

### The Fruit of the Gospel

#### Romans 1:13—15

Paul is still writing the introduction of this book to the Roman churches. He first set forth his apostleship and why he was able to write with God's authority. He then connected what he was writing with the writings of the prophets in the Old Testament, who announced the coming of a Savior in the line of King David. This promised Savior was the same Person who gave him the authority to write the book of Romans. After affirming his authority and his connection to the Messiah of Israel, Paul makes it clear that it was his mission, given to him by Jesus Christ, to call the Gentiles into the obedience of the faith that he was preaching. This is all contained in the first five verses.

He then turned his thoughts to the believers who were in Rome, announcing that grace and peace was now being given to the world by God, in contrast to the expected wrath of the seven-year Tribulation. This tribulational wrath was taught to the Disciples by Jesus as He walked this earth and proclaimed that the Kingdom of God was at hand (Matthew 24; 3:2; 4:17; 10:7). He then praised them for their strong faith and told them of his desire to see them in person and help them grow in their faith so they would become set firm and unmovable in their faith (verses 7—11).

#### **Bearing good news** (verse 15)

It was Paul's desire to visit the Romans so that he would be fruitful among them as he had been among other Gentiles. In context, this fruit was in his being able to share the Gospel of the Grace of God with the believers in Rome, and to see others come to believe, as did those to whom he was writing. The term *gospel* merely means good news, and can encompass much more than just the good news of salvation. Paul tells us that he received the gospel directly from Jesus Christ (Galatians 1:1, 11). Romans 2:16 says Paul's gospel contains information about a time when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, Romans 15:19 shows Paul fully preaching the gospel of Christ, and Galatians 2:14 includes a proper walk as part of the gospel. Certainly, there was much more in play here than what we need to believe for salvation. When Paul mentions the word *gospel*, it can refer solely to the gospel of salvation, however, it can also incorporate every bit of Paul's revelation of the Mystery, the good news concerning how God is now working with the Gentiles, and how we are now saved into the Body of Christ. When Paul says the gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16), he is using the term specifically about salvation. However, we see a much broader usage of the word *gospel* when Paul says his desire was that the Roman believers be established by his gospel (Romans 16:25). It's only possible for us to be established in the faith when we understand Paul's doctrine.

So, when Paul gets to Rome, he desired to not only preach the gospel of salvation to the unbelievers, but also teach the gospel of the grace of God to impart to the Romans some spiritual gift that will aid them in growing in their faith. This growth is the process of bearing fruit and happens when we allow God to work in and through us.

#### **Bearing fruit** (verse 13)

Galatians 5 contains the well known passage of Scripture that lists the fruit of the Spirit. We bear fruit, not by walking in the flesh or in the Law, but by walking in the Spirit. We walk in the Spirit when we consider the flesh dead to sin but alive to God (Romans 6:11). We need to decide not to please the flesh, but to do things that please the Spirit, realizing that we can only bear fruit for God when we give ourselves completely to Him (Romans 7:4). There is nothing in our sinful nature (the flesh) that can please God (Romans 8:8).

Colossians 1:3—12 expands upon how we should live godly lives. Verse 10 tells us what God expects, that we walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, being fruitful in every good work. We can achieve this

only by understanding what God expects of us (study His word, rightly divided) and by applying this information in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. This wisdom and spiritual understanding is in contrast to worldly understanding (1 Corinthians 1:18—14). Spiritual wisdom comes from the Holy Spirit, but appears as foolishness to the world. It is absolutely necessary for us to obtain a head knowledge of what God desires of us before we will be able to apply this knowledge in our daily walk with Him. Our heart will change as we assimilate and apply this knowledge. We can't do this in the flesh, but it must be done by the power of the Holy Spirit working through us.

Many believers upset the apple cart by ignoring this basic truth. They do this by seeking an experience or a heart change without first obtaining a head knowledge. The heart of a believer, or their experience must be built upon the foundation of knowledge, or they will likely be driven off course in their endeavor to grow in their faith. The reason for this is that the heart is desperately wicked, and we are easily deceived by it (Jeremiah 17:9).

It is important that a believer bear fruit, specifically the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22—23). This happens as we walk in the Spirit (Galatians 5:25). Bearing fruit comes naturally as we allow God to work through us. We are never commanded to grow the fruit of the Spirit, we are told that we are to walk by the Spirit. The fruit is a by-product of our walk. Paul says since we are in the Spirit that we now should live by the Spirit. That means it is possible for us to not walk in the Spirit and therefore not to bear fruit, however, that type of life is absolutely contrary to what Paul teaches.

### **Kingdom saints vs. body saints**

It is quite eye-opening to compare Israel's command to bear fruit under God's prophetic program with us today in this age of Grace. Jesus taught Israel, during His ministry on earth, that the trees that are not bearing fruit will be cut down and burned (Matthew 3:17; 7:19). Likewise, Matthew 21:43 shows Jesus telling the religious leaders of Israel that the Kingdom was going to be taken away from them and given to a people who are producing the fruit of it. This dovetails nicely with teaching in John 15 where Jesus compares Himself to a Vine and the remnant believers as branches. Those who bear fruit are His disciples (verse 8), while those who don't bear fruit will be cut off and burned. Bearing fruit was proof that a person was a member of the Little Flock of believers.

In all cases, bearing fruit demand being connected to Jesus Christ. They, and we, are incapable of bearing fruit pleasing to God in our own power. However, we have a different relationship with God than the believers in Israel had. As believers, we have been predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son and therefore we have been justified and, in the Father's eyes, glorified (Romans 8:29—30). We have been washed and sanctified (1 Corinthians 6:11). We are already seen as being seated in the heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6). We have already been given every spiritual blessing (Ephesians 1:3).

Kingdom believers, those saved before the Apostle Paul was saved, are currently waiting for their promises to be fulfilled. This is why Peter needed to explain to the believing remnant that the Lord is not slack concerning His promises (2 Peter 3:9). They expected the Millennial Kingdom to have been set up by now, but God put their prophetic program on hold, temporarily, and began dealing with the Gentiles through the Apostle Paul. They will need to wait until the Second Coming before they realize the fulfillment of these promises. They will not have their sins forgiven, or be gathered together and brought into the land until the Second Coming (Jeremiah 31:8—9, 34). They will not be permanently joined to their Messiah until the marriage supper of the lamb (Revelation 19:9). All of their promises are future while ours have already been given to us. Though we have not fully experienced some of these promises, we have been given them because of our relationship with the Father through the Son.

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