

MINISTRY TO THE SAINTS

Sunday Morning: August 26, 2001

Text: Hebrews 6:7-10 "For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and **bringeth forth herbs** meet for them by whom it is dressed, **receiveth blessing from God**: 8. But that which **beareth thorns** and **briers** is rejected, and *is nigh* unto **cursing**; whose end *is* to be **burned**. 9. But, **beloved**, we are **persuaded better things** of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. 10. For God *is* not unrighteous to forget **your work** and **labour of love**, which ye have showed toward his name, **in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.**"

We are continuing our studies in the book of Hebrews. Last Sunday we were looking at Hebrews 6:1 through verse nine. I want us to look at Hebrews 6:7-10.

These verses deal with our ministry to the saints. Our ministry to the saints is on the basis of our fruit bearing.

PREPARED FRUIT

Hebrews 6:7 "For the earth which drinketh in the **rain** that cometh oft upon it, and **bringeth forth herbs** meet **for them** (who live on the earth) by whom it is dressed, **receiveth blessing from God**:"

As the earth that receives rain brings forth fruit so does God produce fruit for us and we are blessed because of His ministry.

Verses 7 through 10 deal with fruit bearing and the blessing that fruit is for whom it has been prepared. The earth bears fruit, God bears fruit, and we are to bear good fruit and not thorns and briers. If we are ministering to the saints, by bearing fruit, we are doing it by a work and labor of love. If we are ministering to the saints, that ministry will not be forgotten by God.

Many believe that the fruit of a Christian is another Christian, but that is not true. The fruit of God is not another God. The fruit of the Holy Spirit is not another Holy Spirit. The fruit of the vine, if Jesus is the vine, and the word says he is, is not another Jesus. The fruit of a Christian is the ministry that you produce for others.

I want us to think, this morning, about our fruit bearing ministry to others.

Not all of us have the same fruit, except in the case of being a branch on the vine. In the case of the vine, which produces wine, is the fruit that cheers God and man, Judges 9:13 When we come to a fig tree, we come to it because we want to eat some figs. Why do we want to eat figs? because we are hungry.

FRUIT FOR THE HUNGRY

Mark 11:12-14 "And on the morrow, when they were come from Bethany, he was **hungry**: 13. And seeing a **fig** tree afar off **having leaves**, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found **nothing but leaves**; for the time of figs was not *yet*. 14. And Jesus answered and said unto it, **No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever** [age]. And his disciples heard *it*."

Jesus was hungry. He came to a fig tree that had leaves on it. Usually, to my understanding, when a fig tree has leaves it means that the fruit is on the tree. The fruit comes on a fig tree before the leaves. Jesus came to the fig tree with leaves on it, he was expecting fruit.

This verse is significant because this leaf bearing fig tree did not have the fruit that would have satisfied the hunger of the Lord. Jesus had a need and he came to the tree expecting that tree to minister to that need. There are those that look like they would be a blessing to us and all that

we find is leaves.

The Lord address the fig tree and announced that this fig tree would not produce fruit. The word ever is better translated as age. What he was doing was teaching that the nation of Israel, a type of the fig tree, should have been a blessing because of the outward appearance, but there was no fruit, only an outward appearance. When Jesus pronounced this upon this fig tree he was pronouncing this upon the nation of Israel for the age of the Church. Israel is not a blessing. They are a cup of trembling in the hands of the Gentiles. The Gentile nations do not know what to do with Israel, but God prophesied this would happen to Israel.

NIGH UNTO CURSING

Hebrews 6:8 "But that which beareth **thorns** and **briers** is rejected [adokimov, disapproved], and **is nigh unto cursing**; whose end *is* to be burned."

I am reading this verse again to emphasize the word *cursing*. Verse 8 says that those who bear thorns and briers is nigh unto cursing. We will see in the next verse that Jesus cursed the fig tree so that it would not bear fruit during the age of the Church.

CURSED

Mark 11:21 "And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Master, behold, the **fig tree** which thou **cursedst** is **withered away**."

Again, in Hebrews 6:8 we see that those who bear thorns and briers is rejected or disapproved and is nigh unto cursing. What happened to the fig tree that was cursed? It withered up so that it could not produce fruit. Hebrews tells that those who have fruit but not the right kind of fruit are nigh unto cursing. What this means to me is that the Lord does not want us to weather up to the point that we can not produce fruit. If we are not producing the right kind of fruit, we can change. If we continue to produce thorns and briers we will be disapproved.

