

1. Last week we began to look at the Spirit filled life

- A. Saw that to live out a Biblical Christianity is going to take the Spirit's power
 - 1). To attempt this in our own strength will only lead to great frustration and regular defeat
- B. We also saw - the Spirit was given as a helper - to produce in us and through us the life of Christ
 - 1). Which is seen in the fruits of the Spirit - in Galatians 5 – Christlike characteristics
- C. We also saw there is nothing mystical about this – a result of two very practical things
 - 1). When we yield ourselves to Him **we are filled** – Ephesians 5:18
 - 2). When we depend upon Him in a moment-by-moment manner **we are empowered**

Transition: I want to continue our look at the filling of the Spirit from a different angle – **JOHN 15**

- A. We need to understand this - I believe it is a key to many of our problems as believers
 - 1). A solution for much of the frustration, discouragement and repeated failures we experience
- B. My goal is to drive home the truth that Christianity ONLY works when God's power is involved
 - 1). That Christianity without God's power is nothing more than religion

Religion is a system that is based on man's work done in man's strength for man's glory

 - a). Christianity is a relationship based on God's strength given to weak men and women

That results in Christlike living and good works that bring glory to God
- C. In John 15:1-8 Jesus tells us how Christianity works

Jn 15:1–8 (ESV) “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. ⁽²⁾ Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ⁽³⁾ Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. ⁽⁴⁾ Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁽⁵⁾ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ⁽⁶⁾ If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁽⁷⁾ If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁽⁸⁾ By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

1. Outline

- A. God's expectation
 - B. Christ's explanation
 - C. Hudson Taylors (one of my heroes) example
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I. GOD'S EXPECTATION**1. God expects fruit in our life**

- A. In 8 verses Jesus mentions “fruit” 7 times

2. What do we mean when we say fruit in the Scriptures? Defined as many things

- A. We bear fruit when we win others to Christ - Rom 1:13
- B. Christian giving is considered to be fruit - Rom 15:28
- C. Good works are considered to be fruit - Col 1:10
- D. Our praise to God is considered to be the fruit of our lips - Heb 13:15
- E. The characteristics of Christ formed in us is called the "fruit of the Spirit" - Gal 5:22-23

Thought: Fruit in this context would probably include all of these

BUT I believe it is primarily speaking of the Fruit of the Spirit in Gal. 5

Ga 5:22–23 (ESV) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ⁽²³⁾ gentleness, self-control...

3. God expects fruit – but how much fruit does God expect?

Jn 15:2 (ESV) ... every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear *more fruit...*

Jn 15:8 (ESV) By this my Father is glorified, that you bear *much fruit...*

- A. All who bear fruit God prunes so they will bear MORE fruit
He will keep doing that so that they will end up bearing MUCH fruit

4. Why does God want our lives to be filled with fruit?

Jn 15:8 (ESV) By this my *Father is glorified*, that you bear much fruit...

- A. His desire is to be glorified by your life – how does that happen
 - 1). We bring Him glory when we live like His son
We live like His Son when our lives are bearing the fruit of the Spirit
“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control...”
 - a). All those are characteristics of Jesus

Transition: So we see in John 15:1-8 that God desires much fruit in our lives

- A. We are also going to see how that fruit is produced
 - 1). Jesus is going to use the analogy of the grapevine and its branches to instruct us

II. CHRIST’S EXPLANATION

So Jesus says “The Father wants to see much fruit in your life because that brings Him glory”

He also says “Let me show you how that fruit will be produced”

1. Background

- A. More than likely Jesus was standing near a grapevine as He was teaching
As He did many times He uses what is around Him in the physical realm to teach spiritual truths

2. The lesson – Spiritual fruit is produced in the same way natural fruit is

- A. The branches don’t strive or strain until a piece of fruit is popped out
They simply remain attached to the vine and everything needed is provided by the vine
 - 1). Fruit is the natural product of that connection

Point: Just as those grapes were a natural result of the relationship between the vine and branches in the physical realm

- A. Spiritual fruit is a natural result of the relationship between Christ (the vine)
And the believer (the branch)
 - 1). As long as the branch is connected to the vine – fruit will be produced
- B. This means the believer is not the producer of fruit
They are the receiver of fruit
The receiver of the life of Christ that flows into them through the Spirit
 - 1). Fruit is simply the evidence that connection is taking place

Transition: Let’s take a deeper look at this vital connection between the vine and branch

- A. This will be a bit of a reminder of what we saw last week – two things necessary

THE ABIDING LIFE (“Remaining life” if reading NIV)**1. We could call the abiding life – the connected life**

- A. If we break that connection between Christ and ourselves – we are no longer abiding
 - 1). The result: We cut off that life of Christ flowing into us and fruit is no longer produced

Question: What would sever this connection? Its sin isn’t it? Sin breaks fellowship with Christ

Is 59:1–2 (ESV) Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; ⁽²⁾ *but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.*

In the NT: 1 Jn 1:6–7 (ESV) If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. ⁽⁷⁾ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another...

