

Questions on Fee, Chapter 10: *The Fruit of the Spirit*

1. Fee directs the reader to avoid the errors of two extremes in reading about the fruit of the Spirit. On one hand some read the fruit as things which will naturally appear in each individual as s/he becomes more like Christ; i.e., “[Paul] does not thereby intend passiveness on the part of the believer” (114, #1). The other error is to read them as a “list intended to regulate Christian behavior by rules of conduct” (115, #5). In between these is Christian life in which we are neither passive nor legalistic, but rather trust that the fruit will be miraculously borne out in our lives as we seek to walk in the way of Christ in love for one another (114, #1 again).

Do you know what Fee is getting at? How does this middle road play out in the daily life of the believer? What’s the point of the list if we are to assiduously avoid staring at it for fear of its becoming a “new law” (115, #5 again)?

2. Joy “characterizes a community who are walking in the Spirit” (top of 118). It flows not from our circumstances but from who we are in Christ and what he has done for us; our joy flows not from our “condition” but our “position” (118 first two pars.):

- *Adopted as God's children* (Ephesians 1:5)
- *A new creation* (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- *Having a right standing before God* (2 Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 1:7)
- *Freed from the authority of sin* (Colossians 2:11,12; Ephesians 2:1-7)
- *Separated from the world system* (Galatians 6:14; John 17:16; Ephesians 2:2,3)
- *Members in Christ's body* (John 17:21-23; I Corinthians 12:27)
- *Future inheritors* (1 Peter 1:3,4; Ephesians 1:11,14; Romans 8:16)
- *Having a unique role in God's plan* (Ephesians 2:10)

So we learn two things: To experience the joy of Christ, **surround yourself by the joyful community of Christ**; and **keep before yourself** not your dwindling 401k, endless sea of work, annoying and godless colleagues, the deteriorating global environment and expansionist tendencies of Russia, etc., but **who you are in Christ**.

How joyful are you? Is this advice you can see yourself implementing? How?

3. Fee points out that “peace” is not a sort of inner peace (though that may also come), but is a *shalom* of community (118), an absence of hostilities (119, 1st par.). As such it is contextual, so that in 1 Corinthians peace is blocked by unruly *charismata*; in 2 Thess it’s freeloaders; in Romans it’s divisions between Gentiles and Jews. Is there anything blocking peace at RCRC?
4. Listen to Fee’s lecture, 35:00-46:00. *Discuss*.
5. In footnote 5 (p. 125) Fee says, “One wonders whether the general lack of joy that characterizes much of contemporary North American Christianity suggests that the life of the Spirit has been generally downplayed in the interest of a more heady or performance-oriented brand of faith.” On p. 124, Fee says alluringly,

Both Paul’s exhortation to the community... and his instruction to Timothy... imply the need for a continual, ongoing appropriation. The Spirit’s presence is the crucial matter, but that presence does not automatically ensure a quickened, fervent Spiritual life. Both individuals and the church as a whole are exhorted to keep the gift aflame.

What does Fee mean here by “heady” and “performance-oriented”? How does one “keep the gift aflame”?

6. Of self control, Fee says two interesting things. First, he says that “Paul denounces anything that

even smacks of abstinence per se as a Christian virtue..., for example, ‘don’t handle, don’t taste, don’t touch’” (123 par. 1). He quotes for support 1 Cor 10:31-33; Rom 14:1-23 (see esp. 14:1-3, 6-7, 20-23); 1 Tim 4:1-5; Col 2:21. (Please read these.) Is Paul suggesting mature believers avoid the following following forms of voluntary restriction: Lenten vows, drinking alcohol, Sabbath avoidance of shopping, working for money, etc., fasting, avoiding certain television programs, movies, books or art. What forms of abstinence *are* godly?

7. What in the verses above suggest that abstention should only be done for the sake of others, not for personal spiritual growth? When Fee says, “only the Spirit can set us free for self-control—life in moderation, but with abstention for the sake of someone else,” what does he mean? And if only the Spirit can teach us this—rather than abstinence itself—then what can we do to develop self control?