

The Fruit of the Spirit

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The inspired apostle, writing to the Galatians, draws a vivid picture of the two natures in man—the evil and the good; the carnal nature, which is not subject to the law of God, and the spiritual nature, which delights “in the law of God after the inward man.” This inward man which delights in the law of God is the new man born of the Spirit; but this carnal nature is the old man who must be endured or must be crucified.

The apostle gives us a beautiful description of the fruit produced by the Spirit in those who are under his reign and guidance. The apostle does not say the fruit of a good man, but the “fruit of the Spirit.” This fruit is produced by the Holy Spirit in the man. This does not mean that the man himself ceases to be a free agent and responsible for his conduct, but he, of his own will, receives the Spirit; he yields himself up to the work of the Holy Spirit which dwells in him. The result is the fruit produced by the Spirit.

Our Lord Jesus gives us a bit of very sound philosophy that will be almost universally accepted without controversy when he says, “The tree is known by his fruit.” He also illustrates the truth by saying, “Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?” I suppose no chemist could give us the secret of the difference in the nature of the sap of the tree which makes it bring forth fruit after its kind. Here is one tree laden with delicious pears; another is yielding luscious peaches; another is bending its boughs under the weight of beautiful apples. Somewhere, hidden away in the heart and sap of these different trees, is the secret that brings forth fruit so diverse from each other in appearance and flavor.

The secret of a holy life of glad obedience to the law of God, of joyful submission to the will of God; the secret which makes the yoke of the Lord easy and his burden light is hidden deep in the soul of the child of God by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, and where he indwells the buds of life appear, the blooms of beauty are produced, and the rich fruit of righteousness grows and ripens. This fruit, the inspired writer tells us, is “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness temperance: against such there is no law.”

It must not be understood that a state of grace delivers one from obedience to the Ten Commandments or submission to the whole law of Christ—the law of love—but there is no violated law, no warrant for the arrest of anyone possessed of this fruit. The fruit mentioned here places one in such harmony with God, and such cooperation with Him, that he is not subject to pursuit or arrest by any high sheriff of heaven. He walks free anywhere and everywhere in God’s universe. He is indeed in Christ a “new creature.” He is regenerated, he is sanctified, he is Spirit filled; he has victory over himself; his appetites are well regulated and controlled; his attitude toward his fellow beings is one of forgiveness, compassion, and kindest solicitude. He is altruistic toward all the world. He is deeply concerned for his neighbors, and his sympathies go out over all seas. He loves God supremely and his neighbor as himself. This state is not natural. It is quite unlike, and indeed contrary to, the natural man. As the sap of the healthy fruit tree flowing through roots, trunk, and branches, manifests itself in delicious fruit, so the Holy Ghost dwelling in the children of God produces this fruit. A man finds his nature changed; his old desires are gone; he is possessed of a new and entirely different life; supernatural powers from another world and another personality have come into him and wrought a great miracle of grace—a glorious change.

The apostle tells us of the lusts of the flesh—that is, of the carnal nature in the man before the change takes place, prior to the incoming and blessed work of the Holy Spirit. The contrast is something marvelous. Listen to what he has to say of the characteristics of the old man of sin, the natural products of the “body of sin,” the desires that proceed from the flesh, that carnal nature which is not, and cannot be, subject to the law of God. It is a fearful catalogue of evil. Read it for yourself, “For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like.”

Note that the conditions described here may exist at different times in the same man. The conditions are as adverse as one could imagine. They seem as wide apart as demon and angel. Those under the domination of the flesh are in a most fearful state. Those who are filled with the Spirit are blessed indeed. This remarkable change must be wrought by the regenerating grace, the sanctifying power, and indwelling of the Holy Ghost. All of this is pledged and promised through faith in Jesus Christ. Outside of Christ there is no hope for this change, but in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead. In him is omnipotent power and infinite love. At his feet, the insane and violent man, possessed with a legion of devils a few moments ago, now sits with joy beaming in his countenance, clothed and in his right mind.

It is hardly necessary to say that no one can be possessed of all these excellent qualities and the fact not become known to the family, the church, and the community. It may take time. There may be misunderstandings, persecutions even; some never will know; there are people who cannot see one wink on a fair day at high noon. There are those who are so blinded by the god of this world that it is impossible for them to discover any sort of consistency or beauty in the life and character of the most devout saint. Jesus himself said, “The world knoweth us not.”

You can no more hide the child of God who is filled with the Spirit and bringing forth the fruit of the Spirit described by the inspired apostle here, than you can hide a city set upon a hill. It is understood that those wholly sanctified are filled with the Spirit, and in them he produces the fruit mentioned here by the inspired writer. Along with our testimony and witnessing should go this fruit. If we fail to produce the fruit, we must not rail against the Lord, justify ourselves or give comfort to others who testify beyond the facts revealed in experience and life. We must not pull down the standards, but we must at once have recourse to the Christ, the source of our salvation, and the Spirit who produces the fruit. To be filled with the Spirit is to produce the fruit. We shall not make headway, in holy living and in our desires to promote a genuine world revival of religion, by finding fault with the Word of God, limiting the power of salvation in Christ, or being contented with a few scrawny specimens, when our lives should be full of fruit and the tree of our personal experience bending under a weight of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, and all the rest of the fruits mentioned by the inspired writer.

Most of us saw oranges long before we saw orange trees. When we did see the trees we knew them by the fruit which was on them. It is possible to profess an experience that does not possess us; that does not reign

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