

The experiences of a fruit-bearing branch (Quality: Average)

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Preacher: Hickmott, Ebenezer Stephen (1881 - 1965)

[0 : 00] Again, as the Lord may be pleased to help, we would invite your attention to the 15th chapter from John, the first three verses.

I am the vine, the true vine, and my father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away. And every branch in me that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

Now we are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. These words, my friends, you know are the words of him who spake as never man spake.

God is here speaking. Jesus Christ in his love and pity and sympathy and fellow feeling for his dear disciples is here.

And he knew exactly what they felt and how grieved they really were because he was breathing to them how soon he would depart from them.

[1 : 20] I don't mean that he would take away his saving presence, but in his person he would ascend to heaven and glory.

And you see there was no need for him to remain on the earth after his work was finished. But at the same time he manifested in these chapters particularly his deep concern and his sympathy with them in their loss.

They felt it was a loss. They felt it was a loss. They didn't fully understand the meaning why he should be taken from them. Neither do his people today after the Lord has blessed a soul and drew near to them and favored them.

And they had felt communion and fellowship together. And then presently he withdraws his presence from them.

And they are in darkness and in trouble and distress. And they feared that he would never come again. But what he said to his disciples here, he says to his people today, I will see you again and your heart to rejoice and no man should take that joy from you.

[2 : 42] Oh, it is a mercy. If we are really concerned and exercised and really feel that love to him, that we dread to think of him, as it were, withdrawing his sensible, enjoyable presence from us.

While he is with us, friends, we can bear all things, endure all things, and we hope all things then. But when he withdraws, how solemn it is, and yet there is a great necessity.

And now, you see, he says, here I am the true vine, assuring them once more of the reality and the blessedness that he really was what he always told them and manifested to them, not only in his conversation with them, but in his walk, in his life, and in his conduct all the while.

He continually manifested that he really was the Son of God. And that his deep concern and his very thoughts were all concentrated upon their welfare and well-being.

So here he again assures them that there is nothing come between them and him. Nothing.

- [4 : 08] And you see, this figure shows that how closely connected is Jesus Christ with his disciples. That nothing can ever part them or sever them from the vine.
- Nothing. Nothing, friends. Who shall separate us, says the apostle, from the love of God, shall tribulation, distress, and so on? No, nothing.
- There's nothing, my friends, can possibly really separate. I know we often feel that these things fluctuate. We don't always feel the comfort of them, but that makes no difference whatever to the mind and will and purpose of the Lord.
- And then he tells them, too, that his dear father was the husband man. You see, they were planted, this vine, in Jesus Christ, the soil.
- And what a fertile is this soil. And every plant that God has planted thus will bear fruit. It will, friends, it will bear fruit.
- [5 : 15] And the husband man will look after it so patiently and so practically that his end and his purpose is that they shall bear fruit.
- Now, the question arises, are we really bearing fruit to the honor and glory of the Lord? Perhaps you feel how little fruit you seem to bear.
- But, friends, is there any fruit? I say, is there any? And if there's a little, what a mercy that is. Because a little of the righteous man's half is better than the revenues of many wicked.
- We have just a little fruit that honors the Lord and that manifests, too, our union and communion with the Lord Jesus Christ.
- You see, the fruit thrives and is matured by these means which the Lord is pleased to use. And then, you see, he gives a solemn warning, as I said this morning, and it is a solemn warning, too.
- [6 : 25] Whatever we may profess to be, if there's no fruit, friends, we shall be taken away presently. And the end is to be burnt, you know.
- Yes, the end will be to be burnt. Oh, that we might be more deeply concerned and exercised and beg of the Lord to enable us, through given grace, to bear fruit, the fruits of his holy, blessed spirit, in its manifestation in our souls.
- Now, then, he also goes on to say, and every branch that beareth fruit. I would like to mention one or two more fruits. There is the fruit of love, the fruit of meekness, but there is also the fruit of peace, real solid peace.
- The peace, I mean, of God's own. Jesus Christ has brought about and brought in this precious, blessed peace. There could have been no peace whatever if the Lord Jesus Christ had not come and suffered and bled and died in the sinner's place.
- This was the means the Father appointed, you see, that peace should be brought about and made manifest. When the fall took place, there was no peace whatever between God and man.
- [7 : 57] No, no man was separated himself from God. Therefore, you see, he was in a sad and solemn state. And had it not been for the very wonderful interposition of Almighty God, who had already made an adequate provision for those he loved against the poor.
- Paul did not take God by surprise. He already had made provision, a perfect provision. And that provision was made manifest, you see, in the person of his beloved son, who, you see, according to divine writ, came in the fullness of time.
- But before that, there was the offering up of the various sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.
- Now, those sacrifices which our forefathers offered up, they were, they pointed to and were typical of the Lord Jesus Christ's sacrifice, his one sacrifice.

