

Jesus in Gethsemane

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon teaches that Jesus' prayerful solitude in Gethsemane exemplifies the believer's need for earnest, prevailing prayer and surrender to God's will in times of trial.

Scripture: John 18:1-2, Genesis 32:24-30, Matthew 26:36-46, Luke 22:39-46

Topics: "Prayer", "Suffering", "Faith and Trust"

Description

In this devotional sermon, C.H. Spurgeon reflects on Jesus' time of prayer and anguish in the Garden of Gethsemane, highlighting the Savior's example of earnest prayer, solitude, and submission to God's will. Spurgeon encourages believers to cultivate their own 'Gethsemane'—a place and time for private prayer and preparation before trials come. Through vivid imagery and pastoral insight, he calls Christians to imitate Christ's humility, perseverance in prayer, and trust in God's sovereign plan.

Transcript

"When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth with His disciples over the Brook Kidron, where there was a garden, which He and His disciples entered. And Judas, who betrayed Him, also knew the place; for Jesus often met there with His disciples." John 18:1,2.

I REMEMBER to have read somewhere, though I cannot just now recall the authority, that Bethany—to which place one would have thought the Savior would have gone to spend the night, at the house of Mary and her sister, Martha, was over the brow of the Mount of Olives and was out of the bounds of the city of Jerusalem. Now, at the Passover, it was incumbent that all who kept the feast should spend the whole night within the boundary of the city and our Divine Lord and Master, scrupulous to observe every point of the old Law of God, did not go over the hill, but stayed within the area which was technically considered to be part and parcel of Jerusalem—so that His going to Gethsemane was, in part, a fulfillment of the Ceremonial Law and, for that reason, He went no further and sought no other shelter.

Our Lord also knew that on that particular night He would be betrayed into the hands of His enemies and, therefore, He would need to be prepared, by a special season of devotion, for the terrible ordeal He was about to endure. That Passover night was a night to be remembered on this account and He would, therefore, keep it peculiarly sacred. But it was to be made still more memorable as the time of the commencement of His passion sufferings, so He determined to spend the whole night in prayer to His Father. In this act He reminds us of Jacob by the Brook Jabbok—when he had to face trouble in the morning, he spent the night in wrestling prayer—and this Greater Jacob spent His night, not by Jabbok,

but by the black, foul Brook Kidron, and there wrestled with mightier Power. Even. than the Patriarch put forth in his notable night struggle with the Angel of the Covenant. I want you to try, in thought, to go as far as Gethsemane. And I think you ought to be encouraged to go there because our text says, "Jesus often met there with His disciples."

I. And, first, so far as we can in thought, LET US VIEW THE PLACE.

I have never seen the Garden of Gethsemane. Many travelers tell us that they have done so and they have described what they saw there. My impression is that not one of them ever saw the real spot and that not a trace of it remains. There are certain old olive trees, within an enclosure, which are commonly thought to have been growing at the time of the Savior—but that seems scarcely possible, for Josephus tells us that the whole of the trees round about Jerusalem were cut down—many of them to be made into crosses for the crucifixion of the Jews. Others of them to assist in building the bulwarks with which the Roman emperor surrounded the doomed city. There does not seem to have been scarcely anything left that would be a true relic of the old city and I cannot imagine that the olive trees would be spared. From what I have heard from Brothers and Sisters who have gone to the reputed Garden of Gethsemane, I conclude that it is not very helpful to one's devotions to go there at all. One who thought to spend a part of his Sabbath there, and who hoped to enjoy much fellowship with Christ in the place, said that he was made very bitterly to learn the meaning of our Savior's words to the woman at the well of Sychar, "The hour comes when you shall neither, in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father...The hour comes, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeks such to worship Him."

