

# The Trees of Righteousness Blossoming and Bringing Forth Fruit

by Thomas Watson

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*Christians should endeavor after fruitfulness by being engrafted into Christ and filled with the fruits of righteousness, and perform duties of religion in their right timing.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 1:3, Isaiah 61:3, Jeremiah 17:8, John 15:1, John 15:4, Galatians 5:22, Philippians 1:11, Colossians 1:10, Revelation 14:13

**Topics:** "Christian Living", "Fruitfulness"

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## Description

Thomas Watson preaches about the importance of Christians endeavoring after fruitfulness, emphasizing the need to bring forth the fruits of righteousness to glorify God. He explains that Christians are like trees of righteousness, called to bear inward, outward, kindly, and seasonable fruit. Watson highlights the significance of bringing forth proper and genuine fruit in our relationships and the danger of unfruitfulness, evil fruit, or bringing forth good fruit for selfish reasons. He urges Christians to be fruitful, as fruitfulness adorns, pleases God, and is a distinguishing characteristic of a true Christian.

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## Transcript

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"Being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."  
Philippians 1:11

The blessed apostle in this chapter makes a solemn prayer to God for these Philippians; and, among the rest, he puts up two rare petitions for them:

First, that they might be sincere (verse 10).

Second, that they might be fruitful: "being filled with the fruits of righteousness."

Here observe:

1. The matter: "being filled with fruits."
2. The manner of production: "by Jesus Christ."
3. The end: "which are to the glory and praise of God."

DOCTRINE: Christians should above all things, endeavor after fruitfulness. The saints are called "trees of righteousness" in Isaiah 61:3. These rational trees must not only bring forth leaves--but fruit, "being filled with the fruits of righteousness." To further amplify this, there are two things to be inquired into:

QUESTION. How does a Christian bring forth fruit?

ANSWER. He brings forth fruit in the vine. By nature we are barren, and there is not one good blossom growing on us; but when by faith we are engrafted into Christ, then we grow and bear fruit. John 15:4: "Just as a branch is unable to produce fruit by itself unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in Me." Jesus Christ is that blessed Root which shoots up that sap of grace into His branches. The Pelagians tells us we have sufficiency of ourselves to bring forth good fruit; but how improper is this? Does not the root contribute to the branches? Is it not of Christ's precious fullness that we receive (John 1:16)? Therefore it is observable that Christ calls the spouse's grace His grace. Song of Solomon 5:1: "I have gathered My myrrh with My spice." Christ does not say, "your myrrh," but "My myrrh." If the saints bear any spiritual fruit, they are indebted to Christ for it; it is His myrrh. Hosea 14:8: "From Me is your fruit found."

QUESTION. What is that fruit which a sincere Christian brings forth?

ANSWER. It is inward fruit, outward fruit, kindly fruit, and seasonable fruit.

1. A Christian brings forth INWARD fruit: love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, and faith (Galatians 5:22). This fruit is sweet and mellow, growing under the Sun of righteousness. This is that ripe fruit which God delights to taste (Micah 7:1).

2. A Christian brings forth OUTWARD fruit. He brings forth the fruit of good speech. Proverbs 15:4: "A wholesome tongue is a tree of life." Gracious speeches fall from the lips of a godly man, as fruit does from a tree.

A Christian brings forth the fruit of good works (Colossians 1:10). God will say at the last day, "Show me your faith by your works" (James 2:18). A true saint does all the good he can, honoring the Lord with his substance; he knows he is to be in the world but a while, and therefore lives much in a little time, crowding up a great deal of work in a little time. It was Christ's speech not long before His suffering, "I have finished the work which You gave Me to do" (John 17:4). How can they be said to finish their work--who never began to work?

