

## **The Benefits of Abiding in Christ, Part 2**

Scripture: John 15:4–11

Code: 43-81

Open your Bible to the 15th chapter of John's gospel: John, chapter 15. This would be our third message in the opening 11 verses of this chapter. It certainly would be possible to go faster than we are, but this is such a very foundational and definitive text. I know many of you have been in our church for a long time. You've walked with the Lord a long time; you're knowledgeable in the Scripture. But for new believers, for those who have just come to know Christ who are beginning to understand the Scripture, and for those maybe on the outside looking in saying, "I'm trying to figure out what Christianity is," this is a very critical portion of Scripture. So I've slowed down the train a little bit here in the 15th chapter because I want you to understand this. This is a very definitive chapter: particularly, these opening 11 verses.

And just to kind of remind you where we are, when we come into John 13, we come to the Passover on Thursday night of Passion Week and, of course, Christ is crucified on Friday. So this is the last night before His crucifixion, and He celebrates the Passover with the 12 disciples. And at that Passover meal – which strings out late into that very night – and during a subsequent walk after they left the upper room and headed for the garden where they would be called to pray with Him, and where He would be arrested and then taken to a false trial and crucified the next day – all of those hours that He spent with these men were critical hours for Him to deposit promises to them. Thirteen to sixteen of John's gospel is the composite account of all that He promised to them, and to us as well. There's nothing like it in Scripture. It is the most wonderful, rich legacy of Jesus to His own beloved people.

But there was that night a stark reality of the presence of a false disciple, a hypocrite, who had not yet been discovered by the other 11 disciples. The Lord had always known about Judas, but the others had not. In fact, there were no apparent reasons given by Judas, either in his language or behavior, that would indicate to them that he was false, that he would be a defector and an apostate, and walk away and betray Jesus. There were no obvious reasons to believe that he was a tool of Satan, that Satan would actually enter into him and he would go out to perpetrate the sell of the Savior. He was well-embedded among the other 11. And when our Lord said, "One of you will betray Me," they were all more prone to think it might be them than him. But as this evening goes on, the drama of Judas, of course, unfolds. As you start into this section, go back to chapter 13 for a moment.

On that Thursday night before celebrating the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour, the hour of His death had come, that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the max, and He expresses that love in the legacy of promises that He gives them in these subsequent chapters, through chapter 16, and then the prayer to the Father, in 17, which asks the Father to fulfill all the promises. This is an incredible set of promises wrought out of the love of Christ for His own. But immediately in verse 2 we read, "During supper, the devil, having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him." We're just one verse into this incredible evening, and we meet Judas.

Peter asks the Lord a question in verse 9 about washing. “Jesus said to him – ” verse 10 “ – ‘He who as bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean. You are clean, but not all of you.’ For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, ‘Not all of you are clean.’”

Down in verse 17, He said, “If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them. I do not speak of all of you. I know the ones I have chosen; but it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled, ‘He who eats My bread has lifted up his heel against Me.’” And, again, He refers to Judas, the betrayer.

Over in verse 26, “Our Lord answered the question, ‘Who is this betrayer?’ ‘This is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him.’ So when he had dipped the morsel, He took and gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. After the morsel, Satan then entered into him. Therefore Jesus said to him, ‘What you do, do quickly.’”

Verse 30 says, “He received the morsel, went out immediately; and it was night.” This is the background to the 15th chapter. So let’s look at the opening 11 verses of chapter 15, and you will see in what our Lord says here: two kinds of branches, two kinds of disciples – those who remain and bear fruit and those who leave and are burned. And in the background is Judas.

Our Lord says, “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’re already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.” He could say that, by the way, because Judas was gone. The remaining 11 were clean.

And then He instructs them, “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’s 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. Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.”

We’re talking about abiding in Christ, and we’re looking at this very graphic illustration metaphor word picture. Jesus likens Himself to a vine, and the Father is the one who cares for the vine. As you know, the Father was the one who cared for Jesus. Certainly, He cared for Him at the time of His temptation when He sent angels from heaven to minister to Him. But He met His every need through His incarnation and humiliation. He did only what the Father showed Him to do, told Him to do. He submitted completely to the Father. The Father cared for the true vine.

