

Sabbath School Lesson #7 – The Holy Spirit and the Fruit of the Spirit – 11-17 Feb 2017

Christ who breathed on His disciples saying, “Receive ye the Holy Spirit” (John 20:22), wants us to receive the same “Spirit of Christ” which was in all the prophets (1 Peter 1:11), because “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His” (Romans 8:9), which Spirit is Christ Himself, as “the Lord is that Spirit” (2 Corinthians 3:17), for Christ being “the last Adam was made a quickening Spirit” (1 Corinthians 15:45) and “because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts” (Galatians 4:6), and for these reasons, let us have Christ; as Ellen White says, “It is not safe to catch the spirit from another. We want the Holy Spirit, which is Jesus Christ” {Lt66-1894 (April 10, 1894) par. 18}.

The memory text for this lesson reads: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law” (Galatians 5:22-23). If we compare the fruit of the Spirit with the result obtained by following the teachings of the Bible, we shall find that they are identical. Why so? Because “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16-17). So if a man will profit by the reproofs and instruction found in the word of God, he will be perfect, lacking in no good thing. But a man cannot be more than perfect, and anything different from perfection is imperfection. The fruits of the Spirit are the results which come from following the guidance of the Spirit.

The first fruit mentioned is love. Very many persons entirely mistake the Bible meaning of love. With many it consists in a sort of good feeling, an indefinable condition, the principal feature of which is that the person feels happy and extremely well satisfied with himself. But the kind of love that the Bible brings to view does not depend solely on the emotions, but is very practical. John says, “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous” (1 John 5:3). Again, “And this is love, that we walk after His commandments” (2 John 1:6). The keeping of the commandments is the test of love. Paul says, “Love is the fulfilling of the law” (Romans 13:10; Galatians 5:14). Who ever heard of a law being fulfilled by its violation? Some persons think that they have so much love to God that He will accept violation as a substitute for keeping the law; but we learn that love *is* the keeping of the commandments. How a person can love God, and refuse to keep all His commandments, is a mystery that no one has ever been able to explain. Those who make such a profession lay themselves liable to the charge recorded by John in 1 John 2:4.

We see, then, that the result of following the Holy Spirit is to keep the commandments. But this is the whole duty of man (Ecclesiastes 12:13). And we shall find that while love is the keeping of the commandments, all the other things mentioned by Paul in Galatians 5:22-23, as the fruit of the Spirit, are the natural results of keeping the commandments. Joy and peace are mentioned next; and they attend the keeping of the law. The psalmist says, “Great peace have they which love thy law” (Psalms 119:165). The prophet Isaiah wrote, “O that thou hadst hearkened to My commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea” (Isaiah 48:18). Here, the Spirit and the word agree.

Long-suffering and gentleness are given as part of the fruit of the Spirit. Paul says, in 1 Corinthians 13:4, that charity (love), which we have seen is simply the keeping of the law, “suffereth long, and is kind.” He also says that it “vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up;” and as we have seen, meekness is a part of the fruit of the Spirit. Goodness is also part of the fruit of the Spirit; and Paul tells us that love “rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.”

Again we read that “where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty” (2 Corinthians 3:17). But James says that the law of God is a “law of liberty” (James 1:25; 2:12). And David says that those are at liberty who keep the law (Psalm 119:45). Here, again, we see perfect harmony. Again Paul says, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God” (Romans 8:14). John tells us that those whom God in His great love calls His sons, and who have a hope to see Him as He is, purify themselves (1 John 3:1-3). And Peter completes the chain of testimony by saying, “Seeing ye have purified your souls in *obeying the truth,*” and he adds that this purifying is done “through the Spirit” (1 Peter 1:22).

But it is not necessary to multiply proofs. That there can be no in-harmony between God's word and His Spirit is so self-evident that no one who professes to be a true Christian should presume to question it. Indeed, the Bible is the work of the Holy Spirit itself. We read, "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21) – moved by the Spirit of Christ (1 Peter 1:11). May the Lord help us humbly to follow the leadings of the Spirit, that we may be guided "into all truth" (John 16:13), and finally share the promise of our Father to "see Him as He is."

"And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God" (Philippians 1:9-11). The fruits of righteousness are righteous fruits. These fruits are by Christ: "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 [apart from] Me ye can do nothing" (John 15:1-5).

The last verse quoted shows clearly that the fruit borne by the branch that abides in Christ, is deeds of righteousness. The statement is that whoever abides in Christ brings forth much fruit, while separate from Him we can *do* nothing. Doing nothing is made equivalent to not bearing fruit. So then bearing fruit in the vine is identical with doing something. There is nothing more passive than the bearing of fruit; and yet there is nothing in which more intense activity is shown than in a fruitful vine or tree. The tree can do nothing to make itself bear fruit, yet the bearing of fruit is a period of activity. In the fifth of Galatians we have it made very plain that the fruits of righteousness are active deeds. In verses 19-21 we have a list of "the works of the flesh," which are "adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like." And the apostle says, "they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Then in direct contrast with these he places "the fruit of the Spirit," which consists of deeds of a directly opposite nature to the works of the flesh. It is very clear: one set is active wickedness, and the other is active righteousness.

Evil deeds are called works, because they are done for the purpose of getting a gain, although the doer is grievously disappointed in his wages; "for the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). But righteous deeds are those that are done with no thought of self, but as the manifestation of the life and love of God in the heart; and the doer receives, not wages, but a free gift: "the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

There is one most encouraging thing in connection with bearing fruits of righteousness: the Lord does not cut off the branch that bears only a little fruit. Rather, He encourages it, by giving to it the best conditions for bearing more fruit. In the thirteenth of Luke we have a parable, which is represented by a man with a fig tree in his vineyard, to which for three years he has come looking for fruit. To the words, "Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" the vine dresser says, "Let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it and dung it; and if it bear fruit, well; but if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down." When the man comes the next year, and finds that the tree has begun to bear fruit, although in a feeble manner, will he cut it down? No, indeed. If he would bear with it three years when it bore no fruit at all, he will certainly much more bear with it now. He will hail the indications of fruit with gladness, and will more thoroughly continue the work of pruning and dressing, "that it may bring forth more fruit." The Lord "is longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). "A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench; He shall bring forth judgment unto truth" (Isaiah 42:3). "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Romans 5:8-10).