

A Cup Overflowing – A study of the Christian life

Lesson 2:

A Christian Life is...

A Fruit-filled Life

...a fruit-filled life

● What comes to mind when you hear that?

“²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”

- Our lives are “filled” with more “fruit” than the fruit of the Spirit.

- So what does that mean?

“More” fruit?

● Now wait a minute here.

- If we are to “live by the Spirit” (5:16 & 25), and we are “led by the Spirit” (5:18 and Rom 8:14), how can our lives be characterized by fruit *other* than the “fruit of the Spirit”?
- What other fruit fills the life of a Christian?
 - Since the fruit of the Spirit is fruit produced *by* the Holy Spirit, the “other” fruit is, of course, the fruit *we* produce in our own lives.
 - John 15:5

The fruit of the Spirit

● Gal 5:16-25

● “But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.” (v 18)

- “not under law”? What does *that* mean?

● “...those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.” (v 21)

- Does that bother you?
- Ever been guilty of jealousy? How about envy? Should you worry about inheriting the kingdom of God?

The fruit of the Spirit

- “The acts of the sinful nature are...
but the fruit of the Spirit is...”
- Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.
 - Nine items. What about knowledge? Perseverance? Godliness?
 - Notice what Paul says after his “list”: “Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.” (v 25)
 - Also notice what Peter says after his “list”: “If anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.”

Fruit

²²“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”

Gal 5:22-23

“...add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; ⁶and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.”

2 Peter 1:5-7

- What do you make of the fact that Paul *begins* his list with love and Peter *ends* his list with it?

Fruit of the Christian

- What did Jesus say about us producing fruit?
 - “...by their fruit you will recognize them.” Mt 7:20
 - “If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit...” John 15:5
 - “This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”
John 15:8
 - “No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. ⁴⁴Each tree is recognized by its own fruit...” Luke 6:43-44

“I am the vine...”

- John 15:1-17 (read)
- We need to get past verse 2 before we can move on.
 - “He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit...”
 - “cuts off” = airo (Greek)
 - “...while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.”

“I am the vine...”

- John 15:1-17 (read)
- We need to get past verse 2 before we can move on.
- The rest of the passage is clear – we only bear fruit if we remain in Jesus. If we don't remain in Jesus, we're thrown into the fire.
- So, how does Jesus make the transition from a vine, branches, and fruit to the topic of love?
 - Is verse 9 a different topic, or a continuation?

Fruit

- So, let's wrap this up...
- The fruit of the Spirit is:
 - love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control
- The fruit of a Christian is good works, enabled by:
 - faith, goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, love
- We only produce fruit if we are in Christ, because it is his Spirit who *empowers* us to produce fruit.

Next week...

- A Christian Life is *An Evangelism-filled Life*

Notes to accompany Lesson 2: A Christian Life is a Fruit-filled Life

Slide 2:

- Most likely what comes to mind is “the fruit of the Spirit” (Gal 5:22-23)
 - Our lives are “filled” with more “fruit” than the fruit of the Spirit.
 - I won’t ask you whether you believe that or not, because at this point I suspect there are many of you who would say no.
 - This isn’t the kind of statement that easily stands on its own without further explanation, so...
 - In order for you to “buy in” to that idea, I need to first explain what I mean.

Slide 3:

- This just doesn’t seem right.
 - I didn’t say “our lives are *characterized* by fruit *other* than the FOTS”. I said “our lives are *filled* with more fruit than the FOTS”. There’s a critical difference, but the burden isn’t on you to figure out what the difference is, the burden is on me to tell you what I mean.
 - So let me ask: *What other fruit fills the life of a Christian?*
 - The distinction I want to draw is that the FOTS is fruit that the *Spirit produces in our life*, but the “other fruit” that fills the life of a Christian is the fruit he or she produces – no doubt as a *result* of the FOTS.
 - Let’s be quick to acknowledge here that although God will not produce fruit in our lives without our consent (i.e., our submission to his will), it is still **his** work – “...apart from me you can do nothing”. (John 15:5)

Slide 4:

- Let’s look at the whole context: (Gal 5:16-25 NIV)

“¹⁶So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

¹⁷For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. ¹⁸But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law. ¹⁹The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. ²⁵Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”

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- It simply means that our salvation doesn't depend on our success in keeping the law, it depends solely on the sacrifice Christ has already made on our behalf, and on our acceptance of that gift of grace.
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- It *should* bother you, but it shouldn't make you doubt your salvation.
- It should bother you because you are guilty of sin, as are we all.

