

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 22 September 2019. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

Paul, the Fruit Bearer

In a couple weeks, we will be having our annual missions conference; and our theme will be “Bearing Much Fruit.” Over the next couple Sundays, as we prepare our hearts for the conference, I would like to examine the lives some people (both in the Bible, and outside the Bible) who bore much fruit for the Lord.

Of course, the ultimate Fruit-Bearer of all times is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is in a class all His own, because He is the Messiah. He is God in human flesh. He is the *ultimate* Missionary. A missionary is a “sent one”; and Jesus was sent by His Father to come to earth, so that He might purchase salvation for a lost and sinful world. Through His death on the cross, Christ brought forth the fruit of salvation, and transformed lives. Jesus said, ***“Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.”*** Jesus is also in a category all of His own, because He is the One who gives *us* the power to bring forth fruit for *Him*. Jesus said, ***“I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.”***

Jesus was the faithful servant of Jehovah. When He was on earth, He brought forth much fruit; and He expects us to do the same. Jesus told His disciples, ***“As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.”*** Christ commissions those whom He has saved to be His servants; and He commissions us to bring forth much fruit. You cannot separate being a servant from being a fruit-bearer. A servant does His master’s bidding; and *our* Master’s bidding is that we ***“go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.”*** Christ has commissioned every believer to be a missionary (literally, a “sent one”), to tell people the news of salvation. The Great Commission (the job of preaching the Gospel, making converts and disciples, baptising them into Bible-preaching churches, and teaching them to observe all things that Christ has commanded) is at the very core of our service to God. You cannot be a servant of Christ without being a missionary, and without doing your part to *send* missionaries from your church.

This morning, we are going to learn about a servant of Christ who bore much fruit for the Lord. His name is the Apostle Paul. None of us would be here this morning if this man had not obeyed his Master, Jesus Christ, and gone out into the continent of Europe to bring forth much fruit. The title of this message is ***Paul, the Fruit Bearer.***

I. Paul was an Apostle (and missionary) for Christ.

Read Romans 1:1.

In this verse, Paul identified himself as an ***“apostle.”*** What is an “apostle”? An apostle is a “sent one.” And what is another English word for “sent one”? “Missionary.” Paul was an apostle—a missionary—a “sent one.” Just as the Father had sent His Son Jesus into the world to save mankind, so Jesus sent Paul into the world to point people to the Saviour.

Now, I would like to pause for a minute and clarify what I am saying about this word “apostle.” There is a special office in the New Testament called “Apostle,” which belonged only to a small group of men. There were, first of all, the original 12 Apostles, whom Jesus chose when He was on earth. There were very specific qualifications for this office. An Apostle had to have been saved under the preaching of John the Baptist, and have been personally *baptised* by John the Baptist. He had to have walked with Jesus throughout His earthly ministry, and personally learned from Him, and have personally seen Christ after His resurrection. He also had to have been personally chosen by Jesus to be in this office. (You can read about these all qualifications in **Acts 1:15-26.**) These qualifications were the criteria that the eleven Apostles followed when they chose Matthias to replace Judas Iscariot. By the way, there could be only one replacement for Judas, because Jesus chose only *twelve* men for this office. These men were Simon Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Thomas, Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon, Bartholomew, and Matthias.

Now, there were eight other Apostles, in addition to the original twelve. These eight men were in a sort of “outer ring” of Apostles. The qualifications for these Apostles is that they must have seen the risen Christ; and they must have been personally chosen by God to be an Apostle. Paul was one of these eight other Apostles. He was chosen by God Himself, and not by man. He saw the risen Christ at the moment of his salvation, and several times afterward. He was personally sent by Christ as an Apostle. Furthermore, in **Galatians 1-2**, Paul recounts how Peter, James, and John all met with Paul, recognised his God-given authority as an Apostle, and gave Paul the hand of fellowship, as an Apostle to the Gentiles.

Read 1 Corinthians 9:1 and 15:3-8.

