

Nuggets and Gems from the Bible

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OF THE
TRIUNE GOD
IN THE
DIVINE DISPENSATION

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In this booklet we come to [John 15](#). We should not consider this chapter as separate from [chapters fourteen](#) and [sixteen](#) because all three chapters are one message given by the Lord Jesus before He was betrayed and arrested. There is no doubt that [chapter fifteen](#) is the continuation of [chapter fourteen](#) where we see the mutual abode, the mingling of divinity with humanity. Once we understand [John 14](#) we are prepared to consider [John 15](#).

Most Christians are very familiar with [John 15](#), a wonderful chapter about the Lord as the vine and us as the branches. Apparently, it is easy for us to understand this chapter because we know what a vine is, what branches are, and what is the relationship between a vine and its branches. However, [John 15](#) is possibly the deepest chapter in the New Testament. If we are to properly and adequately understand the deeper meaning of this chapter, we must understand the central

thought of God and the intention of the Holy Spirit in writing the Gospel of John. This Gospel reveals that the Lord Jesus is the expression of God, that He is the very God expressed in the form of man. He was expressed in this way that we might take Him as our life and our everything. His intention is to work Himself into us until He becomes our life and everything.

Chapters three through eleven reveal that He can meet all of our needs by becoming our life. Chapter twelve shows us the issue and multiplication of His being life to us. Chapter thirteen indicates the way to maintain our fellowship in life. Then chapter fourteen unfolds to us that He can work Himself into us by His death and resurrection and by His being transfigured from the flesh into the Spirit. By the time of chapter fourteen He has wrought Himself into us through the Spirit of reality. Now He is our life and our essence. He is living within us, waiting for us to cooperate with Him that He might reveal and manifest Himself to us more and more. The Father also comes in with Him to visit us, stay with us and make His abode with us (14:23). In other words, the Father in Him and through the Spirit will be absolutely mingled with us. The Father in the Son and through the Spirit will

be our abode, and we shall be the abode of the Triune God. In this way, the Triune God and we, we and the Triune God, will be built together, that is, God and man, man and God, will be built up together as one. This wonderful oneness is the central thought of God. The ultimate intention of God in the whole universe is that the Father in the Son as the Spirit might be wrought into us and mingled with us until the Triune God and humanity become a mutual abode. This is the background of [chapter fifteen](#).

The revelation of God in [chapter fifteen](#) is meaningful, profound, and all-inclusive. The thought and meaning of this revelation are very deep. The first thing to be pointed out in this chapter is that the Triune God is clearly revealed. God the Father is revealed as the husbandman who is related to a husbandry, a plantation, or a harvest. A husbandman is the source, the originator, the founder, and the planter of a husbandry. He is one who engages in an enterprise. The whole universe is the enterprise of the Father. In other words, the Father has a divine plan, an eternal purpose, and He wants to accomplish the intention behind His purpose. This is what is meant by the Father's being the husbandman. He is the husbandman of the vineyard who plans to

carry out a certain purpose. He is the source, the founder, and the first one to accomplish certain things according to His mind and purpose. Furthermore, as the details found in other parts of the Scriptures disclose, it is the Father's pleasure that all that He is, all the riches of His divine nature, and all the fullness of the Godhead be the riches of the vine. All that the Father is, all that the Father has, all the riches of the Father's divine life, and all the fullness of the Godhead are in the vine. This is all for the vine which is the embodiment of it all. The vine is the embodiment of the fullness of the riches of divinity and of the Godhead. All that God the Father is and has is embodied in the vine.

This chapter not only reveals the Father but also the Son as the vine. As the vine, the Son is the center. The whole universe is pictured as a vineyard, and centered in this vineyard is the vine who is the Son. God the Son is the center. Everything is centralized in Him. He, as the vine, is the center of the vineyard. We have seen that God the Father is the source and founder, and now we see that God the Son is the center. Everything that God the Father is and has is for the center, is embodied in the center, and is expressed through the center. God the Father is expressed,

manifested, and glorified through the vine. So God the Father is the source, and God the Son is the center.

Finally, in the last two verses of this chapter the Spirit is revealed. Here God the Spirit is called the Spirit of reality. This means that the Spirit is the reality. Whatever God the Father is in the Son, and whatever He has centralized in the Son will be realized by the Spirit. All that God the Father is in the Son is a reality in God the Spirit. Everything centralized in the Son is revealed, testified, witnessed, and realized by the Spirit of reality. Therefore, God the Father is the source, the founder; God the Son is the center, the embodiment, and the manifestation; and God the Spirit is the realization, the reality. This is exceedingly profound and deep.

