

## Sermon – 18/01/2009 am

### Light Yields Fruit

Study Text: Ephesians 5:9-10

One of the wonders of creation is the chemical process which occurs in green plants called photosynthesis. 'Photo' means light. In this process carbohydrates or sugars are synthesised from the simple elements, carbon dioxide and water. These sugars fuel the growth of plants and their production of fruit. We are dependant on this fruit for our food. All we eat is ultimately sourced from this amazing process of photosynthesis. And this simple process depends upon light. Without light a plant will not grow nor will it produce fruit.

In a similar way the Christian will not grow nor produce fruit in their life without spiritual light, the light of Jesus Christ. Those who cut themselves off or just wander from the light will stop growing and will bear no fruit – at least not the fruit of the light. Some Christians find coming to church a burden or just boring. Have you ever seen such a person growing in the grace of Jesus Christ? Have you noticed a man who stops reading his Bible suddenly become a more lovingly and kind man?

The apostle Paul may not have been up on the need for plants to be in the light in order to grow but he was certain that Christians need to be in the spiritual light in order to grow and mature in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are not to remain as children, as babes in Christ but to grow up in Christ. We are to grow and bear fruit.

The metaphor of a tree seems to be in the mind of Paul as it was with Jesus when he spoke about a good tree and a bad tree in Matthew 7:15. A tree bears fruit. It bears fruit that is true to type. A good tree bears good fruit and a bad tree bears bad fruit. You can tell a tree by its fruit. Even so, for the good tree to bear good fruit it must remain in the light. Without light it will not grow and produce fruit. Jesus put it slightly differently when he said remain in the vine.

### Fruit of Light

Most translations have 'fruit of the light' although some old MSS have 'Spirit' instead of 'light' in verse 9. In Galatians Paul wrote of the fruit of the Spirit but the context here does point to light. *Walk as children of light* is what the apostle is urging upon the Ephesians. You were once in darkness, you were once full of darkness because of sin. Your conscience, your spiritual compass was corrupted by sin. Born in sin your understanding was darkened and you could not please God. *Without faith it is impossible to please God* (Hebrews 11:6).

But when you heard the gospel and the Spirit of God illuminated your heart you became light in the Lord. You sprang to life as it were. That is not the subject of this passage. Paul dealt with being made alive in Christ back in chapter 2. Here he is dealing with how we grow now that we are alive in Christ. He is dealing with how we live the Christian life.

What does it mean to walk as children of light? It means that we grow and that we produce fruit, fruit that is in keeping with who we are and fruit that is pleasing to God. We are no longer involved in the *unfruitful deeds of darkness* (5:11). These deeds of darkness are done

to satisfy self not God, they are done to satisfy the old sinful nature or the flesh. They are centred upon greed or covetousness.

The fruits of the light that Paul mentions in this brief aside are *goodness, righteousness and truth* (5:9). We will look at these in turn. The rich young ruler came to Jesus calling him 'good teacher'. Jesus picked him up on this adjective saying no none is good but one, that is God (Luke 18:19). God is good. There is nothing bad or evil in God. Jesus the Son of God is also good. He lived a sinless life.

Goodness is seen above all in Jesus Christ. He went about doing good... for God was with him (Acts 10:38). Jesus did not act selfishly or do harm to anyone. He went about healing the sick, feeding the poor, releasing those in bondage and comforting those who mourned. He did not turn his back on anyone who came to him. We are often slow to help those in need or we turn a blind eye to them.

We are often quick to condemn others. This is not a fruit of goodness. Jesus did not condemn. He said he did not come *to condemn the world but that the world through him might be saved* (John 3:17). Through his love and goodness Jesus shone a light into this dark world. Children of light are attracted to this light but children of darkness flee this light of Jesus. Do you walk in the light of Jesus, seeking to bring forth the fruit of goodness that you see in his life?

Goodness is a fruit of the light or of the Spirit. It is not a work that brings light. Many people live good lives in the hope that they will be smiled upon by God and get a reward for being good. There are many who give to the poor and help the needy – some even from a generous heart. Most however do it to make them feel better. They set up foundations and trusts to support a good cause but notice the name they attach.

Many good works are done to satisfy the old nature. There are many good pagans in this world. Paul is not concerned about such people. They are still in darkness and their hearts will one day be exposed to the light of Jesus Christ. Paul is writing to believers who have enlightened hearts and who are walking in the light trying to please God not their own conscience or ego.

Righteousness carries the notion of justice. In fact both are the same word in Greek. Righteousness is a legal term. It refers to living in obedience to the law. It is not unusual to hear of good men, good pagan men getting into trouble for breaking the law. Prominent benefactors may be caught cheating on their tax.

A righteous person is one who upholds the law – the law of the land and, in the case of a child of God, the law of God. Noah was a righteous or just man who walked with God. This was not why God saved him, but because of God's grace he walked in this manner.

In the New Testament, Cornelius was an outwardly good man who gave alms to the poor. He was a devout man who feared God. He also prayed to God. All this did not make him a Christian, but God did hear his prayers and sent Peter to tell him about Jesus. If Cornelius was already right with God there was no need for Peter to tell him about Jesus. He was good but not righteous before God until he believed in Jesus.

Paul prayed for the Philippians that they would be *filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Christ Jesus* (Philippians 1:11). He prayed for them to grow in love, love for God and love for one another. He prayed that they would be discerning as to what is pure and without offence as they waited for the coming of Jesus. Paul would have prayed the same prayer for you if you were in the church at Philippi. Does such a prayer affect the way you live?

Truth is the third of the fruits of the light. This list is not exhaustive as a glance at Galatians 5:22 shows. It is more of a summary of the types of fruit found on this tree of life. It is important to see these fruits as growing on this tree and not just stuck on in a superficial manner. Martin Lloyd-Jones writes ‘the life of a Christian should never give the impression that he has imposed a certain number of things on himself. His life is comparable to a tree whereas the life of cults and false religionists resembles a Christmas tree’.

We must be alert to this error. It is all too easy to start hanging fruits on our tree, especially when we are in certain company, so that we look good. Sometimes these fruits are imposed upon us so that we will conform to man’s ideas, not necessarily to God’s. There are those who demand that you do this or do that if you call yourself a Christian. You must wear certain clothes, eat certain food, work in certain places, and send your children to certain schools. There is always a tendency for men to impose their own rules upon a fellowship but true fruit is not imposed – it always comes from within outwards.

Truth is foundational to the life of a believer. What is truth? Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. That is why truth is a fruit of the light. If we are in Christ we will walk in the truth. We will not be living a lie. We will not be involved in plotting against others to bring them down. Jesus never plotted against those who hated him. He never spoke against them behind their backs. Jesus spoke the truth to their face. ‘You hypocrites’ he called those who said one thing and did another, those who twisted the law for their own benefit.

Are you walking as a child of the light? Walk no longer in darkness. You have the Spirit of Jesus to guide you into all truth and righteousness. You have the word of God. You have access to the Father through Jesus Christ. So find out what is pleasing to God. This is your responsibility as child of the light. Do not remain a baby but grow up and bear fruit for the Lord. With your new spirit – illuminated heart, with your transformed mind, learn to discern what is pleasing to God and do it (Romans 12:2).

*Rev. Dr. Dennis K. Muldoon*