

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

CHRIST'S JOY AND OURS.

A Sermon

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“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.”—John xv. 11.

THERE is a sentence, which has crept in among our common proverbs, so that it is repeated as if it were altogether true,—“Man was made to mourn.” There is a truth in that-sentence; but there is also a falsehood in it. Man was not originally made to mourn; he was made to rejoice. The garden of Eden was his place of happy abode; and, so long as he continued obedient to God, nothing grew in that garden which could cause him sorrow. For his delight, the flowers breathed out their perfume. For his delight, the landscapes were full of beauty, and the rivers rippled over golden sands. God made human beings, as he made his other creatures, to be happy. They are capable of happiness, they are in their right element when they are happy; and now that Jesus Christ has come to restore the ruins of the Fall, he has come to bring back to us the old joy,—only it shall be even sweeter and deeper than it could have been if we had never lost it. A Christian has never fully realized what Christ came to make him until he has grasped the joy of the Lord. Christ wishes his people to be happy. When they are perfect, as he will make them in due time, they shall also be perfectly happy. As heaven is the place of pure holiness, so is it the place of unalloyed happiness; and in proportion as we get ready for heaven, we shall have some of the joy which belongs to heaven, and it is our Saviour's will that even now his joy should remain in us, and that our joy should be full.

I. My first remark upon the text will be this, ALL THAT JESUS SPEAKS IS MEANT TO PRODUCE JOY IN HIS PEOPLE: “These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you.”

If you will read through the chapter from which our text is taken, and also the chapter which precedes it, you will see the nature of the words which Jesus Christ speaks to his people. *Sometimes they*

are words of instruction. He talks to us that we may know the truth, and the meaning of the truth; but his object is that, knowing the truth, we may have joy in it. I will not say that the more a Christian knows, the more joy he has; but I can truly say that ignorance often hides from us many wells of delight of which we might otherwise drink, and that, all other things being equal, the best-instructed Christian will be the happiest man. He will know the truth, and the truth will make him free. The truth will kill a thousand fears which ignorance would have fostered within him. The knowledge of the love of God, the knowledge of the full atonement made on Calvary, the knowledge of the eternal covenant, the knowledge of the immutable faithfulness of Jehovah,—indeed, all knowledge which reveals God in his relationship to his people,—will tend to create comfort in the hearts of the saints. Be not, therefore, careless about Scriptural doctrine; study the Word, and seek to understand the mind of the Spirit as revealed in it, for this blessed Book was written for your learning, that “through patience and comfort of the Scriptures you might have hope.” If you are diligent students of the Word, you will find that you have good reason to rejoice in the Lord under all circumstances.

But sometimes our Lord also spoke *words of warning.* In this chapter, we find him telling his disciples that they were branches of a vine, and that branches which bore no fruit had to be cut off, and cast into the fire. At first sight, it seems to us that there is nothing consoling in such words as those, they sound sharply in our ears, and make us start, and be afraid, and ask ourselves, “Are we bearing fruit?” Well, brethren and sisters, but such heart-searching as that is eminently beneficial, and tends to deepen in us true joy. Christ would not have us rejoice with the false joy of presumption, so he takes the sharp knife, and cuts that joy away. Joy on a false basis would prevent us from having true joy; and, therefore, the Master gives us the sharp and cutting word that we may be sound in the faith, that we may be sound in the life of God, and that so the joy we may get may be worth having,—not the mere surf and foam of a wave that is driven with the wind and tossed, but the solid foundation of the Rock of Ages.

Our Lord also tells us that even the branches that bear fruit will have to be pruned that they may bring forth more fruit. “Unpleasant truth that!” somebody might say; “it will give me no joy to know that I shall have to endure the knife of correction and affliction.” Yes, dear brother, but “tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.” So, beginning rather high up in this pedigree, you get to joy at last, and get to it by the only right method. To try to sail up to joy by the balloon of fancy, is dangerous work; but to mount up to it by Jacob’s ladder, every round of which God has placed at the proper distance, is to climb to heaven by the safe road which he has appointed. There is nothing which the Lord Jesus says to us, by way of warning, which does not guard us against sorrow, conduct

us away from danger, and points us to the path of safety. If we will but listen to these words of warning, they will thus guide us to the truest happiness that mortals can ever find either here or hereafter.