And because the Father saw the travail of his son's soul in those sacrifices, he saw his merit, he saw his work, he saw his own finished work in them.

[9 : 29] He saw how that through Christ's sacrifice, the law, the law of God, that must be met, must be honored, must be upheld.

He saw how that through Christ's work in those sacrifices. And therefore, when Noah offered up a sacrifice of thanksgiving, when he was favored to and brought out of the ark, we read, God smelt a sweet-smelling savor.

That was the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ that the Father saw and received and was honored thereby, glorified thereby.

And I'm sure that Noah felt the answer of a good conscience. He felt the approbation of the Lord resting upon him in offering up that, that sacrifice with thanksgiving to Almighty God.

And so, down the ages, right down to the time when Jesus came himself, and he came, you see, into this lower world, in a most mysterious yet blessed way, honorable way, right way, the way of God's own appointing.

[10 : 50] And he was thus anointed. And those wise men, when they saw his star in the east, they came to worship him.

They were blessed, as I mentioned faith this morning, they were blessed with true faith. And their faith penetrated through all circumstances which might have disturbed or turned aside that faith.

It penetrated through everything. And it saw in that faith the actual, real, and proper Son of God. Therefore, they worshipped him and gave of their substance to him, drank incense and myrrh.

And then we find another godly man. When Mary brought in this dear babe into the temple, he was there. And you see, it had been assured that he should not see death till he had seen the Lord's Christ.

God's Christ, it means. God's Christ, it means.

[12 : 30] God's Christ, it means. He saw, my friends, the love of God. God's Christ, it means. He saw his own soul saved, saved and redeemed by Jesus Christ. And he saw his head, Jesus' head.

He saw, my friends, the real Son of God. And he believed it and received him as such. And he was honored in so doing. Because this was all according to divine testimony.

What a favored man he must have been. And then he said, Now, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace? For mine eyes have seen the Lord's Christ.

Ah, my friends, pray. Oh, pray, dear friends, that you by precious faith may view this dear Son of God.

Say you, is he to be seen now? Is he to be known now? Yes, yes, he is. And he is seen by faith, at times, by his dear people.

[13 : 31] Oh, what a blessed sight it is, if we are favored, to look upon the dear Son of God. And feel that he is mine, and I am his.

You see, oh, the Apostle Paul. With all the grace he possessed. And the very Spirit of God that was in him. Enabling him to preach such blessed truths in the Gospel.

He says, that I might know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.

Then he says, that I might be found in him, not having on mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness, which is by, you see, of God by faith.

So, the Apostle was very anxious that he too might be, I was going to say, more than sure of his interest in Christ, and that Christ was his, and that he was Christ's.

[14 : 34] Is this your and my exercise? I hope it is, friends. Oh, I hope it is. I hope there's something, something very real, and heavenly, and divine, in our meeting together here, as you do, Sabbath by Sabbath, and listen to your pastor, declaring these vital, fundamental things, which will save your soul in their application, and that you are waiting upon the Lord, you see, in this.

So, I say, I do believe that many of you, would that every one of you might be so led, and taught by the Spirit, as to know Jesus for yourself, and follow him, and honor him, and love him, and praise, and bless him, and be very zealous, and careful, over your walk, and over your life.

