

FRUITBEARING AND THE WILL OF GOD

CHAPTER ONE

Fruit, More Fruit and Much Fruit

As we bring this series of lessons it is our prayer that they will help you in your understanding of not only the importance of bearing fruit, but what the fruit is, by what method the fruit must be produced and the source of the fruit; and the important lesson, the results of bearing fruit.

First, there is no doubt as to the importance of fruitbearing.

**“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: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.”
(John 15:16)**

Although we are not told what the fruit is, there are three important facts stated very plainly in this verse.

- (1) You should bring forth fruit. This identifies the primary mission of the believer.
- (2) Your fruit should remain (continue to bear fruit).
- (3) The results of fruitbearing—assurance of having prayers answered.

“...that whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he may give it you.”

This promise alone should be reason enough for any Believer to search diligently to find the answer as to what the “fruit” is, by what method the “fruit” is produced and what it means “that your fruit should remain.” Upon meeting these two conditions rests the only assurance that all of our prayers will be answered. Therefore, we must not trust man’s opinions, ideas, guesses or speculations. For the true meaning of fruitbearing we must go directly to the Word of God for the answers. We can be thankful the Word has the answers recorded in plain, easy to be understood language.

We have never asked, nor do we expect all Believers to accept our interpretation of Scriptures pertaining to any subject given on “Time for the Bible.” Our method of teaching is to do our best to put together, in a comprehensive manner, Scriptures relating to the subject. We do, however, encourage you to accept and believe the Scriptures. If just one person is helped, we will have been successful in our efforts in bringing this series of lessons.

On the subject of fruitbearing we are given a substantial amount of information. Matthew, Mark and Luke all record the fact that there are three stages of fruitbearing called “30, 60 and 100 fold.” However, the gospel of John gives us, not only the three stages of fruitbearing, but gives in exact detail the source of the fruit and the method by which the fruit is produced. In these Scriptures (John 15:2, and John 15:5) we see the three stages of fruitbearing. 30 fold “...**every branch that beareth fruit...**” (verse 2). 60 fold “...**he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit...**” (verse 2). 100 fold “...**the same bringeth forth much fruit.**” (verse 5).

Although we are not told what the fruit is, we do see one fact that stands out above all others, the fruit spoken of here is a product of the Vine, not the branches. Jesus says, **“I am the vine, ye are the branches...” (John 15:5a)** He says, **“...the branch cannot bear fruit of itself,” (verse 4) “without me ye can do nothing.” (verse 5b)** This makes it very clear that one must be in the Vine to bear fruit that will be acceptable to God.

It is important to note that any so-called fruit produced apart from the Vine, the Lord Jesus Christ, will be nothing but “wood, hay and stubble.” It will one day be burned, when we stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ, as we shall see in our final lesson in this series.

In our first lesson, as in most of our monthly Bible studies, we give an outline of the subject and in our following lessons we fill in some of the details. Our outline for these lessons is contained in the following Scriptures.

(1) The three stages of “fruitbearing.”

“Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.” (John 15:2)

“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 15:5)

(2) The three stages of “fruit.”

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.” (Galatians 5:22, 23)

(3) The three walks (walking in the will of God).

“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable , and perfect, will of God.” (Romans 12:2)

From just a casual reading we can readily see a common element that binds these verses together.

In John 15:2-5, we see the fruit being presented in three stages as:

- (1) Fruit -- 30 fold.
- (2) More Fruit -- 60 fold.
- (3) Much Fruit -- 100 fold.

When identifying the actual fruit, in Galatians 5:22, and 23, we see that it is manifested in three stages as well.

- (1) Love, Joy, Peace -- 30 fold.
- (2) Longsuffering, Gentleness, Goodness -- 60 fold.
- (3) Faith, Meekness, Temperance -- 100 fold.

In Romans 12:2 the will of God is also presented in three steps, as being that:

- (1) Good -- 30 fold.
- (2) Acceptable -- 60 fold.

(3) Perfect will of God -- 100 fold.

As we continue our study we will try and put this in context by showing just how these three important teachings relate to each other and how they represent three stages of Christian growth.

The first lesson to be learned is that no person is born into the family of God a full-grown mature Believer, manifesting all nine graces of the fruit and walking in the perfect will of God. The Bible teaches that it is a process of growth. This growth will take place in three stages. It is true that it may take more time for some Christians than for others. It took God only one day to deliver Israel out of Egypt, but it took forty years to get Egypt out of Israel.

