

No Root, No Fruit

by Bill McLeod

A fruitless Christian life is a life that is not producing fruit for God, and it can be caused by care and worry, riches and materialism, and pleasures and lusts.

Duration: 50:45

Scripture: Exodus 23:1, Psalm 1:1-3, Psalm 103:2, Proverbs 26:20, Luke 13:6-9, Ephesians 3:17, Colossians 2:7, 1 Timothy 6:6

Topics: "Fruitfulness"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on Luke chapter 13 and discusses a parable told by Jesus about a fruitless tree in a vineyard. The speaker interprets this parable as a representation of the nation of Israel. The tree symbolizes Israel, which had not produced fruit for three years. The owner of the vineyard decides to give it one more year to bear fruit, and if it doesn't, it will be cut down. The speaker connects this parable to the history of Israel, highlighting the eventual destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 and the scattering of the Jewish people.

Transcript

In Luke chapter 13, you might want to turn there from the sixth verse and on to the ninth verse, the Lord Jesus told another one of his parables. It was about a man that had a vineyard, and in his vineyard he had a tree that had been fruitless for three years. So he talked to his hired man and said, why don't you cut this thing down? It's just taking up space here on the ground.

It's just, it's in the way. Why don't you cut it down? And he said, well, I'm planning to dig around it and fertilize it well, and then we'll see what happens. If nothing happens this fourth year, then we'll cut the tree down.

Now the parable, I think, is quite obvious. He was talking about the nation of Israel. This was God's last call.

God, who spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken unto us by his Son. And God was now calling to the nation of Israel for the last time through his Son, beginning with John the Baptist, whose ministry lasted for six months or so, then the ministry of Jesus for three and a half years, four years, just as the parable says. Three years, no fruit.

One more year, and if it doesn't bring forth fruit, then we'll cut it down. Now the nation was not cut down then. It was not really cut down until AD 70, when the Roman legions finally took the city and burned it.

And as Jesus had said in Luke's gospel, chapter 21, Jerusalem was to be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles were fulfilled. And this ancient people of God were to be led away captive into all nations. And so they were, and so they are.

It's like Paul once said, Jerusalem which now is, is in bondage with her children, but Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. A tree without fruit. You know, many Christians are very satisfied just to have a ticket to heaven.

And they keep checking up to make sure they've got their ticket. They pat their pocket to feel it, make sure it's still there. They open their purse several times a day to make sure their ticket to heaven is still there.

And as far as they're concerned, that's about as far as it ever gets. Just make sure you don't lose your ticket to heaven. So they're riding on the gospel train, but they're doing their own thing.

And they look around when more people get on the train and it's great. The train is filling up. It's just great.

You know in India, it's absolutely incredible. You haven't lived, if you haven't traveled, on a train in India. It's fine if you get on the train where the train starts, you'll likely get a seat.

But if you get on the train a little bit down the line, you just won't get a seat. You'll stand. And people told me they've stood as long as two and a half days on a train in India, but you can't fall over because the crowd is too great.

I mean if you fall asleep, the crowd will hold you up. And sometimes there's many people riding on the roofs of the trains as there are inside, and that's quite dangerous. Oh, they all have tickets.

Everybody's got a ticket. They just keep selling tickets until nobody buys any more tickets. And you have to find your own place on the train.

Inside, outside, upside, anywhere. And you know what they sometimes do? They come, the coach is packed. And here comes a fellow, he knows the coach is going to be packed from past experience, so he brings some friends with him.

And they lift him up in the air, and they rush the train, and they push him in the open door over the heads of the people, and he finally works his way down. They actually do that. Or they rush the window, and they push him in through the window, and the people inside try to keep him out, but he kicks with his feet, and that gets bad, you know.

So they move back, and they get him in. Once he's in, he's part of the crowd. But you know, we Christians, many times as Christians, dear people, we don't try to get anybody on the gospel train, in the door or in the window.

We just sit in our cozy little seat and enjoy what's going on. Make sure you've got your ticket, because that's important, you know. You might get tossed off if you don't have your ticket.