Yes, I believe this is the effect, and fruit, of the Spirit's gracious, anointing, and divine leading, and overshadowing.

Now, these branches, that bear fruit, that this fruit of, of love, and of peace.

Now, the Lord Jesus Christ, by his actual, obedience, and by his solemn suffering, in, in vindicating, and honoring God's holy law, brought about, between God, who was offended, and his dear people, in their sin, brought about, reconciliation, peace.

[16 : 19] You see, God, and his people at first, were at, at variance. They, they never come together at first. Not in the actual, I mean, uh, wording of it.

I know that they were together, in his purpose, but not in, in the, not in the manifestation of it. So, Jesus Christ came, that this might be, brought about, and it has been, brought about, and therefore, the people of God, they are blessed, with the fruits, of the spirit, and that proves, that the Holy Spirit, is with them, and in them, and overshadowing them, and bedewing their souls, with heavenly grace, from time to time.

He, is pleased, to take, of these things, of Jesus Christ, friends, and reveal them, to you, and to myself, I hope. Yes, this, this is, this is, gracious, and I believe, blessed teaching, when you can feel that, you have an interest, in Jesus, and when he, has an interest in you, oh, what a wonderful favor, to think, the Lord Jesus, should have, an interest, in us, that his mind, should be, focused on us, from day to day, to keep us, and preserve us, to enable us, to walk, in his holy, and tender fear, you see, before the world, and before the church, and each other now, here, and thus, to serve him, and thus, to worship him, from time to time.

Well, then this is, I believe, the sinner, reconciled to God, through, the precious blood, of the Lord Jesus Christ, that, is a reconciling, blood, you see, it brings together, God, and his, and his child, and, and, and that in sweet, and precious, and blessed, union, and communion, and fellowship, now, this person, who is thus, reconciled, walks with God, in Christ, look, yes, they walk with him, at times, they are thus, favored at times, so, this is, I believe, what it is to be, reconciled, and then, and then, the pathway, which, these people, are called to walk, is one of trial, one that crucifies, flesh, and our blood, crucifies it, and, one, in which, our nature, is offended, and Christ said here, he spoke these words, so that they should not be offended, our nature, would be offended, friends, and it is offended, at the dealings, of the Lord with us, because, they are, so contrary, to us, but, they are right, it is we are wrong, they are right, see, but, nevertheless, my friends, there will be a great trial, from time to time, in, in walking in, this pathway, of self-denial, oh, to be helped, take up our daily cross, and to deny ourselves, and follow him, and to be, enabled to mortify, the deeds of this poor body, are we in this path, do we desire this,

I say, if you desire it, and that's a good thing, a right thing, and the Lord, will honor that, he will indeed, and lead you, into the experience of it, for these, then I say, this is, being reconciled, to your affliction, to your pain, to, to the path, of sorrow, that you are, may be called to pass, and walk in, more or less, great mercy, to be reconciled, we can't, we can't bring this about, but the Lord, in a moment of time, can, drop grace, into the heart, and, a drop of love, too, and that, will reconcile you, at once, and you will feel, ah, this is not in anger, Lord, no, this is in love, this is, to correct me, this is to balance me, and to keep me, in my right place, and when he appears, to you, you will then know, and feel something, of the balance, and of the clothes, and the wondrous works, of him, who's perfect in knowledge, you need patience, my friends,

