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Spiritually Speaking

The Crush!

Thanksgiving! I have to admit, I love food and I'm pretty thankful for my mom's dressing around this time of year. Most of us will probably reflect on a number of things we are especially thankful for during this season; we certainly have a lot to be thankful for to God. But how about the process He has you in currently, developing your character? What is He producing? "If we are ever going to be made into wine we will have to be crushed-you cannot drink grapes."¹

In the Old Testament, the drink offering was one of the prescribed sacrifices offered to God. It represented the gratefulness and appreciation to God in the worship of who He is and what He had done for His chosen. Many times when the drink offering was poured out on the altar, it was after a difficult or stressful time in the life of the worshipper (see Gen 35:14-15; Lev 23:9-13). For many Christ followers, the traumatic events, stressful issues, suffering and hard circumstances that happen to us are questioned and can be confusing. And the process of personal, spiritual growth tests our faith in ways that lead us to doubt God's goodness and especially His presence in our life. We don't seem to hear Him, and certainly can't see an answer to our situation, much less any relief.

You may be familiar with Paul. Definitely a man chosen by God to be His servant, he was instrumental in proclaiming the gospel and building the church. His life was full of hardship and suffering though he was adamantly following the Lord's lead-right where God wanted him to be. Yet Paul saw himself in the difficulties of his life as being a poured out "drink offering" to God and to the service toward others (see Phil 2:17, and 2 Tim 4:6-8). Paul looked at affliction as *addition*; his hardships and weakness making him strong (2 Cor 12:9, 10). Christ himself gave thanks for His sacrifice, the *pouring out* of His blood for our forgiveness (Matt 26:27, 28).

"God cannot make us into wine if we object to the fingers he chooses to use to crush us. What finger and thumb is God using to squeeze you? Have you been as hard as a marble and escaped? If you are not ripe yet, and if God had squeezed you, it would have been remarkably bitter."² God is in the process of molding and shaping us into the men and women He wants us to be so that we might truly live and serve. Sometimes it is hard and we don't understand; but the end result is the *perfect fruit*. Let him produce the wine he wants. Let's be open and faithful to allow Him to ripen us in His time. Let's live our lives like a drink offering- "*poured out!*"

Blessings,

Mike

¹ Oswald Chambers

² Ibid.