In the true vine, there are branches. There are branches, according to verse 2, that bear fruit, and there are branches that do not bear fruit. Branches that bear fruit are purged, pruned to bear more fruit. Branches that do not bear fruit are taken away, and verse 6 says, “thrown away, dried up, gathered, cast into the fire and burned.” This leads us to contemplate the question that is essentially referred to in verse 8, “and so prove to be My disciples.”

How do you prove to be a true disciple? How do you prove to be a true disciple? Well, what is the nature of a true relationship to Jesus Christ? What is the nature of that? How do you define that? How are we to understand what it means to be connected to Christ? How are we to understand the spiritual reality of our union with God? What does Scripture say about the Christian's relationship to the Lord?

Now, this is very, very important, critically important, because in Matthew 7, Jesus said, "Many will say to Me, 'Lord, Lord, we did this in Your name and that in Your name.' And I'll say to them, 'Depart from Me, I never knew you.'" And He went on in that Sermon on the Mount to conclude by saying, "There are people who will build a religious house on sand; and when judgment comes, it'll collapse."

In Matthew 13, a little later, Jesus said, "The seed of the gospel truth will be sown, and some of it will fall into soil that looks like it's receiving the seed, but it's rock bed underneath the surface; and so before it can bear any fruit, it withers and dies. And other seed will fall into soil that is full of weeds, and they will choke out the life before it can bear fruit." And what our Lord is saying is, you need to expect some people to give sort of initial manifestation that they belong to God and belong to Christ.

And then in Matthew 13, the Lord said, "There will be, in the kingdom, wheat, and there will be tares, and it will be very difficult for you to separate them. There will be, in the kingdom, a time when the net is thrown, the dragnet is thrown, and everything in the kingdom is pulled in, and then it has to be sorted out. The kingdom is like a small seed, the mustard seed that becomes a massive bush so big that the birds can make their nests into it," which is to say the kingdom will be huge, but not necessarily all genuine.

And we live in a time when we see that. When our Lord gave those statements to the disciples, of course, the church hadn't even been born. And now here we are, and we look at a world where Christianity is massive – at least what claims to be Christianity is massive. There are always going to be false Christians. So the question is: "How do you prove to be a true disciple?" Not only, "How do others know you're a true disciple?" but more importantly, "How do you know?" This is a critical, critical question, the most critical of all questions to ask; and it is answered here. And we're going to pick it up at verse 4: "Abide in Me. Abide in Me." The word "abide" is used ten times in this passage. John uses it again in 1 John 4, 1 John 5 – we may have time to look at those in just a minute.

Abide: I know that is kind of an old word and it sort of has spiritual overtones. It's simply the Greek verb *men*, to stay, remain, don't leave, don't go. In fact, don't do what Judas did; don't walk away from Christ. Stay; remain. Don't leave. Don't defect. Don't become an apostate. This is His word to the 11 remaining disciples: "Continue to believe. Continue to be faithful."

This is a call to anyone and everyone who is attached to Christianity and could be in danger of departing. If it happens, 1 John 2:19 says, "They went out from us because were not of us." Don't do that; don't defect.

Hebrews 10 says, "The severest punishment in hell will belong to those who were close to Christ and turned their back on Him because they trampled underfoot the blood of the covenant and counted it an unholy thing." If you're in any sense like Judas, connected to Christianity, don't walk away. Many had done that. Chapter 6, there was a wholesale exodus of people who were called

disciples who walked no more with Him. Judas is no solitary figure, even in the gospel of John, but he is the archetypal defector.

We've all lived long enough as Christians probably to have seen someone who professed a faith in Christ turn and walk away. Our Lord says, "Don't do that. Don't do that." And then He gives promises to those who stay. What is the value of abiding? Why should I stay? Well, the passage starting in verse 4 and going down to verse 11 lists a series of promises to those who remain, who stay, and they're basic.

