

**Sermon preached by Mr R Kinderman at Blunsdon Hill, Wiltshire
on Wednesday evening, 22nd April, 1953**

Text: John XV. 1, 2

“I am the true vine, and My Father is the husbandman. Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away: but every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.”

In every exercise by the Spirit this is the foundation, the object and leading – the exaltation of Christ. Every work of God is to that end.

We tried to notice a little this afternoon the solemnity of those particularly who were not in Christ, those who were spoken of by God Himself as appearing to be a branch, but having no life. I felt during the interval that would exercise; and it is our mercy to be exercised. The truth of God will exercise a living soul. I may just say in opening up, I am convinced – and I feel the word of God and the testimony of the Spirit will bear this out that, whatever is spoken by the lip, hypocrites never have an inward exercise that they may know the truth. That is very solemn, if the Spirit of God lead us into it, because it comes to this, an exercise as to what we give utterance to. We may assent to the truth, we may have a nominal, judgemental knowledge; and this has been continually upon my mind, (I say it affectionately in love and desire,) we may be brought up under the sound of the truth, and hear it in the letter so often that we take it to ourselves, as it were, that that is part of us; until the Spirit of God comes with quickening power into the soul in the new creation. Then that comes to an end; then there is an exercise personally that the Spirit of God would reveal truth. Then there is the fruit, a gracious fruit from Christ, from His Person and His work; for the poet is right,

“Every grace, and every favour,
Comes to us through Jesus’ blood.”

There is nothing that is life, spiritual life, out of Christ; and I would desire the Lord to implant that grace more personally. I do not mean by what I say – not that I am apologising – but I do not mean that you do not feel it. Some of you here have been much longer in experience than I have, if I know the truth, - and I trust we may and do speak from a feeling heart; but I am convinced more and more that there is nothing, no spiritual life, nothing honouring to God, but what flows through the Person and work of Christ.

How important it is to know our union to Him! There is nothing valuable besides. Everything we do, we need to bring it to this. It may be well in the sight of man, but the Spirit of God brings us to this point solemnly, that we stand before God! The work of God’s Spirit in a sinner – and you who fear the Lord know it, - is from time to time to bring him to seek God’s approbation. You remember, on that point, how the Lord spoke to Simon respecting Mary when He was in his house; - just a word, but there is a fullness of truth in it; - “Seest thou this woman?” If you follow that case, and, as enabled by the Spirit, enter into what she did by the Spirit’s teaching, it was not

as to man; it was to God. O, when that Spirit is in exercise in our hearts, when that Spirit moves and regulates our life particularly, and all our concerns, and our religious life, - it comes into it all!

There is nothing honouring, there is nothing right, only what springs from a living union to Christ. Everything is dead; and that is solemnly proved when the end comes. I hinted this afternoon respecting the foolish virgins, that when the voice of the Bridegroom came they were just lacking solemnly the most important point; they had no oil in their vessels with their lamps.

Now I felt in the interval the solemnity that this truth of Christ, "Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away", will exercise a living soul. And I would it might! I have often said, and I believe it, that some of the best times you get in the house of God are those times that take you to your private room in prayer, searching of heart, and exercise of mind. If you get a blessing and some comfort, that will do it; but I believe those times of exercise, and seeking for a confirmation, - sometimes in that very way there is a blessing. I will bring you just to the Book of Ruth again on that point. You remember the occasion when Boaz gave her provision to take home, and she took it home and beat it out. That is the effect of the Spirit's blessing. This is well worth our consideration in these solemn days. I speak in love, not knowing you personally or in any way; and I do feel this, (if I may speak personally concerning the ministry,) it is a constant exercise not to know any man after the flesh; whatever love flows in the Spirit and in unity, yet in the pulpit to know no man after the flesh. Now, that is the work of the Spirit in blessing - it is in beating out; and I believe there is profit; and, in this particular, to beat it out seeking to know exactly where we are in all that concerns us in our profession, lest when we come to our end we should prove that we have no reality. And it is solemn. As dying sinners, it is solemn.