But that seems to be for many as far as it ever goes. And we're talking about and facing the problem of a fruitless Christian life. Now the writer talks about this in Hebrews chapter 6. He says, "...the earth which

drinks in the rain, which comes often upon it, and brings forth herbs, meet for them by whom it is dressed, receives blessing from God.

But that which bears thorns and briars is rejected, and is near unto cursing, whose end is to be burned. But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, although we thus speak. For God is not unrighteous to forget your work of faith, and your labor of love." He's not unrighteous to forget that.

But the Word of God, in some respects, is like a threshing machine. The wheat goes through, and the chaff is separated from the wheat. Well, that's combines today, but I mean it's still a sort of a threshing machine.

That's why the boy didn't want to go to visit his uncle on the farm, because he heard he had a threshing machine. The book of Jude, one chapter, verse 12. Trees without fruit.

Trees whose fruit withers. He says, "...twice dead, plucked up by the roots, no fruit." That's a problem the Old Testament and the New Testament talks about. It says Israel is an empty vine.

He brings forth, she brings forth fruit unto himself. And certainly, if self is in control of my life, all I can ever do is bring forth fruit unto myself. I cannot bring forth fruit unto my God.

Jesus talked about this, Matthew 13, Luke's Gospel, chapter 8, also in the Gospel of Mark. The people that bring forth no fruit to perfection. This problem.

Why don't they? Well, Jesus said they don't because the thorns choke the word. The wheat starts to come up, but the ground is filled with thorns, weeds, cares, He said, riches, pleasures, and the lust of other things entering in. And these weeds, these thorns, they choke the word and they don't bring any fruit unto perfection.

How is it with you? Some of you are sitting here this morning and you're full of care. You're worrying about your health. Or you're worrying about the health of some person in your family.

You're worrying about your job. Worrying about finances. Worrying about the future.

What's going to happen? And your mind is almost a thousand miles away. And because your life is filled with care and worry, you can't bring any fruit to perfection. Riches, just like our Savior said, no man, that includes you and I, oh many try, no man can serve two masters.

For either you will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and he will despise the other. You cannot serve God and man and you can't do it. Don't try.

Because riches, seeking after money, material gains, material things, it's nothing more or less than a noxious plant, a weed, that will choke the good seed of the Word of God and prevent you from bringing any fruit to perfection. And then, of course, pleasures. He that loves sport, well it says, depends on the translation, he that loves pleasure shall be a poor man.

Well, Paul said, she that lives in pleasure is dead while she lives. If it's true for the goose, it's true for the gander. He or she that lives in pleasure is dead while he lives.

He that loves pleasure, he that loves sport, one translation says, shall be a poor man. You can like it, but don't ever fall in love with it. Don't let it ever mean anything great to you.

Because the Bible warns us about this. Pleasure, it's a weed and it chokes out the Word of God. Babylon, how much she has glorified herself and lived deliciously.

So much torment and sorrow give her, God said, a fruitless life. Why? Because I don't deal with the weeds and I let them spring up in my life and choke out the Word of God. The lust, he said, of other things entering in.

Whatever that lust to form, the lust might take. Every man is tempted when he's drawn away of his own lust, so James tells us. These are the things, then, that choke out the Word of God.

Different times, quite a number of times actually over the years, people have said to me, Bill, you know it says in the Bible, 1 Peter chapter 2, desire the sincere milk of the Word that you may grow thereby. And they say, I really honestly, I earnestly want to do it, but I can't. And they asked me this question, how in the world can you desire the milk of the Word of God when you don't desire it? Well, that's a good question.

How would you answer that? You can't desire it if you don't desire it. You can't create a hunger for it if you're not hungry. How can you make yourself hungry? You can.

You might starve yourself to try and make yourself hungry, and you might succeed that way, but you can't do that with the Word of God, because the longer you neglect it, the less interest you have in it, the less hunger you have for it. So then Peter tells us how to get a hunger for the Word of God. Listen carefully if you don't have a hunger.

He said, laying aside all malice, that secret hatred in the heart, and all guile, you could think here of a fisherman who's fishing for fish. Now he doesn't drop a hook down in the water and put a big sign on it in fish language, don't bite or you'll be in trouble. He doesn't do that.

