

Are We Bearing Good Abundant Fruit?

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Brethren, many of you own or have owned a fruit tree. Fruit trees can be a great blessing and can provide fruit for eating, canning, and giving. I have very fond memories of the fig tree in the backyard of my parents' house when I was a preschooler back in the early 1960's. I remember helping Mom pick the figs, and I remember Mom making her delicious fig preserves every year. I have great memories of that, and to this day, fig preserves are one of my favorites.

There are two basic types of fruit trees: trees that bear fruit and trees that don't bear fruit.

In his publication entitled Why Fruit Trees Fail to Bear, Dr. Shengrui Yao, an Assistant Professor at New Mexico State University writes:

Fruit trees normally begin to bear fruit when they are old enough to flower. Nevertheless, the health of the tree, its environment, its fruiting habits, and the cultural practices you use all influence its ability to produce fruit. Adequate pollination is essential to fruit yield. One unfavorable condition can reduce yield or prevent the tree from bearing any fruit.

Most fruit trees are propagated by grafting or budding the selected variety onto a rootstock. The age (from planting) when trees can be expected to bear fruit depends on the type of fruit you are growing: apple, apricot, and sour cherry require three to five years; peach two to four; pear and plum four to six; and quince and sweet cherry five to seven.

So according to Dr. Yao, most fruit trees do not bear fruit for three to seven years after they have been planted. What is interesting about this time period between planting and bearing the first fruit, the grower or the farmer does not know whether the tree will bear much fruit, whether the tree will bear any fruit, whether the tree will bear good fruit or bad fruit. The grower or the farmer has to wait until the tree begins to bear fruit to determine the condition and yield of the fruit from that tree.

The same is true in our spiritual lives. God the Father plants His Holy Spirit within us at our baptism, and then He patiently waits years and years after our baptism as we grow spiritually, as we mature spiritually, and as we begin to bear fruit. But just like the physical trees, what is not known is the quantity and the quality of the fruit that we will bear.

Bearing good abundant fruit is a hallmark of a Christian and of someone being led by God's Holy Spirit. But bearing good abundant fruit takes work. It takes dedication. It takes perseverance. It takes patience. It takes time.

In my sermon this afternoon entitled Are We Bearing Good Abundant Fruit? in preparation for the upcoming Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread, I would like to explore the subject of where we are in our journey to God's Kingdom, where we are in

overcoming our sins, and where we are in producing the spiritual fruit that God the Father expects and desires from us.

Please turn with me to Galatians 5. To begin with, let's read a very familiar and famous section of scripture dealing with the fruit that reflects God the Father and Jesus Christ working in and through us by Holy Spirit.

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

Galatians 5:22 *But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
23) gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!* (NLT)

In today's sermon, I would like to discuss four questions to consider in helping us to determine what kind of fruit that we are bearing, which is a very important gauge and indicator of where we are in our journey toward God's Kingdom.

The first question to ask ourselves in determining what kind of fruit we are bearing is:

1. Are we redeeming the time?

Please turn with me to Ephesians 5. The Apostle Paul exhorts us to do just that.

Ephesians 5:14 *Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.
15) See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,
16) Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.* (NKV)

The Greek verb for *to redeem* is “ἐξαγοράζω” (exagorazo) Strong's #1805, which means “to buy up or to rescue from loss”. So, redeeming the time is to rescue the time we have from loss.

So brethren, do we live our lives as if our lives have no end? Do we live our lives as if we have plenty of time and plenty of opportunities to grow and develop and to mature spiritually at some unspecified time in the future? Are we redeeming the time that we have left in our physical lives on this earth? Are we making progress? Do we prioritize getting our spiritual house in order? Or do we just keep procrastinating, thinking to ourselves that there is always tomorrow?

God the Father and Jesus Christ are very patient with us. However, there is an expectation and a requirement for us to bear fruit. Please turn with me to Luke 11. There is a time limit for us to bear fruit. Christ discussed the existence of this time limit in a parable to the multitudes.

Luke 13:6 *He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none.*

7) *Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?*

8) *And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it:*

9) *And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.*

In this parable, that time limit was three years with a one-year extension. But the tree was to be cut down if it didn't bear fruit after that one-year extension. There was a time limit after which the tree would be removed. No more time, no more excuses, no more chances, no more patience.

In this parable, God the Father is the owner of the vineyard. Jesus Christ is the dresser of the vineyard. The unfruitful fig tree represents one of the people whom God the Father has called out of this world, who knows the truth, but who has not produced the spiritual fruit that our Heavenly Father desires.

