

Spiritual Fruit Looks Like...

John 15:8

Reading: Galatians 5:13-26

Bethany Baptist Church

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As we've studied John 15 we've seen some important truths about the *fruit* of the Christian life:

- God *examines* us to find spiritual fruit.
- Every *true Christian* bears spiritual fruit.
- Spiritual fruitfulness brings *glory* to God.
- *No fruit = no salvation.*
- So *no fruit* is an early indicator of *impending personal judgment.*

Here are some statements about fruitfulness in **John 15: 2, 4, 5, & 8.**

Fruit is a *mandatory* part of the Christian life. So we should spend some time considering *what fruit looks like!*

My *go to resource* for our study of *Abiding in Christ* has been Dr. Jas Rosscup's book by the same title (**hold it up**).

The doctor identifies **5 broad categories** of spiritual fruit in the **NT**, and we will generally follow his lead:

Let's begin with the *fruit of praise!* Do you consider your own expressions of worship to be *spiritual fruit*?

A good place to start is **Hb 13:15**. *Through Jesus Christ then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is **the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.***

Here are some helpful things to notice from this instruction:

- Obvious: *thankful speech is a spiritual sacrifice which is associated with spiritual fruit.*
- Gratitude is a category of *praise*.
- Jesus Christ is the *basis & topic* of our *grateful praise*.
- To go deeper on that last point, the expression *give thanks to His name* might be translated *confessing His name (agreeing with what is true about Jesus – His identity and work)*. So the *content* of our praise is to *agree/say* with Scripture what is *true* about Jesus.
 - Which reminded me of the hymn *His Name is Wonderful! ...He is the mighty King, master of everything, His name is wonderful, Jesus my...*
- Here is an intriguing observation from the **OT**: in some passages that bring *sacrifices & spoken praise* together, *sacrificed calves & lips of praise* are used as *picturesque* synonyms (Hosea 14:2). I.e. *our praise* replaces the *sacrificial calves* on the **OT** *worship altar!*

Another important category of fruit is our *contributions* to those in need.

In his letter to his friends in *Philippi*, the incarnated apostle acknowledged his thankfulness for their gift to him (probably money, perhaps also a care package).

Let's turn now to **Phil 4:14-18** and see how the apostle writes of this gift.

- The Philippians (perhaps one of the strongest NT churches in the middle of the 1st century) had a history of supporting Paul (15).
- The Philippians were *consistent* in their support of Paul's gospel mission (15). Were the other churches *distracted, disinterested...afraid?*
- Paul is especially happy that his *friends' generosity* is a *spiritual profit* – *spiritual fruit* (17; 14 – *you have **done well***) and that this *profit* will accumulate to their spiritual account.

Earlier, in **Rom 16:26-28**, Paul wrote of the gift collected for *famine relief* among the saints in Jerusalem.

- Their financial support was voluntary (v.26, 27 – *they were pleased*).
- Their gift was (27) *their fruit*.

Just a simple observation: the fruit of giving in these two examples met *physical* needs (Palestine) and *ministry/physical* needs (Paul's imprisonment).

Rosscup points out that the *fruit of meeting needs* does not always take the shape of financial support. Sometimes practical expressions of meeting needs serves the same purpose (supplying a *meal*, spending time on a *chore* or *repair* for someone).

Good works are good fruit! This kind of fruit *pops up* in all areas & seasons of life.

Paul prayed that the Colossian Christians would ***bear fruit in every good work***. He noted that the *fruit of doing good works* pleased the Lord and was evidence that we were *walking worthy* of Him.

For a compelling list of the fruit of *good works*, let's review Paul's qualifications for a godly widow in **1 Tim 5:9-10**: *marital faithfulness, great reputation, good mother, hospitable, humble & serving, benevolent, given to doing good*.

The church needs to emphasize that *good works* are the product of a gospel-transformed life and build a platform for speaking the gospel in our community.

Jesus taught that the energizing power for such *fruit* is our *love* for one another (e.g. John 13).

