

# YOU WILL KNOW THEM BY THEIR *FRUIT*...

## ...NOT THEIR *GIFTS*

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The Sermon on the Mount is found in Matthew chapters 5, 6 and 7. This was Jesus' first in-depth teaching that we read as He begins His ministry. In this teaching, Jesus lays out the fundamentals of what it truly means to be a disciple of His. In chapters 5, 6 and mostly 7, He teaches the principles and precepts of living the lifestyle that is pleasing to the Father. He begins, of course, with the teaching on what has come to be known as "The Beattitudes." There have been countless teachings and discussions on this and I do not wish to go into this aspect at this time. The only thing I would like to mention on this topic is that the word "beatitude" is a Latin word which means "blessing."

In Matthew 5:3-10, Jesus uses the word "blessing" (beatitude) 8 or 9 times (depending on which version you use.) In Jewish thought and teaching, if a person uses a word or phrase more than once in the same context, that person wants to stress that point. They understand that the usage of a word or phrase over and over means that the speaker or writer is stressing the point "exponentially." Let's use an example of what I am talking about. We read in Isaiah 5:6 that the Cherubim declare, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts." This is saying that God is Holy 10 x 10 x 10, which is symbolically stating that God is holy, 1000 times over. In Matthew 5, Jesus speaks the word "blessing" at least 8 times. He is expressing in this teaching that a person who follows this lifestyle will be "Blessed" (happy, joyful and spiritually prosperous to the point of being envied by others) 10 x 10 x 10 x 10 x 10 x 10 x 10 x 10, or in other words 100,000,000 times over. Why will the person be so blessed? Because it is the lifestyle that Jesus walked in and lived His life by. In other words the believer's lifestyle will be changed as he or she grows and continues grows in this process. Will it be easy? No. Jesus tells us quite pointedly that we will be persecuted - from outside as well as inside.

That is why in Matthew 7:13, 14, He teaches and warns about the wide gate that leads to destruction and the narrow gate that leads to life. These scriptures are the beginning of His summation of this teaching. He goes on to say that we are to "*beware of false prophets.*" He goes on to speak about a good tree bringing forth good fruit as well as a corrupt tree bringing forth corrupt fruit. Then he states that you will know those who are truly His disciples by their "*fruit.*" Then in verses 21, 22 and 23 Jesus makes some very bold statements, "*Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*"

**Wow!!!** Did you just hear what Jesus said? Wouldn't it be horrible to go through life thinking that you were a child of the Kingdom because of all the wonderful things that you did in the "name of Jesus" and then have Jesus tell you, *"Depart from me, I never knew you."* Jesus states it very clearly that we will know those who are His by their "fruit." He did not mention anything about the gifts. Jesus mentioned that many would prophesy "in His Name." Many would have cast out demons "in His Name." Many will do wonderful works (miracles) "in His Name." Yet He will say, "I never knew you."

**Hey,** let's be honest, the church over the years has been so awestruck by signs and wonders. We run to wherever these signs and wonders may seem to be occurring. The truth is that the real power is in the usage of the Name of Jesus that these signs and wonders occurred. Jesus said that these things happened because of His Name, the power in His Name and not for any other reason. The Kingdom principle of the power of the Name of Jesus is what brings forth the Kingdom. If I may be so crass as to bring to your remembrance that God used a "donkey" or better known to us today as a "jackass" to "prophesy" or speak to Balaam. Now I think we all can agree that the donkey was not "a child of God." Jesus said that if we will not lift up our praise that God would make the very "rocks cry out." I think we all can agree that the rocks are not "children of God." My point is that for too long we have been looking at the manifestations of signs and wonders as barometers for the presence of God in a person's life.

**We** have been enamored with people that have put on "shows" for the "entertainment" of the saints. They parade before us people that are healed and delivered by "them" or "their" ministries and organizations. Of course they mention ever so briefly the name of Jesus, just to keep it "Christian." We go to their "crusades" and "conferences." We support their ministry financially. We do all these things only to find out later on that they were not what they appeared to be. Their personal lives were much different than what they projected in public. We read of scandalous behavior and immoral conduct, adulterous affairs that have led to divorces and remarried to the one they had the adulterous affair with because it has now been "approved of by God." They leave the "scene" for a few months and then all of a sudden come back on the scene, declaring that they have repented and have been set free from the bondage of whatever made them "fall" and are now ready to continue right where they left off, better than before - preaching, prophesying, etc. Hmmm!!!

