

THE GOSPEL SEED-BED

Preached at Providence Chapel, Eden Street, London, on Lord's Day Morning, July 22, 1849.

"But that on the good ground are they, which, in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience." Luke 8:15

The words of our text, I need scarcely observe, are taken from the Parable of the Sower—perhaps the most striking parable that fell from the Lord's lips. In this parable, the Lord represents the preaching of the gospel, and the effect it has upon the hearers: and he brings forward four points of resemblance. The **sower** is the minister of truth; the **seed** is the word of God which he preaches; the **soils** are the different hearers; and the crop represents the fruit and effects that are produced in them.

Now in order to shew the difference between those in whom the word of truth takes a deep, permanent, and saving effect, and those who endure for a time and then fall away, the Lord sets before us four distinct kinds of hearers. In attempting this morning, therefore, as the Lord may enable me, to unfold the meaning of my text, I shall endeavour to describe these four distinct hearers; and in so doing, shall consider what is meant by

I.—First, the way-side hearer.

II.—Secondly, the stony-ground hearer.

III.—Thirdly, the thorny-ground hearer.

IV.—Fourthly, the fruitful hearer.

But we must bear in mind that the parable of the sower is not applicable to every minister, nor to every congregation.

No man is really a sower except one whom God has taught, qualified, commissioned, and sent forth to preach the word of life; for it is only such that are made spiritually manifest in the gospel ministry. And the next thing that we must bear in mind, is that what he sows is **truth**, the pure word of God. He does not go forth with a seed-basket of mingled wheat and tares; but he sows the pure word of God, "the truth as it is in Jesus." So that the parable is not descriptive of every minister, nor of every congregation; but is only applicable to a minister of truth, and to a congregation that professes the truth; and therefore applicable, we trust, to us this morning.

I.—**First**, then, let us, as the Lord may enable, consider the **way-side** hearer. These hearers form the great bulk of a congregation: and the Lord compares them to soil, of which the emblem is the way-side. Now, observe that in this case there is no penetration whatever of the word of truth: the word falls upon them just as seed-corn might fall upon the hard turnpike road, or on the slabs of a London pavement. It is at once trodden under foot; the first passer-by sets his shoe upon it and crushes it into powder. There is no entrance, no burying: but Satan, compared here to the fowls of the air, comes at once and devours it up. This is the case with the great bulk of hearers; they hear, but hear to no purpose. There is no entrance of the word of life into their judgment, their heart, their conscience, or their affections; it falls upon their ears as literal grains fall upon the hard road, whence it is soon picked up by Satan, producing no solid, real, abiding effect. I shall not dwell any longer upon this unhappy case.

II.—But pass on to consider our second hearer, who is represented in our parable under the figure of him who receives the seed upon stony ground; or, as it is in Luke, "upon a rock." Now there are certain circumstances which, at

first sight, seem to distinguish this hearer in a favourable way; yet, if we look to the fruits and effects, we shall find that these favourable marks are only such in appearance.

i First, then, when compared with the hearer whom we first considered, there is some penetration of the word, some entrance. On the first hearer it falls like seed upon the hard ground; there is no entrance of the word of truth; but, in the second hearer, there is some penetration, there is an entrance. But where does it enter? Merely into the judgment, the natural judgment. How many there are, who have heard sound Calvinistic ministers almost from childhood, and been continually accustomed to have the truth set before them! Of these some receive the doctrines of grace from constantly listening to them. The word of truth has entered into their natural understanding; they contend for it earnestly, believe it strictly true, and are well satisfied that it agrees with God's revealed word.

ii But there are others who can go a step further than this; they not only receive the word into their judgment, so as to be sound, orthodox, doctrinal Calvinists, but also receive the truth into their natural affections; they read or listen to it with "joy." They have a degree of delight in it: their carnal affections receive it gladly, and, like John's hearers, they rejoice in the light.

