19) He provided everything necessary for this vine to bring forth fruit for Him. He fenced it, planted it with the choicest vine, built a tower in its midst, and provided a winepress. (Isa. 5:2) After this He looked for grapes, but it only produced wild grapes. (Isa. 2) Despite all of His work with this nation it brought no glory to Him. In fact, God’s name was blasphemed among the Gentiles because of the sin of Israel. (Rom. 2:24)

Several times God sent the nation into captivity. Finally, He set them aside and established the Gentiles nations as the rulers of the world. (Dan. 2, 7, 8; Rom. 11) This set the stage for the True Vine that would come and bear fruit for God.

What was needed was a new beginning by which the line of fallen humanity from Adam could be broken. A race in which the fallen nature would not be reproduced in the offspring. This new Man and His race would then bring glory to God. This is exactly what was accomplished when God Himself took on humanity in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ!

Jesus Christ was born of a virgin, being conceived by the Holy Spirit, and thus the line from Adam had been broken. (Matt. 1:18-25) Jesus, the Second Man, or Last Adam was from heaven and was heavenly in character. (1 Cor. 15:45, 47), He pleased God the Father in all that He did. (Matt. 3:17) Of all those who walked on the face of the earth since Adam, Jesus was the only One Who always pleased God. (John 17:4)

When Jesus declared Himself to be the True Vine, He was stating that He was the one that would bring forth fruit unto God. He would bring glory to God here on earth. Like Israel, He too was taken out of Egypt, but unlike Israel He would accomplish the purpose for which He was sent. He glorified God on the earth, and those who abide in Him will likewise bring forth fruit to the glory of God. (John 15:5; 17:4) \*

# Failure in Convictions

Walter Gustafson

Some saints do not have convictions from the Word of God because they have never been taught them or because they have never discovered them for themselves. God says, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6). First Corinthians is a book of failure. Ten times we read, “Know ye not?” The Corinthians could have answered, at least about some of them, “Yes, we know;” but they did not know them as they ought to have known them, or their behavior would have been different! The real test of knowledge is not how much I know mentally (in my head). The real test of knowledge is how much my knowledge affects my actions. If truth does not affect my actions, then I do not know truth as I ought to know it. Our knowledge should control our behavior.

There are truths in the Word of God of which we need to be reminded. Peter said “I ... stir you up by putting you in remembrance” (2 Peter 1:13). Paul said “To write the same thing to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe” (Phil 3:1 ). “Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counselors there is safety” (Prov 11:14). In Jeremiah 23, God found fault with shepherds and prophets who had not helped God’s people. “I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied” (v21). The next verse is remarkable. “But if they had stood in My counsel, and had caused My people to hear My words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings” (v22).

God condescends to tell us why Judah went into captivity: “And the Lord God of their fathers sent unto them by His messengers, rising up betimes and sending; because He had compassion on His people, and on His dwelling place: but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words, and misused His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy” (2 Chron 36: 15-16). We can, however, get encouragement from these two solemn verses. As long as we are open to the Word of God there is always the possibility of recovery. But these verses warn us that, once we close our consciences to God’s Word, there is no longer any real hope of recovery.

There is a return to the Word of God in every recovery and revival recorded in the Bible. We read of the Passover in the revival of Hezekiah’s day, “For since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there was not the like kept in Jerusalem” (2 Chron 30: 26). But of the Passover kept during the revival of Josiah’s day we read, “And there was no Passover like to that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet” (2 Chron 35:18). We have to go further back in

Israel’s history to find a Passover like that kept in Josiah’s day because it was closer to the Word of God.

“And all the congregation that were come again out of the captivity made booths and sat under the booths: for since the days of Jeshua the son of Nun unto that day had not the children of Israel done so.” It is no wonder the verse closes with the words, “And there was very great gladness” (Neh. 8:17). May the Lord encourage every one of us to study the Word of God diligently so that we have the convictions which we should have based on the Word of God.