After one has received the Lord Jesus as their Saviour we see the first stage of growth.

“As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.” (I Peter 2:2)

The word “babe” is a fitting description of a “new believer.” A new believer is dependant upon others for their growth in understanding the Word of God, until they are able to feed themselves. The “newborn babe” will have the “first fruit” of love, joy and peace, as well as beginning to walk in what is called “the good will of God.”

When the “newborn babe” is able to feed themselves they have reached the second stage of fruitbearing, called more fruit. This could be called the adolescence stage of Christian growth. At this stage of growth one will have taken the second step in their “walk in the acceptable will of God.” This is the results of following these instructions:

“But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” (II Peter 3:18)

However, the goal of the Believer should be to reach the third stage of fruit-bearing, that of “much fruit.” This is God’s plan for all Believers; that they will become of full age, or mature Believers. “**But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age...**” (Hebrews 5:14a) It is then that one will be able to become “a workman.” This is necessary if we are to walk in what the Bible calls “the perfect will of God.”

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” (II Timothy 2:15)

The First Stage of Fruitbearing

The first fruit, love, joy and peace characterize the inward look. They are the very first fruit that will be manifested by the Believer and are a blessing to the Believer only. The first three fruits represent the first stage of “fruitbearing;” the “thirtyfold” mentioned in John 15:2 as “... **every branch in me that beareth fruit.**” The firstfruits of the Spirit, love, joy and peace are the first blessings bestowed upon the Believer by the Spirit of God.

(1) Love, which means “charity,” “benevolence,” “affection.”

“And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost

which is given unto us.” (Romans 5:5)

(2) Joy, which means “cheerfulness,” “calm delight,” “gladness.”

“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.” (John 15:11)

(3) Peace, which means “quietness and rest.”

“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” (John 14:27)

We see this fruit present immediately following the conversion of Zacchaeus.

“And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.” (Luke 19:6)

This was all the result of Zacchaeus having received the Lord Jesus as his Saviour. We see the reason for his joy. **“And Jesus said unto him, this day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham.” (Luke 19:9)**

We see this fruit present immediately following, when the Ethiopian eunuch believed on the Lord Jesus Christ.

“And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.” (Acts 8:39)

We see this fruit present also immediately following the conversion of the Philippian jailor.

“And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.” (Acts 16:34)

These “fruits” are a natural result of receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour. These “fruits” are not the results of long hours of Bible study, prayer, or meditation, but are manifest immediately following “believing on the Lord Jesus Christ.” These “fruits” become the “firstfruits” of salvation; by accepting the first invitation of our Lord.

“Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28)

If a person can have love, joy and peace as a free gift just by receiving the Lord Jesus as their Saviour, why don't more people take advantage of this free gift? I do not know all the reasons why anyone rejects the free gift of salvation; however, the Bible states at least four reasons.

(1) They have not heard. **“...how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?” (Romans 10:14)**

(2) They are blinded. **“In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not...” (II Corinthians 4:4)**

(3) They love their sin. **“...men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.” (John 3:19)**

(4) They just will not come to Christ. **“And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.” (John 5:40)**

CHAPTER TWO

“More Fruit”

In our previous lesson we dealt with the first branch of fruitbearing called “fruit” and saw that it was the results of “just being in the Vine.” In this lesson we will be looking at the second branch, or second stage of fruitbearing called “more fruit.”

“Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth MORE fruit.” (John 15:2)

The “more fruit” is, of course, fruit that is added to the existing fruit of love, joy, peace. This “fruit” is the fruit that is to govern our conduct in our outreach to others.

We saw in our last lesson that just the “fruit” was the results of accepting the first invitation of our Lord, **“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”**

To bear “more fruit” we must accept the second invitation given by our Lord.

**“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.
For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.”
(Matthew 11:29, 30)**

To bear “more fruit” depends upon your willingness to **“TAKE HIS YOKE UPON YOU.”** This means “servitude” or “obligation.”

The offer of “the yoke of discipleship” is offered to all Believers. However, it is a well established fact that all who accept the first invitation are not willing to accept the second invitation, “His yoke.” Many Believers are satisfied to remain “infants” in the Lord all their Christian life.

**“Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.
For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.
For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.
But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”
(Hebrews 5:11-14)**

Paul makes the same indictment to the Corinthians.

“And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.

