

PEACE A FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT.

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Galatians v. 22, 24.

The text forms part of the practical improvement of his subject, which the apostle subjoins to his doctrine. Of that doctrine, as usual in his epistles, the great sum is "grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life." No where more peremptorily than in this epistle does the sacred writer assert the perfect freeness of grace; no where more clearly attribute our redemption to Christ, or more earnestly guard believers against all self-righteous pretensions. Yet, as is also true of his other epistles, the blessed privileges of the gospel of salvation are shewn to lead to holy living; and sanctification is represented as no less than justification the attendant of faith. In discoursing on the passage, in dependence on God's blessing, it may be profitable to consider the graces of the Christian as here enumerated at large; and secondly to fix attention on one of the fruits of the Spirit. That shall be—"Peace."

My first remark is, that being called "fruits," we are reminded that they are not the grounds of a sinner's justification, but the constituents of the character of the justified. The work of the Spirit is connected with the work of Christ, and presupposes it: He, the Comforter, does not speak of himself; nor does he act of himself. He is sent by the Father and the Son; and he comes, the witness of Christ, and the effective applier of his redemption. Observe, accordingly, how in the very body of this passage, the relation of the spirit to the Son is recognised; for in verse 24, they are said to be "Christ's" who overcome the flesh, or crucify it, with its affections and lusts.

Hence, 2ndly, we remark that as "fruits of the spirit," they are also fruits of Christ, as the vine, the tree of life, and suppose union to Him; since he only who is joined to the Lord, is one Spirit. And it is in virtue of more than a relationship to Christ as a Mediator, or Ransomer that believers possess these graces, or develop these fruits. It is in virtue also of vital relationship to him as a living and life-giving head. The second Adam is a quickening Spirit; and from him in whom all fulness dwells, "all the body by joints and bands, (Col. 2.), having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God."

3rd. We observe that as fruits of the Spirit, these graces and tempers transcend any resemblance of them to be found in natural men. They are different, as nature differs from grace. It is not to be denied that natural virtue may exhibit the goodly appearance of certain dispositions which are the same in name with certain fruits of the Spirit here enumerated. You will find men of loving temperament, charitable, and generous,—though strangers to the love that is of faith. You will find "meekness" characterising some who are not Christ's: you may find them "temperate:" there may also be men of faith, in the sense of "fidelity," (the meaning, some think, in which the word "faith" is, in this passage, to be understood.) Nay; it may even be admitted of some of the children of nature, that being so far happily constituted compared with most men, or having had the benefit of certain ameliorating and refining influences, they develop in their conversation and lives, a