Some saints are afraid they will become extreme if they go diligently by the Word of God. I freely admit I could become extreme by going very close to one part of the Word of God and neglecting another part which should regulate how I obey the first part. But I hope my readers can see this would not be going too close to the Word of God. Rather, it is not going close enough. The closer we are to the Word of God, the more balanced we will be in holding and obeying its truth, for the Word of God is a balanced book.

We find an example of how balanced the Word of God is in 1 Kings 12. King Rehoboam made a fatal mistake by not going by the advice of the older men. But in the very next chapter (13), not 20 chapters later, the man of God from Judah lost his life because he took seriously the words of the old prophet of Bethel. “The hoary head is a crown of glory if it be found in the way of righteousness” (Prov 16:31).

How we get along with one another is part of the truth of God. The Lord Jesus was the only perfectly balanced man who ever lived, “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). He was the true meal offering made of fine flour with no unevenness. He possessed every desirable characteristic in perfect blend. Surely every believer wants to be more like Him!

We read these words about good king Josiah, “He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord and walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left” (2 Kings 22:2). Some may take these words as an encouragement to compromise, but 2 Kings 23:25 clearly shows that king Josiah excelled in doing according to all of God’s Word. He is the only king of whom it is written, he “turned not aside to the right hand or to the left.” \*

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## A Person

Oswald Chambers

There is a difference between devotion to a Person and devotion to principles or to a cause. Our Lord never proclaimed a Cause; He proclaimed personal devotion to Himself. To be a disciple, is to be a devoted love-slave of the Lord Jesus Christ. \*

## Knowledge Of God's Ways

William Kelly

Really deep knowledge of the ways of God is always accompanied by humility. There is no greater mistake, nor more unfounded in fact, than the supposition that spiritual intelligence puffs up; knowledge may, i.e. mere knowledge. But I speak of that spiritual understanding of the Word which flows from the sense of God's love and seeks to spread itself, if I may so say, just because it is Divine Love. \*

## True Self-Effacement

W. J. Hocking

Conformity to the mind of Christ is wrought in us by the agency of the Holy Spirit, as the sun in the heavens and the wind in the trees ripen the fruit to perfection and beauty. He takes of the things of Christ and shows them to us, until we are changed into the same image. As we become enraptured with the beauties of Christ, we forget ourselves. This is true self-effacement. \*

## The Christian Athlete

G. W. Kirby

The Christian athlete must learn to be temperate, self controlled, self-disciplined and must keep the rules of spiritual health and vitality. The successful athlete keeps his eyes on the finishing post; so, the Christian must look away from circumstances, from himself, and keep "looking unto Jesus." \*

## York Bible Study Program

December 9 **The Comings of Christ** Keith Keyser  
10 AM - 3PM – Lunch served.

Free 14 page booklet

## Baptism

Is it necessary to be saved?  
Write for a free copy.

## Milk & Honey Information

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## Learning To Love

A.T. Shearman

There is no more beautiful character in the whole of Scripture than Mary of Bethany. Her simplicity has great charm, her sincerity is beyond question, her silence is most eloquent. Luke's portrait shows her sitting at the feet of Jesus, listening to His word. John reveals her to us pouring out her box of costly ointment at the Saviour's feet. In both cases a commendation from Jesus is given. He made sure that we should know that both attitude and action were worthy of Him. Others may criticize, but the Master commends.

Mary *listened* to His word. What she heard profoundly affected her life. In *listening* she *learned to love*. Let us consider more closely these two virtues, listening and loving.

"Mary sat at Jesus' feet and heard his word," Luke 10:39. While Martha was bustling around, "cumbered about much serving," Mary has chosen a better part, that one thing needful that stirred her heart and enriched her life. Let us not be hard on Martha. Such motivations to serve are too rare today for us to criticize her. In both instances she was active for Him, wanting to share her home. But Mary's priorities were different. Her open ear unlocked for her treasures of His love, which inspired her devotion to respond. *In listening we learn*. It is a slow process, but vitally necessary. It is a humbling process, for by it we tap the resources of His fullness. And above all, in His desire for our well-being, it is that good part that shall not be taken away, v.42.

