

# **Fruitfulness Explained: John 15.1-8 Abiding Fruitful “Who controls you?”**

There in one word that determines everything about your future – control.

Who is going to control your life – you or God?

Who is going to take up your time – you or the Lord?

What is going to dominate the attention of your mind – your agenda or God's

I am holding God's agenda, it is called His Word. He wants to have the first and last word in your life. He wants to control you. He was in total control at the beginning. That is why salvation is called the new birth, you and I were totally helpless to make it happen, all we had to do is let Him birth us by His grace. We were powerless, lifeless, hopeless, and helpless.

He gave us His gracious power by His Spirit.

He imparted to us His very life for eternity.

He made us to live and walk in hope.

He became our Savior, Shepherd and Guide as our Personal Comforter to help and keep us to the very end of life and then get us home.

That is why Paul said, “As you received Christ – keep walking that way.” Just like everything starts in the Christian life with God being the initiator, by God being in control – He says stay that way. Why did He say that? Because we don't often do that.

When God controls my time – He bears fruit from it spent for Him.

When God controls my treasures they bring an increase for Him that is eternal.

When God controls my attitudes He gets the glory as I bear the fruit of the Spirit in the soil of my heart attitudes.

When God controls my actions He gets to live through me, He gets the glory and I bear fruit that pleases Him and rewards me forever!

We want control. The battle that rages each day, hour by hour is all about who or what is going to control us. When we are in control we use an operating system called LUST (that is when our flesh calls the shots). When God is in control we use an operating

system called THE SPIRIT. All of life is about control. The flesh lusts against the Spirit and a war wages. You are determining who is winning today by those little choices you and I make each day. Either we feed and strengthen the hold of the Spirit in our daily life – or the flesh.

So either we are growing in the flesh or in God. We are growing in lust (flesh controlling us) or Spirit (God controlling us). Who or what is controlling you?

**Jesus wants to control more and more of my life. That allows Him to produce His life in me – called fruit. He wants to farm more and more of my life so He can increase the fruit bearing of every growing season of my life!**

The question is how? That takes us to a study of fruit bearing that God gives us in **Psalm 92:12-15.**

Read and pray.

Psalm 92:12-15 NKJV

- 12 The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, (that means to grow in the harsh conditions, dry and desert places of life); He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. (that means they grow through storms and strong climate changes) **RESPONSE: Lord -- I want to flourish in EVERY SEASON of my life.**
- 13 Those who are planted in the house of the Lord (a place of obedient worship, praise, ministry, and sacrifice); Shall flourish in the courts of our God. (that means in God's Presence) **RESPONSE: Lord -- I commit to worship and serve you all my days.**
- 14 They shall still bear fruit in old age; (that means life long, to the end – fruitfulness) They shall be fresh and flourishing, (that means life long and to the end freshness and overflowing lives of godliness) **RESPONSE: Lord – I want you to do whatever it takes to make and keep me fruitful!**
- 15 To declare that the Lord is upright; (His way is the Right Way) He is my rock, (His Presence is a place of Complete Security and Peace) and there is no unrighteousness in Him. (He is GOOD in whatever He DOES). **RESPONSE: Lord – You are GOOD whatever you do in my life!**

God says that the picture of a righteous person or saint that He wants us to learn from is the similarities between the characteristics of a “palm tree” and how those can be compared to habits that righteous people also choose to cultivate. Here is the facts we have studied about palm trees.

**The palm tree grows in good clean soil.** When you find these beautiful fruit-bearing trees in California, Iraq, Jericho, or anywhere else, you will never find them planted or growing among rocks or worthless soil.

Because Jesus Christ is our righteousness, and His grace has brought righteousness to us, which we receive by faith, we are those declared righteous. And God's Word instructs

us from cover to cover that we will grow only in the clean soil of the Bible, of good books, and by keeping ourselves unspotted from the world.

**Are you growing in clean soil? Have you chosen willfully what Daniel chose in Daniel 1.8? That choice is the first step in growing into a mature and fruitful saint. Open there with me.**

David who was singing to God in worship Psalms right up to the end of his 70 years left us the pathway he had followed to live a godly life. Look over there with me to Psalm 101.