What we just read in **1 Corinthians 9:1** is the *numero uno* qualification of an Apostle. An Apostle must have *seen* Jesus Christ our Lord. By this count alone, anyone today who claims to be an Apostle is a liar. The so-called “prophets” on the God Channel who claim to be Apostles are phonies. They were *not* saved under the ministry of John the Baptist, nor baptised by him. They were not with Jesus during His earthly ministry; and they did *not* see Him after His resurrection. No one living today can hold the office of Apostle. The Apostles were special men, who were given the job of laying the foundation of the churches. Paul was specially chosen by God to be an Apostle to the Gentiles. Everywhere Paul went, he preached the Gospel to Jewish people first; but the *Gentiles* were the people whom he served the most. Let’s examine Paul’s calling to Apostleship.

Read Acts 9:1-16.

Almost as soon as Paul was saved, the Lord said, “All right, Paul. Get up out of bed. I’ve got work for you to do.” From the moment of his salvation, Paul was ordained by God to be an Apostle to the Gentiles. Yet, if you know Christ as your Saviour, there is a sense in which *you* are an “apostle,” as well. I’m not talking about an “Apostle” with a *capital* A. I’m not talking about the *office* of Apostle. That office hasn’t existed for nearly 1900 years. I’m talking about simply being an *apostolos*. An *apostolos* is a “one who has been sent”; and every Christian has been sent by the Lord. An enormous part of the duty of every Christian is to sound forth the Gospel. Giving out the Gospel is *not* the exclusive job of the pastor. *Every* Christian

should be spreading the good news. Every Christian is commissioned to be a missionary. Let's look at an example of some Christians who took this missionary call seriously.

Read 1 Thessalonians 1:5-8.

The Christians in the church of Thessalonica didn't leave all the evangelising work for Paul and his missionary co-workers to do. *They* went from door to door. *They* gave out the Gospel in the market place. *They* sent out missionaries from their own church to distant towns and regions. That is the very thing for which Paul is commending them in this passage. Paul says that by the time he had made his way down to Achaia (what we call "Greece" today), he found that there were some people there who had already heard the Gospel. How had the people in Achaia heard the Gospel? They had heard it from the missionaries that had been sent out from the church of Thessalonica—which was 200 miles north of them! Already, some of the Thessalonian Christians had travelled 200 miles south to take the Gospel to others. By the way, the church of Thessalonica had existed for no more than a year at that point! They were still very young believers; but they were spiritually mature enough to know that they had a Great Commission to fulfil.

I wish I could say that the independent, Bible-preaching Baptist churches of our day had this same kind of zeal. Sadly, though, this is often not the case. Yet, why *isn't* it the case? Do we not still have a Commission? We certainly do! Let's take a look at what Paul said about this Commission in his letter to the church of Corinth.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-20.

Paul told the church of Corinth that they were "*ambassadors*" for Christ. When he said that "*we*" are ambassadors, he wasn't talking merely about himself and the Apostles: he was talking about *every Christian*. Every Christian has been given the ministry of reconciliation. In Christ's incredible love for us, He has reconciled us to God: therefore, He has now entrusted us with the "*ministry*" of going to lost people and saying, "I am here in Christ's behalf. Christ has gone back to heaven; but I am here as His ambassador to tell you that you need to be reconciled to God. You need to be saved from your sin; and here is how you can be saved."

Paul took his ambassadorship seriously. How seriously do *you* take it, Christian? Are you being a faithful and wise servant of Christ? Is the Great Commission important to you? Are you being a missionary—a "sent one"?

II. Paul was a faithful and wise servant.

In **Romans 1:1**, Paul identified himself as an "*apostle*" of Jesus Christ. However, in that same verse, Paul also described himself as a "*servant*" of Jesus Christ.

Now, there are two words for "servant" in the New Testament. The word *diakonos* means "servant" in the sense of a *hired* servant; but the word *doulos* means "slave." God calls Christians by *both* these names. First of all, every Christian is Christ's *diakonos* (hired servant), because there *is* "hire" for being Christ's servant. There *are* rewards to be given for

serving Christ faithfully, both in this life and in the next. However, a Christian is also Christ's *doulos*. The word *doulos* means "bond slave." Why are we called "bond slaves"? Because we have been bought with a price. We are bought with Christ's blood. Our lives are *not* our own. Here in **Romans 1:1**, Paul chose to call himself by this word *doulos* ("bond slave"). Paul considered his body, soul, and spirit to be the property of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was Jesus' slave: and he couldn't have been happier to be so.

