

Fruitfulness Explained: John 15.1-8 Christ wants to Abide – In my Attitude

This morning God expects fruit in the life of His children. That fruit comes from a good heart. That good heart is made good by God in a process called the new birth.

We all were born bearing fruit, only it was bad fruit – that is why God saved us, He wanted to change us from being a bad tree bearing bad fruit into being a good tree bearing good fruit. Fruit means change and that is what God is seeking in your life and mine this morning.

Twenty-six hundred years ago God explained the new heart that bears fruit in Ezekiel 36. Turn there with me and see what He says.

Ezekiel 36:26-27

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you (that is when God gives us the good heart of Mark 4.8 & 20);

I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh (then God removes the hard, crowded, and shallow hearts);

I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes (then God gives us the power of His Spirit so we can do what God expects);

and you will keep My judgments and do them (that is our responsibility to respond in the fruitfulness that God expects from us).

There is no heart God can't change. There is no life, no past, no sin, no stain, no failure, and no habit that God can't change if you will let Him. Are you letting the Lord change you? Are you responding? Is Jesus Christ controlling you more each day?

One of my favorite illustrations of what God wants to do is the documented change that took place in a generation of people from 1910-1931. To understand what God can do when He changes a heart turn with me now to Galatians 5.19. As I read these verses let me introduce you to the people of the 8 tribes that C. T.

Studd worked among for 21 years. Their biography was written by the Apostle Paul in Galatians 5.16-21

Galatians 5:19-21 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are:

adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, *(these headhunting tribes constantly stole women, violated them, and treated them as their own personal livestock – and had done so for generations);*

idolatry, sorcery, *(the cannibals were lovers of the dark, they were worshipping demons, fearing spirits, and total servants of the Devil and had been for centuries);*

hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, *(these tribes men killed for sport, loved to eat the flesh of their enemies, swore oaths of revenge and hatred, and had no regard for human life);*

selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; *(these primitive savages lived to eat, drank themselves drunk, danced naked around the fires to the worship of their spirit masters, and sank in revelry until they passed out to sleep on the ground until daylight.)*

of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

So modern history testifies to what will happen to those who accept the Word. To illustrate that go back with me to 74 years ago this month, and meet a living legend named¹ CT Studd. After serving 15 years in China and 6 in India, he invested his final 21 in the heart of Africa's vast, dark jungles among the fierce, cannibal, head-hunting pygmies.

Once² a lean and fit professional athlete, C.T. is now gaunt and emaciated. He is hunched over, halting with each step. But in July 1931 he is surrounded by thousands of glistening black bodies wearing banana leaves. The pygmies of the heart of Africa's jungles have come to hear their beloved Bwana for the last time. He speaks to them only after over two hours of singing the songs he had so lovingly taught them:

¹ Born 1858, and went on after salvation to serve in China 1885-1900; then to serve in India 1900-1906; returning to organize a mission in England 1906-1908; and finally to expend his life in Africa from 1910-1931. His beloved wife Mrs. Studd died in 1929. And finally C.T. died July 1931.

² Norman Grubb, CT Studd, p. 216-217.

"Wounded for me, wounded for me,
there on the cross He was wounded for me,
gone my transgressions and now I can sing,
all because Jesus was wounded for me!"

There in front of his cot sit 5,000 former headhunters.

- Once their bodies were the habitation of dark, foul fiends from the pit – now they are temples of the Living God.
- Once they were naked and grossly immoral lovers of darkness -- now they are not only clothed in Christ but also modestly clothed in banana leaves.
- Once they lived as a continuation of generations of murderer, years of darkness, and lives of savagery – now before their beloved father in the faith they sit in an immense sea of white-toothed smiles.
- Once they were all mortal enemies, never without the weapons of war. But no weapons of war are left, only the bond of love. With faces turned heavenward these former enemies sit shoulder to shoulder, singing of the sweet by and by and that beautiful shore they will someday see.

That congregation of saints were converted and transformed by the Lord through the simple, passionate preaching of the truth of God's Word in the Bible. Why have believers all through the ages seen lives transformed by the preaching of the gospel? Because they simply obeyed what Jesus left them and us to do.

