

For the past 14 years I have often repeated a phrase that I never tire of saying—Christians need Christ as much to live as Christians, as they did to become Christians—oftentimes the impression is given that we need Christ to get into the door, but then the rest we do by ourselves...

But surely brethren, I trust we have long since learned otherwise—we remain totally dependant upon Christ, just as much as saints, as we were as sinners—just as no sinner can come to Christ except by the grace of God, so no saint can bear fruit except by the grace of God—it's all grace from the very root to the fruit, and all of this grace is found in Christ...

Our Savior is about to leave His beloved disciples—He has already provided them numerous promises to calm their troubled hearts, He now reminds them of their duty to bear fruit, and informs them of the only way to bear fruit, and that's abiding in Him...

Thus, in coming to 15:1-8, we come to a very important portion of Scripture—after having struggled with how to approach this passage, I have decided to examine it around the theme of fruit bearing—Its Nature, Source, and Purpose...

- I. The Nature of Fruit-bearing—vv1-3
- II. The Source of Fruit-bearing—vv4-6
- III. The Purpose of Fruit-bearing—vv7-8

I. The Nature of Fruit-bearing—vv1-3

1. The first thing I want to address is—what does our Savior mean by fruit—six times in these verses, He speaks of "bearing fruit" (v2 [3x], 4, 5, 8)...
2. [1] Ministerial fruit—we must remember, that in the first place, our Savior is speaking specifically to the apostles...
3. Thus, by "ministerial fruit" I mean—it was by abiding in Christ, they would find strength to fulfill their ministries...
4. V16—"You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain..."
5. Here our Savior refers to their appointment to apostles, and thus likely refers to their ministerial labors as fruit...
6. It's because of v16, that many of the older commentators view vv1-8, in the first place as referring to ministerial fruit...
7. Or put another way—by "much fruit" is meant, the "greater works" He previously promised they would do (14:12)...
8. How would these weak and needy disciples, be used of God to carry the gospel to the four corners of the world...
9. Well, here we are told—they would do so as branches connected to the vine, or, by the strength and grace of Christ...
10. And thus, before I move on, let me make this simple application—ministerial success is the result of God's grace...
11. [2] Personal fruit—by this I mean, by "fruit" refers to the fruit of the Spirit, the graces and character of the soul...
12. Gal.5:22—"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control..."
13. While I do not discount that ministerial work here is included, I suggest this is largely what our Savior meant by fruit...
14. Christians bear the fruit of repentance and faith, as their roots are planted deep down in the soil of God's grace...

15. [a] Every Christian necessarily bears fruit, v2—"Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away..."
16. V6—"If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned..."
17. Let me simply say at the outset, that I totally agree (as does every competent commentator), that these verses are describing eternal destruction...
18. In other words—when our Savior says in v2—"Every branch in Me"—He is talking about two kinds of people...
19. There are those who are in Christ merely by profession, and then there are those in Christ by actual possession...
20. Thus, those who are in Christ but fail to produce fruit are merely in Christ by profession but do not actually possess Christ...
21. They have entered the visible church through baptism and membership, but are not a part of the invisible church...
22. Those who do not abide in Christ, and thus do not bear fruit for Christ, they do not go to heaven with Christ...
23. John Calvin—"But here comes a question. Can any one who is engrafted into Christ be without fruit? I answer, many are supposed to be in the vine, according to the opinion of men, who actually have no root in the vine...."
24. I can only assume our Savior had Judas in mind as an example—he claimed to be a disciple along with the others...
25. He did all the things that the others did—he preached, prayed, casted out demons, and yet, never bore true fruit...
26. His heart was actually bare with regards to the true marks and fruit of saving faith, repentance, love, and works...
27. He was in Christ merely by way of profession—he was never truly planted by faith into the soil of God's grace...
28. Thus, our Savior here refers to people who profess to be in Christ and yet, never evidence the fruit of faith...
29. Or else, they may give some evidence of faith for a season, but, eventually, this fruit lessens and then disappears...
30. True Christians bear fruit, and the continue to bear fruit—this fruit may lessen or decrease but it always remains...
31. [b] Every Christian increasingly bears fruit, v2—"and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit..."
32. The Greek word rendered "prune" (NKJV), and "purge" (KJV), can literally mean either "to cleanse or prune"...
33. Here it refers to a pruning or cleansing of a branch from useless leafs and shoots, so that it bears more fruit...
34. Thus, our Savior promises that the Father would continue to work, what He started in our original conversion...
35. V3—"You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you"—that is, you've been regenerated...
36. Perhaps we can say v3 refers to an initial pruning, that happens when a person is born again or is regenerated...
37. Put another way—it's because of v3 (and our initial pruning), that we bear fruit and thus are continually pruned...
38. And so, I suggest in v3 our Savior encourages these disciples that they are in fact truly and savingly in the vine...
39. And there is a sense in which He provides us with a test whereby we can be sure that we too are in the vine...
40. Mark 1—Have we been cleansed by the word—this happens to every branch as it's initially put into the vine...

