

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE--ITS PLAN
Gal. 5:22, 23

Intro: For the next few Sundays, possibly as many as six, I want to consider these two verses with you. They are found in a letter written by the Apostle Paul to a group of churches in Galatia where terrible confusion existed over the exact nature of the Christian life.

But, a reading of this epistle indicates that they were not only confused about the Christian life, but they were also confused about the Gospel. Usually when there is confusion in one of these areas of truth, there is confusion in the other because of their intimate connection with each other.

So, to simplify it, Paul says, in so many words, "Let us think of the Christian life as fruit."

If we read the context, which is always the wise thing to do, we will discover that Paul uses this expression, fruit, in contrast with the word, works, in Gal. 5:19.

There are times when these words might be used interchangeably because they both speak of a product. Paul speaks in Phil. 1:22 of "the fruit of my labour," or work (GK).

Let us also keep in mind that a Christian must work. Cf. Eph. 2:10; Tit. 3:8. So we are not talking against works.

But we do want to know why Paul uses these two words in this passage in contrast with each other.

May we not answer that question in this way: When he speaks of works, he is speaking of something which we are producing; when he speaks of fruit, he is speaking of something that is being produced for us. We can even say, in us.

Tonight let us consider this word, fruit. It suggests for us the very simple plan of the Christian life. We use the word plan as "the general word for a proposed method of action or procedure" (Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, p. 758).

We will never make any progress as Christians until we understand this word fruit as it is used in the Bible, suggestive of the plan or method that God has ordained for our lives as Christians.

The word, fruit, is used sixty-six times in the NT, and one hundred and thirteen times in the OT. What does the Bible teach us about fruit?

Before we answer that question, let us note that the word has various usages in the Bible:

- (1) Children are spoken of as fruit. In Luke 1:42 the Lord Jesus is called the fruit of Mary; in Acts 2:30 He is called the fruit of David.
- (2) Winning others to Christ is called fruit in at least two passages (Rom. 1:13; John 4:35, 36). Dawson Trotman used to say, "The fruit of a Christian is another Christian."
- (3) Praise is called fruit in Heb. 13:15.
- (4) Paul calls a gift of money fruit in Rom. 15:28.
- (5) The results of our work are called fruit in Phil. 1:22.
- (6) Rewards are called fruit, or will bring rewards as in Phil. 4:17.

So there are many ways in which it is used. BUT BY FAR THE GREATEST EMPHASIS IS UPON THE PRODUCTION OF PEOPLE WHO WILL BY THEIR VERY CHARACTER BRING JOY TO THE HEART OF GOD.

So, now we ask, how can it be accomplished?

- I. THERE MUST BE A VITAL RELATIONSHIP WITH SOMETHING LIVING (John 15:4, 5).

"As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself"--words which should be written upon the heart of every child of God. The fruit may be displayed in you, but it will never be produced by you.

Cf. 1 John 5:11, 12, noting especially, "this life is in his Son."

- II. While we are in John 15 let us also notice that THERE MUST BE CLEANSING (John 15:2b, 3). "Purgeth" and "clean" are from the same root, meaning, to cleanse.

Notice the cleansing agent: the Word. Cf. Psa. 119:9.

- III. IT WILL PROBABLY INVOLVE SUFFERING (Heb. 12:11).

Could we not liken this to pruning? Cf. 1 Pet. 4:12, 13; 5:10.

- IV. FRUIT IS THE RESULT OF GROWTH. Therefore, it will take time. Cf. Matt. 21:33, 34a, esp., "the time of the fruit drew near."

Or, another illustration in Mark 4:26-29 (although this refers primarily to wheat).

James says, "Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath patience for it,

until he receive the early and latter rain." Cf. Jas. 5:7.

This verse not only emphasizes the fact that the growth takes time, but bring us to another point:

V. FRUIT, in the Bible, REQUIRES RAIN.

Cf. Jas. 5:17, 18, and then Isa. 55:10, 11. The rain is the Word. There can be no growth to maturity, no fruit, without the Word.

VI. THE FRUIT IS PRIMARILY FOR THE SATISFACTION OF THE HUSBANDMAN.

Cf. 1 Cor. 9:7, ". . . who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? . . ."

Also, 2 Tim. 2:6, "The husbandman that laboreth must be first partaker of the fruits."

Then Rom. 7:4, ". . . that we should bring forth fruit unto God."

Concl: So here is the picture.

Your life as a Christian is like fruit.

It is produced in you, but it is not produced by you. You by yourself can do nothing.

Fruit will take time.

It requires cleansing, pruning, and feeding.

The results will obviously bring great blessing to you, but they are designed to delight the heart of God.

"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" (Rom. 6:21, 22).