He covers the hook, he conceals it with something bright, feathers, something colorful, and he gets it to zigzag through the water to deceive the fish. And the fish sees that, and he thinks it's something to eat, and pow, he's got it. That's guile.

And many people operate this way. They've got their own piddly little program, and they're constantly trying to work other people into their little program. And so to get them hooked into their program, they have something nice set up to deceive them.

Well that's guile. Laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and remember a hypocrite's an actor on the stage of life, a person who pretends. And how many of us do that? Even in having the family altered, we just go through the motions.

Read the Scripture, pray a prayer. I mean the kids have to have this, you know. But my heart may not be there at all, and I'm actually a hypocrite.

Laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envy, are you absolutely happy with what you have? Everything? The way God made you? Ever grumble because your nose is too big, your eyes are too close together, your ears are too big? I heard a fella say one, you know, his ear stuck out straight out from the side of his head. And somebody told him, brother, when I look at you from behind, you look like a

taxicab with the doors open. Well don't complain about that.

Do you know what God said to Moses? When Moses said on slow speech, God said, who has made man's mouth? Or who makes the dumb, or the deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? Have not I the Lord ever thanked God for the way He made you? I remember one time, some ladies brought this girl to my song leader and I, after a meeting. And they said, we can't get her to talk. She's crying.

She's obviously got a deep need. She won't tell us anything. So I talked to her, and I said, you're gonna have to talk now.

I think we don't know what's wrong. How can we help you? She wouldn't talk. And suddenly she got up and just walked out.

Well the next night she was back, and it was a repeat performance. And some ladies brought her to me, and she's still crying. So I talked to her.

And finally she opened her mouth, and she began to struggle. And it suddenly dawned on me that the poor girl couldn't talk. I didn't know that.

And so it took her a long, long while to get out the words, I can't. And she got the word talk out finally. Well I apologized to her.

And I asked her if she was a Christian, and she shook her head up and down. I said, have you ever thanked God for making you the way you are so you can't talk? Well she shook her head violently. And I said, but you have to do that.

If you're a Christian, why don't you thank God for the way He made you? No, she couldn't do that. And so we spent a little while with the Word of God, and spoke to her about that. Then there was this long silence, and finally she shook her head up and down.

I said, all right now sister, you have a little time of prayer. You talk to your God, and you thank Him from your heart for making you the way He did. And she did.

And then we prayed, and then my song and I drove her home. And she was in the back seat of the car. We were in the front seat of the car.

We're driving along, when all of a sudden she started to talk, and she started to sing, and she started to praise the Lord. And my song and her eyes were on pipe stems. And she said, do you hear that? And I said, be quiet, let her talk.

And she talked to the Lord, and she talked to us, and she sang. It was just beautiful. Ever thank God for the way He made you? Do you thank God? George Mueller said, my wife never walks into the room, but I thank God for giving me this beautiful, lovely person.

Or are you like the husband who said to his wife, who had said to him, honey, you know, we've been married 30 years. You haven't told me once in 30 years that you love me. And he said, listen, I told you before we got married that I loved you, and if anything ever changes, I'll let you know.

And some of you people that laugh, they're just like that. Laying aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisies and envies. Let me ask you this.

The Bible says, having food and clothing, let us be there with content. Hey, it doesn't even talk about a house. Listen, it doesn't talk about a car.

Hey, listen, it doesn't talk about money in the bank. It doesn't even talk about good health. It just says, having food and clothing, let us be there with content.

For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing. Oh, that's the context in 1 Timothy chapter 6. We're to lay aside all envy and all evil speaking. And John Wesley defined evil speaking as saying that about a person which you wouldn't dare say if the person was there.

In other words, gossip. Thou shalt not go up and down as a tailbearer among the children of thy people. The Bible says that where there's no wood, the fire goes out.

And the context has to do with gossip. Some people are log-toters. I preached a sermon on that one time.

Log-toters. They're always carrying logs to keep the fire going, you know. Gossiping about this, gossiping about that.

They can keep a fire going for 50 years. You're to lay that aside. Put it away.