You will notice, as you read the chapter, that our Lord, in addition to words of instruction and words of warning, utters *some very humbling words*. I think that is a very humbling verse in which he says, "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." But it is good for us to be humbled and brought low. The Valley of Humiliation has always struck me as being the most beautiful place in the whole of the pilgrimage which John Bunyan describes. To see that shepherd boy sitting down among the sheep, and to hear him playing upon his pipe, and singing,—

"He that is down need fear no fall,
He that is low no pride;
He that is humble ever shall
Have God to be his Guide;"—

teaches us that, to be brought down to our true condition of nothingness before God, and made to feel our entire dependence upon the power of the Holy Spirit, is the true way to promote in us a joy which angels themselves might envy. Be thankful, therefore, beloved, whenever you read the Scripture, whether it instructs you, or warns you, or humbles you. Say to yourself, "Somehow or other, this tends to my present and eternal joy, and therefore will I give the more earnest heed to it lest by any means I should lose the blessing it is intended to convey to me."

The chapter also abounds in gracious *words of promise*, such as this: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." There are other promises here, every one of which is full of consolation to the children of God. Are any of you lacking in joy at this time? Do you feel dull and heavy of heart? Are you depressed and tried? Then listen to what Jesus Christ says here: "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." What are the things that he says to you in other parts of his Word? He says, "Take therefore no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself." "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me." "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." In this strain does our Lord graciously talk to us; do not let him talk to us in vain. My brethren, do not suffer his precious promises to fall upon your ears as the good seed fell upon the rocky or stony soil. The promise of harvest gives joy to the earth. Rob not your Lord of the sheaves which he deserves to gather from your heart and life; but believe his Word, rest upon it, and rejoice in it, realizing that his words of promise are meant to bring you great joy.

So are *his words of precept*. This chapter contains many of them,

for he tells us that it is his command that we should love our brethren, and also that we should continue in his love. He gives us many precepts of that kind, and every precept in God's Word is a signpost pointing out the road to joy. The commandments upon the tables of stone seem very hard, even though cut by the finger of God himself, and the granite on which they are engraved is hard and cold; but the precepts of the Lord Jesus are tender and gracious, and bring us joy and life. As you read them, you may be quite sure of two things; that is, if Christ denies you anything, it is not good for you; and if Christ commands you to do anything, obedience will promote your highest welfare. O child of God, never cavil at any precept of your Lord! If your proud flesh should rebel, pray it down; for, rest assured that, if you were so selfish as only to wish to do that which would promote your own happiness, it would be the path of wisdom to be obedient to your Lord and Master. I repeat what I said just now. The precepts of Christ are signposts indicating the way to joy. If you keep his commandments, you shall abide in his love; and if you carefully watch his eye, as the handmaidens watch the eye of their mistress, so as to do at once all that he bids you do, you shall have the peace of God flowing into your soul like a river, and that peace shall never fail to bring you solid and lasting joy.

II. Now, secondly, I gather from the text that, **WHEN OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST JOYS IN US, THEN WE ALSO HAVE JOY.**

This meaning of the text is the interpretation given to it by several of the early fathers: "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you." "That is to say," say they, "that I may rejoice over you, and rejoice in you, and be pleased with you, and that so your joy may be full." I am not certain that this is the meaning of the text, nor am I sure that it is not; but, anyhow, it is a very blessed truth. It means this. A child knows that its father loves it; but while it is quite sure that its father will never cease to love it, it also knows that, if it is disobedient, the father will be displeased and grieved. But the obedient child gives pleasure to its father by its obedience; and when it has done so, it receives pleasure itself from that very fact. There used to be servants, in the olden time,—and I suppose there are some now,—who were so attached to their masters that, if they gave satisfaction to them, they were perfectly satisfied; but the least word of displeasure from their master wounded them to the very heart. Perhaps a better illustration may be found in the nearer and dearer relationship of the wife and the husband. The wife, if she has pleased her husband, is delighted in the joy which she has given to him; but if, by any means, she has displeased him, she is unhappy until she has removed the cause of his displeasure, and has again given him joy. Now I know that my Lord Jesus loves me, and that he will never do anything else but love me. Yet he may not be always pleased with me; and when he has no joy in me, my joy also goes if I have a heart that is true towards him; but when he has joy in me, when he can rejoice in me, then is my joy also full; and every one of you, whom the Lord has loved, will find this to be

true,—that, in proportion as Jesus Christ can look upon you with joy as obedient and faithful to him, in that proportion will your conscience be at ease, and your mind will find joy in the thought that you are acceptable unto him.

