

Galatians 5:22-26

Gal 5:22 (NKJV) **But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,** ²³ **gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.** ²⁴ **And those *who are Christ's* have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.** ²⁵ **If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.** ²⁶ **Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.**

Now, as we begin to study this amazing passage, the first word that we want to look at is the word “**but**”. It really is a very important little conjunction because what it does is immediately create a contrast with something that was previously stated. It is called an adversative conjunction which simply means that it is used to express a contrast between the immediate clause and the one preceding it. You could almost think of it as an “adversarial conjunction” in that that which is being contrasted is like an adversary to the other. In the Greek grammar, there are many different kinds of conjunction – each having a specific goal. So, Paul is drawing attention to the fact that what he is about to say is in complete contrast to what he has just said. In v19-21, Paul did not have one good thing to say – not one word. However, every word in v22-23 is completely different and opposite from what was just said in the previous passage. There is no comparison, no similarity, no likeness, no resemblance whatsoever in the two passages. It is almost like you are reading from two different books. What Paul previously said is as bad as can be imagined, and what he is about to say is as good as can be imagined. Contrasts are very important because what they do is provide distinct differences and disparities that cannot be ignored. If I said “You can buy that if you want, but I know from personal experience that it is a rip-off”, it should be something that gains your immediate attention. Just the fact that I used the word “but” should receive your consideration. There is not one single thing that is even similar in these two lists. One list is bad, one list is good. One list is filled with sinful and ungodly attributes, and one list is filled with godly and spiritual attributes. They are adversarial to each other.

The second word that we want to look at is the word “**fruit**”. It is the Greek word “*karpos*”. In this context, the clear implication is that it refers to the effect and the result of God’s work in a person’s life.¹ It is very important to understand that fruit is something that is always apparent – both good fruit and rotten fruit. For instance, we may talk about the “**fruit of our lips**”. [Hebrews 13:15](#) says,

Heb 13:15 (NKJV) **Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.**

What the author is addressing is the actual praise that we give or do not give to God. It is an audible fruit, an audible evidence. [Romans 6:22](#) speaks of spiritual fruit when it says,

Ro 6:22 (NKJV) **But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.**

I.e., spiritual fruit is visible, noticeable, discernible, and it is “holy fruit”. It is fruit that honors God, that glorifies Christ, and that reflects the ongoing sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. This is really a very important reality to appreciate. Why? It is because spiritual fruit is the evidence of spiritual life. At some point in every legitimate believer’s life there has to be the evidence of God’s work and of His

¹ Zodhiates, 820.

spiritual life in that individual. Many churches have made what I personally believe to be a grave and eternal mistake in trying to convince people that they are saved who most likely are not saved just because they had some spiritual experience many, many years ago that for the most part had no ongoing impact on their life. There is no meaningful evidence of them really being born again or being a new creation in Christ. There is no real evidence of the ongoing sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in their life. When you look at their life, nothing spiritual really jumps out at you. They are religious outwardly, but not spiritual inwardly. In genuine salvation, there has to be the evidence of genuine spiritual fruit in their life. It has to be there. I realize and fully understand that during certain seasons of the year that fruit is dormant and that it is not growing. However, I do not believe that to be a meaningful analogy to compare with spiritual fruit in a person's life. The Holy Spirit is always working in our lives, always developing His graces and His life in the believer. I understand that it is a lifetime work, and that is good, but that does not mean that we only grow and bear fruit in seasons. It would not be meaningful for a believer to only be kind three months out of twelve, or to only attend their church every once in a while. It would not be very indicative of spiritual development or spiritual fruit for a professing believer to always be angry, or for them to generally have a backbiting tongue and critical spirit of others. None of that is indicative of genuine spiritual development. What it is indicative of is the absence of spiritual fruit. [Ephesians 5:9](#), speaking of spiritual fruit, says the following,

Eph 5:9 (NKJV) **(for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth),**

Stated another way, when the Holy Spirit is involved in someone's life, there is “**goodness, righteousness, and truth**” that is being displayed in them and through them. God is doing good things in them, helping them to do that which is holy and righteous, and He is guiding their life with His truth. Jesus made this amazing statement in [Matthew 7:17-18](#) when He said,

Mt 7:17 (NKJV) **Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor *can* a bad tree bear good fruit.**

In the context, he is addressing false prophets, but the principle still holds for those who profess Christ. [Philippians 1:11](#) reiterates this when it speaks of the “**fruit of righteousness**”.

Php 1:11 (NKJV) **being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.**

The Scriptures are clear that those who walk in darkness and are unsaved cannot produce spiritual fruit. For instance, [Romans 7:5](#) declares,

Ro 7:5 (NKJV) **For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death.**

[Ephesians 5:11](#) says,

Eph 5:11 (NKJV) **And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose *them*.**

Whenever we see physical fruit on a physical tree, what we know is that that fruit is attached to the tree. In biblical language, **when we see spiritual fruit in a person's life, we know that that person is attached to the true vine which is Christ.** So, if there is never any meaningful spiritual fruit being

developed, it really should raise a red flag for us. In essence, genuine spiritual fruit is the visible expression of the Holy Spirit's power working inwardly and invisibly in the believer. The character of the spiritual fruit as provided in [Galatians 5:22-23](#) is the evidence of the character that is producing it. Listen to what Jesus said in [John 15:16](#) speaking specifically of His disciples,

Jn 15:16 (NKJV) You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Zodhiates, Spiros. *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*. Revised Edition, 1993. Chattanooga, Tennessee: AMG Publishers, 1992.