

Fruit

Not only Desires But Also Required

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Scriptures from the KJV

Here we are brethren, around the middle of summer, and for those of us living in the Northern Hemisphere, it's a time when many are reaping an abundance of home grown fruits & vegetables.

I know here in NJ, we're known as the "Garden State" That "Motto" has been imprinted on our "car license Plates" and "boat registrations" for 60 years now (this week).

I guess New Jersey acquired that slogan because we have a good climate for growing quite a variety of fruits & vegetables, and many here take advantage of the growing season, planting gardens that can produce abundant crops of "Tomatoes" "Peppers" "String Beans" "Egg Plants" and much more.....

In the past, my wife & I have spent much time planting seeds and tending our garden, and it's just so wonderful to have so many good fruits ripening and being at our disposal for consumption.

One year our garden was particularly nice (in fact it was quite fascinating) we had acquired some special seeds, distributed by: "The Ripley's Believe It Or Not Seed Company". Inside the packet, were seeds that claimed to produce some of the rarest & strangest fruits & vegetables that would grow to unbelievable size & quality.

Imagine beans and cucumbers that would grow to be a yard long (that's 3 feet) and foot long peppers, soccer ball size onions, and even pumpkins so big, that a young child could stand inside them. How about Gigantic Delicious Tomatoes that weigh in at over 7 lbs each?

Well we prepared the ground that year, and planted those "Ripley's" seeds, and we were quite amazed at the results. I don't know what was in those seeds, but they produce quite an incredible crop.

Oh our tomatoes never reached 7 lbs, but some were clocking in up to 4 & 5 lbs. (much larger than any I had grown in the past) and we had string beans that literally towered up the tall poles we had prepared for them, with beans 12 to 18 inches long, and quite tasty when we cooked them up for dinner.

Who would have ever imagined that such little seeds could produce such an incredible crop? Those seeds were amazing, to say the least.

Now in the past few years, I've been too busy to grow a garden, but this year my wife did purchase a potted "tomato plant", she set it out in the yard where it was exposed to plenty of direct sunlight, and she began watering it each day, and in no time, it was just full of blossoms, and was looking quite nice.

But there was a problem with her lone tomato plant, although it had quite an abundance of blossoms, it failed to produce any fruit. (Not even one tomato) could be found on it.

So she began questioning what was wrong. At first, she thought maybe there was no "cross pollination" because she never seemed to see any honey bees around the plant, she also considered that maybe being there was only "one" "lone" plant, that that was the reason for it to be barren of fruit.

Well when I finally got a chance to take a look, I noticed that the plant was in a very small pot with little soil (little room for the roots to spread out and grow.) So we transplanted it into a bigger pot, and added plenty of good soil with some mulch to help hold in the moisture.

Well, in a matter of only 2 weeks, the plant was not only full of blossoms, but was also full of nice red tomatoes. It's amazing what a plant can do when it's in some "good ground" with sun, water, and space to grow.

Well, my topic today (as you probably already know) is on "Fruits" I want to speak about how important it is for us the members of God's church, to be producing fruit (good fruit that is) and to be producing plenty of good fruits.

Producing good fruits is extremely important for Disciples of Christ to be doing. Why? Because our Heavenly Father not only "desires" us to be producing good fruit, but also "requires" us to do so. In fact without "good fruits" Brethren, we will be rejected by Him.

Let's go straight to a very sobering verse that states just that (Luke 13:6-9)

"He spake also this parable; a certain man had a fig tree planted in His vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none.

⁷ Then said he unto the dresser of the vineyard, behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none; cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?

(The NIV translates that verse like this): *"I've waited three years, and there hasn't been a single fig! Cut it down, it's just taking up space in the garden."*

Now I look at the "owner" of the vineyard as being our Heavenly Father - the "dresser" of the vineyard "Christ" and the "fig tree" (That He "repeatedly" came to, looking for fruit) well, that's us, the members of His church.

Yes, the Father came repeatedly, looking for fruit, found none, and said "cut it down." But the dresser of the vineyard said this:

Verse 8. And he answering and said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it.

⁹ *And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shall cut it down.*

Well I ask, how's our production of fruit coming along? Are we producing plenty of good fruit? Or are we just taking up space in the garden, maybe just warming a seat for a couple of hours during Sabbath services, still sitting on the fence post, dangling our feet with one foot in, and the other foot out.

