

Week 32

Greatest Love

John 15:8

Jesus is telling us the reward of abiding in Him, fruit bearing. What does it mean to bear fruit? Please turn to Galatians 5:22 to see the list given to us; the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Notice the word fruit is singular, not plural. All nine fruit of the Spirit should be evident in the believer's life, we cannot pick and choose. Does any of this fruit come naturally to you? As soon as I see this list I realize a couple things; Jesus is the only one able to bear this fruit consistently, I cannot bear it myself unless I abide in Jesus and let the Holy Spirit bear this fruit in my life. I have to get myself out of the way. I have to make the choice to behave in my naturally unfruitful way or let God's Spirit work through me in every situation and bear His fruit.

What is a way I can bring glory to God? To bear much fruit. How do I prove I am a disciple of Jesus? Bear much fruit.

A branch that abides bears much fruit in response to the watering and nurturing of the Farmer and therefore much fruit from His little branch glorifies the Farmer.

Have you ever prayed for patience? Did you notice patience is a fruit of the Spirit in the life of a believer? Do you need more patience? Abide, that is live close to Jesus, pray for His will to be done, pray to be conformed to His image. Applying the patience you have been given is a slow process worked out by faith in Jesus and willingness for His will in His time. Thus you will grow more patient.

John 15:9

What a wonderful promise, for the Son to love us as the Father loves Him means we can receive the greatest love possible.

John 15:10

We can abide in Jesus' love by keeping His commandments. There is joy in this obedience, not only joy but peace.

Jesus is the model for behavior for true disciples: He obeyed His Father's commands, and we can obey His, notice, Jesus loved them, so they should love one another. He not only commands, He demonstrates.

Did you notice that love is the first of the Spiritual fruit mentioned? Back to abiding in the vine then, we can only love as Jesus loves if we are abiding, that is if we are submitted to Him and filled with His Holy Spirit. This love is not a feeling, as we have discussed before, this love of Jesus is the determination to do what is best for the other person, even at our own expense. Picture the crucifixion, horrible for Jesus, life to us. It is by faith we love and leave the results to God. Jesus didn't suffer and die because of feelings. He did for us what we could never have done for ourselves, what we needed most.

Loving others is the sign of true discipleship.

How specific and how challenging this is and impossible in our own flesh.

John 15:10

The sense here is continuing to obey His instructions, that is, a lifestyle of obedience. And Jesus is giving us the secret of abiding in Him and His love; keep His commandments. Doing this will make abiding possible. In other words, we set our hearts to obey and by faith He comes into our lives and hearts and lives out His commands through us. He doesn't expect us to produce the spiritual fruit of love on our own. Did you ever walk by a grape vine and hear grapes groaning and grunting trying to grow and become sweet and tasty? No, that's not their responsibility, by staying on the vine they will ripen and become sweet.

John 15:11

Another fruit of the Spirit is mentioned here, joy, is not only present but also full. You have not been called to a dull, lifeless life, waiting to die to go to heaven. Serving God is the fullest and most joyful life you can imagine. All the things the world promises will bring joy, fail in the end. They suck the life out of you rather than fill you.

John 15:12-13

How did Jesus express His love for us? He loved us sacrificially, the ultimate love expression. What does it mean to lay down your life for someone else? In Jesus case it meant laying aside His glory and honor as God, taking the form of an infant, being born in a stable to a young woman, experiencing family life, working hard with His hands, spending 3 years in ministry, and then dying unjustly accused by hypocrites and liars. All planned with a view to our salvation. Doesn't this sound like self-denial for the King of Kings? How do you lay down your life? It takes many forms; giving your time, your talents, your life for the good of others with the motive of honoring and obeying God, not glorifying ourselves. Denying to yourself, taking up the cross, which means dying to self and following Jesus commands. Nothing is sacrificed here that will not be rewarded in eternity.

John 15:14-15

In that time, the persons who followed rabbis were known as his servants but Jesus changed this paradigm, He called them His friends, because He had shared with them all He had heard from His Father. Think for a minute about this statement; isn't sharing family communication, family secrets something you would be very careful about doing?

If it occurred at all it would be only with a few close friends. Jesus has told these disciples the secrets of being a child of God, family secrets, and those secrets have been passed on to us. We have learned from what Jesus told John and John recorded here how we can become part of the family of God and eventually live in His home in a place He has especially prepared for us.

John 15:16

Do you ever pray for fruit that will remain?

Jesus chose His disciples and He has chosen you. Will you remain in the vine in order to bear fruit that is ripe and mature and remains?

Jesus links answered prayer with fruit bearing.

Lovingly sharing the gospel, bearing fruit that remains.

