

Abiding in Christ

Preached at Providence Chapel, Eden Street, London, on Tuesday Evening, July 6, 1847

"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." John 15:4

Have you ever considered the experience of the disciples when their Lord and Master was sojourning here below? To my mind, there is something very instructive, and, I may add, very encouraging in it.

On the one hand, observe how *ignorant* they were of the nature of Christ's kingdom! Two of the most eminent of them besought him that they might sit, the one on his right hand, and the other on his left, in his glory. What ignorance did that request imply of the nature of his spiritual kingdom, as if there were a right and a left hand there! Observe, too, their *unbelief*. How continually the Lord had to chide them! "Where is your faith?" and "O ye of little faith!" Remark also, their *carnality and worldly-mindedness*. How, on one occasion, two of them asked their Master that fire might come down from heaven to destroy his enemies! and how, at the very first onset of danger, "they all forsook him and fled!" It is, to my mind, very instructive and encouraging, thus to see their weakness, ignorance, and unbelief.

We have taken a hasty glance at the dark side of the question; we have traced out what they were in self. Let us now take another view of their character, and mark something of the Spirit's work upon their heart. For though they were, as I have shown, ignorant, unbelieving, weak, and worldly-minded; yet there were distinct marks of the

Spirit's teaching in them. Observe, for instance, their *faith*. What said Peter, who spake in the name of them all? "We *believe* and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." (John 6:69.) Observe, too, their *love*. On one occasion, Thomas, the most unbelieving of them all, felt such love springing up in his soul towards the Redeemer that he said to his fellow-disciples, "Let us also go (with him into Judea) that we may die with him." (John 11:16.) Observe also, their *sincerity*. How they cleaved to the Lord through evil report and good report! turned their back upon the world, gave up everything that nature loves, and followed Jesus in the strait and narrow path that leads to eternal life! Observe also, their *patience*; as the Lord said to them, "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations." (Luke 22:28.)

I bring forward these two sides, because there are many of the Lord's family who are now precisely in the same state and stage of experience that the disciples were when Christ was upon earth. It is therefore most encouraging for them to see that they may have all the short-comings, infirmities, and weakness that the disciples had, and yet be true hearted and genuine followers of the Lamb.

Observe too, how the Lord dealt with them as a nursing father. It is true, there were occasions when he chid them! but how tenderly he chid them! how he led them on step by step from grace to grace! and how from time to time he opened up to them the treasures of his loving heart! On that night, that gloomy night, especially when the Lord was betrayed into the hands of sinful men, he spake to them all that was in his heart. He had hitherto called them "servants;" he would discard that title, and would for the future call them "friends;" and as his friends he would open up to them the secrets of his loving bosom.

In the chapter before us, he speaks of himself as the only Head of divine influence: "I am the true Vine." He tells them too, what *they* were in *him*, as well as what *he* was *to* them. "I am the Vine, and *ye are the branches.*" And the same truth he declares in the words of the text, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me."

We may observe two things in the words before us. *First, the exhortation* that the Lord gives them, "Abide in me, and I in you." And *secondly, the reason* which the Lord lays before them that they should abide in him; for that only by doing so could they bear fruit to his glory.

I.—But before it can be said to any one, "*Abide in Christ,*" he must have standing in Christ. The very expression, "Abide in me," necessarily implies a union with Jesus. Now, of this union with Christ, we may observe three distinct features. There is, *first, the eternal union* which the church had with Christ before all worlds. There is, *secondly, the vital union* which takes place betwixt Christ and the believing soul, when the Holy Ghost raises up faith in the heart. And there is, *thirdly, communion* with the Lord Jesus Christ springing out of this vital union.

This is God's order, the order in which it lay in his eternal mind. But it is not so with respect to the way whereby we become acquainted with it. We do not see, first, our eternal union with Christ, next proceed to vital union by living faith, and end all with divine communion. But the way by which we are brought to receive these things is, first, to feel ourselves "without Christ," cut off by sin from all communion with him; next, by a work of grace upon the soul, to be brought to believe in his name, and thus receive a vital union with him;

out of this vital union with him springs next living communion; and out of living communion arises last a knowledge of eternal union.