(Let's turn to John 15:1 please) (Christ speaking here)

¹ *"I am the vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth **not** fruit He taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit."*

(Our Heavenly Father both "Desires & "Requires" us to bear fruit.) And He's not a procrastinator, if we continue to have no fruit He will remove us, and if we have some fruit, He will prune us.

Now mankind is well aware of the importance of pruning. We see those who have orchards, trimming and pruning their trees, removing the dead branches, and "pruning" the healthy ones. They know that performing this necessary task will help to yield a better crop, and a better harvest of good healthy fruit.

(Dropping down to verse 8)

⁸ *"Herein is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; so shall you be my disciples."*

The NIV translates that verse this way: *"This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."*

So "fruits" are a distinguishing "trait" of a disciple of Christ. In John 13:35 we are told that: *"all shall know if you are a disciple of Christ, if you have "love" one to another."* And in Galatians five we read that "love" is a fruit of the spirit.

(Let's turn there please to Galatians 5, because Galatians 5 not only lists the fruit of the spirit, but also instructs us "how" Yes, how to prune our tree, so we can produce an abundance of fruit.) (Galatians 5 please)

(I was watching a video the other day on "how" to prune your tomato plant. One can't just go in there "in the blind" and beginning cutting off leaves of a tomato plant or limbs of a tree, one needs instructions.)

Let's start in Galatians 5:22 *"But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, & temperance."* And verse 23 says: *"And they that are Christ's (those who are disciples that is) have crucified the flesh with the afflictions and lusts."*

Yes, "crucified" (put to death) the flesh (pruned if you will) the bad branches, the bad limbs, the bad parts. How do we know which branches are the bad ones and in need of pruning?

Well the “tomato plant pruning tutorial” said to cut the ones that were discolored & fatigued... But the branches that we need to be pruning Brethren (and putting to death) are all carefully listed for us in verse 19:

Galatians 5:19 “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness (inclined to lustfulness; wanton; lewd, arousing sexual desire) idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance (variance has to do with contention – debate – strife) (we see that in the church sometimes when brethren debate heatedly over doctrine.)

emulations (effort or desire to equal or excel others, we oftentimes see this in the corporate church [better known as “jockeying for position”) wrath, strife, seditions (disunion – dissension) 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 that do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.

All these things listed here are also “fruits” but they are “bad fruits” their fruits of the “flesh” that need to be condemned.

Brethren, our God requires us to be walking this earth “upright”. He wants the sin (all the sin) purged out of our lives.) All the things on that long list are fruits of the flesh (bad fruits) that need to be put to death in order for the (good fruits) the fruits of the spirit to multiply and to flourish.

(Matthew 12:33 please) (We need to be doers of the word, and we need to realize that we control our actions, and our actions attest to who we are. Whether we produce “good fruits” or “bad fruits” is totally our choice.)

Matthew 12:33 *“Either make the tree good, and his fruits good, or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by its fruits.”*

Fruits tell a lot. We read in the book of Genesis chapter one, that God said: *“Let the earth brings forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, who’s seed is in itself, upon the earth, and it was so.”*

If one plants tomato seeds, there going to get tomatoes. Plant pepper seeds and you’re going to get peppers.

Well how about “God” seeds, Brethren? Yes, how about if one were to plant a seed of the Almighty Father Himself? Brethren, when the Father called us, and we answered His call, got ourselves baptized, and had hands laid on us, we received of His seed. Yes, He planted His seed in us.

(Do we comprehend that; can we even fathom the potential of our High calling?)

Talk about “Ripley’s Believe it or Not” seeds, and the tremendous fruit those seeds can produce, How about fruits from the seed of “El Shaddai” The Seed of the Almighty God Himself?

Our “Fruits” our “Good Fruits” should be flourishing to say the least. . . . And if there not, then we need to question why, because if we don’t have an abundance of good fruits, then something is amiss. . . . Maybe there’s a soil problem, or a lack of “depth” in our roots?

(Turn with me to Mark 4 please) (God doesn’t leave us in the blind concerning how to produce good fruit and if there’s a problem, He instructs His children, just like we instruct our children when something is wrong.)