"Then took Mary a pound of ointment...very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus," John 12:3.

This is most significant. Let us consider the setting of it. They made Him a supper; Martha served; Lazarus sat at the table; but quietly and unobtrusively, Mary performed her act of *love*. Just a few words sum up the positions of Martha and Lazarus, although he had been raised from the grave. But Mary's action brings the whole scene alive. "Then took Mary...." The ointment was very costly. The container was broken, the contents poured out at His feet. The Savior was anointed and the whole house filled with the fragrance of the deed. Can we not say that only one who had *learned* the worth of Jesus, could show such *love* and devotion? It was symbolic of the ourpouring of her very heart. "*Waste*," some said; our Lord's reaction proved that this was *worship* to Him, under the very shadow of the cross. The lessons are not hard to learn. We must spend time *listening, learning*, before our response of *love* will flow out spontaneously and acceptably to our Lord. \*

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is  
of God: 1 John 4:7

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## Father knows best!

John Newton's Letters

"My times are in Your hands!" Psalm 31:15

This world seems all uncertainty – yet all is under the unspeakably gracious and infallibly wise direction of our heavenly Father.

Oh! This is the great thing to be desired – to be interested in the promise which states that all things shall work together for our good – to give us a fitness for the inheritance of the saints in light, so that at last we may attain to His eternal joy. That will make rich amends for all the trials we can meet with along the way.

Our heavenly Father knows best, what is good for us. Oh, for grace to yield ourselves simply and cheerfully to His wise management. Hitherto He has helped us, and all His paths have been mercy and truth. What reasons have we to praise Him for the past – and to trust Him for the rest!

The Lord knows, and He permits me to tell Him what I feel or fear or wish. But when I have done so, it befits me to submit all to Him and to say, "Not my will – but may Your will be done." I aim to say this from my heart, and to account it not only my duty – but my privilege to prefer His choice to my own.

The Lord graciously adjusts all our concerns – and it is our privilege to peaceably and thankfully submit to His judicious management. Our times are in His hands. Vastly more than we are aware of, depends upon the Lord's wise controlling of all our affairs. Is it not a comfort to a blind man, to have an unfailing guide whom he may fully and safely trust?

May we be willing to leave all our concerns in His skillful and faithful hands – to live to Him and for Him today, and to trust Him for the events of tomorrow. \*

## The Permanent And The Passing Away

Author Unknown

Doubting and inconsistency and unbelief are but passing away. Sorrow and pain and trial are not permanent. A few more turns of the clock and swings of the pendulum, and then farewell forever to sin and failures. Farewell to doubts and fears—a final farewell. We are to be conformed to the image of His Son. We shall be ushered into the region of light and of eternal realities. Then good-bye Faith. Farewell Hope. I am launched out into one great eternal sea of love. Faith and Hope make very good companions on the road, but not for eternity. They go with us to the gate, but Love is inside. God is Love. We shall be plunged into the ocean of love, lost in it, never to come out. It is shoreless, bottomless, and infinite. We shall soon be in a region where we shall know as known, and there will not be thought or a feeling, which will be unlike Christ. No trouble or sorrow, all will have for ever passed away. The first thousand years in glory will roll along with Hallelujah to the Lamb! Another thousand comes, and we are still praising the Lord together. The pendulum of praise never ceases to swing. He will be the object of our adoring praise and worship for ever. Eternity! Eternity! Eternity! How long art thou? Not too long to gaze on the Lamb. Then the permanent. Nothing but Christ – the Christ of God, forever, forever, and forever. \*

### 2017 Receipts

A 2017 tax-deductible receipt will be given for funds which are received by December 30, 2017. A 2018 tax-deductible receipt will be given for funds received after this date. Our thanks to all who have helped this last year with the various expenses associated with the ministries of Spread The Word.