I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able,

For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal and walk as men?” (I Corinthians 3:1-3)

This does not mean that Paul did not have the ability to convey the Word of God, or the “hearers” needed a hearing aid. It means that the “hearers” were still infants in the faith, even though they had been saved long enough to have grown in their knowledge of the Lord. They had never taken “the yoke of service.”

Paul uses the word carnal three times to show the spiritual nature of these Believers. Carnal means “flesh.” Instead of following God’s instructions by growing in grace, they trusted the flesh.

Jesus made an offer to the rich young Ruler when He said, “Come follow me.” However, the rich young Ruler preferred the treasures of this world instead of the treasures of Heaven. Demas, too, made the same decision. **“For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world...” (II Timothy 4:10a)**

Although Jesus says “His yoke is easy and His burden light,” He nevertheless makes it clear that there would be a price to pay. However, the rewards for following Him are well worth any sacrifice made. Of the many Scriptures we could quote, it is summed up in Luke 14:27.

“And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.” (Luke 14:27)

The following six verses (Luke 14:28-33) uses the parables of “building a tower” and a “king going to war,” warning us to count the cost lest we begin and are not willing or able to finish. We are told in no uncertain terms, **“...No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” (Luke 9:62)**

Keep these simple and easy to understand instructions in mind as we take up the subject of “the yoke and the cost of discipleship.”

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” (Romans 12:1, 2)

To many this may not sound like a reasonable request at all. However, God is only asking us to yield to Him something which He has already purchased.

“What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and

**ye are not your own?
For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in
your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."
(I Corinthians 6:19, 20)**

This request becomes even more reasonable when we see the tremendous price paid for the redemption of our body and spirit. We could never in this lifetime comprehend the infinite price paid for our redemption.

**"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with
corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain
conversation received by tradition from your fathers:
But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb
without blemish and without spot:
Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of
the world, but was manifest in these last times for you."
(I Peter 1:18-20)**

God is seeking the Believer, whom He has purchased, to yield their body to Him as a vessel He can use for His glory.

**"If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall
be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the
master's use, and prepared unto every good work."
(II Timothy 2:21)**

God will then cleanse and sanctify the Believer's body for a dwelling place of the Holy Spirit where He may manifest His love, mercy and grace to a lost and dying world. No better investment can one make with their life, and the rewards for doing so are beyond our ability to understand.

If you think the sacrifice of following the Lord is just too much, let me remind you, no company in this world can come close to offering the benefits that God offers. What company could offer love, joy and peace? ("**...my peace I give unto you...**" (John 14:27) What company could offer to meet our every need? "**But my God shall supply all your need...**" (Philippians 4:19) What company could answer your prayers? "**...whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.**" (John 15:16) What company could promise rewards that will last throughout eternity? "**But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven...**" (Matthew 6:20) And best of all, no company can offer a new and perfect body that will last forever. "**...shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body...**" (Philippians 3:21)

To live ones life in pursuit of the material and pleasures of this world, instead of accepting God's offer by presenting your body for His service is a poor bargain indeed.

How does one go about presenting, or yielding their body unto God? No better description can be found than that of Isaiah's transforming vision of the Holiness of God, in Isaiah chapter six.

**"Then said I, Woe is me! For I am undone; because I
am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of**

a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.” (Isaiah 6:5)

Isaiah had a vision. However, we do not need a vision for we have a clear revelation in the Word of God. We see a clear vision of the holiness of God in the cost of our redemption. We must note that when Isaiah recognized his condition he did not struggle and strive for weeks or months to clean up his act. He simply acknowledged his condition and then submitted, or yielded to God and let Him do the cleansing.

**“Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar:
And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.” (Isaiah 6:6, 7)**

It was then he could hear the voice of the Lord God say, **“Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” (Isaiah 6:8a)** It was then he could answer, **“Here am I; send me.” (Isaiah 6:8b)**. It is with this kind of submission that one can then follow the council of Colossians 3: 1-3.

**“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.
For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” (Colossians 3:1-3)**

As we grow in grace and knowledge, we will be better able to “seek those things which are above” and to “set our affections on the things above.” This is the meaning of the verse in John chapter 15. **“...every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.” (John 15:2a)**

This “purging” means pruning, cleansing and washing. Isaiah’s cleansing was from a live coal taken from the Altar. The Believer is cleansed by the Word of God. **“Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.” (John 15:3)** The importance of the Word of God in our life can never be over emphasized.

