



Consequences of Bearing Fruit

What are the results of bearing fruit; what good does it do? According to Jesus, it brings glory to God. He told His disciples, **“By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples”** (John 15:8). While a failure to bear fruit results in condemnation, bearing fruit leads to eternal life. Jesus explains that no service in the kingdom is ever in vain. Instead, He promises, **“he who reaps**

receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together” (John 4:36). Finally, although the figure of bearing fruit describes results that can be seen in this life, ultimately the quality, amount, and nature of the fruit we bear will be revealed on Judgment Day. In the Parable of the Wicked Vinedressers, this is clear in describing the time **“when vintage-time drew near”** and the owner of the vineyard, **“sent his servants to the vinedressers, that they might receive its fruit”** (Matt. 21:34). May each of us **“bear fruit with patience”** (Luke 8:16) so that we, when our Lord comes to receive our fruit will find us to have borne the **“good fruit”** of the Spirit in holiness and righteousness.



for the coming of the Lord is at hand” (Jas. 5:7-8). Jesus explains that the trials and struggles of life that may demand patience, can be viewed as *pruning* that allows us to bear more fruit. He taught, **“every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit”** (John 15:2). Like discipline, we may not always enjoy this *pruning* but we should have the foresight to recognize that this struggle can actually allow greater fruit to come as a result.

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Bearing Fruit

By Kyle Pope

The New Testament places great emphasis upon the importance of *bearing fruit*, but what does it mean to “bear fruit”? How does Scripture define this?

Fruit Is the Product of Something

To a culture surrounded by and deeply involved with agriculture, *bearing fruit* in the New Testament is a figure of speech applied to many different situations in life as a way of describing the results or product of something. For example, for Christians, praise to God is described as the **“fruit of our lips”** (Heb. 13:15). Paul told the Philippians that the support that they provided to him was **“fruit that abounds to your account”** (Phil. 4:17, NKJV). As souls throughout the world of the first century heard the **“word of truth of the gospel”** it was **“bringing forth fruit”** to the Colossians and **“in all the world”** (Col. 1:5-6). Near the end of Paul’s life, he wrote, **“if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor”** (Phil. 1:22). He saw continued life as further opportunity to bear fruit. In his hopes to come to Rome, he expressed to them his hope that he **“might have some fruit among you also”** (Rom. 1:13). Clearly, he hoped to strengthen their faith and perhaps even bring additional souls to faith in Christ. That was the **“fruit”** he had in mind.

Unfortunately, the figure of fruit can also be used to describe the product and results of sin. Paul asked the Romans, **“What fruit**

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Lance Purcell
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Kyle Pope

did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death” (Rom. 6:21). He later explains, **“For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death”** (Rom. 7:5). The fruit borne as a consequence of sin is not the fruit Christians should bear. Sin does not bear good fruit but bad fruit that leads to spiritual death. In the same way, false teachers are described as **“late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots”** (Jude 12-13). They do not produce good fruit, and the fruit they produce leads to condemnation.

The Nature of Fruit in Christ

What is the nature of the good fruit disciples of Christ should bear? Paul speaks of what he calls fruit of the Spirit (or of the Light). To the churches in Galatia, he explained, **“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gen-**

tleness, self-control. Against such there is no law” (Gal. 5:22-23). Some have noted that he does not say “fruits” (plural) but **“fruit”** (singular). Now Paul may be using the term as a collective—as we might say “I love music,” including country, classical, or rock within the term “music.” If not, he may be emphasizing that **“fruit”** must involve all actions and qualities he lists after it. To the Ephesians, he wrote, **“For the fruit of the Spirit”** (as in the majority of the manuscripts), or **“fruit of the light”** (in some manuscripts) **“is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth”** (Eph 5:9). Clearly, *good fruit* involves things the gospel considers right, proper, and pleasing to God. Paul told the Romans, **“But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life”** (Rom. 6:22). **“Holiness”** is the condition of being set apart unto God. The Hebrew writer, in speaking of the discipline of children (and by analogy to the trials faced by Christians), explains, **“Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it”** (Heb. 12:11). James echoes this wording in explaining, **“Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace”** (Jas 3:18).

Principles of Bearing Fruit

The gospel teaches several principles regarding fruit bearing that we should note well. First, we are expected to bear fruit. Jesus taught, **“Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire”** (Matt. 7:19) and **“Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away”** (John 15:2a). John the Baptist warned, **“every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire”** (Luke 3:9). This is not optional! It is a condition of salvation. Paul explained to the Christians in Rome who came out of Judaism, **“Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God”** (Rom. 7:4).

Jesus illustrates the necessity of bearing fruit in both a parable and in a miraculous encounter. Matthew records of Jesus, **“And seeing a fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on**

it but leaves, and said to it, ‘Let no fruit grow on you ever again.’ Immediately the fig tree withered away” (Matt. 21:19). On another occasion He told a parable of a landowner who planted a fig tree then found no figs on it. At the appeal of his servants he demonstrated further patience and continued care of the tree—warning that if it continues without fruit it will be cut down (Luke 13:6-9). This may have had specific application to Jerusalem and Judaism, but generally applies to God’s expectation of all of His servants.

In the Parable of the Sower, Jesus illustrates several principles about bearing fruit. First, He warns that **“cares, riches, and pleasures of life”** can prevent one from bringing forth **“fruit to maturity”** (Luke 8:14). So, it’s not enough just to start growing—we must bear fruit. Further, He also explains that faithful disciples will produce different amounts of fruit. The seed on the **“good ground”**—defined as one who **“hears the word and understands it”** will bear fruit **“some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty”** (Matt. 13:23). We don’t all have to be the same. We can bear fruit in different measures and still be pleasing and faithful to the Lord.

Things Necessary to Bear Fruit

While the New Testament stresses the necessity of bearing fruit, it also informs us of some things required to accomplish this. First, we must recognize that we bear fruit based on the quality of our heart and faithful life. Jesus explained, **“every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit”** (Matt. 7:17-18). He taught further, **“Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit”** (Matt. 12:33). Does this mean that someone can’t do good because he or she is just **“bad”** by nature? No. It means we can’t sin and then expect to bear **“good fruit.”** Remember, fruit is the product of something, and the fruit of sin is spiritual death (cf. Rom. 6:21; 7:5).

Second, we must also realize that we cannot bear fruit apart from Christ. Jesus said:

Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, 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, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing (John 15:4-5).

Just as we cannot expect to continue in sin and bear **“good fruit,”** we cannot depart from Christ and expect to bear fruit pleasing to God.

Bearing fruit requires patience. In Luke’s account of the Parable of the Sower, he records Jesus defining the seed on good ground as the one **“who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience”** (Luke 8:16). James urges, **“Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts,**