

DISCIPLESHIP AND FRUITFULNESS

TEXT: JOHN 15:1-8

INTRODUCTION:

1. In this passage, we have a beautiful picture of Christ and His church (15:5). Our union with Christ is one of the most precious doctrines taught in the New Testament.
2. In verse 1 we see that Christ is “the true vine,” and God the Father is “the husbandman” (the vine dresser).
3. Tonight, we will focus on the word “fruit,” a word our Lord uses nine times in this chapter (15:2, 4, 5, 8, 16).
4. The Bible teaches that some people do not bear fruit (15:2); some bear “more fruit” (15:2), and some bear “much fruit” (15:5, 8).
5. God expects us to bear fruit (15:16).
6. Unless we are abiding in Christ, we cannot bear fruit (15:4, 5).

I. FRUITFULNESS IN PRAYER

1. Our Lord said in verse 7, “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.”
2. Our Lord said in verse 16, “whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.”
3. Andrew Murray said, “The healthy life of the believer in Christ is one of unceasing prayer. Consciously or unconsciously, he lives in continual dependence.”
4. Jesus said, “for without me ye can do nothing. (15:5b). This means total dependence upon God for everything. First Thessalonians 5:17 says, “Pray without ceasing.” So we are to depend upon God “without ceasing.”
5. This means continual prayer, continual asking and receiving.
6. The promise of our text gives us boldness to ask. “Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you” (15:7; cf. verse 16).
7. John chapters 14-16 deal with the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit (14:16, 17, 26; 15:26; 16:7-15).
8. Therefore, these promises regarding prayer are given in connection with the coming of the Spirit.
9. The apostle Paul said, “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself

maketh intercession for us,” and, “He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God” (Romans 8:26, 27).

10. Jude verse 20 says, “But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost.”
11. Andrew Murray said, “To avail ourselves of the unlimited prayer promises, we must be men who are filled with the Spirit, and wholly given up to the work and glory of Jesus. The Spirit will lead us into the truth of its meaning and the certainty of its fulfillment. Let us realize that we can only fulfill our calling to bear much fruit, by praying much. In Christ are hid all the treasures men around us need; in Him all God’s children are blessed with all spiritual blessings; He is full of grace and truth. But it needs prayer, much prayer, strong believing prayer, to bring these blessings down.”
12. As I’m getting ready to move, I’ve been cleaning out my office and looking at old letters. One preacher mentioned praying Ephesians 1:16-19 for our children.
13. The word “abide” is used eight times in this passage (15:4, 5, 6, 7, 10). The Greek word is *menō*, and the same word is translated as “remain” in verses 11 and 16.
14. The same word is translated “continue” in verse 9. A true disciple must continue, and therefore will be fruitful. Jesus said in John 8:31, “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.”
15. Answered prayer should be normal in the fruitful life of a believer. If a professed believer never has his prayers answered, this would indicate he is not abiding in Christ (15:7).
16. God is glorified when our prayers are answered (15:7, 8; cf. 14:13, 14).

II. FRUITFULNESS IN OUR WALK WITH GOD

1. The *Scofield Study Bible* says, “Christian character is not mere moral or legal correctness, but the possession and manifestation of nine graces: love, joy, peace --character as an inward state; longsuffering, gentleness, goodness -- character in expression toward man; faith, meekness, temperance -- character in expression toward God. Taken together they present a moral portrait of Christ...and as a definition of ‘fruit’ in John 15:1-8. This character is possible because of the believer’s vital union to Christ (John 15:5), and is wholly the fruit of the Spirit in those believers who are yielded to Him.”

2. There is a contrast in Galatians 5 – “the fruit of the Spirit” and “the works of the flesh” (5:19, 22).
3. Works are produced by man’s efforts. Fruit is produced by the Holy Spirit.
4. The works of the flesh are always wicked – “Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like” (5:19-21).
5. The fruit of the Spirit is always beautiful:
 - “Love” is first on the list (Galatians 5:22; cf. vss. 6, 13, 14). Unfortunately, some Christians are not very loving.
 - On the other hand, some Christians are very loving but they will not take a stand for truth. W. Graham Scroggie said, “To walk only in love would make us soft; to walk only in truth would make us hard; but walking in truth and love we become strong.”
 - First Corinthians 13:13 says, “And now abideth faith, hope, charity (love), these three; but the greatest of these is charity (love).”
 - Our Lord said in John 13:35, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”
 - “Joy and peace” come next in Galatians 5 (Gal. 5:22). Our Lord said in John 15:11, “These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.”
 - First Thessalonians 5:16 says, “Rejoice evermore.”
 - Being joyful means being able to rejoice in all of life’s circumstances.

