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Prayer Meeting Address by Mr. J. Delves at "Ebenezer" Clapham
on 1st. October, 1951John 15

These words convey very needful and yet, it can be, very painful teaching. All the Lord's children will realise the need of the teaching which is here conveyed by Christ to His disciples and to His people, and it is a mercy when and where grace is given to receive the teaching, because it is in receiving the teaching often that the fruit is found.

The point I would like to notice is the great importance of the injunction of Christ here, "I am the vine, ye are the branches", "Abide in Me, and I in you". It will be seen clearly here that this abiding in Christ by His people is the great secret of all spiritual fruit bearing. "Without Me ye can do nothing", that is, as it is in the margin, 'severed from Me' no fruit of an acceptable character can be borne unless the branch is in union with Christ. This makes the union very sacred and very blessed, while at the same time it involves purging. Now this abiding in Christ involves not only the union that subsists between Christ and His people, but also a gracious confidence in Him, which is the confidence of faith assuring us that all His dealings are designed for our good. Not only does it involve confidence in Him, but also dependence upon Him, which is a blessed point to be brought to, and a point we must be brought to before there can be a gracious receiving and a spiritual cleansing, and they are blessed moments in the believer's experience when this abiding is felt. It cannot be actually expressed or conveyed but there is a peculiar sweetness which may be enjoyed even in the midst of much affliction where this spiritual union is felt in a believer's experience.

The Lord Jesus declares Himself to be the Vine and I have been thinking of it like this; the root of the vine is hidden.

from view and yet all life comes from it, but there is the main stem of the vine which supports all the branches. The root may perhaps be applied to the Godhead of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the main stem to His blessed humanity, and the branches flowing from the main stem to every believer in union with Him. Perhaps you may wonder at times whether you are really in a spiritual union with Christ but that point can be solved in a measure by the dealings of the Lord with you and the effect those dealings have upon you. In the second verse here the Lord says that every branch that beareth fruit He purgeth it that it may bring forth more fruit. Not, every branch that bears no fruit He purgeth it to see if it will bear fruit, but every fruitful branch is purged to make it more fruitful and this purging is a cleansing, as the verse that follows shows. "Now ye are clean", that is the purging has had a cleansing effect. "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you".

Now this word may be a reproving word of the Lord to a branch in the vine. It may involve perhaps severe discipline or chastening in order to the purging of that branch, and what branch is there that does not feel the need of this purging? All purging is for cleansing, that is in other words for spiritual sanctification in the fruit-bearing branch. It is always for cleansing and not for destroying. When I was down in Sussex a few days ago I saw an apple orchard that was very fruitful and my brother told me that the secret of that orchard being so fruitful and the apples free from disease was because it had been sprayed all through the winter months, consequently the insects or germs had been destroyed. The trees were continually sprayed or cleansed. Is there not a point of teaching here? The Lord Jesus sprays, as it were, or purges the branches of the vine in order to cleanse it, according to His teaching here, "Now ye are clean". That is the effect of the purging. "Ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you". And here I may revert to what I said in the first place, that the receiving of gracious discipline and

chastening, the receiving of it in a broken spirit is more conducive to fruitfulness than anything else can be because in the receiving of this discipline the fruits, the spices, flow forth in confession, repentance, humility, faith and love; and that is the fruit that is free from all diseases. There is no disease, so to speak, in the graces of the Spirit, and the object of the purging and cleansing is to bring forth that fruit more clearly and more fully.

May the Lord humble us under His hand and if there has to be, as there will be, to use this figure, a spraying of the trees or of the branches with a certain chemical that may not be at all pleasant, may we have grace to receive it and to realise that the great object is to bring us into the third verse, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you".
