

Fruit and more Fruit

The Beauty of the Bride – Part III
Union with Christ

Romans 7:4-5

Introduction

In our last discussion, we began to uncover the meaning of the words that Paul wrote in Romans, chapter 7, verse 4, which said,

. . . [we] might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God.

According to Paul, our union with Christ has offspring. We were married to Christ that we might bear the offspring of fruit for God. This offspring includes:

- the fruit of speech;
- the fruit of spiritual maturity;
- the fruit of sacrificial giving;
- the fruit of saving truth.

Fruit - The Offspring of Our Union with Christ

In our study today, I want to add to that list, three more fruits that we are to bear. We will then be finished with this particular line of study.

The fruit of our Savior's character

1. First, we are to bear the fruit of our Savior's character.

Look at Philippians, chapter 1, verse 11.

having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

An inanimate object can produce inanimate things . . . things that are not alive. It takes life to produce fruit.

A machine cannot produce an apple or a pear or a peach. A machine can make peach jelly; it can fry apples; it can do all sorts of things to fruit, except produce it. Only the apple tree with the dynamic of internal life can produce an apple.

In the same way, a person who is spiritually dead cannot reproduce the life of Christ. They can produce the machine-like repetitions of ceremony, ritual, and religion, but not spiritual life. In fact, in verse 5 of Romans, chapter 7, Paul makes it clear that the flesh – or the unbeliever – can only produce the fruits of death. No matter how hard the flesh tries, it cannot produce spiritual life.

It is only in the life of the believer who has been brought into union with the living Lord and the dynamic of His life, which internally impacts the believer like the sap of an apple tree, that there can be the reproduction of living fruit.

Paul wrote in Galatians, chapter 2, verse 20,

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

The fruit of the believer is the very life of Christ within.

The fruit of sanctified conduct

2. Because of Christ's life within, we, the believer, bear another fruit, which is the fruit of sanctified conduct.

Look at Ephesians, chapter 5, verses 25 through 27.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.

The passion of your Bridegroom is to make you holy and blameless. A process that begins at salvation and continues until the day you are perfected at His appearing, or glorified through death.

Paul wrote in Philippians, chapter 1, verse 6b,

. . . He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

That word "perfect" has been misapplied to a believer reaching some state of sinless perfection. The verb, which is "epiteleō" in the Greek, means, "to complete". So, the promise of Philippians, chapter 1, verse 6, is that Christ began the process and will ultimately complete it at His appearance.

The point is, the true believer has the work of Christ continually developing and completely renovating life from the inside out. God the Father happens to have obligated Himself to make you a holy bride for God the Son. This is not a touch up job; this requires a wrecking ball and a bulldozer.

One author "rattled my cage" when he wrote, *Christianity is not something to keep people quiet. [Christianity] is dynamite to blast us loose from our prejudices, our weaknesses, our besetting sins, our unclean and unchristian habits, our petty selfishness and all the rest of the things that chain our lives to meanness and mediocrity.*ⁱ

Would it shock the students on your dormitory floor or in your classroom; the guy you played golf with last weekend; the neighbor nearest your back fence; the people in your shop or near your cubicle to discover that you are a married man or woman – and that the name of your faithful spouse is the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ? Is there any fruit of holy conduct that backs up your claim to be married to this One who rose from the dead? We bear within us the

Holy One and exposure to Him produces a hatred for sin and a passion for holy living.

A few months ago, my wife gave me a little book that gives the history of words and phrases. It is a fascinating book that you do not necessarily read from cover to cover, but instead, every once in a while, you pick it up and learn a new story behind a popular word or phrase.

Recently, I read about the phrase, "Mad as a Hatter". Perhaps you remember in the novel, *Alice in Wonderland*, which you may have read in elementary school, there was the character known as the Mad Hatter. He was a loony, crazy character that never made any sense and was, for the most part, totally insane. The truth is, the phrase "Mad as a Hatter" actually referred to hat makers in England. Many hat makers seemed to be alike with their strange twitching muscles in their faces, their slurred speech at times, along with their confusion as to who they were. In those days, people often referred to old hat makers as mad or insane. Thus, the phrase, "Mad as a Hatter" came about. Evidently, before the invention of felt-making machines in 1846, hat makers produced their own felt. Felt was a popular fabric for hats and was made of wool fibers or animal hair. Mercuric nitrate was used in the process of making felt. We now know that long-term exposure to mercuric nitrate causes confusion, loss of muscle control, and incoherent speech. It was simply that profession's exposure to this chemical that produced the effects of insanity.ⁱⁱ

What a tremendous spiritual principles this give us, that:

- in the natural world, long-term exposure to something produces long-term effects;
- in the spiritual world, the believer, having been exposed to the Holy One, eventually begins to exhibit the symptoms of holiness and thus, holy conduct is produced as fruit.

The fruit unto God is:

- the fruit of our Savior's character;
- the fruit of sanctified conduct.