Now, at first, this seems to be a very favourable circumstance, that persons should receive with joy the word of God; that they should find a pleasure in hearing the truth preached; that they should understand it in a measure; and, not only so, but feel a gladness of mind in hearing of election, predestination, redemption, and salvation by grace; of the perseverance of the saints, and of what the Lord Jesus Christ has done, according to covenant engagements, for his

elect people. That they should receive these truths in their judgment, and feel gladness, pleasure, and delight in hearing them, seems at first sight a very favourable mark indeed. But when we come to look at the other side, then we see that there are unfavourable things set against it. What are these things?

1. They have "**no root.**" The heart has never been ploughed up with convictions; because, had the ploughshare of conviction broken up the heart, there would have been a seed-bed for the word of life to take root in. But they have "no deepness of earth:" the plough of guilt and wrath has never passed into and through the soil, so as to afford a tilth for the word of truth to fall into, there to take root downward, and bring forth a lasting, fruitful crop upward. They "received the word with gladness;" but without previous sorrow, conviction, or temptation; without their heart being ploughed up by the law, or its hard crust torn asunder by the coulter; therefore there was no broken earth, no loosened soil, no deep furrows, into which a root could penetrate, so as to push downward and grow.

2. There was another fatal mark: they "**lacked moisture.**" The Holy Ghost was not in all this; it was not a work of grace; the blessed leadings, secret teachings, divine waterings, and heavenly bedewings of the Holy Spirit did not attend the word of life. The word merely lodged in the judgment, and was received into the natural affections; therefore it sprung up quickly and rapidly; it had no depth of earth, therefore no deep root; it lacked moisture, therefore no growth.

3. The third fatal mark is, that for the want of root and moisture, in time of temptation, they "**withered away.**" How many do we see just in this state! There was a time

when they heard the word with gladness, when they would walk almost any distance to hear the truth, would sit and listen with delight, and seem to spring up as grass by the willow-courses. There was every mark, every appearance of their being children of God.

And yet, if a discerning eye had looked into the work that seemed to be the work of grace, it would have perceived these two things wanting; **first**, that the Holy Ghost had not ploughed up the heart, nor broken up the soil, so as to receive the seed of truth in any real depth; and **secondly**, that there was no moisture, no savour, dew, power, or divine feeling, none of the watering and bedewings of the Holy Ghost. Seeing these two things wanting, a man of discernment would have predicted the consequences—that as this joy was merely earthly joy, as this consolation was but carnal consolation, as this delight was only a sensual delight, the lighting up of natural affections, without the real teaching and work of the Holy Ghost, when temptation came, it would all wither away.

How many do we see withering away in the time of temptation! How many professors of the doctrines of grace do we see withering away under the temptation of strong drink! I do believe, that if many great professors of the doctrines of grace were to put down on one piece of paper what they spend upon gin, and upon another what they give to the Lord's poor, we should find an awful balance in favour of the gin-bottle. This is a temptation to many carnal professors. They fall into the love of drink, which gradually increases upon them till at last they wither away. Some give up even the very profession they have long made, and sit under Arminian teachers, whilst others go into the world, or perhaps attend no place of worship at all, and at last die the death of the drunkard. Such has been the end of many who

once seemed to run with gladness in the way of the Lord, and receive with joy the doctrines of grace as they came forth from the lips of gospel ministers.

Others fall a prey to sensual lusts. Satan lays snares for them in various ways. In these snares they are entangled, make awful shipwreck, and often wither away as to the very form of religion, become hardened Antinomians, live inconsistent lives, indulge in ungodly practices and vile lusts, and become an open reproach and stumbling-block.

Others who do not wither away, in an open manner, by strong drink, sensual lusts, covetousness, or other gross sins, yet wither away as to anything like fruitfulness, usefulness, zeal, activity, and liberality. They become poor dead hearers, buried in the world, prayerless and careless, blighted and mildewed, a dead weight in churches and congregations, making a minister who has any life and feeling in his soul groan at the very sight of them. I do verily believe that if we were to examine the condition of many large churches, we should find them filled with these stony-ground hearers, a plague and a burden to the living members.

III.—The **third** hearer is the thorny-ground hearer. These seem to be a step nearer salvation, and to have something more like the work of grace than the preceding; because there appears not only in this case a reception of the word, but also a bringing forth of some fruit; though we read, that "they bring forth no fruit to perfection."

