

## Grapes and Olives – Better when pressed!

**Philippians 2:12-18** *So then, my dear friends, just as you have always obeyed, not only in my presence but even more in my absence, continue working out your salvation with awe and reverence, for the one bringing forth in you both the desire and the effort - for the sake of his good pleasure - is God. Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may be blameless and pure, children of God without blemish though you live in a crooked and perverse society, in which you shine as lights in the world by holding on to the word of life so that on the day of Christ I will have a reason to boast that I did not run in vain nor labor in vain. But even **if I am being poured out like a drink offering** on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice together with all of you. And in the same way you also should be glad and rejoice together with me.*

If we look closely at Scripture we find that the Holy Spirit is often likened to new wine. It is clear that God can and does “pour out” His Holy Spirit upon men.

**John 15:5** *“I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me - and I in him - bears much fruit, because apart from me you can accomplish nothing”.*

We are in many places in Scripture encouraged to ‘bear fruit’. The fruit of the vine is a grape. The question is “*What good are grapes to anyone?*”

In Scripture God clearly likens His church to a vineyard and expects fruit. But then what’s the **winepress** for if it’s only grapes that He’s after? Listen to this .....

**Isaiah 5:1-2** *I will sing to my love a song to my lover about his vineyard. My love had a vineyard on a fertile hill. He built a hedge around it, removed its stones, and planted a vine. He built a tower in the middle of it, and constructed a **winepress**. He waited for it to produce edible grapes, but it produced sour ones instead.*

**Matthew 21:33-39** *“Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a fence around it, dug a pit for its **winepress**, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenant farmers and went on a journey. When the harvest time was near, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his portion of the crop. But the tenants seized his slaves, beat one, killed another, and stoned another. Again he sent other slaves, more than the first, and they treated them the same way. Finally he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come, let’s kill him and get his inheritance!’ So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?” They said to him, “He will utterly destroy those evil men! Then he will lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him his portion at the harvest.”*

Grapes at their very best are made into **wine**. God clearly didn’t build a cool-house as a grape store, but a winepress for a purpose!

If you are not very careful and actually **crush** your grapes then the wine will be bitter from the tiny seeds inside the grape. The grapes must be carefully pressed so that only the juice runs out.

This new wine is then left in properly prepared containers (!) until it is ready to drink – or should I say “be poured out”!

**2 Corinthians 4:7-11** *But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that the extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are experiencing trouble on every side, but are not crushed; we are perplexed, but not driven to despair; we are persecuted, but not abandoned; we are knocked down, but not destroyed, always carrying around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our body. For we who are alive are constantly being handed over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our mortal body.*

Paul himself recognized the symbolism only too well ..... in the **Philippians 2:14-17** scripture we read first. Offerings prescribed by God in the OT were often wine, and usually along with olive oil. Paul could understand that the only use he could be to those around him who needed salvation was as pleasing wine and healing oil (and light!), poured out on their behalf – a sacrifice.

**Exodus 29:40** *...with the first lamb offer a tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with a fourth of a hin of **oil** from pressed olives, and a fourth of a hin of **wine** as a drink offering.*

Fortunately for him, and us, there can be no excess of the wine of the Holy Spirit!

Certainly Jesus' act on the cross was a significant outpouring ...

**Isaiah 53:12** *Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors. (ESV)*

**So by being grafted into the vine, and remaining in Him, we can bear fruit with the help of the Holy Spirit – who was Himself “poured out” ....**

**Ezekiel 39:28-29** *Then they shall know that I am the LORD their God, because I sent them into exile among the nations and then assembled them into their own land. I will leave none of them remaining among the nations anymore. And I will not hide my face anymore from them, when I pour out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, declares the Lord GOD.”*

**Acts 10:44-45** *While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles.*

So we can bear fruit, and yet God wants us to “pour out” our lives for the sake of others.