To those who do not know Christ as Saviour, this idea is offensive. "Christ wants me to be His slave?" Yes. However, to be Christ's slave is not misery; it is *freedom*. To be Christ's slave is to be free from the shackles of sin. To be Jesus' servant is to be free from the power and penalty of sin—and, one day, from the very presence of sin. I can testify that being Jesus' servant is wonderful! Paul certainly thought so. In his letters, he was constantly "rejoicing in the Lord," even though he was suffering great persecution for the name of Jesus.

With this in mind, let us examine one of Jesus' parables about service.

Read Matthew 25:14-30.

Before I get to the point of this passage, I first need to explain something about the servants in this parable. It is extremely important that you understand *to whom* Jesus was speaking here. If you do not understand this, you can gravely misinterpret this parable. In **Matthew 24 and 25**, Jesus was speaking *specifically* to the Jewish nation. Gentile believers had not been admitted into Christ's church yet. God did not open the door to the Gentiles until about ten years afterward. Jesus is speaking specifically to the Jews here.

With this in mind, let us return to Jesus' parable. In this parable, there are three servants; and they are Jewish men. This is important to understand, because back in **Leviticus 25:55**, the LORD said, "***For unto me the children of Israel are servants; they are my servants whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt.***" The Jewish people are servants of Jehovah, and of Jesus the Messiah. Whether or not they choose to believe on Jesus, and obey Him, and acknowledge Him as their Master, He *is* their Master nonetheless: and they are His servants. That is why, in Jesus' parable here in **Matthew 25**, we see that there was an "***unprofitable***" servant who was cast into "***outer darkness.***" This man didn't serve his master at all. Yet, the fact that this man was disobedient to his master didn't change the fact that he *was* his master's servant. He was cast into outer darkness because he refused to bring any profit to his master while he was away. To put it another way, he never produced any "fruit" for his master.

Now, what does all this mean? Obviously, the master who went on a long journey represents the Lord Jesus Christ, who has been gone for 2,000 years now. The two *profitable* servants represent Jewish people who have believed on Jesus, and who obey Him. The *unprofitable* servant represents a Jewish person who *never* believed on Jesus as his Messiah, and therefore *never* served Him. He represents an unsaved Jewish man, who never brought forth fruit for God. Of course, the "***outer darkness***" into which this man was cast represents hell.

Now, as I said, it is important to remember whom these men represent! When Jesus talks about these three "servants," He is *not* talking about three "Christians." If this *were* what Jesus meant, He would have been teaching that a Christian can lose his salvation—because the

third man ended up in hell. However, that is *not* what Jesus was teaching. When Jesus talks about these three “servants,” He is talking about *all Jewish people*—whether they be saved or unsaved. In this parable, Jesus is warning His own people, Israel, that they must believe on Him as Messiah and Master, and serve Him with their lives, or else they will end up in hell.

Now, although this parable was directed to Jewish people, this parable also has application to *all* believers, whether they be Jew or Gentile. The part about the “*unprofitable servant*” does *not* apply to us who are saved, because Christ has made us profitable to Him. However, the part about the two *profitable* servants *does* apply to us. The application is this: There *will* be reward for our faithful service to Christ when Christ returns to set up His Kingdom.

If you be saved, then you have acknowledged Jesus’ lordship. The moment you were saved, you owned Jesus as your Lord and Master; and you will be rewarded one day according to how you used your talents. The word “*talents*” in this parable refers to a unit of money that was used in Jesus’ day. It is a picture of that which God has given us to use for His service. Your money, your material resources, your natural abilities and talents, your intellect, your time, your family, your strength, your very body and spirit—all these are gifts from God. They do not truly belong to you: they belong to Him. God wants you to use these things to bring profit to Himself. He wants you to use everything He has given you to bring lost souls into His Kingdom.

Faithful and wise servants use the things that God has entrusted to them in order to serve Him. *That* is the kind of man that the Apostle Paul was. First of all, the Apostle Paul was *faithful*. In **1 Corinthians 4:1-2**, the Apostle Paul said, “*Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.*” Paul served God with a fervency that puts most Christians to shame. Why was Paul so fruitful for Christ? It certainly wasn’t because he was super-talented. He *was* a well-educated man; but apart from his education, he was a terrible speaker; and he was not what we’d call “Mr. Charm.” By Paul’s own admission, he was a poor speaker, with an annoying, grating voice, and an unattractive physical appearance. Also, Paul had a big physical handicap: he was nearly blind. Yet, the power of God was upon him, because he yielded himself to God. He was not lukewarm about the commission that had been given to him. He was not a “Well, I guess I’ll *try* to serve God” kind of Christian. Paul served God with all his might, through the power of the Holy Spirit. He was *faithful*.