Now these receive the word in their natural conscience. The first class of hearers did not receive the "word" at all; they did not receive it even in their judgment. They came and went, came and went, understanding nothing, if they listened

at all. The second went a step further; they received the word into their **judgment**: and not only so, but, beyond this, into their natural **affections**; there was in them a springing up of something that looked very much like a real work of grace.

But now we come to the third hearer; and he seems to go a step further still. He not only receives the word into his judgment; but beyond this into his conscience, his natural conscience. But still a work of grace is wanting. Nothing of the blessed Spirit's work is here; but still such a work as looks very much like it; there is some feeling, a conscience moved and wrought upon; and almost everything that looks, at first sight, as though it were a solid work of grace.

This hearer, then, receives the word into his conscience: he has convictions of his lost and undone state by nature; sees the plan of salvation; and at times feel what he hopes, expects, and others fancy is the real work and teaching of the Spirit; yet, with it all, fruit is not brought forth to perfection; it is choked by the cares, pleasures, and lusts of the world. These grow up, as it were, with the world in his heart, and choke and suffocate it, so that no fruit is really brought forth.

God does not put forth his hand; does not pluck out the weeds; does not burn them up; does not exercise his soul as he exercises the souls of his people; but leaves cares, anxieties, and lusts to spring up, together with the truth; and these grow so thick, that they overspread the truth, and suffocate everything like life and feeling in the soul. Thus all the crop is stifled, and no fruit brought forth to perfection; nothing in the end is found to manifest it as a real work of grace.

Now you will find, wherever the truth is preached, that the great bulk of hearers are made up of these three: of way-side hearers, who come and go, and no impression whatever is made on their hearts; of stony-ground hearers, who hear with joy and gladness, but in time of temptation fall away; and of thorny-ground hearers, who seem to have something like a conscience, like feeling, like life, like a conviction, like the work of grace upon their souls, but no reality. Follow these to their houses; go with them to their respective occupations: you will see them suffocated and buried in worldly cares, anxieties, lusts, pleasures, and earthly pursuits. Nothing is brought forth of real gospel fruit, nothing that God himself approves of, nothing which springs from a work of grace upon the heart.

Now if this be so, what reason have all who desire to fear God, to look into their hearts, and see whether they can find anything there really different from what I have this morning been endeavouring to unfold! I believe the child of God will be very jealous on this point, knowing how soon and easily he may be deceived, and feeling in himself the temptations, the besetments, and the evils that he sees described in the word of God, and manifest in others, he will sit at times in solemn judgment upon his own case, trembling to the very centre, doubting and fearing whether it is the case with him.

IV.—I shall, therefore, as the Lord may enable me, pass on to my last and most important point, to which all I have been saying is but preliminary, and describe him whom the Lord pronounces a fruitful hearer—a child of God—one in whom the work of grace is begun, carried on, and brought to perfection.

Now if we look at this hearer, and compare his case with the preceding, we shall find certain very striking and prominent

marks. It is these marks which I shall attempt now to unfold, and thus shew the distinction between him and the three hearers whose cases we have been hitherto considering.

i The first mark of this gracious hearer is this, that he receives the word into an "honest heart." From this we gather, that the hearts of the other three hearers are not honest—that they lack that which lies at the base of all true religion—sincerity; that God, by the light of his Spirit and the teachings of his grace, has never made them upright.

This I look upon as the very first fruit of divine teaching in the soul, as in Nathanael, that it produces spiritual uprightness, godly honesty and sincerity of heart. But how is a heart thus made "honest?" We know that no heart is naturally so. The Lord never meant to say that. The Lord uses the figure of the soil. But he did not mean—he could not mean, that some have a heart naturally honest, as if exempt from the Adam fall. No, the Lord, in speaking of an "honest heart," implied that it was made so by grace.

1. Now when divine **light** comes into the soul, it shews us who God is, what sin is, what we are. And if a man never had this divine light shining into his soul, he is not an honest man. He may be a very honest man outwardly: he may be externally upright in the world, and have an abhorrence of lies and falsehood: but as regards his own state before God, the concerns of his own soul, and his dealings with God in the matter of salvation, there is no honesty in him.