What are the ways in which we can really please Christ Jesus, and so have joy in Christ's pleasure? According to the chapter before us, *we please him when we abide in him*: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." If you sometimes abide in Christ, and sometimes turn away from him, you will give him no pleasure; but if he be the indispensable Companion of your daily life,—if you are unhappy should even a cloud come between you and your Lord,—if you feel that you must be as closely connected with him as the limb is with the head, or as the branch is with the stem, then you will please him, and he will take delight in your fellowship. Fervent love to Christ is very pleasing to him; but the chilly, lukewarm love of Laodicea is nauseous to him, so that he says, "Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." If you continue, day by day, to walk with God carefully and prayerfully, and to abide in Christ continually, he will look upon you with eyes of satisfaction and delight, and will see in you the reward of his soul-travail; and you, being conscious that you are giving joy to him, will find that your own cup of joy is also full to overflowing. What greater joy can a man have than to feel that he is pleasing Christ? My fellow-creatures may condemn what I do; but if Christ accepts it, it matters nothing to me how many may condemn it. They may misrepresent and misjudge me, and impute wrong motives to me, and sneer and snarl at me; but if I can keep up constant and unbroken communion with the Christ of God, what cause have I for sorrow? Nay, if he be joyful in us, then our joy shall remain in us, and shall be full.

Our Lord Jesus has also told us that *he has joy in us when we bring forth much fruit*: "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples;" that is to say, "I will recognize in you the evidence of true discipleship with satisfaction and delight." Brethren and sisters in Christ, are we bringing forth much fruit unto God? Are you called to suffer? Then do you, in your suffering, bring forth the fruit of patience? Or, are you strong and in robust health? Then are you, with that health and strength, rendering to the Lord the fruit of holy activity? Are you doing all you can for the Lord Jesus, who has done so much for you? You have received much from him; are you yielding any adequate return to him? It is little enough when it is what we call much; but, oh, how little it is when it is little in our own estimation! But when our Lord Jesus Christ sees us doing much for God, he is pleased with us, as the gardener is when, having planted a tree, and digged about it, and manured it, and pruned it, he sees it at last covered with golden fruit. He is pleased with his fruitful tree, and Christ is pleased with his fruit-bearing disciples. Are we making Christ glad in this fashion? If so, our own joy shall be full. I am not surprised that some Christians have

so little joy when I remember how little joy they are giving to Jesus, because they are bringing forth such a little fruit to his praise and glory. Brethren and sisters, see ye to this matter, I pray you. If I cannot enforce this truth with the power that it deserves, may the Holy Spirit cause the truth to come home with power to your hearts!

Our Lord also tells us that *he has joy in us when we keep his commandments*: "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." He that walks carefully in the matter of obedience to Christ's commands, wishing never to do anything offensive to him, asking for a tender conscience that he may be at once aware when he is doing wrong, and earnestly desiring to leave no duty undone,—such a man as that must be happy. He may not laugh much; he may have very little to say when in frivolous company; but there is a joy that laughter would but mock, there is a sacred mirth within to which the merriment of fools is but as the crackling of thorns under a pot; and the man with a tender conscience has that joy, the careful walker has that joy, the man who, when he puts his head upon his pillow at night, can feel, "I have not been all that I want to be; but, still, I have aimed at holiness, I have tried to curb my passions, I have sought to find out my Master's will, and in every point to do it." Such a man sleeps sweetly; and if he wakes, there is music in his heart; and such a man, whatever the trials of life may be, has abundant sources of joy within himself. He is pleasing to Christ; Christ joys in him, and his joy is full.

