

2011 Week Ten
Midlands Churches of Christ, Birmingham, UK
Women's Ministry
Offerings for Quiet Time Study

1. PRODUCING GOOD FRUIT I

Matthew Chapter 3

The word for fruit in 3:8 and 3:10 is the Hebrew KARPOS. It shows up 66 times in the KJV Bible and it's always translated simply as "fruit." Here is its definition: 1a) fruit of trees, vines, fields; 1b) fruit of one's loins, posterity (*I think of biological children; adopted children; spiritual children*); 2) that which originates or comes from something; 2a) an effect, result; work, act, deed; 2b) an advantage, profit, utility; 2c) praises, which are to be presented to God as a thank offering; 2d) to gather fruit or KARPOS (i.e., a reaped harvest) into life eternal (as into a granary) is used in figurative discourse of those who by their labours have fitted souls to obtain eternal life (*simply put, our fruit is also the people that we help to gain salvation, the disciples that we make along life's way who will make it to heaven*).¹

I've been feeling "nudged by God" lately to look at the attitudes of the Pharisees in the Bible and make sure I'm not heading down their path. John's words here – "Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And," (paraphrasing) do not think you can say to yourself, for example, *"I've been a faithful disciple for 25 years and make all kinds of sacrifices for God, therefore I'm ok" – are really for me. The fact is, either I am producing fruit in keeping with ongoing, lifelong repentance; or I am not producing good fruit and I will be cut down in the end and thrown in the fire. !!!*

- Using the definition of KARPOS, above, write out all the kinds of fruit I can think of that my life is producing²
- Is this fruit "in keeping with repentance?" Why or why not?
- Thank and praise God for the good fruit; pray for help and the heart to bring as much honour and glory to God as possible by the harvest of my life!

¹Blue Letter Bible. "Dictionary and Word Search for *karpos* (Strong's 2590)". Blue Letter Bible. 1996-2011. 15 Mar 2011.

< <http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=G2590&t=NASB> >

² *My partial fruit list: my children, Britain and Justin; their future children and grandchildren; my marriage; the things I've written; the music I've recorded (ouch!...for some of that...); the impact I have on people around me; the impressions people have of me; the way people remember me and what comes to mind when they think of me and I'm not with them; the atmosphere in my home; the atmosphere in the groups I'm involved in at church (leadership; worship team; students; I wonder what the teens would say?); my unkempt garden; my dogs' behaviour, good and bad; my friendships; all my relationships – with acquaintances; I need to bear more good fruit in keeping with repentance in interactions with strangers -- I need to set my mind to always be friendly and strike up a conversation, to keep asking God for boldness and wisdom and empathy in those conversations; my impact on my neighbours (don't even know some of them still); people I've met who've become Christians; people I've studied the Bible with who've become Christians; people I've helped train as disciples (since I'm clearly not the only or even primary influence in some of these people's lives, I am only playing a small part in the gigantic and complex fruit-bearing process which produces an eternal soul, or salvation in someone...but it is still good fruit! I need to appreciate more the "little things" I can do to encourage people spiritually, which is bearing fruit for eternity)*

2. PRODUCING GOOD FRUIT II

Here are all the references in the book of Matthew where the word, KARPOS, appears:

Matthew 3:8, 10; Matthew 7:16, 17, 18, 19, 20; Matthew 12:33; Matthew 13:8, 26; Matthew 21:19, 34, 41, 43. (in Matthew 13:8, the word translated “crop” is KARPOS; in 13:26, “grain” is KARPOS; in 21:34, “harvest” and “produce” are both KARPOS; in 21:41, “proceeds” is KARPOS -- using the NASB)

- What can I learn from reading through these verses?
- What promises are there?
- What warnings are there?
- What’s one specific thing I can do today which will produce good fruit?