But here is the truth of God, "I am the true vine." Everything springs from that. Everything of life is in Christ. His church derives life from Him. Nothing out of Christ! The body, the church, - the various figures of the church are given to us, and here we have the branches; and, as you sang in closing this afternoon, even though a feeble branch, it will be our mercy to be amongst them. But I must bring out this point, that, while the poet is true, and there is an exercise, yet you want to feel that life, that favour. You will not just say that and, if I may say it rightly, be satisfied to leave that matter there. You want to know you are a feeble branch; and the feeble branch feels life, derives life; for the word of God here is clear, that if there is no fruit then they are cast away. So there must be sap derived from Christ. The apostle Paul shows the church this when he says, "Your life is hid with Christ in God." That is made manifest by the Holy Spirit in regeneration. There is an exercise of mind in those that fear God, though we have often heard it and read it, and we trust are not left to be gospel-hardened. There is a hardening, separating from the word of God; but there is also a hardening in reading the word of God; we read it so many times; but when the Spirit of God comes afresh with divine power into your soul, then it is renewed. The word of God is life.

"The written and the incarnate Word
In all things are the same."

And that renews exercise.

“Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” O to be born again, to have manifest in us a life which will live eternally, which is of God! And while we are here, in some humble measure, as I have hinted sufficiently, it will be seen; - not to the honour of man, but that men “may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” Why, I believe that the world is sin – I am not meaning now that many may not be brought out and manifest as vessels of mercy, but in their unregeneracy, they hate, because they cannot love, the work of Christ. The flesh hates Christ. You see how solemn, then, this union becomes. The flesh hates Christ. I have often said, and I would say it for our young friends, in desiring that they might be preserved in this solemn day, there is no picture or painting of Christ but what is blasphemy. I say that very solemnly. I feel a necessity laid upon my spirit. The flesh can never have a conception of Christ. Now I know that. It has cost something at times to speak of that, but I feel the solemnity of it, because the enemy is in it, and it is a subtle poison to bring the vain imaginations of man’s mind into these things; and we can never know the truth of God by the vain imaginations of our mind. You see, the Spirit of God shows clearly to His children in union to Christ that there is nothing in the flesh that can honour God. Some of you know it in this, the solemn article of death; while to those out of Christ it is most solemn because it is the entrance to hell, - I say that affectionately, but it is! – to a living child of God in union to Christ the Vine, death is the putting off of this mortality. What we shall be clothed with, the word of God says we do not know. I had not thought of going into that truth, but I feel sometimes necessity laid upon me. It will not be a seeking one another as we see each other here; and that is our mercy. You would not desire to see sinful self. But this mortality shall put on immortality. I feel, when the Spirit of God brings us to realise and see what flesh is, what we are by nature, and to see that that has to be brought down, - why, to a living child of God, as the apostle speaks, “For me to die is gain:” and he knew the power of that truth as in union to Christ. I do not mean I, personally, can say that. God keep us honest! But I do mean this, there is an exercise, and that is the desire of God’s living family. It is in union to Christ.

But I feel a desire just to go into this a little: “And every branch in Me that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.” There is a fruit-bearing, - and I do feel a need of grace to speak of it, - that it might honour God. I hope I have pointed out sufficient to show that it is nothing in the flesh. Now you look. Repentance, godly sorrow, that is not of the flesh. I say, godly sorrow. There is a distinction. You may know something of an outward conviction on account of the consequences of sin, and that may never be by the Spirit in the grace of God, in union to Christ. I have felt very solemnly, and I hope the Spirit may give utterance to speak it, - I have felt this very solemnly of late, that repentance and godly sorrow for sin can never be separated from the Person and work of Christ, because there is a right owning of God’s justice; and, you see, that is solemnly manifested in the sufferings of the Person of the Son of God incarnate. What a solemn distinction there is! Why, that draws out your love to Christ! In that godly sorrow your love to Christ is drawn out of your spirit. You feel that love. You see what sin is in all its reality, what it has cost to put it away. You see in it the holiness and justice of God. Now, that is only to God’s living family. That is never to the fruitless branch. There is no bearing that fruit in the flesh. Christ is as “a root out of a dry ground;” – no form nor comeliness, nothing in Him that we should desire Him.