But it will be desirable to enter into these things a little more in detail. They are vital points of the deepest importance, therefore not to be hurried over, nor passed lightly by; for on them depends our eternal standing, as well as our evidence whether we be bound for heaven or hell.

What, then, is the Scriptural description? (for by the Scriptures we must always stand or fall)—what is the divinely inspired account of the state of a child of God before he is brought to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? "Dead in trespasses and sins." "Without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." (Eph. 2:1, 12.) If this be the description which the Holy Ghost has given of the elect in a state of nature, (and the experience of every one divinely taught bears testimony that God the Holy Ghost, in thus describing their character, has penned it as with a ray of light), must not some mighty revolution take place in the soul before it is brought to believe in Christ, and thus to enjoy vital union with him? What are we by nature? Are we not closely riveted and glued to the world, to the things of time and sense, to our own righteousness, and to all that God hates with perfect hatred? Must there not, then, be a divorce from these first husbands, that we may be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we may bring forth fruit unto God? Must not the sharp sword of God's word cut asunder this close union with the world, with the things of time and sense, with our own righteousness, and with the law? Surely. Before we can be brought into a knowledge of, and any vital union with Christ, or any spiritual communion with his most

gracious Majesty, the keen knife must pass between us and self, us and the law, us and our own righteousness, us and our own fleshly obedience; and thus separate us utterly from these things, in order to bring about a union to Christ, which we never can have so long as we cleave to those perishing things on which the eternal wrath of God rests. And is not this a painful operation? Can the keen knife pass between us and the world, us and our fleshly obedience, us and our own righteousness, us and that idol self which we so dearly love and pay such devout worship to, without leaving marks and scars upon our flesh, or without causing some keen and acute sensations? It cannot; and those who have experienced these things know it cannot. But how indispensable, how utterly indispensable, is this operation in the hands of the Spirit, to cut us off from self; that we may have union, living union, with the Lord Jesus Christ. For Christ and self can never unite. Christ's righteousness and our own righteousness; the love of God and the love of the world; the worshipping of Jesus, and the worshipping of idols; admiring of ourselves, and admiring of him; can never sit upon the same throne. Self must be laid in ruins before Jesus can be set up effectually in the heart. There must be a divorce, a thorough divorce, from everything that nature cleaves to, before a living union with the Lord Jesus Christ can be brought about. This is the reason why the Lord's people pass through such severe exercises, perplexities, conflicts, and trials, such powerful temptations, such varied feelings, such deep afflictions, to uproot them, to cut them clean off and clean out of self, that they may be brought by divine faith to have a vital union with the Lord Jesus Christ.

But is this sufficient? Something more is wanting. All our exercises, all our convictions, all our afflictions; all our trials, all our temptations—be they increased a thousand fold—cannot give us a living union with Christ. We find this daily

manifested. We see many groaning and grieving under trials and afflictions, who yet seem to have no vital union with the Lamb of God. Another process is therefore necessary. The blessed Spirit must not only cut us off from self, but give us a living union with the Lord Jesus Christ. And how does he do this? By making him known to our souls; by unfolding to us something of his glory. Was not this the way by which the disciples had a living union with Christ? It was not Peter leaving his fishing-nets that gave him a vital union with Christ; it was not their coming out of the world that gave them a vital union with Christ; it was not their preaching the gospel, nor working miracles, that gave them a vital union with Christ. Did not Judas do all these things as well as the rest? But it was what the Apostle speaks of (John 1:14), "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." It was this which gave them vital union with Christ. If we have never, by the eye of faith, seen Jesus, the Son of God, "and beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father," and felt the actings of living faith in our bosom whereby that blessed Redeemer was laid hold of and embraced—whatever we may talk about our religion, however highly we may estimate it, or however highly other persons may esteem it in us, we have as yet no vital proof of union with Jesus.

Let these two things, then, be well weighed up in your experience. May Satan not deceive us in this matter. Two processes are indispensably necessary to be passed through; the one, a separation from self, produced by the keen edge of God's word in the conscience; the other, a vital union with Jesus through the actings of that living faith which the Holy Ghost alone can raise up in the soul.

