

## Spiritual Fruit

Preached at North Street Chapel, Stamford, on Thursday Evening, September 2, 1858

"From me is thy fruit found." Hosea 14:8

Man unites in himself what at first sight seem to be directly opposite things; he is the greatest of sinners and yet the greatest of Pharisees. Now, what two things can be so opposed to each other as sin and self-righteousness? Yet the very same man who is a sinner from top to toe, with the whole heart sick and the whole heart faint, who is spiritually nothing else but a leper throughout, how contradictory it appears that the same man has in his own heart a most stubborn self-righteousness. Now, against these two evils God, so to speak, directs his whole artillery—he spares neither one nor the other; but it is hard to say which is the greatest rebellion against God—the existence of sin in man and what he is as a fallen sinner, or his Pharisaism—the lifting up his head in the pride of self-righteousness. It is not easy to decide which is the more obnoxious—the drunkard who sins without shame or the Pharisee puffed up to see how pleasing he is to God. The one is abhorrent to our feelings, and, as far as decency and morality are concerned, we would sooner see the Pharisee; but when we come to matters of religion the Pharisee seems the worst—at least our Lord intimated as much when he said the publicans and harlots would enter the kingdom of God before them.

Now, in this Book the Lord seems sometimes to knock Ephraim to pieces and then to put him together again. Sometimes we find denunciations against his backslidings, and then when Ephraim is broken to pieces the Lord seeks to raise him up, as he says in the 13th chapter, "When Ephraim

spake trembling he exalted himself in Israel." When he was humble and broken down—broken so as to tremble at the majesty of God—he exalted himself—that is, God exalted him, for God exalts the humble; "but when he offended in Baal he died"—the life of God seemed to be extinct in his soul. Now, in this last chapter the Lord speaks very comfortably, and he says, "O Ephraim," that is Israel, "return unto the Lord thy God, for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity." Never think to stand upright by thine own self-righteousness—thou hast fallen by thy iniquity, and now thou must humble thyself before the Lord thy God. Turn to the Lord thy God and say unto him, "Take away all iniquity and receive us graciously, so will we render the calves of our lips"—that is, we will sing and praise thy holy name. "Asshur shall not save us," that is the king of Assyria, "we will not ride upon horses," that is the devices of men, "neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods"—our idols are self and self-righteousness—"for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy." Well, I need not go on with the chapter. Ephraim shall say, "What have I to do any more with idols?" Here is Ephraim brought away from his idols: "I have heard him and observed him; I am like a green fig tree;" and then the words of our text, "From me is thy fruit found," as though he would show Ephraim this—"Ephraim, though thou art a sinner, let not that cast thee down, so that thou shalt think there never can be any fruit in thee: look upward and not to thyself for this fruit."

In opening up these words I shall with God's blessing show—

I.—What is the fruit called here "*thy fruit.*"

III.—How this fruit is from the Lord, "*from me is thy fruit found.*"

III.—How this fruit not only is from the Lord but is *found* also to be such, and made manifest, for we not only have it from the Lord, but it is found to be from the Lord—"From me is thy fruit *found*."

Now, I sincerely believe that wherever God the Spirit has anything to do with a man's soul—and oh! if God the Spirit has nothing to do with a man's soul what an awful thing it is—in his quickening and regenerating operations upon it, his communications of life and grace to it, there will always be a desire to bring forth fruit unto God. No child of God can be an Antinomian, and never so little as when God first begins to work upon the heart. If he has been years in the work there may be a leaning in his wretched heart to this weakness, to this carelessness, but no beginner has any leaning toward or is ever upset by this Antinomian devil. On the contrary his longing is to work out his own righteousness. He is trying to keep the law, working hard to please God by a life of obedience; he is seeking to be holy, and endeavouring to overcome the wicked passions of his heart. So that you never find a child of God under the first teaching who has any leaning towards Antinomianism; it is his will to please God by his own acts and words. But I believe there is a desire in every soul under divine teaching to bring forth fruit, to come out of the world and the things that are of the world, to walk in God's fear, and to have some testimonies that he is accepted, that he is a saved soul, and that he has an interest in the atoning blood of the Son of God. And all through a Christian's life wherever the Spirit moves, wherever the Spirit operates upon that man's heart and conscience, there will be a desire to bring forth fruit; and this is a mark and test of being one of God's family. A profession does not put us into Christ, knowledge does not put us into Christ, talking and chattering do not put us into Christ, none of the works of man give us a birth and being in Christ, and a title to receive