A. When this happens we become like a branch cut off from its source of life

- 1). The Spirit is grieved and withdraws His power and His influence
- 2). We shrivel and dry up – we experience defeat that leads to frustration
 - a). We lose our joy and our life stops bringing glory to God

Point: To live the Spirit filled life – where this power is flowing into us
We MUST be yielded to the Spirit – not allowing sin to break that connection

A. But there is another aspect we saw last week – I need to bring up

- 1). You can have the power flowing into you – but how do you live it out practically

2. We must remain dependent – moment-by-moment

A. Depending upon the Spirit in a moment-by-moment manner is something we all must learn to do

- 1). This is where His work in our life flows into our life in a very practical way
- 2). This is how we can respond like Christ in whatever life throws at us

Point: Rather than facing life in our own strength we get into the habit of facing it in His

"Jesus, you said that you are the vine and I am but the branch. You said that you would give me what I need to bear the fruit that brings glory to the Father. I need your peace right now...I need your joy...your strength...your victory...your kindness... I know this power comes to me through the Holy Spirit. So, Holy Spirit, I depend upon you right now to live that life of Christ through me. Thank you that victory isn't dependent upon my strength and ability but upon yours! I thank you that the life you have brought to me and are willing to live through me is more than sufficient to handle whatever I face at the moment."

A. We talk about depending upon the Spirit but we never do it – here is the way it works

B. As we get into the habit of yielding to the Spirit and depending upon Him in this way

- 1). The natural result: We will see Spiritual fruit beginning to grow in our life
Some fruit... then MORE fruit... as we continue to abide... eventually MUCH FRUIT

Transition: let's move to something very interesting – how we discover fruit in our lives

A. It usually sneaks up on us as a joyous surprise

The Discovery of Fruit In Our Lives

1. Fruit usually takes us by surprise when it is there

A. We're simply abiding – yielding - depending – staying connected - concentrating on Jesus

- 1). But in the background the Spirit is doing His work forming the character of Christ within us = fruit

B. We usually don't notice this until something happens

and we see ourselves respond differently than we would have a few months earlier

- 1). Maybe we would have blown up – but now there is self-control, gentleness
Perhaps we would have panicked – but now there is peace and even joy
Maybe there would have been selfishness – now there is love instead
- 2). We are taken by surprise – WOW I'm growing! I'm changing!

Point: We're surprised because we didn't produce that fruit – we simply discovered it

A. We were busy focusing on Jesus – living for Him and it just happened – snuck up on us

2. This is how we know we are living the abiding life (Spirit filled life)

A. Fruit is starting to grow in our life – the Holy Spirit is producing it

Transition: We've seen the Father expects fruit – and HE wants it to be MUCH fruit

- A. Jesus has explained how that will happen – not through our own power
 - 1). It happens through the power of the Spirit as we remain yielded and dependent
- B. I want to spend our remaining time trying to flesh this out – a living example
 - 1). We are going to look at the experience of one of my heroes Hudson Taylor
 - a). My goal is to try and inspire you to really want this kind of life
- C. Some background on Hudson Taylor
 - 1). He was living a life of frustration – striving – straining – little peace - MUCH failure
 - a). The responsibilities of ministry were overwhelming to him
 - 2). That all changed when he discovered the exchanged life
 - a). Exchanging his strength, ability, peace for Jesus strength, ability and peace
 - b). He started to depend upon the Spirit rather than Himself

III. THE EXAMPLE OF HUDSON TAYLOR

1. A frustrated man

- A. Pick up his story in 1865 – he's in China as a missionary – spiritually frustrated
 - 1). He desired so much to grow in holiness but remained discouraged over his spiritual state
- B. You can hear the frustration in his testimony- see if you can relate

"Every day, almost every hour, the consciousness of sin oppressed me. I knew that if only I could abide in Christ all would be well, but I could not. I began the day with prayer, determined not to take my mind off Him for a moment; but pressure of duties, sometimes very trying, constant interruptions, often caused me to forget Him. Each day brought its register of sin and failure, of lack of power. To will was indeed present with me, but how to perform I found not."