This is just a basic Bible study, and what I give you this morning, really foundational. This is kind of Christianity 101. The first benefit I told you about last week is salvation, salvation, eternal life. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have – " what? " – eternal life."

What is eternal life? It's not something you're going to get in the future, it's something you possess now: "shall have eternal life." What is eternal life? Eternal life must be the life of God because it can't be the life of man or any other created being. So eternal life is the life of God. So believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall have life, you shall live. He that has the Son has life. John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

What is salvation? It is having the life of God in you, the eternal life of God. The eternal life of God is not separate from God, and so salvation is stated in that 4th verse in these words: "Abide in Me, and I in you, and I in you." Or, in verse 5, the abiding branch: "I in him." "I in you."

How do you define a Christian? Not somebody who believes something only, although there's a necessity of believing; not someone who's connected to sound doctrine, although that's essential; not someone who belongs to a church, although that certainly is important. The best way to define a Christian is that Christ lives in that person, that he possesses that eternal life which belongs only to God. And we saw that last week, so I won't take you all through it again. But we saw last week that the Trinity lives in a believer. The Trinity takes up residence in a believer.

Second Corinthians 4:10 says, "The life of Jesus is manifested in our body." Amazing statement. Listen to 1 John 4, verse 12: "No one has seen God at anytime. If we love one another, God abides in us." And then verse 13: "He has given us His Spirit." And then verse 15: "Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God." And then verse 16: "We have come to know and believe the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him." Over and over again.

Same thing in chapter 5, verse 11: "This is the testimony that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life." So in that simple area, that category of 1 John that I read to you – bounced around a little in chapter 4 and 5: God is in us, the Spirit is in us, and Christ is in us. Triune God resides in a true believer. If you have a true faith, if you have been granted by God a true, saving faith that will go all the way, as we read in 1 Peter, to glory, to the revelation of Jesus Christ, then you are the dwelling place of the triune God. That's what it means to be a believer, to be a Christian, and nothing less than that.

The fact that you possess eternal life doesn't just mean you will live forever. Unbelievers will live forever in a kind of everlasting death. To have eternal life is to have the One who is eternal life. So when somebody asks you, "What does it mean to be a Christian?" you tell them it means that "the triune God of the universe – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – has taken up residence in me."

Now, you have the responsibility to convince the person that that's true by the manifestation of God through your life. And that took us to the second thing that we looked at last time, the second promise. The first is salvation; God takes up residence in you. The second is fruitfulness. Verse 4 again: "As a branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine –" that's the agricultural illustration, "– 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." It starts out negative in verse 4, then it becomes positive in verse 5, then it goes back to negative at the end of verse 5. Bottom line: only as you abide in Him and He abides in you can you bear much fruit, much fruit.

This fruit then, according to verse 8, becomes the proof that you're a disciple. That's what verse 8 says: "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples." So that is the only way we know that we are disciples of Christ that are genuine, that we are branches connected to the vine. Our Lord said on another occasion, "By their fruit, you will know them. A good tree doesn't produce bad fruit; a bad tree doesn't produce good fruit. Good tree, good fruit."

It was John the Baptist, wasn't it, in the 3rd chapter of Matthew who saw the Pharisees and Sadducees coming. They wanted a baptism, and 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 then he said, "The axe is already laid at the root of the trees; therefore, every tree that doesn't bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." Same language. If you're a fruitless branch or a fruitless tree, you're going to be cut down and burned. Bear fruit that manifests, first of all, then, repentance. So let's talk about what fruit is.

First of all, fruit is genuine repentance, based on Matthew 3:8. Fruit is genuine repentance – a genuine, honest, penitence concerning sin. Sorrow over sin, not sorrow over the consequences of sin. There is that kind of sorrow. But sorrow over the reality of sin. A true and real sorrow over sin – the sorrow of repentance. That, of course, is a very foundational fruit. If the Lord is at work in you, if you are connected to Christ, if His life is flowing through you, there will be an honest repentance.

