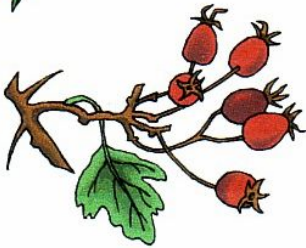
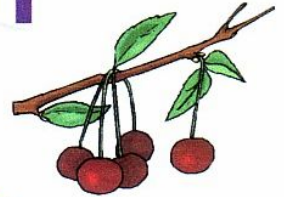
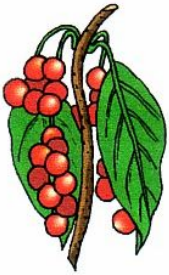


FRUIT



of the SPIRIT



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2018

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1 THE FRUIT IN THE GARDEN

In the beginning God made...a beautiful garden. The Bible describes the care and love that God put into His handiwork. Certainly it was enhanced by the plants and animals, but He created it really for His family. "What is man that You are mindful of him, the son of man that You care for him?" (Psalm 8:4) Then God gave every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. (Genesis 1:29) The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground – trees that were pleasing to the eye and

good for food. (Genesis 2:9) This included two particular trees, the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But the fruit of one was forbidden by God's decree. Eating this fruit would result in death.

From an objective point of view it seems hard to understand why Adam and Eve disobeyed and thus brought "death" into the world. "Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned." (Romans 5:12) But sins, or wrong-doing, come forth from "sin". Sin is disobeying God's commands, which results in separation from God who is the Source of Life. Bad fruit make one sick to death. The injunction of Solomon; "My son, pay attention to what I say; listen closely to my words. Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart; for they are life to those who find them and health to a man's whole body." (Proverbs 4:20-22) When Adam and Eve ate the wrong fruit it was because they esteemed acquired knowledge as greater than God's word. This is very prevalent in these days (21st century). Jesus warned us that in the last days many will turn away from the faith...many false prophets will appear and deceive many people...the love of most will grow cold. (Matthew 24:10-12)

The mistake in the Garden of Eden has continued down through the ages. Eating from the tree of life begins with a personal relationship with God which is made possible through the death of Jesus, who took "death" on Himself, but it only continues when we are listening to the Holy Spirit speaking into our hearts so that we can obey Him. "Whoever has My commands and obeys them, he is the one who

loves Me." (John 14:21) "My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow Me." (John 10:27)

God always intended to "educate" His children by revelation from His heart, in the context of a love and respect relationship. This is why the Bible story tells about God meeting Adam and Eve in the garden in the cool of the day. (Genesis 3:8) Throughout the Old Testament God would call those who wanted to have fellowship with Him to "come away" to God's nominated place so that He could impart revelation. Even Jesus went out to "a solitary place" to commune with His Father. (Luke 4:42) Paul spent a long time in Arabia and then in Damascus before he connected with the Church in Jerusalem. (Galatians 1:17&18) Because of his reputation and history, God had a work of training to do in Paul's life. He had very good knowledge of the Law and the Prophets, but he only knew it from the perspective of legalism. (Philippians 3:6) God is not legalistic. His heart is always for reconciliation because He loves people so much. "He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous." (Matthew 5:44) Disobeying His commandments will bring forth bad fruit but this is not the unforgivable sin. Jesus said, "every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven...anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come." (Matthew 12:31&32)

2 THE FRUIT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

God's instruction to Adam and Eve was to be fruitful, and increase in number; to fill the earth and subdue it – to rule the fish, the birds and every living creature that moves on the ground. (Genesis 1:28) This was the greatest blessing He could bestow. This was harmony in the whole creation. God is both Love and Holiness. These two qualities create an ambience that is God's ideal for fellowship. When His children cooperate with Him in this ideal, respect, harmony and increase are the natural outcome.