And *this is peculiarly the case with those who love the brethren*. There are some who do not love their brethren at all; or if they do, they love themselves a great deal more. They are very apt to judge and to condemn their brethren. If they can find a little fault, they magnify it; and if they can find none, they invent some. I know some persons, who seem to be, by nature, qualified to be monks or hermits, living quite alone; according to their notion of things, they are much too good for society. No church is pure enough for them; no ministry can profit them; no one else can reach as high as the wonderful position to which, in their self-conceit, they fancy that they have attained. Let none of us be of that sort. Many of the children of God are far better than we are, and the worst one in his family has some points in which he is better than we are. I feel, sometimes, as though I would give my eyes to be as sure of heaven as the most obscure and the least in all the family of God; and I think that such times may come to some of you if you imagine yourselves to be so great and good. You strong cattle, that push with horn and with shoulder, and that drive back the weak ones, the Lord may say to you, "Get you gone; you belong not to me, for my people are not thus rough and boastful,—not thus proud and haughty; but I look to the man who is humble, to him who has a contrite spirit, and who trembles at my Word."

Did you every try to pray to God under the influence of a consciousness of possessing the higher life? Did you ever try to pray to God that way? If you ever did, I do not think you will do it a second time. I tried it once, but I am not likely to repeat the experiment. I thought I would try to pray to God in that fashion, but it did not seem to come naturally from me; and when I had done so, I thought I heard somebody at a distance saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and he went home to his house justified; and then I had to tear off my Pharisaic robes, and get back to where the poor publican had been standing, for his place and his prayer suited me admirably. I cannot make out what has happened to some of my brethren, who fancy themselves so wonderfully good. I wish the Lord would strip them of their self-righteousness, and let them see themselves as they really are in his sight. Their fine notions concerning the higher life would soon vanish then. Brethren, the highest life I ever hope to reach to, this side of heaven, is to say from my very soul,—

"I the chief of sinners am,
But Jesus died for me."

I have not the slightest desire to suppose that I have advanced in the spiritual life many stages beyond my brethren. As long as I trust simply to the blood and righteousness of Christ, and think nothing of myself, I believe that I shall continue to be pleasing to the Lord Jesus Christ, that his joy will be in me, and that my joy will be full.

III. Now, thirdly, I think we may gather from the text that THE JOY WHICH JESUS GIVES TO HIS PEOPLE IS HIS OWN JOY: "That *my* joy might remain in you."

I daresay you have noticed that a man cannot communicate to another any joy except that of which he is himself conscious. Here is a man who is rich; he can tell you the joy of riches, but he cannot give that joy to a poor man. Here is another man who takes delight in all sorts of foolery; he can tell you the joy of nonsense, but he cannot go beyond that. So, when Jesus gives us joy, he gives us his own joy; and what, think you, is that? I must put it very briefly.

The joy of Jesus is, first, *the joy of abiding in his Father's love*. He knows that his Father loves him,—that he never did anything else but love him,—that he loved him or ever the earth was,—that he loved him when he was in the manger, and that he loved him when he was on the cross. Now that is the joy which Christ gives to you, the joy of knowing that your Father loves you. Let me stop a little while, that you, who really are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, may just roll that sweet morsel under your tongue,—the everlasting God loves you! I have known the time when I have felt as if I could leap up at the very thought of God's love to me. That he pities you, and cares for you, you can understand; but that he loves you,—well, if that does not make your joy full, there is nothing that can. It ought to fill us with delight to know that we are loved of the Lord, with an everlasting and infinite love, even as

Jesus Christ is loved. "The Father himself loveth you," declares Christ; so, surely, you share Christ's joy, and that fact should make your own joy full.

Christ's joy was also *the joy of hallowed friendship*. He said to his disciples, "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." The friends of Jesus are those who are taken by him into most intimate fellowship,—to lean upon his breast, and to become his constant companions. Our Lord Jesus Christ has great joy in being on the most friendly terms with his people, and have not you also great joy in being on such friendly terms with him? What higher joy do you want or can you have? I have heard a man say, very boastfully, that he once dined with Lord So-and-so; and another, just for the sake of showing off, spoke of his friend, Sir John somebody or other. But you have the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Friend, your Divine Companion; you are going to sit and feast with him presently at his own table. He calls you no more his servant, but his friend; does not that fact make you rejoice with exceeding joy? What is your heart made of if it does not leap with joy at such an assurance as that? You are beloved of the Lord, and a friend of the Son of God! Kings might well be willing to give up their crowns if they could have such bliss as this.

