



The tribe of Issachar understood the times and knew what Israel should do

Issachar Ministries UK seeks to be a people who understand the times, listen to the Lord and know what should be done

Resourcing for Prayer Network

Spiritual Guidelines

The Fruit of the Spirit (1)

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But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Those who belong to Christ have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other. Galatian 5.22

This list of virtues are not gifts which we can receive from the Holy Spirit as is sometimes believed - but they are rather the fruit which those who have received the Spirit (Rom 8:9-11) should display in their lives.

Action Needed

When we receive the Spirit we '*crucify the flesh*' and live by the Spirit. Galatians 5. 19 - 21 (just prior to this lovely passage) clearly list the acts of the sinful nature which need to be rejected. In the natural order the flesh destroys fellowship; but when the Christian permits the Spirit to operate properly in their lives, this is reversed, so that the Spirit creates fellowship, unity, and holiness. '*So, my brothers and sisters, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God*' (Romans 7.4). This requires an active effort on our part.

Harvesting the Fruit

In Matthew 7.16 we are told '*By their fruit you will recognize them*'. And then in Matthew 12.33 we read '*Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit*'. And in Luke 6.43: '*No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit*'.

Different Perspectives

J. R. W. Stott sees in these nine virtues three groups of three:

- attitudes to God,*
- attitudes to others,*
- and attitudes to self.*

while J. B. Lightfoot sees

- dispositions of the mind,*
- qualities governing human relations*
- and principles of conduct.*

This is the 'fruit' that is evident in the Spirit-filled believer and it is the distinctive mark of a good or bad harvest. Good Fruit is the ultimate aim at any harvest. But to attain it proper care has to be taken during cultivation so that we can all yield good fruit in season (Psalm 1.3). Luke's parable of the vineyard (13.6) is apposite when the owner '*went to look for fruit on it but did not find any*'. But neither do we want to ripen into bad fruit in the basket in the prophetic picture in Amos 8.1.

Faith and Works

Although faith does not come from works, works should certainly be the outcome of faith. James emphasises the importance of works (2.14 - 26) '*faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead*'. Colossians 1.10 adds to this '*so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God*'. The book of Proverbs adds two extra thoughts '*The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and the one who is wise saves lives*'. (11.30). '*From the fruit of their lips people are filled with good things, and the work of their hands brings them reward.*' (12.14).

No Fruit?

Both Matthew (3.9) and Luke (3.9) say '*The axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire*'. Matthew 3 also exhorts us to '*Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham*'. Hosea (14.2) reminds us that we all need to repent '*Forgive all our sins and receive us graciously, that we may offer the fruit of our lips*'.

But some pruning is necessary for new life to grow. '*He cuts off every branch in me that bears no and fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful*' (John 15.2). That passage goes on to remind us that we have been chosen and appointed '**to bear fruit - fruit that will last**'. In other words to make disciples who can also be Ambassadors for him.

Good Fruit

Those who trust in the Lord '*they will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.*' Jeremiah 17.8

The vision of the future in Revelation 22 shows a tremendous harvest of fruit '*On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month*'.

A final note - fruit is singular so we need to show all the virtues and not be selective. But although the gifts are not seen in isolation from each other in practice we will spend the next few issues looking at each one in turn.

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