In 2 Corinthians 7, Paul says, "I now rejoice, not that you are made sorrowful, but that you are made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death." You know, people live in the world and they're sorry about the way their life is going; that just leads to death.

Sorrow can overwhelm a sinner, but it's a sorrow unto death. It sucks everything out of life; maybe leads to suicide. But a godly sorrow leads to repentance, that leads to salvation; that is life. So when we talk about fruit and we look at our lives and ask, "What is fruit?" first, it is repentance, it is repentance. That's a good place to start. It is an ongoing repentance. It is a continual sadness, not over the consequence of sin, but over the sin itself. There is a big difference. Most people are sorry about the consequences of sin, but not about the sin itself.

Now, we are told to bear fruit in this section, to bear more fruit, and that God is glorified when we bear much fruit. There is a progression here that is very important for us to understand. There is a progression in our lives, a progression related to abiding and remaining. Perhaps, it's illustrated well in a couple of passages that I'll show you – most notably Colossians 1:9. Paul says this: "For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 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." Increasing.

You know, it's really important that there be an increase. Go back to verse 5 of Colossians 1: "The hope that is laid for you in heaven, that has to do with the truth, the gospel has come to you – " verse 6 " – just as in all the world also, it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you since the day you heard of it." That just connects with the idea that there's fruit, more fruit, much fruit.

Paul's saying to the Colossians that, "You have now begun to produce fruit, and it is increasing, it is increasing." Never to the point of satisfaction.

Philippians, chapter 3; familiar words, the testimony of Paul, who was certainly fruitful. But he said, "I have not already obtained, already become perfect; but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet. One thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." As we abide in Christ, and as we yield to Christ, and as we increase in the knowledge of Christ, our fruitfulness increases. By every means of grace, by every means of grace, our abiding is deeper and wider and higher and richer, and we become more fruitful.

Some people have suggested that we sort of do nothing. This is the "let go and let God" folks, "the quietest" they use to be called, that you don't want to do anything at all. If you do anything, that's the flesh. You just kind of sit there and let God do it through you. Certainly, that was not in Paul's mind in that same text of Colossians 1:29 where he says, "We proclaim Him, Christ, admonishing every man, teaching every man, with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. For this purpose also I labor, work to the point of sweat and exhaustion, agonizing according to His power, which mightily works within me." It was the power of God, but Paul was working to the point of sweat and exhaustion. He was agonizing, using every power in him, every opportunity, every fiber of his being. Yes, it is trusting in the present power of Christ, but it also obeying every command, pursuing every spiritual discipline.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9, "I beat my body to bring it into submission."

It's a battle. It's a warfare. That's always the imagery. We don't run as people jogging; we run as those who run to win the prize. So there has to be in our abiding an increasing commitment to Christ, which then makes us more fruitful. Applied to repentance, it means that our repentance comes as we grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ. Our repentance comes more readily, comes more rapidly, comes more frequently. It's a mark of spiritual maturity to be a repenter.

"If we give evidence - " 1 John 1:9 says, " - if we give evidence that we repent by confessing our sins, we demonstrate that He is faithful and just to be forgiving our sins," present tense. If we are the people confessing, we are the people giving evidence that we are being forgiven. So the first thing that I would just suggest to you with regard to fruit is that it's an attitude that basically dominates our life, resentment of the sin that is in us – not the consequence, but the reality of sin. That's fruit that proves you're a true disciple.

Secondly spiritual attitudes. Another kind of fruit – first repentance – another kind of fruit: spiritual attitudes. Galatians 5:22, "The fruit of the Spirit is – the fruit of the Spirit who dwells in us is – " this is the product, this is the manifestation of the life of the Trinity in us, " – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control."

Those are attitudes, are they not? Those are attitudes. Those aren't acts, those aren't behaviors, they're what's behind behaviors. So here, clearly, fruit is virtuous, spiritual attitudes. And, by the way, all of them, all of them were perfectly manifest in Jesus Christ. So we could say it is fruit in us to manifest the very characteristics of Christ – not in the perfection with which He possessed them, but those same virtues we pursue.