I do not want to find out exactly where Gethsemane was. It is enough for me to know that it was at the side of Mount Olivet and that it was a very retired spot. My conception of it is the result of having, for many winters, resided in a little town in the South of France where olive trees grow to perfection and where, on the side of the hills, I have often sat down in olive groves and I have said to myself, "Gethsemane was a place just like this." I am sure it was so, because one olive garden on the side of a hill must necessarily be very much like another. The hills are lined out in terrace above terrace, each one seldom above eight, 10, or 12 feet wide. Then you rise, say, five, six, seven, or eight feet and there is another terrace and so on right up the hill—and on these terraces the olive trees grow.

One of the charms of an olive garden of that kind is that as soon as you get into it, you may sit down under the lee of the bank at the back of the terrace—perhaps in an angle where you are sheltered from the wind—and you will be completely hidden from all observers. I have had persons sitting within a few yards of me, of whose presence I had no idea. One Sabbath, when we had been spending a little time in prayer together, I saw what appeared to be an Englishman's tall hat moving away, at a little distance, just above one of the terraces. By-and-by, I recognized the head that was under the hat as that of a Christian Brother whom I knew—and I found that he had been walking up and down there, studying his sermon for the afternoon. He had not noticed us, except that he had heard some sounds that seemed to him like prayer and praise. Many of you might be in an olive garden, but, unless you made some sign of recognition to your friends, they would scarcely know that anybody else was there! And under the thick, yet light foliage, with the glints of sunlight shining through, or at night under the kind of ashy, gray color, with the moonlight glimmering through with its silvery beams, I cannot imagine a more delightful place of retreat—a place where one would feel surer of being quite alone, even though somebody might be near you—a place where you might feel free to express your thoughts and your prayers because, at any rate, to your own consciousness, you would seem to be entirely alone.

I cannot help thinking that our Savior also loved to get among the olive trees because of the very congenial form of the olive. It twists and winds and turns about as though it were in an agony. It has to draw up oil out of the flinty rock and it seems to do so with labor and travail. The very shape of many olive trees seems to suggest that thought. So, an olive garden is a place of painful pleasure and of fruitful toil, where the oil is rich and fat, but where much effort has to be expended in the extraction of it out of the hard soil on which the olive stands. I believe that others have felt about this matter as I have felt, namely, that there is no tree which seems more suggestive of a fellow-feeling with the sufferer than an olive—no shade that is more sweetly pensive, more suitable to the season of sorrow—and the hour of devout meditation. I marvel not, therefore, that Jesus sought the Garden of Gethsemane that He might be quite alone—that He might pour out His soul before God and yet might have some companions within call without being disturbed by their immediate presence.

One reason for His going to that particular garden was because He had gone there so often that He loved to be in the old familiar place. Do you not feel something of that in your own special place of prayer? I do not like reading out of other people's Bibles as well as out of my own. I do not know how it is, but I like my own study Bible best of all, and if I must have a smaller one, I prefer one that has the words on the same page as in my Bible so that I may easily find them. And I do not know whether you feel the same, but I can usually pray best in one place. There are certain spots where I delight to be when I draw near to God—there is some association connected with them of former interviews with my Heavenly Father that makes the old armchair to be the very best place at which one can kneel. So, I think the Savior loved Gethsemane because He had oftentimes resorted there with His disciples and, therefore, He makes that the sacred spot where His last agony of prayer shall be poured out before His Father.

II. That, however, is only the introduction to the main matter of our meditations. So, now, LET US VIEW THE SAVIOR IN GETHSEMANE, THAT WE MAY IMITATE HIM.