41. To keep with the imagery of a vine—his happens at conversion when we are engrafted into Christ by faith...
42. When He washed our filthy hearts—when he cuts away the old man with his old practices and evil habits...
43. Mark 2—Are we being pruned to bear more fruit—that is, is God using the struggles of this life to cause us to bear fruit...
44. Though this process may at times hurt, our Father only intends to do us good, and to enable us to bear more fruit...

II. The Source of Fruit-bearing—vv4-6

1. Christ Himself is the source of fruit-bearing—thus through the passage we have reference to our union with Him...
2. Our Savior is the vine and we are the branches—branches bear fruit as they derive nourishment from the vine...
3. Now, before I suggest a few things about our union with Christ, let me say something about the phrase, v1—"I am the true vine..."
4. This is the seventh and last I AM statement found in John, which point us back to Ex.3—"I AM who I AM..."
5. To this statement of divinity, our Savior adds various descriptions—I AM the light of the world, the bread of life, etc...
6. Here He describes Himself as "the true vine"—now if you remember, for John "true" means NT fulfillment...
7. For example, thus far He's been described as the true light and bread—in fulfillment to the OT pillar and manna...
8. But then the question must be asked—if Christ is the true vine, what is He is the fulfillment of—what was the OT shadow...
9. Well, it was for this reason I had Isaiah 5 read—for in it (and other OT passages), Israel is described as God's vine...
10. But the problem with Israel was, he proved to be a very unfruitful vine, and thus was ultimately and finally rejected...
11. And yet, throughout the OT, God promised to send the true vine, who would enable His NC garden to flourish...
12. In other words—Christ Himself is the true vine, who enables His true Israel, the church, to bear much fruit...
13. Christ is God's fruitful vine, and thus, all who are united to Him by faith, become faithful branches in Him...
14. And so at this point, I want to suggest, largely from vv4-7, three things about our union with Christ—it's vital, mutual, and continual...
15. [1] This union is VITAL—by "vital" is meant "crucial" or "essential"—without it, there can be no fruit-bearing...
16. There is nothing in the branch that enables it to bear fruit—it's all taken from the vine—it's dependant on the vine...
17. V4—"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me..."
18. Christians cannot bear fruit of themselves—there is nothing in them, left to themselves, to bear a single fruit...
19. A branch is able to bear fruit because it derives nourishment from the vine, which is communicated to the branch...
20. So too, Christians bear fruit as they derive grace from Christ, which is communicated to them by the Holy Spirit...
21. All of the sap (grace) necessary for us to bear fruit is found in the vine (Christ), and it's experienced through a vital union...