The time limit that God has given us to bear fruit is unknown. God gives us opportunity after opportunity after opportunity to grow, to mature and to bear good fruit. But are we putting off those opportunities? Are we taking God's requirement to bear good abundant fruit seriously?

Please turn with me to Luke 12. Christ gave another parable about a wealthy man who thought he had so much time left in his life. Yet, in reality, he did not.

Luke 12:16 *And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:*

17) *And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?*

18) *And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.*

19) *And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.*

20) *But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?*

21) *So is he that layeth treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God. (NKV)*

Brethren, none of us know how much longer any of us has in our physical lives. We may somehow think that we will live another twenty, thirty, even forty years. Many of us know that we don't have that long. Are we making the most of the time that we have to draw closer to our Heavenly Father and to do His will and to bear the fruit that He desires? Are we redeeming and rescuing from loss the time that we do have left?

Please turn with me to Revelation 3 where we will read about a church that did not redeem the time they had. Christ had John write and warn the church at Laodicea that judgment upon them was coming.

Revelation 3:14 *And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;*

15) *I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.*

16) *So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.*

17) *Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:*

18) *I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.*

19) *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.*

The Laodiceans were part of the called out ones of our Heavenly Father; however, they just did not see nor did they fathom the importance of the immediacy of overcoming their sins and bearing good fruit. They became lax. They became comfortable. They became proud and arrogant. They grew to feel that they really didn't need anything, maybe even God. And in the end, God rejected them for a certain period of time.

I have said many times before in sermons that Church is not a country club. We cannot afford to become too lax and too comfortable. Brethren, is there an urgency in our spiritual lives? Are we drawing closer and closer to God the Father and Jesus Christ with each passing day? Or do we find that we put God the Father "on the shelf" and bring Him out when it is convenient?

Brethren, are we redeeming the time?

The second question to ask ourselves in determining what kind of fruit we are bearing is:

2. Are we overcoming our sins and weaknesses?

Brethren, where are we in overcoming our sins? Are we still trying to overcome sins that we have been fighting against for years, maybe even decades, but without total success? Do we continue to do things that we know do not please God, but because of weakness, we continue to commit the sin? Please turn with me to Romans 7. The Apostle Paul discusses this inner struggle, which is truly a dichotomy.

Romans 7:14 *So the trouble is not with the law, for it is spiritual and good. The trouble is with me, for I am all too human, a slave to sin.*

15) *I don't really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do what I hate.*

16) *But if I know that what I am doing is wrong, this shows that I agree that the law is good.*

17) *So I am not the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it.*

- 18) *And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can't.*
- 19) *I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway.*
- 20) *But if I do what I don't want to do, I am not really the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it.*
- 21) *I have discovered this principle of life—that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong.*
- 22) *I love God's law with all my heart.*
- 23) *But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me.*
- 24) *Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death?*
- 25) *Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord. So you see how it is: In my mind I really want to obey God's law, but because of my sinful nature I am a slave to sin. (NLT)*

Do these verses describe us in our spiritual lives? The Apostle Paul was writing about the daily struggle that every Christian deals with in their spiritual lives. The good that we want to do, we don't do. And the evil that we don't want to do, that's what we do. Paul is talking about two types of sin here in Romans 7.

The first type of sin mentioned in verse 15 is the sin of omission. It is the good that we want to do, but we don't do it.

- a) Sin of Omission

Please turn with me to James 4. James discusses the human frailty of knowing to do good but then not doing it.

James 4:13 *Go to now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain:*

14) *Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away.*

15) *For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.*

16) *But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil.*

17) *Therefore to him that knows to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.*

(KJV)

So knowing to do good and then not doing it is a sin against God. Please turn with me to Luke 10. Everyone knows the parable of the Good Samaritan. But there were two other people included in the parable who did not act in a proper way toward the wounded man.

Luke 10:30 *And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.*

31) *And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.*

32) *And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. (KJV)*

These two people who did not act righteously were a priest and a Levite. They knew God's law of mercy, but they did nothing to help a helpless and injured man. The parable doesn't say whether the victim was conscious or not. The parable is even worse if the victim were conscious and was even moaning or crying out.

The priest and the Levite knew to do good but did nothing. They sinned against God as a result.

The second type of sin mentioned in verse 15 of Romans 7 is the sin of commission. It is the evil that we do when we disobey God's Law.

b) Sin of Commission

Please turn with me to Galatians 5. Whereas Galatians 5:22 lists the fruit of God's Spirit, three verses earlier in Galatians 5:19, we read a different list, a list of sins that we can commit.

Galatians 5:19 *Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, 20) idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21) envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (KJV)*

These sins are active sins, not passive sins. These sins are sins that we commit with our actions, with our thoughts, with our attitudes, and with our words.

