

Faithful AND Fruitful

John 15:1-8

John 15:1-8 - "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples."

Introduction:

- A. The Bible places a great premium on faithfulness. But some, particularly in our tradition, seem to have redefined the term solely in doctrinal terms. That is, you are faithful IF you believe the right doctrines. Practically speaking, many of us have come to practice the "faith only" doctrine that our denominational friends preach!
- B. Actually, there is no faithfulness without fruitfulness.

I. The Necessity Of Fruitfulness

A. Jesus demands it - Jn 15:2

John 15:2 - "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit."

B. We are called by Jesus for this purpose, to bear fruit - Jn 15:16

John 15:16 - "You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you."

C. We glorify God by bearing fruit - Jn 15:8

John 15:8 - "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples."

D. We prove ourselves Jesus' disciples by bearing fruit - Jn 15:8

E. We please God by bearing fruit - Col. 1:10

Colossians 1:10 - so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;

II. The Identity of the Fruit We Must Bear

A. Demonstration of repentance - Matt 3:7-10

Matthew 3:7-10 - But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance; and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father'; for I say to you that from these stones God is able to raise up children to Abraham. The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

B. Fitting words - Matt. 12:33-37

Matthew 12:33-37 - "Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for the tree is known by its fruit. You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. The good man brings out of his

good treasure what is good; and the evil man brings out of his evil treasure what is evil. But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”

C. Godly character traits - Gal. 5:22-23

Galatians 5:22-23 - But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

D. Meeting the needs of others - Rom. 15:25-28

Romans 15:25-28 - but now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints. For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. Yes, they were pleased to do so, and they are indebted to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they are indebted to minister to them also in material things. Therefore, when I have finished this, and have put my seal on this fruit of theirs, I will go on by way of you to Spain.

E. Financial support of preachers - 1 Cor. 9:3-11

1 Corinthians 9:3-11 - My defense to those who examine me is this: Do we not have a right to eat and drink? Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas? Or do only Barnabas and I not have a right to refrain from working? Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat the fruit of it? Or who tends a flock and does not use the milk of the flock? I am not speaking these things according to human judgment, am I? Or does not the Law also say these things? For it is written in the Law of Moses, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING." God is not concerned about oxen, is He? Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written, because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher to thresh in hope of sharing the crops. If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?

F. Conversion of unbelievers - Rom. 1:13; 1 Cor. 16:15; Col. 1:3-6

Romans 1:13 - I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that often I have planned to come to you (and have been prevented so far) so that I may obtain some fruit among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles.

1 Corinthians 16:15 - Now I urge you, brethren (you know the household of Stephanas, that they were the first fruits of Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves for ministry to the saints),

Colossians 1:3-6 - We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, 4 since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints; 5 because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel 6 which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth;

III. *Focus on Conversion and Church Growth as Fruit-bearing*

A. God wants us to be more than faithful in what we believe and teach. He wants us to be fruitful in what we do.

B. To listen to some, you would think that faithfulness and failure are synonymous. They seem to think that, if you teach the truth, people will not listen and the church will shrink to the faithful

few. And, that if a church is growing surely they've compromised their principles somewhere. I deny this is so.

C. We are fruitful, we are successful, when we fulfill the Great Commission - Mk 16:15; Matt. 28:19

Mark 16:15 - And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation."

Matthew 28:19 - "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit..."

D. We are God's fellow workers - 1 Cor. 3:9; 1 Thess. 3:2 (And, incidentally, fellow workers with one another - 3 Jn 5-8; Rom. 16:3, 9, 21)

1 Corinthians 3:9 - For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.

1 Thessalonians 3:2 - and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith,

3 John 5-8 - Beloved, you are acting faithfully in whatever you accomplish for the brethren, and especially when they are strangers; and they have testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. For they went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore we ought to support such men, so that we may be fellow workers with the truth.

Romans 16:3 - Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus,

Romans 16:9 - Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and Stachys my beloved.

Romans 16:21 - Timothy my fellow worker greets you, and so do Lucius and Jason and Sosipater, my kinsmen.

1. God has chosen the teaching/preaching of the gospel by which to save sinful men - 2 Cor. 4:7; Rom. 10:13-14

2 Corinthians 4:7 - But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves;

Romans 10:13-14 - for "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED." How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?

2. When the gospel is preached, God will cause the growth - 1 Cor. 3:6; Col. 2:18-19

1 Corinthians 3:6 - I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth.

Colossians 2:18-19 - Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God.

a....God will lead a Philip to a Treasurer - Acts 8

b....Or a Peter to a Cornelius - Acts 10

E. Faithfulness is more than a belief, it is a behavior, a willingness to take risks and it will lead to fruitfulness - Matt. 25:14-23

Conclusion:

A. Jesus reserved His severest judgment for the unfruitful - Matt. 25:18, 24-30; 21:18-19

Matthew 25:18 - “But he who received the one talent went away, and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

Matthew 25:24-30 - “And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow and gathering where you scattered no seed. And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours.' But his master answered and said to him, 'You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow and gather where I scattered no seed. Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest. Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents.' For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Matthew 21:18-19 - Now in the morning, when He was returning to the city, He became hungry. Seeing a lone fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it except leaves only; and He said to it, “No longer shall there ever be any fruit from you.” And at once the fig tree withered.

B. Which will it be for you? Faithful or unfaithful, fruitful or unfruitful? Consider - Jn 15:2

C. The power to be fruitful is only to be found in Jesus Christ. We must abide in Him - Jn 15:4-5