Secondly, Paul was *wise*. Let’s see how Paul defined wisdom.

Read 1 Corinthians 1:18 – 2:5.

God’s wisdom is not man’s “wisdom.” Man, in his “wisdom,” denies the cross of Jesus, and says, “We all can get to heaven our own way. You don’t need to believe that Jesus is the only Way to heaven.” But Paul knew that what the world called “foolishness” was actually “wisdom.” He knew that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. The world says that Christians are fools for “wasting their lives” serving a God they cannot see, and preaching a Gospel that no one wants to hear. But Christians know that Jesus Christ *is* Wisdom.

Now, if Jesus Christ be Wisdom incarnate, that means that to ignore the Great Commission that Christ gave us is a mark of foolishness. Paul said, “*Woe is unto me if I preach not the*

Gospel.” Unsaved people, in *their* wisdom, say, “My life is mine.” Yet, even many Christians are living their lives according to this same kind of fleshly wisdom. Their thinking sounds much like the world’s thinking. They think, “Give 10% of *my* income to God? Give to Faith Promise missions, too? Are you kidding? My money is mine. I worked for it. I can’t afford to give my hard-earned money to missions when the economy is so bad.” On the other hand, Christians who are filled with *God’s* wisdom say, “Everything I have belongs to you, Lord. You’ve entrusted it to me. Even though times are hard, I’m going to trust you with the money that you’ve given me. I know I don’t have a lot of talent, Lord; but I’m going to trust you to help me to be a witness to people around me. I’m not a good speaker, Lord; but I’m going to trust you to help me knock on doors, and to hand tracts to people, and to give the Gospel to my loved ones, and co-workers, and my family, and neighbours.”

The Bible says in **Proverbs 11:30**, “***The fruit of righteousness is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.***” Carnal Christians think, “I don’t have time to go to church today. Yes, I know that we should go to church to learn the Bible, so that we can be equipped to serve God; but I don’t have time. I don’t have time to read my devotions every day, and to pray. I don’t have time to witness to people. I’ve got too much to do.” However, God says that a *wise* man endeavours to win souls to the Lord. The Bible says in **Daniel 12:2-3** that after the Resurrection of believers, “***they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.***”

The Apostle Paul repeatedly called himself a “servant of Jesus Christ.” However, never forget that being a servant of *Christ* means that you are also a servant to *others*. This means that you are ready and willing to go outside your *comfort zone* in order to reach people for Christ.

Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-23.

What does Paul mean when he says, “I am all things to all men”? Well, let’s start with what it *doesn’t* mean. This does *not* mean, “Go and have a pint with the boys down at the pub, so that they’ll like you, and you can talk to them about Jesus.” This does *not* mean, “Join lost people in their sinful pastimes, so that you can win them to Christ.” That is exactly how *not* to win the lost. Lost people won’t come to Christ if they see you doing the sinful things that they do. They won’t be attracted to Christ if they see you smoking, drinking, using off-colour language, going to nightclubs, pubs, dance halls, and movie theatres, and watching godless Hollywood movies. They will be disgusted and say, “If that is what a Christian is, I’m not interested. That Christian doesn’t live his life any differently from the way I live.” What Paul *is* saying is, “Be willing to go outside your culture, and to learn new things (as long as they aren’t sinful). Be willing, if need be, to learn a new language, or to eat food you aren’t used to, or to part with earthly comforts, in order to win people to Jesus Christ.”

Paul was a servant to the Gentiles. Because he went out of *his* comfort zone (the Jewish culture), and went to the Gentiles, we are all here this morning, with the Bible in our hands. Paul travelled all over Israel, Arabia, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Greece, Macedonia, Romania, Italy, France, and Spain (and, as some people believe, even Britain), telling people about Jesus Christ, and salvation. He was all things to all men.

III. Paul was a fruit bearer for Christ.

In **1 Corinthians 3:9**, Paul said to the church of Corinth, “*For we are labourers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry.*” That word “*husbandry*” simply means “*farm*.” What is Paul saying? He is saying that he and his co-labourers (people like Silas, Timothy, Luke, and others) had preached the Gospel to the people of Corinth, had led them to the Lord, and had taught them how to live for the Lord. Paul and his missionary co-workers were the farmers; and the Christians of Corinth were their “*fruit*.”