out of the fulness of Christ; therefore, from first to last, beginning, middle, and end it is all of sovereign grace, of the work and workmanship of the Holy Ghost in the heart and conscience. If a soul is living under the operation of the Holy Ghost, under this communication and influence, there is a breaking out and a breathing after bringing forth fruit. How that godly man Habakkuk stood upon the watch tower and his soul was grieved within him because there were those that stirred up strife and grievances. How he grieved and groaned not only because the Lord did not hear his prayer, but because he did not bring forth fruit. When we see that leanness, that being content to drag on a life without any union and communion, real faith, hope, or love, we may be sure that the love of God is not there. The people of God may sink very low, but there are those breathings after God that make them live to his praise and honour. Now, when they begin to long to bring forth fruit they begin to see what fruit is, for none can see what fruit is but the saints of God. All men do not know what fruit is, and until a man knows what it is he cannot bring it forth. For instance, here is a man who does not go to the races, to balls or parties, but goes to church and pays his debts. O what a good man he thinks he is; he says his prayers at night, and makes sure of going to heaven. The man is blind as a gnat, dead as a door nail, and his heart is hard as adamant; he does not know what real Christianity is. He gives beef to the poor at Christmas, subscribes to charities and missions, and thinks what wonderful things he is doing. The man has not his eyes open to see what true Christianity is and what real Christian fruit is. When a child of God begins to see what fruit is and that it must be spiritual, the first thing he sees is that natural fruit is not accepted of God. If I gave an order for a basket of fruit because I was expecting a friend to dine with me, and the fruiterer sent me a basket of sloes, crabs, or rotten oranges I should think he was insulting me; and so if a man has not

sufficient knowledge to distinguish between the crabs and all the rottenness of human production and good fruit, he will find that the Lord is not a God to be mocked, but that the only fruit which is acceptable in his sight must be spiritually produced by union and communion with Jesus Christ. And I wish that you who profess religion, and who may have it to some extent, would pray for a clearer view of what fruit is, for then, instead of being puffed up with pride you would see that there was little else in you but thorns and briars. Now, this is what the soul must know—that all fruit is produced by union and communion with Christ. You will find that subject opened up in the seventh chapter of Romans, where we read of being married to him who is raised from the dead. So if a man is not married to Christ and does not thus bring forth fruit it is only bastard fruit. All fruit that is not produced by marriage to Christ is not legitimate fruit. As in nature where children are born out of wedlock, they are the offspring of adultery, and as such will bear the stamp of their parents, and cannot take part in the inheritance of the father; so a person may bring forth fruit, but if that fruit is not legitimate God will stamp it with bastardy, and will not allow it to take part in the inheritance of his family. And, therefore, fruit is not of works. The gift of a few shillings or a few times going to chapel or church will not produce it; it is deeper than this. What is this fruit then? It is faith, hope, love, godly fear, submission to God's will, tenderness of conscience, love and esteem for the brethren, self-denial, putting off the old man, putting on the new, and I might stand here till midnight and then not exhaust the catalogue. These are set forth by the Apostle Paul in the Epistle to the Galatians, where he says, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." Here are all the fruits of the Spirit penned down by the Holy Ghost himself; but you may examine it for yourselves, and indeed compare what is in

your soul with it; then you will confess how short you come of bearing that fruit, the bearing of which stamps the Christian indeed, but we shall never bear fruit to God until we are brought to see that our fruit comes from God.

