

Filled With Fruit

Philippians 1:11

06/24/07

The astronomer Galileo is reported to have said that, “**The sun, with all those planets revolving around it and dependent on it, can still ripen a bunch of grapes as if it had nothing else in the universe to do.**” At the beginning of the summer season we all look forward to and are already beginning to enjoy some of the delicious fruits of soil and sun. God, the creator and sustainer of all things in this universe, is looking for fruit. He is so occupied with the producing of spiritual fruit in our lives it is as if He had nothing else in the universe to do. The church can be compared to a garden or a vineyard. In John chapter 15 Jesus said that the Father is the gardener. In His garden, there is only one plant – a vine – the true vine, who is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the vine and believers are the branches. God has saved us for the purpose of bearing fruit.

If God came to His garden right now and examined you as a branch in the vine, would He find any fruit? A garden is a piece of ground that is set apart from other land for a special purpose. Earlier this year we set aside a piece of land in the middle of our backyard for a garden. Last year we simply mowed the grass that grew on it. This year we plowed it up and we planted tomatoes, beans, eggplant, peppers, and melons in that spot. We water that garden -- we weed it and feed it. Those plants are special to us. Friday morning my wife came in to the house and with great concern in her voice cried out that “**there are worms on our tomatoes!**” By the tone of her voice, you would have thought that the house was on fire....something had to be done right away!

Is God really that concerned about your life and my life as plants in His garden? Yes, He is very concerned. Jesus said, **“By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit.”** Paul prayed that the Philippian believers would be filled with fruit. As we study this verse today, we will divide it into three parts:

I. THE NATURE OF THIS FRUIT

II. THE SOURCE OF THIS FRUIT

III. THE PURPOSE OF THIS FRUIT

First of all, let's look at:

I. THE NATURE OF THIS FRUIT

Remember, this verse is part of a prayer that the apostle Paul prayed for the Philippian church. The prayer begins in verse 9 and ends in verse 11 where he ends the prayer by making request that these believers be filled with fruit. **This let's us know right away that this fruit in the life of a Christian is something we ought to be praying for.** We'll talk more about that a little later. For now we are looking at the nature of this fruit. It is the fruit of righteousness. There are two kinds of righteousness that every believer possesses. **First**, there is the righteousness of Christ that is part of our justification and standing before God. We are declared righteous in God's sight, through faith alone, on account of Christ's perfect righteousness being imputed to our account. **Second**, there is the righteousness or holiness that God implants within the human soul by the Spirit of God when He causes us to be born again.

There must be fruit, or evidence in our lives to attest to the reality of a judicial righteousness. Those who are justified by faith will show it by a life of holiness. And also, there will be fruit as the inevitable result of that righteous principle implanted in our hearts. The new nature will produce fruit – the fruit

of the Spirit and the fruit of good works. This fruit has to do with righteous character and righteous deeds. God is working in us to produce fruit and that fruit has to do with conformity to the image of Christ.

This phrase, **“The fruit of righteousness”** is found several other places in the Bible. Amos 6:12 says, **“You have turned justice into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood.”** Wormwood is an intensely bitter and poisonous plant, a symbol for whatever is nauseous and destructive. This is not the kind of fruit God desires. He wants us to practice justice and righteousness toward others, especially the poor and the oppressed. James 3:18 says that **“the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.”** Peace is listed as one of the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians chapter five. James is saying that the fruit of righteousness will be seen in our lives by making peace. Jesus said, **“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”** When you are constantly engaged in fighting, quarreling and conflict then you are not bearing fruit for God. Righteous fruit is seen in being a person of peace and helping others to be at peace with God and with each other.

These are just a few examples of the fruit of righteousness that God desires in your life. God wants fruit. So many Christians seem to get by with the bare minimum in terms of following Christ and bearing fruit. But God wants there to be an abundance of it in our lives. Ephesians 5:9 mentions several things in which this fruit consists: **“the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth.”** John the Baptist, when the Pharisees and Sadducees came out to hear him he challenged them to, **“bear fruits worthy of repentance.”** Those who profess to know Jesus Christ must do the

same. It is not enough to talk about repenting, but there must be actual fruit and evidence of repentance. In Matthew 3:10 John the Baptist said, "**And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.**"

There is condemnation for those whose lives do not bear any fruit. But there is also encouragement for those who are not currently bearing much fruit that they can become full of fruit. In Luke chapter 13 the Lord Jesus spoke this parable: "**A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, 'Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?' But he answered and said to him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it. 'And if it bears fruit, well. But if not, after that you can cut it down.'**" If you are not bearing righteous fruit for God, you are in danger of being cut down. But you also need to know that even now, God will give you another opportunity to repent and change your ways.