Nehemiah 8:10 says, “The joy of the LORD is your strength.”

- The apostle Paul said in II Corinthians 6:10, “As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.”
- Paul wrote these words from a Roman prison, “Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice” (Phil. 4:4).
- Joy and peace always go together. “The fruit of the Spirit is peace” (Gal. 5:22).
- Our Lord said in John 14:27, “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you.”
- Paul wrote in Colossians 3:15, “And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.”

- Next comes “longsuffering, gentleness, and goodness” (Gal. 5:22). Christians are to be “longsuffering,” but oftentimes we are quick-tempered and easily provoked. “Longsuffering” means, “steadfast when provoked.” It refers to forbearance and patient endurance when treated wrongly, without anger or thoughts of revenge.
- We heard a good message on this Sunday evening (cf. Hebrews 12:1-11).
- First Peter 2:21 says, “Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps,” and then goes on to say in verse 23, “Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not” (I Peter 2:23).
- First Peter 2:21 says Christ is our “example” and we are to “follow his steps.” God has given us the indwelling Holy Spirit in order to make us more like Jesus.
- “The fruit of the Spirit is gentleness” (5:22). This means “kindness.”
- Norman Harrison wrote these words: “Why is there so much unkindness, even among Christian people? There is but one explanation. We brush aside the Spirit to be free to indulge the self-life. We get back on Our Side where the flesh holds sway.”
- First Corinthians 13:4 says, “Charity (love) suffereth long, and is kind” (cf. Ephesians 4:30-32).
- “The fruit of the Spirit is goodness” (Gal. 5:22). This denotes moral excellence.
- This cannot be produced by ourselves. Paul says in Romans 7:18, “In me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing.”
- So, if a Christian has any good in him, it is because he is walking in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16, 22).
- “Faith, meekness, and temperance” come next (Gal. 5:22, 23). “Faith” here means “faithfulness.” It is an attribute of God because God is faithful. “Great is Thy faithfulness” (Lamentations 3:23).
- Many Christians are unfaithful, undependable, and untrustworthy. But as they grow in the Lord, and walk in the Spirit they become faithful, and dependable, and trustworthy. This is the fruit of the Spirit.
- “The fruit of the Spirit is meekness” (Gal. 5:23). Meekness is the spirit of humility. Our Lord said in Matthew 11:29, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.”
- Someone has said that meekness is strength that is under control. Moses is a good example. Numbers 12:3 says, “Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.”

- James 4:6 says, “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble” (James 4:6).
- Man is naturally proud. Pride is part of our fallen nature. Paul beseeches the proud Corinthians “by the meekness and gentleness of Christ” (II Corinthians 10:1).
- “The fruit of the Spirit is temperance” (Gal. 5:23). This is self-control, the ability to hold oneself in check. It is by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit that we restrain the self-life.

III. FRUITFULNESS IN OUR SERVICE FOR GOD (15:16)

1. John 15:16 says the Lord has chosen us, and ordained us, so that we “should go and bring forth fruit, and that our fruit should remain.”
2. There are different degrees of fruitfulness. Our Lord refers to “more fruit” in John 15:2 and “much fruit” in verses 5 and 8.
3. God wants us to bear fruit, and sometimes this involves pruning.
4. Just as a vine must be cleaned from insects, mildew, and fungus, so Christians must be cleansed from worldly things that cling to us. That is why we must stay in the Word of God (15:3).
5. Jesus said, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you” (15:16). Throughout Scripture, the great object of the teaching of election is fruitfulness. Romans 8:29 says we were predestinated to be conformed to the image Christ.
6. The branches are in the image and likeness of the Vine.
7. Ephesians 1:4 says, “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.”
8. First Peter 1:2 says, “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience...”
9. Some zealously preach the doctrine of election, but they often overlook the connection between election and fruitfulness and holiness.

CONCLUSION:

1. M.R. De Haan told a story about a Christian gardener who worked for a wealthy, unsaved man. The man was very religious but lost. The gardener

tried over and over to show his employer that religion without Christ, no matter how sincere, was not enough. But he got nowhere.

2. One day the gardener got an idea. In the garden was a barren tree which never bore fruit. He hung upon the tree artificial wax fruit. The proprietor came out later and was delighted to see such beautiful fruit hanging from his tree, but was very disappointed when he tried to pick the fruit and found out it was not real. The gardener got his attention.
3. Is your fruit real? In which category do you fit – no fruit, more fruit, or much fruit? (15:2,5,8).
4. Verse 6 says that if there is no fruit then you will be cast off into the fire.