**Please,** do not get me wrong. There are many, many wonderful men and women of God that are doing the right thing and whose lives are wonderful examples of what a Christ Like child of God should be. And yes, there are those that have "fallen" and truly have repented and worked through the painstaking avenue of the healing process and have taken the hard and "straight" road to true repentance - not the easy shortcut of mere remorse. However, the point is that Jesus told us point blank that it is the "fruit," not the "gifting," that will reveal if one is truly a disciple of Jesus. Jesus clearly states that not everyone who calls Him "Lord" will enter the Kingdom of Heaven but only those that do the will of the Father. What is the will of the Father? It is the lifestyle and character that Jesus just finished speaking about in this "Sermon on the Mount."

**The** term "disciple" is an interesting term. We must remember that it is not just a Christian term. It is not used just in referring to Christianity and followers of Christ. The definition of the term "disciple" includes the fact that the individual is one that is, "a pupil; a student of; one that follows after a teacher for the purpose of changing their lifestyle to that of the one they are following." We are familiar with disciples of Hare-Krishna that change their outward appearance and ways of eating and living to that of the Krishna way. There are disciples of the Dali Lama. There are disciples of Buddha. There are disciples of Muhammad. Hey, even gang members are referred to as disciples of their leaders and change their lifestyle to that of the leader. The point is that a disciple is one that changes and desires to exchange their old way of life,

exchange their old way of thinking, exchange their old way of doing things, exchange their character to that of the lifestyle, thinking, acting and personality and character of the one they are choosing to follow. If a person says that they are a Disciple of Jesus Christ, then their character and personality should be the prime evidence of that decision. Not the manifestations done in the Name of Jesus.

**Colossians 3:5 - 17** - *“Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new [man], which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him. Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond [nor] free: but Christ [is] all, and in all. Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also [do] ye. And above all these things [put on] charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, [do] all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.”*

In the above scriptures in Colossians, Paul gives us a very clear understanding of what Jesus was referring to back in Matthew 7:20-23. In Colossians 3:5, the very first word we read in the King James Version is the word “mortify.” The Amplified Version translates it as such - “So kill (deaden, deprive of power) the evil desire lurking in your members [those animal impulses and all that is earthly in you that is employed in sin].” I believe that is self explanatory and says it all. “Kill, deaden, deprive of power, animal impulses, lurking” - reminds you of an old horror movie with the monster lurking in the shadows. However, the “monster” that Paul is referring to is the old nature, and its ways, that still hang around and want to come out if, and when, allowed to.

In Colossians 3:8, He tells us that we have a responsibility to “put off” these things of the old nature and its lifestyle and character. Wait a minute. I thought that when I was saved, God’s grace took all of these away from me. That is true because God now chooses to see you no longer as that old person but rather as a new creature in and through Jesus - His child. However, it is still our responsibility to “kill, deaden and deprive of power” those “animal impulses” that still may be lurking within. I do this not because I have to but rather because as His child I want to bless the heart of my King, my Abba, my God. In Verse 10 Paul writes that through Jesus we have now “put on” the “new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him.” Yes, we are now, that new creature in Christ. In the eyes of God the old nature is dead and we are now a child of God. However, in verse 12 Paul goes on to tell us that we are to “put on” - and he lists what we are to “put on.” Wait a minute Paul. Didn’t you just say that through Jesus this has already been “put on” us? Now you are telling us that **we** have a responsibility to “put on” these things that He already had put on us? - I’m confused!!!

Paul is not being confusing nor is he trying to confuse or double talk us. He is simply stating that “spiritually speaking” in the eyes of God, through Jesus, He now chooses to see us “justified” and “righteous.” The relationship that was broken because of the sin nature we had was now restored because

now we have a renewed, born again spirit - we are a totally new creature - a child of God. However, as we are still upon this earth, Paul is telling us that we have a responsibility to be that "Christ like" example so that others can see Jesus in and through our personality, character and lifestyle. He goes on to express what the fruit of that lifestyle is and sums it all up by stating that all of the above mentioned items that we put on are wrapped up in one - which is "charity," or love.