Mark 4:1 *“And he began again to teach by the sea side: and there was gathered unto him a great multitude, so that he entered into a ship, and sat in the sea; and the whole multitude was by the sea on the land.*

² *And he taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in his doctrine,*

³ *Hearken (He wants us to understand this) Behold, there went out a sower to sow:*

⁴ *And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up.*

⁵ *And some fell on stony ground, where it had not much earth; and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth:*

⁶ *But when the sun was up, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away.*

⁷ *And some fell among thorns (remember that word “among” because were coming back to it) and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit.*

⁸ *And other fell on good ground, and did yield fruit that sprang up and increased; and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred.*

⁹ *And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. (He wants us to understand this.)*

¹⁰ *And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable.*

(Dropping down to verse 13)

¹³ *And he said unto them, Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?*

¹⁴ *The sower soweth the word. (So the seed here being sown, is the “Logos”)*

¹⁵ *And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts.*

(The devil is very busy about careless hearers, who don’t perceive or comprehend the word that is being sown, and plainly refuse it.)

(According to the account in Matthew, the ones who receive the word by the “way side” don’t understand it.) (Maybe they don’t want to understand it, or haven’t been given *eyes to see & ears to hear* yet?)

Verse ¹⁶ *And these are they likewise which are sown on stony ground; who, when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness;*

¹⁷ *And have no root in themselves, and so endure but for a time: afterward, when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended.*

(This was the problem with my wife’s tomato plant, it had never taken root to anchor itself, and to allow for the necessary nutrients & moisture to be absorbed, which would have strengthen and matured the plant, and enabled it to produce fruit.)

We have to be careful when persecution arises (and often times it comes from our family) When it does, it’s important for us not to retreat or withdraw, but to hold our ground and let our lights shine. (That’s the kind of fruit our Heavenly Father is pleased with.)

We need to learn to “stand up” to anything (or anybody) that opposes what is right. We need to have “back bone” (even if we have to “stand alone”.)

David fought Goliath alone. Elijah confronted four hundred and fifty priests of Baal alone. Esther stood and confronted the King alone. Stephen, faced martyrdom alone. And our Lord and Savior faced death all alone.

Are all those actions not “good fruits”? Who are we to fear, brethren? And what kind of example do we display if we are not “rock solid” “upright” and “out spoken”???

(I think we can relate this to being in some of the controlling groups, where ones is not allowed “to think for himself” not allowed to “think out side of the box”.) (A person, who allows himself to abide in that situation, also restricts himself from growth, allowing himself to become stagnant, and the Holy Spirit within him is be quenched.)

When I removed my wife’s plant from the restricting pot it was in, it was completely full of roots, but they were all just bunched together, they had not been allowed to grow and spread out to form any kind of root system.

The entire plant was “superficial”. O the plant seemed okay, it looked good on the surface, it was even full of “blossoms” but there was absolutely no fruit, and without fruit, the plant was absolutely worthless.

Let’s put this in perspective, what do you do, if you have a 144 tomato plants that you planted, cultivated, and both dug & dinged, but the plants continue to stagnate and yield no tomatoes?

(Brethren, Matthew 22:14 says: “Many are called, but few are chosen.”)

Now verse 18 I think is the one we need to be especially concerned with, we may be out of the “controlling” groups, but there is another huge obstacle that many in God’s church, can’t seem to hurdle.

¹⁸ *These are they which are sown among thorns (There's that word again) such as hear the word,*

¹⁹ *And the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and "it" (the word) becometh unfruitful.*

There are so many in God's church that seem to be content, yes content with this present evil age, they don't seem to comprehend how "blemished" how "rotten" how "evil" this present world is.

Many seem to have lost "vision". There no longer looking for the City which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God, but instead, take pleasure in "unrighteousness..."

(Brethren, there is only "one way" to overcome this world, and be a fruit producing tree.)

(Revelation 18:4 please) There is only one sure way to keep this world from ruining our lives, and rendering us unfruitful.)

⁴ *"And I heard another voice from heaven saying, come out of her, my people, that you be not partakers of her sins, and that you receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities."*

Want to prevent the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of things from "choking" Yes, choking the word and preventing The Word from becoming fruitful in us? Then proceed to the nearest EXIT.

Remember that word "among" thorns? The "thorns" pertain to the cares of this world with its riches & lusts. That word "among" means = to be in the midst of, so as to influence.