I assure you we have not had a throne and brier casserole at our house. We have had withered fruit at our house because we did not eat it fast enough. What do you do with withered fruit? You toss it out. We do not want thorns, briers, and withered fruit in our lives because that kind of fruit is not desirable nor useful. Who wants to eat that that will make them sick or hurt them.

We want to be a blessing.

UNFRUITFUL

Luke 8:14-15 "And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with **cares** and **riches** and **pleasures** of *this* life, and **bring no fruit** to perfection. **15.** But that on the good ground are they, which in an **honest** and **good heart**, having heard the **word**, **keep it**, and **bring forth fruit with patience**."

What can cause us not to bear fruit? When the word of the kingdom is choked, we do not bear fruit. The word is what helps us bear fruit. When cares creep in the word is choked and fruit bearing stops. What cares? For others? No. Our own cares. I am wrapped up in me, mine. We all have problems from time to time and we have to deal with them, but we do not have to be consumed with them. Riches is a choker and a killer of fruit. People are consumed with trying to become a millionaire because a lottery jackpot of nearly 300 million. I read where a professional football player spent 1500 dollars on lottery tickets. The man who spent 1500 dollars on lottery tickets is already a multimillionaire. He doesn't need any more money. Riches can choke the word and stop fruit bearing. Pleasures can choke the Word. The pleasures of this life. Looking for a good time. Partying all the time. Pleasures of this life keeps our minds off of being responsible with cares, finances, and fruit bearing. We need an honest and good heart. If we have an

honest and good heart and we hear the Word of God and obey the word of God, we are going to be fruitful. Being poor can also be a distraction. The Word of God encourages us to be godly and content. 1 Timothy 6:6 "But godliness with **contentment** is great gain."

FRUIT OF A BRANCH

John 15:1-8 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. 2. Every branch in me that **beareth not fruit** he **taketh away**: and every *branch* that **beareth fruit**, he **purgeth** it, that it may bring forth more fruit. 3. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. 4. 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. 5. I am the vine, ye *are* the **branches**: He that **abideth in me**, and I in him, the same **bringeth forth much fruit**: for without me ye can do nothing. 6. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast *them* into the fire, and they are burned."

This passage uses figurative language. Instead of being literally burned, it could mean that the consequences of being a fruitless child of God will result in something that we do not like on the level of being burned. In the context of this passage is the thought of being cleansed through the Word. The only way that we can abide in Him is to abide in the word. Be in the Word of God and let the Word of God be in you. Study of the Word of God and hiding the Word of God in my heart and life. If the Word is abiding in us and we are abiding in him we are going to be fruitful. We are not going to have to be afraid of being disapproved as we read in Hebrews 6:8 "But that which beareth thorns and briers *is* rejected, . . ." Again the word rejected could be translated disapproved. I do not want to be disapproved when I stand before the Lord. I want to hear well done thou good and faithful servant. We need to abide in the vine because without the vine we can do nothing.

I want to emphasize that the fruit of the vine is not another vine. We are the branches, and the fruit of a branch is not another branch. Alton, if your vineyard in your back yard only produced branches what would you do with it? Cut it down. Alton and Margaret make good jellies and jams with those grapes. The fruit of the vine is the wine. The branches bear grapes. What happens to what you bear, the grapes are crushed. Grapes are not profitable until they are crushed. Sometimes it hurts to see what the produces through us crushed.

DRINK THE FRUIT

Mark 14:25 "Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the **fruit of the vine**, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

Jesus in the upper room with his disciples told them that he would not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom. The fruit of the vine is the wine. It is crazy sometimes what goes through your thoughts when you read these things about the fruit of the vine. The thought came to me, If the fruit of the vine is branches, I wonder what branch juice taste like.

FRUIT OF THE VINE

Judges 9:13 "And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which **cheereth** God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?"

It is the fruit of the vine that cheers God and man. That which is done by faith pleases God, If we are pleasing God we are also being a blessing to the saints.

FRUIT OF A CHRISTIAN

Hebrews 6:10 "For God *is* not **unrighteous** to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have **ministered to the saints**, and **do minister**."

Fruit bearing is God and for the saints. Not every child of God is a saint, but in this verse it is the saints that are being ministered to. Just being saved does not make you a saint. The word saint comes from the word meaning holy. A saint is one who is holy and separated from the world and the flesh. You can't be a saint if you are not just, and it is the just that walk by faith and please God.

HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH

Galatians 6:10 "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all *men*, especially unto them who are of the **household of faith**."

When we are doing good to all men, we need to keep a good Biblical illustration in mind and that is Jehoshaphat and Ahab. 2 Chronicles 18:1 "Now Jehoshaphat had riches and honour in abundance, and joined affinity with Ahab." Jehoshaphat was doing that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, but he went up to Samaria to join forces with king Ahab. Why he did that is beyond me. Ahab asked Jehoshaphat to help him in 2 Chronicles 18:3 "And Ahab king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat king of Judah, Wilt thou go with me to Ramothgilead? And he answered him, I *am* as thou *art*, and my people as thy people; and *we will be* with thee in the war." Jehoshaphat said we are one and my people as thy people in war. They all go out to war and Ahab is killed and Jehoshaphat goes home. What a fun day. Something happened to Jehoshaphat on the way home. 2 Chronicles 19:2 "And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat, Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD? therefore **is wrath upon thee from before the LORD**." We need to be careful how we help all people. If we are helping the household of faith we know we are not helping the ungodly and those who hate the Lord. I have been guilty helping the ungodly, but not knowing it. I still think of it to this day. I had a lady beg me to help her and her three daughters to stay one night in a motel. I am an old softy, and I finally gave in to help her. She said we just need a place to stay tonight and that is all. I went to the motel and paid for one night rent. When I got to the motel, there was a man with her, and I wondered about that, but I had said I would take care of one night for her and her daughters. After I paid the rent, I forgot to pickup the receipt. I called the motel to send me the receipt and he said he would and he did send me the receipt. On the receipt, it had a man's name on it and he lives about two blocks from where I live. She was not a women in need of an overnight place to stay. There was something very wrong about the whole situation. I learned a valuable lesson over that situation.

FRUITFUL IN GOOD WORKS

Colossians 1:10 "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;"

Walking worthy of the Lord and pleasing him will mean that we are being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the deeper knowledge of the God. Increasing in the knowledge of God will help us to be fruitful, pleasing the Lord.

FRUITS OF THE FLESH

Galatians 5:19-20 "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, 20. Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,"

Galatians 5:19 and following talk of the works of the flesh. We might call these works of the flesh, fruits of the flesh. These fruits minister to the individual and not for the blessing of others.

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Galatians 5:22-24 "But the **fruit** of the **Spirit** is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness,

goodness, faith, 23. Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. 24. And they that are Christ's have **crucified** (died to fruits of the flesh) the flesh with the affections and lusts."

In Galatians 5:22 and following we have a reference to the *fruit of the Spirit*. There is an interesting observation about the book of Galatians and that is the word **holy** does not occur one time in the whole book. I personally do not believe that **the fruit of the spirit** here is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. What is this spirit? I believe this spirit is defined in Galatians 4:6.

SPIRIT OF HIS SON

Galatians 4:6 "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the **Spirit of his Son** into your hearts, crying, **Abba, Father.**"

The spirit of his Son is defined, I believe, in words *Abba, Father*. By saying these words we are expressing the spirit of submission to the Father. That is the spirit that Jesus Christ demonstrated in the Garden when he submitted to the will of His heavenly Father. Jesus was saying to the Father, "Not what I will, but what thou wilt." If you have that spirit in your heart, do you know what kind of fruit you are going to produce? You are going to produce "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, and temperance." Verse 23 of Galatians 5 ends with crucifying "the flesh and the affections and lusts." When you crucify the flesh and the affections and lusts you died to the fruits of the flesh. You are no longer producing those fruits.

The following verse will add additional light to these thoughts.

HE MUST DIE

John 12:23-24 "And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. 24. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and **die**, it abideth alone: but **if it die**, it bringeth forth **much fruit.**"

The spirit of his Son is to die. In the past I failed to read verse 27 in the light of verses 23 and 24. What kind of death is he talking about in this verse? I believe we can find the answer to that in verse 27.

NOT DIE?

John 12:27 "Now is my soul troubled; and **what shall I say?** Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour."

What does this verse sound like to you? This verse sounds like when the Lord was in the garden. He asked the question "What shall I say?" Can I say Father, save me from this hour? That is what he said in the Garden, but did he mean that? No! because it was for this hour that he came into the world. He prayed "Take away this cup from me." but what he really wanted was doing the will of the Father. He expressed that desire in the words "Abba, Father."

