



# GRACE

REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH

SOLI † DEO † GLORIA

**THE GOSPEL OF LUKE**  
***Good Fruit and the Foundation***  
Sermon Notes  
**Luke 6:43-49**  
**March 25, 2012**

<sup>43</sup> “For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, <sup>44</sup> for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. <sup>45</sup> The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. <sup>46</sup> “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you? <sup>47</sup> Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: <sup>48</sup> he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. <sup>49</sup> But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great.”

- Since the dawn of Creation, one of man’s greatest pursuits has been his attempt to defy gravity and fly. The history of human flight is, indeed, one full of failure, disaster and death. One of the earliest and most well-known accounts of man’s attempt to reach the heavens is found in Greek mythology. In this account, Icarus, the son of Daedalus attempts to escape from Crete by flying with wings his father made of feathers and wax. According to the myth, Icarus ignored the warnings of his father not to fly too close to the sun, and the melting of the wax caused him to fall into the sea where he died of drowning.
- A more recent incident of a failed flying attempt occurred on February 4, 1912, in Paris, France. On this day, a French tailor named Franz Reichelt decided to test his parachute suit by jumping from the first deck of the Eifel Tower. At 8:22 a.m., Reichelt, known as the Flying Tailor, jumped from the deck of the Eifel Tower, 187 feet from the ground. Unfortunately, his suit did not deploy, and needless to say, the Flying Tailor did not fly that morning.
- Yet, even today, one hundred years later with all the technology we have at our disposal, accidents and fatalities associated with air travel are only inevitable. For example, 2011

was, in fact, one of the safest years for air travel on record. However, there were still a total of 116 crashes and 828 deaths worldwide. [This is according to the Geneva-based *Aircraft Crashes Record Office (ACRO)*, which compiles statistics on aviation accidents of aircraft capable of carrying more than six passengers, not including helicopters, balloons, or fighter airplanes].

- I think all of us understand that every time we take to flight in an aircraft, we assume the risk of potentially disastrous consequences. The reason is because it goes against man’s nature to fly. We are not birds, we are humans; and humans cannot fly any more than pigs can fly. It would, indeed, be a miracle of the greatest order for a man to be able to fly on his own, without the assistance of any technology.
- And yet, when we consider our salvation, it is almost tragic that we do not realize that God’s act of grace in our lives is more miraculous than giving us the ability to fly. That is, it involves a change in nature.
- Yet, it is more radical than being given the ability fly. Rather, it involves going from an enemy of God, to having his infinite favor – from death to life.
- We will always act in accordance with our nature – whether we are humans, birds, fish, or, in the case that Christ provides this morning – fruit-bearing trees.
- Therefore, to act in accordance with what God demands, a change in nature is absolutely required. And this is the underlying point of the passage this morning.

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| <p><b>I. A Tree is Known By its Fruit</b></p> <p><b>II. The Fruit of a True Disciple is Obedience</b></p> <p><b>III. True Disciples Build their Foundation on the Rock</b></p> <p><b>IV. Lives Founded on the Rock will Persevere</b></p> |
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<p><b>I. A Tree is Known By its Fruit</b></p>
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*<sup>43</sup> “For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, <sup>44</sup> for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. <sup>45</sup> The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.*

- Jesus continues here in his “sermon on the plain” by describing a reality that those living in the first century agrarian society knew well: Good trees bear good fruit and bad trees bear bad fruit.
- It certainly does not require a degree in Botany or Horticulture to understand that **a tree is known by its fruit.**

- Jesus continues: *For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush.*
- Up until this point, the words of Christ seem self-evident and obvious to everyone. However, as our Lord so often does, He thing goes from the physical world of Creation and draws a direct parallel to the spiritual world: <sup>45</sup> *The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.*
- In other words, just as good trees produce good fruit and bad trees bad fruit, so “good” people produce good fruit (“works”) and bad people, bad fruit.

