

“The Fruit of Righteousness”
Philippians 1:7-11
(Preached at Trinity, July 17, 2016)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As Paul opens this letter to the Church of Philippi he opens his heart up to them. He declares: **Philippians 1:8 NAU** - "For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus."
2. He loved them with a pastoral heart. Every remembrance of them filled his heart with joy, particularly as he considered their fellowship with him in the Gospel.
Philippians 1:3-5 NAU - " I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴ always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, ⁵ in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now."
3. The outward expression of their Christian graces brought Paul to affirm his confidence of God's work of grace in them.
Philippians 1:6 NAU - " *For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.*"
4. What was the basis of Paul's confidence in them? Too often, what we call assurance is actually nothing more than a vain presumption. Our Confession speaks of this presumption:
LBC 18:1 – *Of the Assurance of Grace and Salvation* – “Although temporary believers and other unregenerate men, may vainly deceive themselves with false hopes and carnal presumptions of being in the favor of God and in a state of salvation, which hope of theirs shall perish. . .”
5. Paul has been speaking about the substantive marks of God's grace working in them.
 - a. In **Hebrews 5:9** they are described as "things that accompany salvation"
 - b. In **Verse 7** Paul writes "you all are partakers of grace with me."
6. Paul shares some of these marks:
 - a. How they were sharing with Paul in the work of the Gospel.
 - b. How their lives were a display of love that was abounding more and more in knowledge and discernment.
Love is one of the chief marks of a believer.
John 13:35 NAU - "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."
1 Corinthians 13:2-3 NAU - "if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³ And if I give all my possessions to feed *the poor*, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing."
7. But there is another mark that Paul holds before them. Paul states in **Verse 11** that they were filled with the "fruit of righteousness."
Salvation is accompanied by fruitfulness.

8. This fruitfulness was a common teaching of Jesus
- a. Jesus describes it in the Parable of the Sower:
Matthew 13:23 NAU - "And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty."
 - b. When describing false teachers Jesus declared:
Matthew 7:15-21 NAU - "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ "You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn *bushes* nor figs from thistles, are they? ¹⁷ "So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ "A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. ¹⁹ "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ "So then, you will know them by their fruits. ²¹ "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven *will enter*."
 - c. Jesus described it as an issue of the heart:
Luke 6:43-45 NAU - "For there is no good tree which produces bad fruit, nor, on the other hand, a bad tree which produces good fruit. ⁴⁴ "For each tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they pick grapes from a briar bush. ⁴⁵ "The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil *man* out of the evil *treasure* brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart."
9. Paul makes a similar statement about this fruit in his letter to the Church of Colossae.
Colossians 1:9-10 NAU - "For this reason also, since the day we heard *of it*, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰ so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please *Him* in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;"
10. "having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which *comes* through Jesus Christ"
 What is the fruit of righteousness described here? This is one of those cases where there is some ambiguity with the Greek genitive case. Generally, the genitive case designates possession. But it can be vague at times. We have two possibilities here.
- a. Paul may be referring to the fruit that flows from the righteousness that Christ has provided—the fruit that comes from a right relationship with Christ. This would have justification as the focus—the righteousness of Christ imputed to us.
 - b. Paul may be referring to the fruit that consists of righteousness. This would have sanctification as the focus.
 - c. There is no reason not to consider both aspects. Both are an inseparable part of the Christian life. The perfect passive participle at the beginning helps to reinforce this. Paul is speaking of something completed in the past with the results continuing.

- I. There is the aspect of imputed righteousness –The external fruit of righteousness flows forth from God’s work of justification
- A. Paul always had an eye upon eternity and the coming judgment
1. He has his sights fixed upon the Day of the Lord

Verse 6 - "*I am* confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus."

Verses 9-10 - "And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰ so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ;"

Philippians 2:15-16 NAU - "so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain."
 2. The question for every human being is do you believe that there is existence after this life? Do you believe in life after death?
 - a. The reality is human beings will survive into the infinite depths of eternity.
 - b. What all men have to ponder carefully is how they will spend these countless eons.
 - c. There is a Creator who governs all things. He demands of us total allegiance, total worship. He has given us a righteous Law and demands perfect obedience.
 - d. Where we spend eternity depends on whether or not we have kept His Righteous Law perfectly.
 - Those who have rendered perfect obedience go to heaven – It will be a place of infinite beauty and excellence. The presence of Christ will be glorious and perfect righteousness will shine.
 - For the disobedient; for those who have broken God’s Law even a single time, eternity will be spent in a place called hell. It will be a place of terrible torment, unquenchable heat, unbearable darkness—the absence of anything pleasurable.
 3. The difference between heaven and hell is a matter of guilt versus innocence. Most people don’t consider themselves bad enough to go to hell but the truth is a single sin renders us guilty and under God’s judgment.
 4. What shall be done! We have not obeyed! We cannot obey. Try as we may we cannot render what God demands. If heaven requires perfect obedience then we are hopelessly condemned.
Does this describe you?