You look at the case of the dying thief. I do not need to go into that now; but there is no deathbed repentance in that. (I feel Mr Gosden was helped when he gave that extract of Bishop Ryle's on that point. [Gospel Standard March 1953] Very solemn! We do need clear teaching. But in respect to the dying thief, do you not see how the fruit – do you now see how that union to Christ was manifest? How he had an entering into the Person of Christ, into the Son of God, into the Lord Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God? It was couched in his language, by the Spirit's teaching; godly repentance and godly sorrow for sin in his heart flowing out, he says, "We indeed justly." Not just to get away from the sufferings of his body; - O, my friends, how clear is the Spirit's teaching on this point! – but a true glorifying of God, giving glory to God, giving honour to God, in His eternal justice as seen in the sufferings of Christ, and acknowledging the justice of God to him as a sinner, and that God would be just in his condemnation. That comes in with the poet very solemnly and very really in respect to this bearing of fruit, - and I have felt a desire for God's living people, you who fear God, that the Lord would give you a little enabling, and that His presence might be felt and you not sent empty away, not in any vain confidence, but a confidence in the truth of Christ, - and that is in this,

"And if my soul were sent to hell,
Thy righteous law approves it well."

Now by this teaching there is a sacredness in that, through that repentance which needeth not to be repented of. Why, that honours God! That is not the repentance of an Esau. That is not just to get out of trouble, but seeing and knowing God's justice rightly, and yet bowing before God. O, that repentance that needeth not to be repented of! Why, my friends, if the Spirit of God favour us with that daily, it would be our mercy. I tell you this, that would regulate our lives. You see, it is the grace of God manifested through Christ in a sinner that regulates, and that is when those around us see our good works. It is not you seeing your good works and being able to say, "How good I am!" It is that grace manifested in godly repentance and godly sorrow. Why, I have often felt this and said it, solemnly, - if the Lord grant us this we do not need to tell people then what they ought not to do and how near the world they may go. Why, under that godly sorrow for sin by the teaching of the Spirit and in union to Christ, a sinner has to say at times, "Lord, I confess my heart is a sink of sin. Do keep me from those things which would dishonour Thy Name!" You see that fruit of repentance and godly sorrow by the light of divine teaching, and union to Christ is that which shows what indwelling sin is. There is a growing in that, because as you see more of your indwelling sin, so the Person and work of Christ becomes more precious. To those who know that godly sorrow, the precious atonement of Christ becomes more precious. You see the vital power of it, and you are led by the Spirit into the root of it, the foundation of it, in the Person of the Son of God. That is union to Christ! No union separate from His divine Person! Now I know that. I speak what I know. Very solemn! Some of you may have been like oneself; - I had not thought to tell you, but it just comes to my mind; I feel, until the Lord revealed that years ago, I knew darkness of mind for a fortnight, and I felt that I had read and spoken of the Lord Jesus Christ, but there was something short; and I believe the Lord showed me, - I say it to His Own honour – and revealed to me, in that darkness, the light of truth, that the secret of it all was in the Person of the Son of God.

Now that is the grace of God. O that the Spirit of God may grant us that fruit! "Every branch in Me that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." Why, you see in this the

workings of God by His Spirit in the souls of His people, from time to time showing them by the light of His countenance His truth, His justice, and by His law in the conscience showing them solemnly their inward defilement. Sometimes it may be a thought. You may have been cold and indifferent in the things of God, not feeling that gracious repentance in your soul. I speak to you who are made manifest in Christ and know it. You know what it is to feel solemnly at times how formal your prayers are, and the Lord brings you by some circumstance – I cannot just name it; you will know it, and it is by divine teaching; - sometimes it may be just a thought in your spirit, and you are brought to see the wretchedness and defilement of your evil heart; you are brought to cry with the apostle, “O wretched man that I am!” You may say, How is that in connection with the text? Why, I believe that is part of God’s purging, bringing you from self, taking away that which is so dishonouring in the flesh. And what is the effect? Why, that gracious enabling by the Spirit of God to plead before the throne of grace the precious atonement of Christ! Do you know that, sinner? Do you know what it is through this gracious union, again and again, in the spirit, to plead the atonement of Christ? What a favour!

