

“DON’T BE IGNORANT” (Part 1)

About Spiritual Fruit (Romans 1:13; John 15:1-8)

INTRO: Romans 1:13 Paul says, “I desperately want to come and have a harvest (bear some fruit) among you.” Paul hoped to have similar fruit as when he had visited other Gentiles. The quest for spiritual fruit was at the center of all Paul did - and so should it be for us. B. Wilkinson . . .

I. THE MANDATE TO BEAR FRUIT (John 15:1-8)

“Fruit” is mentioned in 24 of 27 NT books, over 70 times in all. Gifts in 4 books! The most being 8 times in John 15 alone (15:2, 8, 16). We were planted by God to bear fruit. Fruit evidences our salvation (Matt. 3:8, 7:16, 20). It is result of growth – a sign of maturity. It is external evidence of internal life. Bearing fruit glorifies God. Note: We are expected to bear fruit, not produce it (v. 2). Jesus is the Vine who produces the fruit we bear—proof of salvation (Jn. 15:8). Fruit is excess life—“good works” (Jn. 3:14), “shine as lights” (Matt. 5:16). When we bear fruit God is glorified and we find joy (Jn. 15:8, 11).

II. THE MANIFESTATIONS OF FRUIT

Spiritual fruit comes in three varieties:

- A. *CHARACTER* (Attitude) - Who you are (Gal. 5:22-23). One root with 9 varieties:
- B. *CONDUCT* (Action) - What you do - right actions
 - 1. Godly living (Tit. 3:14; Eph. 2:8-10; Rom. 6:22; Eph. 5:9; Phil. 1:10-11; Col. 1:10)
 - 2. Generous giving to the saints (Rom. 15:25-28; Ph. 4:17)
 - 3. Continual praising (Heb. 13:15) - Mouth reveals heart. Are you a complainer or a praiser?
- C. *CONVERT* (John 4:4, 31-38; Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 3:5-7; 16:15; Ph. 1:22) - People won to Christ are spiritual fruit. This I think is more of what Paul had in mind in Romans 1:13. The spiritual fruit of sharing Christ and seeing people get saved. Bearing fruit makes us attractive and irresistible. Constantly living the first two varieties creates opportunities for the third.

III. THE DEGREES OF BEARING FRUIT (John 15:2, 5, 8)

Each of us is a branch producing some measure of fruit. How much fruit does God want? What is your degree in fruit bearing? Four Degrees:

- 1. *Little* or No Fruit - 40% (v.2) – N.F. degree (barren, unproductive, empty) “in me” Christians? (not much of one!) – all been here. Problem? v. 5c-apart from Him. Fruitless and barren branches Saved? Rest are fruitful and productive. Note: Half of all Christians bear little or no fruit!
- 2. *Some* Fruit – 30% (v.2) S.F. degree - *The difference between NF and SF is discipline.* Disciplining required (sin issue). Lifted up and cleansed by discipline. He lifts up – Lifts out of dirt and cleans. Discipling (sin issue).

- 3. *More* Fruit – 20% (v.2) M.F. degree – *The difference between SF & MF is pruning.* Pruning (less about sin and more self-issue) – purge, purify, cleanse to bear more fruit. Cutting off the suckers. Discipline vs. Pruning... still hurts and painful.
- 4. *Much* More Fruit” - 10% (v.5,8) – MMF degree (Much More Fruit) – overflowing basket. *The difference between MF and MMF is abiding.* Goal (30, 60, 100-fold (Mk. 4:8). Abiding 10 times in Jn. 15. Why so? Staying, remaining, quality time and obedience are about relationship.

How progression works: When we have NO fruit, God disciplines us in love. When we fail to produce SOME fruit (because of sin), God will discipline us in love. When we fall short of producing MORE fruit, God will prune us in self to bring us to surrender. To produce MUCH MORE fruit, we must abide in Him. The more fruit we bear the more God is glorified.

KEYS to Spiritual Success: The key to glorifying God is *bearing fruit*. The key to bearing fruit is *abiding*. The key to abiding is *obeying*. The key to obeying is *loving* (and trusting). The key to loving is *knowing God* better. Here’s the FLOW:

Know ➡ Love ➡ Obey ➡ Abide ➡ Fruit ➡ Glorify

CONC: Paul says we are not to be ignorant of our responsibility to bear spiritual fruit in every form. Jesus said, “By their fruits you shall know them.” How are you known? By works or fruit? “WORKS” says effort, labor, strain, toil. “FRUIT” says unfolding, quietness, beauty. Which branch best describes you? What would your degree be today? N.F., S.F. M.F., M.M.F.? The more fruit we bear the more we glorify God (make Him look good). How much fruit is in your life today? God is looking for fruit, is He finding enough in your life? W. W. Wiersbe quote . . .