

The fruit of righteousness

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In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul wrote, 'For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.' Eph 5:8-11.

In this passage, Paul identified two kinds of fruit that are the basis of two ways of walking in life. *The fruit of light* is the righteousness of God that is revealed in our lives as we walk in the light of the word that is ministered to us by Christ. Rom 1:16-17. 1Jn 1:7. The fruit of light is from the tree of life. Rev 2:7. Eph 5:9. *The fruit of darkness* is from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Eph 5:9,11. Walking in darkness leads to 'death'. Our salvation depends on recognising the difference between the fruit of light and the fruit of darkness. This is the focus of our meditation today.

The kingdom of darkness

Salvation is our deliverance from the kingdom of darkness, into the kingdom of the Son. Col 1:13. We are in darkness when we refuse the word of God that is proclaimed to us by those who are part of a presbytery, whom Christ sends to us. When we receive their word, it becomes a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. Psa 119:105. We walk in the light of this word and have fellowship with those who are ministering to us, and with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. 1Jn 1:3.

We remain in darkness when we walk by the sight of our eyes, and live according to our own understanding. God, who is Light, is the Father of lights. Jas 1:17. 1Pe 1:23. By His word, a person is delivered from the darkness that blinds their mind in relation to whom God has called them to be. Eph 3:14-15. A person who lives in darkness can only know themselves through the knowledge of good and evil. The Scriptures refer to this as 'living according to the flesh'. Rom 8:5-6.

With the knowledge of good and evil as their reference point, a person who lives according to the flesh endeavours to know themselves through self-assessment and by comparing themselves with others. The apostle Paul said that when they do this, they are not wise. 2Co 10:12. In other words, they are not living by the wisdom from above, which is found in the word of the cross. 1Co 2:2-5. The apostle James explained that they are, in fact, living by a wisdom from beneath. He described this wisdom as 'earthly, sensual, and demonic'. Jas 3:15.

Notably, James taught that envy and self-seeking are the fundamental motivations of those who live according to the wisdom from beneath. Envy and self-seeking give rise to confusion and to every evil thing. Jas 3:16. Paul described the confusion and evil that result from envy and self-seeking as 'the unfruitful *works* of darkness' which a person does in secret. Eph 5:11. Their works are done in secret because they are the expression of a projection that they have 'tailored' for themselves to conceal the shame of their nakedness and fear. We note, in this regard, the words of Jesus, who said, 'And this is the

condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their *deeds* were evil.' Joh 3:19.

Those who minister from the basis of selfish ambition in a church are motivated by envy, comparison and argument. Php 1:15-16. This is indeed a great darkness, because those who minister in this manner believe that their sight and initiatives belong to the light. Mat 6:23. Paul said that, because of this, their preaching is *insincere*. Php 1:16. The word is not true in them. They are deceived and, consequently, deceive others through their ministry.

In their confusion, they mistakenly believe that the pursuit of empowerment through connection with those within the presbytery, who have grace, is fellowship in the light. However, the prophet Daniel described this mode of relating and ministry as cleaving to those who have understanding with deceit, or intrigue. Dan 11:34.

The kingdom of the Son

How are we delivered from darkness? In the Son, we have redemption through His blood and receive the forgiveness of sins. Col 1:13. This is our beginning point. Under the influence of grace and supplication, as the word of the cross is preached to us, we are caused to look on Him whom we have pierced. Zec 12:10. As we see Christ crucified, we are able to accept our guilt in this matter. Also, we are delivered from our own self-righteous perspectives and understanding, which is a darkness from which we are unable to deliver ourselves. When we acknowledge this reality, we have become 'poor in spirit'. Mat 5:3.

We mourn as we acknowledge the injuries that our unfruitful works of darkness have caused to others, and have therefore caused to Christ. With godly sorrow, we cry out to God for forgiveness, and we make amends, where possible, for the impact of our sin upon others. 2Co 7:10.

The Holy Spirit enables our mourning to shift from godly sorrow to a fellowship in the travail of Christ. Rom 8:26. This is an amazing transaction! In this fellowship, we cease from judging ourselves and others. Our judgements cease because the other law, which is the basis of our judgements, is being removed from our heart through the circumcision of Christ. Rom 7:23. Col 2:11-12.

Significantly, we are able to forgive those who have sinned against us. The capacity for forgiveness is not natural to us. It is a measure of grace that can only be received as we meet Christ and are joined to the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. Unless we forgive those who have hurt us, and relinquish our presumed right for vengeance, we will not receive forgiveness from God for our own sins. Mat 6:14-15. Furthermore, we will find no relief from our pain; nor healing of our injuries.