“That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.” (Ephesians 5:26)

“Sanctify them through thy truth thy word is truth.” (John 17:17)

We close this lesson by identifying the “more fruit.” The “more fruit” is identified in Galatians chapter five, verse twenty two, as:

- (1) Longsuffering
- (2) Gentleness
- (3) Goodness.

The “first fruit,” love, joy and peace characterize the “inward look at self. The “more fruit,” longsuffering, gentleness and goodness characterize the “outward look” to others.

“Longsuffering” is a very important word with a lot of meaning. In the Greek the word “longsuffering” means “patience, or enduring of ill will.” Another view of “patience” according to Webster’s dictionary is:

- (1) Bearing pain or trials calmly, without complaint.
- (2) Manifesting forbearance under provocation of strain.
- (3) Not hasty or impetuous.
- (4) Being steadfast despite opposition, difficulty or adversity.

This, my friend, is a tall order. We can readily see why this fruit alone would be all but impossible apart from the fruit of the Spirit.

Working through the Believer, we see much the same thing in the next grace, given in the outward look to others.

“Gentleness” is a word that carries a great deal of information as well. In the Greek it means:

- (1) Usefulness.
- (2) Excellence in character.
- (3) Gracious, kind.

This fruit would also be very difficult to imitate in the flesh.

“Goodness” in the Greek means “virtue.”

- (1) Conformity to a standard of right.
- (2) Morality, particular moral excellence.

This is what is meant by the Scripture in I Corinthians chapter 9, verse 14.

“Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.” (I Corinthians 9:14)

All three of these fruits, longsuffering, gentleness and goodness are contained in the instructions Paul gave to Timothy.

“And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.” (II Timothy 2:24, 25)

The bearing “more fruit” is important if we are to take the second step in our walk in what the Bible calls “the acceptable will of God.”

CHAPTER THREE

“Much Fruit”

We come now in our study to the third stage of fruitbearing, the “much fruit.”

“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye

**shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.
Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.” (John 15:7, 8)**

We see from these Scriptures two very important truths. First, God is glorified only by our bearing MUCH FRUIT, which is the sole mission of the Believer.

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16)

“For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.” (I Corinthians 6:20)

“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.” (Colossians 3:17)

Second, it is upon the condition of bearing “much fruit” that the Believer is assured that all their prayers will be answered, as we see in John 15:7b “...ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” This makes it very important that we understand:

- (1) The meaning of bearing “much fruit.”
- (2) What this fruit is.
- (3) By what method this fruit is produced.

In our first lesson we saw that the fruit of love, joy and peace was the first stage of fruitbearing and was the results of just being in the Vine.

In our second lesson we saw that the fruit of longsuffering, gentleness and goodness was the second stage of fruitbearing and was the results of purging, or pruning, washing and cleansing.

Before we identify the “much fruit,” we need to understand what the word “much” means, if we are to understand and follow the instructions that will glorify God and be assured of prayers being answered.

The word “much” is a different word then the word “more” that is used in John 15:2. The word “more” means “fruit added to existing fruit.” The word “much” means to bear fruit abundantly, or more often.

The word “remain” in John 15:16, means the same as “much” or “abundant fruitbearing.” Here the word “remain” means “to stay in a given place;” “to continue to bear fruit.”

“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: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.” (John 15:16)

I was told, early in my Christian life, that the “fruit” was people who were saved and remained in fellowship year by year. However, this is not in keeping with what the Bible says concerning the fruit. People being saved are a product of “bearing fruit.”

Apart from teaching a new convert the Word of God, fellowshiping with them and praying for them, there is nothing else we can do to assure their continued fellowship with the Lord. That decision is up to the “new Believer.”

We do, however, have a great deal to do with whether our fruit remains, or we continue to bear fruit. The Bible is clear that the fruit is “our fruit.” **“...and that your fruit should remain...”** The fruit produced by the Believer comes with their submission to God.

The lesson is simple. When a Christian has grown to the three stages of “fruitbearing” they are to continue in that state of bearing fruit.

We repeat for the sake of clarity:

- (1) The Christian life begins as “an infant.” **“As new born babes...” (I Peter 2:2)**
- (2) Then we grow. **“But grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour...” (II Peter 3:18)**
- (3) As we grow we will grow into bearing “more fruit.” **“Study to show thyself approved unto God...” (II Timothy 2:15)**
- (4) We grow from bearing “just fruit” to bearing “more fruit” and then “much fruit,” by following the Bible instructions. Then we are to remain in a continuous state of “fruitbearing.” **“...that your fruit should remain...” (John 15:16)**

We must keep in mind that the process of growth is all accomplished by the Word of God.