And then it says, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, the pure, unadulterated milk of the Word of God, that you may grow. So then, I have to deal with the weeds, the cares, the riches, the pleasures, and the lusts of other things entering in. I have to deal with malice and guile and envy and evil speaking and hypocrisy and these things.

And if I'll deal with them, then the Word of God will become so alive to me, I'll find an hour a day isn't enough. It's quite simple. How can I get a hunger for it when I don't have a hunger for it? Deal with the sin in your life, and you'll have all the hunger in the world for the Word of God.

I mean, that's what the Bible is saying. Trees without fruit. That's a conundrum.

I mean, that's a contradiction. If I'm a Christian, now then, what kind of fruit? What do we mean by fruit? First of all, a thankful heart. It talks about that in the Bible.

God said in Isaiah 57, I create the fruit of the lips, peace, peace, to him that is far away and to him that is near. I create the fruit of the lips. And what's that? Hebrews 13, 15 tells us what it is.

By Him, that is by Christ, let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips confessing to, or one translation says, giving thanks to His name. Did you thank God today for anything? You thank God for that beautiful sun shining out there? I remember a fellow one time, I think it was Lancaster, Pennsylvania. He told me that the year before, the sun was shone one day.

I mean, it shone every day, but the clouds and the smog were in the way. Ever thank God for the sun? Thank God you can walk? Thank God you can think? Even thank God for the pains you sometimes have. Paul had them too.

And Paul said in 2 Corinthians chapter 12, I take pleasure in infirmities. And the Greek word there is a normal New Testament word for sickness. I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in distresses, in persecutions, for Christ's sake, for when I am weak, then I am strong.

You know, Spurgeon suffered terribly. He prayed and hundreds of people were healed through his prayers. They said more people were healed through Spurgeon's prayers than through all the doctors in London.

They urged him to write a book on it. He said, I don't understand it well enough to write a book on it. I mean, like some modern neophytes, he had some kind of a healing thing going.

Travel all around the country, barnstorm the country, make bags of money. He didn't even want to talk about it. Some miraculous cases, just like in the book of Acts.

But he prayed for his own wife and she wasn't healed. She was bedridden for 20 years. He prayed for himself and he wasn't healed.

And from age 36 to 56 when he died, he suffered terribly physically. Had to leave London three months every year to go and stay in Mentone, Switzerland. Because he couldn't live in the London fogs, he would have perished.

And gout and sciatica and lumbago. All kinds of physical problems. And he said, you know what gout's like? You put your foot in a big vice and you get someone to tighten the vice as tight as they can and then give it a full turn more.

That's gout. And he suffered from that. And he praised God for it.

Just for the privilege. You know that Puritans talk about the methods God uses to tear down this earthly tabernacle because we can't live forever in this. You want to live forever in this body? Listen, ever had a kidney stone attack? Brother, I wish it on my worst enemy.

It's terrible. You can't stand, you can't sit, you can't lie, you can't do anything but just groan and sweat. But the Puritans talked about these delightful measures that God uses to tear down our tabernacle so he can give us that heavenly tabernacle.

And many of us have forgotten that or never ever knew it, I suppose. The fruit of my lips giving thanks to God's name. So in Colossians chapter 2 it says, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

Come, you thankful people, come. Raise a song of harvest hope. Well, we sing that song once a year.

That's enough for some people. Because they're always sad. They always see the dark side of life.

They don't have anything to be thankful for. Always asking God for things and never thanking God for things. God daily loads us with benefit.

Do you know that today, if you're... Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits. Oh, that means that sometimes Christians will forget the benefits and blessings God has given. You've got them.

But we spend so much time adding up the bad things, we never see the good things. And we sin. And consequently, we're fruitless in our Christian life.

This is one of the fruits. And then, the Bible talks about the fruit of righteousness in Philippians chapter 1. It says, being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God. Are you honest in business dealings? Have you got some old clunker of a thing, you know, there's no

more use around the place, so you paint it up, fix it up, and so on, and you sell it for more than you paid for it ten years before, and congratulate yourself.

You've got a few extra bucks to give to God. You think God wants that kind of tainted money? The Bible talks about unjust gain. And many times as Christians, you know, we're involved in this kind of thing.

