

Place: Lurgan Baptist 5:2:2002

Reading: John 15:1-17

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND US

15. SPIRITUAL FRUIT

Once upon a time there was a handsome and heroic prince. He had his eye on a young lady from his kingdom. He knew that he had to travel abroad for quite a long time, so he asked one of his servants to tell the young lady about his love for her. " Show her, how cool I am. Show her all my powers and stuff, and please don't forget to show her some fruit from my beautiful orchard." So the servant did just that. He attempted to impress the girl with the powers of his prince. He took her to the mountain of miracles and showed her some amazing sights. Then, he pointed to the sky to show her his prince's signs in the sky. Later, he showed her the well of wonders and pulled some incredible objects from it. The young lady was certainly impressed. She considered giving her heart to the prince, but she always held back. The servant wondered how he might help her make the final decision to love his prince. Then he remembered what his prince had said. " Don't forget to show her some beautiful fruit in my orchard."

Oh, yes, the fruit. He had neglected the fruit. That's the ticket he thought ! I'll show her the fruit from the prince's orchard. To be honest, the servant had not been out to the orchard for quite some time. The gate was rusty. It creaked and squeaked as he opened it. The tree's in the orchard were in desperate need of cultivation and pruning. Nevertheless, the servant found an unusual tree in the middle of the orchard. It was special because it yielded nine separate fruits, each one delicious and nutritious. Well, the servant began picking the fruit. Soon, he had each one of the nine fruits in a basket. He took the fruit to the young lady, and guess what He finally won her heart for his prince. You know, all of his incredible sights and powers were impressive. Yet she needed something more. The fruit satisfied her hunger, nourished her body and met the deepest hungers of her life. At last, the prince had answered her lifelong questions.

According to our Lord Jesus Christ the test of any life is its fruit. Just as trees and plants are identified by what they produce, Christ says people are known by the fruit their lives produce. He says, " Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits " (Matt 7:15-16) The Lord Jesus in the same context goes on to say, " Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord have we not prophesied in that name ? and in thy name have cast out devils ? and in they name done many wonderful works ? And then I will profess unto you I never knew you, depart from me ye that work iniquity." (Matt 7:22-23) Christ didn't ask us to examine Christians for signs and wonders or great prophetic gifts. He said, " Ye shall know them by their fruits." (Matt 7:16) You see, the gifts of the Holy Spirit may be counterfeited, indeed they were at Corinth.

Mystery religions were prominent there. But while it was possible for spiritual gifts to be counterfeited by cheap, emotional extremes in the mystery religions, spiritual fruit cannot be counterfeited. How do we know that the Holy Spirit is working in our lives ? What is the evidence

? What is the proof ? Its not the gifts, rather its the graces ! Christ is looking for fruit. Remember the gifts can be imitated by Satan and they will, but Satan cannot imitate the fruit of the Spirit. (2 Thes 2:9 Rev 13:1) Christ is looking for fruit. " By their fruits ye shall know them " (Matt 7:20) My we do not gauge spirituality or Christianity by the spectacular or the sensational, even though modern day Christendom may do so. No ! Christ is looking for fruit. (Lk 13:6) And the man who shows nothing of Heaven in this life, will share nothing of Heaven in the next.

My the fruit of the Holy Spirit is not a maybe its a must. Without fruit in the life there is no root in the heart. This is the only real evidence of being saved. What attracted the lovely young maiden to the prince ? Not the miracles but the fruit. Do you want an exciting and vital Christian life ? Do you want God to use you to bring others to Himself ? Then you need spiritual fruit !
Now I want to develop this theme this by looking at:

(1) THE POSSIBILITY OF FRUIT

For Christ's profound but practical teaching establishes the possibility of fruit. Now this picture of the vine, the husbandman and the branches would be familiar to the disciples. Can't our imagine our Lord and the disciples walking towards Gethsemane, and the light of the moon falling on the Golden Vine that embellished the Gates of the Temple, or can't you see them heading towards the Garden through the vineyards in the Kidron Valley and Christ saying to them, " I am the true Vine." Now in Scripture there are three horticultural symbols associated with the nation of Israel the Vine the Fig the Olive. The Vine represents Israel as a witness for God in the Past. The Fig Tree, is a picture of Israel in the Present. (Matt 24:32) The Olive indicates Israel repentant and restored bearing fruit for God in the Future. (Rom 11:16)