“Every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit;” – fruit that is from this living union to Christ.

The fruit of humility. That is not in the flesh. There is a mock humility in the flesh, and that is a most subtle, proud matter. It is a false name. I believe that a child of God, under divine teaching, will abhor himself for that. When the Lord shows him the awful nature of pride in the form of humility he will have to beg of the Lord in His mercy to take it away. It is a most heinous thing, and we are not without it. The child of God does not look at the Pharisee in someone else. The Pharisee and the publican that came into the temple are both in us. There are two natures if we are the children of God. If we only have the Pharisee, then we are a branch to be cut off; there is no grace; but if we are the children of God, we have a times solemnly to realise it and pray against it by the Spirit of God. You will hate your religious self because of that; and it take subtle forms. O, when the Lord shows you, how solemn! And how? Why, by the purging of God as the husbandman He shows you this, that it dishonours Christ. Everything that dishonours Christ is abomination to God; and the Lord shows that. I believe we can test ourselves, as enabled by the Spirit, by this light, by this standard, does it honour Christ? For there is a humility becoming the gospel. Mary knew it. One of our poets has a rich hymn on that truth,

“I no more at Mary wonder,
Dropping tears upon the grave.”

That was not to be seen of men; that was not to be seen of creatures. The Lord in His mercy, for His church, for that gracious entrance of His church into the truth, and in love to the brethren (for there is a unity there,) has given us her case; and she came to Christ. O, she was drawn! His love was in her heart. She was one that was in union to the Vine. She was a guilty sinner, a defiled sinner, to whom the Lord had made known the riches of redeeming love and grace, and favoured her soul. Her only treasure was in Christ. That draws the soul to Him. It is

“Sinners can say, and none but they,
How precious is the Saviour!”

O, it is five hundred pence debtors! And I say reverently, there will be no falling out of that point. God's people are all brought to be the "chief of sinners." Mary felt it at that particular time; and how the fruit of that grace was in her heart in humility! That was done to God. That was in honour to God in His love and mercy, and to Christ, that she came with an alabaster box of ointment, very costly. Why, this fruit of humility, as that flows out of the soul to Christ for what He has done in His love and mercy, - there is nothing too dear for Him, nothing too dear for Him! It may be only momentarily, but you will ask that that grace might abound more and more. Sweet grace! O, it is not dead religion, the religion of a living child of God. There is a remnant. What a mercy if we are amongst them!

Sinner, do you know a little of that mercy flowing into your soul, that has drawn your heart out in love, humbled you at the feet of Christ, and you have been willing to be there, willing to be nothing? That is not in the flesh, not according to anything sin-polluted; and God is honoured in that. "Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples." That is the mark of the disciple, this bearing fruit. Mary was a disciple. "Seest thou this woman?" O that may be in your upper room, it may be in your field. It does not matter. But it is not for any earthly eye when you have had to weep, at the feet of Christ to His goodness. But I must say this, that will have an effect upon you, as it did on Mary. She brought an alabaster box of ointment, and it will not be letting your left hand know what your right hand does. That is not honouring to God. You see, this fruit is to God. O, the Lord knows. When the Lord would bless the house of Cornelius. He says, "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God." Why, that was not the work of the flesh; and that was God's testimony. And how the Lord made manifest His love and mercy!