In Ephesians 5:9 it says, "Fruit is all goodness and righteousness and truth." That's internal: a love for goodness – being good to people; a love for righteousness – honoring God. A love for truth as revealed in Scripture. How do you know if you're a Christian? You love goodness, you love righteousness, you love truth. Those are attitudes. Those are the attitudes behind the behaviors. So there is an attitude of repentance toward sin. We could say the first fruit is to resent sin and to confess it, turn from it. The second fruit is attitude fruit – attitudes that are virtuous, as indicated in Galatians 5.

Thirdly, another kind of fruit – and I'm just taking you to scriptures that demonstrate this – a third and very important aspect of fruit: go to the 13th chapter of Hebrews for just a moment; Hebrews, chapter 13, verse 15. Here is instruction that, "Through Him – " that is through Christ. Without Him we can do nothing, right? Again, it's, "Through Him." He is mentioned in verse 12 as "the one who sanctified His people through His own blood." "Through Him – " who lives in us, the true vine from which we draw our life. "Through Him then, let us – " once in awhile, every Sunday? " – continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name."

That's worship. And, by the way, that is a language that is taken from the 14th chapter of the prophecy of Hosea. Hosea says, in chapter 14, "Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity. Take words with you and return to the Lord." Go back to the Lord and be ready to talk, be ready to speak. "Say to Him, 'Take away all iniquity and receive us graciously.'" This is a – the words of repentance: salvation. This is looking at Israel's future conversion. And then in doing so, you "present the fruit of our lips, the fruit of our lips." "Take away our sin, receive us graciously, that we may present the fruit of our lips."

You can't worship until you've been redeemed. You can't worship until you've repented and been saved. That's what Hosea's saying. A time in the future is going to come. Israel's going to come repent. They're going to take words back to God. God doesn't want to hear those words of praise and worship and adoration unless there has been true repentance and true salvation.

“So let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.” See that little phrase “give thanks”? That’s probably not the best translation of the Greek. The Greek is the word *homologe*. *Logeó* is a Greek verb meaning “to speak” or “to say,” from which we get *logos*. *Homo*, H-O-M-O in English means “the same,” the same. Homogeneous, the same.

So what it’s saying is this: “Offer God a sacrifice of praise, the fruit of lips that save the same, to His name.” What does that mean? What do we do in worship? We give back to God the very same things that He has revealed to us about Himself. This is what worship is. It is saying back to God everything that He has revealed to us as being true about Himself. All of that is in Scripture.

We don’t make up things. True praise then is saying back to God all His attributes as revealed in Scripture. You go through the Scripture from beginning to the end; the attributes of God are scattered all across the pages of Holy Scripture. The more you know the Bible, the more you know about the nature and character and essential being of God. The more you know who He is and what His attributes are, the more you can say back to Him, “God, you are the Creator, You are the Sustainer, You are the Redeemer. You are all-wise, all-knowing, all-sufficient, all-powerful. You are unchanging. You are gracious, loving, kind. You are just, holy, pure.”

What is worship? It is saying the same things back to God that He has said are true about Him; and that is the only worship that God accepts. He doesn’t want you inventing Him, recreating Him, coming up with your own notion of God, but rather to say back to Him what is true about Him as revealed by Him.

The second thing is to say back to God not only what He has revealed about His nature, but what He’s revealed about His works. So when you go through the psalms, you read things like, “You are the God who did this. You are the God who brought Your people out of Egypt. You are the God who parted the Red Sea. You are the God who led Israel through the wilderness. You are the God who brought us into the Promised Land. You are the God who protected us at the Passover,” et cetera, et cetera.

You come into the New Testament: “You are the God who has redeemed us through the offering of Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, whom You put on the cross and then raised from the dead.” In other words, that is the sum and substance of praise. It is to say back to God with a grateful, thankful heart, all that God has revealed He is and all that He’s revealed He has done; that’s praise. So your praise then is essentially confined by the divine revelation. The more you know about the Word of God, the more you know about God and what He’s done. And the more you know about what He is and what He’s done, the purer your praise is. That’s fruit. That’s the fruit of your lips – worship.