Psalm 101:1-8 NKJV

1 I will sing of mercy and justice; To You, O Lord, I will sing praises. 2 I will behave wisely in a perfect way. Oh, when will You come to me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. **(Note his CHOICE OF PERSONAL INTEGRITY)**

3 I will set nothing wicked before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; It shall not cling to me. **(Note his CHOICE OF A PACT OF PERSONAL PURITY)**

4 A perverse heart shall depart from me; I will not know wickedness. **(Note his CHOICE OF PERSONAL ABSTINENCE FROM EVIL EXPOSURE)**

5 Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor, Him I will destroy; The one who has a haughty look and a proud heart, Him I will not endure. 6 My eyes shall be on the faithful of the land, That they may dwell with me; He who walks in a perfect way, He shall serve me. **(Note his CHOICE OF PROPER HEROES)**

7 He who works deceit shall not dwell within my house; He who tells lies shall not continue in my presence. **(Note his CHOICE OF LIMITING HIS PERSONAL FREEDOM/EXPOSURES like to certain TV shows, DVDs, books, etc?)** 8 Early I will destroy all the wicked of the land, That I may cut off all the evildoers from the city of the Lord. **(Note his CHOICE to PURGE HIS LIFE)**

**The palm tree grows from the inside out.** An oak tree can be rotten and dead in the inside, but it will still be very much alive on the outside. We all remember our childhood days, when we would play and hide in an old oak tree. But it is not so with the palm tree. If it is rotten on the inside, it will die.

***God wants truth alive within us.*** Psalm 51:6 Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, And in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom. NKJV

***Our words and deeds flow from what we really are inside the center of our beings, our heart.*** Matthew 12:35 A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. NKJV

What is really going on inside of you? Is it the garden of God? Do you have the fruit of the Spirit maturing and overflowing out of your life more and more as the days go by?

**The palm tree grows no branches.** To be sure, there are the fronds at the top but no branches. In other words, it spends no time on side issues. "The "single eye" is a rare

item, but when it is found among the Lord's people, it is a gem of highest value and price.<sup>1</sup>

***Remember God wants our complete focus to act on our behalf.*** Deuteronomy 4:29 But from there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul. NKJV

***Today God is watching to see if you are tuned in to Him or not.*** 2 Chronicles 16:9, "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him... " NKJV

***David said he had chosen his top priority on earth as the Lord. Have you made that choice yet?*** Psalm 73:25, "Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You. (NKJV)

***Jesus said that if we stay focused He will flood our lives.*** Matthew 6:22-23 "The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. 23 But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness! NKJV

***Jesus said either He controls us or we call the shots – we can only have one master!*** Matthew 6:24 "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. NKJV

***Paul said he limited his choices in life in order to please God.*** Philippians 3:13, "Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; **but one thing I do**, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, (NKJV)

***James reminds us that wavering between God's control or not destabilizes our lives!*** James 1:8 "...a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways." NKJV

**All of the fruit of the palm tree is at the top.** In other words, a life offered on a daily basis for God! This is the ambition of the righteous. Life is measured by a new standard. Life is reduced to either being lived for what is "good" that which survives the fires of the judgment seat of Christ – or "bad" that which will burn as good for nothing in God's sight. That is the key – what does God want me to do. The palm tree portrays a life lived before the Face of God. The Lord wants us to hold everything we have before Him and ask for His examination and approval.

That is a **life lived intentionally bearing fruit in every season, increasing to the end.** The Psalm 92 life teaches: how useless self pity is; how dangerous selfishness becomes; how worthless greed ends up; how hopeless independence

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<sup>1</sup> Ideas drawn from Roy Gustafson, *In His Land Seeing Is Believing*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: World Wide Publications, 1980, p. 75-78 .  
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can be; how restless discontentment can be; how empty pleasures become so quickly.

That is a **life of spiritual maturity** that has learned how priceless real friends truly become; how endless Christ's joys can be; how numerous ministry opportunities are all around us; how satisfying Christ's presence becomes the more we are alone; how comforting prayer grows to be in our lives.

That is a **life where we invite our Heavenly Father the Gardener** to work on in our lives. We ask Him to control our -- Attitudes, Actions, Time and Treasure. To control these He must prune and chasten us. Pruning is positive (when we cooperate) and Chastening is negative (when we resist).

