

CHAPTER 6

Gifts and Fruit

In some Spanish cities orange trees grow along the sides of the streets. At certain times of year one sees the bright oranges hanging on them. Probably people hang lights and presents on them at other times, as are hung on Christmas trees. Do you see the difference? It is the very nature of a branch that is part of an orange tree to bear fruit, but gifts are hung on it by others. Gifts are not medals for work well done. Some of God's gifts are available to us if we will humble ourselves, stoop down and pick them up. Others are given in the sovereignty of God who makes the sun to rise on the evil and on the good. (Matt. 5v45) Fruit come from abiding in Christ (John 15v1-8)

In this Chapter we will consider the fruits and gifts of the Spirit but firstly let us consider the greatest gift of all -the gift of eternal life." This is the message we have heard from Him and proclaim to you that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not live according to the truth; but if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus His son, cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1v2-9) "He came to His own home but His own people received Him not, but to all who received Him, who believed in His name, He gave power to become the children of God." (Jn. 1v12) "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6v23) "For God so loved the world that He gave His only son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life." (John 3v16)

"The word is near you on your lips and in your heart (that is the word of faith which we preach) because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your hearts that God has raised Him

from the dead you will be saved. For man believes with his heart and so is justified and confesses with his lips and so is saved." (Rom. 10v8-10) The Scripture says; "No one who believes in Him will be put to shame for everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved." (Rom. 10v13) *Aramaic Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall have life*

Are you saved? This question which is frequently asked in the Evangelical circles in which I grew up, is a question which I found does not communicate easily to Roman Catholics. Instead, I found that the Scriptural question, "Is Jesus Christ your Lord" does communicate and that just as it says in the preceding Scripture that:

1. We confess with our lips that Jesus is Lord
2. We believe in our hearts that God has raised Him from the dead
- 3_ We are saved

It is so easy to sing 'Jesus is Lord' or repeat a creed acknowledging His Lordship, but if person to person you are asked straight; "Please Confess that Jesus is Lord." Can you confess it face to face with someone else and mean it from your heart? Adult confession *not only by word but by action* (Luke 6:46 Matthew 7:21-23) of the of Lordship of Jesus is essential before we can receive the gift of eternal and the abundant life of Jesus came to give you and me. When we make this confession from our hearts, we are delivered from the kingdom of darkness and we are 'born again' into the family of God. No longer is God our 'great-great-great grandfather, He becomes our own Father. "We receive the spirit of Son ship when we cry Abba. Father it is the Spirit Himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God (Rom 8v14-17)

When people experience the dramatic transformation of the new they often say I've been saved — saved from a life without God— saved from the road to hell.

But there is more to it than this. It is not just a mere belief and blind faith. There is the witness of the Holy Spirit which comes into

our heart as Paul puts it: "In Him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation and have believed in Him were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit which is the guarantee of our inheritance...." (Eph. 1:14-14) It is interesting to note that Saint Patrick¹ in his profession of faith Trinity says: "He has poured out the Holy Spirit on us in abundance, the gift and guarantee of eternal life."

Did you receive the gift of the Holy Spirit when you believed?" (Acts 19:2) In the book of Acts, the receiving of the Holy Spirit was very important. There was concern in Samaria (Acts 8v14-18) because people who had been baptised had not yet received the Holy Spirit. On this and on other occasions, the manifestation of the Spirit was given to each and a difference was seen. Have you experienced the Spirit in your life? If you have not, I cannot tell you any better what to do than to obey Jesus as He says;" And I tell you, ask and it will be given you, seek and you will find knock and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks, it will be opened. What father among you if his son asks for a fish will instead of a fish give him a serpent! If you being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him." (Lk, 11v9-13)

Yes, we should ask for the Holy Spirit remembering that Jesus too, wants us to have the Holy Spirit for He said: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments, and I will pray the Father and He will give you another Counsellor to be with your forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. You know Him for He dwells with you and will be in you." (John 14v15-17) When we receive the Holy Spirit, we will know it. It is the power of God in our lives to be witnesses for Jesus. (Acts 1v8) As Jesus said; "He who believes in Me as the Scripture has said, out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water." "Now this He said about the Spirit which those who believed in Him were to receive...." (John 7v38, 39) "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness,

¹ Patrick in his own words by Joseph Duffy Veritas Publications Dublin 1975

faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, against such there is no law." (Gal. 5v20)

How can we experience these fruits? In this passage we see that they were called 'fruits of the Spirit', not fruits of determination or of sweet people. In other words, they come about by God's Spirit abiding in us and we in Him. God's Spirit can be compared with the sap flowing in a tree bringing leaves and fruit. It's so easy to read about the fruit of the Spirit and say; 'I must be more loving'. Only to find ourselves being less loving. It is so easy for us at times to say with Paul; "I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do." (Rom.7v9) Yet God has more for us than this. As we read on, Paul says; "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death.... For God has done....in order that the just requirements of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. To set the mind on the flesh is death but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace." (Rom. 8v1-6) As George Fox, the Founder of the Quakers said; "When we abide in the faith which Christ is author of, we will have peace and access to God, but if you look out from faith and from that which would keep you in the victory, and look after fleshly things or words, you will be brought into bondage to the flesh again. For the ministry of Christ Jesus and His teaching bringeth into liberty and freedom. The ministry that is of man and by man, which stands in the will of man, bringeth into bondage and under the shadow of death and darkness. Therefore, none can be minister of Christ Jesus but in the eternal Spirit which was before the Scriptures were given forth. For if they have not the first-fruit, they are none of His. If you walk in the Spirit and serve God in it, ye have liberty and victory over the flesh and his works, but if you quench the Spirit walk in the flesh and be servants of it, you lose the peace and freedom of God."²

Jesus, in John 15, gives us the beautiful picture of Himself being the Vine and that we are like the branches and He wants us to abide in Him

² George Fox's Journal extract from year 1647

and bear fruit and so prove to be His disciples so that our joy may be full.