And, first, our blessed Lord is to be imitated by us in that He frequently sought and enjoyed retirement His was a very busy life. He had much more to do than you and I have, yet He found abundant time for private prayer. He was much holier than any of us are, yet He realized His need of private prayer and meditation. He was much wiser than we shall ever be, yet He felt the necessity for retiring into solitude for communion with His Father. He had much power over Himself, He could control and compose Himself far more readily than we can, yet, amid the distractions of the world, He felt that He must frequently get away alone. It would be well for us if we were more often alone. We are so busy—so taken up with this or that committee meeting, working-class, Sunday school, preaching, talking, visiting, gossiping—all

sorts of things, good, bad, or indifferent—that we have no leisure for the due cultivation of our spiritual life! We rush from pillar to post without proper time for rest, but, Brothers and Sisters, if we want to be strong, if we mean to be like Jesus, our Lord and Savior, we must have our Gethsemane, our place for secret retirement where we can get alone with our God. I think it was Luther who said, "I have a hard day's work before me today—it will take me many hours and there will be a stern struggle, so I must have at least three hours prayer, that I may gain the necessary strength for my task." Ah, we do not act in that wise fashion nowadays—we feel as if we cannot spare the time for private prayer, but, had we more communion with God—we would have more influence with men.

But our blessed Master is especially to be imitated in that He sought retirement when He was about to enter upon the great struggle of His life. Just then, when Judas was about to give the traitor's kiss—when scribes and Pharisees were about to hound Him to the Cross—it was then that He felt that He must get

away to Gethsemane and be alone in prayer with His Father! What did you do, my dear Brother, when you apprehended trial? Why, you sought out a sympathizing friend! I shall not blame you for desiring the consolations of true friendship, but I shall not commend you if you put them into the place of communion with God. Are you, even now, dreading some approaching calamity? What are you doing to meet it? I will not suggest that you should neglect certain precautions, but I would admonish you that the first and best precaution is to get away to your God in prayer! As the feeble conies find their shelter in the solid rock, and as the doves fly away to their home in the dovecot, so should Christians, when they expect trouble, fly straight away to their God upon the wings of fear and faith! Your great strength does not lie in your hair, otherwise you might feel as proud as Samson was in the days of his victories! Your great strength lies in your God! Therefore, get away to Him with all speed and ask Him for help in this, your hour of need!

Some of you pray when you are, as it were, at Calvary, but not at Gethsemane. I mean you pray when the trouble comes upon you, but not when it is on the road. Yet your Master here teaches you that to conquer at your Calvary, you must commence by wrestling at your Gethsemane. When as yet it is but the shadow of your coming trial that spreads its black wings over you, cry to God for help! When you are not emptying the bitter cup—when you are only sipping the first drops of the wormwood and the gall, begin, even then, to pray, "Not as I will, but as You will, O my Father!" You will thus be the better able to drink of the cup to its very dregs when God shall place it in your hands.

We may also imitate our Lord—as far as it would be in our line, in His taking His disciples with Him. At any rate, if we do not imitate Him in this respect, we may certainly admire Him, for He took the disciples with Him, I think, for two purposes. First, for their good. Remember, Brothers and Sisters, that the next morning was to be a day of trial for them as well as for Himself. He was to be taken to trial and condemnation, but they were to be severely tried, in their fidelity to Him, by seeing their Lord and Master put to a shameful death. So He took them with Him that they also might pray—that they might learn how to pray by hearing His wondrous prayers—that they might watch and pray, lest they should enter into temptation. Now, sometimes in your special hour of trouble, I believe that it will be for the good of others for you to communicate to them the story of your distress and ask them to join you in prayer concerning it. I have often done this, so I can urge you to do the same. I found it a great blessing, on one dark day of my life, to ask my sons, though they were but lads, to come into my room and pray with their father in his time of trouble. I know that it was good for them, and their prayers were helpful to me, but I acted as I did in part that they might realize their share in domestic responsibilities—that they might come to know their father's God—and might learn to trust Him in their time of trouble.

But our Savior also took His disciples with Him to Gethsemane that they might assist to comfort Him and, in this respect, He is to be imitated by us because of His wonderful humility. If those disciples had all done their best, what would it have been worth? But what they really did was most discouraging to Christ, instead of being at all helpful to Him. They went to sleep when they should have watched with their Lord and they did not assist Him with their prayers as they might have done. It is noteworthy that He did not ask them to pray with Him—He bade them watch and pray, lest they should enter into temptation. But He said to them, "What? Could you not watch with Me one hour?" He did not say, "What? Could you not pray with me one hour?" He knew that they could not do that. What mortal man could pray at such a time as that, when great drops of bloody sweat punctuated every paragraph of His petition? No, they could not pray with Him, but they might have watched with Him—yet that they did not.