5. This is where the wondrous mercy of God in the Gospel is most precious. He has sent forth His Son as our Redeemer. He HAS obeyed God's Law. He has rendered perfect righteousness. It is possible for us to stand on that Day in His righteousness. Paul refers to this as "Being filled with the fruit of righteousness which *comes* through Jesus Christ" In addition, He has dealt with the matter of our guilt and God's condemnation by becoming our substitute upon the cross. He carried our sins in Himself and suffered God's wrath in our place.
 6. Through trust in Christ's righteousness and His sacrificial death as full payment of our sin His righteousness can become our own. We must forsake our sin, our continued rebellious life, and follow Him as our Lord and Master.
- B. We call this transferred righteousness by the death and resurrection of Christ Justification.
1. We receive the sacrificial atonement of Christ by faith and faith is the means by which the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us.
 2. We are declared "sincere and blameless" – **Verse 10**
- C. The word for "sincere" literally means "tested by sunlight"
1. In the ancient art of pottery there was common pottery and then there was fine pottery of great value. Common pottery was thick and chunky and easily made in great quantities. That's why they survive in many of the ancient archeological finds—because they were thick and durable.
 2. The fine pottery was thin and almost transparent. It was easily damaged, sometimes cracking during the firing process. An unscrupulous potter could fill the cracks with wax and make them almost invisible to the naked eye. But if you held it up before the sun it was easily seen. Thus, the word came to be synonymous with purity, honesty, and sincerity.
 3. In justification we have been declared pure and spotless. Held before the fires of judgment there is no flaw within us.
Ephesians 5:27 NAU - "that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless."
 4. The word translated "filled" is a perfect, passive, participle – this refers to a completed action upon the subject with continuing results. This brings into focus both justification and sanctification.

II. In the context of this passage, however, Paul’s chief focus on the sanctifying fruit of righteousness.

We need “real knowledge and discernment” so that we might be able to rightly discern good from evil in order to be “sincere and blameless until the Day of Christ.”

A. Sanctification is a progressive work of pressing towards righteousness

1. It might be said that Justification **IS** righteousness and sanctification is the fruit that the righteousness of justification produces.
2. We are saved by faith in Christ alone. Our faith is in His righteousness alone. But genuine faith is never void of an outward display of righteousness in the believer.
3. We are being prepared for the Day of Judgment which Paul refers to in **Verse 10** as the “Day of Christ.”

Jesus spoke of the severity of that Day.

Matthew 7:21-23 NAS - "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. ²² "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' ²³ "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness."

4. Dennis Johnson writes: “On that day, it will be obvious that the treasures marketed by filmmakers, automakers, fashion designers, entertainers, the movers and shakers in business, or the in-crowd on campus are cheap trinkets that cannot last. Then everyone will stand before God’s throne, compelled to look into his soul-piercing eyes and to realize that he reads every hidden thought and shameful secret. Yet on that day there will be people who will not have to squint or cringe away from the King’s searching gaze. They will be “pure and blameless” on the day of Christ.¹
5. The “potters” analogy still applies in sanctification. We are pressing towards eternity without pretense or hypocrisy. We are genuinely pure. We will stand the scrutiny of the all-discerning eye of God because we stand in the righteousness of Christ. But we also bear the outward fruit of righteousness, the outward display of His transforming grace.
6. In **Verse 9** Paul speaks of abounding love flowing forth in real knowledge and discernment. This enables the proper choosing of things that are excellent.

B. Pressing towards righteousness is a demanding work of diligence and discipline and yet it is Christ working in us.

Verse 11 - "the fruit of righteousness which *comes* through Jesus Christ,"

1. This righteousness is the fruit of regeneration. No mere man can produce this fruit of righteousness by his own efforts. This was Paul’s point in **Eph 4:24** - "put on the new self, which in *the likeness of God* has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth."

¹ Johnson, D. E. (2013). *Philippians*. (R. D. Phillips, P. G. Ryken, & D. M. Doriani, Eds.) (1st ed., p. 48). Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing.

2. We must press on in righteousness, but it is Christ who enables us to press on. This way God gets all the glory - "to the glory and praise of God."
3. When we fail and sin we have the pity and grace of our Savior who is continuing the work He has begun in us.
4. Jesus gave the analogy of the Vine
John 15:4-5 NAS - "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither *can* you, unless you abide in Me. ⁵ "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing."

Conclusion:

1. The Christian life is a life that mirrors the life of Christ. It is a life that makes righteousness a high priority. It is a life that keeps the ever advancing reality of eternity and the Day of Christ ever before our eyes.
It is a life that is lived *Coram Deo* – "Before the face of God."
2. On that Great Day, God alone will receive all of the glory for the beauty of holiness that He alone has imparted to us.