

Fruit

By Leon King

Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. -- John 15:16.

Beginning with verse one of chapter fifteen, the context concludes with the seventeenth verse. The whole is a discourse about the true vine and the branches. The analogy is plain. Jesus is the true vine. The disciples are the branches. Jesus chose the disciples out of the world and ordained them that they should go and bring forth fruit.

I want to use the fifteenth chapter of John as a basis for our remarks together with the text already quoted. Before trying to give some thoughts on this subject, it would be good to share some observations about the fifteenth chapter of John concerning some of the words it contains.

I. SOME FACTS ABOUT JOHN 15.

During my growing up years, I was taught that the Bible contains a definite numerical pattern. I believe it does. The fifteenth chapter of John is a classic where the numerical pattern amplifies the doctrine taught therein.

The word "fruit" appears exactly eight times - no more and no less. The number eight is connected with the "new creation," or "new beginning," or "new birth." So those who bear fruit must be born again in order to bear fruit. Since the branches are used to produce fruit, it remains that those who are born again will be used for fruit bearing.

The word "vine" appears exactly three times - no more and no less. The number three has to do with God or the Godhead. Jesus said, "*I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.*" -- (John 15:1). So, we see as the branches represent believers, the vine represents Jesus Christ. We cannot hope to bear fruit apart from the power of God in our lives. That will not happen, of course, unless we are born again by His power and grace.

The word "abide" appears in its two forms exactly nine times in this passage - no more and no less. The number nine is the Bible number for the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit that was promised to the disciples who would be in them (John 14:17).

The word "branch" or "branches" appears exactly four times from the translated text. The second time the word "branch" appears in verse 2 of John 15, it is in italics indicating that it was supplied by the translators. The number four stands for the first creation. This alludes to the body of the believer. It is this body that we are to subdue through the Holy Spirit. It is in this body that we bear fruit, but the fruit is not a product of the body. "*But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.*" -- 2 Corinthians 4:7.

II. FRUIT BEARING

Fruit bearing is dependent upon the branch drawing the life source from the vine. When we go to the vineyard to gather grapes, we know that the grapes do not exist because of an act of their will. There is a dynamic or power, which made the grapes come forth from the branches. Inside the root and vine is the life-giving liquid, which flows through the branches causing them to produce leaves, buds, flowers, and fruit. The branches cannot do this of themselves. In fact, they do nothing of themselves in fruit bearing. In this respect, they are only animated by the power flowing from

the vine. The branches draw the fruit-bearing power from the root and the vine. So it is with us who are God's children. Without Him, we can do nothing. The fruit produced in our lives is a product of the power of Almighty God. That power or dynamic is the Holy Spirit.

It is absurd to think that a vine can bear fruit without being vitally and continually attached to the vine. This is a sober message regarding the responsibility of the saints. We know that it is only by His grace that we have come to Him. We know that if He were to withdraw His grace, we would flounder and fail. At the same time, we have His command to abide in Him that we might bear fruit. We cannot be self-sufficient and bear fruit. We cannot look to ourselves apart from our union with our Lord Jesus Christ, the true vine. It is in Him and through Him and by Him that our fruit comes forth.

Remember, our Lord said in the text that, "*I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit,*" When we were the servants of sin, we had no abiding fruit toward God. We can only look on those things we did before our conversion with remorse and repentance. As we do, we remember that the grace of God brought us from that shameful condition of condemnation. In that condition, we were bound by our sin nature. Bound by that depravity, we brought forth the "works of the flesh." That is the only kind of fruit we were capable of producing. That is the kind of "tree" we were before we became believers in Christ.

The blessed word of God made us clean. God gave us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts. The Holy Spirit and the word have cauterized us so that we are able to abide with him. In abiding, the process of bearing fruit begins. As the fruit begins to appear, God begins a purging process. The manifestation of abounding fruit requires purging.

Many years ago, my family and I were in Germany. I remember driving along the road in the Rhine River valley. I saw the workers in the grape vineyards clipping away most of the limbs that were on the grape vines. In my ignorance, I thought they were destroying the vines. I said to my wife, "Those vines will never bear grapes this season - maybe never again." Well, I was clearly wrong. The Vine Dresser clipped away the superfluous parts of the branches that could not bear fruit, so the fruit bearing branches could bear more fruit. He knew exactly what to take away and what to leave. He knew what was required to produce fruit. He knew where to cut and where not to cut. In the same way, the Heavenly Father clips away things from our lives that are not essential to fruit bearing. Many of these things may not be sinful but are removed nevertheless because they are not essential to our purpose – and this is bearing fruit. What is the purpose for their removal? More fruit is the intermediate object with much fruit being the ultimate object.