ABBA, FATHER

Mark 14:36 "And he said, Abba, Father, all things *are* possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt."

When Jesus cried, "Abba, Father." he was expressing the latter part of this verse. When we pray the model prayer saying "Our Father" we are expressing our desire for the Father's will to be done and not ours. His death in the garden and his death on the cross has produced some blessed fruit for the saints. A portion of that fruit is power over the Devil and a legal document, the New Testament, that will provide me with an inheritance. He is bearing fruit for you and for me. He is our high priest. Have we been reading about that in Hebrews chapter 6? Yes, we have.

The spirit of His Son was expressed in Mark 14:36. "Not what I will, but what thou wilt." If we have that same spirit we will be producing the fruit of that spirit which is found in Galatians 5:22-23 ". . . love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23. Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." I want to produce this fruit to be a blessing to the saints and faithful in Christ. Loving the brethren is ministering to the saints. In loving the brethren, we don't pat them on the back and say "Be filled, and be warmed." When we see a brother, who is seeking to enter into the kingdom, hungry and naked, what do we do. We give him food to eat and clothes to wear, or what ever the need may be.

HE WILL NOT FORGET

Hebrews 6:10 "For **God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love**, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have **ministered** to the **saints**, and **do minister**."

This verse is a promise. If we are blessing others by the fruit of our lives and ministry, God is not going to forget that. You can count on it. He is not going to forget that. He wants to remember that. He wants to forget our sins, but he wants to remember our ministry to each other.

HE SEES YOUR MINISTRY

1 Thessalonians 1:3 "Remembering without ceasing your **work** of faith, and **labour** of love, and **patience** of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, **in the sight of God** and **our Father**;"

What does it mean "in the sight of God and our Father"? It means that God is looking at your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope. This work does not happen unnoticed by God the Father. What can we do?

CUP OF WATER

Matthew 10:40-42 "He that receiveth you **receiveth me**, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me. **41.** He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a **prophet's reward**; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a **righteous man's reward**. **42.** And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of **these little ones** (the least of these my brethren) a **cup of cold water** only in the name of a disciple, verily **I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.**"

This verse tells of receiving and giving to the insignificant. Not giving a lot. How much does a cup of cool water cost? This kind of ministry is very important to the Lord. This ministry is to the little ones which I believe are the ones who are entering into the kingdom of the heavens. If you are ministering to those who are seeking to enter into the kingdom, you are ministering to the undesirable in many cases. Not the first but the last, the ones who will one day be first.

YOUR MINISTRY IS TO THE KING

Matthew 25:38-40 "When saw we thee a stranger, and **took thee in?** or naked, and **clothed thee?** **39.** Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and **came unto thee?** **40.** And **the King shall answer** and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done *it* unto **one of the least of these** my brethren, **ye have done it unto me.**"

When was the last time you saw the king living on the street, or naked, sick or imprisoned and ministered to him. When you allowed the sap of the vine, the Lord Jesus Christ, to flow through you to produce the fruit that others needed. To whom was this blessing provided? The least of His brethren who are seeking to enter into the kingdom of the heavens.

Who are we really ministering to when we give a cup of cold water? We are ministering to the King of kings and the Lord of lords. I am not persuaded that our ministry should be to a person living in a cardboard box who never darkens the door of a church. Our ministry to the saints will

not be forgotten. Our ministry is to the sheep that have been called and chosen to enter into the kingdom of the heavens. These sheep are often the outcast of the family, being called *the least of these my brethren*; and ministering to them may bring the reproach by association.

When the Lord was incarcerated did Peter go and visit him. No! Peter was looking out for his own hide. Peter's attitude was, we are all on our own.

There is a good example of this ministry in 2 Timothy 1:15-18 "This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be **turned away from me**; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes. 16. The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; **for he oft refreshed me**, and was **not ashamed of my chain**: 17. But, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found *me*. 18. The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day: and in **how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus**, thou knowest very well." When others were forsaking Paul, Onesiphorus was seeking out Paul to minister to him in his need. Those who turned away from Paul were ashamed of his chain. How Onesiphorus refreshed Paul is not spelled out, but a cup of cold water will not go unnoticed nor rewarded.

Could it be, that when the Lord was on the cross, that the one who gave the Lord a cup of vinegar, will not lose his reward?

May the Lord help us to appreciate the value of ministering to each other. As those who ministered to each other in Matthew 25 are the ones who enter into the kingdom. Keep in mind that ministering to each other is ministering to the Lord himself.