

01 – THE FOUNDATION FOR FRUITFULNESS

⁸By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

John 15:8, New King James Version

We all desire to live fruitful lives. God desires for us to bear much fruit (not just a little bit) because a fruitful life will benefit us; it will also bless those we do life with, and it will bring glory to God (John 13:35). But a desire to produce good fruit is not enough – in order to produce good fruit in your life, you need to have the right nature (root), and you need empowering. In creation, everything produces after its own kind (Genesis 1:11): plant life produces plant life, animals reproduce animals, and humans reproduce humans.

⁴³“For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. ⁴⁴For every tree is known by its own fruit. For *men* do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush. ⁴⁵A good man out of the good treasure of his heart (or wealth deposited in him) brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

Luke 6:43-45, New King James Version (brackets mine)

An apple tree has the potential to produce apples because it is in its nature to do so. The seed and root determine the kind of the fruit that can be produced, and it determines the potential of fruitfulness as well. A good, healthy tree doesn't produce bad fruit and a bad, or unhealthy, tree will not bear good fruit. Jesus shows us that the fruit in our lives is determined by the deposit (seed and root) that is within us. There are only two kinds of seed or roots: good or evil. There is no middle ground. You either have an evil, sinful heart because you are born of Adam and you have been born with a sinful nature (or heart) (Romans 5:12), or you have a good, righteous heart because you've put your faith in Christ and He has made you right, or good (Romans 5:1; 2 Corinthians 5:21).

Righteous actions (good fruit) flow from a righteous (good) heart (or nature), while sinful actions (bad fruit) flow from a sinful (bad) heart (or nature). Unbelievers (sinful, unrighteous nature) can do good things and show good fruit (like the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control in Galatians 5:22-23) but the fruit cannot be sustained nor is it eternal. It also doesn't change their nature – it doesn't make them righteous (saved) just because they do righteous, good things. They need to put their faith in Christ for salvation. Likewise, a Christian (who has a righteous nature) can do bad things and show bad fruit (like the works of the flesh: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these in Galatians 5:19-21), but it doesn't change or undo their identity and their righteous nature: the Christ nature in them.

¹⁹ For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.

Romans 5:19 New King James Version

In the natural, there are a number of things that would hinder an apple tree from producing apples: things like not getting enough water or sun, over-fertilizing or fungal disease. Spiritually, there can only be one of two reasons why someone would not be bearing good fruit in their lives. Firstly, it could be a nature problem: if someone hasn't received Jesus and been born-again, they will not and cannot produce the fruit of Christ in their life. We were all born sinners because of Adam, but when we are reborn we receive the eternal life of God in us and are empowered to live a fruitful life - a life of victory. Christians no longer have the sin nature that drives unbelievers to do sinful things. Christians have a righteous nature which drives them towards righteous actions. However, the flow of righteous actions isn't automatic. Even if a Christian doesn't produce the good fruit that they are able to, they still have the eternal root of eternal life.

5 Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God...

1 John 5:1, New King James Version

4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.

1 John 5:4, New King James Version

Secondly, someone who has received the eternal life of Christ and been reborn, but is bearing bad fruit or isn't producing the good fruit that they could, doesn't have a nature problem. Sinful actions do not make your nature sinful, just like righteous actions cannot make your nature righteous. Righteousness is a gift that is received (Romans 5:17) and cannot be earned or achieved. A Christian who is sinning (bearing bad fruit) or isn't producing fruit like they could, doesn't have a nature problem: they have a belief problem.

6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge...

Hosea 4:6 New King James Version

32 And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

John 8:32 New King James Version

2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind...

Romans 12:2 New King James Version

We seem to think that ignorance is bliss, but in actual fact, what you don't know is causing you to perish or even killing you. When we come to know the truth, we start to walk in freedom - but the lies that we believe (either because of ignorance or because we have been deceived) hold us in bondage. Transformation (change) can take place in our lives when we change our way of thinking (renew our minds). The way we think determines the way we live (Proverbs 23:7). We need to change our thinking if we want to see change in our lives. If we want to bear the fruit of Christ in our lives we need to realize that the seed for that fruitfulness is in us, and we need to start thinking in accordance with that truth - we need to start thinking more like Jesus and less like the

world and the devil (Romans 8:6). We need to start thinking in accordance with our new nature (2 Corinthians 5:16-17) and focus on things above; on the risen Christ who lives in us (Colossians 3:1-3; Colossians 1:27). We are no longer sinners (Romans 6:6) for we have been saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8). We have been made the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:21).

⁵"I am the sprouting vine and you're my branches. As you live in union with me as your source, fruitfulness will stream from within you—but when you live separated from me you are powerless.

John 15:5 The Passion Translation

The Christian life isn't about trying to be fruitful. The Christian life isn't about trying to get closer to God. The Christian life isn't about becoming more like Jesus. The Christian life is about discovering what happened to you the moment you received Jesus and became a Christian; it's about realising how close you are to God – that you are one with Him (1 Corinthians 6:17). When you realize that Christ is in you and you live in the consciousness of that reality, you will start living more fruitful accidentally than you ever did trying your best to.

¹¹For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:11 New King James Version

Jesus is the foundation of a fruitful Christian life. Awakening to the reality of Christ in you is the foundation for an abundantly fruitful life (Colossians 1:27).

Questions.

1. Romans 5:18-19
 - a. What did Adam's offense (sin) bring?
 - b. What did Jesus' obedience bring?
2. Romans 5:1.
 - a. How does justification come?
 - b. What does justification bring?
3. What are the two reasons for a lack of good fruit or no good fruit in a person's life?
4. 2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 John 5:1,4; John 8:32; Romans 12:2. Proverbs 23:7. How does that which brings fruitfulness come into a person's life?
5. 1 Corinthians 3:11. What is the foundation for a fruitful Christian life?
6. Personal reflection: Do you identify bad fruit in your life which needs to get dealt with?
 - a. If it's a nature problem: you can deal with that by receiving Christ and being born-again. If that's the case, then pray this prayer:

Jesus, I confess that You are Lord and Saviour. I believe in my heart that God, You raised Jesus from the dead. I receive salvation now. I receive Your Spirit to live in me. I receive eternal life! Thank You, Jesus.

- b. If it's a belief problem, I encourage you to continue digging into the truth of the Word, to let go of the lies that you believe about yourself and embrace the truth of what God says about you. Mind renewal is a process, and so keep digging in and don't give up! Keep focused on Christ in you and keep allowing your heart and mind to be filled with truth.

Answers:

1.
 - a. Judgement upon all to condemnation. Many were made sinners.
 - b. Justification of life. Many made righteous.
2.
 - a. By faith.
 - b. Peace with God through Jesus.
3. Nature (not born again), or belief (they are born again, but have a belief problem).
4. Receive Christ. Discover truth. Change your way of thinking. See yourself differently.
5. Jesus.
6. Personal reflection

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