

Spiritual Life and Patient Fruit Bearing

By Tom Ross

Luke 8:14-15 declares: ***"And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring forth no fruit to perfection. But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience."***

These verses are found in The Parable of the Sower where Jesus reveals four types of hearers represented by a certain type of soil, and their reception or rejection of the seed sown which represents the Word of God. Three out of four hearers do not bring forth fruit because they are unregenerate and incapable of bearing spiritual fruit even though the pure seed of the Word has been sown. They are dead in trespasses and in sins, wholly incapable of producing spiritual affections, desires, or fruit such as repentance and faith. Lost men, though responsible to repent and believe, are incapable of doing so because they have only a carnal nature that rejects God and His Word. Romans 8:7-8 confirms why lost people cannot bring forth spiritual fruit with patience: **"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God."** In another place Jesus declared that **"the flesh profiteth nothing"** (John 6:63) illustrating why the natural man who is blinded and captivated by Satan (II Cor. 4:4; II Tim. 2:26) fails to discern the spiritual glories of the Gospel of grace (I Cor. 2:14). Interestingly enough, the Parable of the Sower enforces the command to preach the Gospel to every creature, sowing the seed of the Word on every type of soil, regardless of the results. All the while knowing that statistically an overwhelming majority of people

we witness too will never be saved and bring forth spiritual fruit. Our responsibility remains the same, to sow the good seed of the Word of God everywhere we go on every type of soil.

The one type of hearer that brings **"forth fruit with patience"** is contrasted with the previous three hearers who were unfruitful. The hearer that brings forth fruit is said to be a **"good ground"** hearer, who has **"an honest and good heart."** Certainly, this hearer is not good, honest, or fruitful by nature because he is in the very same condition as the other hearers. All that was stated above about the unfruitful hearers may also be said about the natural condition of the good ground hearer. All men are spiritually dead, ignorant, unfruitful, vile, and sinful due to their fleshly kinship to Adam: **"As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doth good, no, not one...For all of sinned and come short of the glory of God...Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned"** (Rom. 3:10-12, 23; 5:12). The total depravity and inability of the natural man is an indisputable fact of Scripture.

So how can any man be brought out of spiritual deadness to life, out of ignorance to repentance and faith, out of the darkness of depravity to light, out of being unfruitful to bearing fruit? The answer is simple and profound; yet rejected by a majority of professing Christendom. The difference between the unfruitful hearers and the fruitful one is the regenerating, life giving power of the Holy Spirit in the new birth. According to Jesus the only way any man can see (spiritually discern) and enter into the kingdom of God is to be born of the Spirit (John 3:3-5). In the context of John 3 it is

important to note that you must be born of the Spirit (3:3-8) in order to believe on Christ (3:16). The Spirit of God must be in you in order to see and believe the glory of the Gospel of Christ for you. It is the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration, who prepares the heart to receive the good seed of the Gospel in saving faith. There must be spiritual life before the exercise of saving faith as illustrated by the fact that **"faith"** is said to be the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23), meaning that faith is a product of the Spirit's work. All spiritual fruitfulness in a believer, from beginning to end, is traced back to the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit in the elect: **"For it is God that worketh in you both to will and do of his good pleasure"** (Phil. 2:13). The reason why the good ground hearer received the seed and brought forth fruit is because the Spirit of God gave spiritual life in regeneration, and immediately enabled the hearer to exercise the gifts of repentance and saving faith. I Thessalonians 1:5 states the truth this way: **"For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake."** The unfruitful hearers in the parable had the very same seed sown unto them as the fruitful hearer. The difference is the power of the Holy Ghost creating spiritual life in the sovereign work of regeneration, thus enabling the sinner to receive the good seed of the Gospel and appropriating it by the gift of saving faith (Eph. 2:8-10). Unlike the hardshell, I believe the Spirit's work of regeneration is always and immediately followed by the exercise of the spiritual gifts of repentance and faith. There is a logical order, spiritual life must precede or come before faith, but there is no measurable time lapse between regeneration and conversion.

Another thing that separates the good ground hearer from the other three is that he brings **"forth fruit with patience."** This again is not due to any intrinsic superiority in the good ground hearer, but rather by the fruitful presence of the Holy Spirit who now indwells the believer. The Spirit

of God begins the work of spiritual fruit bearing in the elect in regeneration and carries it forth in sanctification. The indwelling of the Spirit sanctifies the truth of Scripture in the heart of the believer and the spiritual product is called the **"fruit of the Spirit"** (Gal. 5:22-23). This spiritual patience is marked by abiding in Christ, walking in Him, and obeying His commands. This joyful abiding, walking, and fruit bearing can only be done by those in Christ, as they are empowered by the Spirit. John 15:7-11 states: **"If ye abide in me and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."** God's elect will inevitably bring forth spiritual fruit due to their inseparable union to Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. This cannot be said of the unregenerate. There is a stark contrast between the elect and the reprobate set forth in Romans 2:7-8: **"To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory, and honour and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath."** Two entirely different destinations await the regenerate and the unregenerate. Those born of the Spirit, washed in the blood of the Lamb, and sanctified by truth will bear spiritual fruit that ultimately brings them into conformity to the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who are unregenerate who remain in unbelief, will one day stand before the Lord at the Great White Throne Judgment to be judged for their dead and unfruitful works. They will be cast into the Lake of Fire to suffer the wrath of God for all eternity.

Dear reader, have you inspected your fruit or lack thereof lately? Which company are you in? **"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for**

whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting” (Gal. 5:7-8). Revelation 22:11-12 declares: “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.”

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