

Galatians 5:16-26

I remember there was a peach tree next door when I was young. My neighbor occasionally shared his fruits with me. Those peaches were delicious. They were big, juicy and sweet. The size is like a big orange or a tiny grapefruit. I always wanted more. Years later, I had my garden with a peach tree. That peach tree grew out tiny peaches like the size of an apricot and they had no sweetness. There is a difference between good fruit and bad fruit. Today, we are going to learn about spiritual fruit from Galatians. Fruit can similarly be expressed as good one from the Spirit, and bad one from the sinful nature.

Book of Galatians is a letter from apostle Paul to the Christians in Galatia. The churches in Galatia were formed with both converted Jews and converted gentiles. A group of Jewish Christians believed that a number of the ceremonial practices of the OT time were still binding. Paul wrote this letter to correct them. The key point of the letter is justification by faith alone. All those that have faith in God are justified and are children of God, heirs of Abraham (Gal. 3:23-29). The later part of the book covers teachings on holy living while we have freedom in Christ. Chapter 5 covers the teaching on spiritual fruit.

### 1) Bad fruits

The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19-21). These three verses in chapter 5 listed the bad characters (fruits). These sinful acts are bad, but do we commit these behaviors sometimes? Be watchful and turn ourselves to the Holy Spirit.

### 2) Good fruits

Now let's study Gal. 5:22-23, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law." Holy Spirit produces this set of characters in us when we yield to Him.

- a) Some Christians categorize the individual characters within this set of fruit as internal (self) and external (to others). Characters that are internal are like joy, peace, faithfulness and self-control. Only when one submitted to

God and let the Holy Spirit work within, one can have joy and peace inside and the self-control to resist sinful nature. At the same time, one can express them externally to others such as love, kindness and goodness.

b) Some Christians like to categorize them as:

1. toward self internally: love, joy, peace
2. toward others horizontally: forbearance, kindness, goodness
3. towards God vertically: faithfulness, gentleness, self-control

Some suggested the first triad is towards God whereas the 3<sup>rd</sup> triad is towards self.

Of course, there is no clear separation in many cases. For example, love shall be toward oneself, others and God. Love is the first one listed as key virtue. Regardless how one wants to categorize them, all these characters are important for each Christian to have, act and display for the glory of God.

### **3) What kind of fruit are you?**

"For there is no good tree which produces bad fruit, nor, on the other hand, a bad tree which produces good fruit. For each tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they pick grapes from a briar bush. The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart (Luke 6:43-45). So, what kind of fruit are you, good or bad? We need to self-examine ourselves often. The Holy Spirit can convict us if we are in tune with Him. Take action to change those evil areas by the power of the Holy Spirit.

### **4) What kind of fruit do you want to grow?**

The good one! This chapter of Galatians listed the nine spiritual characters. Which spiritual character/s are you weak at? Which spiritual character/s do you want to be strengthened? Pray about it. Your close Christian friends and mature Christians around you like church pastor can give you suggestion/feedback. Once decided, seek God and keep connected with Him, then He can help you. "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing" John 15:5.

May God help you in your spiritual fruit journey so that your characters and actions can bring glory to God.