Yes, Israel was God's Vine. (Ps 80:8) He had taken the nation from Egypt carried it across the sands of Sinai, planted it in the Promised Land, hedged it around, and entrusted it to a series of husbandman and looked for a return on His investment. But the nations leaders ill treated some of His servants. Last of all He sent His Son and they were now preparing to murder Him. There could only be one result. The kingdom of God would be invested elsewhere. So for this present age, God's purposes are centred in the church. (Acts 15:14) And in contrast to the fruitlessness of the nation (Hosea 10:1) Christ is the True Vine ! Now lets break this picture down a little further ! Look at:

(a) THE VINE: THE LORD JESUS:

" I am the true vine " (15:1) The Anti-type which fulfils all the expectations of the Heavenly Husbandman.

I wonder have you ever been in a vineyard ? In 1983 I was on a preaching tour in South Africa for almost two months. When I was in Cape Town I was taken to a place called Groot Constantia. There I saw acres and acres of vines. You see, this figure of the vine pictures an intimate union with branches that are totally dependent upon it. Now Christ is the Vine and we are the branches. Its His life flowing through every branch, every stem, every twig of the church. His life only that can produce the desired fruit. Now what is your vine ? For is it not amazing that many

who profess the name of the Lord Jesus have other " vines," in their lives from which they seek their resources. I mean, how many things do you attach yourself to for your well-being ? Some think their " vine," is their bank account, education, popularity, skills, connections, social relationships, possessions. Some even think that the church is their " vine." They attach themselves to a church or organisation. Israel was the Vine in the OT Christ is the Vine in the NT Israel was usually referred to as " degenerate vine," but the Lord Jesus is " the same yesterday, today and forever." (Heb 13:8) He is a Vine, that will never wither, the kind of vine we are privileged to be attached to. (a)

(b) THE VINE-DRESSER: THE FATHER:

Or " the gardener, the vinedresser." (15:1) This means that the Vine and the branches, the Lord Jesus and those who are savingly united to Him become the object of the Father's care and culture. My do you know what the vine-dresser's responsibility was ? He was simply the one who cared for the vines watering, training, pruning, as occasion arises. Do you know what this means ? It means our Heavenly Father is constantly occupied with our needs and welfare ! Is this not tremendously encouraging ? For nothing will escape His all seeing eye ? My He does not give others the task of caring for the vine and the branches. No, He himself cares for us, faithfully, tenderly, conscientiously. So are you getting the picture ? (a) (b)

(c) THE VINE-BRANCHES: THE BELIEVERS:

Look at (15:5) In Hampton Court in London, there is a large greenhouse containing a very old and magnificent vine. Its branches run everywhere. Its foliage is beautiful and its fruit colourful and abundant. Even the remotest tiny tendril seeking a corner to which it can cling is vitally connected with the parent stem. That vast vine is an organic whole. Every branch runs back to the source. Each is busy producing its own foliage, flowers and fruit. My is that not a picture of us ? Joined to Christ the Vine in a life-giving, life-sustaining union ? Our union with Christ is a Lasting Union we need not be afraid. It is a Loving Union so that we may enjoy Him. It is a Living Union so we may bear fruit.

My have you grasp this ? You see, you are not simply a member of this religious group, or the other, but you are a living branch in the living vine. But what is a branch ? A branch is simply a piece of wood brought forth by the vine for the one purpose of serving it in bearing its fruit. Do you know what a branch suggests ? Entire Consecration ! For the branch is entirely give up to one purpose, that of bearing fruit.

Christ says, " Ye are the branches " (15:5) Are you entirely give over to the " vine," the Lord Jesus for the purpose of bearing " His fruit ?" I wonder have you ever asked yourself these questions. Who am I ? What am I ? Why am I here ? Well, here in (Jn Ch 15) the Lord Jesus tells us who we are and why we are here. He says, we are branches and we are here to bear fruit. Look at what Christ says in (15:16) This passage is all about " fruit." The Lord Jesus uses the word " fruit," seven times. Now branches don't produce the fruit. The vine does. The branches simply bear the fruit. We Christians don't produce spiritual fruit. Christ does. But our job is to bear the fruit He produces ! How did we do that ? By abiding in Him ! (15:4) Did you notice that Christ uses the word " abide," nine times in this

passage ? What does it mean ? It means, " to stay close, to maintain heart communion," with the Saviour.