3. A Christian brings forth KINDLY fruit. "The godly man brings forth his fruit" (Psalm 1:3), that is, he brings forth that fruit which is proper for him to bear. But what is this kindly and proper fruit? It is when we are holy in our callings and relations. In a magistrate, justice is kindly fruit (Deuteronomy 16:19); in a minister, zeal (Acts 17:16); in a parent, instruction (Deuteronomy 4:10); in a child, reverence (Ephesians 6:1); in a master, a good example (Genesis 18:19; Ephesians 6:9); in a servant, obedience (1 Peter 2:18); in the husband, love (Ephesians 5:25); in the wife, submission (Ephesians 5:22); in a tradesman, diligence (Exodus 20:9); in a soldier, innocence (Luke 3:14).

A tree of God's planting brings forth his fruit, that which is suitable and proper. I shall never believe him to be godly, who does not bear kindly fruit. A man cannot be a sincere Christian--but a bad master. A sincere Christian--but a bad parent, does not sound well. That minister can no more be godly who lacks zeal--than that wine is good which lacks spirits; that magistrate can no more be good who lacks justice--than that pillar is good which is not upright. That child can no more be good who does not honor his parents--than a traitor can be said to be loyal. When Absalom rose up in rebellion against his father, the mule which he rode upon (as if she were weary of carrying such a burden) resigned her load up to the great, thick oak, and there left him hanging by the hair, between heaven and earth, as neither fit to ascend the one nor worthy to tread upon the other.

Let Christians be persuaded to bring forth proper and genuine fruit, and shine forth in their relations. He who is not godly in his relations goes under the just suspicion of being a hypocrite; let a man seem to be a penitent or zealous--yet if he does not bear fruit proper to his station, he is no tree of righteousness--but some wild, degenerate plant. There are some who will pray, hear sermons, discourse well; and this is good; but what does this bleating of the sheep mean? They are not good in their relationships; this reveals that they are unsound. A sincere Christian labors to fill his relationships. I do not like those Christians who, though they seem to be traveling to heaven--yet leave the duties of their relations, as a uncharted territory, which they never come near.

The excellency of a Christian is to bring forth proper fruit. Wherein does the goodness of a member in the body lie, but to discharge its proper office? The eye is to see, the ear to hear, and so on. So the excellency of a Christian is to bring forth that fruit which God has assigned to him. What is a thing good for--which does not do its proper work? What is a clock good for--which will not strike? What is a ship good for--which will not sail? What is a rose good for--which does not give forth its fragrance? What is that professor good for--who does not send forth a sweet perfume in his relationships?

The commendation of a thing, is when it puts forth its proper virtue.

Not to bring forth suitable fruit, spoils all the other fruit which we bring forth. If a man were to make a medicine and leave out the chief ingredient--the medicine would lose its virtue. If one were to draw a portrait and leave out an eye--it would spoil the picture. There are many to whom Christ will say at the day of judgment, as He did to the young man in Luke 18:22, "Yet lack you one thing. You have prayed, fasted, and heard sermons--yet lack you one thing--you have not been godly in your relationships."

Relative graces do much to beautify and set off a Christian. It is the beauty of a star to shine in its proper orb. Relative grace bespangles a Christian.

4. A sincere Christian brings forth SEASONABLE fruit. Psalm 1:3 speaks of "he who brings forth fruit in his season." Ecclesiastes 3:11 says that "everything is beautiful in his time." That may be good at one time, which at another time may be out of season. There is a great deal of skill in the right timing of a thing; duties of religion must be performed in the fit juncture of time.

Christian duties which relate to our neighbor must be observed in their season. For example, our reproving others must be seasonable. Reproof is a duty; when we see others walk irregularly, like soldiers who march out of rank and file, we ought mildly--yet gravely, to tell them of their sin (Leviticus 19:17); but let this fruit be brought forth in its season.