God's word cannot produce "good fruit" in us, if we are still part of this world.

Brethren, has the cares of this world, has the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things, cause us to forget who we are? Have we forgotten that we are "so-journers" down here in this land in which we "temporarily" reside?

Let us not allow this present evil world to choke the word that is in us, rendering us unfruitful, because our citizenship is not down here on this earth; our citizenship is with the "saints" and of the spiritual household of God, up in heaven.

We read in Hebrews that our brethren died in the faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, embraced them, and separated themselves from this world, confessing that they also, were strangers & pilgrims on the earth.

They never retreated to anyone, they held their ground at all times. They didn't embrace this world, they rejected this world, and this world rejected them. Just like this world (including some of our "brethren" in the church, and some of our family members at home) will reject us.

But we need to be good examples to this world (displaying good fruits) Hoping and praying that all will one day repent, because according to the Apostle John, this world (and the lusts there of) is going to pass away, only those who do the will of the Father will abide forever.

According to the Apostle Peter, the “Day of the Lord” *is coming as a thief in the night, in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and its earthly works* (according to Peter) *shall be burned up.*

Do we believe that brethren, do we have faith in God’s word? Peter goes on to say that if we do believe that this world is passing away, then we would be altering our conduct & change our ways, possessing good fruits, by allowing the seed of God’s word to take root, to permeate our being and in turn, cause our “good fruits” to flourish.

That takes faith on our part, and let us not forget that we are living at the time when Christ Himself “questioned” whether He would even find faith at His return... Many in this world (including “many” in God’s church) seem to be oblivious to the signs of the times in which we are living... Are we???

We need to have “faith” brethren; we need to be well rooted in the word of God, glorifying our Heavenly Father with “good works” and producing an abundance of “good fruits”. (This brings us to verse 20)

²⁰ And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred.

Now the KJ version “obscures” the most important part of this verse, and it’s much too important a verse not to fully grasp, so I want to read it from the “New Living Translation”

*²⁰ “And the seed that fell on good soil **represents** those who hear and accept God's word and produce a harvest of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted!”*

Our “response” to the seed that is sown, our response to the word of God (which the seed represents) is our choice, where the soil, how we treat the seed is our responsibility, our choice.

And our eyes have been opened to God’s word when we answered His calling at baptized and hands. Now we choose the soil in which the seed has been sown.

We choose whether we want to allow Satan to snatch it from us, or allow the word to take root, so we can remain constant in the faith, so we can endure through temptations.

We choose whether to EXIT this untoward world, so we can produce plenty of good fruit, or hold on to this world, and remain unfruitful. The choice is ours with what we do with the word that we have been given.)

Now I want to touch on one more thing concerning “fruits” as we being to wrap this message up. It has to do with “humility”. Our God desires to dwell with us, that is why He created us (and planted His seed in us) in the first place.

He wants to see “good fruits” in each and every one of His children. He wants to see Himself, in us.

And He tells us in Isaiah 66, that the one He looks to and approves of, is one who is of a contrite spirit (one who possesses humility) and trembles at His word.

Good Fruits are not something that one boast or flaunts about, oftentimes “good fruits” are produced behind the scene. I can remember planting some Black raspberries one year, and the plants quickly produced some beautiful green leaves.

Those plants looked so healthy, so vibrant.... But there appeared to be no fruit, every time I walked past that Raspberry bush, I always glanced at them, hoping to see some fruit, but saw none.

One day, I stopped to take a closer look, and when I stopped down and looked under the leaves, WOW, I was amazed to see that bunches of Black Raspberries had been produced, they may not have been visible from a distance, but to my joy, they were there.

Good Fruits are not always that visible. Remember when Christ was hungry, and saw that Fig tree in the way? He had to approach it and take a closer look to know whether it was productive or barren.

Well our Heavenly Father has been doing the same thing with each and every one of us, taking a closer look. He comes looking; seeking Fruit (Good Fruit) in us.

Why? Because He not only Desires us to have good fruit, but He also Requires us to have good fruit. Now what He finds when He comes looking, depends on us, It depends on what we do with the seed (His seed) Yes, it depends on what we do with the word (His word) that we have been freely given.

Let those who have ears, hear what the spirit is saying to the churches.