Moreover, *our Lord Jesus felt an intense delight in glorifying his Father*. It was his constant joy to bring glory to his Father. Have you ever felt the joy of glorifying God, or do you now feel joy in Christ because he has glorified his Father? I solemnly declare that, if Christ would not save me, I must love him for what he has done to exhibit the character of God. I have sometimes thought that, if he were to drive me out of doors, I would stand there in the cold, and say, "Do what thou wilt with me; crush me if thou wilt; but I will always love thee, for there never was another such as thou art, never one who so well deserved my love, and so fully won my affection and admiration as thou hast done." How gloriously has Christ rolled away the great load of human sin, adequately recompensed the claims of divine justice, and magnified the law, and made it honourable! He took the greatest possible delight in doing this; it was for the joy that was set before him that he endured the cross, despising the shame. Let that joy be yours also; rejoice that the law is honoured, that justice is satisfied, and that free grace is gloriously displayed in the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was the joy of Christ that he should finish the work which his Father gave him to do; and he has finished it, and therefore he is glad; will not you also rejoice in his finished work? You have not to put a single stitch to the robe of righteousness which he has wrought; it is woven from the top throughout, and absolutely perfect in every respect. You have not to contribute even a quarter of a penny to the ransom price for your redemption, for it is paid to the uttermost farthing. The great redemptive work is for ever finished, and Christ has done it all. He is Alpha, and he is Omega; he is the Author and he is also the Finisher of our

faith. Sit down, my brethren and sisters in Christ, and just feed on this precious truth. Surely, this is the "feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined," of which the prophet Isaiah long ago wrote. I see thee, Lord Jesus, with thy foot upon the dragon's neck; I see thee with death and hell beneath thy feet; I see the glory that adorns thy triumphant brow as thou waitest till the whole earth shall acknowledge thee as King; for thou hast once for all said, "It is finished," and finished it certainly is; and shall not my poor heart rejoice because thou hast finished it, and finished it for me?

IV. My last observation is that, WHEN CHRIST COMMUNICATES HIS JOY TO HIS PEOPLE, IT IS A JOY WHICH REMAINS, AND A JOY WHICH IS FULL.

No other joy remains. There is a great deal of very proper joy in many families when children are born, yet how many little coffins are followed by weeping mothers! There is joy when God fills the barn, and very properly so, for a bountiful harvest should make men glad; but the winter soon comes, with its cold, and dark, and dreary weather. But, brethren, *when we get the joy of the Lord, it remains.* Why? Because the cause of it remains. The rill will continue as long as the spring runs; and the joy of a Christian is one that never can alter, because the cause of it never alters. God's love never changes towards his people; the atonement never loses its efficacy; our Lord Jesus Christ never ceases his intercession; his acceptableness with God on our behalf never varies; the promises do not change; the covenant is not like the moon,—sometimes waxing and sometimes waning. Oh, no; if you rejoice with Christ's joy to-day, you will have the same cause for rejoicing to-morrow, and for ever, and for evermore, for he says that his joy shall remain in you.

Then, next, *this joy is full joy.* Then, dear brethren, if our joy is full, two things are very clear; first, there is no room for any more joy; and, secondly, there is no room for any sorrow. When a man gets to know the love of God to him, he is so full of delight that he does not want any more joy. The pleasures of this world lose all their former charm. When a man has eaten all he can eat, you may set whatever you like before him, but he has no appetite for it. "Enough is as good as a feast," we say. When a man is forgiven by God, and knows that he is saved, the joy of the Lord enters his soul, and he says, "You may take all other joys, and do what you like with them. I have my God, my Saviour, and I want no more." Then, ambition ceases, lust is quiet, covetousness is dead, and desires, that once roamed abroad, now stay at home. The saved one says, "My God, thou art enough for me; what more can I require? Since thou hast said to me, 'I love thee,' and my heart has responded, 'My God, I love thee, too,' I have more true wealth at my disposal than if I had all the mines of the Indies under my control."

There is, also, no longer any room for sorrow, for if Christ's joy has filled us, where can sorrow come? "But the man has lost his gold." "Yes," he says, "but if the Lord likes to take it from

me, let him have it." "But the man is bereaved of those that are very dear to him, as Job was." Yet he says, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." When a man consciously realizes the love of God in his soul, he cannot want more than that. I wish that all of us had that realization; for, then, our joy would be so great that we should have no room left for sorrow.