Unjust gain. I heard some kids talking one time, and this one kid had bought a car, and it was a clunker. So his friend said, what's wrong? Transmission.

Well, he said, get some soft soap, and get some sawdust, and pack the transmission full, and then let some guy try it out, and he won't hear a sound. I mean, he will in a couple of days. Here were these two kids, scheming as to how to sell this clunker.

There are lots of Christians who would do the same thing. Maybe I shouldn't have mentioned this. Now some of you will be in temptation.

But listen, the Bible talks everywhere. If there's a heavy emphasis on anything in the Bible, it's on living a righteous life. Read the book of Isaiah.

Read the book of Psalms. Or read almost anywhere in the Word of God. And God wants us to be honest.

I heard about a man, I forget where he is now, somewhere in the United States. He's got the biggest used car business in the world. Do you know why? Because he tells the people exactly what's wrong with the car he's selling.

And people have so much confidence in him, they'll phone him long distance and they'll say, Have you got a 76 Chevy? And he'll say, Yeah. What's wrong with it? He'll tell them. How much do you want? He'll tell them.

I'll buy a whole lot for you. Don't even bother looking at it. He tells them exactly what's wrong.

All the people say, That's not the way you sell used cars. I know it isn't. I mean, it's not the way most people sell used cars.

I don't know if this guy's a Christian or not. He sure sounds like one. You know, sometimes the children of Satan are more honest than the children of God are.

We sell houses and we don't tell the people there's something wrong somewhere. They find out after they buy it. And then we besmirch the testimony of God.

The Bible says we are to adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things. And that word adorn, it's the word from which we get the English word cosmetic. We are to dress it up.

We're to make the gospel of Jesus Christ as attractive as possible. I've sometimes said, so I'll say it again, that if Jesus Christ and His gospel are the picture, you and I are the picture frame. And if the picture frame is conk-eyed, dirty, worm-eaten, obviously cheap and worthless, it certainly isn't going to enhance the picture of Christ.

It would be better for me not to be known as a Christian than to be that kind of a person. It says then, Be filled with the fruits of righteousness. Oh, seek for that.

Let us walk honestly as in the day. Not in rioting and drunkenness. Not in sex sin and lustfulness.

Not in strife and envying. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ and do not make any provision for the flesh to fulfill the luster of. Romans 13, down around the end of the chapter.

And here's what it says in Psalm 85. Righteousness and peace have kissed each other. And I have no doubt at all there are many people here this morning that do not have peace of heart and mind before God.

But listen. Peace will never kiss your soul until you become righteous in your dealings with man. Peace kisses righteousness.

If you want a good study, take a concordance sometime and look up all the places in the Old and New Testament where righteousness and peace occur together, you'll be amazed. Again and again. In James, Isaiah, in the Psalms, righteousness brings peace.

I think of a man who was walking without peace from the time of the last war until four years ago when he met God in the crusade I was conducting. Made some things right that had been made wrong back in 1940-something. Made them right.

And the following night, came to the pulpit and just wept and wept as he told the people how the peace of God had come. After all these years of vain searching, you can read all the Christian books you want, and you and I can pray all we want. Philip Taylor said, God doesn't want your tears.

God wants your will. And sometimes we substitute our tears for our will. Peace will come when I do what God is asking me to do.

And then, fruit. Oh, there's a fruit of sowing and reaping. He that reaps, Jesus said in John 4, he that reaps, receives wages and gathers fruit unto life eternal that both he that sows and he that reaps may rejoice together.

And herein is that saying true. One sows and another reaps. I thank you, he said to the twelve apostles, I thank you to reap that whereon you bestowed no labor.

Other men labored and you entered into their labor. What does Jesus Christ say? Sowing and reaping. I feel sad that there's such a heavy emphasis on the reaping aspect and almost a total absence of any emphasis on the sowing.

Because you cannot reap. Any farmer knows that. If you do not sow.

Herein is that saying true. One sows and another reaps. A very fine looking young man, probably twenty-five, came to talk to me one night, a Christian.

He said, Brother Bill, I need some help. Okay, what's wrong? He said, I share Christ with all kinds of people. And almost nobody ever gets saved.

