

## The Fruit of the Spirit

In Matthew chapter 7, we have recorded Messiah's declaration concerning the identification of wolves in sheep's clothing:

"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. **Ye shall know them by their fruits.** Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit ..." (Mat. 7:15-18).

From these words, we find that production of fruit is the identifying feature of whether a tree is determined to be good or bad. A good tree bears grapes and figs, whereas a corrupt tree can only bear corrupt fruit. The nature of the fruit defines the tree, and this feature enables us to determine who the wolves in sheep's clothing are.

In John chapter 15, our Master again speaks of bearing grapes, as good fruit emanating from himself as the true vine:

**"I am the true vine,** and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit ... Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, **the same bringeth forth much fruit:** for without me ye can do nothing ..." (Jno. 15:1-5).

In order to bear good fruit, we must remain in the Christ-Vine, for of our own selves, we can bear no good thing. We need the nourishment of being branches of the True vine to yield fruit fit for the purpose of the Husbandman.

Our reading in Galatians chapter 5 continues this theme of a vine yielding fruit – and again, fruit comprises the characteristics that define the true disciples of the Lord, by contrast to the works of the flesh:

"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: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. **But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance:** against which there is no law ..." (Gal. 5:20-22).

Notice that here, there is only one type of fruit: "the fruit" – singular - "of the Spirit". But that single type of fruit is made up of many component parts – nine in fact, just like a vine yields one type of fruit – the grape – yet there are many individual parts that make up the whole bunch. We, being part of the true vine, need to yield those attributes which define us as being disciples of Christ: we propose therefore, to examine each of those nine attributes in turn:

### LOVE

The quality of love that the disciple must express is in the Greek *agape*. It is this Agape love, that Messiah spoke of in saying "Greater **love** hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his

friends” (Jno. 15:13). What greater love can there possibly be, than that of Christ towards his ecclesia, for whom he laid down his life? Yet this is the love that we must share amongst us: “Hereby perceive we love, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (1 Jno. 3:16). We must reciprocate the love of Christ, in laying down our lives in service to one another, and to our Lord himself. This theme of the *agape* love is beautifully brought out in 1 Corinthians chapter 13, the scrutiny of which we must leave for a future study.

### **JOY**

The kind of joy experienced and demonstrated by the disciple of Christ is not an enjoyment of worldly pleasures, but is rather a motivating force enabling us to bear tribulation for Christ’s sake. As Nehemiah encouraged the builders of Yahweh’s Temple: “**the joy of Yahweh is your strength**” (Neh. 8:10). Rejoicing in the spiritual blessings provided by our loving Father, we can be strengthened to follow the example of Messiah. Of him it was said “... who **for the joy that was set before him** endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2). Notice, it was not sheer determination that enabled our Lord to endure the cross, but “for the joy that was set before him”. Having a vision of the coming glory, he was able to look beyond the present distress, to that joy that awaited him at his Father’s Right Hand – and it was that vision which enabled him to endure. We must seek to maintain that vision and spirit of Joy when bearing affliction for Christ’s sake: “my brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into diverse temptations ...” (Jas. 1:2).

In this we have the spirit of the Apostles: “they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name” (Acts 5:41). We, like them must rejoice in adversity, because we know that those adverse circumstances are designed to prepare us for something far greater, even life in the joyous kingdom to come.

### **PEACE**

One of the titles of Jesus is “prince of peace” (Isa. 9:6), and of his future dominion it is written: “in his days shall the righteous flourish; **and abundance of peace** so long as the moon endureth” (Psa. 72:7). But the “peace” being spoken of here is not only a situation of tranquillity amidst innumerable blessings: it is a peace with God. God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself (2 Cor. 5:19), and through him we have peace with our maker. As the Apostle declared: “therefore being justified by faith, **we have peace with God** through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God” (Rom. 5:1-2). Those who put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ can have an inner peace even in the midst of troublesome times, styled by the Apostle to the Philippians: “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding” (Phil. 4:7). Indeed, it was at Philippi that the apostles demonstrated this peace of mind, by praying and singing praises to God (Acts 16:25) whilst they were in affliction in prison. Our Master himself showed this peace of mind when he lay asleep in the boat whilst the storms raged outside. To trust in the power of Yahweh to deliver us from all adverse circumstances and granting us entry into his kingdom develops a resignation to our Father’s will, and a peace of mind that those in the turbulent nations of the world cannot possess.

### **LONGSUFFERING**

Longsuffering is one of the qualities of our Father in heaven: “ ... thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, **longsuffering**, and plenteous in mercy and truth” (Psa. 86:15). It is illustrated in His relations with the rebellious people of Israel, and it extended towards us, in providing a means whereby we can be saved from our sins: “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but **is longsuffering to usward**, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9). It is part of the perversity of human nature that men readily accept the longsuffering of Yahweh in forgiving their sins, yet they will not do likewise and

forgive those who trespass against them. But that is the way we must behave: We are to “walk worthy of the calling wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, **with longsuffering**, forbearing one another in love” (Eph. 4:1-2).

