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## FRUITFULNESS: NEW LIFE AND THE WORD OF GOD

by Dan Trygg

The **place of the Word of God in the growth of the Christian life is extremely significant.** It is highly instrumental in our spiritual birth (Jas. 1:18), and in the day to day sustaining diet of our spiritual lives (I Cor. 3:1-3; Heb. 5:11-14). Living, continuing and remaining in it, by the obedience to known truth and the pursuit of additional truth, is a clear mark of the true disciple of Jesus Christ (Jn. 8:30-32; Mt. 28:19,20). The promises contained therein are keys which help to unlock the bondages of sin (Jn. 8:31-36) and open to us the rich treasures of our inheritance as children of God (II Pet. 1:2-4; cf. Eph. 1:10b,11,18,19).

**The place to begin a survey of the impact and importance of the Word of God on our spiritual lives would be to examine how it affects our spiritual beginnings in Christ, i.e., the conviction of sin and new birth in Christ. Unquestionably, it is the ministry of the Holy Spirit to convince people of their sinfulness, their need for God, and to disclose to them who Jesus is** (Jn. 16:7-15). He bears witness to the good news of God's provision in Christ. He opens the hearts of men to expose their need, and to declare to them the possibility of deliverance and new life in Jesus. Thus, Jesus said that no one would come to Him unless drawn by God (Jn. 6:40-45). They must see who Jesus is, and then believe (vs. 40). Those who have heard and learned from the Father come to Jesus (vs. 45). **Obviously, this does not occur in a vacuum. There must be some content of truth, some information, with which the Spirit confronts people, so that they could "see" or "hear" in order to "learn" and "believe".** Peter plainly states that "this is the word which was preached to you" (I Pet. 1:25). Paul confirms this, not only by describing the Word as the Holy Spirit's tool for spiritual battle (Eph. 6:17; cf. Heb. 4:12), but also by asking how is it possible for people to believe in Jesus if they have not heard a preacher declare the good news to them (Rom. 10:14)? **The Spirit** who searches and knows human hearts (Jer. 17:9,10; I Chr. 28:9; Psa. 139:1-16,23,24; I Cor. 2:10), **uses the Word, then, as His instrument of conviction,** laying bare the hearts of individuals with the sword of truth (Heb. 4:12). **He then presents the Gospel word of promise, which the person under conviction can lay hold of in the assurance of faith,** ...for without a hope, a promised, looked-for truth, there can be no faith (Heb. 11:1). Thus it is that the Scriptures can at the same time tell us that we are born again of the Spirit in one passage (Jn 3:3-8), while in another assert that we are born again through the Word of God (I Pet. 1:23 ). Both statements are true, being different facets of the complete picture.

**This Word that comes to be living, active, and abiding in the Christian is described as the spiritual seed which was the beginning of our spiritual life** (I Pet. 1:23; Heb. 4:12). (The Greek word in I Pet. 1:23 is *sporos*, from which our word "spore" is derived. Cf. I Jn. 3:9, where the Greek word *sperma* is used.) This is where new life is infused into the new believer, making him a new creature (Jn. 3:3-8; Jn. 1:12,13; II Cor. 5:17). This is the hope for a changed life, the possibility of bearing fruit according to a new spiritual-genetic make-up (Mt. 7:16-20; 12:33-35; I Jn. 3:9).

This picture of the Word as spiritual seed is further affirmed, by Mk. 4:1-20. Jesus presents, through the parable of the sower, the conception, growth, and fruitfulness of truth in the hearts of men. **The seed which is sown upon the soil is identified as the Word** (vs. 14), the message of the kingdom of God (Mt. 13:19). It is this seed which brings the possibility of life and productive growth. **Apart from the seed, the soil, no matter how fertile it may be, has no ability within itself to cause kingdom growth. The converse, however is also true. The seed, which has all of the potential of life and growth, is also powerless to produce lasting growth apart from the soil. Its growth is contingent upon the receptivity of the soil.** Thus, in the parable of the sower we see **four possibilities** presented:

**(1.) No growth** (vss. 4,15), due to the seed being snatched away from the soil.

**(2.) Temporal/counterfeit growth** (vss. 5,6,16,17), where the soil is conducive enough for growth to allow the seed to sprout, and yet will not allow the plant to put down roots. In nature, every seed contains enough nutrients to enable the life within it to sprout, when the seed case is softened and penetrated by water and stimulated by warmth. This built-in nutrition is only temporary, however. The seedling must soon draw nutrition from its environment, or die. Such is the problem with this rocky soil. Because of its shallowness, sprouting is encouraged by the rapid warmth of the soil. The seed, in this case, however, never actually became one with the soil. As Jesus said, "...it had no root..." (vs. 6). Again, in vss. 16,17, Jesus stated, by way of explanation, that the Word "had no root" in this particular type of hearer. **The temporal growth was never a real growth produced by the soil, but only a beginning manifestation of the seed's inner life.** The shallowness, which was so encouraging to the sprouting of the seed, soon became also the factor behind the burning out of this new growth before it could put down any roots. In reality, the growth was never the soil's growth, but only a momentary, abortive appearance of the explosive life potential of the seed itself.

**(3.) Stunted growth** (vss. 7,18,19), which is a genuine growth, a true marriage of seed and soil, but one which never reaches its full potential due to the overwhelming, competing demands of weeds. Weeds divert the soil's life potential away from the true desired crop, starving and limiting the maturity of the crop.

**(4.) Fruitful growth** (vss. 8,20), an unhindered intermarriage of both soil and seed. Here the life potentialities of the soil are spent only upon the fulfillment of the maturation of the Gospel seed-life, resulting in the fruitfulness desired.

So then, without the seed of the Word, there would be no hearing, no learning, no faith, and no life. **Spiritual birth requires the Word, in some form or another, as the initiatory qualification for life**, much as there is no conception of life without a sperm cell to fertilize the waiting egg. **On the other hand, the seed itself is not sufficient for life, either. There must be the supportive, ready environment** of a prepared, open heart. **Finally, the seed in the soil of the heart must be quickened by the water of the Holy Spirit** (Jn. 7:37,38; cf. Tit. 3:5,6; Isa. 32:15-20), or the life potential of the seed will never be set into motion.

Father, we thank You that in Christ Jesus You have truly transformed us. We are new creatures, made of a different stuff, given a new spiritual-genetic make-up. We understand the necessity for this, having experienced the utter inability to produce good fruit from a plant of poor, inferior stock, ...attempting to get figs from thistles, as it were. Lord, this new beginning makes all the difference. Without it, there really *is* no hope. Being made new, however, we actually *do* have the hope of glory, the life of Jesus Christ, Himself, abiding within our own breasts. Thus, we can hope, even expect, the "fruit of glory" to be produced in our experience.

Father, grant to us hearts that are receptive soil for the seed of Your truth. Enable us to accept both rebuke and encouragement with positive faith, knowing that it is such truth, implanted in our hearts, which will produce the fruit of deliverance, freedom, and life within us.

#### **FOR MEDITATION: I Peter 1:23.**

"...for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God."

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### **Knowing Christ Means Identifying With Those Who Suffer**

"We cannot know Christ unless, like Christ, we become engaged with those who suffer. Why? Because, inescapably, Christ was the Suffering Servant. The cause of that sorrow? Yearning for all who have gone astray like lost sheep."