



“Fruitful Inspection”

by Chantaye Elmore Knotts

THE U.S. FEDERAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYS FRUIT INSPECTORS TO EXAMINE FRESH FRUIT AND ENSURE THAT ALL FRESH FRUIT MADE AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC MEETS THE HEALTH STANDARDS OF THE STATE AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENTS. Fruit is inspected for maturity, size, firmness, shape, and quality. In a similar way, God inspects the lives of every Christian to see whether the spiritual fruit of their lives meet the spiritual standards outlined in God’s Word. What will He find when He checks *you* out?

Where’s the Fruit?

One unique feature of fig trees is that the fruit usually appears before the leaves. Jesus once cursed a fig tree because He saw its leaves from a distance and approached it—expecting to find fruit, but there was none (see Mark 11). When Jesus pulled back the fig leaves, He realized that He was standing before

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a fruitless tree that was good for nothing but a show.

We live in a world of great pretenders—people who are content to act rather than to be. They look like Christians—sometimes, that is, when they are around certain people—but in reality, they are hypocrites living insincere, double lives. They are one way at church, yet another way at school and at home. Some pretenders look like devoted friends in your face, but behind your back they look like your worst enemy. Some pretenders wear knock-off merchandise. What they are wearing may look like designer goods, but it is all just fake. Some people are satisfied with a “look”—they spend everything they have to create an image, a look, a facade. They “slay” when you see them coming—they look like they have on thousands of dollars’ worth of the “real thing,” when nothing could be further from the truth. Why do we find it easier to *act* like something rather than to *be* it? They look like Christians, hang out with Christians, and talk like Christians, but when it actually comes to bearing fruit, they are empty and barren. Where is the fruit? What good is it to fool the people, when God sees the heart?

Bad Fruit

The only thing as bad as or maybe worse than being an unfruitful Christian is bearing “bad fruit.” Paul described “acts of the flesh” as those behaviors and attitudes that should *never* appear in the life of a real Christian. Years ago, no one would have imagined the kinds of nudity, explicit violence, bad attitudes, intense rage, and filthy talk found in many television shows, on the Internet, on social media, in movies, and heard in popular music. Even among professing Christians, unmarried couples move in together. Young people have babies that they are not ready to raise—either financially or emotionally. Design divas decorate their homes with images

of Buddha and other idols. And folks find it pretty funny when their buddy ends up drunk or gets upset and drops a few curse words. From a biblical perspective, it is bad fruit. Even if “times have changed,” God’s standards have not changed. Paul had a very serious warning at the end of verse 21; read it for yourself:

The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:19-21)

Good Fruit

God expects Christians to be Christians—which equates to being fruitful. In Galatians 5, the apostle Paul offered a quick checklist for the spiritual fruit that should be growing in the life of every Christian: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law” (Galatians 5:22-23). Where can you get this fruit? It grows naturally in the lives of those who are really serious about their relationship with Jesus. The closer you get to the Lord, the more fruitful you become. Do you love God? Do you exercise good control over your temper and physical urges? Are you patient with others? Are you kind? That is good fruit—which God is looking to find.

Check yourself and decide this: what kind of tree are you? Are you the unfruitful fig tree, flossing leaves without fruit—trying to “fake it until you make it”? Are you a bad fruit tree, full of deformed, diseased “spiritual fruit” that is only good enough for the trash? Or, are you a good fruit tree—full of words and actions and thoughts that meet God’s standards and bless others? God is checking you out—and you cannot fool the Fruit Inspector. What kind of fruit will He find on your tree?