And as we maintain heart communion with the Lord, there will be a development in fruitbearing. Look at the progression " fruit," (15:2) " more fruit," (15:2)

" much fruit," (15:8) " fruit that remains," (15:16)

My the secret of living is fruitbearing ! Have you grasp that ? Oh you say, " I'm saved, saved from hell, saved for heaven." Wonderful, but is that it ? Have you failed to recognise that the Father created you, the Son Redeemed you, the Holy Spirit indwells you. Why ?

" that ye should go and bring forth fruit." (15:16) (1)

(2) THE PURPOSE OF FRUIT

I don't know about you but one of my favourite sections in the food store is the produce department. There is something about fruit the colours, the shapes, the sizes, the smells. I love fruit. Now the English word

" fruit," comes from the Latin " frui," which means " to enjoy or take pleasure in." What would life be without fruit ? Fruit puts freshness and sweetness on our tables !

My fruit is produced:

(a) TO REPLENISH:

Its produced to be eaten. It has food value and is intended to provide nourishment. Fruit doesn't produce fruit for itself. Apples trees don't eat their own apples.

Incidentally, did you know that there are over 7,500 varieties of apples world-wide ? There are apples of all shapes, colours, and tastes. Even S.Hylands and C. Rudely did not know that ! And they're selling them ! Let me tell you something else. Did you know that fruit provides all the vitamins, minerals, natural sugars, and amino acids needed for human nutrition ? So what ?

Well, natural acids are necessary for prompt elimination of toxins, poisonous acids, and other impurities produced by internal sources like digestion and metabolism. Also, these acids help destroy impurities from external sources such as air, water, or pesticides.

Fruit protects against us cancer, heart disease, and stroke. My eating fruit makes sense !

But do you know something ? Spiritual fruit is produced to feed others ! My people are all around us are starving for love, joy, peace and where will they get this spiritual nourishment if not from people who know the Lord ? We are to provide nourishment for others !

Do you see Paul in (Gal 5) ? Its as if Paul holds up a Bible fruit tree with both arms, shakes it, and causes the fruit to come falling down. He gathers the fruit in the basket of Galatians (Ch 5) and shouts, " The fruit of the Spirit is " You see, this spiritual fruit provides the necessary ingredients for human relationships. It helps people eliminate toxins and poisons like anger, bitterness, rebellion, in the heart. Take a look at you life. Is it attractive ? Is it appealing ? Is it appetising to others ? What would your home be like if the fruit of the Spirit were present ? What would this church be like if the fruit of the Spirit were present ? My the nine graces of the Holy Spirit would make a difference in the home, in the church, in the business ! (a)

(b) TO REPRODUCE:

Seeds in fruit make more fruit possible. So we plant the seeds of the fruit of the Spirit so that others will come to Jesus Christ. Of Dawson Trotman it was said, that " he was born to reproduce." That may be said of every Christian for the impact and influence of our lives on others should be such that under the Spirit's blessing there will be reproduction. Reproduction is the basic law of life. Like always produces like. When God created Adam and Eve He said, " Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth, and subdue it."

(Gen 1:28) In other words, reproduce after your kind.

Now is this not true in the spiritual realm ? The fruit of the believer then is spiritual children, baby believers would you please ! That explains Paul's words in

(Rom 1:13) when he says, " I purposed to come unto you that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles." My is it not a great joy and privilege to lead others to the Lord Jesus ?

But then its not we who do the work, its the Lord that does the work in and through us ! Christ said, " I ordained you to be fruitbearers." Now, how are you getting on ? Have you a spiritual family ? When you get to glory will you be able to say, " Lord, here am I and the children which thou hast given me ?" (1) (2)

(3) THE PICTURE OF FRUIT

Now that brings us to (Gal Ch 5) Let me just try to set the scene here. Notice there is

1. A CONTEXT Here:

Look at (5:14) That's a short summary of the Christian life.