Righteousness, both holy living and also right standing with a holy God, brings forth fruit that is pleasing to God. Jesus says that we recognise those who belong to God by their fruit. Every good tree bears good fruit but a bad tree bears bad fruit. (Matthew 7:16-20) But what is most interesting is that there is no one righteous, not even one. (Romans 3:10) It is through Jesus that God has imparted a righteousness that we only receive by faith. When we receive this, then, in Jesus Christ, we become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:21) We can never earn this by our good works, yet, having received this gift, we demonstrate it with good fruit. This can only be done in His power, as we yield our old nature to His "pruning". Just as a gardener prunes the trees and plants to bear more fruit, so does God, the Gardener, prune us. (John 15:1-17) This involves sacrifice of our own ways to His superior wisdom. Some are tempted to give up, but abiding, remaining faithful, brings more holiness and therefore more fruit. John writes that we are chosen and appointed to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last. We are also assured that He who called us is faithful and will complete His work in us. (Philippians 1:6)

If we enjoy gardening there are amazing insights from John. Although he was a fisherman he must have known about growing things. Jesus taught in parables related to everyday life. He assures us that He is the vine, and His Father is the gardener. The first thing Jesus says is that the Father cuts back and removes every branch that does not bear fruit. This is tantamount to saying that God is going to deliberately "offend our sensibilities if we are exhibiting bad fruit". We meet many people who are angry with God because He did not do for them what they wanted or expected. Yet they would discipline their own children (hopefully) if these children were exhibiting bad fruit. Even more amazing and challenging is the fact that the Gardener prunes the branches that are bearing good fruit so that they will bear even more fruit. In another place (Hebrews 12:5&6) the Bible says, "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when He rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those He loves, and He punishes everyone He accepts as a son".

The end fruit of righteousness is holy living and the right to represent Jesus on this earth. We must learn to be overcomers and this requires subjugation of our old nature when we suited only ourselves. The fruit of righteousness is Christ in us, the hope of glory. (Colossians 1:27)

Jesus calls Himself "the Vine". He asks us to "remain in Him", because we are "the branches". Our life comes through the Root in the ground. He warns us that we will be withered and only fit for the fire if we disconnect from Him. A healthy connection to the Vine will yield beautiful fruit and plenty of it. And what is this fruit? **"Ask whatever you wish and it will be given you."** Answered prayer

brings the Father glory. The fruit of righteousness brings the Father glory, and demonstrates that we are His disciples (followers). Then not only are we disciples and servants but we become His friends as we do what He has planned for us. Love flows back and forth, joy is complete and the Kingdom increases. Through our connection with the Vine the increase that was God's original desire happens. John goes on to write that we were chosen and appointed for this (John 15:16) and He promises that this fruit will last. God absolutely backs up what we have asked for in love. "For no matter how many promises God has made, they are all 'yes' in Christ. And so through Him the 'Amen' is spoken by us to the glory of God." (2 Corinthians 1:20)

3 THE FRUIT OF UNRIGHTEOUSNESS – SPOILED FRUIT

Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to God. (Genesis 4:3) We have heard it preached that God preferred Abel's offering because he brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The question is which was a righteous offering and which was unrighteous. We believe it was not what was brought as much as the attitude of the heart. We can bring any old thing, or a leftover, just because we must make an offering, or we can think in love about the best we can offer. Jesus' commendation of the widow who gave her all (Mark 12:42) shows how to give to God. The rich young ruler was invited to give up his treasure and follow Jesus but he went away sad because he could not. (Matthew 19:16-22)

Isaiah writes a story about God's vineyard. (Isaiah 5:1-7) "My loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside. He dug it up and cleared it of stones and planted it with the choicest vines. He built a watchtower in it and cut out a winepress as well. Then he looked for a crop of good grapes, but it yielded only bad fruit." "When I looked for good grapes, why did it yield only bad?" "The vineyard of the Lord Almighty is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are the garden of His delight. And He looked for justice, but saw only bloodshed; for righteousness, but heard cries of distress."

Amos also has a story. (Amos 8:1-4) "This is what the Sovereign Lord showed me: a basket of ripe fruit. 'What do you see, Amos?' Then the Lord said to me, 'the time is ripe for my people Israel; I will spare them no longer...the songs in the temple will turn to wailing...hear this, you who trample the needy and do away with the poor of the land.'"