Now, out of this vital union with Christ springs *communion* with him. "Abide in me, and I in you." But we can have no

abiding in Christ except we have first union with him. The Lord clearly presupposes that the disciples to whom he was speaking had this union with him. He says, "Abide in me," that is, 'ye are already in me, continue in me;' as he says, (verse 9,) "Continue ye in my love." But O, how many things there are that prevent this abiding in Christ! Let us consider a few.

1. *Unbelief, the power of unbelief*—what an enemy—what a desperate enemy is this to abiding in Christ! What is it that brings the soul near to Christ, that gives it vital union with Jesus, and makes him precious? Is it not living faith? Is not that the eye which sees Christ? Is not that the hand which takes hold of Christ, and brings him near? Is not that the ear that hears the voice of Christ? Surely. Unbelief then is that mortal foe which ever fights with desperate enmity against the life of faith in the soul. When, then, we are filled with little else but unbelief, is there any sensible abiding in Christ? We cannot at such moments realize even our union with him at all. He is so distant that we cannot get near unto, much less enjoy communion with him.

2. *The power of sin* is another thing that prevents the soul from acting up to this divine exhortation, "Abide in me." O how sin, in its workings within, in its mighty power, in its polluting defilements, separates our souls from the object of our heart's love! How it drives us, as I was speaking last Lord's day, to "the ends of the earth!" How it intercepts and cuts off communion with the Lord of life and glory!

3. *Darkness of mind*. O how the Lord's people have, for the most part, to groan and lament under darkness of mind; and how continually this prevents communion with the Lord Jesus Christ! When we are in that state, as some of us doubtless often are, where "we see not our signs;" when night rests

upon our soul; when we cannot find the way, nor that our feet are in the way; when we can scarcely trace one mark of divine teaching within; when Jesus is as little known to us as though there were no Jesus at all, and as though we had never seen him nor believed in his name—what power and prevalence this darkness of mind has to intercept communion with the Lord of life and glory!

4. *The cares and anxieties of the world* laying hold of the heart, stealing in upon the affections, burying the thoughts, and overwhelming the mind with a flood of carnal solicitude—who that knows the coming in of the world in this shape, does not know, painfully know, how it breaks in upon the communion with the Lord Jesus Christ!

5. *The temptations of Satan*; the fiery darts that he often casts into our carnal mind; and the workings, the hideous workings of evil, that are thence felt, deeply felt within—how these things all conspire to prevent a firm and believing abiding in Christ.

But if there were no such hindrances, if there were no such difficulties, would the Lord have said, "Abide in me?" He knew, well knew, there was everything in us to prevent abiding in him. That though, in rich grace, he had brought us near to himself; yet there was everything in self, everything in sin, and everything in the world, to intercept communion with him, and take us out of that sweet, blessed, and spiritual state, in which we feelingly and experimentally abide in him.

But I must not dwell upon one side of the question only, and merely shew the hindrances to felt union and communion with the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us look at the other side of the picture, and see how we are enabled from time to time to

abide in Jesus.

Be this never forgotten, that if we have ever been brought near to the Lord Jesus Christ by the actings of living faith, there never can be any final, actual separation from him. As far indeed as our feelings are concerned, there is many an interposition to communion with him, and fears too of final separation from him; but there is never actual separation. In the darkest moments, in the dreariest hours, under the most painful exercises, the most fiery temptations, there is, as with Jonah in the belly of hell, a looking again toward the holy temple. There is not an abandoning of all hope, a going into the world, a giving up of all we have felt in the Lord's name. There is sometimes a sigh, a cry, a groan, a breathing forth of the heart's desire to "know him, and the power of his resurrection;" that he would draw us near unto himself, and make himself precious to our souls. And these very cries and sighs, groanings and breathings, all prove that whatever darkness of mind, guilt of conscience, or unbelief we may feel, there is no real separation. It is in grace as it is in nature; the clouds do not blot out the sun; it is still in the sky, though they often intercept his bright rays. And so with the blessed Sun of Righteousness; our unbelief, our ignorance; our darkness of mind, our guilt of conscience, our many temptations—these do not blot out the Sun of Righteousness from the sky of grace. Though thick clouds come between him and us and make us feel as though he was blotted out, or at least as if we were blotted from his remembrance, yet, through mercy, where grace has begun the work, grace carries it on; "Being confident of this very thing that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." (Phil. 1:6.) Were it not so, there could be no revivings of faith, hope, or love. But, through mercy, infinite mercy, where the Lord has implanted his blessed graces of faith, hope, and love, he waters them from time to time with the dews of his grace; as

he says, "In that day, sing ye unto her, a vineyard of red wine. I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." (Isa. 27:2, 3.)