Please turn with me to 2 Timothy 3, where we will read about the active sins that describe the society that we live in today at the end of this age.

2 Timothy 3:1 *This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. 2) For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3) Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, 4) Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; 5) Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. (KJV)*

Are there any parts of Galatians 5 and 2 Timothy 3 that describe us? If so, are we overcoming these sins? Paul instructed that we should turn away from these traits and characteristics.

Please turn with me to Romans 6. Paul also addresses the issue of cheap grace, which many in the worldly churches believe in. God forgives us so we can sin all we want to. In fact, some churches teach that the more we sin, the more we show the glory of God because of his infinite grace and mercy. That attitude goes against everything that God wants in us.

Yet do we ever find ourselves thinking “Well, I can sin now, and then I can repent, and then the Father will forgive me.” This is not a righteous attitude. Paul discusses this in Romans 6.

Romans 6:1 *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?*

2) *God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?* (KJV)

So brethren, where are we in overcoming our sins? Are we bearing good fruit in our progress against our struggles?

The third question to ask ourselves in determining what kind of fruit we are bearing is:

3. Is God the Father increasing His Spirit in us?

Brethren, the grand majority of us have been part of the faith for many decades. Personally for me, it has been 48 years. Do we have more of God the Father’s Spirit in us than we did decades ago? Is the Spirit increasing inside us? During this time of introspection in the weeks leading up to Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, we should honestly look at the condition of our spiritual lives to see where we are as vessels of our Heavenly Father’s Spirit.

Brethren, we must be putting sin out of our lives. Now is the time to concentrate on putting the sins out of our lives. But there is no void in this spiritual battle. If we put sin out of our spiritual lives, we must replace that void with more of our Heavenly Father’s Spirit. We are either on an upward path by decreasing in sin and increasing in the Father’s Spirit, or we are on a downward path by increasing in sin and decreasing in the Father’s Spirit.

Brethren, the Feast of Unleavened Bread does not picture putting sin out of our lives, just like it does not picture putting the physical leavening out of our homes. We do not deleaven our homes during the Days of Unleavened Bread. Our homes are deleavened before the Days of Unleavened Bread begin. Likewise, the Feast of Unleavened Bread pictures living a sinless life with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth as Paul described in 1 Corinthians 5:08.

So, brethren, are we putting sin out of our lives more and more? Do we ask our Heavenly Father for the power to do that? Do we ask our Heavenly Father for more and more of His Spirit?

Please turn with me to Luke 11. God the Father wants to give us His Spirit, and He wants to continue to increase His Spirit in us. Jesus addressed this concept in discussing the love of a father.

Luke 11:9 *And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.*

10) *For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.*

11) *If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent?*

12) *Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?*

13) *If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?*

(KJV)

Brethren, do we ask God the Father for more of His Spirit? When was the last time that we actually specifically asked that of Him?

Jesus Christ is our perfect example for us to imitate and for us to follow. Jesus was the only begotten Son of God the Father when He walked this earth 2,000 years ago. Please turn with me to John 3. Jesus was very different from us in so many ways, and one of those ways was that He was always filled with the Holy Spirit and had the Spirit without measure. John the Baptist proclaimed this to the multitudes in John 3:34.

John 3:34 *For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him. (KJV)*

John 3:34 *For he is sent by God. He speaks God's words, for God gives him the Spirit without limit. (NLT)*

So Jesus lived a perfect sinless life, because there was no room for sin in His spiritual life. Because Jesus was filled always with the Holy Spirit to the point of overflowing, there was never any room for any evil thoughts, any evil attitudes, any evil speech, any evil intentions.

John 7:37 *In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.*

38) *He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.*

39) *(But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)*

So the rivers of living water represent God's Holy Spirit which flows through us and out of us. The Spirit influences us to do good to counter the evil influences of the world, of Satan and his demons, and of our own human desires.

Brethren, the Spirit flowing through Jesus was like a powerful artesian well gushing water up from the ground. There are no voids in the artesian well. Everything is filled with fresh clean water. If you try to throw any contaminates into the artesian well, the contaminates are immediately repelled and rejected. There's just no room for any contamination of the artesian well spring.

This is how Jesus never sinned. He was so filled with His Father's Spirit, there was never any room for sin. The Spirit was gushing from Him like water from a fire hose.

But with us in our spiritual lives, the opposite can be true. Please turn with me to 1 Thessalonians 5. The Apostle Paul warns us with four simple words in Greek which are also four simple words in English.