Hosea uses similar pictures. "When I found Israel, it was like finding grapes in the desert; when I saw your fathers, it was like seeing the early fruit on the fig-tree." (Hosea 9:10) Then he writes, "Israel was a spreading vine; he brought forth fruit for himself. As his fruit increased, he built more altars; as his land prospered, he adorned his sacred stones. Their heart is deceitful." (Hosea 10:1&2)

Jeremiah sums up, "I am bringing disaster on this people, the fruit of their schemes, because they have not listened to My words and have rejected My law". (Jeremiah 6:19) "Your sins have deprived you of good." (Jeremiah 5:25)

Ezekiel has an even more dramatic story. (Ezekiel 17:1-11) "A great eagle took some seed and put it in fertile soil...by abundant water and

it sprouted and became a low spreading vine. Its branches turned towards him, but its roots remained under it. So it became a vine and produced branches and put out leafy boughs. However another great eagle came and the vine now sent out its roots towards him...and stretched out its branches to the second eagle for water. It had been planted in good soil by abundant water so that it would produce branches, bear fruit and become a splendid vine." Then Ezekiel writes, "this is what the Sovereign Lord says, 'Will it thrive? Will it not be uprooted and stripped of its fruit so that it withers? All its new growth will wither.'" Paul writes that Satan masquerades as an angel of light. (2 Corinthians 11:14) Looking to the wrong "eagle" is a bad mistake!

God has made all people to find their life and their fulfilment in Him. Yes! We have a choice but the result of unrighteousness is bad fruit, by God's decree. Many people complain that God did not do this or that for them and so they reject Him. The God who made us and the whole world knows how it works and gives us instruction, prophecy and warnings which we ignore to our detriment.

4 THE VINEYARD BEFORE CHRIST

As we have written in the last chapter, God prepared a vineyard to yield a harvest. Symbolically, the vine was the emblem of prosperity and peace. More particularly it symbolised God's chosen people. They were the vine which God had taken out of Egypt (slavery) and planted in a particularly choice land. They had been given all the

attention necessary for the production of outstanding fruit. (New Bible Dictionary page 1311)

The prophets have much to say to this "vineyard". "Ephraim (which means double fruitful) is a trained heifer that loves to thresh, so I (God) will put a yoke on her fair neck. I will drive Ephraim, Judah (praise) must plough, and Jacob (which means the supplanter – displace, take the place of) must break up the ground. Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and break up your unploughed ground; for it is time to seek the Lord". (Hosea 10:11&12) God is warning His chosen people to repent, to seek Him, the Source of good fruit and not to have hard hearts.

Joel warns that the locusts will eat everything. (Joel 1:4) "Despair you farmers, wail you vine growers". (Joel 1:11) Yet he also writes, "even now...return to Me with all your heart...return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and compassionate". (Joel 2:12&13) God is always wanting to restore and prosper but He waits for the response to His wooing.

Micah writes about Israel's guilt and punishment. "You will plant but not harvest...you will crush grapes but not drink the wine...What misery is mine! I am like one who gathers summer fruit at the gleaning of the vineyard; there is no cluster of grapes to eat, none of the early figs that I crave...not one upright man remains." (Micah 6:15-7:2)

God has never changed. He decided to call a people for Himself who would bring Him honour and glory, who would prosper so that others who were not in Covenant with Him would see how good God is. This people would be full of the joy of the Lord and God spoke to them in pictures and parables to help them understand His heart.

The fruit would supply their needs and the needs of others who were not in Covenant, so that the family of God would increase and people who were not righteous could repent.

Amos writes the most interesting prophecy of all. "'The days are coming,' declares the Lord, 'when the reaper will be overtaken by the ploughman and the planter by the one treading grapes. New wine will drip from the mountains and flow from the hills. I will bring back My exiled people Israel; they will plant vineyards and drink their wine; they will make gardens and eat their fruit. I will plant Israel in their own land, never again to be uprooted from the land I have given them.'" (Amos 9:13-15)

God has already brought Israel back to their land, therefore the harvest is gathered faster than the ground is prepared and the wine finished faster than the seed is sown. This is impossible in the natural, but the prophet is speaking into being the desire of God's heart and the timing of His intention. He called a people to Himself. The invitation is out. Who will answer the call?

