

19 Fruit of the Spirit for the Physical Area of Life

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The fruit of the Spirit is not something practiced or applied--it is a result of the appropriation of knowing and accepting who we are in Christ. Most Christ followers have to memorize, practice, and work to replicate the manifestations of the Spirit. Whereas, indwelt Christians (those who have the life of Christ living in them) don't replicate, but apply a resource that already exists in them--the very life of Jesus.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23).

This passage reminds us what it looks like to have the Spirit's work demonstrated through the life of the indwelt Christian. This is perhaps the evidence of the life of Christ being freed up in the child of God. We find throughout Scripture that this fruit is the chief manifestation and evidence of life within. This does not mean that a person who does not have this evidence is not loved and accepted by his/her Savior. But it is evidence he/she is doing the doing and not Christ within.

"Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified" (1 Corinthians 9:25-27).

One of the key manifestations of the fruit of the Spirit is self-control. When humans compete in earthly sports, they work to achieve accolades from other humans. Whereas, with indwelt Christians, we are to mix our faith (of Christ in us) with works, in order to achieve a reward that is registered in heaven--eternal weight of glory. Therefore, we are to run our earthly race in such a way that we are focused on disciplining our body to make it our slave--NOT the other way around. If we don't have this as our focus, we weaken our testimony by "disqualifying" ourselves before a very observant world. Most of the time, we indwelt Christians are the only heavenly view unbelievers have of our Savior and Father. Due to this reality, we need to enslave our bodies for the purpose of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Keep in mind that unsaved people have the ability to discipline their bodies, but they have no power to enslave their bodies to Christ within--because Christ isn't present within them. The twist is that unbelievers use their bodies for proof of being their own god; whereas, the children of God demonstrate that their bodies are subject to their Master and Husband--Jesus Christ. Biblical self-control, however, is "of the Spirit" and not "after or in the flesh." What is the significance of this?

With indwelt Christians, the Spirit's self-control is evidenced in their eating, drinking, resting, breathing, sexual activity, working, cleansing, use of their five senses, and most importantly-- how they spend their money.

It would seem that the Spirit's self-control basically must have to do with inward motivation through the life of Christ. For what purpose (or to what end) do we control, govern, and discipline our body's activities if it is not Christ providing the self-discipline in and through us? For if it is not Christ who does the doing, our self-life is sure to steal the glory of such fruit. If it is for anything other than the sake of Christ Jesus and the furthering of the kingdom of God here on earth and in heaven, it is simply the indwelt Christian "walking after the flesh (self-effort)."

"Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:5-8).

The application of self-discipline is difficult, if not impossible, for a believer to appropriate if Christ is not revealing His life in him/her. We cannot apply all diligence unless it is united with the faith that He Himself invests in us. We can't even muster up faith without His life doing the manifestation in us. Moral excellence is the result of Christ as Life, NOT the practice. Once we allow His Life to flow through our mortal beings, we can have the knowledge (mind) of Christ to function effectively in self-control. Then, and only then, can perseverance have its perfect way in us to perform godliness, kindness, and divine love. These qualities of His Life are in us and are increasing in effectiveness as long as we keep first things first.

Godship (playing god) has a major effect on the appropriation of these life truths. If the believer uses his/her "willpower" to practice the fruit of the Holy Spirit--self is sure to be glorified. The end result is more rejection from self and others, when the flesh fails him/her in such self-life performance. Believers who practice instead of manifest are in need of repentance; for without true repentance--there is NO permanent change of character. But once repentance occurs, identification in Christ can be lived out and reconciliation can be applied without any effort on our own--but through Christ. He will reconcile with others according to His efforts within us.

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