

Fruitfulness for God

Part 1

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[00:00:00] Before you, dear brethren, is the subject of fruitfulness for God. We've read of Abraham being called by God and he moved out not knowing where he was going. He was a man of faith and God can always use those that move in faith. So we find that God said to get out of his father's house and from his land and go into a place that I will show thee. And Abraham moved out and God was with him. We find that promises come through to Abraham and he takes him out as the scriptures that we have read have shown. He takes him out and he shows him the stars of [00:01:02] the heavens and promises that he's going to raise through his way a nation, a great nation and he was going to be greatly blessed. And God said unto Abraham, so shall I seed be. He looked up into the heavens and he saw the vast expanse and God says, so shall I seed be. And in the verse that we read, it's wonderful to see faith working. He believed in the Lord and he counted it to him for righteousness. So that what is coming through now is the way of God and Abraham is believing what God says. It's a wonderful thing for us just to believe what God says. But then in the waiting time we find that he tries to bring in a helping hand and so he cries to God [00:02:06] as to whether the blessing was going to come through one of his servants, one in his own household. But the Lord points out to him that it is through his own bowels that the blessing is going to come. Then we find failure again in that Sarah suggests that he take the handmaid, Hagar, to wife and raise up a seed through her. And so Abraham tries this way, but it's not the way of God. And there comes this man Ishmael and it isn't the way that God is going to bring about the great nation. A great nation was raised by Ishmael, but it was not in the divine pattern. And it isn't until Abraham comes through to the realization that God is going to work it out according to [00:03:04] his will. Now that's something, dear brethren, we must bow to and that is the will of God. We may try and help, we may try and give God a hand, but it's not going to work. We've got to allow him to come through in his own way and in his own time. And Abraham was tested for quite a time. And here he is, he's an old man, he's knocking on a hundred years of age and the Lord appears to him at the Oaks of Mamre as we read in chapter 18. And there's one thing that marks this man and that is vitality and life. There's a spring in his step. It says that he ran out to meet them in verse 2.

He bowed himself towards the ground and then he says, let a little water be fetched to wash your feet and a morsel of bread that your heart may be comforted. But he goes and does much more. We [00:04:05] find that he hastens into the tent and he says, make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it and make cakes upon the hearth. And then Abraham runs again, he runs out to the herd and he fetches a calf tender and good. He gives it to the young man and he hastened to dress it. There's urgency in the matter. And that's what we've got to learn, that here we are in the last days, the day of grace is running out and there's urgency to follow through the will of God that he may be able to use us in working out his way for blessing and for fruitfulness. Then it says he took butter and

milk and the calf which he addressed and set it before them and he stood by them under the tree and they did eat. Then the question comes to Abraham, where is Sarah thy wife? And he said, [00:05:02] behold in the tent. Abraham knew where his wife was. Just at the time when she is needed. But Abraham is a man of God. He's moving in faith, his household is in subjection. And this dear brethren is absolutely necessary for the working out of the ways and the will of God in the households of the Saints. Normality should be there. And here he says she's in the tent. And then this conversation goes on. The promise comes through. We find that there's a little failure in Sarah's part. But God stands by his promise that they're going to have a son in their old age. What a joy it must have been to Abraham and to Sarah. And the promise is made and God stands by it. And then we find in the time that Sarah is pregnant, there's great calamity happening in Sodom. The [00:06:05] disaster comes in. The judgment of God comes in. But then you see the fretfulness out of all the promise, the judgment had to come in. That city, a lot had become entangled with it, came under the judgment of God. But God is not turned aside in any of his plans. They're going through. We find that a little later on, that at the right time, the appointed time, Sarah gives birth to a son.

And his name is called Isaac. And the promise of God is there. And the parents look upon that son and realize that what God said was true in Isaac, shall I say he called. God works it out his way.

And dear brethren, this is something we need to learn. We don't want to give up. We don't want to say, well it's hopeless, a hopeless case. We just seem to be dying out. Things are dwindling. [00:07:04] There seems to be lack of life. Where is our faith in God, dear brethren? Are we looking up or are we looking at the failures? Abraham could look down and he could see failure, failure, failure in his own self and in the time that was elapsing and nothing was coming through. But oh, when we make room for God and his will is made known, we find that the fruitfulness pours out. And here we've got a fruitfulness to God. Our whole nation begins in Isaac, shall I say, be called. And then we find that through Isaac, Jacob and Esau and then the nation of Israel is born. But it's according to God's promise. And God is going to have a people. And he's going to have it coming down through his [00:08:01] way. So dear brethren, we're not to get cast down. We're to see that even out of what appears to be barren conditions, God is in control. And God is bringing through fruitfulness for his glory and for his praise according to the divine pattern. Let's go to 1st Samuel. 1st Samuel chapter 1.