What about America today? The same sins abound, we just call it by different names. We are surrounded by a nation of individuals who seem to try to get their own way all the time. Listen to the list Paul gave and the modern form of these sins our culture has developed.

- ADULTERY/FORNICATION: is seen in people's repetitive, loveless, cheap sex;
- UNCLEanness: is seen in America's stinking accumulation of mental and emotional garbage;
- LEWDNESS: is seen in people's frenzied and joyless grabs for happiness;
- IDOLATRY: is seen in people's trinket gods;
- SORcery: drugs, occultic entertainments of all kinds and our modern magic-show religions;
- HATRED: is prompting paranoid loneliness;
- CONTENTIONS: seen in daily cutthroat competition;
- JEALOUSIES: evidenced in all-consuming-yet-never-satisfied wants;
- OUTBURSTS OF WRATH: we are awash with brutal tempers;
- SELFISH AMBITIONS: has left us with an impotence to love or be loved;
- DISSENSIONS: we are a land of divided homes and divided lives;
- HERESIES: people obsessed with small-minded and lopsided pursuits;
- ENVY: the vicious habit of depersonalizing everyone into a rival;

- **MURDERS:** we kill our unborn, and euthanize our aged, and ignore the starving poor that circle our planet while we sip our exotic drinks and complain about the long lines at the mall and restaurants
- **DRUNKENNESS:** we are a nation of uncontrolled and uncontrollable addictions;
- **REVELRIES:** college years have become an orgy, life is a weekly wait for the next party, and mindlessness reigns.

Fruitfulness expected Mark 4.1-20

Here's the message: God wants His workings in our lives to SPRING UP, to INCREASE, and to PRODUCE. How? That's point two.

Fruitfulness explained in John 15.1-8

The God of Heaven says I am in the business of producing crops. When my Word gets into your life something is going to happen. When you allow me full access – amazing results will come. That leads us to ask a series of questions about fruitfulness. If God is explaining fruitfulness to us what exactly does that mean.

Question number one: Does God know how to raise crops?

The conclusion is immediate -- God really knows how to raise a crop. He has demonstrated an unbelievable ability to cause life here on this planet to multiply and flourish beyond what is even possible for us to comprehend. Here are just a few examples from nature around us.

Question number two: What crop does God want to produce in our lives?

Now God has outlined for us in His Word the four areas He watches, remembers and will someday test for fruitfulness. Do you know them? Are you cultivating these four areas each day for His Glory? What does God call time, possessions, attitudes, and actions in our lives that are harnessed and used and deposited before Him in Heaven? FRUIT.

Fruit Consists of inviting Jesus into each area of my life and letting Him take it over. When Jesus is invited into each area what happens? My time becomes where He "abides" (John 15); my attitude becomes His personality (Galatians 5); my

body is not mine any more and I present" it to Him (Romans 12); my possessions are all evaluated by how to make God "rich" and not me (Luke 12).

CHRIST WANTS TO ABIDE IN MY TIME:

Remember the river of our life flowing by at 60 minutes an hour? This is all about how we use, how we prioritize, and how we spend our moments.

Has God said anything about that time? Yes – Seek Me FIRST (Matthew 6.33). Jesus wants to be welcomed into all of my time. That is what abide means, He wants to "stay" with you – get up each morning and eat with you, go out to the car and ride with you, sit at your desk while you work, go to lunch, ride home and spend the evening with you. He wants you to notice Him, talk to Him, and let Him be a part of your life. What are the results of abiding in Christ? In these verses Jesus explains three: He gives us prayer that is effectual; fruit that is perpetual; and joy that is celestial.

CHRIST WANTS TO ABIDE IN MY TREASURES:

This is what we do with our money. This is how we view our possessions.

Has God said anything about those treasures? Yes – Jesus actually said much about money, the summary would be in two passages -- (Matthew 6:19-21 lay not up) and Luke 12 be rich towards God!

CHRIST WANTS TO ABIDE IN MY ATTITUDES:

This is what we do with our minds. This is how we relate to life and people.

Has God said anything about that mind? Yes – He wants to capture our thoughts 2nd Corinthians 10:4-5; He wants to then turn them above and get them tuned to Him in Col 3.1-2; and then He wants to start shaping my Attitudes so that they reflect His Personality. That is what the fruit of the Spirit is all about in Gal 5.

