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Prayer Meeting Address by Mr. J. Delves at "Ebenezer" Clapham
30th October, 1950

Reading: John 15

These are the Lord's words to His disciples, very separating and yet very uniting. A truth is adduced which may cause much searching of heart with some of us, at least with myself, in relation to the true evidence of union with the Lord Jesus which does evidently consist in bearing fruit.

But what I would like particularly just to mention is that the Lord's very tender, gracious words to His disciples here apply likewise unto all His living children. He calls them His friends. This means that He himself is their friend; and while that is true, the friendship is very graciously mutual between both parties. But more particularly here we have the amazing truth that the Lord Jesus Christ is the friend of His people. He is a true friend as we have sung and as we read in the Proverbs "A man that hath friends must show himself friendly and there is a friend who sticketh closer than a brother". There may be occasions when that illustration may not have a very close bearing. Brothers even in families may not be particularly friendly one to the other; but the relationship does normally designate affection and friendship one towards another. But here the Lord Jesus is a friend of His people and that friendship is evinced in three particulars mentioned in the verses we have read. First of all in the union subsisting between the two parties. The beauty of this friendship does in the first instance consist in the union. What gracious words are these "I am the vine, ye are the branches; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit, for without me", that is severed from Him, "ye can do nothing".

It is observable that the secret then of all fruitfulness and the nature of all friendship is in this union. There can be no friendship, even between persons, without union. It is a great thing to have a real friend, to whom you can feel a union, not only in spiritual things but can walk in agreement in regard to material considerations. But the union subsisting between the Lord Jesus and His people is a wonderful evidence of that divine friendship which unites the Lord to His people and them to Him.

The second evidence of this friendship consists in the sacrifice made for them. Where is there one who would make such a great sacrifice for his friend, who would give his life? If one made on your behalf a great personal sacrifice in order to your well being or deliverance from some trouble, you would say that such a one was a real friend, a true friend, who came to your help at great sacrifice to himself, in a time of deep necessity. A friend in need is a friend indeed. But what does the Lord say here? He says "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends". Not only did the great Redeemer come to the help of His people in their bondage and in their helpless, ruined condition, but did stand in their place, did bear their punishment instead, and thus delivered them fully and absolutely from the curse of a broken law.

He is a true friend. But this friendship consists also in revelations that He makes to His people. If you have a real friend you will confide to them things that you would perhaps not like to mention to people generally. It is nice to be able to confide in a friend and feel to have that measure of confidence so far as that can be among us; it is very sweet. But here you see the Lord does take His people into His confidence, that is to say He treats them not in this sense as servants but as friends. "For all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." Some of you have felt this friendship of Jesus in the sweet discoveries of His grace and love, His person and will, in your souls, making Himself known as your Mediator, your Friend, revealing the Father's will. This is a very choice evidence of divine friendship and very sweet to feel. May the Lord grant that we may walk in the comfort of it, thus realising that we have a friend who sticketh closer than a brother.