Sometimes, dear Friends, when a very great trial comes upon you, it will be well for you to ask some Brothers and Sisters, who cannot do much, but who can do something to come and watch with you and

pray with you. If it does not do any good to you, it will be good for them—but it will do good to you, also, I feel sure. Often—I have to confess it—I have got two Brothers to kneel with me in prayer when I have been depressed through this late illness of mine. And their honest, earnest, hearty prayers in my study have often lifted me right up into joy and peace! I believe it has also done them good. I know it has done me good and I feel sure that you might often be a blessing to others if you did not mind confessing to them when you are depressed and sad at heart. Say, "Come into my room and watch with me one hour." And you may add to that request this other one, "Come and pray with me," for some of them can pray as well as you can, and even better. So imitate the Savior in endeavoring not only to pray yourself, but to call to your assistance the praying legion of God's elect ones when a great trial is impending.

Still, our Lord's example may mainly be followed in another direction, namely, when we do pray in the presence of a great trouble, it is well to pray with much importunity. Our Savior prayed in Gethsemane three times, using the same words. He prayed with such intensity of desire that His heart seemed to burn with anguish. The canals overflowed their banks and the red streams came bursting down in bloody drops that fell upon the earth in that rightly-named "olive-press." Ah, that is the way to pray—if not actually unto a bloody sweat, as we may not have to do, or be able to do, yet with such intensity of hearty earnestness as we can—and as we ought—when God the Holy Spirit is working mightily in us! We cannot expect to be helped in our time of trouble unless it is intense prayer that we send up to Heaven.

But imitate Christ also in the matter of your prayer I feel sure that He only softly whispered the request, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me." You also may present that petition, but mind that you say it very softly. Yet I feel certain that it was with all His might that our Savior said, "Nevertheless not as I will, but as You will." In the presence or in the prospect of a great trouble, make this your prayer to God, "Your will be done." Brace up your soul to this point—having asked the Lord to screen you, if it should seem good in His sight, resign yourself absolutely into His hands and say, "Nevertheless, O my Father, not as I will, but as You will!"

It is prevailing prayer when one gets as far as that! A man is prepared to die when he knows how to present that petition! That is the best preparation for any cross that may come upon your shoulders. You can die a martyr's death and clap your hands even in the midst of the fire if you can, with all your soul, really pray as Jesus prayed, "Not as I will, but as You will." This is the objective which I set before you, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ—that if you are expecting sickness—if you are fearing loss—if you are anticipating bereavement—if you are dreading death—let this be your great ultimatum, go to God now, in the time of your distress and, by mighty prevailing prayer, with such prayerful sympathy as others can give you, breathe out this one petition, "Your will be done, O my Father! Your will be done! Help me to do it! Help me to bear it! Help me to go through with it all to Your honor and Glory. Let me be baptized with Your Baptism, and drink of Your cup, even to the dregs."

Sometimes, dear Friends, you may wish, in your hearts, that the Lord would make great use of you and yet, perhaps, He may not do so. Well, a man who holds his tongue when Christ tells him to do so, is glorifying Christ more than if he opened his mouth and broke the Master's commandment. There are some of the Lord's people who, by a quiet, holy, consistent manifestation of what the Lord has done for them, glorify Him more than they would do if they went from place to place telling out His Gospel in a way which would make the Gospel itself disgusting to those who heard it. That is quite possible, for some people do it. If my Lord puts me in the front rank, blessed be His name for it, and I must fight for Him there as best I can. But if He says to me, "Lie in bed! Be bed-ridden for seven years, and never get up!"—I have nothing to do but to glorify Him in that way. He is the best soldier who does exactly what his captain bids him.

