

Fruit and Gifts of the Holy Spirit

It is essential to clearly understand the fundamental difference between the two expressions. 'Fruit' is the natural result of an inner principle of life brought forth through a process of constant growth. 'Fruit' requires time to develop and comes to perfection with the help of many external factors like water, light, sun, etc.

In comparison, 'gifts' can come through the liberal actions of a giver. They are usually found in a completed condition even though their use can be made more perfect through the recipient in the course of time, e.g. when someone receives a camera as a gift. The quintessence of our present observation is that 'fruit' comes gradually from inside, whereas 'gifts' come all at once from an outer source. This is only a rough definition, but it helps to clarify the difference that is to be made between the two expressions.

The fruit of the Spirit, therefore, appears as an expression and result of a godly life which was given to the believer when he was born again. The fruit may show almost instantly in some characteristics, but will generally

only appear gradually through the process of 'growing in grace'. Its development is promoted through external means of grace like Christian fellowship, spiritual service, external circumstances, but especially through the reconciliation of the soul with God. This 'fruit' has an ability for growth during the entire period of Christian life and, from that point of view, a constant growth in holiness should be taking place.

In comparison, the gifts of the Spirit can be given suddenly at any stage of the believer's life. The New Testament shows clearly that a gift was given to some believers when they first received the Holy Spirit. Other gifts were imparted at various turning points of the Christian walk (i.e. 1.TIM 4:14 - most likely due to Timothy being chosen for spiritual service - ACTS 16:1-3). Again, other gifts could be desired and asked for at any time (1.COR 12:31 and 1.COR 14:13).

The promise of the gifts of the Holy Spirit therefore appears to be unrelated to the maturity of the believer in the 'growth of grace', providing, of course, that the person in question is counted worthy of them by the

Lord. They do not primarily arise out of the inward life but are sovereign acts of a great Giver.

Love is not a spiritual 'gift'.

The first and foremost 'fruit' of the Spirit is love. This Godly love, manifested through a life that is wholly given to the Spirit of Christ, is so wonderful that we have the impression that Paul describes the ideal Christian when giving an entire chapter (1.COR 13) to its praise.

We want to be entirely clear about the fact that love is a 'fruit' rather than a 'gift'. In 1. Corinthians 14:1 it is separated from the spiritual gifts. It is quite unscriptural to say: "I am seeking for love, the greatest of all gifts." Many speak like this, but love is not mentioned amongst the nine gifts of the Spirit in 1. Corinthians 12:8-11. Instead of expecting that the character described in 1. Corinthians 13 falls into the heart suddenly and fully developed as a completed gift from God, we should rather understand that it is the fruit of the effect of a Godly principle from within. It will only be brought to perfection through a life of intimate fellowship with the Lord.

It is important to note two significant facts regarding the relation of 'gifts' and 'fruit':

- a) Nine gifts are mentioned in 1. Corinthians 12:8-11, and nine kinds of fruit in Galatians 5:22.
- b) The large chapter about love (1.COR 13) is planted between the two most important chapters about the spiritual gifts and forms an essential part of the subject described therein.

The first point teaches us that gifts and fruit should keep each other in balance. The second fact shows us that they are tightly knitted to

gether. When the apostle writes: "*But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.*" (1.COR 12:31), he does not intend to indicate that we should neglect the spiritual gifts. He admonishes us to create a balance and undertakes a correction of spiritual values. The greatest thing of all is the increasing resemblance with Christ; and it is a grave error to think that 'gifts' could take the place of 'fruit'.

Spiritual Gifts without Love are of No Value

Paul emphatically explains this in the first verses of 1.

Corinthians 13. He describes spiritual gifts in their highest form - and then destroys the whole picture with one blow! The gifts of speaking in tongues, prophecy, knowledge or faith all come under his rod of chastisement. All the explanations concern those who used these gifts and did not have love. It is a stirring passage. Without doubt, it has to be of utmost importance for all who claim the experience of Pentecost to be theirs.

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