Do it privately. Matthew 18:15: "Go and tell him his faults between him and you alone." Do it when you see him in the best temper, not when his passions are up--that would be like pouring oil on the flame. But only reprove him when it is seasonal--when his spirit is meekened and calmed. You put the seal on the wax when it is soft and pliable. There is a time when men's spirits are more flexible and yielding; now is the fittest time to stamp a reproof upon them, and it is likeliest to take impression. When Abigail reproved Nabal, it was in the right season; not when he was in wine--but when he was in his wits, and was fit to hear a reproof (1 Samuel 25:37).

Another season for reproof is in the time of affliction. Affliction tames men's spirits, and then a word of reproof spoken prudentially may work with the affliction. A bitter potion is not refused if in case of extremity of pain. Affliction opens the ear to discipline.

Also, our comforting others must be seasonable. Proverbs 15:23: "A word spoken in due season, how good is it?" When we see one fallen into sin, and like Peter weeping bitterly--now a word of comfort will do well. When the incestuous Corinthian was deeply humbled, the apostle called for oil and wine to be poured into his wounds. 2 Corinthians 2:7: "You ought rather to comfort him." And the reason given was, "lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with sorrow." When the soul is wounded for sin, then bring the mollifying ointment of a promise (Jeremiah 3:1). Hang out free grace's colors; display the glory of God's attributes, His mercy and truth to the sinner.

When the spirit is broken, a word of comfort spoken in season is putting it in joint again. We bring forth seasonable fruit when we give wine to those who are of a heavy heart. Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul. Job's friends pretended to comfort him--but, instead of pouring oil into the wound, they poured in vinegar.

Duties of religion that relate to God must be performed in their season. Mourning for sin is a duty. God loves a contrite heart (Psalm 51:17). How powerful with God is the weeping rhetoric which a poor sinner uses? Yet there is a time when weeping may not be so seasonable; when God has given us some eminent signal deliverance, and this mercy calls aloud to us to rejoice--but we hang our harps on the willows and sit weeping. This sadness is fruit out of season.

There was a special time at the Feast of Tabernacles when God called His people to rejoicing: "Seven days shall you keep a solemn feast unto the Lord your God--and you shall surely rejoice." Now if the Israelites had sat heavy and disconsolate at the time when God called them to rejoice, it would have been very unseasonable, like mourning at a wedding. When we are called to thanksgiving, and we mingle our drink with tears, is not this to be highly unthankful for mercy? God would have His people humble--but not ungrateful. It is the devil's policy either to keep us from duty--or else to put us upon it when it is least in season.

Rejoicing is a duty (Psalm 33:1). But when God, by some special providence, calls us to weeping, then joy is unseasonable. This is that which God complained of in Isaiah 22:12-13: "In that day the Lord Almighty called you to weep and mourn. He told you to shave your heads in sorrow for your sins and to wear clothes of sackcloth to show your remorse. But instead, you dance and play." Occolampadius and others think it was in the time of king Ahaz, when the signs of God's anger, like a blazing star, appeared. Now to be given to mirth was very unseasonable, according to verse 14: "Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you until you die." It is a concise form of an oath, as if God had said, "I swear that it shall not by any prayer or sacrifice be expiated!"

To read at home when the word is being preached or the sacrament is being celebrated, is unseasonable, nay, sinful. As Hushai said in 2 Samuel 17:7, "The counsel is not good at this time." One duty is to prepare for another--but not to jostle out another; fruit must put forth seasonably. The great God who has appointed the duties of His worship has appointed also the time. If, when public ordinances are administered, any person, whether out of pride or sloth, shall stay at home, though he may have his private devotions--yet he brings forth fruit out of season, and let that man know he shall bear his sin.

Let all the trees of righteousness bring forth seasonable fruit. In prosperity, be thankful; in adversity, be patient. "To everything there is a season" (Ecclesiastes 3:1). The Psalmist said, "He appointed the moon for seasons" (Psalm 104:19).