This leads to the next point:

II. THE SOURCE OF THIS FRUIT

In verse 11, Paul said that the fruits of righteousness are "**by Jesus Christ.**" This fruit comes by Him and through Him. He is the source of all fruitfulness in the life of a Christian because He is the source of life – He is the living vine. The person who has not been united to Christ by faith is still a dead branch. Therefore, the first step in bearing fruit to God is to come to Christ and to put your faith in Him. Jesus said, "**Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a**

tree is known by its fruit.” If you are not bearing any righteous fruit, it may be due to that fact that you have not been born again and have not become a new, living creation.

But even if you are already united to Christ by faith, you must go to Him continually and remain in close fellowship with Him in order to be fruitful. Here the believer needs to be directed to John chapter 15. In John 15:5 Jesus said, **“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.”** Self effort may produce plenty of outward activity, but it will never produce real fruit. Unless you are leaning on and depending on Christ's life in you as you serve Him, it will all amount to nothing. When you give up trying to live for Christ in your own strength, then you will find that by abiding in Him you can do all things! Paul said in Philippians 4:13, **“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”**

Abiding in Christ is the idea of maintaining constant fellowship and communion with Christ. He is the vine, the source of life, and it is by staying in intimate fellowship with Him that we will bear fruit for God. The most useful Christians throughout the history of the church have always been those who lived the nearest to Christ. Of course this involves the practice of continual prayer and meditation in the word of God. In John 15:7 Jesus combined these two things – prayer and the word: **“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.”** There are no formulas, there are no short cuts, there are no gimmicks, and there are no easy ways. In order to bear fruit we must abide in Him. In order to abide in Him we must allow His words to abide in us and we must

seek Him in prayer for this fruit. He said to “**ask what you desire**”, or as other translations say, “**ask whatever you wish.**” If you are a Christian and you delight yourself in the Lord, then your strongest desire and most earnest request is that He produce the fruit of the spirit in you and make you like Jesus.

Abiding in the word is also crucial. Referring to the godly person, Psalm 1 says, “**His delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night.**” The result is that “**He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water that brings forth its fruit in its season.**” Frequent meditation in the word results in a continual harvest of spiritual fruit. The Bible is the essential food and drink for your soul. Whether you realize it or not, you are becoming what your mind thinks about. Your character is being formed and solidified with each passing day. This is true whether you are intentionally meditating on certain things or if you just let life happen. Some of the most powerful influences on the development of your character come from the following sources:

1. What you read
2. What you look at
3. What you listen to
4. The people you associate with
5. What you think about

All these things feed your mind and are a significant influence in the way your mind is programmed. Therefore, the word of God is extremely important because what you think determines what you value and what you pursue. What goes into your mind will affect the kind of fruit your life produces. Do you want spiritual fruit? Meditate on spiritual truth. Scripture says, “**Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.**”

So then, frequent prayer and meditation in Scripture are indispensable for fruit-bearing. But there is another element that is absolutely essential in the life of every believer that Jesus mentions in John chapter 15. He said, **“Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.”** Anyone who has grapevines, fruit trees or rose bushes know the value and necessity of pruning in order to produce more fruit or flowers. Pruning improves the quantity and quality of fruit. With grapes especially, if no pruning is done, there will be a drastic reduction of fruit produced by the vine. The result of not pruning is a lot of leafy growth, without much fruit. It seems that this is the condition of a lot of Christians - they have a lot of leafy, showy appearance, but the real fruit of the Spirit is missing.