5 THE VINEYARD THAT JESUS SPOKE OF

We have already written some on John 15 in chapter 2 (The fruit of righteousness) but Jesus makes many references to the vine and the significance of the fruit. First He says He has come to fulfil the Law and the Prophets. (Matthew 5:17 & 20) "'Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law, you will certainly not enter the Kingdom of heaven.'" In a different way He is talking about obedience and connection (or relationship). The vine had

to bear fruit (of righteousness), because the owner of the vineyard expected it. That was why He planted it in the first place. In His early preaching He was addressing Jewish people who had failed over and over to obey God's commandments and to desire a personal relationship with God, as Moses and Abraham had done. He says, "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness." (Matthew 6:33)

Jesus talked about putting new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. New wine goes into new wineskins. (Matthew 9:17) He is trying to tell His hearers that He has come to introduce a new Covenant, which fulfils the Law and the Prophets. The vineyard is actually acquiring a new name – the Kingdom of God. In this new "vineyard" there is room for many workers. (Matthew 9:37) Then Jesus sends out those whom He has chosen and authorises them to do the work of gathering the harvest. (Matthew 10 and Luke 9) He also sends out others who are not from the "inner" group. (Luke 10) He is certainly expecting a huge harvest! Jesus does not mind when His workers join His crew, and the pay is the same for all. (Matthew 20) It is the writers' personal experience that the joy and privilege of being a worker, a labourer in His vineyard is not about the pay, but just the sheer pleasure of the master's "Well done", which truly warms the heart. Jesus says He tells the truth. "Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the Kingdom of heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now, the Kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it." (Matthew 11:11&12) A

passionate and enthusiastic "harvester" is advancing the Kingdom and bearing the fruit that the Gardener requires.

At the end of Jesus' three year ministry the Jewish people that He had come to teach and to claim were mainly still so slow to catch on. Even His disciples could not grasp the New Covenant that Jesus was teaching. "I did tell you, but you do not believe." (John 10:25) John also writes, "At first His disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realise..." (John 12:16) Jesus needed to remind them of the Prophet's writing. He cursed the fig-tree. (Matthew 21:18-22) Jesus is effectively saying that God has so much joy when people receive His Word, but are useless to the Kingdom of God when they do not show those indications of early fruit which is the promise of an abundance of beautiful, tasty fruit. This fruit is what those outside of Covenant are to taste and see that the Lord is good. (Psalm 34:8)

Fig-trees begin to bear fruit before the leaves come. When the tree is full of leaves then the tiny fruit ripen. In Hosea, God says that when He found Israel it was like finding grapes in the desert; when I saw your fathers, it was like seeing the early fruit on the fig-tree. (Hosea 9:10) In Song of Songs (2:13) the fig-tree forms its early fruit; the blossoming vines spread their fragrance. Micah has written (7:1) "What misery is mine! I am like one who gathers summer fruit at the gleaning of the vineyard; there is no cluster of grapes to eat, none of the early figs that I crave. The godly have been swept from the land; not one upright man remains." It is in the power of God or by the favour of God that the fruit ripens, but if there are no signs of a coming harvest there will definitely be no harvest!

Jesus tells another story. "A man had a fig-tree, planted in his vineyard, and went to look for fruit on it, but did not find any. So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, 'For three years now I've been coming to look for fruit on this fig-tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?' 'Sir,' the man replied, 'leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig round it and fertilise it. If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.'" (Luke 13:6-9) This story is told in the context of "repent or perish". Not bearing fruit, then, is something we must repent of, because it is disobedience. The story of the buried talent fits in with this concept. (Matthew 25:14-30) The master was angry and the bad servant perished.

Jesus tells another story of bad tenants in His vineyard. (Luke 20:9-16) "A man planted a vineyard, rented it to some farmers and went away for a long time. At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants so they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the tenants...sent him away empty-handed." This happened three times. When the owner of the vineyard sent his son they killed him so that his inheritance would be theirs. Of course they did not get away with this and Jesus says, "What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others." When the listeners heard this, they said, "May this never be!"