To excite you to seasonable fruit, consider that the seasonableness of a thing, puts a value and preciousness upon it. Duties of religion performed in their season, are glorious. Creatures, by the instinct of nature, observe their season. Jeremiah 8:7: "Yes the stork in the heaven knows her appointed times." And shall not Christians observe their seasons--when to mourn and when to rejoice? Consider also that duties of religion not well timed are dangerous; mourning in a time of

joy, and private duties in time of public ones--are unseasonable and will prove harmful.

#### Application

##### I. Information.

This shows us who is a Christian in God's calendar, namely, the fruit-bearing Christian. As soon as the sap of grace is infused--it puts itself forth in evangelical fruit. No sooner was Paul converted than he became a plant of renown; he brought forth rare fruit--humility, faith, and heavenly mindedness. He was one of the most fruitful trees that God ever planted in His vineyard. When God changed the jailor from a wild tree to a tree of righteousness, he brought forth sweet and generous fruit. How kindly he treated the apostles! He set food before them and washed their wounds; he who was before their jailor, became then their nurse and physician!

##### II. Reproof. Here is an indictment against three sorts of people:

1. This reproves such as bring forth no fruit. Hosea 10:1: "Israel is an empty vine." Oh, how many unfruitful hearers there are who evaporate into nothing but froth and smoke, being like those ears of corn which are turned into straw! They give God neither the early fruit, nor the latter. There are many Christians who are like arbors, covered only with the leaves of profession; they may be compared to the wood of the vine which is good for nothing (Ezekiel 15:2). "He who has not the fruits of the Spirit--has not the Spirit, and he who has not the Spirit--is none of Christ's" (Romans 8:9). And if he is not Christ's, whose is he then? I fear the sin of this age is unfruitfulness. Never has there been more laboring in God's vineyard, and yet never has there been less fruit; instead of the fruitful fig tree and the pomegranate, we have abundance of barren willows growing among us. Ministers say they fear they spend their labor in vain; many are perverted, few converted.

To those professing Christians who are unfruitful, let me say four things:

First, unfruitfulness is a shame; barrenness of children was counted a great shame. For a tree in winter to be unfruitful is no great wonder; but in the spring and summer, to be without fruit--is a reproach to the tree. So, in the winter of ignorance and popery--to have less fruit was less culpable; but in the springtime of the

gospel, when the Sun of Righteousness has shined so gloriously in our horizon, now to be without fruit is a reproach not to be wiped away!

Second, what account can the unfruitful professor give to God? God will come with this question, "Where is your fruit?" A godly man dies full of fruit. Job 5:26: "You will approach the grave in full vigor, as a stack of sheaves is gathered in its season." The unfruitful professor comes to his grave, not with a stack of sheaves is gathered in its season--but as a bundle of worthless straw, fit only for the fire! It is good to think to ourselves what answer we shall give to God for our barrenness. The Lord has planted us in a rich soil, and He may say to us as He did to His vineyard in Isaiah 5:1-2 "My beloved has a vineyard on a rich and fertile hill. He plowed the land, cleared its stones, and planted it with choice vines. Then he waited for a harvest of sweet grapes--but the grapes that grew were wild and sour!"

Hilly places are judged the fittest for vines to grow in (Psalm 80:10), that is, in a very fat, rich soil. There the sun comes best, and is of more force for ripening the grapes. So may God say to us, "I have planted you in a hilly place. You have been higher than the nations round about you. You have even been lifted up to heaven with ordinances. The sunbeams of mercy, and Zion's silver drops, have fallen upon you--but where is your fruit? Your blessings have been great--but where is your fruit?" Whom God finds without fruit, He leaves without excuse.

Third, those who do not bring forth good fruit, shall never taste of the fruits that grow in heaven. Heaven is the garden of God, the paradise of pleasure, where the most rare, delicious fruits grow; there are fruits which the angels themselves delight to feed on. Now, if you do not bring God your fruit, you shall never taste His fruit. You who do not bring forth the fruits of righteousness, shall never taste the fruits of paradise. Oh, present Christ with your sweet spices; give Him your myrrh, your spiced wine. Your myrrh is, repentance; this, though it is bitter to you, is sweet to Christ. Those who have no myrrh or wine to give to God--shall never feed upon the Tree of Life which bears several sorts of fruit.