**I**n his conclusion on this thought, Paul then states in verse 17, that in whatever we do - word or deed - it is done in the name of Jesus for the purpose of glorifying Jesus. You see the fruit (the character, personality and lifestyle) of an individual is really what makes Jesus look good. The fruit of a Godly lifestyle makes the gifts more palpable by the non believer. The gift does not make Jesus real. What makes Jesus real in people's lives is when they encounter the personality, character and lifestyle of Jesus emanating from the true child of God's life. People are not looking for signs and wonders. They can go to Las Vegas for that and see magicians or go to Cirque du Soleil.

**P**lease, do not misunderstand me. I believe in the gifts of the Spirit. I believe in their usefulness in today's Body of Christ and usefulness in their aspect of the Gospel message. However, we must also remember that satan can come as an angel of Light (2Corinthians 11:14) and that Jesus warned us about "false Christs" and "false prophets" that would do signs and wonders to deceive (Matthew 24:24). That is why Jesus warned us and told us that we are not to look at the manifestation and signs and wonders only but most importantly look at the person's lifestyle and character. Are they a person of integrity? Are they a person who desires to live a holy lifestyle? When shown they are wrong, do they truly repent or just act remorseful and continue on in their sin? When they are brought to correction based on Biblical truth, do they receive it or deny and reject the correction? These are all aspects of a person's "fruit."

**W**e must also remember the other aspects or characteristics of a true disciple of Jesus which are found in Galatians 5:22, 23 - *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."* Galatians 5: 24, 25, makes a fitting conclusion to verses 22 and 23 as it states, *"And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."*

**A**nother thing to keep in mind is that the gifts of the spirit are not for ourselves but they are given by God through people to give to others. People (or animals and things as we had discussed previously) are just the conduits in which the "gift" is carried to the ultimate recipient of that gift. The "gift of healing" is not for the one who delivers the gift to a person who is ill. No, the gift of healing is for the person who needs the healing. No one owns any "gift." A person may seem to work in a specific gifting more than others. However, that does not mean that he or she owns that gifting.

**W**e must remember that the "anointing" that we many times refer to people as having, is not really within and of them self, but rather the anointing is always on the Word of God. The anointing is either on the true Word of God that is spoken or activated within the character, personality or lifestyle by an individual and/ or in the power of the Name of Jesus used by an individual. The anointing of God will work through any conduit that activates or uses the truth, principles and precepts of God's pure unadulterated Word in and through the power of the Name of Jesus. If your life is emanating the Word of God that is within you then the Kingdom of God will be expressed and not just expressed through signs and wonders, but it will be expressed through a true "Christ like" character, personality and lifestyle. (2Corinthians 3:3)

**B**ack in Matthew 7:23, we read that one day there will be those who thought they were one of Jesus' disciples because of the works that were done by them using the "Name of Jesus." Unfortunately, some will hear those horrible words, *"I never knew you: depart from me, ye that worketh iniquity."* The

iniquity is the pride and arrogance of thinking that it was because of them and their own “self-righteousness” that the signs and wonders occurred. You see those people never actually made Jesus their **Lord** (the absolute, supreme and final authority within their life) which would have been expressed by their desire to live and express truly “Christ like lifestyle.”

**O**n the other hand, wouldn't we all desire to hear those words spoken in Matthew 25: 21 and 23, “Well done, [thou] good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of **thy** lord.” Notice what I highlighted. Jesus said “enter into the joy of **thy** (your) Lord.” He is speaking to the person who truly made Jesus their **Lord** - the absolute, supreme and final authority within their life. Not that we are perfect and not having a “sin consciousness” but rather just simply having a desire to bless the heart of my God by not wanting to sin. If I do sin, I receive the correction, truly repent (not just being remorseful for what I did but truly repentant) and go forward.

**A** person can call themselves or refer to themselves as an Apostle, a Prophet, an Evangelist, a Pastor, a Teacher, an Elder, a Reverend, a Bishop, a Pope, a grand highly exalted mystic puh-ba (for any old Fred Flintstone fans out there) or whatever other title we come up with these days - it does not matter. It does not matter what we call anyone. It is not the title. It is not the gift that one may seem to be working in. It is not any sign or wonder that reveals who a person really is. It is the **fruit** - the Christ like character and personality that emanates from the true child of God that reveals who their Lord is. Do people know who you are by your Christ like character and lifestyle? Do they know you by your fruit... our by the gifts?