3. THE LORD, WHO IS MY GOD

Psalm 140

*You may think this is strange, but for the longest time, I had a very hard time saying what the psalmist says here in verse 6, “You are **my** God.” In spite of understanding it intellectually, for years, I couldn’t really say it to God and wholeheartedly believe it. I also avoided describing myself as a servant of God or a servant of Christ as Paul the apostle often did, There’s both sides of sinful pride in that struggle: the false humility of, “I’m not good enough to be a servant of God” (but then, intellectually, I know – if I’m not serving God, there’s only one other possibility: I’m serving Not God: myself; or Satan, the enemy. Irrational!); and there’s also the other end of the prideful spectrum present: “Since everybody is supposed to be able to say, “God is my God,” that doesn’t make me anybody special to God. What good is that?” (ouch – embarrassing thought!) This psalm helps me in my weakness.*

4. GOD, WHO SHIELDS MY HEAD

Ps 140:7 says that God, my strong deliverer, “shields my head in the day of battle.” This word for “head” in Hebrew (RO’SH), can mean a person’s physical head, but it just as firmly denotes the top or summit of something (like a mountain, or tower); the upper part, the chief part, the best part, the highest part, the beginning part, the front part. It also can mean the sum total of something. It can mean the base of operations, or tower, or prize which is most important to defend against an enemy’s attack. ³

- In Genesis 11:4, the “head” of the tower of Babel that mankind wanted to build was the top part that was to reach into heaven. As a disciple of Jesus, I’ve decided to build a tower, too (Luke 14:28, NIV). What do I consider to be “the head” in the tower that I am building for God? *This is what God is shielding today, as I go out to battle.*
- Looking at the definition of RO’SH, what else comes to mind when I think of how God is protecting me by “shielding my head?” ⁴

God promises protection, but does not promise the absence of a battle.

- What are the enemies that surround me today, that may cause me trouble with their lips, slander me, or come at me violently? What are the snares, nets, traps, that could be hidden for me? How should I be praying about them?
- What should I be confident of, as I read through this psalm?

5. GOD, WHO GUARDS MY FEET

1 Samuel 2: 1-11

The NASB reads, “he keeps the feet of his godly ones....” It struck me that, as the Psalmist affirmed that God shields our head, Hannah, the mother of Samuel, prophesied in her wonderful prayer that God also keeps, or guards, my feet! In Gen 29:1 this word (REGEL, Strong’s H7272) is translated “journey;” in Gen 33:14 it’s translated “pace;” in Ex 11:8, it’s translated “follow.” ⁵

- How is God guarding my pace? *I always want to do more than I am able to do in a day. I’m learning to thank God for the limits of time and health that he has placed in my life.*
- How is he guarding or keeping my journey?

- Am I following Jesus in such a way that God can easily guard my feet? What or who else am I following?
- Pray Hannah's prayer to God. *I am so impressed that the first line captures the transformation in Hannah's heart, that occurred when God answered her prayer for Samuel, so perfectly: "my heart rejoices in the Lord." Not in the result of the answered prayer. But in the Lord, the God who responds to her, protects, delivers, loves her. I know Hannah could say, at this point, "MY God."*

³ Blue Letter Bible. "Dictionary and Word Search for *ro'sh* (Strong's 7218)". Blue Letter Bible. 1996-2011. 16 Mar 2011. < <http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H7218&t=NASB> >

⁴ I think of: God is protecting my **beginning**: the idealism I when I first became a disciple (those principles are still true, if I will hold on to them); I can live my life wholeheartedly (which is how every child **begins** life, and how I want to live it, and wish everybody could live it this way, too) if I trust that God is really shielding me; I think of my children's faithfulness as Christians as a prize, a beachhead, and I believe God is shielding that and protecting it (even though my youngest is not a Christian yet); my own faith, my salvation, my relationship with God, my eternal inheritance in heaven. I think of the thoughts in my head. I need God to shield me from evil, negative, accused thoughts. I think of specific dreams that are precious to me and specific dreams that are precious to my friends – dreams to marry, be healed, to adopt, to make a difference in this world for God.

⁵ Blue Letter Bible. "Dictionary and Word Search for *regel* (Strong's 7272)". Blue Letter Bible. 1996-2011. 16 Mar 2011. < <http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=H7272&t=NASB> >