Fourth, think of the heavy doom which will be passed upon the unfruitful person. Matthew 25:30: "Cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness." This man had not embezzled his talent--but because he did not trade with it and bring forth fruit--he was therefore sentenced.

This reproves such as bring forth evil fruit. They are not trees of the garden--but the wilderness; their hearts are a fruitful soil for sin! They bring forth pride, malice, superstition, and the like. This reproves such as bring forth good fruit--but to a bad end. Hosea 10:1: "Israel is an empty vine, he brings forth fruit unto himself." A man would be better to bring forth no fruit--as bring forth fruit unto himself.

QUESTION. What is it for one to bring forth fruit unto himself?

ANSWER. It is when all the good he does, is to magnify himself. The worm of pride gets into his fruit and spoils it. Prayer is good; but when a man prays only to show his gifts, this is to bring forth fruit unto himself.

Some take pride in their humbling confessions, which is as if Benhadad's servants had been proud when they came before the king with ropes around their necks (1 Kings 20:31). Works of mercy are good--but when a man gives alms not so much to feed the poor, as to feed his pride--then he brings forth fruit to himself, and this fruit is filled with worms. God will say to all such self-seekers, as once He did to the people of the Jews in Zechariah 7:5, "When you fasted and mourned, did you at all fast unto Me, even to Me?" Sinners, did you not bring forth fruit unto yourselves?"

III. Exhortation. Let this exhort all to fruitfulness. How happy would it be, if it might be said of us as it was of Joseph in Genesis 49:22, "Joseph is a fruitful bough!" We love to see everything fruitful; if there is a tree in our orchard, though covered with ever such fair leaves, we do not value it unless there is fruit. When you come into your garden, you complain if you see no fruit. We love to see fruitfulness everywhere, and why not in our hearts? Oh, let the precious grapes and figs we bear, give evidence that we are trees of God's planting.

We often plant trees to be a shade to the house. God cares for no such trees as are only for shade--He loves fruit. Arabia is called "Felix," because of the sweet fruits which grow there: frankincense, with other perfumes and spices. That Christian may be entitled "Felix," happy, who has the sweet fruits of the Spirit growing in his heart. Be fruit-bearing trees. This is the emblem of a sincere Christian: he is never without fruit, either blooming in his affections or fructifying in his life.

That I may persuade Christians to fruitfulness, I desire them to weigh these five things:

1. Fruit is that which God expects from us. We are His plants, and "Who plants a vineyard and does not eat its fruit?" (1 Corinthians 9:7). Let us not be as Pharaoh's lean cows, which devoured the fat cows, and yet still were lean; let us not be still devouring sermons--yet never the fatter for them.

2. Fruitfulness is one of the most distinctive characteristics of a Christian. Proverbs 12:12: "The root of the righteous yields fruit." Fruitfulness distinguishes a saint from a hypocrite. The hypocrite is all for show and pretense; he has fair leaves--but "the root of the righteous yields fruit." Fruit can no more be separated from faith--than moisture from the air; it is the very definition of a branch in Christ; it bears fruit (John 15:2). As a man differs from a beast by reason, a beast differs from a plant by sense, and a plant differs from a stone by fruit--so a sincere Christian differs from a hypocrite by fruit. Fruitfulness puts a difference between the sound tree--and the hollow tree.

QUESTION. But may not hypocrites bring forth fruit?

ANSWER. They do not bring forth fruit in the Vine; they bring forth in the strength of their abilities, not in the strength of Christ.