Here are some **attitudes** that steal fruit and rob us of rewards:

- Beware of **the problem of exceptionism**: it makes me think my life is an exception to God's Word. Thus I can excuse myself from doing anything for Heaven because of my past, or my pain, or my poverty, or my poor self-image. The problem of exceptionism can erase Christ's well done.
- God resists us when we maintain an **assumption of our own superiority**, or when we constantly think that we are more right than anyone else. God will not tolerate any habits we maintain of building up ourselves by tearing others down.
- God has to chasten our constant **impulses to promote ourselves**. Just as He must resist our tendency to take credit for things that were really the ideas or the work of others.
- His Spirit is grieved at the ease with which **we hold a grudge** over slights that we've been guilty of committing ourselves.
- God will always stand against our **uncanny ability to rationalize**, justify, and excuse what we do and say while at the same time, and even over the same issues, being unsympathetic and judgmental with others.
- God is at war against all **the unmortified pockets of pride in our lives**. What do pockets of pride look like? They are when I am proud of my intellect, or proud of my achievements, or proud of my giftedness, or even proud of my goodness. Pockets of pride in my life can erase Christ's well done. Remember Lot who was righteous yet lost it all because he thought he could stand and he fell into sin. <sup>2</sup>

Here are some **actions** that steal fruit and rob us of rewards:

- God will not allow us to persist in the enticing **sins of old age**: a lust for comfort and convenience, a greed for recognition and a covetousness for security. The sins of old age can erase Christ's well done. Remember Solomon who started well and failed in the end because he refused to obey God at the end of his life.
- Actions God warns us to deal with are when we say that we need to stay in control because we're so shy and sensitive.
- God says it is sin when we won't give Him complete control because we fear our marriage partner would take advantage of our submission.

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<sup>2</sup> Adapted from Jan David Hettinga, Follow Me: Experience The Loving Leadership of Jesus, (Colorado Springs, Co: NavPress, 1996, Pages 191-192.  
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- God will not overlook any moral laxity even if we say we have unusual sexual desires and God's rules are too restrictive.
- It is inexcusable when we try to say that security and comfort have always been big issues with us so we can't risk having God take away our support system.
- We risk reward loss when we try to tell God that our children need our full attention, and God can have our life after we get them raised.
- We risk reward by failing to discipline our flesh by arguing we like to eat, and we can understand why the Israelites complained about the manna. We fear that if we gave my appetite to God, our life would be boring.
- Or we excuse bad behavior by claiming that in order to "reach my friends" I have to be with them doing the things they enjoy. <sup>3</sup>

Here are some **uses of our time** that steal fruit and rob us of rewards that all relate to **UNHEALTHY FEARS:**

- **Fear of Pain**, Fear of Abandonment or Rejection, Fear of Death, Fear of Losing Control, Fear of Failure, Fear of the Future, Fear of Shame and Embarrassment, Fear of Strangers, Fear of Loss, Fear of What People Think of You, Fear of Aging.
- **HOW DOES GOD DELIVER US FROM FEAR?** With Greater Fear! Fear of God. **WHAT IS THE FEAR OF THE LORD?** This list is distilled from references to the fear of the Lord that appear throughout Psalms.
  1. Reverence and respect for God as the all-powerful Leader of all else.
  2. Certainty of inescapable accountability for behavior to God
  3. Practicing the presence of a Holy God
  4. Humbly following His leadership by obeying His Word. <sup>4</sup>

So how do I get Him in control and me out of the driver's seat of life? Here are some simple but powerful items to sign over to Him at closing.

1. ***My Desires need to become His Desires.*** Luke 22:42 *saying, "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done."* NKJV
2. ***My Pleasure needs get surrendered to His Pleasures planned for me "at His right Hand".*** Psalm 16:11 *You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.* NKJV
3. ***My Happiness is supplied by His Happiness welling up within me by His Spirit.*** Romans 5:1-5 *Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. 3 And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; 4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.* NKJV

<sup>3</sup> Jan David Hettinga, Follow Me: Experience The Loving Leadership of Jesus, (Colorado Springs, Co: NavPress, 1996, Pages 193-194.

<sup>4</sup> Jan David Hettinga, Follow Me: Experience The Loving Leadership of Jesus, (Colorado Springs, Co: NavPress, 1996, Pages 218-219.

4. ***My Ownership of anything gets swallowed up by His Ownership of everything.*** 1 Corinthians 6: 19-20 *Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.* NKJV
5. ***My Control over my life and body is yielded over to His Control.*** Romans 12:1-2 *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.* NKJV
6. ***My Success is flowing from the Word Filled Life that produces His Success.*** Joshua 1:8-9 *This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. 9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."*