You find Elkanah has got two wives and one, Hannah, is barren. And in verse 10 we'll begin reading. She was in bitterness of soul. 1st Samuel chapter 1 verse 10. And prayed unto the Lord and wept sore. And she vowed a vow and said, O Lord of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid [00:09:06] a man-child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head. Came to pass as she continued praying before the Lord that Eli marked her mouth. Now Hannah, she spoke in her heart. Only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard. Therefore Eli thought she had been drunken. And Eli said unto her, how long wilt thou be drunken? Put away thy wine from thee. And Hannah answered and said, no my Lord. I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord. Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of the line. For out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto. Then Eli answered and said, go in peace. And the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked him. And she said, let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the [00:10:03] woman went her way and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad. And they rose up in the morning early and worshipped before the Lord, and returned and came to their house to Ramah. And Elkanah knew Hannah his wife, and the Lord remembered her. Wherefore it came to pass, and the time was come about after, was come about after Hannah had conceived that

she bear a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, because I have asked him of the Lord. Verse 24, and when she had weaned him, she took him up with her with three bullocks, and one ephor of flour, and a bottle of wine, and brought him into the house of the Lord in Shiloh. And the child was young, and they slew a bullock, and brought the child to Eli. And she said, O my Lord, as I so liveth, my Lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the Lord. For this child I pray, and the Lord hath given me my petition, which I have asked of him. And therefore also I have lent him to the Lord. As long as he liveth, he shall be lent to the Lord, and he worshipped the Lord there. Again we have a woman [00:11:03] in barren conditions, with her heart poured out before the Lord. How many situations have been saved by sisters pouring out their heart to the Lord. They've known barren conditions, and perhaps along with that, they've seen the breakdown in the priesthood. Because at this time, the priesthood was at a very low ebb. Eli was an old man, he didn't seem to care what much what was going on, and his two sons were wicked. They were taken up with other women, and they were taking what was due to the Lord, and they were defiling the service of God. But here is a woman who's pouring out her heart to the Lord. First of all, she's written off by Eli, a man that at that stage left discernment. He didn't know what was going on in her heart, because he wasn't caring about [00:12:02] the conditions, that he himself was right in, as far as his service, and as far as his household was concerned. But we find here, that even although she's written off as a woman of blight, he said she said, don't write me off. It's because I have a heart that's pouring out to the Lord. I have a concern, and I have something deep weighing in upon my spirit. Then we find that Eli, even although he's a man that seems at the most out of touch with God, and what is going on, he is able to discern someone that's genuine, and he said the Lord grant thee thy petition. So she goes home, and we find that at the appointed time, she gives birth to a son, and the son's name is Samuel. The gift from the Lord, asked of the Lord, and given by him, an answer to a woman of prayer, and vitality [00:13:06] begins. We find that she stays home until the baby's weaned, and then she takes him up, and they go up to worship, and it's there she leaves him. She's given him to the Lord, and he's a young boy that grows up, and we find that he becomes, in many ways, a fulfillment of what was lacking. There was not only a barren condition, as far as this woman Hannah was concerned, in her own self, in her own body, but it spoke of the barren conditions there in Israel, that the response to God was not flowing through. God was looking for something for his own heart, and there were those there that were robbing God, but she has a concern. The prayer is poured out, and we find that the boy is given, and she gives him to the Lord. And as we go on through this account, we find that there is much that the [00:14:08] Lord reveals. It says later on that the vision, a vision, or a speaking of the Lord was rare in those days. No wonder the conditions were so poor, for how we need to look within to see that conditions are right amongst us, and so that the Lord will speak to our hearts, and the Lord will pour out a blessing, and will bring in fruitfulness, because in Samuel we see fruitfulness in regard to the things of God. He's the last of the judges, he becomes the last of the judges, and he fulfills the part of a priest, and of a prophet, and he's a man of God, and he's able to fill in that which was lacking. He's one that had his ear attuned to what the Lord would say, as we find later on that he listens. He's woken in the night, and the Lord speaks to him, and he keeps running into Eli, until [00:15:03] Eli perceives that the Lord was speaking to the lad. But he said next time, say, speak Lord for thy servant hear us. And we find that Samuel does that. He says, speak for thy servant hear us. He doesn't say, speak Lord, because he didn't know the Lord at that stage, but he said, speak for thy servant hear us. But he's a young boy that grows up, and he has a concern, and the Lord is able to entrust with him a message for his people. So we see that in conditions such as this, what was seen in Hannah, and what was seen in Israel, because of the concern of one that bore it before the Lord, prayers are answered, blessing comes in, and there is fruitfulness for God. So again, dear brethren, we're not to give up. Our confidence is to be increased, and our faith enlarged, in a God that is able to do wonderful things. Because even in the life of Hannah, he was able to do wonderful [00:16:01]