Hypocrites bring forth something like fruit--but it is not the right fruit. The fruit they bear is not so sweet. The crab-apple tree may bear fruit as well as the pear-tree--but the pear excels in sweetness. The hypocrite may pray and give alms as well as a child of God--but there is a difference in the fruit. The fruit of the regenerate is wholesome; it is sweetened with faith and ripened with love. The hypocrite's fruit is sour and harsh; he does not bring forth sweet pomegranates--but crab-apples; not figs--but wild grapes.

The seeming fruit of hypocrites dies and comes to nothing. John 15:6: "He is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned." The hypocrite's fruit is like the grass upon the housetops, which withers before it grows up (Psalm 139:6; Matthew 13:6).

3. Fruitfulness adorns a Christian. The fruit adorns the tree; a fruit-bearing Christian is an ornament to religion. The more fruitful the branch is, the more fair to look on. A dead tree, as it is unserviceable, so it is unattractive. A Christian, decked with the fruits of righteousness, is beautiful and glorious.

4. Fruitfulness is good evidence to show for heaven; the fruits of love, humility, and good works are (as Bernard said) seeds of hope, signs of predestination, and the happy foretastes of future glory. The righteousness of faith, is always accompanied with the fruits of righteousness. He who can show good,

fruit goes full sail to heaven!

5. God delights in His fruitful trees. When His garden flourishes, He will walk there. He who curses the barren tree will taste of the fruitful tree. Song of Solomon 5:1: "I am here in My garden, My treasure, My bride! I gather My myrrh with My spices and eat My honeycomb with My honey. I drink My wine with My milk."

This exhorts those who do bear fruit--to bring forth more fruit. Do not think that you have enough fruit--but bring forth greater degrees of sanctity. John 15:2: "He prunes every branch that produces fruit so that it will produce more fruit." Grace is like the morning light which increases more and more--to the full meridian of glory. Christians should be like that ground in the parable which "produced a crop that was thirty, sixty, and even a hundred times as much as had been planted." (Matthew 13:8). He who has a little gold labors to increase it; and is not grace more precious than gold?

Some Christians have a little fruit, and they think that is well. They are like trees which have an apple or two growing on them to show that they are of the right kind. They are like the church of Philadelphia which had a little strength (Revelation 3:8). Just so, they have a little faith and a spark of love. Christ chides a little faith (Matthew 14:31). We "grow only as we get our nourishment and strength from God" (Colossians 2:19). Christ compared the breasts of the spouse to clusters of grapes for their fruitfulness (Song of Solomon 7:7). Oh, labor to be Christians of high degrees! The apostle prayed that the love of the Philippians might abound yet more and more (Philippians 1:9).

Now that I may press Christians who have fruit--to bring forth more fruits of patience, humility, love, and the like. Consider that this is the end why we have continual cost laid out upon us--that we should bring forth more fruit. The Lord is still manuring us; not a week, not a day--but He is at continual cost with us. He rains down golden showers; and why is God at all this cost with us, but that we may bring forth more fruit?

The more fruit we bring forth, the more glory we bring to God. John 15:8: "Herein is My Father glorified--that you bear much fruit." Though it is a blessed sight to see any fruit, I would not discourage such as bear but two or three olive berries; it is a sign they are not dead trees. It is observable, the ground in the parable which brought forth a small amount of fruit--Christ called "good ground" (Matthew 13:8). If the farmer sees a thin ear which has but a little corn in it--yet he is glad to see some fruit, and he carries it into the barn. So, though you are a thin ear and do not have as much grace as others, God will not reject you. If there is any fruit, God will accept it. He who gained but two talents still heard, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" I say this that I may not discourage the weak Christian; though you have less fruit growing on you, you are too good a tree to be made fuel for the fire; you shall be transplanted into paradise!

But I also say, do not rest in small beginnings--but labor to put more oil in the lamp and be increasing your stock of grace; for the more fruit you bring forth, the more glory God has. Though the lowest degree of grace may bring salvation to you--yet it does not bring as much glory to God. It is observable in the text, when the apostle had said, "filled with the fruits of righteousness," he adds, "which are unto the glory and praise of God." It is a praise to the farmer, and commends his skill and industry--when the plants in his orchard thrive. Just so, when the plants of righteousness flourish, this is to the praise of God's glory. It is the highest end of the creature to bring glory to God. Better we lose our lives--than lose the end of our living.