**Let me tell you something – grapes don't pour very well but wine does!!**

If we are to fulfill our calling in God then we must not be surprised when we are “hard pressed” on every side .....

It is in those times – and the times following when the situation has “matured” (you don't make unripe grapes into wine) – that we can truly follow Jesus, and Paul's example – and shine out God's glory to a perverse generation, with the help of the Holy Spirit. By God's grace some may be saved by the “outpouring” of our lives on their behalf as an acceptable sacrifice to God.

**In the same way Scripture likens our Christian life and walk to be one of being grafted into a vine, it is also likened to being grafted into an olive tree ....**

**Romans 11:17-18** *But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree, do not be arrogant toward the branches. If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you.*

Vineyards and olive groves are often found together in Spain and in Scripture! The Holy Spirit is also often likened to oil and well as new wine. God used the common things to signify His kingdom and principles to help the common man to remember them. Olive oil would most likely have been the most common oil around as wine (except obviously for water) would have been the most common drink.

Has anyone plucked a ripe olive from a tree and tried to eat it? I have – they're disgusting and bitter. They can of course be eaten as a fruit, but interestingly only after they have been soaked in salt-water. And salt is significant of what in Scripture? Purification.....

**2 Kings 2:20-21** *Elisha said, “Get me a new jar and put some salt in it.” So they got it. He went out to the spring and threw the salt in. Then he said, “This is what the LORD says, ‘I have purified this water. It will no longer cause death or fail to produce crops.’”*

And it was also a significant part of the system of offerings that God required in the OT.

No – the best way to gain use from an olive is? You guessed it – pressing it for oil. Olive oil would have been so in demand those days I would think few were eaten – most would have been pressed for oil. Oil for lamps, for light and warmth, for food dressing, oil for anointing wounds to bring about healing, and oil for anointing for sanctification in religious rituals.

**All these of course have Holy Spirit parallels, and that's exactly why – God calling men to acknowledge His ways, His laws, His principles ... and to recount them whilst doing ordinary things.**

Too much wine, or wine at inappropriate times is often spoken of in Scripture but;

**Psalm 104:14** *You cause the grass to grow for the livestock and plants for man to cultivate, that he may bring forth food from the earth and wine to gladden the heart of man, oil to make his face shine and bread to strengthen man's heart.*

**Prov. 31:6** *Give strong drink to the one who is perishing, and **wine** to those who are bitterly distressed;*

**Exodus 27:20** *"You are to command the Israelites that they bring to you pure **oil** of pressed olives for the light, so that the lamps will burn regularly.*

**Mark 6:13** *They cast out many demons and anointed many sick people with **oil** and **healed** them.*

If we are to be who God wants us to be in this world it seems He may allow us to be hard pressed when we are mature (ripe!) so that we can bring **out of us for others** what God has put within us by the Holy Spirit; gladness, strength, light (truth!), comfort, healing and even purification.

So don't be surprised or disappointed when God seems to be allowing you to be "pressed on every side". He wants to see you pour out your life! Grapes are tasty but soon forgotten – wine is better. Olives are bitter, but olive oil is very valuable in many ways .....

#### **Footnote:**

In our Bible studies we have looked many times at how Father, Son and Holy Spirit appear together in Scripture but as I was preparing this talk I came across this, which I have read many times and yet never seen it in this light before ...

**Job 29:5-6** *When the Almighty was yet with me, when my children were around me; when my steps were bathed with cream, and the rock poured out rivers of oil for me! NKJV*

**Deut. 32:13** *He enabled him to travel over the high terrain of the land and he ate of the produce of the fields. He provided honey for him from the cliffs, and olive **oil** from the hardest of rocks...*

Did Job witness a rock pouring out olive oil for him – or had he grasped some eternal principle way ahead of his time? Some theologians date the book of Job to be very much earlier than it's 'position' in the apparent chronology of books coming after Nehemiah and Esther.... and yet Moses in Deuteronomy also seems to transform 'water' from the rock into oil!