This last story was told to the Jewish listeners and we know from history that it did happen. They did kill the Son. But this made a way for Gentiles to hear the message and respond. Jesus told these stories to help people rise up in faith. Faith is the outworking of being fruitful and faith brings mighty answers to prayer.

6 THE FRUIT OF THE VINE

The first miraculous "sign" that Jesus did was to change water into wine. Because the servants obeyed Him without question and filled the ceremonial jars, which were usually used for washing, with water for drinking, Jesus short-circuited the whole production of wine. Miracles happen when there is absolute trust on the part of the recipient. But John writes that these reveal the glory of Jesus, which enables people to put their faith in Him. (John 2:1-11)

Jesus talks about reading the signs. His coming was preceded by a sign (Isaiah 7:14) and announced by a sign. (Luke 2:12) The disciples asked Jesus what would be the sign of His coming and the end of the age. (Matthew 24:3) At the finish of His explanation about the end of the age He says, "Now learn this lesson from the fig-tree: as soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it (the end of the age) is near, right at the door." (Matthew 24:32&33)

Jesus said some very significant things at the Last Supper. "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer for...I will not eat it again until it finds fulfilment in the Kingdom of God." After taking the cup, He gave thanks and said, "Take this and divide it among you, for I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the Kingdom of God comes." Then He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body given for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same way...He took the cup saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is poured out for you." (Luke 22:15-20)

Jesus regarded this cup of wine as representing His blood. In Gethsemane He asked that the cup be taken from Him and even sweated drops of blood, even though being strengthened by angels. (Luke 22:42-44) This is the explanation of Jesus' provocative statement, "I tell you the truth, unless you can eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is real food and My blood is real drink. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood remains in Me, and I in him. Just as the living Father sent Me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on Me will live because of Me." (John 6:53-57)

Many hearers were offended at such a hard teaching and even the disciples grumbled. Jesus said, "The words I have spoken to you are Spirit and they are life. Yet there are some of you who do not believe." He went on to say, "This is why I told you that no one comes to Me unless the Father has enabled him." (John 6:60-65) Partaking of Jesus' body and blood by faith literally enables us to receive every gift and characteristic that is the person of Jesus. This is the plainest revelation of God's intention for His family – the likeness of our big brother. (Hebrews 2:11)

Jesus had preached from the beginning to repent for the Kingdom of heaven is near (Matthew 4:17); the Kingdom of God is near, repent and believe the good news (Mark 1:15); and He sent out disciples with the same message, the Kingdom of God is near you. (Luke 10:9) Then He thanked the Father that He had completed the work that the Father gave Him to do. (John 17:4) The changeover was done; the vineyard was now the Kingdom of God.

7 THE FRUIT THAT PAUL SPEAKS OF

Paul explains the changeover concept in his letter to the Romans. (11:11-24) He writes about God giving Israel a spirit of stupor, eyes so that they could not see and ears so that they could not hear. (11:8) God has always loved them and always will. "I have loved them with an everlasting love." (Jeremiah 31:3) Isaiah spoke for God, "Here am I...All day long I have held out My hands to an obstinate people who walk in ways not good, pursuing their own imaginations". (Isaiah 65:2) So God has punished them, broken them off the "vine" because of unbelief. "Their zeal is not based on knowledge. Since they did not know the righteousness that comes from God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness." (Romans 10:2&3)

But this is a great blessing for the Gentiles. The rejection of Israel is the reconciliation of the world. Acceptance of "adoption" or engrafting gives life from the dead. The branches that have been grafted in now share the nourishing sap from the holy root...and the root supports each branch as long as it stays connected to it. If the root is holy, so are the branches. This happens by faith because the rejected branches were broken off because of unbelief. We are warned to "continue in His kindness". The writer to the Hebrews echoes this. "My righteous one will live by faith. If he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him. But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved." (Hebrews 10:38&39) This is a real life-and-death matter!

Having explained the "transfer" and God's mind in the matter, Paul makes it plain that all Israel will be saved but for the Gentiles salvation is dependent on being nurtured by the Vine. Most of his

writing is teaching us how to stay connected and all the advantages that God offers to those who do. Fruit is expected, both Christ-likeness in our lives and an outflow to extend God's kingdom. This is why he states so firmly, "I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. (Romans 12:1)

The body of Christ, the family of God, those in the Kingdom, drawing on the sap of the Vine, have responsibilities, and different gifts which we use in accordance with the measure of faith God has given us.