Occasionally, but very, very seldom. I said, alright. Have you asked God to search your heart? Yes, I have.

God telling you anything? No, God's not telling me anything. What I did some while ago, it's all been taken care of. You're walking in the shadow of the cross? Yes, I'm trying to live for the glory of God.

Filled with the Spirit. But not many people ever get saved. I said, alright, I conclude then that God's given you a ministry of sowing.

Not everybody can be a good sower, you know. And I remember what he said. He said, oh, thank you.

Thank you. Bless God, and away he went to continue sowing and sowing. Listen, do you know that some of our missionaries spent thirteen years on a mission field and never saw one convert? Did they have sin in their life? Well, if you believe some things you read, you'd have to conclude they had.

But there was a long thirteen-year sowing period. And then came a tremendous harvest. But you can't have the harvest if there's no sowing.

So when Jesus says, he that reaps receives wages, he brings into the context the man who sows as well as the man who reaps. What did he say to his apostles? Somebody else spent all the time in the labor and you're simply reaping their labors. And you think God's going to give a bigger reward to the person that wins sows than to the person who sows? Of course, we should sow with one hand and reap with the other.

And some can do that. And another thought here. In the book of Isaiah it says, Blessed are you... Want to be blessed with God? Blessed are you that sow beside all waters.

Are you involved in world missions? Or is that some pretty interesting little thing the church is doing from time to time? Are you really involved? Have you ever prayed for China? The largest country in the world. A billion people living there. You can tell from that whether you have a burden for world missions or not.

If you haven't even prayed for China, forget it. You don't really have an interest in world missions. Blessed are you that sow beside all waters.

That send forth thither the feet of the ox and the feet of the ass. You're sending people out. You're praying.

You're praying for your own children to go. Listen, don't be a hypocrite and pray for missionaries to go out if you're not willing to pray for your children to go out. We should be willing to give all our children to God.

So then maybe you only see them once every four years. Is that also bad? Are you going to see them in heaven and in different lights? Oh, that God would take the scales off our eyes concerning some of these things. Sowing and reaping.

And then, fruitfulness, total involvement in the work of God. The Bible says we are to be ready to every good work. Some Christians aren't involved at all.

Remember, they're watching for their tickets, man. They've got to make sure they've got their tickets quite close here. I mean, they spend all their time checking their tickets.

And the schedule. When is Jesus coming back? When will this gospel train get there, you know? But they're not really interested in anything beyond that. Total involvement, as much as I can, in the work of God.

Being fruitful, it says, in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. And we can be fruitful in every good work. Now, we don't want to dissipate our energies and try and run in all different directions at once.

We can't do that. But we are to support every good work in whatever measure we can, being consistent, of course, with the time, the talent, the energy that we have. All right, so that's fruitfulness.

Now then, what's the secret of a fruitful life? All right, here's one thought. What God said, from Me is your fruit found. Fruitfulness comes from God, and only from God.

And that raises automatically another question. It's a matter of abiding in Christ. In John 15, 7, Jesus said, If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.

Herein is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit. So shall you be My disciples. So He wants us to bear much fruit.

And it comes through abiding in Christ and through allowing the Word of Christ to dwell in us richly, as Paul said in Colossians 3.16, in all wisdom. What does it mean to abide in Christ? He said in John 15, Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can you, unless you abide in Me.

So if the branch is cut off from the tree, the branch can't bear fruit. Joseph, it says, is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well whose branches run over the wall. But there were twelve branches, or boughs, on that tree.

But his was the most fruitful of all. His branches ran right over the wall, and strangers on the other side of the wall could eat the fruit of his life. Some people, the only concern they have is their own immediate family to make sure their family gets to heaven.

Is that the only concern you have? That's the only concern many Christians have. Let me tell you something. If that's the only concern you have, some of your children are likely to wind up in hell.

God turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends. He quit all his complaining and praying about himself and prayed for his friends, and God knocked the chains off his life. And some of us, we're so concerned about our own little family, we don't even stop to think about the children next door.

We don't turn a wheel to trying to win them to God. Maybe they're in deep, deep trouble and we partly sympathize with people next door. While it's their fault they're not Christians, yet maybe I've never even shared Christ with them.

