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“Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples,” John 15:8

Bear Fruit

Lesson Aim: To encourage productive living.

L271. Date: May 1978. **Text:** Luke 13:6-9, John 15:1-8.

Topic: Fruit-Bearing; Holy Spirit: Fruit Of:

Someone has observed, “Nature is God's braille for a blind humanity.” The Bible recognizes that spiritual truth can be understood through natural revelation. **“The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made”** (Romans 1:20). No analogy between the natural and the spiritual is more beautiful than that expressed in Luke 13:6-9 and John 15:1-8.

The grapevine and the fig tree are used commonly in Scripture to represent people, especially the nation of Israel. Psalm 80:8 reads, **“Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it.”**

Isaiah describes Israel as the vineyard of the Lord which brought forth wild grapes and deserved the judgment of God. The analogy is clearly stated: **“The vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant”** (verse 7). Jeremiah 2:21 uses the same symbolism to speak of the apostasy of Judah from God, as does Hosea 10:1.

The text of today's lesson has an application to Israel. It pictures God's expectation of fruit from her. It also has an application to the people of God today. The primary application of the lesson comments which follow will be to Christians, while recognizing its application to Israel as well.

I. GOD REQUIRES FRUIT.

Why is a tree or vine placed in the orchard or vineyard? Why is care taken to cultivate the soil, to fertilize and water the plant, to protect from intruders that would destroy it? Why the pruning, spraying, and watchful care? The purpose of each plant is to bear fruit.

The one purpose of each plant is fruitfulness. The glory of each branch is to bear fruit for its owner, not for itself. Every other thing is subordinate to that one great design. The owner of a vineyard has a right to seek fruit from its plants, as the owner sought fruit from the tree in the parable Jesus told: **“He came and sought fruit thereon”** (Luke 13:6). The Father's requirements for fruit from His children are not unreasonable. He has a right to receive a return for His “investment” in Christians.

As the husbandman (John 15:1), God does all that is necessary to make Christians productive. They are each important and dear to Him. He works tenderly with them. He allows sufficient time for them to bear fruit.

The owner of the vineyard said, **“Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit”** (Luke 13:7). Three years should be sufficient time for productivity to begin in a good tree. God is not unreasonable in His demands, particularly in view of His provisions.

God warns that judgment will follow fruitlessness. **“Cut it down”** (Luke 13:7) is the solemn command. What is the purpose of a fruit tree that bears no fruit? It has no purpose for existence. The kingdom of God has no place for existence without productivity.

God is committed to producing fruit through His children. As a good gardener, He does all that is necessary to produce fruit. The life's work of a good gardener is to produce a fruitful garden. God is the greatest gardener of all.

Fruitlessness is inexcusable. God provides all that is necessary to guarantee spiritual fruit in the Christian. The only reason a Christian does not bear fruit is that his will is in rebellion against God. Fruitlessness is sin.

God is just in requiring spiritual fruit because He provides all the resources necessary to produce spiritual fruit.

No believer need fear the work of the heavenly Gardener. He is **“my Father, and your Father; . . . my God, and your God”** (John 20:17). As a father, He works tenderly. As God, He works sufficiently.

Each believer should rejoice that God is at work within, making him capable of bearing fruit. That makes possible the injunction expressed in Philippians 2:12, 13, **“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”**

II. JESUS ENABLES FRUITFULNESS.

A. Each Christian is chosen of God for the purpose of a fruitful life.

Jesus said, **“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain”** (John 15:16). How could He express the purpose of salvation more clearly?

Other scriptures bear out that same theme: **“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them,”** Ephesians 2:10. Divine election is to service as well as to salvation.

God has instituted an invariable law in nature. Everything produces after its own kind. The way a plant or animal propagates its species is by reproducing its likeness in other creatures like itself. A cotton stalk produces cotton seeds which produce other cotton stalks. That is why the cotton plant does not die out after one season. The law of nature applies in the spiritual realm as well.

Jesus Christ receives the repenting-believing sinner and makes him a saint by regeneration. He has chosen that those who are new creatures by faith in Him (II Corinthians 5:17) would reproduce themselves spiritually by bringing other people to faith in Christ as personal Savior. That is the meaning of John 15:16.

Jesus chose some that through them He might reproduce other believers, and through them other believers, and through them other believers, on and on. Each one is saved for the purpose of saving others through his witness.

B. Spiritual fruit is possible in each Christian because of his union with Jesus Christ.

“Abide in me, and I in you” is the spiritual principle Jesus expressed (John 15:4).

Remember the analogy of the vine and its branches. Jesus is the vine. Each believer is a branch (limb) of that vine. All that the vine is to the branch, Jesus is to the believer.

The branch is joined to the vine in an actual structural union of growth. The believer is joined to Jesus in an actual spiritual union of the new birth. He is “in Christ.” He is joined to Christ. As there is a union between a grafted branch and the stalk to which it is joined, so there is a union between the believer and Jesus Christ.