Now the blessed Spirit is the sole author of communion with the Lord. It is only under his secret operations and most divine influences, that we are ever brought to the footstool of Jesus; that our eyes are ever anointed with heavenly eye-salve to see his beauty and glory; that our hearts ever pant after him as the hart after the water-brooks; or that we ever feel anything like union and communion with his most gracious Majesty.

But the blessed Spirit works by means. What are those means?

1. One means that he employs to bring about and keep alive this abiding in Christ is *faith*. It is through faith that, in the first instance, we have vital union with Christ; and it is through faith that we have communion with him. And the stronger the faith is, the more communion with his blessed Majesty there is. Now, the blessed Spirit after he is pleased, in the first instance, to raise up faith, waters his own grace in the soul, draws it forth into living act and exercise, and thus fixes that faith upon, and makes it centre in Jesus. Wherever faith is thus blessedly raised up and drawn forth, union is revived, and communion blessedly experienced.

2. The blessed Spirit makes use of the *word of life*. It is through the word that the soul in the first instance is cleansed. "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." (John 15:3.) It is by the word that the soul is begotten again unto eternal life. It is too by the word applied to the heart that the blessed Spirit from time to time keeps alive communion with the Lord Jesus Christ. Is it not

so in vital experience? Some passage of Scripture drops into the soul, some promise comes warm into the heart, and as it comes it makes way for itself. It enters the heart, breaks down the feelings, melts the soul, and draws forth living faith to flow unto and centre alone in the "altogether lovely." There are many times and seasons when the word of God is to us a dead letter; we see and feel no sweetness in it. But there are other times, through mercy, when the word of God is made sweet and precious to us; when we can say, with the prophet of old, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart." (Jer. 15:16.) It was so in the case of David. He says, they are "more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb." (Psa. 19:10.) When this is felt, the sure effect is to bring the soul into communion with the Lord Jesus, who is the true word of God, and makes use of the written word to draw us near unto himself.

3. The blessed Spirit is pleased to make use also of *prayer*; raising up a spirit of grace and supplications, and interceding for us and in us "with groanings which cannot be uttered;" stirring us up, enabling us to pour out our heart at the footstool, and giving us power and inward strength whereby we plead with God, and wrestle with him as Jacob did of old, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." As the blessed Spirit is pleased to raise up these pantings and longings within, he strengthens faith in the heart, and there is a flowing forth of love to the Lord, whereby he is embraced in the arms of the tenderest affection.

4. The blessed Spirit sometimes also sheds abroad *love*; and love is a sweet seal of union and communion.

5. And lastly, not to mention others, the Spirit sometimes

makes use of *conversation* with the Lord's family. "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another." (Mal. 3:16.) And as the disciples found in journeying to Emmaus, "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?" (Luke 24:32.)

And thus the blessed Spirit, in these various ways, maintains and keeps alive communion with the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Abide in me." The Lord did not use these words as though there were any power in the creature to abide in him. But he was pleased to use them that they might be blessed to his people when the Holy Spirit applied them to the heart; for, he adds, "*And I in you.*" The one is the key to the other. If we abide in Christ, Christ abides in us. It is by Christ abiding in us, that we are enabled to abide in him. But how does Christ abide in us? By his Spirit. It is by his Spirit, he makes the bodies of his saints his temple; it is by his Spirit, that he comes and dwells in them. Though it is instrumentally by faith, as we read, "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith:" yet it is through the communication of his Spirit to the soul, and the visits of his most gracious presence. Thus he bids us, encourages us, and influences us to abide in him by his abiding in us.

But his abiding in a child of God may be known by certain effects following. If he abide in you, he makes and keeps your *conscience tender*. It is sin that separates between you and him. Therefore, the Lord Jesus Christ, in order that he may abide in you and make you abide in him, makes and keeps your conscience tender in his fear. And this keeps you from those sins which separate between you and him.

