

## **Growing into Fruitfulness--Sabbath Sermon April 12, 2008**

**By Elder Enoch Ofori Jnr**

**(Sabbath Sermon 12 April 2008)**

As every parent will testify, one of the delights of parenthood is to watch your infant of yesterday grow up and begin to live a more independent life.

You watch with delight as your child takes his first faltering steps, starts to run around and begins to string words together. Before long, he's jabbering out some coherent sentences.

The baby babble is over, and he has been weaned off the breast milk too. Your child is growing up. From child, he will soon go through his teens and then reach adulthood.

Growth is part of the natural life. Any living thing that does not grow, or is held back from doing so, either dies off or becomes stunted. And growth is associated with fruitfulness. Rarely do we see a young tree bear fruit or a child give birth.

As no newborn is brought forth as an adult, so is the born-again believer. He's (re)born as a baby in Christ first before he attains spiritual maturity. As a spiritual baby, the newborn believer is fed "the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 Pet. 2:2).

With growth comes fruitfulness (the end-result of the seed [word] planted by Christ – 1 John 3:9). But without fertile soil, growth may well be impeded much less lead to fruit bearing.

And so the soil must be right as illustrated in Jesus' parable of the sower in Matthew 13—it was only the seed that fell on good ground that brought forth fruit, some hundredfold, some sixty fold, and some thirty fold (vs. 3-8, 18-23).

In the parable, Jesus likens "the good ground" to understanding—grasping and receiving the Word which is able to save the soul (Jam. 1:21).

That Word is Jesus Christ planted in us so that we might grow into His Christ-like Nature. To bear fruit, we must abide in Him.

Because we together with Him constitute One Body/Tree, Yeshua likens our relationship with Him to the relationship of a tree to its branches; the latter depends on the former for growth and fruitfulness. As He puts it, He is the true Vine, and we, His disciples, are the branches (John 15:1-5).

The purging/pruning of the branches represent spiritual discipline by the Father so that we might yield more fruit (Heb. 12:6-11). The spiritually mature believer is said to have self-restraint, being in control of his senses. As an adult in Christ, such a believer has experienced godly discipline and therefore able to discern between good and evil (Heb. 5:12-14).

This is the believer who (in his maturity) bears "the fruit of the Spirit" which is love (defined as the keeping/fulfilling of God's law – Rom. 13:8-10), joy (in the Holy Ghost – Rom. 14:17), peace (of Christ derived from His law of peace – Col. 3:15, Ps. 119:165), long-suffering (Rom. 12:12; Jam. 5:11), gentleness (2 Tim. 2:24), goodness (basic quality of God), faith (without which no one shall please the

Lord – Heb. 11:6), meekness (Christ-like character – Matt. 11:29), and temperance (sobriety to abstain from all appearance of evil – 1 Thess. 5:22; Prov. 1:10) – Gal. 5:22-23.

Though not in name, the apostle Peter lists a parallel ‘fruit of the Spirit’ in which one ‘virtue’ (Spirit-born character trait) cumulatively and progressively leads to another till they abound in us, making us “neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Only when we attain this spiritual stature in Christ (grow in grace and knowledge) shall our calling be made sure and entry into the everlasting Kingdom granted us (2 Pet. 1:1-5).

But fruitfulness is not all about godly living nor even about the assurance of salvation. It’s also about having our requests granted by Christ so we might be even more fruitful! (John 15:7-8, 16). It is about having the confidence that because we abide in Him (through obedience to His Word), He will hear our prayer (1 John 5:14-15).

Notice! Because the disciples of Christ had at one time not grown up spiritually and therefore lacked Faith one of the fruit of the Spirit, they could not cast demons out of a lunatic (Matt. 17:14-17). Moreover, they could not undertake fasting-prayer (vs. 21) due to their lack of spiritual maturity. The result of their efforts was therefore nil—fruitless!

The need to bear fruit is an all-important challenge every believer must meet, or he will be cut off and cast into the fire as unproductive/unprofitable (Matt. 3:10, 25:30).

The penalty for lack of fruit is dire: you’ll be cut down. But not until God, the Husbandman, in His mercy gives you a grace period—perhaps you might bear some fruit (Luke 13:6-9). Yes, the ax is laid at the root of the tree but is not yet hewn down just in case...

As Jesus gave the Jezebel of the Church in Thyatira space to repent (Rev. 2:21), so God gives space to all His children not yet fruitful. But it won’t be forever. One day, each one of us will be called to give an account!

Fruit bearing, then, is the great test of Christian discipleship (John 15:8). It’s for this purpose that God’s ministers warn every man in Christ, “teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man PERFECT in Christ Jesus” (Col. 1:28).

Since we depend on Christ in order to bear fruit, humility (towards Him) is of the essence. He gives more grace to the humble that he might bear much fruit (Jam.4:6). St. Peter’s admonition to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ is certainly to this end (2 Pet. 3:18).

May He give all of us grace to be fruitful to His own glory (Philippians 2:13). Amen

## Contact

Don't hesitate to contact us for any reason.

We strive to answer all your requests, comments, questions or concerns as quickly as possible

Pastor Enoch Ofori Jnr

P.O. Box RP 141 Chirapatre, Kumasi Ashanti

+233 322095507/+233 24 423 5015

[info@asdpagh.com](mailto:info@asdpagh.com) | [www.asdpagh.com](http://www.asdpagh.com)