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## FRUITFULNESS: IN HIM, BUT NOT OF HIM?

by Dan Trygg

**Is it possible to be in Christ, i.e., identified with Him, and yet not be of Him? How? There are several instances where the Scriptures declare this very thing.**

**Tares Among The Wheat.** For instance, in Matt. 13:24-30,36-43, we have the example of Satan implanting counterfeits within the kingdom of God. These tares, as they start out, are thought to be as the rest of the crop. They look like the genuine article, until the head of grain starts to form. It is fruitlessness which exposes the reality of the nature of these plants. Then it can be seen that they were of a different origin entirely.

**False Teachers.** In Matt. 7:13-23, we have a second example. There are those who call Jesus, "Lord", and do many good works of service and religion, which they attribute to Him, and, yet, He says of them that He never knew them. He does not say, "I knew you at one time, but you wandered away." He said, "I *never* knew you" (vs.23). They, too, were of a different origin (vss. 16-20). Their fruit was therefore bad and to be rejected (vss. 17,18,23).

**The Olive Tree.** In Rom. 11:17-24, we have another illustration of how it is possible to be identified with the people of God, but not really be of them. Here, the tree refers to the people of God cultivated throughout redemptive history by God in the nation of Israel. The root and trunk were the patriarchs and the Old Testament faithful, planted in truth and watered by God's Spirit. From this root stock, however, many different branches grew out, i.e., different people groups, religious parties, family lines, etc. Some of these were fruit-bearing, i.e., they were in living relationship to the life of the tree. They were responding to truth and were consistent with truth. Others, however, were unfruitful. They had cut off any authentic spiritual life-relationship with the tree of the faithful. Their only link to the tree was their physical descendency from the nation of Israel. The point is that they identified themselves with God's people by virtue of their physical heritage. Spiritually, however, they had no life, and were not a functioning part of the tree. Hence, they were rejected and broken off. In the same way, people will identify themselves with Jesus, go to church, and do religious things, because their parents or grandparents were churchgoers. In reality, however, they may have no genuine, living contact with the Vine at all.

**So then, it is possible to be Christ, i.e., associated with Him, His people, even calling oneself a Christian, and yet, not really be "of" Him.** As Jesus said in Matt. 7, "You will know them by their fruits ... every good tree bears good fruit; but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit" (vss. 16-18; cf. I Jn. 3:9). With these rejected branches there seems to be something wrong in the area of the "treasure of the heart" (cf. Matt. 12:33-35). The fruit of one's life is to be transformed by the objective regeneration of the inner man. It would appear that herein is the fundamental area of deficiency.

However we might understand the relationship of the rejected branches to the Vine, what is apparent to all is that **self-deception regarding our spiritual status can be a very real possibility.** The objective reality may be that we have no fruit-producing relationship with Jesus, even though we may *think* that we do. This possibility is not intended to cause us to live our lives in continual fear, for God Himself has specifically said that He has purposed to deliver us from fear (Rom. 8:15; II Tim. 1:7; I Jn. 4:13-18). **Rather, God's purpose in confronting us in this way is to cause us to deal with the defective area.** What is it that is hindering the appearance of fruit? How can we know that we are truly in a life relationship with Jesus?

**Ultimately, only God knows those who are His** (II Tim. 2:19), but we can, by honestly

pursuing truth and righteousness, continually cultivate the attitude of humility whereby we can be taught by God more readily (Prov. 2:1-4). **As our spiritual sensitivity increases, if we are “of” Christ, we will be assured both by the inner witness of the Spirit and by the fruit of Jesus seen in our lives.** If we are not truly alive in Jesus, God will be working to bring us face to face with our condition. The intention of passages like this one, where the possibility of self-deception is presented, is to spur us on to flee to Jesus. For when we abide in Him, all our questions will be answered, in time. There will be fruit, and there will be assurance, as we see Him operating in our lives.

Father, thank You that You know our hearts, and that You instruct sinners in the way, lead the humble in justice, and teach them Your way (Psa. 25:8,9). Father, keep us from self-deception and self-satisfaction. Keep confronting us with truth to rebuke us and correct us, so that we might walk with You even more closely day by day. We confess that our hope is in You, alone. Lead us in the way of life.

### **FOR MEDITATION: Matthew 12:33.**

“Either make the tree good, and its fruit good; or make the tree bad, and its fruit bad; for the tree is known by its fruit.”

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## **The Functioning Church As A Family**

“Being a part of a family is something with which most people can identify. This is why Paul wrote what he did in Rom. 12:10. With the exhortation to ‘be devoted to one another in brotherly love’, he introduced the Roman Christians (and us) to another analogy to illustrate the functioning church. He was referring to the family unit.

“The ‘body concept’ graphically portrays that Christians *are* ‘members one of another’. Each believer (no matter what his or her status in life) is necessary and vitally important in God’s order of things. The ‘family’ concept gives us an even greater appreciation of what a functioning church should be. The concept of the family adds a dimension of warmth, tenderness, concern, and loyalty -- in short, human emotion and devotion.

“The term ‘brotherly love’ (philadelphia) refers to the love that should exist between brothers and sisters within family units. Applied to the functioning church, it refers to the love Christians should have for each other as brothers and sisters in Christ. We are also a family -- the family of God! The term ‘brothers’ (adelphos) is used to refer to the ‘Christian family’ approximately 230 times in the N.T. The term literally means ‘from the same womb’. It is distinctly a ‘family term’.

“Paul’s use of the words, ‘be devoted to one another’, enhances and supports his emphasis on brotherly love and family relationships in the church. To ‘be devoted’ literally refers to the mutual love of parents and children and husbands and wives. It could be translated ‘showing loving affection’ or ‘love tenderly’. Thus the KJV reads: ‘Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love.’ Paul’s point is clear. Christians are to be just as devoted to each other as are the individual members of a close-knit family unit. For we are a unique family unit.

“Christians begin as infants -- babes -- in Christ. We go through various stages of development. In our immaturity we can easily fall into patterns of self-centered behavior. But as we mature, our lives should reflect the nature of Christ. Showing affection and love to other Christians as brothers and sisters in Christ does *not* happen automatically. Otherwise, we would not have so many exhortations to do so.” If we did not have a healthy family background, or if we have experienced other hurts and disappointments in relationships, we may find it more difficult to openly risk to express or receive affection comfortably. This is an area where growth and healing are possible, and to be pursued, so that the full benefits of God’s family might be experienced by all.

Quotations selected from Building Up One Another by Gene Getz (Victor:IL 1979). Pp. 21-23.