I find Paul's emphasis on the *fruit of good works* difficult to miss in his closing words in his letter to help Titus guide the newly planted churches on Crete. Let's quickly examine his final words (**read all of Titus 3**):

- **V.1** – *ready for every good deed*
- **V.2** – *showing every consideration for all men*
- **V.8** – *believers are to be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and **profitable** for men.*
- **V.14** – *Our people must also learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs, so that they will not be...**unfruitful**.*
- Although the apostle makes it abundantly clear in **v.5** that good works *can't save you*, his repeated word & his last word is a call to engage in the *fruitful pursuit of good deeds!*

Souls won for Christ are eternal fruit.

Jesus' powerful conversation with the Samaritan *woman at the well* led to her *conversion* followed by the faith of many in her village of Sychar.

The disciples were amazed and confused by Jesus' willingness to speak with a woman and a Samaritan in broad daylight. They were also concerned that Jesus stop and strengthen Himself. So they were concerned about *propriety & priority!*

Let's pick up the account in John 4:31-43.

- Jesus' key statement for our purposes is **v.36 (read again)**. Jesus maintained the priority of soul-winning, picturing it as *gathering fruit for eternal life*.
- The Lord was willing to dismiss *man-made social conventions* to share the gospel.
- He recognized that *soul winning* was a *team effort* (vv.36-37, *sowing & reaping*; OBTW, both word-pictures are related to *fruitfulness*).
- Jesus felt that *soul winning* was *urgent* (though we are tempted to put it off until tomorrow!). **v. 35** – *four months? Look - white (ready right now!*

Other evangelism and conversion texts picture Christians as *spiritual children* of the apostle or leader who led them to Christ (e.g. Paul & the Corinthians), which is not too far removed from the physical idea of our children as the fruit of our bodies & lives.

- With that, Paul refers (more than once) to specific Christians as his *sons in the faith* (e.g. 1 Cor 4:17, Titus 1:4).

Finally, a compelling evidence that we are Christ's is the fruit of Christlike character.

We all have character (some of us *are* characters)! What *kind of character* do you have? What does it say about where you've been *abiding*? ...about where your *life comes from*?

Rosscup points out that in our passage in **John 15 (return)** and its immediate context Jesus brings out the important of *love* (9), *joy* (11), *obedience* (14) & *peace* (14:28).

- Do you suppose these *characteristics* were true of Jesus...?
- Where else do you read of such *fruit* (*love, joy, peace, ...*)?

So let's look again at **Galatians 5:22-23 (read)**. These **nine** characteristics Paul identifies as the *fruit of the Spirit*.

- These form a wonderful "*composite sketch*" of the *nature* of our Lord Jesus and so as they grow in us we become *Christlike!*

James associates a similar list w/ *godly wisdom & spiritual fruit* in **Jas 3:17-18**: *But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.*

- *Purity, peace, gentleness, reason, mercy, good fruits, steadfast, transparent*
- The *seed* James writes about is the ***gospel*** which yields a crop of *righteousness* in the lives of those who *believe*.

Paul says we have the *mind of Christ* (Phil 2) and Peter wrote that we are to *follow in His footsteps* (1 Pet 2:21).

- Thus we grow to *think Christ's thoughts & imitate His life & pursue His mission.*

We've identified these categories:

The fruit of praise!

Generous contributions to those in need.

Good works.

Souls won for Christ.

Christlike character.

The final summarizing *harvest* of all other categories is **Christlikeness...becoming more like Jesus:**

- Jesus was *all* these characteristics & had all these priorities we've seen.
- Jesus is the *vine* we *abide in* to produce *fruit*, thus His life runs to/thru us and produces *fruit* which ultimately must be *associated w/ & credited to* Him. Life bears fruit & it bears fruit *after its kind*.
- We read in Eph 4 that *we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ...we are to grow up in all aspect into Him who is the head, even Christ.*
- God saved you for the ultimate eternal purpose to be *conformed to the image of His Son* (Rom 8).

So we *abide (live)* in Christ. Christ produces **His fruit** in us.

...pray...