Moreover, in this revelation there is not only the Triune God but also the Body of Christ. The Body of Christ is the church. In this revelation the church is likened to the branches of a vine. The branches of a vine are simply the body of the vine. If you take away the branches from the vine, the vine will have no body. Without the branches, the vine has nothing remaining except the root and the stem. Hence, the branches are the body of the vine.

If we look to the Lord, we shall see what a wonderful and mysterious matter this is. All that God the Father is and has is centralized and embodied in God the Son, and all of this is realized in God the Spirit. Now all of this has been wrought into us and will be expressed and testified through us. [John 15](#) has four very important items: God the Father as the source and founder, God the Son as the center and manifestation, God the Spirit as the reality and realization, and the branches as the Body, the corporate expression. The branches are very vital, for they express what God is in Christ as the Spirit. Without the branches there can be no full expression. The full expression depends upon the branches, the Body, for what God is in the Son and as the Spirit will be expressed by the branches, the Body. All that God the Father is and has is in the Son, all that the Son is and has is realized as the Spirit, and all that the Spirit has is in the Body, in the church, in us. In other words, God the Father as the source is embodied in God the Son as the center who is now realized as God the Spirit as the reality. All that the Spirit has is expressed in us, that is, in the branches, the church. The Triune God is expressed, manifested, and glorified in the church.

In [15:1-11](#) we see that the vine and the branches are an organism to glorify the Father by expressing the riches of the divine life. Some readers of this booklet might be bothered by the word organism; it may sound quite strange to their understanding to hear of the organism of the Triune God in the divine dispensation. But we are used to saying that the church, the Body of Christ, is not an organization but an organism. What is the difference between an organization and an organism? A table, for example, is an organization, for many pieces of wood are assembled to form one entity. Why is a table an organization and not an organism? Because in the table as a unit there is not one organ. There are no organs in a table because there is no life in a table. Apparently, our body is also an organization. However, it is much more than an organization because we have both organs and life. Since our body has both organs and life, it is an organism, not merely an organization. In like manner, the church, the Body of Christ, is an organism.

What is the Body of Christ? It is the mutual abode, the mingling of divinity with humanity. As we have seen, there is such a mingling in [chapter fourteen](#). This mingling is the mutual

abode of God and man. This mutual abode, this mingling of divinity with humanity, being full of organs and life, is an organism.

In [John 15](#) this organism is likened to a vine tree. The grape vine is used as a figure of this wonderful organism. Within this vine tree we have the tree itself and all of its branches. The Lord Jesus said that the vine tree is just Himself ([v. 1](#)). He is the tree and we are the branches of this tree. By this clear picture we can see that we are the branching out of the tree, for the branches are the branching out of the vine tree. If you were to cut off the branches, you would just have a bare tree without branches and there would be no branching out of the vine. But today this universal vine tree has many branches, and these branches are simply His branching out. When the Lord Jesus was on earth, He was just a small man living in a certain place. But look at His branching out today: He has parts in Washington, D.C., New York, Los Angeles, London, Frankfurt, Tokyo, Manila, Taipei, Hong Kong, and throughout the world. Praise the Lord that throughout the whole earth we see the branching out of this vine tree! This is not an organization; it is an organism that has life with many organs, organic systems, and organic elements growing in it.

The vine and the branches are an organism to glorify the Father. What is the meaning of the word glorify here? It means to have the intent, content, the inner life, and the inner riches released from within and expressed. The vine and the branches are an organism to glorify the Father, to have the intent, the content, the inner life, and the inner riches released and expressed from within. As an organism to glorify the Father, the vine and the branches express the riches of the divine life. When the vine tree bears clusters of grapes, that is the time when the riches of the divine life are expressed. This expression is the glorification of the Father because the Father is the divine life. The Father is the source and the substance of the vine tree. Without the fruit, the essence, substance, and life of the vine tree would be concealed, hidden, and confined. However, the riches of the inner life of the vine are expressed in the clusters of fruit. I say again that to express the inner life in this way is to release the divine substance from within the vine. This is the glorification of the Father.

THE DIVINE DISPENSATION

To have the vine and the branches as an organism to glorify the Father is the divine

dispensation. Here the word dispensation does not mean an age or a period of time. It means dispensing. This word has the same meaning as the word economy. *Oikonomia*, the Greek word for dispensation or administration, has been anglicized as the word economy. What is this *oikonomia*, this economy? It is a governmental administration, that is, a divine dispensation into mankind. This divine dispensation is God's economy. According to the Greek, this word is used clearly in [1 Timothy 1:4](#). However, the King James Version rendered it as "godly edifying." It should be translated as God's economy or as God's dispensation.

