

## Unity of the Vine and the Branches

By Ginny Larsen

*“You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”*  
(2 Timothy 2:1)

*“And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.”*  
(John 1:16)

*“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”*  
(John 15:4-5)

*“As the blood of the body, though flowing from the heart, belongs equally to every member, so the influences of grace are the inheritance of every saint united to the Lamb; and herein there is a sweet communion between Christ and his Church, inasmuch as they both receive the same grace. Christ is the head upon which the oil is first poured; but the same oil runs to the very skirts of the garments, so that the meanest saint has an unction of the same costly moisture as that which fell upon the head. This is true communion when the sap of grace flows from the stem to the branch, and when it is perceived that the stem itself is sustained by the very nourishment which feeds the branch. As we day by day receive grace from Jesus, and more constantly recognize it as coming from him, we shall behold him in communion with us, and enjoy the felicity of communion with him.”*

(From *Morning and Evening* by Charles Spurgeon, from March 15)

### What is Unity?

There are those who think they have unity outside of abiding in the true Vine, Who is Christ Himself. They have a form of "unity," but it is not the unity of the Spirit, which we have only as we are placed into Christ, as a branch that drinks and receives life from that Vine. People can create unity from many different common goals. They may have political goals or religious goals, and they may want to join together for a common cause, but in the Body of Christ, there is a unity that has been made by Jesus Christ. He was crucified for our sins, He rose again for our life, and only as we partake of Him through the Holy Spirit He has given is there unity that comes from abiding in Him.

We may disagree with one another on issues, and not all of us see eye-to-eye, but in Christ, there is a unity for those who are born of His Spirit, cleansed by His blood, and sharing in His Body. We are united under one Head: Jesus Christ Himself. We draw our life from the same Head, receive the same grace, and all our giftings come from the same Spirit for the same purpose: His glory. Unity can only come as the truth of Christ is believed in our hearts. True unity can be realized only if we are founded on that truth, which unites us to our Head.

We abide in Jesus and His unity when we take in His Word and believe it and obey it. “Good feelings” do not cause unity with Him or one another. Overlooking sin and excusing it does not enable us to have unity nor is it agreeing with each other on a few issues while overlooking other

important truths. Unity is the truth of Jesus Christ. Who He is, what He did, and our obedience of faith enables us to have unity first with Him, the Head, and then with the rest of the Body. As the Truth is shared, all receive the life that only comes from the True Vine flowing to the branches. As we abide in His Word, meditating on it and observing all that we learn of Him, trusting in Him, His life fills us and automatically will produce fruit in our lives. That fruit will all be characteristic of the Vine it comes from. We cannot have unity with those of a tree or vine other than Jesus. *"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them by their fruits"* (Matthew 7:15-20).

### Coexist? Or Unity in Christ?

Today, there is a movement toward "unity" that unites around everything else but the truth of God's Word or Jesus Christ. It seeks to unite Christians with Muslims, Buddhists, cults, and every other religion, ideology, and philosophy. The purpose of this movement is to form a one world religion. The Bible calls this movement *"the great Harlot"* (Revelation 17). Bumper stickers now tell us to "coexist" and show symbols for each religion. Yet, the one thing they know they cannot coexist with is the truth. This is why they must unite in wiping out truth. They think they can have unity and peace if they can wipe out the foundation of truth and build another foundation, but any other foundation besides the truth of Jesus Christ is no foundation at all but rather sinking sand for those who try to build on it.

In Christian churches everywhere, congregations are told the Word of God is not relevant for our day. We are told that to be relevant to the world, we now need to go outside of it. Mystical experiences, false signs and wonders (2 Thessalonians 2:9), and extra-Biblical revelations give a false sense that God is with them in this. We are told we need to "love one another" and not judge, but when you present truth, they will claim you are judging them. Yet, it is the truth itself that judges them - not any person - because truth exposes lies. They will not mention the Gospel, the blood of Jesus, sin and the human condition, or why we need salvation and what we need to be saved from. We quickly learn that truth itself must never be presented if we are to all coexist in the "unity" of "love and acceptance" without the Gospel. The unity that comes out of this becomes a united effort against God Himself and His Word.

The unity that comes in Christ cannot also unite itself with the world or false religion. It has to separate itself from the world and hold fast to the Vine, receiving nothing else but what comes from the Vine. If it does receive from the world, it cannot be united with the Vine itself, let alone the branches that are united to the Vine. *"Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, 'I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty'"* (2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

## We Are Of One Seed

The unity we have in Christ is a family unity. We are all of one seed (1 Peter 1:23; 1 John 3:9). Just as in our earthly families we have one father, who has given his seed, we are all of the same seed in Christ. We are of "imperishable" seed. It is eternal. It does not ever perish or become corrupted. It is everlasting and manifests itself in us by the nature it gives us. We are born of righteous seed and receive a nature that does not want to sin and cannot continue in sin. It is against our nature to do so even though we still have this nature of our flesh that we battle with. We feel it in ourselves, in our new nature, in that Spirit that dwells in us when we sin, and we grieve over our sin and hate it and turn back to our Abba, crying out to Him. We go to our Advocate to be cleansed, as we agree with Him in His hatred for that sin. As we grow in Christ, that new nature is formed in us more and more and becomes more evident. We see more and more our own helplessness in ourselves to be anything but abiding in the Vine. The more we all abide as a Body in that Vine, the more true unity in Him is manifest in us all together. We see what we are being made to be – a dwelling place for God! *"In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit"* (Ephesians 2:22).

## Unity Through Christ Alone

There is no unity in our flesh when it tries to "get along," but as we acknowledge the inadequacy of our flesh and consider ourselves "crucified with Christ," then we are alive unto God, and His nature of love comes forth in us (1 Corinthians 13). God cannot dwell with false religion, He cannot dwell with sin, He cannot dwell with anyone that is not of His own seed and righteousness. He cannot dwell with human self-righteousness, because it is corruptible. Self-centered attempts at goodness cannot have communion with Him. Nothing will please God but faith (Hebrews 11:6). That faith has to be a uniting with Him in His death and resurrection through faith in His righteousness alone and in all He is and said He will do. It has to be a leaving behind of our own self-righteousness, our own ways, and what we hold onto as our life in this world. It is no longer "I" who live but *"Christ Who lives in me"* (Galatians 2:20).

This is why we take communion in church – we are acknowledging the communion of the Body of Christ. We are acknowledging His death, atonement for sin, and His resurrection from death. We are acknowledging what He did for each of us and as a whole – we acknowledge that our righteousness does not come from ourselves but from Jesus and what He did. Our unity with Christ and one another comes from Jesus and what He did. We acknowledge His promise to bring all of that to fulfillment in Him when He returns to take us to be with Him. Now, we walk by faith, keeping that communion with Him, abiding in Him, and sharing communion with one another, established in His unity and none other.

*"You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus"* (2 Timothy 2:1). In this grace that flows from Christ, we are strengthened. We are strengthened in our own life as we are freed from our sin nature. We are strengthened each time that grace works in us to manifest the nature of Christ in us and put to death our flesh. We are growing from grace first received to more and more grace working in us as we abide in Him and His Word and as we let His life work in us. That grace then flows to the whole Body of Believers and brings more grace and life and fruit. The Unity of the Body of Christ grows stronger and healthier. From His fullness, then, we are all receiving grace upon grace.

Abba, may Your life-giving sap flow through us all daily and enable us to see all that we are being brought to as one Body in Christ and the ultimate unity we will know in Heaven!