

Simply Christ

Gospel Newsletter

Sharing the simplicity that is in Christ

May 21, 2017

A TREE AND ITS FRUIT

A man calls the county agricultural agent for advice. "I have a tree in my apple orchard that I am having trouble with. Regardless of what I do it will not produce apples. For years I have watered, fertilized, and pruned it, but it never grows apples. I even cut back the other trees so it can get more sunlight. Every so often it puts out little pine cones, but I pull them off as fast as I can so it does not become a pine tree. Do you know what the problem could be?" "Yes," the agent replied. "Your tree is not an apple tree. It is a pine tree. Cut it down!"

Jesus told us *"A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them"*

Matthew 7:18-20. If a tree produces corrupt fruit, you know it is a corrupt tree. It does not matter how much you water, fertilize, or prune it, it is still a corrupt tree. The only solution is to cut it down and plant a good tree in its place. This tree is a type of fallen humanity. God's redemption does not just prune the corrupt tree. He cuts it down and plants a *"tree of righteousness"* in its place.

The cross of Christ is God's great "ax." It is the instrument by which he cuts down the sinful tree out of the heart of those who come to him through Christ Jesus. The cross does not prune. It

does not water. It does not fertilize. Its singular purpose is to be the *“ax laid unto the root”* of the *“Adamic”* tree. Luke 3:9. The apostle Paul gives witness of this work saying, *“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.”* Romans 6:6. This is not a work in progress, but a finished work. Those who are in Christ Jesus are not in the process of being *“cut down.”* The old tree IS cut down and they are now the *“trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.”* Isaiah 61:3. The end of the *“old man of sin”* along with the works of sin is not the goal of our walk in Christ, but the starting point. Paul never said *“I am being crucified with Christ;”* he said *“I AM crucified with Christ.”* Galatians 2:20. Just as there was no resurrection before there was a crucifixion, there is no *“newness of life”* without first the *“old man”* having been *“crucified with Christ”* through faith in Christ Jesus. This is how God’s people are delivered from the bondage of sin. Romans 6:7

There is, however, more to the Christian walk than just not being a sinner any longer. That of itself is more wonderful than words can express, but even as a good tree is planted to produce good fruit, we are delivered from both sin and the Law to bring forth fruit unto God. Romans 6:22, 7:4. The fact that a tree is an apple tree may insure it will not produce pine cones, but it does not guarantee that it will produce apples. Even so, the fruit of the Spirit that is produced in a child of God is directly related to their relationship with Jesus Christ. Jesus said, *“As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.”* John 15:4 The fruit of the Spirit increases as we draw close in the

knowledge of and communion with Christ. Peter said, *“Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord”* II Peter 1:2.

There is a difference between a person lacking the fullness of *“the fruit of the Spirit”* and a person bearing the fruit of sin. The apostle John wrote, *“Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.”* I John 3:15. Hatred is the corrupt fruit of a corrupt tree. The only answer for such a tree is that it be cut down by the cross of Christ. On the other hand, a child of God may be found lacking in the fullness of God’s love. Their answer is to simply draw close to Christ. As they do this, love will increase along with all the fruit of the Spirit.

For too long Christian people have been fed the lie that one person’s impatience is the same before God as another’s immorality. That is absurd! Would you consider the man who through a misunderstanding may have spoken harshly to your daughter to be the same as someone who seduced and abused her? Of course not! Neither does God! God will chasten the impatience found in his children, but sin he will judge along with the sinner. For the lack of understanding this simple difference, almost universally the church has accepted and gloried in the fallacy that all God’s children are sinners. If they are, then Christ, who came to save his people from their sin, must have died in vain.

The purpose of this teaching is not to excuse the lack of *“the fruit of the Spirit”* in a child of God, but to point out the difference between the lack of spiritual fruit as opposed to the presence of sin.

In fact there are strong warnings given to those who do not bear fruit unto God. Jesus said, *"...my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away..."* John 15:1-2. In the parable of the fig tree in the vineyard, Jesus concludes, *"if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down."* Luke 13:9 Peter tells us *"But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins."* II Peter 1:9 A child of God who lacks the fruit of the Spirit is headed back into darkness, but cannot see they are on a course back to their former sins.

There is no reason for the children of God to lack in any spiritual thing. Peter writes, *"...his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue."* II Peter 1:3 Christ is the life of his people. He not only delivers us from sin, but he will cause his fruit to abound in our hearts and lives if we simply abide in him. He is our Life!