III. Now, in the third place, and only briefly, LET US VIEW THE DISCIPLES IN GETHSEMANE, BY WAY OF

INSTRUCTION TO OURSELVES.

Probably, the disciples had often been with their Master to Gethsemane—I suppose, sometimes by day, and oftentimes by night, in secret conclave they had been instructed in the olive garden. It had been their Academy! There they had been with the Master in prayer—no doubt, each one praying and learning how to pray better from His Divine example. Dear Brothers and Sisters, I recommend you oftentimes to get to the place where you can best commune with your God.

But, now, the disciples came to Gethsemane because a great trouble was impending. They were brought there that they might watch and pray. So, get to the place of prayer, at this time of trouble, and at all other times of trial that shall

come upon you throughout your whole life. Whenever you hear the knell ringing out all earthly joy, let it ring you into the garden of prayer! Whenever there is the shadow of a coming trouble looming before you, let there also be the substance of more intense communion with God! These disciples were, however, at this time, called to enter into fellowship with their Master in the thicker, deeper darkness that was coming over Him—far denser than any that was coming over them. And you are called, dear Brothers and Sisters, each in your own measure, to be baptized unto Jesus in the cloud and in the sea, that you may have fellowship with Him in His sufferings. Be not ashamed to go even to Gethsemane with Christ, entering into a knowledge of what He suffered by being made, according to your capacity, to suffer in the same manner. All His true followers have to go there. Some have only to stand at the outside gate and keep watch, but His highly-favored ones have to go into the denser gloom and to be nearer to their Lord in His greatest agonies. If we are His true disciples, we must have fellowship with Him in His sufferings.

Our difficulty is that the flesh shrinks from this trial, and that, like the disciples, we sleep when we ought to watch. When the time of trial comes, if we get depressed in spirit about it, we are apt not to pray with that fervor and vigor which greater hopefulness would have begotten. And when we come to feel something of what the Savior endured, we are apt to be overwhelmed by it rather than stimulated by it and so, when He comes to us, He finds us, like the disciples, "sleeping for sorrow." The Master gently said, "The spirit, indeed, is willing, but the flesh is weak." But I do not suppose that one of the disciples made any excuse for himself. I feel, if I may judge them from myself, that I would always have said, "I never can forgive myself for going to sleep that night! How could I fall asleep when He said, 'Watch with Me'? And when He came again, with His face red with bloody sweat, and with that disappointed look upon His Countenance, said, 'What? Could you not watch with Me one hour?' how could I go to sleep a second time? And then, how could I go to sleep a third time?" Oh, I think that Simon Peter must always have remembered that his Savior said to him, "Simon, could you not watch with Me one hour?" That question must have stuck by him all his life—and James and John must have felt the same.

Brothers and Sisters, are any of you sleeping under similar circumstances—while Christ's Church is suffering— while Christ's cause is suffering—while Christ's people are suffering—while a trial is coming upon you to help you into fellowship with Him? Are you, instead of being aroused to a higher and more intense devotion, sinking into deeper sleep? If so, Christ may, in His great love, excuse you, but I beg you not to begin making excuses for yourself! No, awake, Brothers and Sisters and "watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation."

That slumber of theirs must have been greatly rebuked by their Savior's kindness to them. As I understand the narrative, our Lord came to His disciples three times and, on the third occasion, He found them still heavy with sleep, so He sat down beside them and said to them, "Sleep on now, and take your rest." There He sat, patiently waiting for the traitor's arrival—not expecting any help or sympathy from His disciples, but just watching over them as they would not watch with Him, praying for them as they would not pray for themselves—and letting them take another nap while He made Himself ready to meet Judas and the rabble throng that would so soon surround Him. Our Master, in His great tenderness, sometimes indulges us with such sleeps as these, yet we may have to regret them and to wish that we had had sufficient strength of mind and earnestness of heart to stay awake and watch with Him in His season of sorrow. It appears to me that of all the 11 good disciples, there was not one who stayed awake. There was one vile traitor and he was wideawake. He never went to sleep—he was awake enough to sell his Master and to act as guide to those who came to capture Him.