2. A CONFLICT Here:

Look at (5:17) Christianity is living in the arena, not in the armchair. 1. 2.

3. A CONTRAST Here:

For Paul is contrasting " the works of the flesh," with " the fruit of the Spirit." Now one would have thought that Paul would have written, " the fruits of the Spirit." But no, he talks about " the fruit (singular) of the Spirit." For he's thinking of qualities of character as a single cluster. These virtues are not like so many flowers in a bouquet.

Rather they are like the variety of petals on one lovely flower. They are like a cluster of grapes distinguishable and yet inseparable ! Now what does " the fruit of the Spirit," mean ? The " fruit of the Spirit," represents traits of Christian character produced by the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer ! Now this ninefold fruit has been classified in many ways. I want to divide into three triads.

(a) The First Three Virtues Express the Godward Aspect of the Christian life:

The ideal life in its relation to God ! Paul begins with:

1. LOVE:

The Greek word is (agape) Of course love means different things to different people. I came across this verse that says,

" Love is a very funny thing
Its shaped just like a lizard
It wraps its tail around your throat
And goes right through your gizzard."

People " love," all kinds of things. " I love my car, I love my dog." I heard about a bumper sticker on a truck which said, " Wanted prospective wife who loves dogs. Send picture of dog." Well, the love that Paul is talking about here is different. This is divine love and this divine love is God's gift to us, for " the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. " (Rom 5:5) But we must cultivate this love and pray that it might abound more and more.

(Phil 1:9) Let me define this love. It is love which seeks the highest good of others, regardless of their treatment of us. Let me illustrate this love. A soldier was asked how it became a Christian and he told this story. He was in the new barracks one day when a new soldier arrived. From the very start he noticed this new soldier was different. He would not join in certain barrack activities, and each night before he got into bed he would always read his Bible and in front of the whole barrack room he would kneel in prayer. One night the soldier who was not saved was on guard duty.

It was a terrible night of cold and rain and when he arrived back in the barrack room he was feeling miserable. Then he looked across the room and saw the Christian kneeling in prayer. That made matters worse. So taking off his heavy boot covered with mud, he pitched at the Christian hitting him in the head. The Christian did not move, he just kept praying. So the other soldier took his other boot and did the same thing. Still no reaction from the Christian. However, the next morning when that unsaved soldier got up, he found his boots by his bedside, clean, polished, shining. That broke his heart and he came to faith in Jesus Christ. My is this fruit flourishing in the garden of your heart ? Are you someone who seeks the highest good of others regardless of their treatment of you ?

2. JOY:

That inward peace and sufficiency that is not affected by outward circumstances ! (Chara) Now there's a difference between happiness and joy. Happiness is dependant on happenings, but true joy is not. It glows in the dark. Do you remember Paul and Silas in the prison ? They were beaten, bruised, and battered. All around them were the outcasts of society. Yet " at midnight Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises to God." (Acts 16:25) No wonder Paul could write, " Rejoice in the Lord alway and again I say rejoice."
(Phil 4:4) When I was down in Cornwall in November (2002) I was taken to " Three Eyes Church, where Billy Bray preached. Billy was a tin miner by trade and he loved his native Cornwall, but his love for souls was greater. He was renown for his joy. " I can't help, praising the Lord," said Billy Bray. " As I go along the street, I lift

up one foot and it seems to say " Glory," and I lift up the other foot and it seems to say " Amen," and so they keep on like that all the time I am walking."

Do you what Billy Brays last word was before he entered the presence of the Lord ? " Glory." The best pastor the Iron Hall ever had was a man by the name of Pastor Evans. " Pop, Evans as he was affectionately called. During my early years in the Hall I visited his widow. That was an experience. She had so little materially, but so much spiritually. It was a tonic to go and see her. The radiance of her Saviour beamed from her eyes and countenance. I would often read a psalm with her and as I finished I can see her yet in the old armchair lifting her arm, and shouting in her Welsh accent, " Glory." Joy are you reflecting it ?