What is fruit then in your life as a believer, that manifests the Trinity is in you? One, it is continual repentance. Two, it is attitudes that are Christ-like attitudes: love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control. And it is praise that really gives back to God a true representation of who He is as the God revealed in the Old Testament, and the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ revealed in the New, the triune God; and praising Him and thanking Him and glorifying Him for all that He is and all that He has done.

Let me give you another component, a fourth – Philippians, chapter 4 – and this just kind of digs down a little deep in a more specific way. In Philippians, chapter 4, the apostle Paul was obviously in



need, very difficult times for him, and dear friends sent him gifts. They sent him supplies, food; and he was extremely grateful. In fact, in verse 16 of Philippians 4, he reminds them that when he was in Thessalonica, they sent a gift more than once for his need. They were very, very generous and loving toward him.

In verse 17, he says this: “Not that I seek the gift - ” this is the pure heart of Paul. “Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit – ” NAS says, “ – for the profit which increases to your account.” That word “profit” is not the word profit in Greek. It is *karpon*. It is the word “fruit.” It is the word *karpon*, which is just the Greek word for “fruit.” “Thanks for the gift. I’m so glad you sent the gift, not because I want the gift, but I want the fruit that increases to your account.”

He saw that gift, that expression of love, as spiritual fruit produced through them by the indwelling God. It is the similar significance of chapter 15 of Romans: “Macedonia and Achaia – ” 15:26 “ – have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.” These Gentile churches were sending money to Jerusalem for poor believers. They were pleased to do so. They’re indebted to them; for if the Gentiles have shared in their spiritual things, they’re indebted to minister to them also in material things.

In other words, the gospel came through the Jews and came first to them, and then through them; and so the Gentiles are sending a gift. Verse 28: “Therefore, when I have finished this, and have put my seal on this fruit of theirs, I’ll go on my way to Spain.” He saw the Gentiles sending money to poor Jews in Jerusalem as spiritual fruit. So we could add something else to the list: spiritual fruit is contributions to those in need, contributions in those in need.

Second Corinthians 9 sees this as “seeds sown which produces fruit. Sow sparingly, reap sparingly,” a money gift. So what is fruit? It is repentance, it is spiritual virtue, it is praise and worship, and it is expressions of love meeting needs. In fact, John asks in 1 John, “If you see your brother have need and you don’t meet his need, how does the love of God dwell in you?” How can you prove you’re a Christian if you don’t love your brother? That’s a big part of 1 John.

Then we give you a fifth element of fruit: 1 Corinthians 14, 1 Corinthians 14. Yeah, you know what’s going on in 1 Corinthians 14 – some of you do – chaos in the Corinthian church with tongues and all kinds of chaos, as everybody was doing whatever they wanted in the services. Paganism had encroached in the worship, and so Paul wants to call a halt to all this nonsense, all this meaningless talk. So he says in verse 14, “If I pray in a language, another language, my spirit prays, my mind is unfruitful. If I’m praying in a language I don’t know, my mind is not engaged.”

So what is the outcome? “I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also. I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind also.” I’m not going to be engaged in things that I don’t understand and you don’t understand. What’s the point? “Otherwise, if you bless in the spirit only, how will the one who fills the place of the ungifted say the ‘Amen’ at your giving of thanks, since he doesn’t know what you’re saying?” This would be, according to verse 14, unfruitful, unfruitful.

So you want to be fruitful, say things that edify. That’s another kind of fruit – communication that edifies, communication that blesses, communication that instructs. It may be in a prayer, it may be in a teaching environment, it may be in a conversation, it may be in a counseling or discipling setting. What they were doing was what people do today, going off in a corner and mumbling gibberish to

themselves in some kind of nonsense language they didn't know about. It didn't help them; it certainly didn't help anybody else. It was selfish, and gave them some kind of fleshly gratification without edifying anybody, including them.

