

The Fruits of Righteousness

Ellet J. Waggoner | The Present Truth | July 13, 1893

“And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God” (Phil. 1:9-11).

The fruits of righteousness are righteous fruits. These fruits are by Jesus Christ, as He says: “I am the true vine, and My Father is the husbandman. Every branch in Me that bears not fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit. . . . Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me. I am the vine, ye are the branches; He that abides in Me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit; for without [apart from] Me ye can do nothing” (John 15:1-5).

The last verse quoted shows clearly that the fruit borne by the branch that abides in Christ, is **deeds of righteousness**. The statement is that whoever abides in Christ brings forth much fruit; while separate from Him we can do nothing. Doing nothing is made equivalent to not bearing fruit. So then bearing fruit in the vine is identical with doing something. **There is nothing more passive than the bearing of fruit;** and yet there is nothing in which more intense activity is shown than in a fruitful vine or tree. **The tree can do nothing to make itself bear fruit, yet the bearing of fruit is a period of activity.**

In Gal. 5:22, 23 we have the fruits of righteousness spoken of as the fruit of the Spirit. These are, “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.” The fruits which are by Jesus Christ are the fruits of the Spirit, for Christ said of the Spirit, “He shall glorify Me; for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you” (John 16:14). **This glorifying Christ is in the fruit that is borne of the Spirit;** for the glory of Christ and the glory of the Father are the same, and Jesus said: “Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.”

In the fifth of Galatians we have it made very plain that the fruits of righteousness are active deeds. In verses 19-21 we have a list of “the works of the flesh,” which are “adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envying, murders, drunkenness, reveling, and such like.” And the apostle says, “They which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” Then in direct contrast with these he places “the fruit of the Spirit,” which consists of deeds of a directly opposite nature to the works of the flesh. One set is active wickedness, and the other is active righteousness.

Moreover, the apostle follows the list of the fruits of the Spirit with the statement, “against such there is no law.” That means that they are in harmony with law. As the works of the flesh are violations of law, **the fruit of the Spirit is obedience to law.**

Evil deeds are called works, because they are done for the purpose of getting a gain, although the doer is grievously disappointed in his wages; “for the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). But righteous deeds are those that are done with no thought of self, but as the manifestation of the life and love of God in the heart; and the doer receives, not wages, but a free gift; for “the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

There is one most encouraging thing in connection with bearing the fruits of righteousness, and that is that the Lord does not cut off the branch that bears only a little fruit. On the contrary, He encourages it, by giving to it the best conditions for bearing more fruit. In the thirteenth of Luke we have a parable, which is represented by a man with a fig tree in his vineyard, to which for three years he has come looking for fruit. To the words, “Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?” the vine dresser says, “Let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it and dung it; and if it bear fruit, well; but if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.” When the man comes the next year, and finds that the tree has begun to bear fruit, although in a feeble manner, will he cut it down? No, indeed. If he would bear with it three years when it bore no fruit at all, he will certainly much more bear with it now. He will hail the indications of fruit with gladness, and will more thoroughly continue the work of pruning and dressing, “that it may bring forth more fruit.”

So the Lord “is longsuffering to us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). “A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax [dimly-burning wick] shall He not quench; He shall bring forth judgment unto truth” (Isa. 42:3). “God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life” (Rom. 5:8-10).