The manifestation of the fruit in the third stage, “much fruit” is called faith, meeekness and temperance. It is the manifestation of this fruit that keeps one in constant fellowship with the heavenly Father, for it is the expression of character in our “upward look to God.”

The first of these three graces is called FAITH.

(1) Faithfulness to the Word of God; Faith to rely on inward certainty, to agree, assume or yield. The faith mentioned here means acting upon the Word of God. This is in perfect harmony with the following Scripture.

“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” (Hebrews 11:6)

The second of the three fruits is called MEEKNESS and means “humility,” or “humbleness.” In everyday language the meaning is:

- (1) The absence of vanity.
 - (2) Not proud or haughty.
 - (3) Not arrogant or assertive.
 - (4) Insignificant, unpretentious, ranking low in some hierarchy.
- This Scripture in Romans pretty well sums this up.

“For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every

man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.” (Romans 12:3)

“For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.” (Galatians 6:3)

The third fruit is called TEMPERANCE. Temperance means:

(1) Self-control.

(2) Moderation in action, thoughts, feelings, or passion.

Paul gives an even better definition in these Scriptures. The word “whatsoever” covers both our “talk” and our “walk.”

“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.” (Colossians 3:17)

“Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” (I Corinthians 10:31)

It is with the manifestation of these “fruits of the Spirit” that a Believer will have grown to a state of maturity, where they may prove (discern), not only the “good” and “acceptable,” but the “perfect” will of God. It is then that they are fulfilling the mission to which God has called them.

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

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16)

John 15:5 gives us the results of continually ABIDING IN CHRIST.

“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 15:5)

John 15:7 tells us the results of “His Word abiding in the Believer.” It is then, and only then that one can stand on the promise made to those who bear MUCH FRUIT. To make sure these blessings continue we must therefore give diligence to the following instructions.

“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” (John 15:7)

“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: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.” (John 15:16)

We offer a word of warning to those who may be walking in sweet fellowship with the Lord, enjoying the peaceable fruits of righteousness. It is at this stage of fruitbearing that one can become the most vulnerable, or likely to fall. We should, therefore, pay close attention to the following Scriptures.

“Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.” (Hebrews 2:1)

“Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” (I Corinthians 10:12)

“Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.” (II Peter 1:10)

CHAPTER FOUR

The Branches

In our first three lessons we have dealt with the three stages of fruitbearing as well as the results of fruitbearing. However, we must not overlook what happens to the “branches” that DO NOT BEAR FRUIT. **“Every branch in me that bearth not fruit he taketh away...” (John 15:2a)**

“If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.” (15:6)

Right here is where one of the biggest mistakes is made in understanding “fruitbearing.” If we were to look at these branches we would see a vast amount of beautiful fruit, and we would say, “Oh my, what wonderful works is being done.” However, God does not look at fruit the same way we do. God only sees the fruit that is produced by the “Vine” not that which is produced by the flesh.

If we had no more information than what is recorded here we might naturally assume that the branches that did not bear fruit represent those who were once saved, and because they did not bear fruit were then lost. To accept, or assume this interpretation without further investigation, would leave us with a lot of unanswered questions. It would help to keep in mind that “fruitbearing” is the issue here, not the free gift of salvation.

I do not want to minimize the severe loss one will suffer by not bearing fruit; however, it is not the loss of salvation. This truth can be understood only by understanding what salvation is. Salvation is dependent upon the righteousness received from Christ, not our own righteousness.

**“And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.”
(Philippians 3:9)**

To fully understand salvation, we must understand that salvation comes from being partakers of the “divine nature of Christ.”

“Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” (II Peter 1:4)

The “branches,” then, become an integral part of the Vine, **For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body...** (I Corinthians 12:13) and its roots are in the very foundation. **“For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”** (I Corinthians 3:11) For further proof consider the following Scriptures.

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” (II Corinthians 5:17)

“For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.” (Ephesians 5:30)

Thus it becomes impossible to remove a branch from the Vine without destroying the Vine itself; and what, then, would happen to all the other branches? So we see we must look elsewhere for answers. However, as with all of these seemingly difficult questions, the correct answers can always be found in the Word of God.