Now, if the real gift was used – and there was a real gift in the apostolic era – then verse 13 says, “If you're going to actually speak in a language given by God, then pray that it may be interpreted.” Don't ever let it happen if it's not interpreted, because understanding is everything. So when you communicate truth to someone, that's fruit. When I preach to you, teach you, that's the fruit of the life in me.

Now, another one – I'll give you two more quickly – pure conduct, pure behavior. We've got to get to behavior, all right? We've talked about repentance internal, and we've talked about virtues internal, we've talked about worship that starts in the heart and reaches out. Now we're starting to reach out – a communication that blesses others.

And then pure conduct, just pure conduct – righteous behavior. Philippians 1:11, “Being filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ.” Or, Colossians 1:9-10. It says essentially the same thing, “so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respect, bearing fruit in every good work, bearing fruit in every good work.” Hebrews 12:11 essentially says the same thing: general conduct. So now we've talked about repentance, we've talked about the idea of manifesting Christ-like virtues on the inside, worship, contributions of love to the people in need, communication that blesses others, a life of righteous behavior and conduct – this is fruit, and this is how you prove you're a real disciple.

One final one: bringing people to Christ – that's fruit, that's fruit – bringing people to Christ. John 4, when Jesus was talking to the woman at the well in Samaria, He was speaking to the disciples as the Samaritans were kind of coming out of the village toward Him. In verse 34, He said, “My food is to do the will of the One who sent Me and accomplish His work. Do not say, ‘There are four months and then comes the harvest.’” That would have been the agricultural calendar. “Don't say that. Look, lift up your eyes, look on the fields, they're white for harvest.”

And I think He saw the Samaritans coming across the field. “Already he who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for life eternal, so that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together.” Sometimes you get to sow, sometimes you get to reap, sometimes you get to sow and reap, right? Or, in the language of 1 Corinthians: “One sows, one waters, and God gives the – ” what? “ – the increase.” This is fruit. This is fruit.

The apostle Paul wanted to go to Rome, in Chapter 1 of Romans, for one purpose – Romans 1:13, “that I may obtain some fruit among you, even as among the rest of the Gentiles. And I'm under obligation to the Gentiles, barbarians, wise, foolish. For my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you who also are at Rome because I'm not ashamed of the gospel. It is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes, the Jew first, and also the Gentile.”

“I want to come and have some fruit.” What did He mean? Some people who had come to Christ, by the power of God, through the apostle Paul – spiritual fruit, spiritual fruit. In Romans 15:18 he said, “I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed.” That's spiritual fruit, spiritual fruit.

That is, I think the most wonderful fruit because it's the end product of everything else. If you live a life that resents and resists sin, if you live a life that pursues holiness, if you live a life of worship, if you live a life with the right kind of spiritual attitudes, if you live a life that does good to others, shows love to them and manifests general righteousness, your life will have a powerful testimony. And when you say the triune God lives in you, there will be something to support that claim. That makes the gospel attractive, and the Lord will use you to lead others to salvation.

Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 16:15, "I urge you, brethren – you know the household of Stephanas, they were the first fruits of Achaia." He saw the folks that came to Christ under his ministry, his fruit: repentance, Christ-likeness, spiritual virtues, worship, expressions of love, righteous behavior, and winning souls to Christ. And, as we read from what Peter said, "If you see these things, if you see these things, you will know that you are a true disciple."

"If these qualities are yours – " 2 Peter 1:8 " – and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. If you lacked these things, you're blind, short-sighted, forgotten your purification from your former sins. So be diligent, brethren, all the more, to make certain about His calling and choosing you. And as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; but you will know that an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you." Now, there are a whole lot of other benefits for abiding, but that's for next week.

Lord, thank You again for the richness of Your word and truth. Thank You for blessing us with this gift above all gifts, more precious than anything. Thank You for giving us opportunity to worship You today, to life up Your praise. Now may we go and live the things that we know to be true, for Your honor and glory we pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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