

Home Group study: week beginning 9th March 2020

Fruit of the Spirit: Goodness

On Sunday Simon Bagg challenged us with the question: what would we say if we only had 100 words a day to use? So what would those words be and why? (Don't feel you've all got to make it exactly 100; a small sample is fine. Though 100 is the *maximum* you're allowed!)

Read: Ephesians 5: 1-16, Genesis 1: 3-4

In verse 8 Paul urges us to 'live as children of the light'. He then talks (v9) about 'the fruit of light'. How does he describe 'the fruit of light'? Do you think the 'fruit of light' is the same thing as 'the fruit of the spirit' (Galatians 5: 22-23)? It was suggested last week that the fruit of the spirit are closely interlinked; can 'goodness', 'righteousness' and 'truth' be separated from each other? Or are they components of the one fruit that can't exist in isolation?

Understanding

It is notable that in Genesis 1 v3 the very first thing God speaks into being is light. What does Genesis 1 v4 say about light? (*Group leaders, please note there are two halves to that verse: both parts need to be discussed and understood.*) Is v4 significant in Paul's description of the 'fruit of light'?

Throughout the creation story we see this recurring phrase 'And God saw that it was good'. Simon suggested that there was a point in Genesis when everything stopped just being good. What was that point? How does that affect our ability to be 'good'?

Ephesians 5 v8 talks of a transformation in our lives. How is 'darkness' described in vv3-4? How serious do some of these products of darkness seem to us? How successful are we in avoiding those things? How serious are those things to God (vv5-6)? How are we advised (v7) to avoid them? What does it mean by 'being partners with them'?

Discuss how we can be 'very careful' (v15). The end of v16 seems to apply just as much to our time as to Paul's time. Do our 'evil days' make our attempts to put on goodness more or less difficult? Does it make it even more essential to try to obey this passage (and why)?

Application

Have a look at 2 Peter 1 3-8. What do we need to help us live good (godly) lives? How can we tap into God's divine power (v3)?

What is the starting point for goodness (v5)? What does goodness then lead on to? Does this seem like a natural progression? Do the qualities listed here sound familiar?

Interestingly they sound like the fruit that God creates in us through the Spirit, and in the Ephesians passage Paul, as we have seen, talks about 'fruit of the light'. Paul talks about goodness as a fruit of the Spirit and therefore a quality that God creates in us, and Peter says in v3 'His divine power has given us everything we need...' At the same time neither of them suggests we should just sit back and let the Spirit work these things out in us (see Ephesians 5 v8 as well as 2 Peter 1 v5). What does this suggest about the way God works in us? And how might we 'make every effort' to add these qualities to our faith?

There are plenty of good people in the world. But on Sunday Simon suggested that the intent behind good acts is different for the Christian from the intent behind good acts in a 'worldly' perspective. What might those differences be? (*There is a hint in 2 Peter 1 v8: don't overlook the eternal perspective.*) Discuss how we can ensure that our 'good acts' are acceptable to God and are not just things we do to make ourselves feel good.