John 15:17

This sums up the teaching of the Vine and the Branches and is a great contrast to what is taught next.

The command then is to love, it is required, we are to put others interests above your own. Just think of the diverse backgrounds of these men; all levels of social order and they were commanded to love each other.

The world teaches us that love is spontaneous, a feeling that may come and go. Marriages break up because "I just don't love him any more". How can that be reconciled with the teachings of Jesus?

This is the world's way of thinking, not Jesus' way. The bible says that while we were still His enemies, sinners, He died for us; do you think that had anything to do with feelings? Friends, don't you want to be loved when you are unlovable? How can we expect to be if we only give love to those who we feel are lovable.

If we understand how deeply God loves us in spite of our sin and failing, we will be more likely to love others, even 2 year olds and teen-agers. If you do not realize how much God loves you, if you have never bowed your knee to Christ and accepted His free give of forgiveness, cleansing from sin and salvation for all eternity, then you will have a difficult time loving others.

John 15:18-19

Here is the contrast, the love we are commanded to give and the hatred we are told to expect. If you love Jesus and become like Him, you are told to expect to be hated. You must abide in Christ to endure the hatred of the world. Why are Christians hated? Because they have left the kingdom of darkness and entered the kingdom of light. Light exposes the deed of darkness of unbelievers. People don't like this; they don't like to have their sin exposed. Remember Jesus said in John 3:19 "this is the judgment that the Light (that is Jesus) has come into the world and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.

What are some the reasons Christians are hated?

They display a contented lifestyle, they have peace, they are certain of their future, they don't fear death, and they love their enemies.

Jesus told the disciples and us what to expect, and Peter also warned us "if you are reviled for the Name of Christ, you are blessed because the Spirit of God rests upon you".

If you love Jesus and keep His commands do not be surprised if the world hates you.

John 15:20

If Jesus is not honored or respected by the world, neither can you expect you will be.

John 15:22-25

Those who rejected Jesus, rejected God, Jews and Gentiles alike. They hated Jesus enough to murder Him even after they saw all the amazing good works He had done. The Jews had no reason to reject Jesus, He came as their Savior, fulfilled their Scriptures, healed many, promised eternal life to all who believed, He fulfilled all prophecy regarding the Messiah.

John 15:26-27

In John 14:26, told us the Father would send another Helper, the Counselor, the Spirit of truth, in the Name of His Son? Remember this is the Spirit that goes out from the Father and this verse adds the detail that the Son would also send the Spirit. The Father and Son together sent the Holy Spirit.

What do we learn about the Holy Spirit in these verses? He is a Person of the Trinity, He comes from the Father and from the Son, He encourages, helps, strengthens. The Spirit of Truth will teach, reveal truth, and remind us of God's truth. The Holy Spirit ministers to the heart and to the mind.

The disciples would testify that Jesus is the Messiah. The "you" refers to the disciples since they had been with Him from the beginning of His ministry. They would certainly need the Holy Spirit to remind them as they preached and taught and wrote. Then this verse also extends to us if we are believers. Believers are called to testify of Jesus, allow the Holy Spirit to help us through times of difficulty and to remind us of the truth of God's Word and work in our hearts and minds.

John 16: 1-2

This is part of the same conversation the chapter change is an interruption. Just think of all Jesus has told the disciples this night all the way back to the foot washing. Jesus warned the disciples they would be persecuted; He didn't want them to be surprised when the fiery trials came. He predicted His own persecution and theirs in order to strengthen them for the difficulties ahead. "All this" refers to the teachings, which he wanted them to remember, and thankfully they wrote down for us. The accuracy of His predictions increased their faith.

John 16:2

Remember in John 9:22 and 12:42 we were told that the religious leaders threatened that anyone who said Jesus was the Messiah would be expelled from the synagogue. Now Jesus warned the disciples this would happen to them.

The prophecy of them being killed for the sake of the gospel came true very soon after this. Stephen was the first martyr for the faith (Acts 7:54) James, also one of the disciples, was beheaded by King Herod, soon after Jesus ascended. Remember also, Saul of Tarsus, went through all the land persecuting believers in the Way, thinking he was serving God by killing those who professed Jesus as Messiah.

John 16:3-4

As you know, history reveals horrible and shameful acts perpetrated by those who thought they were serving God. People are imprisoned and martyred daily even now because of the truth of Jesus and His love. Isn't it better to err on the side of mercy? Any religion based on hatred is not consistent with the command of Jesus to love one another.

The disciples were forewarned and so are you and so am I. If we take a stand for Jesus anytime, anywhere, we can expect opposition. Jesus waited until the end of His time with the disciples to give these warnings. He had been with them to protect them until this time but after He was killed the full force of persecution was shifted to them and we can expect no less.