Philip Ryken writes, “There is a living, organic connection between people we are on the inside and the lives we lead out in the world. Whatever fruit we produce – whether good or evil – is rooted in the true condition of our souls. We can only produce the kind of spiritual fruit that it is our nature to produce. The reason we say and do the things we do is that we are the people we are.”

## PROBLEM

- Now, this is a well and good until one discovers to problem facing all of mankind:  
**We are born sinners who only produce bad fruit.**

Ephesians 2:1-3: “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins <sup>2</sup> in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— <sup>3</sup> among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.”

- In other words, we are born doing exactly what our nature dictates, walking and “following the course of this world...at work in the sons of disobedience...carrying our the desires of the body and the mind...[being] by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.”
- And so **our problem becomes even graver.**
  - **If we are born sinful, bearing sinful fruit; yet, God demands be righteous and bear good fruit, what do we do?**
  - In fact, commanding a person to bear good fruit is like going up to a lime tree and commanding it to bear apples. **It is impossible.**
  - Yet, this is what God requires of us: that we are born again, with a new nature and bear good fruit.

- So, once again, what can we do? And the answer is simple: **nothing**.
- It was the great Puritan writer John Owen who declared:

“To suppose that whatever God requires of us that we have power of ourselves to do, is to make the cross and grace of Jesus Christ of none effect.”

- And so it is with our change of nature: **it requires a miraculous act of God’s grace**.
- Last week, Tom did an excellent job of describing how each of us must understand the grace and mercy of God which He sovereignly and providentially extended to us.
  - In his message, Tom drew the distinction between **mercy** and **grace**.
    - Mercy is an act of God whereby He does not give us what we deserve (i.e., His judgment).
    - Grace, on the other hand is an act of God whereby He gives us what we did not earn (i.e., His righteousness and favor).
    - Therefore, to fulfill what Christ is stating here (i.e., that we bear good fruit), **a miraculous act of God’s grace is required**.
    - **That is, God must change our nature, regenerating us (making us “born again”) and bringing us from death to life.**
- This truth reminds me of one of my favorite chapters in the Old Testament. It is Isaiah 11.
  - In Verses 6-8 we read:

<sup>6</sup>The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,  
and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat,  
and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together;  
and a little child shall lead them.

<sup>7</sup>The cow and the bear shall graze;  
their young shall lie down together;  
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

<sup>8</sup>The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra,  
and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder’s den.

- The passage is beautiful as we see a glorious picture of the work of Christ (the “branch” from “the stump of Jesse”).

- That is, we see the wolf dwelling with the lamb. In our fallen world, wolves eat lambs, but the point here is that their natures have been changed. Natural enemies are not dwelling together, pointing to the greatest of all changes in nature: because of Christ, God and man will dwell together.
  - We also see the lion eating straw like the ox. Yet, a lion is a predatory carnivore who would naturally eat oxen. But, again, the picture we have here is one that shows forth the glorious work of Christ – natures are changed, and enemies are now at peace because of the work of the Prince of Peace!
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- Unfortunately, as humans, when we try to fix problems, we go about it the wrong way, beginning with the symptoms and convincing ourselves that we have fixed the problem.
  - **However, each of us must constantly remind ourselves that we bear sinful (bad) fruit because we are sinners. We are not sinners because we sin.**
    - I must admit that as parents, this is one of the most challenging aspects of what we do as parents.
    - When our children act in a way that is wrong, our first inclination is always to try and fix the behavior (often because it will make our lives easier), rather than going to the root and addressing the heart.
    - In fact, we often reward children who – regardless of the nature of their hearts – know the right things to say and do when mom and dad are watching.
    - But, it is much more difficult and time-consuming, to teach a child to examine their hearts, their motives, and their need for Christ.
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- Recall that much of what Jesus has been teaching in His “Sermon on the Plain” has been directed at the self-righteous Pharisees.
  - And, once again, herein lies the fundamental error in legalism (and we are as susceptible to it today as they were in the first century): **Legalism states that a person is “good” because they do “good things.”**
  - This is the classic problem of the “cart before the horse.”
  - For, legalism says, if you do “X” (which no doubt may be good), then you will be good.
  - In other words, legalism seeks to address the symptom and then assumes “everything is now good.”