things. We find later on, that after she had given Samuel to the Lord, and here she was, the promise that God gave to her, the answer to her prayers, she gave to the Lord. But the Lord is no man's debtor, because later on, Alcana and Hannah have three more sons and two daughters. So the Lord is able to do far exceedingly above whatsoever we may ask or think. But we must give first what is due to him. Dear brethren, I believe that if we are willing to give what is due to him, then the fruitfulness will abound, and the blessings will pour, and there will be that life coming through, and there will be much for the heart of God. Let's go to Luke's gospel. Luke's gospel, chapter one, and verse five.

Luke one, verse five. There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named [00:17:07] Zacharias, of the course of Abia. And his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. And they had no child, because that Elizabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years. And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God, in the order of his course, according to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense. And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said unto him, fear not Zacharias, for thy prayer is heard, and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. Thou shalt have joy and gladness, and many shall rejoice at his [00:18:04] birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink, and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, and to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. And Zacharias said unto the angel, whereby shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years. And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God, and am sent to speak unto thee, and to show thee these glad tidings. Verse 24, And after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying, Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men. Chapter 3.

[00:19:14] Verse 2, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John, the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his path straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made flesh, and all flesh will see the salvation of the Lord. Then said he to the multitude that came to be baptized of him, O generation of vipers, who have forewarned you to flee from the wrath to come. Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves we have Abraham to our father, for I say unto you that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. Here we find again the promise of God to a man that is faithful. But [00:20:09] there's one thing about Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth that's worthy of note, and that is that was truly a marriage, what we would say a marriage in the Lord. How much of the testimony is spoiled by a man or a woman that belongs to Christ, being linked up with marriage with someone that is not in Christ. And this brings disaster. It's not according to the direction of the Lord, but here we find that the Lord is able to use what is there in Zacharias and in Elizabeth, because it says that his wife, he was a priest, and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. So they're in the priestly family, and they become one. But there is

something lacking, and God always delights to supply what is lacking, [00:21:06] when there is a genuine cry to him. And it is obvious from verse 13 that Zacharias had been praying, and he'd been praying for a son. And God had heard that revival was needed, that there was something needed right at that time. And God knew the need, and he saw the cry, and he answered the prayer. And dear brethren, again let me say that we can count upon God. God knows the need amongst us. He knows the need of vitality. He knows the need of youth. He knows the need of that steady flow of praise to God, and the outgoing of the news that he delights to show forth in his beloved son. So here we find Zacharias continues with the work in hand.

He goes home, and we find that Elizabeth now is expecting a child, and it's all according [00:22:06] to the ways of God. Marvelous! She's too old. Zacharias says, I'm well advanced in years, but God is in control. And God brings forth a man that was going to stir the nation right to the core. A man that obviously lost his parents while he was young. He's a man that lived in the wilderness. He wore a leaven girdle, camel's hair, and he ate locusts and wild honey. But he was a man that was called for a purpose. A man that was an answer to prayer. And there was a revitalizing amongst the people of God. A word was coming through from a man that was the fruit of a prayerful father and a faithful mother. Oh how we need to look for fruitfulness there brethren. Fruitfulness perhaps in numbers? Yes. Fruitfulness in the service of God? Yes. And now our fruitfulness [00:23:05] in the going out of the news to stir a nation that had settled right down and was taken up with everything else but what was due to God. And so John goes out and he preaches in the wilderness. Fulfillment of the prophecy. Here was a man sent from God. And he goes out and he preaches this word. Offspring of vipers, who has forewarned you to flee from the wrath to come? And here they're coming out to hear him. And he's preaching to them. Bring forth fruits worthy of repentance he says. So that in every situation, no matter how barren it may seem, God is looking for fruitfulness. And dear brethren we should be on our faces earnestly beseeching a God of promise that there may be fruitfulness according to his way, according to his will and in his timing. So that the testimony may go on. We're not to give up dear brethren. We're not to give up. God doesn't expect us to give up. He expects us to be full of faith and full of vitality so that we're able to make haste [00:24:05] when haste is needed and to follow through what God instructs us in. So here we find again fruitfulness out of barren conditions and God's word going out. The fulfillment of prophecy, the awakening of Israel and those that were prepared to repent and get into line with God's thoughts. So if ever there's been a time in the history of the church there needs to be repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. And we need to be stirred in our hearts to take out the gospel to the unsaved. But the gospel needs to go out of right conditions in our own hearts and in our own gatherings so that the fruitfulness will abound to God and that there will be the ongoing of the testimony into the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let's bring it up to date in 2 Peter because oft times we get these lessons in the scriptures and we can see maybe [00:25:09] the meaning of God's ways in days past. But Peter brings it right up to date. He brings it up to 1987 and in the second epistle of Peter chapter 1. Simon Peter a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ. Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue. Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this giving all diligence add to your faith virtue and to virtue knowledge and to knowledge temperance and to temperance patience [00:26:05] and to patience godliness and to godliness brotherly kindness and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things be in you and abound they make you that you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these