In [Ephesians 3:10-11](#) we read of the eternal purpose of God. The words eternal purpose are a biblical term. According to modern English it should be eternal plan. In eternity past, God made a plan for eternity future. Hence, this plan is an eternal plan. This plan is to have a large number of human beings regenerated with the divine life, become the Body of Christ, and express all the fullness of the Godhead embodied in Christ. This is the eternal plan, the plan that God made in eternity past for eternity future. We need to know [1 Timothy 1:4](#) and

[Ephesians 3:10-11](#) very well. We need to become more familiar with these verses.

This organism of the vine and the branches is the expression of God the Father in the Son through His Body, the church. In this regard we need to consider [Genesis 1:26](#). Have you ever thought that the church is found in [Genesis 1:26](#)? The church is there. The expression of the Father is also there. If you were to ask how this can be so, I would reply that the expression is the image. God created man in His own image. Eventually, man became the expression of God. Then how about the church? Please notice that the man mentioned in [Genesis 1:26](#) is not an individual man but a corporate man. God did not create millions of men; He created a corporate man who includes millions of persons. Properly speaking, the man mentioned in [Genesis 1:26](#) is mankind, and mankind is not individual but corporate. What is the church? The church is a selected part of mankind. We may take as an illustration of this definition of the church the example of the wood used in making furniture. Although I may collect much material for the purpose of making a table, eventually I shall only select the best part of this material to use in making the table. After the table is made, I will cast the left-overs aside.

I would only keep and treasure the table that I have made. Mankind is the material that God is using to make the church. We do not know how much of this material has been sacrificed. God has selected only a part of mankind to be regenerated and become the church.

The church is a corporate entity. This corporate entity was sown as a seed in [Genesis 1:26](#) and will be reaped as a harvest in [Revelation 21](#) where we see the New Jerusalem as the ultimate consummation of the organism that expresses the divine image. In [Genesis 1:26](#) we see a corporate man made in God's image; in [Revelation 21](#) we see the New Jerusalem, the corporate expression of the image of God. The seed is sown in Genesis, the harvest is reaped in [Revelation 21](#), and the crop is here on earth today.

THE VINE, GOD THE SON

As the vine, the Son is the center of God's economy. God the Son is the center of God's business, of God's operation, of God's enterprise. God has an operation in the universe. This operation is His divine business. The Son as the vine is the very center of this enterprise.

This vine is the embodiment and manifestation of the Godhead. [Colossians 2:9](#) says that in

the Son the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily. [John 1:18](#) says, “No one has ever seen God; the only begotten Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.” In [Colossians 2:9](#) we see the Son as the embodiment of the Godhead, and in [John 1:18](#) we see Him as the declaration, the manifestation of God. So the very Son of God, who is God’s universal vine, is God’s embodiment and manifestation.

This vine is an organism full of life, like the tree of life ([Gen. 2:9](#)). It is not an organization without life, like the tower of Babel ([Gen. 11:4, 9](#)). The tree of life is an organism, and the tower of Babel is an organization. Which do you prefer to have—the tree of life or the tower of Babel? The tower of Babel was great and high, but the tree of life was probably the same height as we are. If the tree of life had been too high, it would have been awkward for people to reach it. According to [John 6](#), the people tried to force Christ to be a king. This means that they wanted to make Him a tower. But He preferred to be the bread of life. This means that He wanted to be the tree of life.

The vine is very good to propagate life and to multiply life. To propagate life means to spread life widely, and to multiply life means to reproduce life. With every kind of vegetable life we see the

matters of propagation and multiplication. One grain of wheat is sown into the earth and grows into thirty, sixty, or a hundred other grains. This is both the propagation and the multiplication of life. If we consider deeply the matter of the Lord's likening Himself to a vine, we shall realize that of all the plants, flowers, grasses, and trees, only the vine is the best plant to show the propagation and multiplication of life. A vine is not noted for its blossoms or its materials; it is noted for its manifestation of the riches of life. Once a vine is full of ripened fruit, you can easily discern the riches of life. So the vine produces life. The Lord is not life for people to appreciate as blossoms; neither is He life to be used as some kind of material. Rather, the Lord is life to bring forth life and to produce life.

The propagation and multiplication of life are to express life for the glorification of the Father. When the life of the vine is expressed through the branches in its propagation and multiplication, the Father is glorified, because what the Father is in the riches of His life is expressed in the propagation and multiplication of the vine.

As we have pointed out, the vine tree is good for neither blossoms nor materials. A vine has no flowers for us to appreciate. I have heard of

people going to see the beautiful cherry blossoms in Washington, D.C., but I have never heard of them going to see the blossoms of a vine. A vine is not noted for its blossoms. As a child, I was raised near a vineyard. Every year I saw the grapevines there, but I could hardly see any blossoms. The blossoms of a grapevine are very tiny and not at all colorful.