The vine and the branch become one. The same nature, the same life, the same purpose, the same place, the same work unites them. Spiritually,

the Lord Jesus and the believer in Jesus become one.

Life flows from the Lord to the believer just as it flows from the stalk to the branch. Though they are distinct, the vine and branch become so joined and identified it is as if they were actually one.

The Christian should never think of himself as apart from his Lord. They are one! The union was established by the Holy Spirit who worked in the penitent believer the miracle of the new birth (John 3:1-21).

That relationship, once established, can never be broken. The explanation for all fruitfulness is the union of the branch (the believer) with the vine (the Lord Jesus) by which it receives from the vine all that it needs to produce fruit for the use of the heavenly Gardener.

Fruit always grows on the branch, never on the stalk. Spiritual fruit is produced by the believer. But the branch is not required to produce fruit apart from the stalk. Quite the contrary, **“the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine”** (John 15:4). No servant of God is ever responsible for producing fruit by himself for God. He is responsible for being available to God so that God can produce fruit through him.

C. Abiding is the secret of production.

Hear the words of Jesus. **“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing,”** John 15:4, 5.

To “abide” means to live a life of dependence. It is not to live in a strain, trying to be spiritual. It is to keep the inner life right and to relax in your availability to Him and His availability to you. Never be concerned with abiding. Be concerned with Jesus Christ. When your heart's interest is centered in Him, abiding will be natural.

The opposite of abiding in Christ is self-sufficiency. When Christ is on the throne of the life, you are abiding in Him. When you take control of your life, you have ceased to abide.

The branch is locked into the vine by nature. It has no choice whether it abides in the vine or not. Man has a will, however, and can experience degrees of abiding. Only when the will is in agreement with the Spirit of God is the Christian wholly abiding in Christ.

It is absolutely essential that the believer abide in Christ. Jesus used a very strong term when He said, **“As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me . . . for without me ye can do nothing”** (John 15:4, 5).

The statement is emphatic. Jesus said that except the believer would

abide in Him, he could do absolutely nothing at all. That explains the fruitlessness in the lives of many believers. No one can live carelessly in relation to sin and sanctification but still have a life of spiritual fruit. There is no possible substitute for abiding in Christ day by day.

The branch needs help to produce fruit. It needs sustenance from the vine and supervision by the gardener. Fruit is produced on the branch, but the fertility which causes the fruit to grow is in the vine and the protection of the plant is the work of the gardener.

The Christian needs help to produce fruit. The sustenance is from the Lord Jesus Christ and supervision is by the heavenly Father. Fruit is produced in the life of the Christian, but the fertility which causes the fruit to grow is in Jesus and the protection-cultivation of the plant is the work of God the Father.

III. THE SPIRIT INCREASES FRUITFULNESS.

A. There are degrees of fruitfulness.

Jesus mentioned “fruit, more fruit, much fruit” (John 15:2, 5, 8). It reminds one of the parable Jesus told about the farmer who sowed his seed (Matthew 13:1-8). Some never sprouted; some sprang up and died away; some grew but were unproductive; some produced thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and a hundredfold. In natural growth and in spiritual service, there are degrees of fruitfulness.

Never be content with the quality of your fruitfulness in the service of God. Keep on growing. Keep on increasing in your productive capacity. If you bear fruit, resolve to bear more fruit. If you bear more fruit, resolve to bear much fruit. Jesus said, **“Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples,”** John 15:8.

Much fruit is possible to every child of God. God provides the resources; the Christian bears the fruit. The glory of the branch is not in its size or its leaves, but in the fruit it produces. The Christian is as capable of producing fruit as God is capable.

How is the Father glorified when Christians bear much fruit? Man does not add to God's glory, of course. By a fruitful life, God's glory is manifest in the believers. It is the principle of Matthew 5:16, **“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”** A beautiful garden magnifies the skill and care of the gardener. A productive Christian magnifies the power and person of God.

“If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God: if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all

things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen,” I Peter 4:11.

B. Fruitfulness is increased by pruning the branch.

Every nurseryman knows the importance of pruning a tree. What is pruning? It is not the removal of weeds outside the plant. It is not the cultivation of soil around the plant. Pruning is to cut off a portion of the plant itself. It means to remove the shoots of a previous year's growth. All that is not necessary to the productivity and strength of the plant is cut away. The properly-pruned tree is much more productive.

What does God “prune” from the lives of His children? He takes away the sin in order to increase productivity. But He takes away more than that. He removes the “good” things as well, things which are not wrong in themselves but which will hinder the harvest. Even some religious activity must be cut away, as well as many social and business interests, if the Christian would be fully fruitful.

How does God “prune” His children? Jesus mentioned the gardener pruning the vine and then added, “**Now ye are clean** (Greek, **katharos**) through the word which I have spoken unto you,” John 15:3. God cleanses by His word. Jesus chose a term (**katharos**) which means “to be free from admixture of anything that soils, adulterates, or corrupts.” That is how God cleanses His children.