### **GENTLENESS**

To be gentle is also associated with being meek (which we will shortly consider) and patient. So it is written that “... the servant of the Lord must not strive; but **be gentle unto all men**, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves ...” (2 Tim. 2:24-25). Again, the apostle told Titus to exhort the believers “... to be ready to every good work, to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, **but gentle**, showing meekness to all men” (Tit. 3:1-2). Sometimes it is difficult to be gentle to all men, especially when in a dispute with them, but that is the Divine Way. We must not issue a “railing accusation” (Jude 9) regarding others, but rather submit to one another in love. So it is written of Messiah, the Great Shepherd: “he shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall **gently lead** those that are with young” (Isa. 40:11). This is the way of Christ, and we must follow his example.

### **GOODNESS**

Goodness is one aspect of the Fruit of the Spirit, and is beneficial for us to consider further. It is written: “there is none righteous, no, not one ... They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; **there is none that doeth good**, no, not one” (Rom. 3:12). The question arises therefore, How can goodness be part of the Spirit’s Fruit if there is “none that doeth good”? Even the Master himself rebuked a man who called him “good”: “... there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, **Why callest thou me good?** There is none good but one, that is God ...” (Mark 10:17-18). Again, the question arises, why did the Master rebuke a man for calling him “good,” especially when he was the only man free from committed sin? The answer is in Messiah’s reply: the source of all goodness is Yahweh himself. As revealed to Moses, He is “merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and **abundant in goodness** and truth” (Exod. 34:6). Any goodness held by men is derived from Him. There are men in Scripture, such as Joseph of Arimathea (Luke 23:50) who are spoken of as being “good”, yet their goodness was not intrinsic to themselves. The Apostle Paul said “I know, that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth **no good** thing ...” (Rom. 7:18), and that is the natural state of all men: there is nothing “good” in them. Goodness is a quality that can only come from outside influences: i.e. from the revelation of God to men concerning His Goodness. Jesus himself, as the “word made flesh” displayed the goodness of Yahweh, the only underived source of goodness. This is truly humbling: none of us can boast of our own good works, we are all naturally under condemnation. But if we accept and embrace the goodness of God as revealed in the provision of His Only Son, we can be counted righteous through the faith we express.

### **FAITH**

Romans chapter 4 provides a discourse on the importance of faith in the sight of our God, using Abraham as an example. The point being, that even Abraham could not glory in his own goodness, or good works, but he was rather counted as being righteous by the exhibition of his faith: “for what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness” (Rom. 4:3-5). As we saw above, there is none amongst men who are intrinsically good, yet by His Grace and Mercy, our Father will count our faith as if it were righteousness – hence the expression “justified by faith”. The faith of Abraham was faith in life out of death. So the Apostle continues to say in Romans chapter 4: “being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now **dead**, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the **deadness** of Sarah’s womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being

fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness” (Rom. 4:19-21).

Abraham implicitly believed that from his dead body, and the deadness of Sarah’s womb, there would come life – the birth of Isaac. He didn’t consider his natural state, or that of his wife: rather, he believed in the promises God had made to him. Even so the apostle continues “Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But to us also, to whom it shall be imputed, **if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead ...**” (Rom. 4:22-24). Here is the faith that saves: a faith in life out of death. “Without faith it is impossible to please God” (Heb. 11:6) - but with it, we can please Him, and find forgiveness and life in His Sight.

### **MEEKNESS**

We already considered 2 Timothy 2:24 above, in the context of “Gentleness”. Meekness, or teachableness is a quality to be nurtured and developed. Human pride must make way for humility and subjection before God. Even Messiah himself had a spirit of meekness, and he tells us to learn from his example: “... take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Mat. 11:29). Before the Master, Moses was called “very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth” (Num.12:3), and he demonstrated that the best form of leadership is service. Again, in Psalm 37 we read: “But **the meek shall inherit the earth:** and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace” (Psa. 37:11).

This brings together some of the threads we have been considering: there will be “abundance of peace”, or in other words, “rest unto your souls” as a consequence of displaying that meekness by which a person can inherit the earth. Zephaniah pleaded with Israel: “Seek ye Yahweh, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment, seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of Yahweh’s anger” (Zeph. 2:3). Meekly seeking first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, we will be spared in the day of Yahweh’s wrath when the pride and haughtiness of man shall be brought down low.

### **TEMPERANCE**

The word “Temperance” signifies “self control”. This was a quality necessary to be a Spirit appointed elder in the ecclesia in the first century: “an overseer must be blameless, as the steward of God, not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre, but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, **temperate**, Holding forth the faithful word as he hath been taught” (Tit. 1:7-9).

It is also a principle by which a disciple must live. It is listed by Peter as one of the aspects which needs to be added to our faith (2 Pet. 1:5), and the Apostle Paul also speaks of it: “... Every man that striveth for the mastery **is temperate** in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corrupt crown; but we an incorruptible” (1 Cor. 9:25). Self control is essential for our subjection to Christ: just as a contender in the Olympic games had to train, work out, and control himself, even so we must devote ourselves to service in the army of Christ. To exercise self-control “in all things” is something we must strive for, as we seek to serve our Redeemer in spirit and in truth.

In our considerations, we have seen the important attributes which collectively make up the 9 fruits of the Spirit. Disciples of Christ must be “filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God” (Phil. 1:11). Let us therefore seek to emulate the example of our Redeemer, and fill our lives with the spirit-fruit that gives glory and praise to Yahweh, the only One who can save us through the work of His Only Begotten Son.

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