The gifts listed in Romans are:

- ◆ **Prophecy** – speaking to people for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort (1 Corinthians 14:3)
- ◆ **Serving** – submission to a leader as unto God
- ◆ **Teaching** – helping people to understand God's ways as Jesus did, reliant on revelation from God
- ◆ **Encouraging** – standing with people
- ◆ **Contributing to the needs of others** – generously, as God gives to us
- ◆ **Leadership** – diligent governance, a Christlike example
- ◆ **Showing mercy** – cheerfully

Paul goes on with the qualities and virtues that God expects:

- ◆ **Love** – must be sincere
- ◆ **What is good** – cling to this
- ◆ **Brotherly love** – be devoted to one another
- ◆ **Give honour** – to one another above yourselves

- ◆ **Zeal and spiritual fervour** – never lack in this, serving the Lord
- ◆ **Joyful in hope** – which never disappoints (Romans 5:5)
- ◆ **Patient in affliction** – suffering produces perseverance (Romans 5:3)
- ◆ **Faithful in prayer** – approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (Hebrews 4:16)
- ◆ **Sharing** – with God's people in need
- ◆ **Bless those who persecute you** – blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness (Matthew 5:10)
- ◆ **Rejoice with those who rejoice** – delight in the successes and blessings of others
- ◆ **Mourn with those who mourn** – carry each other's burdens (overload), and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2)
- ◆ **Live in harmony** – speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. (Ephesians 5:19)
- ◆ **Do not be proud** – be willing to associate with those of low position
- ◆ **Do not be conceited** – think of yourself with sober judgment (Romans 12:3)
- ◆ **Do not seek revenge** – repay evil for evil, leave room for God's wrath towards sinners
- ◆ **Be careful to do right** – live at peace with others, as far as it depends on you

- ◆ **Overcome evil with good** – our faith as believers that Jesus Christ is the Son of God becomes the victory that has overcome the world's ways. (1 John 5:4&5)

It is no wonder that Jesus said, "You must be born again!" (John 3:6)

Who could bear this fruit without the help of the Holy Spirit?

8 BEARING FRUIT

The gifts and qualities and virtues listed in the previous chapter are only a beginning of Paul's understanding of bearing fruit. A plant has the potential to bear fruit but the fruit itself is the proof that the gardener waits for. It would seem that God, the Gardener, waits for the branches on His vine to bring forth fruit.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit enable the branches to do this. The Holy Spirit enables one to say "Jesus is Lord", (1 Corinthians 12:3) and bring glory and honour to Jesus. Eventually every knee should bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. (Philippians 2:11) This has been decreed by God. At this time, though, we choose to do this. We have the great privilege to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in various gifts. There are different kinds of service, different kinds of working but the same Lord. The manifestations of the Spirit working are:

- 1 **the message of wisdom** – revelation of God's words into a matter
- 2 **the message of knowledge** – revelation of the hidden problem and God's ways into a matter
- 3 **faith** – confidence of what God wants to do in a matter

- 4 **gifts of healing** – just as Jesus did when He was here on the earth
- 5 **miraculous powers** – just as Jesus did when He was here, knowing the Father's will
- 6 **prophecy** – confirming the hearer's own revelation from God as a second witness
- 7 **distinguishing between spirits** – God's Spirit or another spirit (demon) from the devil
- 8 **different kinds of tongues** – known languages or one inspired by the Holy Spirit
- 9 **interpretation of tongues** – from unknown languages to one that the hearers understand, either by translation or by divine inspiration.

The practice of these gifts, inspired by the Holy Spirit, will bring forth fruit and increase the Kingdom, because they are given so that we may bring honour to God. None of these gifts is "owned" by the recipient/ minister. We are just channels of these gifts, not only to those in the Kingdom but to any outside who will receive. "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power. He went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with Him." (Acts 10:38) This is why Jesus commanded His disciples (and all who believe their message) to obey everything He has taught them to do – "and surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:20)

The fruit of the Spirit, on the other hand, is development of character. Every act of the sinful nature must be surrendered afresh

at the Cross. We are commanded not to gratify its desires. Instead we must seek to be led by the Spirit.