There is a depth in the heart, which is covered over as with a lid, and must be so, because till the veil is taken away—the veil of ignorance, of unbelief, of self-righteousness spread over the heart—until this veil is taken away by the power of God's grace, all its dark recesses will lie covered up. These

secret depths are made manifest to the child of God by the light of divine truth shining into those dens, caverns, and hidden recesses, which are thus laid naked, bare, and open to view. There may be surface sincerity, as beneath this chapel there may be deep cellars, covered over with the flooring, so that what is going on below is not seen above.

So a man may seem very sincere, straightforward, and honest, and yet have only honesty in his face, whilst in the cellar thousands of toads, newts, and efts may be creeping about unseen. But let the light of God shine into the soul, **that** penetrates into the cellars, looks into the very depths of the heart, lays bare every secret recess. Thus, the light of God shining into the soul makes the heart honest, and nothing but this light shining into the soul out of the fulness of God can make an honest man: because in this light he sees and knows he cannot deceive or mock God, that all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom he has to do.

He may deceive his fellow-creatures, but he cannot deceive the Lord God Almighty. This will manifest itself in every secret acting of his soul before God. "Thou, God seest me!" lies at the root of all true prayer. 'Thou, God, searchest my heart; thou, God, knowest all that is in my soul; all that I have, all that I am is open before thee; I cannot escape thee.' "If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there, if I take the wings of the morning, or dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me" **Ps 139:8-10**. This is the effect of the light of God shining into the soul.

If, then, a man never had a ray of divine light shining into his soul, he is not an honest man really and spiritually before

God. He always will be, however sincere before men, a deeply-dyed hypocrite before God, and the more profession he makes, the more deeply-dyed will be his hypocrisy.

2. But besides this, there is the **life** of God in the soul to make him honest. Light makes us see—life makes us feel what we are. As there is light to see, and life to feel, we not only see what we are—our great vileness and awful wickedness—but we feel it, mourn over and under it, groan and cry on account of it, abhor it, and pour out our hearts in bitter complaints because of it. It is by this mysterious union of light and life coming into the soul—that we see the evil of our hearts, and feel what we are as sinners before God.

Where there is this light and life in the heart, there, and there only, will there be honesty. Now an honest man never can be before God anything but what God makes him: he has nothing but what God gives him: he knows nothing but what God teaches him. Thus he stands before God and men. He takes nothing to himself, has nothing, boasts of nothing, as he has nothing to boast of; for he cannot boast of sin, hypocrisy, wickedness; therefore as an honest man, he stands before God a poor, ruined, undone wretch: a leper from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot. He often says, "Behold I am vile!" puts his mouth in the dust, and laying his hand upon his mouth feelingly acknowledges himself to be the chief of sinners, and less than the least of all saints.

Now if you have never had this as the ground-work of your religion, you are not at present manifest as a hearer in whose heart God has begun and is carrying on the work of grace. At present, it is to be feared you are a way-side, stony-ground, or thorny-ground hearer; and whatever you may be hereafter made by the light and life of God entering

your soul, at present you bear very few marks of having "an honest heart."

ii The next mark is, a **"good heart."** 'A good heart!' say you; how can that be? Has any man a "good heart?" Yes; for if not why does the Lord Jesus Christ say he has? He did not make mistakes. But no man has a "good heart" by nature; the Lord Himself has settled that point. When one came to him, and said, "Good Master," what was his answer? "Why callest thou me good?"—though he was good—"there is none good but one, that is God." There is no man's heart good except as made so by the grace of God working in him to will and to do. If it has not so worked in you, you have not a "good heart."

What is a "good heart" then? As there is such a thing, let us see what it is. The figure is kept up; the heart is compared to the soil.

1. A "good heart" is a heart broken up, as good soil is broken up. We have seen the fault of the other soils. One was hard, the seed had no penetration there whatever. The second had a kind of soil, but was all mixed with stones; it was so shallow that the Lord said, there is no depth of earth: it was nearly all rock. The third had little else but thistles, thorns, and briars growing up in it. The marks of a good soil were wanting in all these. No heart, therefore, can be called good till broken up; for it is "a broken and contrite heart," in which God takes delight.