This pruning work that God does on us involves the removal of something in our lives in order to be replaced with fruit. Whenever God prunes us, it is usually not a pleasant experience. The pruning knife is painful. We are usually reluctant to allow God to remove the things in our life that are getting in the way of holiness of life, but God has His way of doing what needs to be done. He providentially places us in circumstances and trials which are the instruments He uses to make us more holy. If you are experiencing a painful ordeal in your life right now, then know that God is probably at work with His pruning shears. Bishop J.C. Ryle, an Anglican minister, said, **"BY TRIAL HE WEANS US FROM THE WORLD, DRAWS US TO CHRIST, DRIVES US TO THE BIBLE AND PRAYER, SHOWS US OUR OWN HEARTS, AND MAKES US HUMBLE."**

I believe that in my own life and in my family, God is doing some pruning right now. It is painful and I am tempted to become downcast about it.

But God is up to something – He is pruning us that we might become more fruitful. We have to remember that we are not here merely for our own pleasure or comfort. God created us and He saved us for His purposes. He is the Potter and we are the clay. He is the gardener and we are branches in his garden. Our purpose is to bear fruit! And He is going to order our lives for maximum fruit bearing. Jesus said that God only prunes those branches that already are producing fruit. His pruning or His discipline proves the existence and reality of grace in the soul. Hebrews chapter 12 says, **“My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.”** He only disciplines or prunes those He loves.

Is God pruning you? Are you experiencing a deep trial, a difficult situation? Has He pruned your finances or even taken away someone you loved? Has your health been affected lately? Maybe you are being wronged or mistreated. How have you reacted to these things? Realize that if God has allowed these things in your life it is because you need it. The best Christians on earth still need pruning! When we are being pruned our sins become more disgusting in our eyes and the Lord becomes more precious. It is then that we learn the sufficiency of His grace. Octavius Winslow, in his work *Personal Declension and Revival of Religion in the Soul* put it this way: He said, **“Let it ever be remembered by the tried believer, that supporting grace, in the season of trial, is a greater mercy than the removal of the trial itself.”** We find that hard to believe don’t we? It is not wrong to pray for removal of our pain. But we have to learn what Paul did after praying three times for his thorn in the flesh to be removed: **“My grace is sufficient for you.”**

Remember that this work of pruning is done by your heavenly Father who loves you more than you know. We ought to give thanks for His pruning and praise Him for the trials that draw us nearer to Him. We ought to remember that everything God does, He does in love. Allow me to quote from Octavius Winslow again. He said, **“Not one unkind thought is there in the heart of the God that now chastens you. Could you look into His heart—not a spring would be found dwelling, nor a pulse beating there that would not speak of love to you at this very moment. All that He seeks with regard to yourself, is your increased fruitfulness; and to promote your real sanctification, is to promote your real happiness.”** God deals with each one of us according to His sovereign love. Your pain is never arbitrary, but God deals with you according to your personal need and His wise purposes. Therefore, our response must be loving submission to His will and heartfelt praise for His perfect love.

That lead us to the last point from Philippians 1:11 –

III. THE PURPOSE OF THIS FRUIT

Paul said, **“And this I pray.... being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.”** God wants fruit because fruit brings Him glory. Therefore, you and I should want much fruit so that we can bring God much glory. That is the great end of the Christian life – to glorify Him and enjoy Him. If that is truly your highest goal and desire, then having a life filled with the fruits of righteousness will be high on your list of priorities. Think about it – what is it that you want your life to be filled with? Riches, ease, pleasure, honor or fame? Or do you want to be filled with righteous fruit? Jesus said, **“Herein is My Father glorified that you bear much fruit.”**

Every day we have the privilege of living for God’s praise and glory. Some days it is easy. Some days it is not so easy. Some days it seems impossible. Yet every day we are to live to the glory and praise of God. There are days of emptiness and loneliness. There are days of frustration and great

loss. There are weeks of profound anguish and bereavement. Those days too must be lived to the glory and praise of God. Whether the sun is shining or the rain is pouring, we live for His glory. Though I lose every earthly possession, though every earthly bond is severed and I feel completely alone, though all my treasures are destroyed, though my flesh and my heart fail, Jesus Christ will never fail me. Every day we must remember that. God is looking for fruit because He is looking for glory. Therefore, let us bless the Lord at all times; and may His praise continually be in our mouths.