The fruit of the Spirit's control

3. Thirdly, there is the fruit of the Spirit's control.

Paul writes in Romans, chapter 7, verse 5,

For while we were in the flesh, . . .

(this word, “sarx,” which is translated, “in the flesh,” is used in a number of different ways by the apostle Paul, but in the context of this verse, it clearly refers to someone who has not yet been born again),

. . . the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death.

Paul contrasts the fruit unto God in verse 4, with the fruit unto death in verse 5. He also contrasts the work of the Law with the work of the Spirit. Notice verse 6.

But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.

“Grammatos,” or literally, “the writing,” was a popular reference to the Law.

So, there is the Law, which produces fruit unto death. That is true simply because no one can keep the Law. And the Law renders the same sentence to everyone – death!

The Spirit, however, produces fruit unto life.

There is probably not a better text to contrast these two categories of fruit than Paul’s letter to the Galatian believers. Turn to Galatians, chapter 5. Look at verses 18 through 21.

But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

By the way, why warn them? Because it is possible to be in the community of believers, reading Paul’s letter, and not belong to the community of faith. It is possible to say or think you belong to the Spirit, but if you operate and live and enjoy the works of the flesh, you are self-deceived and still in your sin.

Paul is warning that these are the fruits of the flesh and they lead to everlasting death. Now look at verses 22 and 23.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

In other words, there are no laws to prohibit this kind of living.

By the way, this list is not called the fruits of the Spirit, but the fruit of the Spirit. In other words, God is not producing the fruit of love in some believers and patience in other believers and self-control in another group of believers. You know, it is obvious that God wants to develop the fruit of:

- patience in the two-year-old Sunday school volunteers (that is why He motivated them to work in there);
- self-control in the parking lot crew;
- gentleness in the Middle school workers.

We also have the mistaken notion that we will get patience nailed down and then, we will move on to goodness and, once we have mastered that fruit, we will work on joy and then, love. No, this is one fruit with many expressions. Rather than one apple on a stem, this is more like grapes in one cluster.

If the Spirit of God is at work in a believer’s life, evidence will exist in any one of these areas. Obviously, in different believer’s lives certain qualities of conduct and character will be more evident. There are also times when God’s Spirit seems to focus on one expression or another.

The truth remains, however, that long-term exposure to the Spirit of God produces these kinds of symptoms.

The fruit of the Spirit

Let us look at a few of them.

Love

1. In verse 22 of Galatians, chapter 5, there is the evidence of love.

Since God is love, it is impossible to be a partaker of His divine nature without exhibiting that fruit as well.

This is the opposite of the flesh. Mankind is selfish, driven by ego, with his own desires and his own advancements paramount to his thinking. Love is the opposite of self.

This fruit of the Spirit, which is the evidence of a dynamic supernatural power within, is “agape” or “love”.

Donald Grey Barnhouse paraphrases and expands I Corinthians, chapter 13, which is the great love chapter. He writes,

Love is unselfish. Love is interested in other people, but not in gossip. Love thinks of the life and problems of others and tries to say the word and perform the act that will make life a little happier for them. Love is not envious when someone else gets a promotion, wins a prize, makes a good bargain. Love is glad when oil is discovered on another man's property. Love does not go around talking about its own achievements. Love leaves statistics to God. Love is genuinely interested in the other person's job and wants to know how he is getting along . . . love does not lose its temper, is not hasty, does not snap at others. Love puts the best possible interpretation on words and events. Love will never think the worst of others. Love is never glad when others get into trouble, is never happy about sin. Love is always glad about truth. Love will stand anything . . . Love always wants the best. Love will endure any offense.ⁱⁱⁱ

Joy

2. Paul goes on to record the fruit of the Spirit is joy, or "xara" in the Greek.

This word has absolutely nothing to do with circumstances. That is why Paul could write in II Corinthians, chapter 6, verse 10a,

[I am] sorrowful, yet always rejoicing . . .

"Xara" is a joy that is grounded in the awareness of a relationship with God.^{iv}

This is the fruit of the Spirit of God. You cannot generate this alone. This is His work in your heart and life.

Peace

3. The next fruit follows naturally and that is, the fruit of peace.

I have read that the worst ocean storms can rip across the Atlantic Ocean causing incredible waves. But the most violent storms never go more than fifty feet deep.^v

I have seen plants with large leaves floating on the surface of the ocean, near the rocky shore where the surf pounds and keeps them continually in motion. They are under the pressure of surf and wind, heat and waves, yet survive in great health. How? Because deep below, anchored to the rocky soil beneath, were its roots, clinging fast to the rock.

Peace has nothing to do with things being settled on the surface. Peace has everything to do with things being settle in your soul, by the internal, fruit-bearing Spirit of God to whom you submit your life.