Now, compare for a moment a "good heart" or broken heart, with the "joy" that the Lord says the stony-ground hearers receive the word with. There was no depth in them; they were not broken up with convictions; had no sense or sight of their lost, undone state; no holy fear of God; no trembling

at his word; no fear of being wrong, no desire to be right; yet they received the word with gladness. Now, if a man lacks a broken heart, he lacks the main evidence of being a partaker of grace; for the leadings, teachings, and dealings of God all tend to this; they all tend to break a man's heart. If the Lord deal with him in conviction, it breaks his heart; breaks up the hard, impenetrable soil he formerly possessed. If the Lord manifest mercy, kindness, love, tender favour, it breaks the heart; for it softens, melts, and humbles it. That is one mark, then, of a "good" heart—to be broken and contrite.

2. Another mark is—that it is made tender and soft. It is so in the natural soil. Look at the hard clods—nothing grows there. But a soil that crumbles and breaks to pieces, and is tender to impression—that when the rain falls, dissolves under it—when the dew distils, it enters into its most secret pores—when the wind softly blows, crumbles to pieces—that is a good soil. So with a "good heart" made so by God. When the Lord speaks, there is a softness and tenderness felt in the soul, an impression made, as upon that band of men whose hearts the Lord had touched **1Sa 10:26**. This is a very distinguishing feature of the child of God. "Because thine heart was tender," the Lord says of Josiah.

You never find this soft heart in hardened Antinomians. They have no tenderness, melting, confession, contrition before God; no softness, no yielding to impressions; no breaking down; no falling beneath the power of vital godliness as manifested in a child of God; no crumbling down of the hard heart; no self-loathing, self-abhorrence, or godly sorrow. You never see these marks in the stony-ground, in the thorny-ground, or in the way-side hearer: they are proud, obstinate, hardhearted; there is in them no real breaking down of soul and spirit before God.

Now, look at this. Perhaps some of you this morning have been trying yourselves. One fears he is but a wayside hearer after all. Another may say, 'I fear after all the profession I have made, I am nothing but a stony-ground hearer.' A third may cry, 'I have so many cares and anxieties, am so stifled with thorns, that I fear after all I am only a thorny-ground hearer.' Look a little farther. Remember that the children of God have all the temptations of others. If the stony-ground hearers have had bad marks, you have had some of the same; if the thorny-ground hearers have snares and temptations, you have similar; and when left to judge by carnal reason, you may often fear that you have nothing else.

But let us see whether we cannot find something beyond these—whether there is any honesty, sincerity, and uprightness before God; whether any breaking up of the heart, any tender, soft, melting feelings, any humility, contrition, godly sorrow, self-loathing, and self-abhorrence, which God here seems to have marked out as the feature of a "good" heart. Into this "honest and good heart," the word of truth is received. There it is lodged. This is the gospel seed-bed; there it takes root; there it springs up, and brings forth "first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear."

iii The next thing said of these hearers is, that they "**keep it.**" Others do not "keep it." In the first case, the birds of the air came, and caught it up; it was not "kept" at all. In the second case, it sprang up, and withered away—it was not kept; it dried away like grass upon the house-top. In the third case, it was suffocated, smothered, choked. But they who received it into an honest and good heart, "kept it;" not by any exertion of their own, nor because they were able to keep it any more than the others. But the gracious Lord who

in the first instance was pleased to prepare their hearts to receive it, and then lodge it in the soil, himself keeps it there by his own blessed hand; as we read, "I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment." And, unless it is "kept" by the Lord's watering it every moment, by the dews and rains of his Spirit, by the application of his word with power, by the whole work of grace—unless the Lord thus keep alive the seed of truth that he himself has implanted in the soul, it is not "kept" at all.