[21 : 01] I know, patience, and much grace, and much of the spirit, of the Lord Jesus Christ, to be able, to rightly bear, your affliction, and your trial, which the Lord, has laid upon you, and laid upon me, and I hope, and pray, that it may be, and is, sanctified, in some measure, from time to time, and, in sanctification, there is a purging, purging, we don't like, this purging work, it's too painful, but it's so necessary, friends, to be purged, from our sins, and also, to give you, fellowship, with Jesus Christ, again, and, this purging, will cleanse you, cleanse you, it will indeed, and, you will find, and feel, that Jesus has, a balm, a balm, in Gilead, so that, you will receive, that sweet, and, fellowship, and communion, with him, as he applies, that heavenly balm, so that, these fruits, of the spirit, then, are made manifest, do we manifest, them in our walk, in our life, you desire, to be humble, you desire, to be kept, from murmuring, or complaining, don't you, you desire, to follow Jesus, in the way, he went, it was a rough way, a bitter, painful path, you know, but nevertheless, you see, he looked forward, to the joy, that was set, before him, he endured, the cross, despised the shame, and is now, sat down, on the right hand, of the majesty, on high, for then, he purged, these, these branches, this is, this is, a painful work, there is much, needed to be done, in the vine, to keep it healthy, to keep it, in a condition, of fruit bearing, there is, my friends, in the winter season, the scraping, of the vine, so that the outer, bark, may be, stripped off, and taken away, because many insects, are underneath that, and they will, spoil the vine, they sat, they take, the nourishment, and the sap from it, so there is a need, be, for them to be, purged, and then you see, the vine, is painted, with particular, stuff to keep, to kill these insects, and to nourish, the vine, and then, you notice, sometimes, if you go into, a vine, and you would see, perhaps, a lot, a good many, pieces of the vine, the branches of the vine, cut back, and perhaps, cut back rather hard, they are cut back, to the, to the, bunch of grapes, you might think, that, you see that the, husband man, or the gardener, has, is spoiling that vine, but no, no friends, that encourages, that sap, to go into, the bunch of grapes, instead of, flowing past, so to speak, and nourishing, the branch, that would be, of no use, really, so, there is a, there is a pruning, of the vine, even in the summer time, this must be done, it must be, if you are to obtain, good grapes, and then, there is the pruning, in the winter season, and this is also, it looks then, very severe indeed, there is just, so to speak, the stem, and each, each side shoot, is cut back, to about, one eye,

or two eyes, from the base, this looks, very drastic indeed, but it's very, very necessary, if this was not done, like this, there would, you could not, expect to have, or get, get any grapes, now you will find, my friends, there is a likeness here, the Lord sometimes, cuts, cuts us back, in your profession, he may, disappoint you, in various things, he may, cut back, I say, pride, and presumption, he will too, in his own time, and way, and then, again you see, he will, check, the flesh, from gaining, any ground, if it does, gain much ground, over the new man, it's so detrimental, you see, the fruit, cannot, in any way, grow, or thrive, where, Satan, is gaining ground, so don't be surprised, if you have, affliction, upon affliction, but that'll be, for your good, and that, and that will, honor your Lord, especially, when he's pleased, which he is, to sanctify it, and you will feel, then it's working, for my good,

I never thought, it would, at first, it seemed so drastic, it seems so, I was going to say, almost cruel, for the Lord, to lay upon us, as he does, his afflicting hand, but is it?

No, it's all in love, real love, he loves his people, too much, to allow them, to go on, in their own way, or in a way, that would be, detrimental, to his honor, and his glory, so, divine, and our souls, are purged, from sin, from our sins, they are purged, it doesn't mean, now, that we shall, not feel, these sins, arising again, but at the same time, it will check them, tremendous, so that they will, not, they will not, be able to, gain any ground, or any advantage, really, over the new man, grace, must reign, through righteousness, unto eternal life, now, he says, and this is the, effect, and fruit, of this purging, and of this, discipline, and of the affliction, being sanctified, and of the trials, too, that you pass through, the Lord overrules them, and in such a mysterious way, manifesting his wisdom, and his love to you, he doesn't leave you,