I think also that at least partly in consequence of that slumber of the disciples, within a short time, "they all forsook Him and fled." They seem, for the time, to have slept away their attachment to their Lord and waking, as from a disturbed dream, they scarcely knew what they did, and helter-skelter, away they fled! The sheep were all scattered and the Shepherd was left alone, thus fulfilling the ancient prophecy, "Smite the Shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered." And that other word, "I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me." Wake up, Brothers and Sisters, otherwise you, too, may forsake your Master—and in the hour when you ought most to prove your fidelity, it may be that your slumbering state of heart will lead on to backsliding—and to forsaking of your Lord. God grant that it may not!

IV. Now I close with a word of warning which I have almost anticipated. LET US, IN THOUGHT, GO TO GETHSEMANE TO TAKE WARNING FROM JUDAS. Let me read to you the latter part of the text—"Judas who betrayed Him, also knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes met there with His disciples."

"Judas who betrayed Him, also knew the place." Yes, he had probably, many times, been there all night with Christ. He had sat with the other disciples in a circle round their Lord on one of those olive-clad terraces and he had listened to His wondrous words in the soft moonlight. He had often heard His Master pray there. "Judas who betrayed Him," had heard Him pray in Gethsemane. He knew the tones of His voice, the pathos of His pleading, the intense agony of that great heart of love when it was poured out in prayer! He had, no doubt, joined with the other disciples when they said, "Lord, teach us to pray."

"Judas who betrayed Him, also knew the place." He could have pointed out to us the very spot where the Savior most loved to be—that angle in the terrace, that little corner out of the way, where the Master was known to find a seat when He sat down and taught the chosen band around Him. Yes, Judas knew the place, and it was because he knew the place that he was able to betray Christ, for, if he had not known where Jesus was, he could not have taken the guard there.

It does seem, to me, very dreadful that familiarity with Christ should have qualified this man to become a traitor. And it is still true that, sometimes, familiarity with religion may qualify men to become apostates. Oh, if there is a Judas here, I would speak very solemnly to you! You know the place. You know all about church government and church order, and you can go and tell pretty tales about the mistakes made by some of God's servants who would not err if they could help it. Yes, you know the church members. You know where there are flaws of character and infirmity of spirit. You know how to go and spread the story of them among worldlings and you can make such mischief as you could not make if you had not known the

place! Yes, and you know the Doctrines of Grace, at least with a measure of head-knowledge, and you know how to twist them so as to make them seem ridiculous, even those eternal Truths of God which ravish the hearts of angels and of the redeemed from among men! Because you know them so well, you know how to parody them and to caricature them—and to make the Grace of God, itself, seem to be a farce!

Yes, you know the place. You have been to the Lord's Table and you have heard the saints speak of their raptures and their ecstasies—and you pretended that you were sharing them. So you know how to go back to the world and to represent true godliness as being all cant and hypocrisy—and you make rare fun out of those most solemn secrets of which a man would scarcely speak to his fellow because they are the private transactions between his soul and his God!

I can hardly realize how terrible will be the doom of those who, after making a profession of religion, have prostituted their knowledge of the inner working of the Church of God and made it the material for novels in which Christ's Gospel is held up to scorn! Yet there have been such men who have not been content to be like birds that have fouled their own nests, for they have also gone forth and also tried to foul the nest of every believing heart that they could reach. What a dreadful thing it will be if any one of us, here, should know the place and, therefore, should betray the Savior! Do you know the place of private prayer, or do you think you do? Do you know the place where men go when the shadow of a coming trial is looming before them? Do you think you know something about fellowship with Christ in His sufferings? But, what if the greed of gold should override in you, as it did in Judas, such natural attachment as you feel towards Christ and better things? And what if even Gethsemane should, like a pit, open wide its mouth to swallow you up? It is terrible to contemplate, yet it may be true, for, "Judas who betrayed Him, also knew the place."

