

Are you going to have a fruitful Summer?

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Scripture Reading: Luke 8:4-18

Summer is here (*finally!*) and, before you know it, it will be over. Many have plans and expectations for their summer: trips, leisure activities, seeing people, projects that require good weather for outside activities, etc. Farmers are thinking a little differently. Their whole livelihood depends on a good growing season, so they can have a good harvest. They need rain and sunshine – hopefully no drought and no devastating storms. But they would not have any hopes if they did not get out in the Spring, cultivate the soil, and plant seeds.

This scenario is used many times in the Bible to describe what kind of a life we should have. One of the great themes of Scripture is that we live a fruitful life – a life that is abundant with godly character, words, and actions. This is likened to a fruitful tree, vine, or field (Psalm 1:1-3; Galatians 6:7-10; Matthew 12:33-35; John 12:24-26; 15:1-8, 16-17; Romans 6:21-22; II Corinthians 9:10-11; Philippians 1:9-11; Colossians 1:3-6, 9-10; Hebrews 13:15; James 3:17-18). Scripture describes the fruit of the Spirit – the work of Christ in our lives (Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 5:9; Philippians 1:11 cp. Galatians 2:20; John 15:4-5, 7-8).

How Important is a fruitful life?

The parable of the sower shows the fallacy of seed sown, which does not continue through the process of becoming a mature harvest.

In Luke 8:5, 11-12 we see seed that never germinates. It never even takes root.

In Luke 8:6-7, 13-14 we see shallowness and the distractions of competing interests and desires. The seed sprouts, but never develops into the fruitful state that can be harvested. Too many interpreters have given false hope to carnal people who have “believed” but have shown no fruit. This is the carnal person who has learned the facts and mentally assented to the Gospel. They are not born again. They only have an appearance of faith (note Luke 8:18). They may be a church-going person, or just a person who “talks the talk, but does not walk the walk.” See James 1:21-27; 2:14-23; II Timothy 2:19; Titus 3:5-8.

It is only in Luke 8:8, 15 that we see a truly born-again person. They **will** bear fruit. Luke stated this very simply by saying “a hundredfold” – implying an abundant harvest (cp. John 10:9-10). Matthew 13:8 and Mark 4:8 clarify the fact that true believers may have varying degrees of fruitfulness. We are all not the same in amounts of fruit in our lives, nor in the timing of how soon we are fruitful. Nevertheless, the mark of a true Christian is that they will bear fruit. See Matthew 3:7-10; John 15:2, 6, 8; Galatians 5:16-25.

Are we determined to have God's fruit in our lives? Or, are we satisfied with a little bit of Christian activity, which pacifies our conscience?

It is of great importance that we get ourselves settled in the matter of seeking fruit in our lives. We are given a principle that shows stages of development in the matter of bearing fruit.

Mark 4:28 is stated very clearly in the New Living Translation: ***"The earth produces the crops on its own. First the leaf blade pushes through, then the heads of wheat are formed, and finally the grain ripens."***

Some satisfy themselves as sprouts. Others are content to have immature, unusable, potential fruit. James 5:7 would teach us that it takes *"patience"* for this fruit to finally ripen. It is great to have seeds sprouting. The farmer is glad to see fruit developing, but there is no satisfaction until there is ripened fruit to harvest.

Christians can find themselves content and cozy, because they are in that middle stage – busy with Christian activities, but not maturing into the true image of Christ. **They are satisfied to encourage others to believe, to grow and mature, but they themselves have stopped growing and maturing.** The functions of keeping the church going has become the goal, instead of the means to a greater goal.

Consider Hosea 6:3-4. We are to "follow on," "press on," "pursue" to know the Lord and become like Him (Philippians 3:8-15; II Corinthians 3:18). Unfortunately, many people's pursuit of God is like a morning mist or the early dew, that disappears when the sun rises.

What can we do in order to have a fruitful life?

II Peter 1:2-11 offers us some help. Compare Galatians 5:22-23 and you'll see that we need to cooperate with God's Spirit to have fruit in our lives.

II Peter 1:2-4 – The knowledge of God and His Son gives us grace and peace. This knowledge is packed with promises that impart God's divine nature to us. God's Spirit transforms us when we focus on the gospel truth of Jesus Christ. See Romans 12:1-2; II Corinthians 3:18.

II Peter 1:5-11 – We are to diligently add / supply these things to our faith, so that we can have a fruitful life [note: as we "add / supply" these things (vs. 5), God "adds / supplies" to us also (vs. 11)]:

- Virtue / goodness / moral excellence
- Knowledge
- Temperance / self-control
- Patience / perseverance / steadfastness
- Godliness
- Brotherly kindness / affection
- Love