II.—This leads me to my second part—"*From me* is thy fruit found." How positively and clearly is this set forth in the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of John's Gospel, where the Lord says, "Without me ye can do nothing." "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me." So you see that union with Christ is indispensable to the bringing forth of fruit; for as the sap flows out of the stem so it is with the believing soul and Jesus; only so far as Christ flows into his soul is he able to bring forth fruit unto God. "Abide in me and I in you; as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me." Then there is a being in Christ by vital union, and an abiding in him by faith, prayer, hope, and love, and a receiving grace for grace out of his fulness; so that from him is our fruit. Now, as we begin to feel day by day our barrenness, and as our wrinkles arise in our face, we begin to see that from Jesus only is our fruit. Let us then raise our souls up out of our miserable selves and fix our eyes upon him at the right hand of God and beg of him to communicate of his grace to our souls, and send down the influence of his Spirit that will bring forth fruit in us, which is peace, praise, and honour to God. No one can bring forth fruit without a conflict with self; self checks the crop like the ivy clinging to and strangling the vine. I have a vine in the front of my house, and almost the first thing I noticed when I returned home yesterday was that every leaf was struck with mildew—in fact the whole tree has been struck, as it were, with the same withering disease. What an emblem of a poor, withered professor! There will never be a cluster either fit to be made into wine or eaten as dessert. Now,

when we see what we are in ourselves we see nothing but mildew. As the vine seems to have more enemies than any other fruit, because, as it is said, it cheereth the heart of God and man, and we are represented in Scripture as branches of the vine, therefore we need the grace of God in order that we may overcome these enemies. Though I have not sufficient skill to cure the mildew on my vine, yet the Lord has skill to cure the mildew in our souls, for his grace can and does and will sanctify the sinner's heart; therefore whatever despair I might feel about having any fruit from the vine on my trellis, there shall be no mildew upon the trellis of your soul, for he can send a shower to wash off the mildew, and put forth his hand to knock off the insects that feed upon the leaves, or, worse than all, upon the fruit of the vine. The Lord says, "From me is thy fruit found." The fruit flows forth, the spirit of thankfulness, of brokenness, and godly sorrow for sin. And yet there will be times and seasons when we sink very low, and when we feel or fear that there never was a spark of grace in our heart. But your very feeling there is no fruit is in itself a fruit. Your mourning over your unfruitfulness and your being cast down into dejection, these very things are fruit if they are spiritual, for they are produced by the same Holy Ghost that brings forth the blossoms of faith, hope, and love.

III.—There is the finding of this fruit. In a vine some of the richest clusters are found under the leaves. Leaf and fruit go very much together, for where there is a leaf full of sand and mildew you find nothing but a cluster of rotten fruit. Well, so in grace; if there be little fruit there will be a withered profession, because the leaf represents the profession. The world can see what you profess, and they will see the mildew spots upon it. "O," they say, "that man talks about religion, but he is just like us. You who have to deal with him know how he deals, how he can laugh and giggle like other men, and how passionate he is if anything crosses him. It is only a

profession; he goes to chapel, but we all know what he is." Here is a profession with the mildew upon it. "See," they may say, "that man was drunk last night: here is a man who goes to North Street Chapel." If the leaf is so bad, what must the berry be? If the man's profession is such, what must be the man himself? So if the mildew has struck the leaf you may be sure the mildew has reached the clusters. We find that the best clusters sometimes grow on the last bough; so it is in grace—the humbler a man is the more fruit he will bring forth. The same sap that feeds the branch nearest the stem feeds the branch farthest off. "From me is thy fruit found." Your soul may be often cast down, and you may say, "Was there ever any sinner like me?" but your complaints do not take you into the world again; you are not telling lies or joking and gossiping with your neighbours, but you are mourning and groaning that you are not bringing forth fruit unto God. Now, the Lord may speak these words to encourage his saints: "Come out of the world. From me is thy fruit found. Not from the world. Be not carried away with the things of time and sense—not from worldly-mindedness, not from family distress is fruit produced—but from me, out of my fulness by the communications of my grace." If you don't get it from that source you will get it nowhere, and every branch that beareth not fruit he heweth down. So that we come to one of two things: you must either be a branch that bears fruit from Christ—from the communications of Christ's love to your soul—or else one that beareth not fruit, which the Father taketh away. There is no intermediate state whereby we have part from ourselves and part from Christ, for "from me," saith the Lord, "is thy fruit found."