

Understanding the Will of the Lord (Part 3) (Ephesians 5:1-18)

For the past few weeks, we have considered the topic of understanding the will of God for our lives. God's will begins with the believer in Jesus Christ learning about and following Him (*Ephesians 5:1-2*), and continues, in that He desires that each one be transformed, by the renewing of our minds (*Ephesians 5:3-7*). God does not want us to act like the world and conform to it, but instead wants us to become more like the Lord Jesus Christ (*Romans 8:28-29*). As we do this, the third aspect of God's will is brought forth in our lives: we begin to bear spiritual fruit (*Ephesians 5:8-14*).

III. Bearing Fruit, as We Abide in Christ

The Christian life is a process, a journey, and a pilgrimage. It is the process of God taking the garbage of our sinful past and making it into something useful, for His glory. It is the journey of taking our broken lives and healing them through God's Son. It is the pilgrimage of our prejudices, desires, and knowledge being removed and remade, as we accept and obey the Truth of God's Word. When these things occur, God calls it bearing fruit (*John 15:1-16*).

Bearing spiritual fruit takes time, patience, and effort. However, we live in a world that wants instant results, lacks patience, and often does not want to work to receive gain. This is not the way that God works, and is why we do not see many believers following and learning about Jesus Christ today. The life of a disciple is a long-term investment that produces guaranteed fruit, in God's timing (*Psalms 1:1-3*). It takes time, patience, and effort to follow Christ, but is completely worth the investment.

The Christian walk has been compared to investing, soldiering, racing, and farming (II Timothy 2:1-6). None of these professions bring forth instant fruit, but take time, energy, and resources to see any come forth. The investor must invest wisely, or else suffer great loss. However, if he makes a wise investment, he will receive fruit from it. Jesus Christ invested His doctrine in His apostles, who invested the same into others, until someone invested it in us. When we obey God's will and bear fruit, we are making that person's investment worthwhile (*II Timothy 2:1-2*).

A soldier does not become a master of his craft overnight. It takes years of weapons and armor training, physical conditioning, and studying tactics for him to become a fruitful soldier. Just so, a believer does not become an expert at defeating Satan overnight (*Ephesians 6:11*). Instead, it takes much learning and experience to defeat our ancient foe (*II Timothy 2:3-4*).

A runner in a race does not finish that race instantly. He must first prepare for the race, run it according to the rules, and then finish it, to receive any reward. Likewise, every believer is running a race. If we have a hope of reward in Heaven, we must run the race according to the rules. Thankfully, we have the rulebook: the Word of God. If we run the race lawfully, God promises that every believer that does so will receive a reward (*II Timothy 2:5*).

Finally, we understand that a farmer does not gather fruit from seed that he planted only a few days prior. The seed needs to be watered, fertilized, and weeded around, before it becomes a plant. Even then, some plants do not bear fruit for many days, weeks, months, or even years! It takes the patience of the farmer to wait and care for the plant, before it bears fruit. Scripture promises us that, if we will follow Christ, learn about Him, and allow Him to change us according to His will, we will bear fruit in our season (*Psalms 1:1-3*). Jesus also promises that, if we abide in Him, our fruit will not spoil, but remain: meaning that it has everlasting value (*John 15:1-16*) and reward (*II Timothy 2:6*).

What is this fruit that God promises we will bear? It is that of the Spirit of God. When we are filled with the Spirit and learn about the Lord Jesus Christ, we will naturally bear the fruit He promises. This fruit is

spiritual fruit that reflects an obvious change in the life of a believer (***Galatians 5:22-23***). Alternately, the fruit of the flesh will be produced, when we are not filled with the Spirit (***Galatians 5:19-21***).

How is your spiritual fruit bearing? Are you in a season of much growth, or are you in one of drought. God desires that we walk with Him daily in His Word, prayer, and amidst a loving church family. If you need help with these things, I hope that you will allow us the privilege of helping you! Please feel free and welcome to attend our church services, call me for an appointment, or drop by the house for a visit anytime. We will be happy to serve in any way that we can.

James Bussard is the pastor of Heritage Baptist Church that meets at 8 N. 2nd St. in Woodsboro, MD @ 11:30am and 6pm on Sundays. For questions or comments about this article, please call (301) 304-2127 or write him at HeritageParkPastor@Gmail.com. For more service times and information about the church, please go to www.FrederickforChrist.com or call (301) 304-2127.