Now, dear brethren and sisters, as you come to the table of your Lord in this spirit, you will feel so full of joy that you will be too full for words. People really full of joy do not usually talk much. A person, who is carrying a glass that is full to the brim, does not go dancing along like one who has nothing to carry. He is very quiet and steady, for he does not want to spill the contents of the glass. So, the man who has the joy of the Lord filling his soul is often quiet; he cannot say much about it. I have even known that joy to get so full that we have scarcely known whether we have been in the body or out of the body. Pain, sickness, depression of spirit,—all seem to have been taken right away; and the man has had so clear a view of Christ, and his mind has been so abstracted from everything else, that, afterwards, it has almost seemed like a dream to him to have felt the love of God in its almighty power, lifting him above all surrounding circumstances.

Then, dear brethren, if it be so with us, the joy of the Lord will be much too full for us ever to forget it. If, at this very moment, our soul is filled with Christ's joy, it is possible that, twenty or thirty years hence, any one of us may be able to say, "I remember that first Sabbath night in the year 1875 at the Tabernacle; my Lord then met with me, looked into my soul, and saw there was a void there, and he poured his own heart's joy into me until my soul could not hold any more." And, perhaps, in some dark time in the future, your present experience will be a great stay to your soul, and you will recall David's words in a similar case, "O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar;" and you will say, "Though, now, deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts, the remembrance of that bright season causes me to know that thou dost not forsake those on whom thy love has once been set." Come close to your Lord, beloved. I delight to come very near to him. To touch the hem of his garment, is enough for sinners; but it is not enough for saints. We want to sit at his feet with Mary, and to lay our heads upon his bosom as John did. O ye unconverted ones, look to Jesus; for, if ye look to him, ye shall live! But as for you who are converted, a look will not be enough for you. You want to keep on gazing at him, and for him to keep on gazing at you, till he shall say to you, "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck;" and you also shall say, "He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love. Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am sick of love." Oh, that there might now be such sweet fellowship between Christ and all his

blood-besprinkled ones that, if we cannot pass the portals of heaven, we shall be very near them; and if we cannot hear the songs of the angels, at any rate they will hear ours; and if we cannot look within, and behold their joys, let us at least tempt them to look without, and see ours, and half wish that they might be allowed to sit with us at this communion table, though that is an honour reserved for sinners saved by sovereign grace, for—

“Never did angels taste above
Redeeming grace and dying love.”

Thus may the Master smile on you, my dearly-beloved, and make you to be such eminent saints that he can have great joy in you; for, then, his joy shall remain in you, and your joy shall be full.

How I wish that everybody here knew my dear Lord and Master! I tell you, who do not know Christ, and do not experimentally know what true religion is, that five minutes' realization of the love of Christ would be better for you than a million years of your present choicest delights. There is more brightness in the dark side of Christ than in the brightest side of this poor world. I would sooner lie on a bed, and ache in every limb, with the death-sweat standing on my brow, by the month and year together, persecuted, despised, and forsaken, poor and naked, with the dogs to lick my sores, and the devils to tempt my soul, and have Christ for my Friend, than I would sit in the palaces of wicked kings, with all their wealth, and luxury, and pampering, and sin. Even at our worst estate, it is better to be God's dog than the devil's darling; it is better to have the crumbs and the mouldy crusts that fall from Christ's table for the dogs than to sit at the head of princely banquets with the ungodly. “I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.” God bless you, and save you; and he will do so if you trust in Jesus his dear Son. As soon as you trust in Jesus, you are saved. God grant that you may do so this very hour, for his dear name's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

JOHN XV. 1—11.

John xv. Verse 1. *I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.*

All other vines were but types and shadows; Christ is the substance, God's ideal vine: “the true vine.” Israel was a vine;—the figure is a common one throughout the Old Testament;—but it was a false vine, and it bore bitter grapes.

2. *Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away:*

The true description of a real saint is that he is in Christ, that he abides in Christ, and that he bears fruit unto Christ. Where there are not these three things, there is no real saintship, and so the man is taken away. Whatever he seemeth to be, and seemeth to have, he is taken away. Oh, the sad loss of many professors in being taken away! What a terrible doom, to have had a name to live, and then to be taken away!

2. *And every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.*

The vine is very apt to become unclean and unhealthy; there are all sorts