

The Branch Life of the Believer

Lesson 1

Spiritual experience as revealed in the Bible is on a continuum starting with knowledge and ending with ultimate sanctification. Do you think that you have appropriated for yourself every spiritual experience that God desires for you as you mature in Christ?

I. Introduction

- a. For the purposes of our discussion today let us say that there are **five** different levels of appropriation of spiritual experience:
 1. **Knowledge**. This is where I read something and accept it as true. I.E. Jesus was an historical person who died near Jerusalem a little over 2000 years ago.
 2. **Faith**. This is a Biblical truth which is imparted by the Holy Spirit to me and I appropriate it for myself. I.E. Jesus Christ died for my sins.
 3. **Experience**. This is where I cooperate with the Holy Spirit to perform some Biblical command. I.E. I forgive another for some offence that they have committed against me.
 4. **Meditation**. Initiated by God, this is where I transcend earthly sensory boundaries and the activities of my brain to gain some spiritual insight and clarity on some spiritual truth that God wishes to impart to me. I.E. Paul's ascent into the third heaven.
 5. **Ultimate** sanctification. This is a level of spiritual appropriation that all born again believers will one day experience when we have put on immortality. I.E. Then we will see Him face to face.
- b. It was the belief of Andrew **Murray**, a missionary to South Africa in the late 1800's who wrote "Abide in Christ" from which this series is largely taken, that believers can appropriate the "life of Christ within" only through Spirit induced meditation.
- c. The purpose of this series on John 15:1-10 will shed light on **what** to meditate upon but will not teach meditation.

John 15:1-10 I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. ² Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. ³ Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. ⁴ Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. ⁵ 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. ⁶ If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. ⁷ If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. ⁸ Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. ⁹ As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. ¹⁰ If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. KJV

II. Experiencing the True Vine

- a. All earthly creation is the shadow of a heavenly reality-the expression, in created, visible forms, of the **invisible** glory of God. Rom 1:20 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: KJV
- b. The true Life and the Truth are in Heaven; on earth we have **figures** and shadows of the heavenly truths. When Jesus says: "I am the true Vine," He tells us that all the vines of earth are pictures or emblems of Himself.
- c. He is the divine reality, of which vines are the created expression. To some extent they all point to Him, and preach Him, and reveal Him. If you desire to know Jesus, **study the vine**.
- d. In this series my prayer for all of us is that we would come and gaze on the heavenly Vine till our eyes turn from **all else** to admire Him.
- e. Figuratively, this will require that we come and be still under the shadow of the true Vine, and rest under it from the heat of the day. Literally it means that we must **free** ourselves from our daily concerns.
- f. Let us take, and **eat** of the heavenly fruit of the true Vine, and let our souls say along with Solomon: Song 2:3 *I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. KJV*
- g. However, spiritual **enjoyment** of Christ as the True Vine is a heavenly mystery. It is not imparted by mere study.
- h. Study; by itself **will not** teach us to know what the heavenly Vine really is, nor will it appropriate its cooling shade, nor will it allow us to taste the life-giving fruit of the Vine.
- i. Indeed, to experience this aspect of the hidden life-giving mystery comes by revelation which only Jesus Himself, by His Holy Spirit unfolds and **imparts** to us.
- j. He is the True vine; the living Lord, who Himself speaks, and gives, and works all that He has for us to **experience** as we grow and mature in Christ.
- k. If we desire to know the meaning and power of Christ as the True Vine, we must **realize** that we will not find it by thinking about it or studying it.
- l. While this activity on our part may help to show us what is available from Him and may awaken a **desire** to know Him more fully, our effort cannot show us the Vine. Jesus alone can reveal Himself to the seeking one.

The Branch Life of the Believer

Lesson 1

- m. He does this through His Holy Spirit who opens the eyes of the **blind** to gaze upon Him. He opens the heart to receive Himself. Such understanding is His to give and He must Himself speak the word to you and to me.
- n. In order to enjoy Christ as the True vine we must realize that such enjoyment is only possible by **transcending** our thinking, studying and concentration on the subject.
- o. So, what am I to do if I want the mystery in all its heavenly beauty and blessing, **opened** up to me? In this series we will review this passage which can only awaken your desire to know Christ as the True Vine.
- p. Given this preparatory **step** Murray instructs us to then “bow down and be still, worship and wait, until the divine Word enters your heart, and you feel His holy presence with you and in you”.
- q. Murray also says that as we worship and wait that the “overshadowing of His holy love will give you the perfect calm and rest of knowing that the Vine will **do all**”.
- r. He speaks, listen, not to His words only, but to Himself, as He whispers secretly day by day: "I am the true Vine! All that the Vine can ever be to its branch, "***I will be to you.***"

III. Lessons from the Branch Life

- a. Without sap the branches cannot flourish or even exist. **Vitality** is essential to a Christian. There must be *life*—a vital principle infused into us by God the Holy Ghost, or we cannot be branches of the Lord.
- b. Claiming the mere name of Christian is but a dead thing. We must be filled with the spirit of divine life. This life is **mysterious**. Rom 8:9 Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.
- c. Most of us do not understand the circulation of the sap, what causes it to rise and what causes it to descend again. So too, the spiritual life within us is beyond our understanding. Our **lack** of understanding does not impede its operation however.
- d. Regeneration is wrought by the Holy Spirit entering into man and becoming man's life. It is by this divine life that the believer **feeds** upon the flesh and blood of Christ. It is by this feeding that the believer is sustained by Christ our divine food. John 6:53 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.
- e. He is both our salvation and our sustenance. Each time we partake in the elements of **communion** we commemoratively eat His body and drink His blood. In this sense too, He is our True Vine.
- f. As the sap is life to the vine so too in a very real sense Christ is life to the believer. Just what this means is obscure to us, a spiritual mystery at best to most of us. Christ **as life** is what we seek to appropriate more fully.
- g. The roots of the vine go searching through the soil, but we cannot **see** them suck out the various gases, nor do we see them transmute the mineral into the vegetable; this work is done at a microscopic level.
- h. The branch merely **abides** in the vine in order to appropriate this beneficial connection with its life giving source. This too is the sole requirement of the believer in Christ “*abide in me and I in you*”.
- i. Our **root** is Christ Jesus, and our life is hid in Him; this is the mystery of the Lord. Yet this mystery is the centerpiece of the Christian life operating unseen just as the sap operating unseen is the life of the vine itself.
- j. The sap in the vine is **permanently active**. In the Christian, the divine life is always active and always full of energy—not always in fruit-bearing, but in inward operations as well.
- k. The believer's **graces**, are in constant motion, ebbing and flowing from faith to faith, experience by experience.
- l. The spiritual life of the believer never ceases to palpitate within. Even though we are not always working for God; our spirit is always **living** upon Him.
- m. As the sap **manifests** itself in producing the foliage and fruit of the vine, so with a truly healthy Christian, his acquired grace is externally manifested in both his inner walk and in his external manner of life as well.

IV. Application

- a. Holy Lord Jesus, the heavenly Vine of God's own planting, I beseech You, reveal Yourself to my soul.
- b. Let the Holy Spirit, not only in thought, but in experience, give me to know all that You, the Son of God, are to me as the true Vine. May such understanding change me in my walk with You.