When Peter went to the house of Cornelius, he could feel that power of the Spirit in the manifestation of the love of Christ, and that drew out their affections. I had not thought of saying, but I must as I feel that just laid upon my mind, - do you wonder that he said, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" That is the power of the Spirit. That is fruit. O, that draws to the ordinances of God! - in truth. Nothing else! Nothing else is valuable. If anything else comes in and intrudes, that is of the flesh, but this is of God. O, and that draws out! Nothing can withhold that fruit. "Every branch in Me that beareth fruit."

And you see, sometimes, in bestowing that grace of humility, the Lord will purge. The Lord knows how to humble us at His feet. Every solemn, sometimes! And I feel I must notice, in this purging, that the Lord deals with His Own children in union to the Vine. Mark this, sinner! This is not effective in those that are cut off and taken away. But mark the language of scripture, - very solemn, but we cannot get away from the scripture, and however refined, naturally, our ears may be, it is God's truth, - "If ye be without chastisement, whereof all" - all who? All who are in union to the Vine and made manifest by the Spirit; the children of God are made manifest in this life; - "whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons." O, there is an exercise of heart. Do you seek to be a son of God? I have thought sometimes how we desire in prayer that the Lord would seal His adoption, that we might be adopted. Well, God has given to us the mark and evidence. Have you known the chastening of God? Do you know what it is for the Lord to make

that manifest in your soul? And what has that done? O, painful to the flesh, because it is a purging, separating it brings you from the dearest idol. O, one prayed for that, prayed for chastening, and in light and knowledge, rather than to be out of the secret, rather than to be left in coldness and indifference.

“The dearest idol I have known,
Whate’er that idol be,
Help me to rear it from Thy throne,
And worship only Thee.”

And if I may mention another poet who speaks better than myself concerning that, one says, “I asked the Lord that I might grow;” and the Lord answered that prayer. Now that may come, and that purging will bring you down. Well, the Lord intends it, sinner. It is to bring down our proud flesh. It is! It shows what we are more and more, and humbles us at His feet. But it “yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness, when the Lord has effected His work in chastening. You come again and again into fresh exercise and trial, and it is for this divine purpose, that there might be no glorying in the flesh; and it is to bring forth that gracious work of humility and love and every grace of Christ in a sinner, that God may be honoured in your affections. “If ye then be risen with Christ,” says the apostle, “seek those things that are above”, where Christ is, in the heavens.

The Lord will have this made manifest by the Spirit in the experience of His people, that they are in Christ, and their affections set upon Him. Now to that end, how the Lord works! O, do we know what it is to feel the purging of God that our affections may be drawn unto Him? When the Lord accomplishes it, you would not have been without it. There is at times in this work a kissing of the rod, and Him that has appointed it. When you are brought to see the end that God has in view, it is not in anger. The Lord did not deal with Ephraim in anger. It was in love. The Lord says, “Is Ephraim My dear son?” Not pleasant! Ephraim tells us how he felt. But it was to one end. We know what the flesh is what it would speak, but under divine teaching, as I have felt in a living experience of this truth, you would not be without that afflictive dispensation. Afflictions of themselves harden; they bring rebellion. You see that in the worldling. Man is born to trouble. There is a distinction in God’s appointments to His children as the manifestation of His grace, in this truth; but in an afflictive dispensation, under divine teaching, you do not see it at first. I may say this, (and follow on in the experience of it,) to those who have this new creation, “But every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it,” in the quickening power of the Spirit. You know your wordly-mindedness solemnly. I speak to those in this case. The Lord will have the affections of His people drawn to Himself. There is wordly-mindedness, the lusts of the flesh. You see, the Lord deals with these things. O, my friends, how solemn it is! And I know it! The Lord comes in His dispensations. You may not be able to tell another; it is in your soul. The heart knows its own bitterness in these matters, and when the Lord has accomplished His work “a stranger intermeddleth not with its joy.” But this is to bring forth more fruit, to draw the affections out to Christ, and to cause you to sing with one,

“Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it;
Prone to leave the God I love.
Here’s my heart. Lord, take and seal it,
Seal it from Thy courts above.”

Ó, a mercy to see divine appointments in those ways which are painful to our nature! Yet the Lord makes manifest His love in them, shows His tender mercy in them, and “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him.” It is in love.