He may be known, then, to abide in you by the secret checks

he gives you when temptation comes before your eyes, and you are all but gone; as one of old said, "My feet were almost gone; my steps had well-nigh slipped." (Psa. 73:2.) He is pleased to give a secret **eternal [internal?]** check and admonition; so that your cry is, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Gen. 39:9.) And if you go astray and turn from the Lord to your idols, as to our shame and sorrow we often do, he proves that he still abides in you by not giving you up to a reprobate mind, not suffering you to harden your heart against him; but by his reproofs, admonitions, and secret checks in your conscience—by the very lashings and scourgings which he inflicts upon you as a father upon his child, and his secret pleadings with you in the court of conscience—by all these things he makes it manifest that he still abides in you.

Now these two things are the grand vital points that all Christians should seek to be established in. The first is, Is he a believer in Christ? Has the blessed Spirit made Christ known to his soul? Has he embraced Jesus in the arms of living faith? The second point which he should seek to have established in his soul is—Does he abide in Christ? This he may know by having some testimony that Christ abides in him, and produces the fruits that flow out of this inward abiding. If Christ abide in him, his heart will not be like the nether millstone. He cannot rush greedily into sin; he will not love the world, and the things of time and sense; he cannot happily love idols, or do those things which ungodly professors do without one check or pang. Jesus in the soul is a guest that will make himself known; yea, abiding there, he is King therein. He is Ruler in Zion, and when he comes into the heart, he comes as King. Being therefore, its rightful Sovereign, he sways the faculties of the soul, and makes it obedient to his sceptre; for "thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power;" (Psa. 110:3.) "O Lord our God, other

lords beside thee have had dominion over us; but by thee only will we make mention of thy name." (Isa. 26:13.)

O search your hearts. God enable us in mercy to do so, and see whether we have any testimony that we abide in Christ, by knowing and feeling that Christ abides in us, and, depend upon it, if Christ abide in us, there will be some marks and fruits flowing out of that abiding; there will be some outward as well as inward evidences that we are of another spirit from those dead in sins or dead in profession. There will be humility, sincerity, godly simplicity, and filial fear; deadness to the world, separation from evil, lowly thoughts of ourselves, brokenness of heart, contrition of Spirit, and tenderness of conscience; a fleeing from all things here below to make our sweet abode in the bosom of a risen Lord. Can we find these things going on in our souls? If not, we may call ourselves believers, or Christians, or children of God, but we have little evidence that we are worthy of the name.

II.—But we pass on, as time is waning, to consider *what are the fruits* of thus abiding in Christ? "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." Have you never seen in the winter the gardener pruning a vine? What a heap of branches lie at the foot of the tree after the keen knife has severed them. Will they ever bear fruit again? Is not this their destiny—to be swept into the dung-heap? And though I know that professors of religion never had that vital union with Christ which the branches had with the vine from which the pruning knife had severed them; yet the Lord says, "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away." (John 15:2.) There was not a vital union, I know; but there was an apparent union. Those whom the husbandman takes away, bore no fruit; they are gathered up, and their "end is to be

burned." (Heb. 6:8.) But on the other hand, wherever the branch is left in the vine, it bears fruit; the object of the gardener is, that it should bear more fruit, and he prunes it for that very purpose.

But what is the source of all the fruitfulness in the branch? Is it in self? No, not in self, that we well know. It is the sap that flows out of the stem into the branch that makes the branch fruitful. It is so in nature; and the Lord has declared it is so with the true branches of the only true vine. "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." The only way whereby we can bring forth fruit to God's honour and glory, is by abiding in the vine.

And is it not God's chief purpose in dealing with the souls of his people to bring forth fruit in them? "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." (verse 8.) What are all God's chastenings, corrections, rebukes, and sharp trials for? Are they not that we may bring forth fruit to his honour and glory? But only in the same proportion as we abide in Christ can we bring forth fruit. God enable us to see whether we bring forth any!