Neither is the vine tree good for materials ([Ezek. 15:2-3](#)). No furniture is made of wood from a vine tree. Neither is the wood of a vine tree good for making columns, beams, posts, or mantles. You will never see a building that has been constructed with the wood from a vine tree. The vine tree is only good for bearing fruit. It is not good for blossoms or materials.

It is the same with the church. If you come to the church with the intention of seeing cherry blossoms, you will not see any. Likewise, if you come to the church to select material that is good for building furniture and worldly organizations, you will only find something that is good for bearing fruit. We were reborn to bear fruit.

We all have been ruined. We have been ruined for blossoms and we have been ruined for materials. We are good for nothing on this earth. If you are still good for something, it means that

you are still worldly. We are not good for education, business, or politics. We are not even good for religion or for being a pastor. Forty-five years ago I was completely ruined. Now I am a useless person who is good for nothing. As far as human society and religious organizations are concerned, I am a waste. How about you? Praise the Lord that we are all a waste—a waste because of Jesus and a waste for Jesus. We all have been ruined by Him. Are you still able to be a good professor? The only kind of professor you should be is a wasted professor. Can you still be a good businessman or farmer? You must be a wasted businessman or farmer. We have been ruined and are good for nothing except fruit-bearing, for expressing the Father in the Son. In the church you will not see blossoms or materials. You will only see small men who are good for nothing except for bearing fruit.

THE HUSBANDMAN, GOD THE FATHER

The husbandman is God the Father. The Father as the husbandman is the source, the author, the planner, the planter, the life, the substance, the soil, the water, the air, the sunshine, and everything to the vine. As we have already pointed out, whatever God the Father is, has, and

can do has all been embodied in the vine tree. The Son as the vine is the center of God's economy and the embodiment of all the riches of the Father. The Father, by cultivating the Son, works Himself with all of His riches into this vine, and eventually the vine expresses the Father through its branches in a corporate way. This is the Father's economy in the universe.

In the Old Testament, the children of Israel were a vine in the eyes of God ([Psa. 80:8](#); cf. [Isa. 5:2](#); [Jer. 2:21](#); [Ezek. 19:10](#); [15:2](#)). But Israel failed God as the vine, for they did not give God the opportunity to express Himself through them. Although God tried to express Himself through them, they failed Him. Finally, in the New Testament the real Israel came. The Lord Jesus as the true Israel is the true vine who can fully express God. This true vine is the very embodiment of God and the full manifestation of God. What God is and what God has have been embodied in this true vine and fully manifested through this true vine.

THE BRANCHES, THE BELIEVERS IN THE SON

No plant other than the vine tree can illustrate adequately the living relationship between

us and the Lord. We are the branches of the vine. What kind of relationship does this suggest to you? The branches are good for nothing except to express the vine. All that the vine is and has is expressed through the branches. Individually, the branches are the regenerated ones. Corporately, they are the church, the Body of Christ ([Eph. 1:22-23](#)). The branches, the believers in the Son, are for the expression of the Son with the Father through the fruit-bearing.

THE FRUIT-BEARING

What is fruit-bearing? It is the overflow of the riches of the inner life. Do not try to bring people to Christ by your own effort. Do not use schemes to win souls. Bearing fruit is a matter of the overflow of your inner life. We need continuously to enjoy Christ as everything to us. Then we shall have an abundance of inner life. Out of this abundance of inner life there will be a flow that will reach others, penetrating into their lives. This flow will bear much fruit. It is not just preaching or soul-winning; it must be fruit-bearing by the overflow of the riches of the inner life. This kind of fruit-bearing is the manifestation of the inner life. The inner life of the vine is the riches of all that the Father is and has.

This is to be manifested by the fruit-bearing of the vine. Hence, the vine's fruit-bearing is to express the Father in the Son. All the branches that bear the fruit are related one to another. By their abiding in the vine, none of them bears fruit in the way of being separate from the tree. All of them bear fruit by the same life that circulates in them. Apparently, each one of them bears fruit separately; actually, all of them bear fruit corporately in one tree and with one life. Today our fruit-bearing must be like this, in one Body and with one life.

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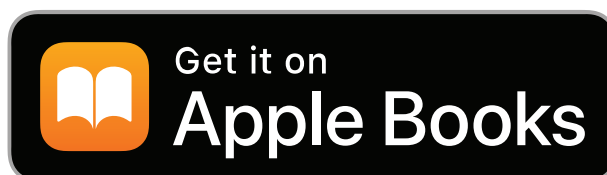
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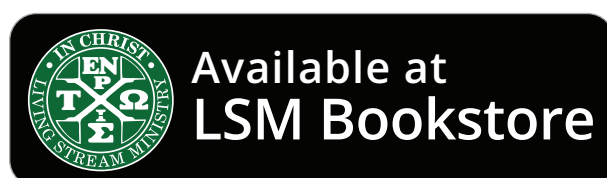
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