2. Deliverance

- A. As Taylor sought the Lord longing for a greater spiritual power – becoming more discouraged

He received a letter from a friend and fellow missionary - John McCarthy

McCarthy wrote: Abiding, not striving nor struggling; *looking off unto Him; trusting Him* for present power; *trusting Him* to subdue all inward corruption; *resting in* the love of an almighty Savior, *in the conscious joy of a complete salvation*, ... willing that His will should truly be supreme. This is not new, and yet 'tis new to me. I feel as though the first dawning of a glorious day had risen upon me. I hail it with trembling, yet with trust.

"I seem to have got to the edge only, but of a sea which is boundless; to have sipped only but of that which fully satisfies. Christ literally seems to me now the power, the only power for service; the only ground for unchanging joy.

"How then to have our faith increased? Not a striving to have faith, or to increase our faith, but a looking off to the Faithful One seems all we need; a resting in the Loved One entirely, for time and for eternity."

 - 1). Abiding not striving or struggling in our own strength
 - 2). Looking to Christ for His power to live this Christian life
 - 3). Trusting in Christ to subdue all inward corruption
 - 4). Resting in His love and in the joy of a completed salvation
 - 5). This all happens as we look away from self and look to Him
 - a). Does that sound good? My heart warms to that
I find myself breathing a sigh of relief
Christianity in His strength - Resting - YES!

Thought: This is what the Holy Spirit wants to do in your life
He wants to exalt Christ so that He becomes everything to you

Jn 15:26 (ESV) "But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, *he will bear witness about me.*

Jn 16:13–14 (ESV) When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ⁽¹⁴⁾ *He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.*

1). When you are filled with the Spirit – when you are living the abiding life

a). He is going to promote Christ – Lift Him up in your life

He doesn't want to be the center of attraction – He wants Christ to be

B. As Hudson Taylor read this letter- it resonated in his soul – this is what He was looking for

1). He laid the letter down rejoicing in the new awareness of what being united to Christ meant

a). The implications of identifying with Him

2). Some days later he wrote a letter to his sister

Joyfully declaring he had discovered the *exchanged life*

Part of his letter read: "As I read [McCarthy's letter] I saw it all! 'If we believe not, he abideth faithful.' I looked to Jesus and saw (and when I saw, oh, how joy flowed!) that He had said, 'I will never leave you.' 'Ah, there is rest!' I thought. 'I have striven in vain to rest in Him. I'll strive no more. For has He not promised to abide with me—never to leave me, never to fail me? And, dearie, He never will!

a). I have striven in vain to rest in Him – trying to earn what I already have in Him

Now I will concentrate on who He is instead of on who I am

I will rest in His perfections and stop focusing on my own imperfections

b). I will live trusting in His promises

He continues: "The sweetest part . . . is the rest which full identification with Christ brings. I am no longer anxious about anything, as I realize this: . . . It doesn't matter where He places me, or how. That is rather for Him to consider than for me; for in the easiest positions He must give me His grace, and in the most difficult His grace is sufficient. "So, if God places me in great perplexity, must He not give me much guidance; in positions of great difficulty, much grace; in circumstances of great pressure and trial, much strength? No fear that His resources will be unequal to the emergency! And His resources are mine, for He is mine, and is with me and dwells in me. All this springs from the believer's oneness with Christ."

a). I am no longer anxious about anything – Why?

Because it doesn't matter where He places me now – that is up to Him

b). Wherever He places me – I can rest - it is His problem to take care of me there!

1a). In hard times He must and will provide the strength I need

2a). In times of great perplexity – He must and will provide the guidance I need

3a). In times of great difficulty – He must provide the grace I need

c). Because I am one with Him - wherever I go He will go with me

Whatever I need He will provide the resources

1a). *It is no longer me striving! It is me resting in His ability and resources*

Thought: Here is how the biographical sketch concludes – this would be the application

Like Taylor, you need to understand your identity in Christ. You are "in Christ" and Christ is "in you." Once you received Christ as your Savior, you also receive Him as your very life. (Colossians 3:4) The Christian life is Jesus living His life through you by His indwelling Holy Spirit (that's the vine and the branch). It is not something you achieve but receive by the same faith you had at salvation.

You do not have to strive to be victorious You already are victorious in Christ. You have everything you need in Christ. *Your sin is EXCHANGED for His righteousness, your weakness for His strength, you inadequacy for His adequacy.*

This is not a call to passivity or license but of sweet submission to Christ. Obedience is necessary—but it is a delight, not a duty.