The hymn writer penned this truth with these words,

*Hidden in the hollow of His blessed hand,
Never foe can follow, never traitor stand;
Not a surge of worry, not a shade of care,
Not a blast of hurry touch the spirit there,
Stayed upon Jehovah, hearts are fully blest,
Finding as he promised, perfect peace and rest.^{vi}*

The Spirit's fruit through abiding in Jesus Christ

Before we leave this text would you notice that this cluster is called "the Spirit's fruit," not ours. In fact, a close examination of Romans, chapter 7, verse 4, reveals that we do not produce the fruit – we simply bear it!

Andrew Murray wrote,

The branch is nothing more than a rack from which the fruit of the vine hangs. It is the sap from the vine, coursing through the branch that produces fruit. Likewise, it is the life of Christ, flowing in us that produces anything worthwhile.

The truth is, we cannot produce fruit – we simply bear fruit unto God, as Paul wrote in Romans, chapter 7. That is why it is called the fruit of the Spirit and not the fruit of Stephen, or Susan, or Bill, or Tom. There is no cause for self-congratulation.

It would, in fact, be well to correct our theological vocabulary. We might say, "That sister or brother sure is a peaceful or a joyful Christian." The truth, however, is that they are not peaceful or joyful in and of themselves; they are simply responding to the Spirit of God whose joy and peace is evident in their lives and they are bearing it out in their conduct and character.

In John, chapter 15, our Lord delivers the secret to a fruit bearing life. He said, in verse 5,

I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do . . .

(some things, one thing?),

. . . nothing.

The secret of fruit bearing is not a secret – it is a relationship. Throughout John, chapter 15, this relationship is evident. Jesus said:

- abide in Me (15:4a);
- abide in the vine (15:4b);
- you abide in Me (15:4c);
- he who abides in Me (15:5b);
- abide in Me (15:6a);
- you abide in Me (15:7a);
- My words abide in you (15:7b);
- abide in My love (15:9b).

The word “abide,” from “meno,” means, “to remain”. It simply refers to intimacy and fellowship. It is saying to God, “I want to be where you are.”

When you desire God; when you talk to God in prayer; when you meditate on His word in your private study; when you relate the events of life to Him; when you praise Him for His delights and His discipline, you are abiding in Him.

None of you, who are fathers, ever sat down with your son and said, “Okay, I want you to watch carefully how I walk and then, you try it.”

No, he just shuffles along just like you do.

None of you, who are mothers, ever sat down with your daughter and said, “Okay, watch how I brush my hair and listen to how I laugh and repeat after me, ‘ya’ll’. That’s it. Not “you all,” but ‘ya’ll’.”

Without any formal lessons, they picked these things up from you. How? They learned it by simply *abiding* with you.

In the same way, when you abide in Him, He gives you the evidence that you have been hanging around Him. You pick up His character, His perspective, His accent on life.

Bearing fruit is not so much a list of rules to follow as it is a relationship to enjoy and develop.

It was Dr. Alexander Graham Bell who advised the parents of a little girl named Helen, to send for a teacher from the Perkins Institution for the Blind, in Boston, Massachusetts. Anne Sullivan, a nineteen year old orphan, was chosen for the task of instructing six year old blind, deaf, and mute Helen Keller. After weeks of arduous work, Anne was able to connect the letters she pressed into Helen’s hand, with actual objects. Two years later, Helen was reading and writing Braille fluently. At the age of ten, Helen learned different sounds by placing her fingers on her teacher’s throat and feeling the vibrations. Later, Helen went to college, where Anne spelled every single lecture into Helen’s hand. Their nearly fifty years of companionship ended when Anne died in 1936. Helen wrote these endearing words about her lifelong friend who had become her eyes, her mouth, and her ears,

My teacher is so near to me that I scarcely think of myself apart from her. I feel that her being is inseparable from my own, and that the footsteps of my life are in hers. All the best of me belongs to her – there is not a talent or an inspiration or a joy in me that has not been awakened by her loving touch.^{vii}

In many ways, what Anne Sullivan was to Helen Keller, Jesus Christ, our Bridegroom, is to every believer. He is to be our eyes, our mouth, and our ears. He is our inseparable friend.

Let me rewrite this to speak of our divine, ever faithful Friend,

He is so near to us that we scarcely think of ourselves apart from Him.

We feel that His being is inseparable from our own, and that the footsteps of our lives are in His.

All the best of us belongs to Him – there is not a talent or an inspiration or a joy in us that has not been awakened by His loving touch.

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ⁱ Roy L. Laurin, Romans: Where Life Begins (Kregel Publications, 1988), p. 227.

ⁱⁱ Webb Garrison, What’s In A Word? (Nashville, Rutledge Hill Press, 2000), p. 132.

ⁱⁱⁱ Donald G. Barnhouse, Romans Vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1959), p. 207.

^{iv} Fritz Rienecker and Cleon Rogers, Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament (Zondervan, 1976), p. 517.

^v Barnhouse, p. 209.

^{vi} “Like A River Glorious,” The Hymnal for Worship and Celebration, p. 494.

^{vii} Van Morris, Helen Keller, The Story of My Life (Doubleday, 1954).