Observe these two things. If you do not abide in Christ, you bring forth no fruit; if you do abide in Christ, you are bringing forth fruit. But what is the fruit that a branch brings forth by abiding in the Vine? Is it all *external* fruit? External fruit is good. "By their works ye shall know them." But there is *internal* fruit brought forth by the Spirit in the court of conscience, as well as external fruit brought forth in the life and conversation. For instance,

1. There is the fruit of *humility*. Is not that a precious fruit? "Be clothed with humility." (1 Pet. 5:5.) But we cannot bring

forth the fruit of humility, real humility, except we have a vital union and communion with the Man of Sorrows. And if we know anything of union and communion with the Man of Sorrows, the bleeding Lamb of God, there will be a transfusion of his humility into our souls. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 2:5.) As we are led to look to Christ, believe in Christ, and our heart's affections are attracted and drawn forth to Christ, humility will flow into the soul, in the same way as the sap flows out of the stem into the branches.

2. There will also be *sincerity and godly simplicity*. What is my heart by nature but "a heart deceitful above all things and desperately wicked?" (Jer. 17:9.) Can there be then any sincerity in the heart by nature? No *spiritual* sincerity: there may be *natural* sincerity; but that is no fruit of the Spirit. To be sincere Godward; sincere in all we do, think, or speak in his name; to have a single eye to his glory; to have the simplicity of a little child before his gracious Majesty—where shall I go? whither shall I look to find this precious grace of the Spirit? Oh, how I see continually, and that more and more, how men are led by base motives! Oh, how many men professing godliness, ministers and hearers, do I see led by ambition, pride, self-interest, or covetousness! How little do I see—I may say, how little do I feel in myself—of that singleness of eye to God's glory which is such a precious fruit of the Spirit in the soul!

3. *Godly fear, reverence of the great name of Jehovah*; a conscience made and kept tender by him, a sight and sense of evil, and a fleeing from it,—is not this another precious fruit that is brought forth in the heart through abiding in Christ?

4. *Faith in his blessed name, love towards his glorious*

Person, hope in his blood and righteousness; patience under trials, afflictions, temptations, and all the painful things that we have to grapple with in this vale of tears; *perseverance* to the end, amidst a thousand inward conflicts and many outward foes—are not these, too, inward fruits of the Spirit brought about through abiding in Christ by living faith?

5. *Prayerfulness, watchfulness, self-denial*; brokenness of heart, contrition of spirit, sorrow for sin; mourning over our weak and wayward heart; panting and longing after his manifested presence; crucifixion of self in all its varied shapes and forms—are not these, too, inward fruits and graces that are brought forth by abiding in Christ?

Where these inward fruits are, there will be outward fruits; inward fruits first, outward fruits next; inward fruits before God, outward fruits before man. If we abide in Christ; if we have union and communion with him; if we live unto and live upon him, and he abide in us, we cannot have these choice blessings, and be like professors buried in carnality and covetousness. There will be, there must be, marks, outward marks, whereby we shall be, we must be, distinguished from them.

But all these fruits, whether inward or outward, spring from one source—union and communion with the lowly Lamb of God. Be this never forgotten. It is not my doing *this*, or my doing *that*—I may do a thousand things, and yet all spring from base motives, because they spring from selfish motives. But if the Lord is pleased to lead me, as a poor, ruined wretch, as a guilty, needy sinner, to the footstool of mercy, and there opens up to my heart and conscience the love and blood of the Lamb, give me union to Jesus, and maintain communion with him—every grace and fruit of the Spirit will be found in me, just in the same way as the strength of the

stem is made manifest by the strength of the branch, and the strength of the branch is maintained by its abiding in the stem.

You may be tried, some of you, that you bear so little fruit. You look into your own heart, and see little or no fruit there; you look to your lives, and see little or no fruit there. But perhaps you are mistaken (and we are apt to be mistaken) as to the way whereby fruit is to be brought forth. You read, you pray, you strive, you do your best; and yet you always fail; and you will fail to the end. And a blessed thing it is to fail; for all these failures are meant to bring you into a fleeing away from self-righteousness in all its shapes and forms to a cleaving to the Son of God—to have no faith, no hope, no humility, no patience in yourselves; but that the Lord may work in us to will and to do according to his own good pleasure, and bring forth those things which are well-pleasing in his sight. And this is the only way whereby we can bring forth divine fruit. The Apostle declares expressly, that we are divorced from our first husband, the law, and married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. And there is no other way whereby fruit can be brought forth for our good, and God's glory.