A. The exchanged life – exchanging our life for His – that's how we bear fruit

1). We don't struggle and strive to produce it

We concentrate our thoughts and affections on Christ

We surrender to Him and look to Him for HIS grace

- a). We rest in Him – trusting Him to give us what we need at the moment
- 2). THAT is how we live out the Christian life
 - a). THAT is the life of the branch that is connected to the vine

Point: It is a life that knows that Christ is always with us

- A. A life that trusts Him to reprove our errors when necessary
 - That trusts Him to give us counsel we need in every difficult situation
 - And trusts Him to empower us for every act of service
- B. It is a life that doesn't worry about tomorrow in spiritual or temporal matters for He will be there
 - 1). It is walking with Him in the present - and to be excited about it
 - 2). And it is a life that is assured of the future – we will be with Him

Thought: Affecting our present and our thought about the future - This is the Christianity of Paul
Phil 1:21 (NIV) For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Question: Does this mean we just sit around and do nothing?

"All this resting stuff, drawing from His life. Do we just let go and let God. Abide & glide. Do nothing?"

- A. Remember were talking about the Spirit living the life of Christ through us
 - 1). Did Jesus just sit around and do nothing - NO! He was very active - worked hard

Point: You start living this abiding life you won't sit around doing nothing?

- A. You may be more active then ever - but there will be a greater ease about it
 - 1). Because your moving in a divine energy rather than your own
- B. Your responsibilities may be greater than ever - but there will be a greater peace in it all
 - 1). He gives you His peace - and He's not worried about a thing
- C. Your influence may grow - along with it the people problems that are attached to that
 - 1). But you'll find a greater love, patience and kindness to deal with it all
- D. Temptations may be greater - as you become more effective and the devil aims bigger guns
 - 1). But Christ's self-control will be formed into your character to meet those temptations

Thought: This is the Christianity I want – Christ saturated – Holy Spirit empowered

Transition: How did Hudson Taylor finish.

- A. Was this just some fad he got excited about – then faded back to his old life

3. Finishing well!

An Anglican clergyman, the Reverend H. B. Macartney of Melbourne, Australia, added this testimony to that of many others regarding the missionary's possession of the *life that is Christ*:

"He was an object lesson in quietness. He drew from the Bank of Heaven every farthing of his daily income. 'My peace I give unto you.' Whatever did not agitate the Savior, or ruffle His spirit was not to agitate him. The serenity of the Lord Jesus concerning any matter and at its most critical moment, this was his ideal and practical possession. He knew nothing of rush or hurry, of quivering nerves or vexation of spirit. He knew there was a peace passing all understanding, and that he could not do without it.

- A. This is how he lived out the rest of his life

That is the possibility for us – that is the exchanged life that Paul spoke of

Ga 2:20 (ESV) I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

- 1). THAT is the life of the branch that Jesus is speaking about in John 15
 - a). His peace, power, love, joy, wisdom flowing into us
- 2). We are in Christ and He is in us – we have His resources available every moment

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- B. This is what I want – I want to live like Paul did – that exchanged life of Gal 2:20
I want to live like Hudson Taylor did
 - 1). It is a choice I make by faith – a choice to begin to rest in Christ
 - 2). To trust Him in everything He brings into my life – That He knows what He's doing
That He goes into that situation with me – I am in Him – He is in me
That He will also supply all I need for that situation
 - 3). It is Walking in God's power – serving in His abilities – resting in His promises
 - C. It is a life of daily dependence upon the Spirit to live this life through me
 - 1). Turning to Him when that life is challenged – when I feel anxiety creeping in
 - a). I trust you to live that life of Christ out through me right now
I choose to exchange my anxiety for His peace – My fear for His courage....
 - 1a). Spirit – I thank you this is why you have taken up residence in me
 - D. Listen to this testimony about Hudson Taylor from another missionary
"He was a joyous man *now*, a bright, happy Christian. *He had been* a toiling, burdened one before, with not much rest of soul. It was resting in Jesus now, and letting Him do the work (through the Spirit)- which makes all the difference!"
 - 1). Sounds good – may God help us to stop striving so much and start resting more
 - 2). These are the truths I want to enter every day with
 - C. It is a life of absolute dependence that trusts the Spirit to live that life of Christ through you
 - 1). As you depend upon Him to exchange you're life with His
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CONCLUSION

1. Life as a branch – the exchanged life

- A. It is the ONLY kind of life that will lead to bearing MUCH fruit
It is the ONLY kind of life that will end up bringing God MUCH glory
It is the ONLY kind of life that brings the joy, peace that you want so MUCH
- B. I don't hear much about the exchanged life any more - shame
 - 1). But the men I so admire discovered it – Apostle Paul - Hudson Taylor – George Mueller etc.
Men who got so much done for God – without striving and straining
There was a great resting in their great work - A great peace in the midst of turmoil
And they glorified God so greatly in their lives
- C. God help me to discover more the Spirit filled life
Where I exchange my weaknesses for your strength
My anxieties for your peace
My schedule for yours
Do whatever you want with me – help me to trust in you being there through it all