22. [2] This union is MUTUAL, v4—"Abide in Me, and I in you"—we are in Christ by faith and He is in us by His Spirit...
23. This means, the union between a believer and Christ is very intimate and personal—the two become one flesh...
24. And it's because Christ is in us by His Spirit, that we will continue to abide in Him by a saving and living faith...
25. [3] This union is CONTINUAL—here I am thinking of our Savior's repeated exhortation to "abide in Him, v4—"Abide in Me" v7—"If you abide in Me..."
26. The word "abide" merely means "to remain or continue"—in both v4 and v7, it's put as an exhortation or command...
27. In other words—abiding is something we must do—it's an activity of the soul that all Christians must continue...
28. For example—this morning we all come into this room—we are all presently abiding or remaining in this room...
29. If we were to leave this room, we would no longer be abiding in the room—to abide means to remain or continue...
30. Thus, fundamentally, our Savior is exhorting us to remain in Him—we are to continue in Him—we are to abide in Him...
31. How do we abide in Him—well, we remain or continue in Him, the same way that we originally got into Him—BY FAITH (Jn.6:56)...
32. Thus, at its very heart, to abide in Christ is to remain or continue in Christ by faith—to hide ourselves in Him...
33. Thus, at this point I want to digress for a few minutes and suggest three helps for Christians to abide in Christ...
34. [a] Be convinced of the strength of your enemies—that is, be conscious of the dangers that exists outside of Christ...
35. Beginning with v18, our Savior will warn His disciples about the opposition they will receive from this world...
36. The knowledge of these powerful and hateful enemies, should drive us to remain or abide in Christ as a Refuge...
37. For example—think of Noah Ark—after those 8 people entered that Ark—all of their enemies were outside...
38. First, think of all the people that mocked and ridiculed Noah—for 120 years, he was a preacher of righteousness...
39. But now, he was free from these foes—although they may have beaten on the door—he was behind their reach...
40. But secondly, more than this there was the wrath of God as evidenced in 40 days and nights of storms and flood...
41. But regardless how hard those waves beat against the hull of that ship, Noah remained safe within God's provision...
42. Thus, the more Noah was convinced of the dangers outside the ark, the more he resolved to abide in the ark...
43. Or else, think of the cities of refuge—these were six cities constructed for those who accidentally killed someone...
44. They could flee to the nearest city and as long as they remained within that city, they were safe from the man-slayer (a relative who sought to avenge their loved one)...
45. As long as he remained within the city, the man-slayer could not harm him, but if he left it, he could be killed...
46. And so the more this man was convinced of the dangers outside the city, the more he resolved to abide in that city...
47. [b] Be convinced of your utter and absolute weakness—that is, we possess no native strength in and of ourselves...
48. There is a tension within this passage—on the one hand we are exhorted to abide in Christ, and yet on the other hand, we are told we can do nothing in and of ourselves...

49. Why does our Savior exhort His beloved people to do something that, left to themselves, they have no ability to do...
50. Well, the only answer I can give is—He wanted His disciples to know and feel their own desperate need of Him...
51. Our Savior wanted His disciples to know they have no strength in themselves—He wanted them to know their emptiness...
52. We remain in Christ, in part, as we remain convinced of our utter and absolute native poverty and neediness...
53. 2Cor.12:9—"My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness" v10—"For when I am weak, then I am strong..."
54. Dear brethren, we must be ever convinced of our own weakness—"for without Me, you can do NOTHING..."
55. [c] Be convinced of the abundance of grace found in Christ—"He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit..."
56. There isn't grace in Christ to enable God's people to bear little fruit, but "much fruit"—an abundance of fruit...
57. There is in Christ enough grace to enable every person in union with Him, to bear fruit in every circumstance...
58. There is grace to bear the fruit of patience when you are wronged or mistreated by someone without cause...
59. There is grace to bear the fruit of joy even when you walk through a valley of tears, sorrows, and/or uncertainties...
60. There is grace to bear the fruit of self-control, even though you are surrounded by all manner of temptation...

III. The Purpose of Fruit-bearing—vv7-8

1. Here I want to address three purposes or results of abiding in Christ, and thus, bearing fruit (even much fruit)...
2. To be more specific—I want to suggest three purposes or results of being fruitful Christians, who abide in Christ...
3. [1] Communication with God, v7—"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you..."
4. This is a very tremendous promise—simply put, as we abide in Christ, His word abides in us—that is, we understand, believe, and love that word...
5. Thus our prayers and desires will be increasingly shaped by that word, and thus, in harmony to God's revealed will...
6. As we abide in Him, and fellowship and commune with Him, His word shapes and moulds the desires of our heart...
7. This means our prayers will be informed by the word, or put another way, they will be prayers in harmony to His word...
8. Such prayers as these, shaped by His word, offered by faith by those abiding in Christ, will be heard and answered...
9. [2] Glorification of God, v8a—"By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit"—this is the ultimate purpose of fruit-bearing...
10. Because salvation is all of grace, everything that we say and do, must be done, for the purpose of glorifying God...
11. [3] Identification with God, v8b—"so you will be My disciples"—that is, you will make evident you are My disciples...
12. Bearing fruit doesn't make us disciples, but it does reveal that we are true disciples, both to others and ourselves...