I know a man, he attended a gospel-preaching church. He attended it for about 25 years, and he never got saved. So he finally went to another evangelical church in the community, and the first Sunday he was there, he got saved.

And the church he'd attended for 25 years, they were totally scandalized. What in the world is wrong with God that He'd do a thing like that just because the fellow never came back, you see? Well, he said, Oh, in the other church they told me for 25 years I couldn't go to heaven unless I was born again. But they never told me how to be born again.

In the other church, the first Sunday I got there, somebody got a hold of me and said, Are you born again? I said, No. He said, Here's how. And I got on my knees and I got saved.

So as I say, Oh, people, listen. We have to broaden our horizons and have the same concern God has for the world. The field is the world.

You start getting concerned for people beyond your own little boundaries, and you'll see blessings start pouring in in your own family, again and again. It just happens to be one of God's ways. All right, the laws, the rules governing fruitfulness.

Here's another rule. John 12, 24. We hear it again and again.

Unless a kernel of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone. But if it dies, it brings forth much fruit. If it dies.

Now, Jesus said the same thing in the Gospel of Matthew chapter 16 when He said this. He said, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself. I read a commentary on that one time.

They said the phrase means to totally repudiate self. Let him deny himself. And take up his cross daily and follow Me.

Do you do that? I have a friend that God has marvelously used in Christian ministry, especially in the winning of the loss to Christ. He's a very unusual person. And he told me this one time.

He said, I have never ever known a fruitful ministry for God that was not connected with deep personal sacrifice. You know, today we say, Hang loose. Spurgeon used to say, Brother, sit loose.

What did he mean? Don't make your plans in concrete. Make them in sand because God might want to alter them overnight. You're planning to go here.

God might want you to go there. I was with the shantyman mission years ago. And Bill Russell, whose son Bob is ministering in Regina, Bill and I were traveling together.

We were to reach a bunch of camps. Had it all lined up. And so we went from camp to camp, preaching the Word of God.

But we had all figured out that Friday night was our last meeting. Saturday morning we were zooming home to see our families. But you know what happened? On Friday, we heard of one more little camp.

There was only 14 men in it. Way up in the bush, on an impossible road. So we talked about it.

Do we go there? Oh, we don't have to go there. The road is terrible. There's only 14 men.

We've been in camps with 75, 120 men. Why should we go to a camp with 14 men? And we talked about it, but all the while we knew we had to go. So we finally went.

I'll tell you, I never saw a road like that. Listen, three miles an hour was two miles an hour too fast. It was a brand new bulldozed road, no snow on it.

You had to go like a snake just about a mile and a half an hour like this to get into that camp. And all along the road there were cars and trucks abounding. The people just couldn't drive anymore because it was

beating up the underneath, knocking the old pans off and everything.

We prayed and drove and we got there. They couldn't believe it when they saw it. You're preachers? And you drove over that road? Well, come on in.

And dear people, we had one of the sweetest meetings I've ever been in. Oh, the power and presence of God in that place that night. But you see, we have to make a sacrifice.

And God constantly does that in our lives, not because He hates us. Perhaps to some extent it's a test of the reality of this crucified life I talk about. Unless, people, it's the simplest law in the world, unless a kernel of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone, fruitless.

But if it dies, it brings forth much fruit. Listen. Really, no other qualification is necessary except that you be born again.

And if you're willing to be absolutely nothing, be nothing, have plans that are completely fluid, just waiting for God to move, God will use your life, sometimes, in very unusual and powerful ways. And then, you and I must know what it means to be resurrected, because in Romans chapter 7, it says we're dead to the law, brethren, that we might be married to another, even to him that's raised from the dead, in order that we might bring forth fruit unto God. So we're married to Jesus, who's no longer on the cross, nor yet in the tomb.

He's seated at the right hand of God. So in Colossians chapter 2, it says this, Buried with Christ in baptism, when also you are risen with Him through faith in the working of God that has raised Him from the dead. And there are Christians in this room this morning, I'm sure lots of them, who don't believe they're crucified, who don't believe they're dead, who don't believe they're buried, who don't believe they're resurrected, who don't believe they're ascended and seated at the right hand of God with Jesus Christ, and then they wonder why they're fruitless in their Christian life.

