

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE—ITS POWER
Gal. 5:16-23

Intro: Last week we considered together the fact that Paul describes the Christian life as fruit. He uses this word, fruit, to describe the method, or plan, of the Christian life.

When he calls it, fruit, he immediately implies that it is something which grows. In order for it to grow it must be attached to a source of life. The production of fruit demands that there shall be pruning, and there needs to be cleansing. Watering is also essential. And the last thing we noted was that fruit must be produced for someone. The Bible indicates in at least three passages that this someone is the husbandman.

It seems very likely that Paul must have in mind our Lord's teaching in John 15. Christ is the vine; we who know Him as Saviour are the branches. We can only bear fruit as we "abide in the vine" (John 15:4). The branch by itself can produce nothing; it needs the life that is in the vine. The husbandman of the vineyard is the Father. He supervises the watering, the pruning, the cleansing. The fruit which He desires takes time because it is the result of growth.

Tonight I want to speak about one additional feature of the Christian life as fruit. It is the power that such fruit demands. "The fruit of the Spirit."

I. WHO IS THIS "SPIRIT"?

If you were to read the epistle to the Galatians through you would find the Apostle Paul referring to the Spirit 15 times. Cf. 3:2, 3, 5, 14; 4:6, 29; 5:5, 16, 17 (2x), 18, 22, 25 (2x); 6:8. He writes about the Spirit in such a way that we must assume that the Galatians knew just what he was talking about.

If any reference is something of a description, it would be 4:6. But, even from this, we must assume that Paul had given them teaching prior to the writing of his epistle concerning the identity of the Spirit.

Since it seems that this metaphor must have been taken from the Upper Room Discourse in John 13-16, let us look at that passage to see if our Lord said anything about the Spirit when He was talking to His disciples about fruit.

Cf. John 14:26. Here our Lord speaks of the Holy Spirit, who is also a Comforter (Gk: Paraclete), and then He adds

the words, "whom the Father will send in my name." This means that the Holy Spirit will be "the Spirit of his Son," the term used to describe the Holy Spirit in Gal. 4:6. SO THIS IS NONE OTHER THAN THE HOLY SPIRIT, ONE OF THE THREE MEMBERS OF THE GODHEAD WHO IS EQUAL IN DEITY WITH THE FATHER AND WITH THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

So the fruit that we are talking about is not the fruit of Paul, nor of you, nor of me, nor of any other believer; IT IS FRUIT WHICH CAN ONLY BE PRODUCED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT. Therefore, it is fruit which is humanly impossible to produce.

We have life in Christ, but that life is made available to us through the Holy Spirit. And so any fruit which is produced through us for God is produced by the Holy Spirit, and only by the Holy Spirit. Is this clear? We need to understand this basic truth.

But now we come to a second question.

II. WHERE IS THE HOLY SPIRIT that He is able to make it possible for me to bear fruit?

Please turn to Gal. 3:2. Note carefully what this verse says. (Read it.)

Will you note that he is implying by his question that every Galatian believer had received the Spirit? He is not asking if they had received the Spirit, but on what basis had they received Him--by works, or by faith.

In Rom. 8:9b Paul says, "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

In Living Letters this reads, "(And remember that if anyone doesn't have the Spirit of Christ living in him, he is not a Christian at all.)"

To state the same truth in a positive fashion we would have to say that every Christian has the Holy Spirit living in him.

To emphasize this, let us turn again to John 14, verses 16, 17. (Read.)

Two facts are very clear. First, the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 (because that is the time He was given), and He came to dwell "in" every true child of God. NO PERSON HAS BEEN SAVED FROM THAT DAY UNTIL THIS WITHOUT BECOMING THE DWELLING PLACE OF THE HOLY

SPIRIT. Secondly, Jesus Christ made it perfectly clear that the Holy Spirit would not come and go, to and from the believer. He specifically stated with reference to the Holy Spirit, "that he may abide with you for ever."

This was a relationship which Old Testament saints did not enjoy, but this holy privilege can be claimed by all of us now.

Let me cite one other passage in proof. Turn to 1 Cor. 6:19, 20. Before we read it, answer this question. What would you think might cause the Holy Spirit to leave a believer--if you are not convinced of this truth? Obviously it would have to be sin.

Was the Corinthian Church guilty of sin? They were not only guilty of sin; they were guilty of sins--gross sins! But, what does Paul say to them? The Holy Spirit has left you because of your sins? NO! (Read the verses.)

Now we are ready for our final question tonight.

III. In view of the fact that the Christian life is "the fruit of the Spirit," does it follow that SINCE I AS A CHRISTIAN AM INDWELT BY THE SPIRIT THAT I WILL, WITHOUT ANY RESPONSE ON MY PART, BEAR "THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT."

In other words, can I just be passive about this whole thing, and expect the Holy Spirit to be fruit in me?

The answer is, NO. I cannot be passive. But there are two parts to this answer.

A. In the first place, Paul wanted the Galatians to know that there is a power within us which is always opposed to any and everything that the Holy Spirit may be attempting to do. He calls it, "the flesh."

Read Gal. 5:17.

What is "the flesh"? It is that old nature in me, that nature which delights in sin, that despises the things of God. Before I became a Christian, this was all I had in me. But when I became a Christian and the Holy Spirit came to dwell in me, then war started. The "flesh" may have it respectable parts, but it is, nevertheless, opposed to God.

Read Rom. 8:7, "Because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be." (This is ASV.)

So, now I see that I have a twofold problem. The fruit that I desire I cannot produce because it is "the fruit of the Spirit," but I also have "the flesh" in me which resists everything that the Spirit would do.

What is the answer to my dilemma?

B. Read Gal. 5:16, 18, 25.

If you and I "walk in the Spirit," we will "not fulfil the lust of the flesh," but also we will begin to experience "the fruit of the Spirit." The two are without question connected in this passage.

"Walk." What does it mean? No one can read Paul's epistles without coming to believe that this is the greatest word in the NT concerning the Christian life.

Note:

1. It is a life, not a solitary experience. People are looking for an experience that will solve all of their problems. There is none. The Spirit of God deals with us moment by moment.
2. It is a life totally different from that of the flesh. "These are contrary the one to the other."
3. It is a life in which we must place ourselves under the control, the directing influence, of the Holy Spirit. It is a life of yieldedness, dependence, faith.
4. It is a life in which I will be strengthened from within, but the pattern can always be seen in the Word of God.

Concl: What, then, is the power of the Christian life? It is a Person, the Holy Spirit. That is why we call it "the fruit of the Spirit." He not only delivers us from "the lust of the flesh," but He produces in us those qualities of life which please God, first of all. Then, they satisfy us. And, finally, they make us a blessing to each other, equipping us to win others to Christ. Cf. Acts 1:8.