The Heavenly Father is glorified when we bear much fruit. "*So shall ye be my disciples,*" the Lord declared. (John 15:8). We are told that "*Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*" -- 1 Corinthians 10:31. Glorifying the Heavenly Father is certainly the will of the Father for our lives.

III. NATURE OF THE FRUIT

What is the fruit? What indication is there that a person knows the Lord? Paul asks, "*What **fruit** had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your **fruit** unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.*" -- Romans 6:21,22. Again, "*Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth **fruit unto God.***" For when we were in

*the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth **fruit unto death.***" -- Romans 7:4,5. Our union with Jesus Christ is for the purpose of bringing forth fruit unto God. In the life of the "Old Man," we brought forth fruit unto death. In other words, there is the fruit, which is produced by the Holy Spirit and there is the fruit, which is produced by the fallen, carnal nature.

"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." - - Galatians 5:19-21. This is a list of the evident fruit (or works) of the flesh, the fallen nature. When we see these things in one's life - or the life of anyone, we can say they are walking in the flesh. They walk according to the fallen nature.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." -- Galatians 5:22,23. Only a born-again believer can produce these qualities. This is evidence of the new birth. This is the fruit in the which, if much is produced, gives glory to the Heavenly Father.

"And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." -- Galatians 5:24,25. We would have to be spiritually blind to not see the conflict that is spoken of here. If we live in the Spirit; then let us also walk in the Spirit. We cannot produce love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance apart from our abiding in Christ.

These qualities are the product of the new nature and the Holy Ghost. Fruit is evidence of kind. There are other factors, but fruit is indisputable evidence of kind. Jesus taught the disciples about fruit bearing in the Sermon on the Mount. He said, "*Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their **fruits**. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth **good fruit**; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth **evil fruit**. A good tree cannot bring forth **evil fruit**, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth **good fruit**. Every tree that bringeth not forth **good fruit** is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their **fruits** ye shall know them.*" -- Matthew 7:15-20. In the same way that men determine the kind of tree by its fruit, the Lord taught the disciples that they could determine false prophets by their fruit. We know when one is walking in the Spirit by the fruit that is manifested in his life.

IV. ABIDING FRUIT.

Jesus said, "*...and that your fruit should remain:*" -- John 15:16b. This speaks of the life of the individual overall. The "much fruit" bearer is the blessed man. He is blessed and others are blessed by his life and the remembrance of his life.

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." -- Psalms 1:1-3.

Bearing fruit

Attached fast to the vine, the branch grows
still
by the strength within and naught of its will;
Through the Vine to the branch drawn up
from the root
flows the source of the power sent forth to
bear fruit.

“Look what I’ve brought forth” are words
never said
by the branch on the Vine with its grapes so
red;
“Those grapes by my power could never be
if I were to be severed,” great Vine, “from
thee.”

“Nothing, O nothing could I venture to do
if it were not,” O glorious Vine, “for you!”
“Remind me each day as I’m touched by
your dew,
that my purpose,” dear Vine, “is to glorify
you.”

Since that first day when the grapes did
appear
twigs grew from me both there and here;
“What’s that? the husbandman
mysteriously appears
and looks toward me as he picked up His
shears!

Reaching forth gently, with my stalk in His
hand
He snipped away twigs and they fell to the
sand!
Strange as it sounds, there was really no
pain
And I knew that my loss was truly His gain.

Just a little while later as the time passed
again
from the Vine came softly the dynamic
within;
And one day I marvelled, what a sight was
in store
clusters of grapes - full - sweet - and more!

As I gazed on the clusters that hang from
my line
I saw as they glistened, they reflected the
Vine;
Love, joy and peace were their names to be
shown
with goodness and temperance, and they
not alone.

Gentleness and meekness came forth near
the Vine
with faith and longsuffering, not the least of
the nine.

Much fruit! Much fruit! All glory is thine
for the fruit on this branch brought forth by
the Vine!

— Leon King, 1997