- **HE WANTS TO CAPTIVATE MY THOUGHTS.** 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,
- **HE WANTS TO DRAW MY AFFECTIONS:** Colossians 3:1-2 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.
- **HE WANTS TO TRANSFORM MY PERSONALITY:** Galatians 5:16-26 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. 17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness,

lewdness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. 24 And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

At any point in time, we are either walking in the flesh or in the Spirit. There are fifteen manifestations of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-21. Of these, eight deal with interpersonal problems. It is not enough to say that we have always struggled in these areas, or to say "I sinned" and go on. Instead, the Scriptures show us that a truly spiritual person will be growing in a visible way in each of the nine areas described as "the fruit of the Spirit" in Galatians 5:22-23—all of which will greatly impact our relational lives:

But what happens when we live God's way? He brings gifts into our lives, much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard—things like:

1. ARE YOU ALLOWING CHRIST'S LOVE TO ABIDE IN YOU?

Love is the absence of selfishness and the presence of affection for others. It is the product of the Holy Spirit present in our lives (Rom. 5:5), so it remains even in the harshest and most difficult times because we don't produce the love—the Holy Spirit does! The word *agape* is the love of choice, referring not to an emotional affection, physical attraction, or a familial bond, but to respect, devotion, and affection that leads to willing, self-sacrificial service (John 15:13; Rom. 5:8; 1 John 3:16-17).

Ask yourself: *Can others trace my progress in expressing God's love? Am I less selfish and self-seeking than I was last month?*

2. ARE YOU ALLOWING CHRIST'S JOY TO ABIDE IN YOU?

Joy is the spiritual quality that releases us from circumstances because our happiness is based on unchanging divine promises and eternal spiritual realities. It is an exuberance about life through Christ. Christian joy is not a shallow emotion that, like a thermometer, rises and falls with the changing atmosphere of the home. Rather, Christian joy is a deep experience of adequacy and confidence in spite of the circumstances around us. The Christian can be joyful even in the midst of pain and suffering. This kind of joy is not a thermometer but a thermostat. Instead of rising and falling with the circumstances, it

determines the spiritual temperature of the circumstances. Paul put it beautifully when he wrote, *"I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content"* (Phil. 4:11). Joy is a gift from God; as such, believers are not to manufacture it but to delight in the blessing they already possess (Rom. 14:17; Phil. 4:4).

Ask yourself: *Do those who know me and watch my life see me as a joyful person?*

3. ARE YOU ALLOWING CHRIST'S PEACE TO ABIDE IN YOU?

Peace is the internal serenity that only God can give. Jesus said not to live tomorrow's challenges today, but to trust what lies ahead to Him. Troubles are not absent; rather, God is present! When the Holy Spirit is not grieved, the Dove of Peace is able to alight on the heart. Peace is an inner calm that results from confidence in one's saving relationship with Christ. The verb form denotes binding together and is reflected in the expression "having it all together." Like joy, peace is not related to one's circumstances (John 14:27; Rom. 8:28; Phil. 4:6-7, 9).

Ask yourself: *Has peace become more and more a way of life for me this year?*

4. ARE YOU ALLOWING CHRIST'S PATIENCE TO ABIDE IN YOU?

Patience ("longsuffering" in KJV) is the absence of personal irritation at the actions of others. It is a willingness to stick with things. It is that bearing long with people that Paul spoke of in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. Patience is also one of the supreme attributes of God. It is His character that is revealed as being gracious and longsuffering. (See Exodus 34:6; Numbers 14:18; 2 Peter 3:9.) This is patience or the ability to endure injuries inflicted by others and the willingness to accept irritating or painful situations (Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:12; 1 Tim. 1:15-16).

Ask yourself: *Am I more patient than I was three months ago? Or less? If I am not increasing in patience, is it because I am not yielding and submitting to the Holy Spirit?*

5. ARE YOU ALLOWING CHRIST'S KINDNESS TO ABIDE IN YOU?

Kindness is a beautiful reflection of God in our lives by having Christ's compassion in our heart. It is when we chose to avoid an abrasive manner in our dealings with people. It is when we choose to live out Ephesians 2:8 and 4:32. Kindness is seen as sensitivity toward others that produces deeds of self-sacrifice and love—even toward the

unlovely and undeserving. Kindness will soften any word or act that might hurt another.