Throughout the Bible, God makes it clear that His will for mankind is that they would bring forth fruit of service for Him. The whole reason why God temporarily set aside the nation of Israel, and established a new institution called “the church,” is that most of the nation of Israel had chosen to reject their Messiah. Because they were spiritually cut off from their God, they were bringing forth no fruit for Him. That is why Jesus warned them that “*The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation (literally, “a people”) bringing forth the fruits thereof.*” God wants fruit; and there is only one way that we can bring forth fruit. We must draw our spiritual life from the Vine. Let’s look at one more Scripture.

Read John 15:1-16.

Isn’t this a beautiful picture? In this parable, the Father is the “*husbandman*” (“farmer”); Christ is the vine; and the people of Israel are the branches shooting off from the vine. Those Jewish people who refuse to believe on their Messiah are like dead branches, bringing forth no fruit; and Jesus made it clear that their end is to be cast out and “*burned*” (in other words, cast into hell). On the other hand, the Jews that have believed on Him are like live branches, bringing forth fruit. And what was Jesus’ will for them? Was it that they bring forth “at least a little” fruit? No, His will was that they would go and bring forth “*much fruit*”!

Now, like so many of Jesus’ other parables, this parable was given to the nation of Israel. However, there is application in this parable for *every* believer. If you have repented of your sin and believed on Christ, then you are *not* a dead branch (an unsaved person) anymore. On the day you were saved, you began to draw spiritual life from the Vine, Jesus Christ. However, the question is: *How much* spiritual nourishment are you drawing from the Lord? Should you be submitting yourself to Christ every day, and walking in the Spirit continually, then there *will* be much fruit coming forth from your life. There will be love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. There will be prayer, faith, hope, patience, virtue, spiritual discernment, brotherly kindness, and tender mercy. There will be obedience and service to God and to others. And, there will be souls—souls who have come into the kingdom of God because you showed the love of Christ to others, and lived a holy life before them, and opened your mouth to give them the Gospel. There will be souls in heaven because you gave your tithes, gave to missions, and used your resources, abilities, and time, to spread the Gospel—all out of a heart of love for God.

Paul brought forth much fruit for the Lord, because he was abiding in the Vine. Are *you* abiding in the Vine?

Conclusion: In closing this morning, I would ask this: What if God were to call *you* to go completely outside your comfort zone? Would you obey Him? Would you be willing? I know many friends who

were well established in life, with families, and good jobs, and making decent money, who surrendered to God's call, left their jobs, and went off to foreign countries as missionaries, and learned new languages, and totally new cultures. Christian, are *you* willing to do such a thing, if God should call you?

Perhaps God won't ever call you to leave Ireland; but would you be *willing* to do so? Parents, are you willing to let your *children* go to a foreign land as an ambassador of Jesus Christ? If you know Christ as Saviour, you are *already* an ambassador for Christ, right here where you are. However, what if God were to call you to go somewhere else? I wouldn't be surprised if there should be children here this morning whom God will call some day to go to a foreign country as a missionary. What if God were to call you to teach a Sunday School class, and impart God's Word to others right here in our church? Would you obey God if He were to call you to a place that you don't know, or to do something that you have never done before? If you know Christ as your Saviour, you should be *willing* to go wherever He wants you to go—whether it be across the street, or across an ocean. How about giving to missions? Are you willing to consider how the Lord would have you give in this next year? Are you willing to go, and give, and pray? Are you bringing forth "*much fruit*" for the Lord?

As I close this morning, I would also ask this: Has there been a time in your life when you were saved, or born again? You cannot even begin to produce true fruit for the Lord until Christ has saved you from your sin, and given you new life in Him. You cannot clean up your life, or do any good work, in order to earn your salvation. You must repent of your sin, abandon your worthless self-righteousness, and trust in Christ alone to save you. You must humble yourself, and confess that His death for your sins on the cross, and His resurrection from the grave, is sufficient to pay for *all* your sins. Won't you believe on Jesus today, and ask Him to forgive you of your sins, and come into your life? If you will do so, Christ will begin to produce true spiritual fruit in your life!