1 Thessalonians 5:19 *Quench not the Spirit.* (KJV)

The Greek verb for *quench* is "σβέννυμι" (sbennumi) Strong's #4570 which means "to extinguish or quench or suppress". Brethren, if we are not exercising the Spirit, if we are not allowing our Heavenly Father to flow His Spirit through us, if we don't make our strong and deep relationship with God the Father the highest priority in our lives, we could be in the process of extinguishing and suppressing His Holy Spirit in us.

Please turn with me again to Ephesians 5. Conversely, God the Father wants us to be filled with His Spirit. Paul exhorted the Ephesian congregation concerning this in Ephesians 5.

Ephesians 5:16 *Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.*

17) *Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.*

18) *And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;*
(KJV)

But brethren, how much and how strong is God the Father's Spirit flowing through us? Is it a trickle? Is there any flow at all? During the next days and weeks, let's focus on increasing that flow and increasing the Spirit that the Father is putting into us.

Brethren, are we "in tune" with God the Father? Are we continuing to study and pray to draw closer to Him and to understand more and more about Him? Please turn with me to 1 Corinthians 2. We have all been immensely blessed to have our minds and our understanding opened to the incredible but simple truth of God the Father's identity in the pages of the Bible. This understanding did not come about by accident or happenstance. God the Father has revealed incredible things about Himself to us through His Spirit.

1 Corinthians 2:9 *But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.*

10) *But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.*

11) *For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.*

12) *Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.*

13) *Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.*

14) *But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (KJV)*

Brethren, are we growing in the Spirit? Are we continuing to yield to God the Father so that He can increase His Spirit in us and increase our understanding of Him?

Please turn with me to Galatians 5. Paul exhorts us to walk in the Spirit and to be led by the Spirit.

Galatians 5:13 *For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.*

14) *For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*

15) *But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.*

16) *This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. :17 – For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would*

18) *But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. (KJV)*

The Greek words *for under the law* are “ὑπὸ νόμον” (upo nomon). *Upo* is a Greek preposition which connotes many meanings dictated in part by the case of the noun after it. *Nomon* is in the accusative case. According to Winer’s Greek Grammar, *upo* followed by the accusative case has the meaning of “subject to the power of”. So verse 18 could read “But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the power of the law.” We are no longer subject to the Law because God the Father has given us favor and grace because we have His Spirit.

So brethren, are we walking in the Spirit? Are we being led by the Spirit? Are we living our lives in a righteous way where God the Father can continually increase His Spirit in us more and more? Are we overcoming and putting out our sins? Are we allowing God the Father’s Spirit to push those sins out of our lives? Are we praying? Are we studying? Are we fasting and drawing closer and closer to our Heavenly Father? Brethren, is God the Father increasing His Spirit in us?

The fourth question to ask ourselves in determining what kind of fruit we are bearing is:

4. What type of fruit are we bearing?

Brethren, God expects us to bear fruit. We just cannot do nothing. I know that that sentence is a double negative and is not good grammar, but there is no better way of stating it. We just cannot do nothing.

Please turn with me to Matthew 25. We all know the parable of the talents.

Matthew 25:14 *For the kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.*

15) *And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.*

16) *Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents.*

17) *And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two.*

18) *But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.*

19) *After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.*

20) *And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more.*

21) *His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.*

22) *He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them.*

23) *His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.*

24) *Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed:*

25) *And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: there thou hast that is thine.*

26) *His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed:*

27) *Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.*

28) *Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents.*

29) *For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.*

30) *And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (KJV)*

In the parable, the first man was given five talents. The second man was given two talents. The first man gained five talents more and bore much fruit. The second man gained two talents more and also bore much fruit. But the third man took his one talent and did nothing with it. That man bore no fruit.

The third man was judged harshly because he had borne no fruit. The man had an excuse, but that excuse was not accepted, and he was cast into outer darkness.

Brethren, are we making excuses for not growing and for not bearing fruit? What excuses will we give to God the Father when He asks for the return on His investment in us?

Please turn with me to John 15. On Passover night, Jesus discussed bearing fruit with His disciples. I would like to go through His discussion verse by verse and meaning by meaning.

John 15:1 *I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.*

2) *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.*

3) *Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.*

4) *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.*

5) *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.*

6) *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.*

7) *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*

8) *Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.*

- a) God the Father is the husbandman (NKJV is vinedresser).
- b) Jesus Christ is the vine.
- c) God the Father cuts off and puts away unfruitful branches.
- d) God the Father prunes the branches which are bearing fruit so that they bear more fruit.
- e) We have to be part of the vine to bear fruit. It is not within us to bear fruit. It is only with God's Holy Spirit can we bear fruit.
- f) Without God's Holy Spirit, we wither and die spiritually.
- g) God the Father is glorified when we bear fruit.