Ask yourself: *Is my character showing an increasing tendency toward personal kindness in the way I treat others?*

6. ARE YOU ALLOWING CHRIST'S GOODNESS TO ABIDE IN YOU?

Goodness is being Godlike, which is the opposite of fallen humanity. The example of Jesus should be our guide for life—everywhere we are we should touch those around us with His goodness. It is a conviction that a basic holiness should permeate everything we have and do.

Ask yourself: *Am I a visibly better person than last year? Does the Lord and the godly mentors He has put in my life, see me doing good to all those around me?*

7. ARE YOU ALLOWING CHRIST'S FAITHFULNESS TO ABIDE IN YOU?

Faithfulness refers to a trustworthy and dependable life involved in loyal commitments. A faithful person keeps their own life in order so that you can count on them. Like Psalm 15 speaks of, this type person always keeps their word. Faithfulness is the same as loyalty and trustworthiness (see Lam. 3:22; Phil. 2:7–9; 1 Thess. 5:24; Rev. 2:10).

Ask yourself: *Am I making strides in reliability and dependability?*

8. ARE YOU ALLOWING CHRIST'S GENTLENESS TO ABIDE IN YOU?

Gentleness is better translated “meekness,” which is the opposite of asserting ourselves. It means we do not need to force our way in life. The Lord said that the meek were the ultimate winners (Matt. 5:5). Those who are servants of the Lord must not strive (2 Tim. 2:24). They must resist selfish ambition because that is a reflection of Satan, not God (James 3:14-16).

Ask yourself: *What shape is my personal agenda in? Is it intact and my rights being defended? Or, is it as Christ desires—in hopeless shape, crucified with Him and fading?*

9. ARE YOU ALLOWING CHRIST'S DISCIPLINE TO ABIDE IN YOU?

Discipline (“self-control” in KJV) refers to restraining passions and appetites (1 Cor. 9:25; 2 Pet. 1:5-6) and is defined by the Greek Dictionary as “a virtue, which consists in mastery of the appetites and passions, especially the sensual ones.” By the Spirit’s power we become able to marshal and direct our energies wisely. The only force

that can control our flesh is the Holy Spirit. When yielded to the Spirit, we become vessels that are worshipful sacrifices to Him, and no longer to self. Self cannot control self; flesh is not able to harness flesh. Only the Spirit can discipline us.

Ask yourself: *Do others see me as graciously under the control of God's Spirit of Discipline? Am I beating under and giving knockout blows to my flesh—like Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:27?*

When God's Spirit is at the helm, there is a remarkable change in our homes, churches, and lives. We see that as believers we are in the same family—God is our Father. We are headed toward a common goal—heaven. We serve a common Master—Jesus. We follow the same Guide—His Word. And share the same passion—that Christ gets all the glory.

So in our lives the anointing of the Holy Spirit is the **moment-by-moment** appropriation of God's power over the pests that irritate and nag us in life. Only the Holy Spirit can free us from frustrations and irritations. Only the Holy Spirit can quiet us and bring us to contentment.

At salvation we received all of the Holy Spirit. But **to possess** Him and **to be controlled** by Him are two vastly different conditions. It's the application that matters.

The fruit of the Spirit is actually a list of Christ's personality traits when the Holy Spirit runs our lives. There are 9 evidences called the fruit of the Holy Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23:

LOVE	JOY	PEACE
LONGSUFFERING	KINDNESS	GOODNESS
FAITHFULNESS	GENTLENESS	SELF-CONTROL

The Holy Spirit pours His **LOVE** over my **STRIFE**, and brings **PEACE**.

The Holy Spirit pours His **JOY** over my **ENVY**, and brings **PEACE**.

The Holy Spirit pours His **PEACE** over my **DISPUTES**, and brings **PEACE**.

The Holy Spirit replaces my personality with Christ's. The results are dramatic, life changing and overflowing. There is always enough left over for others, an overflowing life is meant to be shared. The fruit of the Spirit is for me. The overflowing life is for others.