- But, legalism is like having a cancer patient who is in a great deal of pain and giving him heavy doses of pain medication to make the pain go away...and then convincing the patient that he is now fine, because he no longer feels any pain. Sadly, the patient will likely die from the cancer, because the root cause has not been addressed.
- This is why Christ referred to the Pharisees as “white-washed tombs.”
- And this is precisely the point: **Legalism is from man and cannot address man’s true problem of sin. Biblical Christianity is from God and is the only solution to man’s greatest problem.**

○ This is also one of the main reasons I do not give an “invitation” at the end of the service. It is not that I believe “invitations” are necessarily “bad;” however, it is primarily for two reasons: (1) I do not want to give a false impression that by “walking an aisle” (i.e., doing “good”) that someone is saved. (2) If I faithfully proclaim the Gospel, it will accomplish all that God intends. And if someone is saved through the Gospel of Christ – they will do good works, because they have a change in nature. That is, a human will never fly, because it is not his nature. Yet, a bird will always fly, because it is his nature.

- Lastly, the purpose of this part of the “sermon on the plain” is self-examination. That is, Christ’s point here is not to provide each of us with the tool (or a weapon) whereby we can examine everyone else. **Recall, that Jesus has just completed a discourse on commanding us to first remove the log in our own eyes before we attempt to remove the splinter in others’.** In other words, in the case of “fruit examination” the call our Lord is giving us to that we need to examine our own fruit.
- Also, it forces us to take responsibility and face the truth regarding our own sin.
  - Paul Tripp in his book War of Words, writes, “It is very tempting to blame others or to blame the situation around us...[but] word problems reveal heart problems. The people and situations around us do not make us say what we say; they are only the occasion for our hearts to reveal themselves in words.”
- Jesus concludes this particular section by stating: **“out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.”**
  - The tongue is a powerful organ in our bodies, and the Scriptures make this clear. And here, our Lord is stating that the mouth and the “lips” of a man will ultimately reveal his true heart.
  - Recall Isaiah’s confession when he saw the Lord in Isaiah 6: “Woe to me! I am a man of unclean lips!” The holy presence of the Lord revealed to the prophet his own sinful nature.

David Gooding writes, “The saintliest man may be appalled by the occasional overflow whose sudden eruption escapes the filter of his moral judgment and reveals what pollutants still remain in the depths. But if the general tenor of a man’s conversation is evil, the source must be evil too. No excuse can break the connection between a tree’s fruit and the nature of the tree.”

## II. The Fruit of a True Disciple is Obedience

<sup>46</sup> *“Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you? <sup>47</sup> Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like:*

- And so, if we are called to do that which is impossible by bearing good fruit due to a change in nature, and if we are to examine ourselves, what is the type of fruit we want to ensure we produce?

- First, we can turn to Galatians 5:22-23, the famous “fruit of the Spirit” passage:

<sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”

- The fruit of the Spirit reveals the character of our lives when led by the Holy Spirit.
- And consistent with this passage, we learn from the words of Christ that the singular fruit of the true disciple is **obedience**.
- It was Christ who said in John 14:15, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”
- Here, in Verse 47, Jesus describes a true disciple: <sup>47</sup> *“Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like...”*
  - In other words, the true disciple is the one who:

1. Comes to Christ
2. Hears His Words
3. Does them

- Once again, this is why we do not conduct “invitations” here. We want to be careful not to “reward” those who simply “come to Christ.” We all need to come to Him, hear Him, and obey Him. We must all be hearers and doers of God’s Word.
- Sadly, if we are not careful, we will teach that someone simply needs to say a few words and pray a prayer, and then they are saved.
- This what Christ is speaking of when He says, <sup>46</sup> *“Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you?”*