Brethren, what kind of fruit should we be bearing? Please turn with me to Romans 12, where the Apostle Paul lists many fruits that we should be producing. Paul exhorted the members of the congregation in Rome to bear more and more fruit.

Romans 12:5 *So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.*

6) *Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;*

7) *Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching;*

- 8) *Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.*
- 9) *Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.* 10) *Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;*
- 11) *Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;*
- 12) *Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;*
- 13) *Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.*
- 14) *Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. :*
- 15) *Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.*
- 16) *Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.*
- 17) *Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.*
- 18) *If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.*
- 19) *Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.*
- 20) *Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.*
- 21) *Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. (KJV)*

So brethren, from these verses from Romans 12, let's ask ourselves these questions about bearing fruit. How much of the following fruit are we truly bearing?

- a) (Verse 8) Do we encourage others? Are we concerned about others? Do we truly pray for one another? Fellowshiping with brethren is a wonderful opportunity to encourage others who are dealing with many problems. Fellowshiping can be talking with one another at services, calling one another, writing one another, texting one another.
- b) (Verse 8) Are we generous? Do we share with others in need, whether it be with our money, with our skills, or with our time?
- c) (Verse 8) Do we show mercy to one another? It so important that we do not allow bitterness and strife to enter into our relationships with one another in the Church. If we are wronged by someone, are we quick to forgive? Are we quick to try to understand? Are we quick to resolve the wrong?
- d) (Verse 8) Are we cheerful? Do we come to services with a smile? It is hard to comfort others and to encourage others if we walk around in a gloom and doom attitude.
- e) (Verse 10) Are we selfless? Do we honor others before ourselves? Do we let others have the bigger piece of pie? Are we interested more in helping others or more in who gets the credit?
- f) (Verse 12) Do we rejoice? Do we reflect the joy that comes from the hope we have from the knowledge of God's Truth and the future that awaits us?
- g) (Verse 12) Are we patient? Are we growing in patience? Even when we are wronged? Even in crises? Even when driving on the roads and freeways of Houston?

Are we patient with our children? Are we patient with our friends and coworkers? Are we known by others for being patient?

h) (Verse 12) Are we praying? Are we spending time on our knees every day before our Father in prayer? Are we praying effectively? Are we deepening our relationship with our Father and with Jesus Christ? Do we pray for others?

i) (Verse 13) Are we helping with the needs of the brethren? Are we willing to help with the needs of others? Are we willing to help with the needs of the Church brethren? We brethren for the most part are scattered all over the country and beyond. Many brethren have specific needs. Are we ready, willing and able to help those brethren in their needs?

j) (Verse 13) Are we hospitable? Do we invite others in our homes for dinner or just to get together? Do we find ways to fellowship with one another in the Church even though we are scattered?

k) (Verse 14) Are we forgiving to others? Do we truly pray for our enemies and for people who mistreat us and even persecute us?

l) (Verse 16) Are we humble? Do we think too highly of ourselves? There is a big difference in being confident and being arrogant? Are we prideful or are we humble when we deal with others and when we deal with our Heavenly Father?

m) (Verse 17) Are we honest? Honesty is so missing in today's society. We simply live in a society that never tells the truth, that always lies, that always stretches the truth, that always misleads for their own advantage. Are we known at work or at school for being honest?

Brethren, it is obviously clear from scripture that we must be bearing abundant fruit?

So brethren, are we redeeming the time that we have on this earth to bear the maximum fruit that we can?

Are we overcoming our sins and growing closer to God the Father to bear the maximum fruit that we can?

Are we allowing God the Father to increase His Spirit in us so that we can bear the maximum fruit that we can?

Are we bearing the abundant good fruit that God the Father wants us to bear?

In closing, please turn with me to Colossians 1. Paul discusses that we should be fruitful in every good work.

Colossians 1:9 *For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;*

10) That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

Brethren, we must bear fruit. We must bear abundant good fruit. It is not just an expectation that God the Father has of us, it is a requirement that He has set before us.

But brethren, where are we in this process? Are we producing a bumper crop? Or is our spiritual fruit tree sickly and not bearing fruit?

Brethren, it is never too late to start to bear fruit. God the Father and Jesus Christ will help us if we have the desire. Our Heavenly Father will fill our weaknesses with His strengths. He will tend to us. He will nurture us. But we must want His help, and we must move forward in our journey. In the coming days and weeks, let us think and meditate on these subjects and issues.

Brethren, I close with the question that is the title of my sermon: "Are we bearing good abundant fruit?"