The Bible says you are dead. You are dead. Colossians 3, 3, then in Colossians 3, 5, it says, Therefore, die.

Have you ever accepted by faith through faith in the working of God, it says? These great truths, dear people, that you're crucified and dead and buried and resurrected with Jesus Christ, when will you come to the place where you're accepted by faith and repent of your wicked unbelief that keeps you from entering in to these great truths and making you a fruitful Christian for the glory of God? These are some of the simple laws governing fruitfulness to God's glory. And we must not forget, of course, the place of the Word of God. Everywhere I go, I challenge people, oh, not many pick it up, but a few do.

I'm going to challenge you. And I hope that in this crowd, there'll be numbers of people that will pick it up. Handwrite, or use a typewriter if your handwriting is as bad as mine.

Not even an angel can read it, so I use a typewriter. All right, write out your own copy of the Word of God. Start with a short book like, say, Jude or 2 John, 3 John, Philemon, books with just one chapter.

Then graduate to maybe 1 John or 2 Thessalonians or something like this. Just expand it a little bit. Then get into Romans, Corinthians and these books.

Just, first of all, do the New Testament. That'll take you a while. And you know what happens when you write out the Word of God? It really gets fastened in your mind.

Well, I have my copy of the New Testament almost finished. Not too far to go now. Then I'm going to have to start on the Old.

That's going to be a bigger job. But I challenge you to do it. Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom.

What does it say in Psalm 1? Blessed is the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water that brings forth his fruit in his season. His leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he does shall prosper, but the ungodly are not so.

Are you planted deeply in the Word of God? And then, of course, thinking of that. We must think of this. It says rooted, to go back to the root for a moment before we conclude.

Rooted and built up in Him. And then, that's Colossians chapter 2. In Ephesians chapter 3, Paul says, rooted and grounded in love. And I want to ask you that question as we close.

Can you honestly say you're rooted and grounded in the love of God? Walk in love, it says, as Christ also loved us. Do you do that? Do you walk daily in love? Well, that's what it says. Let all your things be done with love, Paul said.

Do you live that way? Let all your things, everything you do, touching other people, let all your things be done with love. Rooted and grounded in love. In Isaiah 4 it talks about someone who says, the root shall be as rottenness and their blossom shall go up as dust.

There's nothing there. Nothing there. Their root is dried up.

They shall bear no fruit. Some Christians are really dry. Some Christians are so dry.

I heard about a fellow. He was so stingy, they said, that every night there was a heavy dew. He used to go out early in the morning with a sponge and sponge all the dew off his lawn and squeeze it into a rain barrel.

And he did such a thorough job, they said, that if a sparrow walked through the grass after 9 o'clock in the morning, he got chafed knees it was so dry. And let me tell you something, there are Christians just as dry as that. Every bit as dry as that.

You get near them and you get an itchy scalp. They're so dry. Listen people, we needn't be that way.

Some people are afraid to smile because they're afraid they might crack their face. I mean, they haven't smiled in years. But you can't blame them.

They don't have anything to smile about. Oh, listen. God's in the process of changing people so he can smile and laugh and praise God and be fruitful for the glory of God.

You know and I know that all of us someday have to stand before God. Every one of us that says he'll give a call of himself to God. Why don't we live as if that day was coming tomorrow? If we thought it was going

to happen tomorrow, we'd spend the whole day oh, in the presence of God calling on God, confessing sin, getting my life straightened out.

Well, then why not do it anyhow? These weeds, cares, riches, pleasures, lusts of other things entering in, whatever it is, what's God been saying to your heart in these sessions? Are you going to go on exactly the way you are? I've heard people say, I'm a Christian. I'm not making much progress in my Christian life. And I've got a Christian friend.

And I know what happened to him. He was the same as me. And then one day, it was just like a bolt of lightning hit him.

Zap! Now he's on fire for God. He's praising the Lord all day and all night. So I'm waiting to get zapped.

What does the Bible say? The Bible says, draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Listen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/18/SID18436.mp3>

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