- We must, each of us, guard against the flippant use talk of salvation.
- In college, we had a prayer we all would recite every Sunday morning, and part of the prayer was: “Guard us against flippancy and irreverence in the sacred things of life...”
- May we never be flippant with describing “how someone is saved.” May we always remember it must be a sovereign act of God that is evidenced by an obedient life.
- As a parent, this is difficult as well. That is, our children want to please us so much that they will often say “I love the Lord” and “Jesus died for my sins,” and this is wonderful. However, it is not the words that save them, but God’s grace, evidenced not by “Lord, Lord” statements, but an obedient life. This is why the Early Church would often take at least a year following a confession of faith from the lips of a new convert before the church would baptize them. This yearlong period (when the new believer was referred to as a catechumen) was intended to examine the course of their life and teach them the doctrines of the faith. Following that period, if they remained committed and desired baptism, they would undergo it.
- In John Bunyan’s classic allegory, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, he describes the journey of Christian and Faithful to the Celestial City. On their way, they encounter Talkative, who always speaks in spiritual terms, but does not live like a Christian. Christian said the following words to his friend Faithful: “He [Talkative] talks of prayer, of repentance, of faith, and of the new birth; but he knows but only to talk of them... The soul of religion is the practice part... This Talkative is not aware of; he thinks that hearing and saying will make a good Christian, and thus he deceives his own soul. Hearing is but as the sowing of the seed; talking is not sufficient to prove that fruit is indeed in the heart and life, and let us assure ourselves that at the day of doom, men shall be judged according to their fruits... The end of the worlds is compared to our harvest, and you know men at harvest regard nothing but fruit, not that anything can be accepted that is not of faith.”

### III. The True Disciple Builds His Foundation on the Rock

<sup>48</sup> *he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock.*

- Here, Jesus describes to true, obedient disciple:

**He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock.**

- What is important here is that Jesus is **not** saying that “In order to be a Christian, you must dig deep and lay a foundation on the rock.”
  - Rather, He is saying, “**If you are a true believer, then you will dig deep and built the foundation on the rock.**”



- The implication here is clear: building a foundation on the rock will not be easy. It will take a lot of hard work and toil. Yet, the true believer will do it – NOT because such work will earn him favor with God, but because he lives a life of loving obedience to the Lord.
- In fact, Jesus, here, use the definite article (“**the**”) rather than (“a”). That is, “**the**” rock is none other than **Christ alone**.

“<sup>11</sup> For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”  
1 Corinthians 3:11

- J.C. Ryle wrote, “Such a man’s religion may cost him much. Like the house built on a rock, it may entail on him pains, labor, and self-denial. To lay aside pride and self-righteousness, to crucify the rebellious flesh, to put on the mind of Christ, to take up the cross daily, to count all things but loss for Christ’s sake, - all this may be hard work. But, like the house built on the rock, such religion will stand. The streams of affliction may beat violently upon it, and the floods of persecution dash fiercely against it, but it will not give way.” J.C. Ryle
- And this brings us to Christ’s final point: **The true disciple will persevere, because of Christ alone, the one true and sure foundation.**

#### IV. The Foundation on the Rock Will Persevere

*And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. <sup>49</sup> But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great.”*

- And so it is with the true believer.
- We have nothing to fear, for we stand on the one true foundation, our Lord Jesus Christ.
- May we never forget, however, that **we are not saved by good works; rather, we are saved unto good works.**
- **Therefore, if we are born again, we have a new nature and will bear much fruit. The greatest evidence of this is in our obedience, and we will then build our lives on the rock of Christ. And because our lives are built on Christ alone, we will persevere ‘till the end.**
- The true meaning of the first Psalm now comes into clear focus:

Psalm 1:<sup>1</sup> Blessed is the man  
who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,  
nor stands in the way of sinners,  
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;  
<sup>2</sup> but his delight is in the law of the LORD,  
and on his law he meditates day and night.

<sup>3</sup> He is like a tree  
planted by streams of water  
that yields its fruit in its season,  
and its leaf does not wither.  
In all that he does, he prospers.

<sup>4</sup> The wicked are not so,  
but are like chaff that the wind drives away.

<sup>5</sup> Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,  
nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;  
<sup>6</sup> for the LORD knows the way of the righteous,  
but the way of the wicked will perish.