The right to vengeance is an expectation that belongs to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. When we are *granted* repentance through grace and supplication, and *receive* faith by hearing God's word, we are delivered from this desire for vengeance. 2Ti 2:25-26. Rom 10:17. We are able to leave the matter with the Lord, who says to us, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay.' Rom 12:19.

As we are delivered from the right to vengeance, we receive the right to be born of the divine nature as sons of God. Joh 1:12-13. Receiving and expressing the divine nature as a son of God is dependent upon forgiving others by the grace that we receive from Christ.

In Him, we are not overcome by evil; rather, we are enabled to love our enemies. Rom 12:21. Mat 5:44. This is because love is becoming our nature.

In the kingdom of the Son, which is the light, we are growing as sons of the Father; the life of Christ is becoming our life; and we are enabled by the Spirit to minister this life to others. This is what it means to *bear the fruit of light*. Paul identified this fruit as 'all goodness, righteousness, and truth'. Eph 5:9. In today's meditation, we will specifically consider *the fruit of righteousness*.

The fruit of righteousness

The fruit of righteousness is the fruit that we are to bring forth through our fellowship in the offering of Christ. Paul's prayer was that his readers would be 'filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God'. Php 1:11. This is the fruit that is brought forth by those who hunger and thirst for righteousness as they partake of the communion elements. Mat 5:6. They are blessed because 'they are filled' with this fruit through their participation in the offering and sufferings of Christ, as members of His body. Mat 5:6. 1Co 10:16.

Christ was referring to the fruit of righteousness when He identified Himself as 'the Vine'. He said, 'I am the Vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can *do* nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.' Joh 15:5-6. We see that the fruit of the Vine, which is the fruit of righteousness, is what *we do* as we abide in Christ. They are the works of our sonship in Him.

As we noted earlier, bearing the fruit of righteousness depends upon our fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ. In his discussion on the fruits of righteousness, Paul, who was writing to the Philippians from prison, testified, 'My chains are in Christ.' Php 1:13. His chains and imprisonment were his point of participation in the sufferings of Christ.

The fruit of Paul's fellowship in the sufferings of Christ was that the gospel was being proclaimed to, and even beyond, 'the whole palace guard'. Php 1:13. Paul called this 'the furtherance of the gospel'. Php 1:12. Notably, he said that through his chains, his brethren in the Lord were emboldened to speak the word without fear. Php 1:14. Even when others were cleaving to him with deceit, supposing to add affliction to his chains, he was able to rejoice that Christ was being preached. The works, for which Paul had been set apart by God, were being fulfilled through his chains in Christ, and all things were working together for good. Php 1:18. Rom 8:28.

Bearing the fruit of righteousness

In order to bear the fruit of righteousness, we must receive illumination. 'Illumination' means 'turning from darkness to the light'. The gifts of the Spirit are the manifestation and ministry of *exanastasis* life operating in the body of Christ. They bring illumination to us so that we can be delivered from the delusion, or darkness, of our fallen way. As we turn from our own way, the sufferings that we are experiencing under the judgement of God are commuted to *chastening* in Christ.

This is most important. Paul explained and demonstrated, 'No *chastening* seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it *yields the peaceable fruit of*

righteousness to those who have been *trained by it.*' Heb 12:11. Those who receive illumination, and are trained by the chastening of the Lord, put off the carnal desire for self-definition, which is a lameness. They make straight paths for their feet by walking in the pathway of offering that the word is illuminating to them. Heb 12:13. Importantly, they have fellowship with one another, with the presbytery, and with the Father and the Son.

The apostle James contrasted the works motivated by envy and self-seeking with the fruit of righteousness, writing, 'Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace'. Jas 3:16,18. He was explaining that the works of sonship are fulfilled through *offering*, which is the expression of love. We recall the words of Jesus, who said, 'Greater love has no-one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.' Joh 15:13. Evidently, the fruit of sonship is sown in peace when we lay down our lives to reveal others. This was Paul's mode. As we have already noted, he testified that through his chains his brethren became much more bold to speak the word according to their name as a son of God. Php 1:14.

To 'sow the fruits of righteousness in peace' means to 'proclaim, through testimony, the gospel of sonship that we have received in the light of fellowship'. To this end, we note the words of Paul, who wrote, 'How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "*How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!*" ' Rom 10:14-15.

The feet of those who bring good news are beautiful because they are shod with the gospel of peace. Eph 6:15. These are sons of God who are *walking in the light* of the word that they have received. Their testimony is sincere because it is the expression of who they are as a son of God in Christ.