The predominant characteristics of God Himself are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Paul writes that those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. (Galatians 5:24) As we become more aware of what God has called us into and seek His face and His ways more, we reflect the Lord's glory and are being transformed into His likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:18) It is God who changes us as we submit our wills to Him, and this change is a true miracle, which anyone, who will, can have.

John has very good advice. (1 John 2:15-17) "Do not love the world (values) or anything in the world...cravings...lust ...boasting about things we have. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives for ever." We have an anointing from the Holy One and this remains in us. His anointing teaches us about all things and as that anointing is real (His presence in us), so we must remain in Him.

Bearing fruit spreads the fragrance of Life. (2 Corinthians 2:16) Jesus came so that we may have life, and have it to the full. (John 10:10) This is the Life that God ordained for His family in Eden. There would have been no death or mourning, no crying or pain. (Revelation 21:4) These glorious things are unavailable until Heaven, but there is a measure of them available to those who have faith now.

Jesus invited us to have faith in Him so that we will do even greater things than He did while on the earth, because He went to the Father.

He is now seated at the right hand of God (Colossians 3:1) and lives to intercede for us. (Hebrews 7:25) He said, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in My name." (John 15:16) Bearing fruit qualifies us for answered prayer.

9 FRUIT THAT REMAINS

God has made promises. Paul writes, "I thank my God every time I remember you...because of your partnership in the gospel...being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. (Philippians 1:6) "God...by His power may fulfil every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith." (2 Thessalonians 1:11) It is also written, "How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity! ...For there the Lord bestows His blessing, even life for evermore." (Psalm 133:1&3)

The reason the church grew so rapidly after Pentecost is written by Luke. "They devoted themselves to...the teaching...the fellowship... communion and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done. All the believers were together and had everything in common...they gave to anyone in need...they continued to meet together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of people." (Acts 2:42-47)

Partnership in the gospel and sharing possessions seems to be the "secret" of having fruit that remains – not only remains but multiplies. This is in line with God's original decree to increase. This concept has largely been lost from the established church and those that do

encourage it have been mocked and vilified. Paul outlines the principles that God initiated in His promise to Noah, when He said, "As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest...will never cease." (Genesis 8:22) "Whoever sows sparingly will reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work." (2 Corinthians 9:6-8) God supplies seed to the sower as well as bread for food. But He will increase our store of seed to enlarge the harvest of our righteousness. He desires to make us rich in every way so that we can be generous on every occasion. (2 Corinthians 9:10&11) This generosity, says Paul, results in thanksgiving to God. The recipients of generosity have tasted God's love which they will remember. A typical example is the story of Peter and John at the temple gate. (Acts 3) Though they did not give money they did give what they had and the man was healed, and praised God. What we have received from God, by faith, is what we can also give away, by faith. The disciples prayed for great boldness as they asked the Lord to "stretch out His hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the Name of Jesus." (Acts 4:30)

Paul writes, "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows...the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people,

especially to those who belong to the family of believers." (Galatians 6:7-10) "Live as children of Light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth), and find out what pleases the Lord." (Ephesians 5:8&9) Fruit that remains is demonstrated in a life that is being transformed to the image of Christ.

Peter also has great advice. "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness. Through these He has given us His very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature...For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. **For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.**" (2 Peter 1:3-8) The word of God keeps emphasising increase and fruitfulness. God expects this of His family just as He expected it of His chosen people under the Old Covenant. The vineyard was designed to bear fruit and those in the Kingdom of God likewise. This is the fruit of the Spirit of God who is in the world to help us and train us to reflect the Heavenly Father and do the works He has planned.