Although the Believer is not lost by failure to present their body to the Lord, to bear fruit that will glorify God, they will nevertheless suffer a severe loss by not doing so. The following Scripture tells us what will happen to the “branches” that do not bear fruit.

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” (II Corinthians 5:10)

Seeing this event will take place in Heaven, we know only Believers will be at this judgment. This Scripture makes it plain that every Believer will one day appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, both those who have obeyed the Word of God, the good, as well as those who have not obeyed the Word of God, the bad. It will be at this time that those who do not bear fruit will come face to face with the reality of their loss for not obeying the Word of God.

To further confirm this truth we look at another portion of Scripture.

“For we are labourers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building.

According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Now if any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;

Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire."

(I Corinthians 3:9-15)

The Believer is referred to as a building. "...ye are **God's building.**" The Bible compares the Believer's life to a building, a super structure upon the one and only foundation, Jesus Christ. The appeal is made to each one to take heed how they build thereon.

There are two types of material from which this building may be constructed; "gold, silver, precious stones," or "wood, hay, and stubble."

How can we know which material we are using to construct this building? First, we need to understand that the gold, silver and precious stones are products created by God. Wood, hay and stubble are results of the curse. The gold, silver and precious stones are God's creation. The wood, hay and stubble are the good works of sinful man.

The Scripture tells us to "**take heed how we build thereupon,**" (v.10). "**Every man's work shall be made manifest,** (v.13). Their works will be apparent, or made public.

Only you can determine whether your works are the work of God through the Holy Spirit, or the product of just good works produced by the flesh. The Scriptures teach that it is possible to manifest many of the gifts of the spirit, without being governed by the "fruit of the Spirit," the Holy Spirit. By illustration we read of this in I Corinthians.

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.

And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. (I Corinthians 13:1-3)

Paul tells us that it is possible to perform even the gifts of the spirit in the flesh, but they become worthless, just "wood, hay and stubble. Therefore they become the branch that bears no fruit.

Wood, hay and stubble can be seen at a great distance; however, a fortune in gold, silver and precious stones can be concealed on a person. Size, therefore, is not a good measuring stick to judge the material being used. The quality becomes more important than the quantity. The material we are building with can be identified as either “our works,” or “the Lord working through us.”

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20)

All of our works will be tested by fire. **“If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.”** If any man’s work shall be burned **“he shall suffer loss.”**

It is plain from these Scriptures as to what happens to the “branches” that do not bear fruit. There is a loss, but it is not the loss of salvation. **“...but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.”**

Perhaps there are those who at one time were walking in fellowship with the Lord, but for whatever reason they are no longer walking in fellowship; and they may even feel that God no longer cares about them. There is a valuable lesson to be learned from the account of the prodigal son, recorded in Luke 15:11-24. Without going into the deep and theological views held by some, I would like to draw at least one plain, simple and encouraging lesson. Regardless of what you may believe about the primary interpretation of this account, you must agree that he was a son.

- (1) He was a son when he was in his father’s house. **“...a certain man had two sons” (Luke 15:11).**
- (2) He was still a son when he left his father’s house. **“... the younger son gathered all together and took his journey...” (v.13)**
- (3) He was still a son when he was in the pig pen. **“I will arise and go to my father,(v.18).**
- (4) He was still a son when he left the pig pen. **“Father, I have sinned----and am no more worthy to be called thy son.” (v. 18, 19)**
- (5) He was a son when he arrived at his father’s house. **“And he arose and came to his father, (v. 20).**
- (6) When he was a great way off his father saw him. **“...when he was a great way off, his father saw him...” (v.20)**

The son made some important decisions. First he came to himself. If you recognize your condition and confess this to the Father, you will receive the same reception as this prodigal son; a full restoration of all the privileges lost while in the far country.

The prodigal son’s journey to the wild side of life was costly. None of the privileges that were his birthright were available to him when he was in the far country.

The son made some important decisions. First, he came to himself. If you recognize your condition and confess this to the Father, you will receive the same reception as the prodigal; a full restoration of all the privileges lost while in the far country.

“And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was

a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry: For my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.” (Luke 15:20-24)

He was restored to all of the family privileges---the ring. He was cleaned up---the robe. He was given a place of service--- the shoes. The father was far more interested in the son's return than the religious crowd was. (Read the account of the older brother, (Luke 15:25-32).

The Lord Jesus says to all who “labour and are heavy laden:”

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 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. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”
(Matthew 11:28-30)