Jesus Himself realised the need of abiding in the Father for He said;

"Truly, truly I say to you, the Son can do nothing of His own accord, but only what He sees the Father doing. For whatever He does the Son does likewise, for the Father loves the Son and shows Him all that He Himself is doing." (John 5v19, 20) Again Jesus says; "I can do nothing on My own authority; as I hear I judge and my judgment is just because I seek not My own will but the will of Him who sent me." (John 5v30)"My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me. If any man's will is to do His will, he shall know whether the teaching is from God." (John 7v16)"These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things a bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." (John 14v26)

To re-cap Jesus speaks of being the tree in John 15 and we the

Branches. Paul speaks of being grafted into the tree and remaining their by faith (Romans 11) It is the sap of the Spirit of Jesus flowing in us that enables us to bear fruit to the glory of God. It is His Spirit in us that enables us to be overcoming Christians. The Lord prunes our lives that they may bare more fruit and the branches which bear no fruit are taken away.

I can think of several people who are beautiful; their lives simply radiate love joy and peace and it is clear that the Holy Spirit has been flowing in their lives for years. Each one of us should experience more and more of the fruits of the Spirit as we draw closer to Jesus who said; "By their fruits you shall know them." (Matt. 7v20).

DO WE WANT THE GIFTS GOD HAS PREPARED FOR US?

How do we feel when you prepare with great effort a gift for someone you love and they reject the gift and throw it away and tell us

it is worthless? None of us feel good when that happens to us. Or think of

It the other way around: we see an array of things we would like and among them somethings we don't like. We try to pick what we want, but find there is an invisible barrier blocking the way. Finally we in desperation think we might as well have something as nothing so we accept the gifts we don't want. Suddenly in them we find the key that unlocks the door to the other gifts.

In 1965 I went to a Pentecostal Evangelist's meeting in Birmingham, England and there were some people speaking in tongues and swooning on the ground in front of me and it completely switched me off. In 1968, while visiting a college friend in Bristol, I went with him to the 'Breaking of Bread' meeting at his fellowship. There someone spoke in tongues and someone else gave an interpretation. There was such a sense of God's presence that one could not doubt that it was for real.

To put my 1971 experience, mentioned in Chapter 1, in other words:

I saw my need for the gifts of the Spirit listed in 1 Cor. 12v4-11, i.e. words of wisdom, words of knowledge, discernment etc. I saw too that I could hardly expect these gifts if I was grieving God by rejecting the gift of tongues. So I humbled myself and asked for prayer. Some people laid hands on me and prayed for me. They told me to speak whatever sounds came. It sounded stupid and unreal at first but afterwards I was much released to pray in that way in the name of Jesus and I just claimed the victory in His name when anything I was not happy about seemed to come out. Exciting things started happening in my life so that I have never doubted the value of praying in tongues. Often when I am discouraged, I find that I have not prayed in tongues much recently and I have noticed that this happens in other people's experience too. Remember to build yourselves up by praying in the Holy Spirit. (Jude v20) This, I feel, means praying in tongues and also the anointed prayer of faith which the Spirit gives in our own language.

The ability to pray in tongues is not a badge to say that one has arrived; nor is it a sign that everything is all right in one's life. It doesn't mean that one's denomination is all right either, for that matter. It is more like receiving a radio transmitter/receiver which we can switch on or off. When it is in use, it is real gut-level communication with God according to the will of God. This communication has been experienced by Christians over the centuries, for example: In his Confessions³, St. Patrick writes; "On yet another occasion I saw a person praying in me. I was as it seemed inside my body and I heard him over me, that is, over the inner man. There he was praying with great emotion. All this time I was puzzled as I wondered greatly who could possibly be praying inside me. He spoke, however, at the end of the prayer, saying that he was the Spirit. When I awoke I recalled the words of the apostle." "Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weakness for we do not know how to pray as we should but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep to be uttered, and He who searches the hearts of men knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God." (Rom. 8v26, 27) Paul says; "For if I pray in a tongue, my Spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. What am I to do? I will pray with the Spirit and I will pray with my mind also. (1 Cor. 14v15) I thank God that I speak in tongues more than you all." (1 Cor.14v18) Paul was a highly educated man. Sometimes I wonder if this was why he had to pray in tongues more than others in order to have a pure communication with the Father without his education getting in the way and so he could receive the living word from the Spirit to use as a sword. In my experience, I had to humble myself and be willing to receive the gift of tongues and use this prayer language before I was conscious of the other gifts of the Spirit working through me. (1 Cor. 12v4-11)

THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT (1 Cor. 12v4-10)

1. The utterance of Wisdom
2. The utterance of Knowledge

3. Faith
4. Healing
5. Working of Miracles
6. Prophecy
7. Ability to distinguish between spirits
8. Various kinds of tongues
9. The interpretation of tongues

These other of the Spirit are basically a gift from God ministering through one person to the person God intends them for. The person ministering the gift is only the channel through whom the gift operates rather than the possessor of the gift. Obviously faithful

Channels as used by God and people frequently used are sometimes thought of as having the gifts, but they are only channels and the gift is for the person the Lord is ministering to. As God's children move in His Spirit and Abide in Him, they should be open to seeing God's Spirit give gifts to others through them.

Eternal Life is for you. The witness of the Spirit is for you. Remember the Lord's word to the church. "Those whom I love, I reprove and chasten, so be zealous and repent. Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him and he with Me." (Rev. 3v19, 20) ASK JESUS IN NOW.