I say, he won't leave you, in the midst of this, so, he will come to you, and he will sympathize with you, and he will support you, in the, in the affliction, and, when you feel this, I believe you'll be able to, thank him, for his kindness, yes, his loving kindness, and tender mercy, towards you, your thanking, your, your feel, what, what am I, that I should, deserve, such pains, being taken with me, to, to so keep, and so preserve, and so help me, to walk, in a right path, we don't deserve it, but at the same time, the Lord doesn't act, according to what we deserve, he acts, according to his own, love, and wisdom, and grace, and I believe you'll give grace, and that precious grace, will balance these clouds, one, of Job's friends asked, didn't he, he says, dost thou know, the balancing of the clouds, the wondrous works of him, who's perfect in knowledge, the clouds, are full of rain, and they distill that, that rain upon the earth, well beneficial this is, to the thirsty earth, and how beneficial, to a thirsty soul, is a, is the rain of heaven, and we are promised, that the Lord will come down, like rain upon the mown grass, and as showers, that water the earth, and my doctrine, he says, shall drop us the rain, my speech, shall distill us the dew, so, so,

[29 : 20] I say friends, these people, are a very favorite people, you know, they're under the, continual, eye, of their Lord, watching, every movement, and they are being prepared, for, heaven, for that rest, for that, for the company of heaven, and, and, I believe, that they will be at home there, it will be their element, they won't be out of place, you know, no, because they had, earnest here, foretaste here, they've had touches of his love here, he sometimes, sheds it abroad now, doesn't he, know how sweet it is, how blessed it is, now you feel, everything is right, you can leave, all things in his dear hands, while you wait upon him, in this, and feel, he loves you, notwithstanding all, you may be passing through, so, then, in conclusion, he says here, in this third verse, this is, the Lord's own conclusion, oh,

I hope, and pray, that this, really and truly, is true of us, at least, a goodly number of us, I hope, you know, nothing, nothing can cleanse us, of sin bitten, sin smitten soul, but, the atoning blood, of the Lord Jesus Christ, himself, that, must be applied, I think I said this morning, there must be contact, contact with Christ, when he was on the earth, he, he had contact, with people, with various diseases, you remember, you can, you remember, you can read, how he touched them, he could touch lepers, but he wasn't, contaminated, oh no, why, because he was holy, and pure, and separate from sinners, but he could touch them, and they received, the healing virtue, that flowed, from his dear body, so,

I say, the Lord can say, and does say, of his dear people, isn't this, just what you want, to feel friend, ah, you say, I feel opposite, to being clean, I feel sin, is such a, such a terrible, dreadful, contaminating, thing, and there's such a, such a power in it, I feel so, unhappy, and, I am unholy, how can I, expect, that the Lord, will look upon me, and, and, and come to me, but friends, he doesn't come on that ground, oh no, you see, you, are clean, in Christ, don't forget that, in Jesus, that's where your, cleanliness, is found, and that is, conveyed to you, betimes, and that constitutes, my friends, your, cleanliness, and your, reconciliation, to, your path, and to, and to the Lord himself, and you will, be laid into his sweet, and precious, cup of presence, and oh, how precious, that presence will be, now you're clean, he says, through the word, which I have spoken, unto you, the word of the Lord, has such a gracious, penetrating, and, sympathizing effect, upon the soul, of the believer, that this is the effect, of it, it cleanses, as well as heals, his, his needy soul, oh, friends,

I do hope, we may, be favored, to realize, something of these, realities, they are realities, and we must know, and feel them, if we ever get, to heaven, and glory, now you're clean, ah, and you will now, feel, such a love, at times, to the Lord Jesus Christ, you will be prepared, by his spirit, to suffer for him, and with him, yes, yes, and you will enter, into this scripture, and, we know, that all things, work together, for good, to them, that love God, and are the call, according, to his purpose, you see, and you will feel, as you feel this, would you have, anything altered, when you look, at your path, may have been, one of great trial, at times, and caused you, much anxiety, much trouble, but now you look at it, and as, as you have felt, the cleansing of Christ's, precious blood, you say,