The fuller we are of fruit, the more we are like Christ, who was full of grace and truth (John 1:14). He received the Spirit without measure (John 3:34). This tree of life was ever bearing; and He brought forth

several sorts of fruit--wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and so on. The more we are filled with the fruits of righteousness, the more we resemble the Sun of Righteousness. We were elected to this end--to be made like Christ (Romans 8:30); and we are most like this blessed Vine when we bear full clusters.

The more fruit a Christian brings forth, the more will Christ love him. "Surely now," said Leah, "my husband will feel affection for me, since I have given him three sons!" (Genesis 29:34). When we bear much fruit, then Christ's heart will be joined to us. Christ will pardon a weak faith--but He will honor a great faith. It was not a sparkle of faith which Christ commended in Mary Magdalene--but flaming love. Luke 7:47: "She loved much." Christians, would you be like that beloved disciple who leaned on the bosom of Jesus? Would you have much love from Christ? Let Him have much fruit from you.

Bearing much fruit will usher in abundance of comfort into the soul in the hour of temptation. Satan will be sure to besiege the weakest Christian; all his darts fly that way, and a strong temptation may overcome a weak faith. But a flourishing faith stands like a cedar, and is not blown down by the wind of temptation. A strong faith can stop the mouth of the devil, that roaring lion.

A store of fruit will also give comfort in the hour of death. A little grace will make us above the danger of death--but high degrees of grace will make us above the fear of death. Oh, what joy it will be on the deathbed, when a Christian can bring his sheaves full of corn, when he can show the five talents that he has gained by trading, when there is not only a drop or two of oil--but his lamp full of oil! What if the devil shows God our debts--if we can show him our fruit? Oh, how sweet will death be! It will not be a destruction--but a deliverance. Death, like a whirlwind, may blow down the tree of the body--but it cannot blast the fruit of our graces. The trees of righteousness carry their fruit with them. Revelation 14:13: "Their works follow them." The Christian who abounds in holiness may say as Simeon did in Luke 2:29, "Lord, now let You Your servant depart in peace." He who bears but a little fruit departs in safety; but he who bears much fruit departs in peace.

Consider what need we have to be putting forth still more fruit; our graces are yet in their infancy. Indeed, in heaven this doctrine will be out of season; we shall not need to hear it. Then we shall be done growing, being arrived at our full stature. Then our light shall be clear and our love perfect; but while we live here, there is something lacking in our faith (1 Thessalonians 3:10). Therefore we need to increase the stock of grace and bring forth more fruit. Our grace is eclipsed with sin; our faith is full of unbelief. When the sun is eclipsed, it is by degrees getting out of the eclipse and it shines brighter and brighter, and will recover its perfect luster. So it must be with us: we must be getting out of the eclipse until we arrive at our perfect luster in glory.

He who does not increase to more fruitfulness, will soon be on the losing hand. He who has not more faith will quickly have less. "You have left your first love." It is with grace as it is with fire: if it is not fed and increased, it will soon decay. Such as do not thrive in their spiritual estate, we may perceive sadly to decline. Though a Christian cannot lose the seed of grace--yet he may lose the actings of grace and the comfort of grace. Therefore, bring forth more fruit. No sooner does a Christian begin to stand still--than you may perceive him going backward.

The more your fruit is increased, the more your glory is increased. He whose pound gained ten more, was made ruler over ten cities. If you would have your crown hung full of jewels, let your boughs be hung full of fruit.

