

Passion-Fruit, Anyone?

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control...”

Ok! How many sermons and talks have you heard on this one? One of the things I love about the Word of God is that it reveals itself when our hearts are ready. AND, it is so multi-faceted...one verse can give one person peace of mind, another person strong conviction, and yet another person incredible insight and inspiration. It convicts, it teaches, it refreshes, it pierces, it encourages, and so on all at the same time. We've all had this experience with a Scripture verse at one time or another.

This is what happened to me this morning. As I was praying for peace and joy in a desperate tone of voice, an old conversation with a theologian friend of mine came to mind. I was telling him several years back about a stronghold in my life that I just couldn't shake. I said, "If I just had more self-control, I know I could overcome this thing." Then he said something I will never forget: "Laura, you can't just make yourself *have* more self-control; it is a fruit of the Spirit." He went on to try to explain it, and I sort of understood but couldn't grasp it fully. I knew that somewhere down the road this truth would come back to me, and it did.

As I was reading this morning, the Holy Spirit "sank in" that discussion from several years ago (YES, for some of us it takes years to get it!!!). Before the famous "fruit of the Spirit" verse comes this in verse 16: *"So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. **BUT IF YOU ARE LED BY THE SPIRIT, you are not under law.**"* Then it goes on to list all the acts of the sinful nature, only to then list the fruit of the Spirit. By the way, a few of the things on the sinful nature list are things that are totally acceptable by the world's standards today...discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, impurity & drunkenness, just to name a few... eek! Here's the jist of the whole passage, though, in the verses following: *"Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit."*

Oh, my goodness! Do you know what this means? We don't have to try anymore!!! The fruit of the Spirit is not a "to-do" list that we can check off...neither is it a vending machine with good works paid in, God's blessings poured out-- access to the fruit is within us, and as we live our lives in submission to Him, it is a by-product and result of His work in us. Unfortunately, though, when we do it our way--or worse yet, give in to the sinful nature, the fruit we have access to will not be produced in our lives until we repent and choose for Him to be in control. A side note, though: it's ok to ask for someone else to help you with an addiction or a stronghold. God is creative and will use many different tools to help us. Listen to His voice to tell you whether you need professional help or accountability with a sin struggle.

Do you want peace today? Live by the Spirit. Do you want to love your spouse or kids more? Submit to the Spirit. Do you want self-control over that habit or sin? Christ Jesus has already crucified this for you, and the Spirit will help you triumph over it. Whatever it is you are needing or wanting more of today, ask God to provide it for you or direct you to the right solutions through the power of the Holy Spirit. Humble yourself, profess that He is Lord, give up gratifying the desires of the sinful nature, submit yourself to Him---AND WATCH HIM PRODUCE A SWEET TASTE OF HIMSELF FOR YOU AND FOR OTHERS...He gave Himself up so that we could live this way -- it is His passion that we do so. "Passion"-Fruit, anyone?

Love you,

laura