things is blind and cannot see afar off and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather brethren give diligence to make your calling and election sure for if you do these things ye shall never fail never fall for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Wherefore I will be not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things though you know them and be established in the present truth. Peter here brings the word right up to us today and I haven't got time to go into the any details in these precious verses that we have read but we find that Simon [00:27:06] Peter here sets him forth himself forward as a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ and he's writing to us to them that have obtained like precious faith and we have obtained precious faith. We've been brought in by the grace and the mercy of God into wonderful blessings and it's all based upon the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. So he says according to his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue. Then he goes on to speak of the great and precious promises that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature having escaped from the corruption of that is in the world. And then he goes on to speak of these this list of things and these are vital dear brethren to the understanding and appreciation of the work of God and of the things of God partakers of the divine nature and then that these things may be seen in the saints of God and it's not that one [00:28:07] having acquired one you build on that and it just goes up like a mountain but that the what is set forward here in verse five that our faith may have virtue. It's not a matter of adding to it and I think if you've got a new translation there you'll get a better understanding of what is meant. But the faith is to be marked by virtue and the virtue that marks the faith is that is to be acquired through knowledge and so it's not so much a building one on top of the other but the characteristics of each of these things is to be seen in the other so that we get the gain of it in our own souls and working through this in experience with God we may have these things and abound and that's what God is looking for dear brethren in the hearts of each one of us [00:29:01] that there may be that which abounds towards God that the enjoyment of the things of Christ may be so precious to our hearts that there is the abounding towards God so that we might not be barren or unfruitful God is looking for fruitfulness he's looking for expansion in our hearts and he's looking for expansion in the testimony of Jesus Christ dear brethren this is what we're to pay attention to not much time is left to us the Lord is coming soon but we should be deeply exercised about the needs amongst us and to be hasting to do something about and to fulfill what is lacking counting upon a God that fulfilled all his promises all the brethren that our faith may increase that the testimony might be enlarged that our appreciation of Christ may grow and so there will be an attractiveness amongst the people of God so that souls will be added to the testimony it says here but he that lack of these things is [00:30:01] blind you can't see oh dear brethren let us not let us not have this lack amongst us that we're blinded to the needs of the saints that we're blinded to the cause of the gospel that we're saying well we're just settling down we're in the last days we're just about home to glory so what's the good of doing anything let's just give up and over and wait for the Lord to come that's blindness that's not answering to the call the high calling on high we're we're responsible before God to answer to the light that is given to us and to abound in fruitfulness to God so that we might not fall oh how many are falling in the testimony in the last day here we are dear brethren we're in the last straight and we're going up to the tape and the Lord is soon going to take us how many are falling by the way taken up with the things of the world the wickedness and the corruptness in the world and not taken up with the things of Christ where is the fruitfulness amongst us where is the abounding in the knowledge and appreciation of the [00:31:01] things of God and the earnest desire in the hearts of each one of us young and old going on together so that there will be that which is due to the heart of God so he says wherefore the rather brethren give diligence to make your calling and election sure for if you do these things you shall never fall so he says in closing wherefore i will be net i will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things though you know them and be

established in the present truth dear brethren there are many things that we say we know but we're not in the gain of them in our own souls and in the practical working out of what we profess to know Peter says even although you know them let's refresh our minds let's let's refresh our hearts because there's nothing lacking from the divine sight and God wants us fully taken up with the things of Christ so that the testimony might abound and precious souls may be added to the assembly in these last and closing days may it be for the glory of God and for the honor of that precious name the name of the Lord [00:32:06] Jesus the name to which we gather or may our hearts just be stirred that we may all be gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus and to no other name and to go on in the things that are fruitful and abounding towards God a God that always keeps his promise a God that's absolutely reliable in all that he says and does a God that we can count on even in the most barren conditions you