Now, this is to the dear children of God; and as the husbandman He will do it, my friends. I have felt that this is a certainty. God will do it if we are His children; and if we never bear fruit, if our affections are not drawn out to Christ, it is a very solemn matter, with all the religious profession we may have. But in God’s living family the Lord does it, and He will purge that there might be a bringing forth of more fruit. And you will see in it His mercy. He is a wise Husbandman. You will own that God is just. Not in it, as I said; - “No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous,” whatever its nature; but it is the “afterwards,” when you see His mercy in it, when you see His love, when the Lord breaks down the rebellion, your hardness, manifesting that living Spirit of Christ in you, and you say, “Lord, this has been good! It is well.” Why, that woman who came to Elisha said, “It is well.” Now that is by the Spirit; and that gives honour to God. You honour God, you honour His work you honour Christ. That draws the affection unto Him, and you desire to walk closer in His fear and in His love. Not that you are able of yourself; (I think we have cleared that;) but there is also a gracious fruit of prayer, God’s Own gift to His children. Why, that draws out prayer before God. You say in effect, “Lord I am so unstable, so unable to keep alive my own soul, but I do beg for Thy grace, and I do beg to live near to Christ, to honour Him, to honour Him in my daily life;” - (I feel it is so practical - “honour Him in my family.” Why, that will cause you to feel how unable you are. Now that draws out prayer, and there is fruit.

This purging by God as a wise Husbandman is not to bring you to an end, not to an eternal hell. The devil will suggest it. I must just mention that. Those who know what it is to bear fruit, who are in Christ, they have an adversary. He does not come to those who are nominal professors. Them he will leave. The Lord deals with them, takes them away and burns them. But you who fear God and who are in union to Christ by His teaching, you have an accuser. How often he suggests, “Why, this is to prove you are a hypocrite; it is to prove you are not a child of God that this has come into your life,” - of whatever nature it may be, whether personal or in any other way.

David knew something about it, and you see how the church of God, in the manifestation of divine life, echo the language of the psalmist. He says, “Thou hast prepared a table before me, in the presence of mine enemies.” When the Lord does that in His mercy, by showing you that what He has done in His dealings was not to consign you to eternal hell, not that you should cast away your confidence, but that it has been in mercy, to bring down your flesh, to subdue that which is within you, to bring out, (if I may say,) and make manifest His Own work in the Spirit, to draw your affections to Christ, then you can see the wisdom of His work. You may say, “My winter has been long.” O, but if the Lord comes! What does the church sing? Why, it bears fruit! “The time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.” There is a time of fruit-bearing after that winter season of God’s dealing.

Now you will take no honour to yourself in that. You will give Him all the honour! “I am the true Vine, and My Father is the Husbandman.” O, to be under His teaching, to see in His dealings that

grace of God as a Husbandman, dealing with us as children of God in Christ; and making manifest His work, until the end; and to see it there in mercy! It is in all God's dealings; - "wise and good; uniform, though various."

Now God's children know this, I have felt a desire that we might be enabled by the Spirit to feel that gracious, living experience, - there is a living experience of truth; - and that we may seek to know the work of the Holy Spirit. I may say in closing this is the work of the Holy Spirit - sealing; the sealing of God in Christ in and His church.

May God deal with us as His children, and though painful to our flesh, - I did desire to go further into it - it will separate you from the world; not a fleshly separation, not "Stand thou aside; I am holier than thou;" but by that same work of separation drawing you unto Christ. O, this is purging; in this the effect is to bring forth more fruit; and it causes a desire inwardly to know more. Why, you come with the apostle then: Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect, but I follow after." It is the Spirit's work. O, to have a Holy Ghost religion! Now, a Holy Ghost religion, my friends, is life. To live and die without a living manifestation of union to Christ is hell. Now only God can make you know what that is.

The Lord grant His blessing, and preserve us from eternal hell through His infinite mercy in Christ and by the Spirit sealing that work in our souls!