3. PEACE:

Peace is one of the great words of the Bible. The Old Testament word is " shalom." If you are ever in Israel and don't know what to say, try " shalom," meaning " a desire or prayer that all is well with you." The word itself actually carries the idea " to make complete." The New Testament word for " peace," basically means " to bind together." The word " peace," occurs eighty eight times in the New Testament. Many of the letters of the New Testament begin with " Grace and peace." Peace in the New Testament really means " tranquillity or serenity." It means " that tranquil serenity of heart which comes of the all-pervading consciousness that our times are in the hands of God." James Merritt tells of some Korean Christians who were going through persecution. They responded by saying, " We are just like nails. the harder you drive us, the deeper you drive us. And the deeper you drive us, the more peaceful it becomes."

(b) The Second Three Virtues Express the Manward Aspect of the Christian Life:

The ideal life in its relation to Others. Paul begins with:

1. LONG-SUFFERING:

Certainly we are not born with a lot of patience. The Holy Spirit has to give it to us. We all need patience. Wouldn't you like to be like the little boy at the end of the escalator in the department store ? He was watching the moving rail as it came by.

A sales lady asked, " Son are you lost ?" " No, ma'am I'm just waiting for my chewing gum to come back." Now although this word is translated patience.

(Heb 6:12 James 5:10) Its better translated

" long-suffering," since its basic idea is " patience with people." Long-suffering, something that puts anger a long way off. (Col 3:13) Is that what you do when someone tramps on your toe literally or figuratively for the tenth time ? Is that what you do when someone keeps you waiting for an appointment ? Is that what you do when someone rubs you up the wrong way ?

2. GENTLENESS:

This refers to an attitude rather than an action. It was a word used of old wine. Mellow not harsh. It refers to a sweetness of spirit, a

mellowness of manner, a texture of character. Do you recall how gentle the Lord Jesus was with the woman taken in adultery ? Oh, He loathed her sin, but He loved her soul. (Jn 8:11)

3. GOODNESS:

Goodness is kindness in action. Of the Lord Jesus it was said He " went about doing good." (Acts 10:38) Barnabas was " a good man," and out of the goodness of his heart he gave his material wealth to the cause of Christ. Now let me ask you, what about your relationship to others ? Is it marked by long-suffering, gentleness and goodness ? Did you notice that:

(c) The Last Three Virtues Express the Selfward Aspect of the Christian Life:

The ideal life in its relation to Ourselves.

1. FAITHFULNESS:

Faith or faithfulness ! It means fidelity, dependability, keeping promises, being reliable. My can you imagine the Lord Jesus ever letting anyone down ? Yet thats precisely what so many believers do. They take on a work for God but their heart is not in it. They join a fellowship but they are never there half time ! Faithfulness ! My can you employer depend on you ? Can you church rely on you ? Can the Lord trust you ?

2. MEEKNESS:

Thats the spirit that accepts the blows of others, with the confidence that God is in control. Do you recall the Lord Jesus said, " I am meek and lowly of heart."
(Matt 11:29)

3. TEMPERANCE OR SELF-CONTROL:

Paul's word here pictures the discipline of an athlete who has learned to master his body for the games.
(1 Cor 9:27) Oh, how we need to control our bodies
(1 Pet 2:11) our appetites (Phil 3:19) our indulgences
(Ps 132:4) and our tongues (Jam 3:2) In every area of life self-control is needed ! Now when you read about these " graces," of the Holy Spirit who do you think of ?

The Lord Jesus ! When you think of love you think of Christ, when you think of joy you think of Christ and so on. You see, the fruit of the Spirit is character. Its the kind of person you are. Its how Christlike you are. A Sunday School teacher had been telling her class about the wonderful qualities of the Lord Jesus when He lived on earth. Then she asked, " Where does Jesus live now ?" She fully expected one of the children to say " in Heaven." But she was surprised when a little girl from a poor section of the town responded by saying, " Oh, He lives down our street." Upon further questioning the teacher concluded that someone lived in that child's block whose life radiated the Lord Jesus. What about you ? Is your life radiating Christ ? Are you like Him ?

According to the Lord Jesus the test of any life is its fruit ! Do you pass the test ? Are you like Him ?