There are so many temptations in their way. Sometimes sin works so powerfully as though it would suffocate and bury the crop; sometimes **temptation** entangles them, and seems to draw away all the dew from their heart; sometimes despair almost lays hold of them, and seems as though it would crush and bury all the word of life in the soul. But amidst all their trials and temptations, all their doubts and fears, all their exercises and misgivings the Lord keeps alive, by the waterings and bedewings of his grace, by the various teachings and leadings of his Spirit, that which he in his mercy and love first implanted in their souls.

iv Is the next mark in you? "Fruit?" I want you to compare these marks with what is going on in your souls; to lay down your experience side by side with them. This will prove whether you are a fruitful hearer. Upon the way-side hearer it will have no effect; it falls only on the outer ear. If you are a stony-ground hearer, it will not suit you. You want something to stir up your natural affections—to have a letter-Christ preached, and the doctrines set forth in the letter; great assurance spoken of; all the doubts, fears, and exercises of God's people cut up root and branch, and called 'working at Dung-gate!' You want your carnal mind elated with fleshly joy; your natural feelings worked upon. You will not bring your heart, and lay it down side by side with the

description of an honest and good heart. You dare not do it.

Thorny-ground hearers, too, are afraid of that. They are thinking even now of tomorrow's profit or loss, or of yesterday's business: a whole crop of thorns and thistles is springing up now to stifle any conviction. They will not bring forth their experience, lay it down, and say, 'These are the things that my soul knows.'

But the fruitful hearer, whose heart is made honest by the grace of God—in whom there is this goodness wrought—this simplicity, humility, tenderness, and trembling at God's word; this godly jealousy over himself; this desire to be right, this fear to be wrong; these sighs and cries to a heart-searching God; this looking to the Lord —he will be bringing it forth piece by piece, saying, 'I have felt **this**, I have felt **that**; I have experienced these things; I know that to be truth; whatever men say against me, whatever I say against myself, I am sure I have felt **this!**'

Some of you may be thus bringing forth your experience, and saying, 'God knows this has been going on in my soul for years; I know I have honesty and sincerity before God, if I have nothing else'. This is bringing it out, comparing it with the word of God, and the experience of the saints; and he finds that, in the midst of exercises, temptations, perplexities, trials, the work of grace, to his wonder and astonishment, has been still kept alive in the soul. Such a one stands a monument of God's preserving mercy.

Now this man "brings forth fruit." There was no fruit in the way-side hearer; no fruit to perfection in the stony-ground hearer. There might be fruit in appearance, but no fruit to perfection. But the hearer, who has received the word into an honest and a good heart "brings forth fruit." And what fruit?

Why, fruit of three kinds: fruit in the **heart**, fruit in the **lip**, and fruit in the **life**.

v Let us see what these fruits are that he brings forth in the **heart**; or rather, that the Lord brings forth in him.

1. There is, first, the fruit of **faith**. This is the only man who really believes in Jesus; who believes the gospel to be glad tidings to perishing sinners; and who believes in, and accepts the doctrines of grace as sweet and suitable to his soul. This is the only man who really believes in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ, in his blood, in his glorious righteousness, in his dying love, as sweet and suitable. And why does he believe it? Because it has been revealed in a measure to his soul.

Another may have heard it, and received it gladly; but there has been no special discovery or manifestation of the gospel to his heart with divine power. His head may be stuffed with doctrines; but there is no faith in his heart; no real coming unto, trusting in, or hanging upon the Lord Jesus Christ. There may be abundance of false confidence and presumption, but no real looking unto the Lord Jesus Christ out of the depths of a broken heart; no calling upon his name; no seeing him by the eye of faith; nor casting all his soul upon him as able to save to the uttermost.

2. Again, he will bring forth the fruit of **hope**; or rather, God will bring it forth in him. The light shining into his soul making his evidences clear, bringing sweet manifestations of the love of God into his heart, applying his precious promises, and shedding abroad his favour—all these things, experimentally felt within, give him gospel hope, "an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast, and entering into that within the veil." Others have no such hope. Their hope is the hope of the hypocrite that shall perish; the spiders web spun

out of his own fleshly bowels; and vain hope; not a good hope through grace, anchoring in the blood, love, and obedience of Jesus.

3. And he brings forth the fruit of **love**. There are times and seasons when he can say, "Thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." He loves the Lord Jesus Christ; he loves the truth as it is in Jesus; he loves the people of God; he loves the work of grace wherever he sees that work manifest; and he feels a sweet union with the tried and tempted followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

4. He brings forth also true **humility**. He has had a sight of himself; he knows what is in man, and abhors himself. His heart is humbled by and before God.