Slide 5:

- The fruit the Holy Spirit produces in our life is in contrast to the acts that our sinful nature will commit (even more than “commit” – “be characterized by”) without his presence. We still commit “acts of the sinful nature”, but our life is not characterized by them.
 - Paul never intended his listing in Galatians 5 to be an all-inclusive list of all the positive changes the Spirit works on one who has given his life to Christ. He's merely saying that these *are* the workings of the Spirit. Peter, on the other hand (2 Peter 1:5-9) makes another point. His letter is to caution the church about the presence of false teachers & false prophets, and to encourage them to be ready for Christ's return. “If you possess these qualities in increasing measure” (v 8), “you will receive...the eternal kingdom...” (v 11). Not that we will attain it of our own work, but these qualities will “keep [us] from being ineffective and unproductive” (v 8). IOW, having these qualities, and working to perfect them, will allow *us* to produce more fruit.
 - The point being that since we are letting the Spirit lead us, and are allowing him to bear his fruit in our lives, we need to “keep in step” with him and produce our own fruit in keeping with his. Not an easy task, and we will always fall short, but still our goal.
 - Does Peter say “If anyone does not have them, he is no longer saved?” No, he merely says that “he has forgotten” that he is saved. He has failed to give Christ's sacrifice the proper prominence in his life.

Slide 6:

- It's easy to get caught up in over-philosophizing these passages, and there are probably many connections. One connection I think is obvious though, is this:
 - Paul's list is the fruit produced by the Holy Spirit in our lives. This fruit cannot be produced unless we have first *received* the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). The gift of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit was made possible by an act of Love (capital “L” intentional) on God's part. All other fruit is produced, and all other blessings flow because of that act of love. **Because** of that love, we have joy, we receive peace, etc.
 - Peter's list, OTOH, is fruit the Christian produces in his own life, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and because of it. We don't even *receive* such an indwelling unless we first have faith (not coincidentally the first item in Peter's list). That faith produces goodness, etc., until the culmination of all these traits

truly produces the kind of agape love that characterizes the life of a Christian. Also not coincidentally, this is the same type of love that Paul begins his list with!

Slide 7:

- Give the class enough time to respond and come up with answers of their own.
 - The context of this verse is that of false teachers. It is by their fruit that you can recognize false teachers. If that is true though, it also makes sense that by their fruit you can recognize Christians.
 - Pretty self-explanatory. Is the reverse true? *If someone is bearing much fruit, does it mean he is in Jesus?*
 - A Christian's fruit always glorifies the Father. It is **by our fruit** that we show whose disciples we are!
 - This was my point 3 bullets above, on Matthew 7:20 – if a false teacher can be recognized by his fruit, a Christian can also be recognized by his fruit (the generic “he” applies here to all Christians – not just males).

Slide 8:

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ²He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. ³You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

⁵“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. ⁸This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

⁹“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. ¹¹I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. ¹²My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. ¹³Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. ¹⁷This is my command: Love each other.”

- Two images at the beginning of this passage that are either intriguing or potentially troubling:
 - The Father “cuts off” branches that bear no fruit.
 - He prunes every branch that *does* bear fruit.
 - NIV, International Children's Bible, & New Century Version, “cuts off”
NASB, “takes away”
Contemporary English Version, “cuts away”
God's Word Translation, “removes”

αἶψα means “to lift; by implication to take up or away; figuratively to raise (the voice), keep in suspense (the mind); specifically to sail away (that is, weigh anchor); by Hebraism (compare [H5375]) to expiate sin: - away with, bear (up),

carry, lift up, loose, make to doubt, put away, remove, take (away, up)”

Certainly the possibility of this word meaning “remove” or “take away” exists, but let me suggest another possibility that [in my opinion] makes more sense within the context of John 15, and is consistent with the definition of airo. Consider what happens to a [grape] vine that is allowed to grow across the ground. It does nothing but gets dirty and bears no fruit. The primary meaning of airo is “to lift up” or “take up”. If the gardener lifts up the vine that’s growing across the ground, cleans it, and ties it up (and likely prunes it), it’s likely to bear fruit. This is also consistent with the second half of the verse.

Just as important to understand is that Jesus says the Father “cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit.” These branches are in contrast to the branches in v. 6 that do not remain in Jesus and are thrown into the fire.

- The word translated “prunes” is the Greek word “kathairo”. What does that sound like? It’s where we get the English word “catharsis”. The word kathairo is used only one other time in the NT – Hebrews 10:2, where it clearly means “cleansed”.

Whether kathairo is properly translated “prunes” or “cleanses” in John 15 isn’t really important, because the imagery is still there – whatever it is that God is doing is for our own good and causes us to bear more fruit!

Slide 9:

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- Some say that verse 6 doesn’t have anything to do with salvation, but is merely a caution that branches that don’t bear fruit are useless. It’s my opinion that this verse means exactly what it says: Anyone that does not remain in Christ is like a branch that is thrown away and...is thrown into the fire. The important here is “does not remain in me”, which is how he begins the verse.
- The transition from the idea of a vine to the idea of love is an easy one: We don’t bear fruit if we’re not part of the vine (i.e., “Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.” v. 4), and love is the ultimate denouement of the fruit we produce (as we discussed earlier with regard to 2 Peter 1).

Slide 10:

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