

The Home Builders
Week 6
Fruit

For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. (Luke 6:43-44)

In the Bible the term “fruit” generally refers to our works and/or our words. The fruit of our lives as believers is the tangible outworking of a life devoted to Jesus.

“This fruit (Galatians 5:22-23) is the manifestation of God’s character as a result of abiding in Him and Him in us” (Home Builders, p. 89).

The apostle Paul gives us further understanding in the area of “fruit.”

1. Paul’s Caution-Galatians 5:13-18

We have been called to freedom in Christ. Beware, beloved, of the overwhelming possibility of stepping into the flesh (See Romans 7:14-25). “Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please” (Galatians 5:16-17). This is a strong reminder that believers are capable of committing **any and every** sin because of the indwelling flesh, which remains after conversion. In simplest terms “the flesh” is the habitual pattern of sin imprinted on our memory banks from our lives prior to conversion. When we return to these habit patterns of the flesh, the Spirit of God will bring conviction to bear in the lives of God’s people. If the still small voice of the Spirit is neglected and repentance is not produced, God’s discipline will follow (see Hebrews 12:4-11).

2. Paul’s Contrast-Galatians 5:19-25

Paul, in an effort to help us understand the mandate to walk by the Spirit, contrasts **the works of the flesh** with **the fruit of the Spirit**. Paul writes, “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 (those who refuse to repent and be saved) that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (Galatians 5:19-24 parenthesis mine). Those who reject Jesus and choose a lifestyle contrary to Him without repentance and faith are unbelievers. “Those who practice such things, will not inherit the kingdom of God.” Their lifestyle gives evidence to their unregenerate state.

Paul contrasts the “deeds of the flesh” with “the fruit of the Spirit.” Through our surrendered wills and sanctified hearts, Christ in us will crucify the flesh and produce the fruit of the Spirit. However, it is important to understand that all believers will

(occasionally) step into the flesh and fall back on sinful habit patterns of their lives prior to conversion. Sinless perfection for the people of God is unattainable in this life. Praise God, we will be made perfect when we see the Lord! These sojourns into fleshly behavior (should) become less common and the length of these backwards missteps (should) become shortened as we grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ. Galatians 5:25 says, "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit." If we are genuinely converted **our practice** (or pattern of life) will gradually (begin to) measure up to **our position** in Christ through the process called sanctification. Praise God, one day we will be made perfect when we see Jesus. "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is" (1 John 3:2). Until then, beloved, we strive to be conformed to His image!

3. Paul's Correction-Philippians 4:1-5

As we are looking at the usage of "fruit" in the Word of God, we cannot move on without looking at the importance of the fruit of our lips, demonstrated by **our words**. Our works and our words readily reveal who is at the control center of our lives. Proverbs 18:20-23 says, "With the fruit of a man's mouth his stomach will be satisfied; he will be satisfied with the product of his lips. Death and life are in the power of the tongue; and those who love it will eat its fruit."

The book of Philippians is dominated with the theme of the joy of the Lord. The Philippian church held a special place of affection in Paul's heart. Throughout his letter, Paul affirmed his love for them and the spiritual delight he felt for their forward progress with the Lord. Paul longed to see his Philippian friends and co-laborers in the faith. He was homesick for them. Sweet memories of the Philippian flock flood Paul's soul, bringing joy to his heart and encouragement to his weary soul. Paul wrote, "Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved" (Philippians 4:1). Like a father proudly considering the godly maturity of his child, Paul reflected on the spiritual growth of the body of Christ in Philippi and the great delight they brought to him. But Paul was aware of a problem in the assembly of believers in Philippi. Sadly, there was some trouble in paradise!

Solomon wrote, "Dead flies make a perfumer's oil stink" (Ecclesiastes 10:1). That is, when dead flies are discovered floating in a vat of perfumed oil, the whole batch is ruined! And it only takes a few flies in the ointment to spoil the sweet fragrance of the perfume and render it worthless.

Likewise, in the body of Christ, one or two malcontents can spoil the fellowship and stink up the place! In the midst of the sweet aroma of a united fellowship striving to fulfill the purposes and plans of God, "dead flies" were spoiling the ointment! Division among believers spoils intimacy in fellowship, shakes the faith of new converts, damages the cause of Christ to the unbelieving world, and breaks the heart of God.

At the church of Philippi, Paul was aware of "dead flies" in the ointment. Epaphroditus brought word to Paul of the conflict between two women in the congregation, Euodia and Syntyche. We are not certain of the source of strife between the two women. At any

rate, Paul urged the two women to reconcile their differences and “live in harmony in the Lord” (Philippians 4:2). Take note that these two women had been faithful in their service to the Lord. Paul wrote they had “shared in [his] struggle in the cause of the gospel and their names [were written] in the book of life” (Philippians 4:3). The word “shared” means “to strive together for, labor with, to strive together with one in something.” It has the idea to be on the same team in an athletic contest. These appear to be spiritually mature women (probably leaders in Women’s Ministry) who had allowed the world, the flesh, or the devil to lure them into sin, hinder the Holy Spirit’s work in their lives, and engage in fleshly behavior resulting in a spat of some sort.

Can you imagine what it felt like to be one of these two women? In a letter that contained no other rebukes, no correction of doctrinal error, or reprimand for moral failure, in a letter that consists of positive encouragement to press on in the Lord, in a letter intended to be read publicly to the congregation, can you imagine? Can you imagine hearing your name announced as one of the two “dead flies” in the ointment that was spoiling the fragrance of Christian harmony? Mercifully, the reference to Euodia and Syntyche was brief. Much was left unsaid causing me to fear that the details of this squabble were well known to the congregation.

Paul’s gentle plea for unity is immediately followed by an admonition to rejoice in the Lord. Paul writes, “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near!” (Philippians 4:4-5). This does not mean the Lord’s return is near (although surely it is) but rather that He is near to help.

Is it possible that these ladies had lost their joy, turned against each other, and lashed out with harsh words? We don’t know the root cause of the conflict but we do know the end result was disharmony and the whole congregation was affected.

The Spirit of God produces the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control) in us as we surrender to Him. He produces the fruit of righteousness in our walk as well as in our words. That is the testimony the Christian world should be known for, not bickering and in-fighting!

Beloved, yield to the Holy Spirit and allow Him to rule and reign in your hearts and your lives.

By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; and by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches. (Proverbs 24:3-4)