5. He brings forth, or rather the Lord brings forth in him, the fruit of **repentance**. He sees what he is as a sinner, and truly repents. He brings forth the fruit of godly sorrow; for seeing what his sins have cost the Lord Jesus Christ, he mourns over them with a repentance not to be repented of.

6. He brings forth **spiritual-mindedness**. In the place of a carnal embracing of mere doctrines, his affections are fixed upon the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and simplicity of heart. And this produces that spiritual-mindedness which is life and peace, and delight in heavenly things.

vi He not only brings forth these things in his heart, or rather, God brings them forth in him; but he brings them forth in his **lip**. When he speaks of the things of God, he speaks of them with real feeling, with real love in his soul, and real grace in his breast; his heart teaching his mouth. If he be a minister, he will speak with power; he will not deliver truth in a hardened, presumptuous, unfeeling manner; but

having life and feeling in his soul, and an inward experience of the things of God, what he speaks will be uttered with unction, dew, savour, and power; it will reach the heart, melt the spirit, and bring forth life and feeling in the hearers. And if he be a hearer, a private character, he will also bring forth fruit with his lips. His speech will be seasoned with salt. There will be a life and power in his conversation when he comes into the company of the people of God; the hearts of others will unite and melt as it were into his, and find sweet union and mutual communion.

vii Nay more, he brings forth fruit in his **life**. He is not a drunkard, nor an adulterer. When hidden and covered by darkness, he knows that, when no human eye sees him, God sees him. He will not be a slave to sin; God will deliver him. Sin shall not have dominion over him; he may be entangled from time to time in secret lusts that work in him, but he will beseech God to subdue them, and bring him out of every snare. He will sigh and cry to be delivered from sin in all its shapes and forms. He will not be a covetous, a proud, a worldly-minded, an oppressive man. If a master, he will not oppress his servant; if a servant, he will be sincere and upright towards his master. He will not be an unkind, cruel husband at home. Before his friends, his wife, his children, he will be the same—a Christian at home, as well as a Christian abroad. Thus he will bring forth fruit in his life, as well as in his lip.

If there be no fruit in his life, depend upon it, there is no fruit in his heart: if there be no fruit in his heart, depend upon it there will be no fruit in his life. Very few professors will bear following home; very few whose lives and conversation will bear looking into: very few who are not slaves, more or less, to some sin—drunkenness, pride, uncleanness, covetousness, worldly-mindedness, tricks in business, or some deceitful

practices. The children of God will indeed be tempted, entangled, and hampered, yea, fearfully hampered by sin in their soul's feelings. But he, who has made their hearts inwardly honest, will make their lives outwardly honest. God, who has implanted his precious grace in their soul, causes the word to take root in the heart, and makes them to bring forth fruit, some a hundred fold, these indeed are rare; some sixty fold, and some thirty fold.

But if they bring forth no fruit whatever; if there be no fruit in their heart, lip, or life, where shall we place them? If the preacher stand in God's counsel, he will be as God's mouth. I might this morning have amused, entertained, or deceived you; and said, if you believe the doctrines of grace you are Christians. But I dare not say so; I should not be standing up in God's name, nor be doing the work of a minister uprightly, if I were to do so; my conscience, I hope, would not let me thus flatter and deceive you.

Then, where are the fruits? We profess to be Christians, profess to be children of God; but where are the fruits? Where are the fruits inwardly? Where are the fruits outwardly? If we have no fruits inwardly, no fruits outwardly, we may call ourselves what we please, but we shall not be what the Lord calls, fruitful children, "trees of his right hand planting."

Look into your hearts; compare your experience, and the things brought forth there from time to time, with the things plainly and clearly laid down in God's word. And if you can find the marks which I have brought forward, of the grace of God in your soul—it is an encouragement for all of you who desire to fear God. You may be lamenting that you bring forth so little fruit to God's honour and glory. But he can cause you to bring forth more fruit. He can deepen the work

in his own time: and he can make and manifest you as fruitful branches in the only true Vine.