

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

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We know there are many who will disagree, but based on a careful study of the evidence, we believe that Paul wrote his letter to the Galatians in AD49. It was his first Epistle and was written not only to one local group of people, but to believers in a large Roman province reaching from north to south (in the centre of what is modern Turkey). Only one New Testament book was written before Galatians, and that book is the Epistle of James (which was written in AD45). The letter to the Galatians is a strong

address to those who were still trying to hold on to the Mosaic law. Then, it is the letter bringing the message of God's grace. We can safely say that it addressed the transition from the Mosaic dispensation to the Messianic dispensation.

A third characteristic of the Galatian letter is the message of the fruit of the Spirit compared to the works of the flesh:

"Now the works of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, moral impurity, promiscuity, idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambitions, dissenting, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and anything similar (...)" (Gal 5:19-21).

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, self-control" (Gal 5:22-23).

This is the scripture that usually springs to mind when the concept of the fruit of the Spirit is discussed. But the Bible, through Paul, also approaches the topic somewhat differently and perhaps in simpler fashion, in Ephesians 5:9:

"(...) (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;)" [King James Version].

Some other translations, however, render the verse differently:

"(...) for the fruit of the light [results] in all goodness, righteousness, and truth (...)" [e.g. Holman Christian Standard Bible].

If we study the full context it seems all to be about light versus darkness. After first describing that the readers had once been darkness (please note, they were not in darkness, but were

darkness itself), Paul then calls on them to walk as children of light, because they had become light in the Lord. Then follows his description of the fruit of the light, after which he summarises it as discerning what is pleasing to the Lord. Instead of the modern trend of presenting ‘12 steps how to...’ Paul states simply that the fruit of the light manifests or results in goodness, righteousness and truth.

In verse 11 Paul admonishes the reader not to participate in the fruitless works of darkness, but instead, to expose them. The implication of this principle for us today is that we cannot be neutral, but we must expose, rebuke, and speak against wickedness in all forms. To cry out sincerely against unrighteousness is to hate sin (Heb 1:9), to stand beside God against evil (Psa 94:16), and to remain faithful to Christ. Sadly, when one does so, he or she is all too easily branded as a “Christian fundamentalist”, and most definitely not a kindly sense.

Unfortunately, there is a fundamentalism that has no biblical truth in its foundation although it speaks in biblical terms. This is the man-made fruit of doctrinal error. We can only overcome this by diligently seeking to correctly teaching the word of truth (or rightly dividing the word of truth) – 2 Timothy 2:15. To this end we need to rid ourselves of the stubborn stains of Greek philosophy and philosophical practices, as well as Roman traditions and practices – or at the very least to understand their dangers so as not to fall in error.

This article is a sincere attempt to stimulate among us a search for the truth as it was given to the original readers, as well as its significance and principles for us who are alive today. We cannot separate the two and create a new liberal theology to suit modern humanist philosophy. Such theology consistently denies the deity of Christ. It promotes religion, and not faith in the Christ.

It is in this spirit (attitude) that Martie, my wife, and I researched the seeming differences of “spirit” versus “light” in the various translations. We found that the older manuscripts used in translation used the word “light”, whereas “spirit” is found in later manuscripts, probably following Galatians 5. In the end there is for us no essential difference, for to walk in the light is to follow the guidance or leading of the Holy Spirit. And the fruit of such a life will be seen in goodness, righteousness, and truth.

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