God Himself sowed His very best "seed" when He gave His only Son. This is why Jesus is the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep. (1 Corinthians 15:20) He is raised from the dead so that we can have assurance that we too will be raised from the dead. Jesus

said, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day." (John 6:44)

10 THE HARVEST

Among the Songs of Ascents, (Psalms 120-134) which are songs that Hebrew pilgrims sang when going up to Jerusalem, the Holy Spirit has inspired prophetic words, "For the sake of my brothers and friends, I will say, 'Peace be with you'...I will seek your prosperity." (Psalm 122:8&9) This Hebrew word, shalom, basically means "be whole", but also "completeness, welfare, health, at ease". Shalom is a harmonious state of the soul and mind and encourages the development of the faculties and powers. (Vine's Dictionary page 272) As the pilgrims continue to "go up" they sing. "When the Lord brought back captives to Zion...our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy...the Lord has done great things for us...those who sow...will reap with songs of joy." (Psalm 126) "Blessed are all who reverence the Lord, who walk in His ways. You will eat the fruit of your labour; blessings and prosperity will be yours. Your wife will be like a fruitful vine...your sons will be like olive shoots." (Psalm 128) "For the Lord has chosen Zion...this is My resting place for ever and ever; here I will sit enthroned, for I have desired it – I will bless her with abundant provisions; her poor will I satisfy with food, I will clothe her priests with salvation, and her saints shall ever sing for joy." (Psalm 132:13-16)

In chapter 4 we wrote Amos's prophecy. The harvest that the Spirit of God brings in will always be at least double (one hundred-fold).

(Matthew 13:19) When we cooperate with Him we also participate in this harvest. When we do not we are judged worthless servants. (Matthew 25:19-30) Jesus decreed, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field." (Luke 10:2) The work is there all "day" and the "pay" is the same. It is never too late to begin gathering the harvest. (Matthew 20:1-16) But Amos's prophecy indicates something quite extraordinary. The one who is bringing in the harvest will be overtaken by the one preparing the ground for the next planting. So many people will come into the Kingdom continuously that those intercessors praying for the "good soil" of a soft and ready heart towards God will also see the continuous flow, and those who preach the word to plant the seed will find such hunger for God's presence and power that the finished wine will be instantaneous. This is what happens in revivals. New wine will drip from mountains and hills. The Holy Spirit will intervene in problems, and people will seek God for answers. But Jesus warns that new wine must be put in new wineskins. (Luke 5:37-38) "No one after drinking old wine wants the new, for he says, the old is better." The old ways and the old traditions are preferred because people hate to learn new ways. But if the Church wants to hold those who have poured into the Kingdom in this revival, they need to produce new wineskins. There is a great resistance to the Church because of the abuses, but Jesus' death and resurrection is as relevant as it ever was because Jesus truly is the LIFE. "He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life." (1 John 5:12)

We have written about being connected to the Vine. We have written about God's plan to graft those outside the Kingdom into the

Vine. We are encouraged to drink the "wine" of the Holy Spirit, who is sent by the Vine, the product of His being "crushed and broken". (Ephesians 5:18) Jesus said, "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever – the Spirit of Truth." (John 14:16) Jesus warns that those who speak against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come. (Matthew 12:32) The Holy Spirit was Jesus' "lifeline" to the Father while He was on the earth, and He is our "lifeline" also. It is folly and it is fatal to cut the lifeline.

Jesus asked his disciples to share with Him by taking the cup of wine (or unfermented juice). "Drink from it, all of you. This is My blood of the Covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins". (Matthew 26:27&28) Paul reminds all disciples to remember Jesus in this act. (1 Corinthians 10:25&26) This act is also the answer to Jesus' mystery saying, "I tell you the truth, unless you can eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is real food and My blood is real drink. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood remains in Me, and I in him." (John 6:53-57) This statement offended His listeners to the point where some ceased to follow Him. Yet He had already said, "Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of Me." (Luke 7:23) Believing when we do not fully understand is a test of our love for Him.

In conclusion, the fruit of the Spirit, in all its forms, bearing fruit in our personal lives, and bringing in the harvest, increasing the family of God, is God's top priority. It is up to His own to believe Him and to

work with Him, according to the gifts He has already given and according to the good works He has already prepared for us to do.
(Ephesians 2:10)

For us, the writers, cooperation brings the greatest fulfilment possible. Thank you Lord for Your magnificent plans and purposes!

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