

1. “By Their Fruit...” (1Q 2010—The Fruit of the Spirit)

Biblical material: Matt. 7:20, Luke 13:7–9, John 11:4, 12:28, 15:1–10, 2 Tim. 3:5.

Quotes

- The fruit of the Spirit is not excitement or orthodoxy: it is character. *G. B. Duncan*
- Have you ever noticed the difference in the Christian life between work and fruit? A machine can do work; only life can bear fruit. *Andrew Murray*
- Through the Holy Spirit we are restored to paradise, led back to the Kingdom of heaven, and adopted as children, given confidence to call God “Father” and to share in Christ’s grace, called children of light and given a share in eternal glory. *St. Basil*
- Walking in the light is not only characterized by the absence of sin but equally importantly by the presence of love. Those who remain (abide) in Christ cannot fail to display the fruit of the Spirit, in a Christ-like character. *David Jackman*
- Words are like leaves; and where they most abound, Much fruit of sense beneath is rarely found. *Alexander Pope*

Questions

What is the main point of determining “by their fruit”? What does this say about the role of evidence in making decisions? What is the difference between evidence and claims? How is the fruit of the Spirit characterized? Why are actions so important? How does all this fit into the context of the great controversy over the character of God?

Bible discussion

Trees bear fruit according to their nature (see Matt. 7:20). That’s a fundamental principle, and one that is essential in examining what kind of spiritual fruit Christians bear. Similarly there is the expectation that there will be fruit (ref. Luke 13:7-9). A fruitless fruit tree is a waste of space... Fruitless branches are cut off, while fruitful branches are pruned to increase their fruitfulness (John 15:2). The fruit must be right and true—not some kind of fake fruit (2 Timothy 3:5).

Comment

“To keep His commandments, is to love. To love God and to love each other, something that cannot be commanded. To bear fruit, that is, the fruit of the Spirit - love, joy, peace and other wonderful things that cannot be commanded.

“1 Corinthians 13; that’s keeping the Commandments. Being patient, kind, not insisting on having one’s own way. Not even being irritable. I mean, think of living in a society where people all behave like that. Why would anyone want to do away with the Ten Commandments? If everybody lived up to the Ten Commandments, we’d be perfectly safe, perfectly free; everybody behaving like this. And you know what it is people want to get rid of—it’s that Number Four, as we call it, the Sabbath Commandment—which is observed

like a servant by many. But actually, its purpose is to remind us of the truth about our powerful and friendly God.

“God is a friendly God, and He will save all friendly people. Why only friendly people? I think it’s just because Heaven is a friendly place, and God is a friendly God who presides over the universe.

“And so in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” Gentle Jesus, meek and mild, will always run His government the way He did during the three and a half years that He was here.

“‘But,’ you say, ‘it didn’t work very well.’ That’s right. Because people were not very meek. It’s only safe for God to run the universe the way Jesus presided over His Kingdom when He was here among us for three and a half years, which is to admit only meek people.

“Now, meek does not mean weak. Many misunderstand meekness for weakness. Moses, the meekest of all men, was a very powerful person. Gentle Jesus, meek and mild, is the all-powerful Creator of the universe. These meek people are also called peacemakers and merciful, in the Sermon on the Mount, and other gentle things. It’s safe to have them around, because the Law of Love is written in their hearts. And there’s no need to post the Ten Commandments on the walls of the New Jerusalem. Even Number Ten is in their hearts. They not only don’t do anything wrong; they don’t even want to. *A. Graham Maxwell, Servants or Friends, Tape #9.*

Ellen White Comments

As long as time shall last, the wheat will be found among the tares, and the tares among the wheat. By their fruit they will be known. The desire of the disciples was to be with Christ. “To whom,” said they, “shall we go?” Shall we go back to seek counsel of the formalist? We cannot understand why so many go away. The thought arose in their minds that Christ had made a mistake in speaking words that would offend. These disciples, they thought, might have been held if he had not spoken so decidedly in regard to partaking of his flesh and blood. “But,” said they, “shall we leave the great Teacher? The scribes and Pharisees have dealt most unfairly with Christ. Shall we take sides with them in lifeless formalism, in teaching for doctrine the commandments of men? Shall we teach the tradition of the elders?” {HM, June 1, 1897}

But “by their fruit,” Christ declares, “ye shall know them.” The lesson that we are to learn is that whenever the counsel that God chooses to send is neglected, it will certainly place man in a position of distrust and suspicion. If he does not thoroughly reform the defects in his character, if he does not die to self, he will separate farther and farther from righteousness and truth.

We need not be surprised if we pass through a similar experience. Men who do not make Christ their all and in all, but have a superficial faith, will not understand the words of Christ. Many unite themselves with Christ expecting to secure some temporal advantage, but the Gospel requirements offend them. Not having united with Christ to do the will of God, they have no spiritual life. Had they received his word, they would have had understanding. Said Christ: “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself. He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory; but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.” {ST, July 15, 1897}

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