IV. Direction. I shall here lay down some means to fruitfulness.

1. Be sensible of unfruitfulness. Any might have been fruitful in grace if they had not conceited themselves so; he who thinks himself fruitful enough--is barren enough. Be sensible of your needs; it is better to know your spiritual leanness, than presume. "You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see." Revelation 3:17-18

2. If you would be fruitful, remove those things which will hinder fruitfulness, such as cherishing any secret lust in the heart. Sin indulged--is like vermin to the tree, which destroys the fruit. Grace cannot thrive in a sinful heart.

Avoid the love of riches. The cares of the world choked the seed, in Matthew 13. The love of sin poisons the fruit; the love of riches chokes it.

3. The third means to fruitfulness is weeping for sin. Moisture helps growth in trees; holy tears water the trees of God and make them more fruitful. Mary Magdalene, a weeping plant, how fruitful was she in love to Christ! Moist grounds are most fertile; the soul that is moistened and steeped in tears, is most fruitful. Never did David's graces flourish more, than when he watered his couch with tears.

4. If you would be fruitful, often apply the blood of Christ and His promises. Apply the blood of Christ. Naturalists say that blood applied to the root of some trees makes them bear better fruit. However that may be--I am sure that the blood of Christ applied to the heart makes it flourish more in holiness. None are so fruitful as a believer. "I know," said Paul, "whom I have believed." There was applying blood to the root of the tree; and how fruitful he was in zeal, love for Christ, and heroic courage! He who believes Christ died for him, never thinks he can do or suffer enough for Christ. When we read and pray, then we do but water the branches; when we believe, then we water the root of the tree and make it fruitful.

Apply the promises. Farmers have an art to nourish the root to make the tree bear better. The promises applied, are for nourishing of a Christian, and then he puts forth fruit more vigorously. The root of the pine tree watered with wine, causes it to flourish. The promises are as wine to water the trees of righteousness, whereby they spread and increase more in grace. Ever preserve the nourishment of the tree, if you would have it bear fruit. A pensive, dejected soul is less fruitful; but when through the promises a Christian's heart is cheered and comforted, then he is enriched with pleasant fruits. He becomes like a tree laden with fruit.

5. Another means to fruitfulness is humility. The low grounds are most fruitful. "The valleys are covered with grain." (Psalm 65:13). The humble heart is the fruitful heart. The largest and sweetest fruits of the Spirit, grow in a humble Christian. 1 Peter 5:5: "God gives grace to the humble." Paul called himself the least of saints--yet he was the chief of the apostles. The virgin Mary was low in her own eyes--but this lowly plant bore that blessed Vine which brought the fruit of salvation to the world.

6. If you would be fruitful in grace, be much in godly fellowship. Malachi 3:16: "Then those who feared the Lord spoke often one to another." It is observed that some plants will bear better near other trees, than when they grow alone--as is seen in the myrtle and olive trees. This holds true in divinity also: the trees of righteousness, when they associate and grow near together, thrive best in godliness. The fellowship of saints is an excellent means for fruitfulness. Christians increase one another's knowledge, strengthen one another's faith, and clear one another's evidences. When the trees planted in God's orchard stand at a distance and grow strange one to another, they are less fruitful.

7. If you would be fruit-bearing trees--be near the water of the sanctuary. Jeremiah 17:8: "He shall be like a tree planted by the waters, and that spreads out the roots by the river; her leaf shall be green, nor shall it cease from yielding fruit." The Word preached will not only make us knowing Christians--but growing Christians. Ministers are compared to clouds in Isaiah 5:6; their doctrine drops as the rain, and makes the trees of God fruitful. No wonder that they are barren trees and near unto cursing, who are not under the droppings of the sanctuary; a Christian can no more be fruitful without ordinances, than a tree without showers.

8. And last, if you would fructify quickly--go to God and implore Him to make you fruitful. God is called the gardener in John 15:1, and He has an art above all other gardeners. They can plant and prune trees--but if those trees are dead they cannot make them bear fruit. God can make the barren tree bear fruit. He can put life into a dead tree! (Ephesians 2:5)

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