I cannot bear to think that anyone of you should be familiar with the ins and outs of this Tabernacle and yet should betray Christ—that you should be one of those who gather around this Communion Table, that you should be familiar with all the loving and tender expressions which we are known to use here, and yet, after all, should forsake our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! Pass the disciples' question around and each one ask it, "Lord, is it I? Is it I?"—

"When any turn from Zion's way, (Alas, what numbers do)! I think I hear my Savior say, 'Will you forsake Me too?' 'Ah Lord! With such a heart as mine, Unless You hold me fast, I feel I must, I shall decline, And prove like them at last.'"

Therefore, hold me up, O Lord, and I shall be safe; keep me even to the end, for Your dear Son's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: JOHN15:1-8.

On the way from the supper table to the Garden of Gethsemane, or while still lingering in the upper room, our Lord spoke this wondrous parable.

Verse 1. I am the true Vine. All other vines are but shadows of Christ. They represent Christ, but He is Himself the substance, the essence, the one great reality. He is the Truth of all things that exist. "I am the true Vine." Does anybody ask which is the true Church? All who are vitally joined to Christ are in the true Church, for He says, "I am the true Vine."

1. And My Father is the Vinedresser He cares for the Church with infinite wisdom and love. No one else can care for that true Vine as the Father—the Vinedresser—does.

2. Every branch in Me that bears not fruit He takes away. If there are any who are only nominally in Christ and who, therefore, bear no fruit, their doom is certain, for, in order to final perseverance and eternal safety, there must be fruit-bearing.

2, And every branch that bears fruit, He purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit Pruning, then, is for fruit-bearers. If the branch were dead, what would be the good of pruning it? Say not, dear Friends that your afflictions must be caused by your sins—no, rather they may come in consequence of your virtues Because you do bear fruit, it is worthwhile for the Vinedresser to use His knife upon you, that you may bring forth more fruit!

3, 4. Now you are clean through the word, which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. Give good heed to that sweet word, Beloved Brothers and Sisters, "Abide in Me." Do not seem to get into Christ and then depart from Him. Pray for constancy to all your other Graces.

4, 5. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine; no more can you, except you abide in Me. I am the Vine, you are the branches. He that abides in Me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit, for without Me you can do nothing. You know how the branch is in the vine, it is a component part of the vine. But do not forget that the vine is also in the branch—that the sap, which is the very life of the vine, flows into every living branch. So we are in Christ, and Christ is in us, and He says to us, as the marginal reading has it, "Severed from Me, you can do nothing." What? Not even a little, Lord? Can we not do something good, something acceptable apart from You? No, "Without Me, you can do nothing."

6. If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. That is all that can be done with fruitless vine-branches. You cannot make anything of them. Other trees yield timber and are useful for various purposes, but with the vine, it is as the Prophet Ezekiel says, "Son of man, What is the vine tree more than any tree, or than a branch which is among the trees of the forest? Shall wood be taken from them to do any work? Or will men take a pin of it to hang any vessel on it? Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel; the fire devours both the ends of it, and the midst of it is burned. Is it meet for any work?" It is useless if it is fruitless and so is it with us—if we do not bear fruit unto God, we are of no service to Him whatever.

7. If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done for you. Here is the secret of prevailing prayer! It is not every man who chooses to pray who shall have whatever he asks of God! But the successful pleader is the man who abides in Christ and in whom Christ's words abide. God will not hear our words if we disregard His words! We cannot expect our prayers to be prevalent if we are severed from our Lord.

8. Herein is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; so shall you be My disciples. "Much fruit" should be produced by the disciples of the much-doing Christ. The true Vine was full of fruit and it scarcely can be believed that we are branches of that Vine if we exhibit only a little fruit. It is "much fruit" that proves our union to this Vine.

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