Lord, I wouldn't, have one thing altered, I believe, what that was done, is right, and best for me, right for me too, I can see, and I feel too, I hope, that this is, that this glorifies thee, it honors thee, and it makes manifest, that I am thy child, because of the discipline, and the pains thou art, taken with me, to teach me, Jesus Christ, and to prepare me, for heaven, when I come to the end, of the way, when you will find, friends, as you draw near, to your journey's end, Jesus will himself, be precious, and you will also feel, to need to be prepared, for the end, yes, that, the hymn writer, felt it, himself, didn't he, when he, when he penned that, wonderful hymn, prepare me, gracious God, to stand, before thy face, my spirit, must the work, perform, for it's all of grace, in Christ's, obedience, clothe, and wash me, in his blood, so shall I lift, my head with joy, among the sons of God, that is my, daily prayer, sometimes hourly prayer, and I have some evidence, at times, that it really does enter in, to the, here to the Lord God, of Sibbea, not because I'm worthy, but because I'm needy, and because I believe, the love of God, is towards me, that's what I want to feel, and that's what I, would feel, and pray that you also, may realize, from time to time, that you may feel, the presence, of the Lord Jesus Christ, to be with you, as you gather here, in his great name, you have been favored,

[36 : 05] I say you've been, very favored indeed, with a gracious, and I'm going, and I mean what I say, you've been favored, with a gracious, patient, able, minister of the gospel, and you know, his ministry, has been owned, in a very special way, here, amongst you, and you have reaped, the profit, and the real good, of that ministry, and I, and I know, he has, had many trials, but, they have been, sanctified, to his own soul's good, and they, reflected, so to speak, in his ministry, and they, they've done you good too, the, the, the good that the Lord, has done for him, it's been, handed down, if I might so put it, through the ministry, of the word, into your soul, and you bless God, haven't you, for it, cleave to him, hold up his hands, I say, and love him, still, very freely, and continually, pray for him, and I believe, this, this honors the Lord, when a people, pray, for their pastor, and the servants, of the Lord, who come amongst them, from time to time, he commends this, he does indeed, and I hope, and I believe, it's true here,

I do indeed, yes, and I thank, would thank him, that I believe, you are, living together here, in union, and in love, it is, can't be said, of every cause, you know, but I think, it can be said here, and therefore, if this is, all of the Lord's mercy, and goodness, to you, and his dear servant, I hope, and I pray, that his life, may be spared yet, for several years, to come, that he may still, blow the gospel from it, and still going out, before you, and break the bread of life, and I hope, and pray, that when he comes, actually to the end, the Lord will say, well done, thou good, and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful, over a few things, I'll make thee ruler, over many things, he wouldn't say that, himself, I know, but, the Lord will say that, to him, I'm sure of that, for now, I must leave it, friends,

I want to thank the Lord, for his, mercy, and goodness, to me today, yes, I'm feeling, in myself, much better, than I did, but at the same time, I have, much sorrow, on account, of my unprofitableness, and my prayerlessness, and state, and condition, you don't know, how prayerless, I sometimes feel, but I, would not have it so, I want to be more prayerful, I want to be more, in the spirit, from time to time, and if the Lord, is pleased, to spare my, unworthy life, for a little longer, I wish to, to be made useful, to his dear people, and I hope, that these, ends, he will, teach me, and lead me, and sanctify, to me, every trial, and every loss, may the Lord, God of Israel, be graciously pleased, to still be amongst you, and to move, amongst you, and also, bless his dear servant, with, from time to time, that you may, feed under the, holy, holy gospel, as is preached, in its purity, reality, and power, from time to time,

Amen. May the Lord, have a great, joy, you of faith, you have participated in the schoolANGLOS Oh, we have lost your pride, we come, we have made it and go.

Oh, we have lost your pride, we have made it and go.

[41 : 23] Oh, we have lost your pride, we have lost your pride, we have made it and go.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. And the Lord And the Lord Gracious Lord, help us to thank Thee from our hearts for Thy goodness and mercies throughout this another earthly Sabbath.

And we do pray that the word spoken rightly in Thy sight and under the anointing of Thy Holy Spirit may be dropped with power and savour and comfort in the hearts of our dear friends here.

[43 : 41] And now we commit them and ourselves to Thee and to Thy keeping. And may Thy grace and the Father's love and the communion and fellowship of the Holy Spirit rest and abide with us each.

And all the true Israel of God now and forever. Amen and amen.