

The Fruit of the Spirit

The Vision / March 2009

Pastor E. Keith Hassell

Galatians 5:19-26 (NKJV) “Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told *you* in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those *who are* Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.”

The “fruit” of the Spirit is contrasted with the “works” of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-21. “Fruit” is not the same as “works.” Whereas work involves labor, fruit involves life. Work is done in a factory whereas fruit is produced in a garden.

No matter how we try, factories can never manufacture real fruit. Manmade attempts to produce fruit are synthetic imitations of the real. Many of us can remember the wax bowl of fruit sitting on our grandmother’s kitchen table!

Fruit comes from a rooted, abiding, and living presence. In John 15:4 (NKJV) Jesus said, “*Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.*” The key to fruitfulness is not found in working but in abiding. Grape vine branches naturally bear clusters of grapes when they are connected to a living vine. A branch that is cut off may look good for a while, but it is dead and will not produce fruit. Fruit is the natural result of abiding.

Contrary to what some have believed, there is only one “fruit” of the Spirit rather than nine. Both the Greek noun for “fruit” and the Greek verb for “is” are singular. Paul, therefore, is not listing “fruits” of the Spirit but the “fruit” of the Spirit. The “fruit” is the image and likeness of Jesus Christ. It is called the “fruit of the Spirit” because the Holy Spirit is the One producing Christ’s image within us.

What about the nine graces listed in describing the fruit of the Spirit? The fruit of the Spirit is like the nine-branched Jewish “Menorah” which is one lamp stand composed of one middle shaft and eight side shafts—four on each side. Love is the middle shaft. Love is Christ’s supreme motive. Apart from love nothing else matters (1 Corinthians 13). Love is the king of all graces. Every other grace comes forth out of love. Love is called “the royal law” (James 2:8). Love is the supreme revelation of God’s nature because God is love (1 John 4:7-8). Out of love grow the other spiritual graces of Christ.

Joy is Christ’s strength in obedience (Nehemiah 8:10). Joy is not happiness. Happiness is based upon “happenings” or “happenstance”. Happiness is based upon good circumstances while joy is not. Joy is the deep-seated feeling of well-being brought about by knowing that all is well between a person and the Lord. Joy is the overflow of God’s manifest presence in our lives. Jesus said in John 15:11 (NKJV): “*These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.*” The world does not give us Christ’s joy and the world cannot take it away.

Peace is Christ’s security and confidence in times of trouble. Peace is the tranquility that brings rest. Peace is the absence of striving, worry, and confusion. It is rest in the security of

God's salvation and preservation. Physical rest depends upon the assurance that all is secure. Jesus said in John 14:27 (NKJV): *"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."*

Patience is Christ's endurance under trial. It has to do with enduring with tolerance the injuries, injustices, and irritations caused by others. Patience is slow to anger. It has a high boiling point. Paul said in 2 Thessalonians 3:5 (NKJV): *"Now may the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patience of Christ."* Hebrews 12:3 (NKJV) says, *"For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls."*

Kindness is Christ's concern for others. Kindness is a sympathetic and visible concern for those around us. Kindness is going out of our way to show others that we care.

Goodness is Christ's character. It is moral and spiritual excellence. Goodness is living life according to God's righteous standard. The Scripture declare often that God is good and His mercy endures forever! In Matthew 19:16-17 (NKJV) we read, *"Now behold, one came and said to Him, 'Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?'¹⁷ So He said to him, 'Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.'" (See also Ephesians 5:8-10)*

Faithfulness is Christ's confidence. Faithfulness has to do with steadfast conviction and faith in the truth. Faithfulness is living our lives with commitment, loyalty, and trustworthiness. Hebrews 2:17 (NKJV) declares, *"Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people."* Jesus was faithful to what He knew to be right and true and to the purpose of God for His life.

Gentleness is Christ's humility. It is often translated "meekness". Gentleness involves a mild disposition—one that is conciliatory to others. Gentleness is characterized by a humble attitude and calm response to people and problems. Gentleness is the opposite of rough, harsh, hateful, and mean. (Matthew 11:29; 2 Corinthians 10:1)

Self-control is Christ's victory. Victory comes in mastering our own carnal passions and desires. Self-control was one of the virtues most emphasized by philosophers and respected in Roman society. Philosophers often taught that the wise needed no law to regulate them, because their virtue itself was a law. Paul says that people of the Spirit fulfill the moral intent of the law (Galatians 5:14) by means of the Spirit guiding their lives.¹ Jesus demonstrated self-control during the days of temptation when He chose to obey God rather than to give in to the desires of the flesh. (See 1 Corinthians 9:24-25)

The "fruit of the Spirit" is the evidence of Christ's presence in our life. Life is like a fruit market where fruit is displayed, examined, and bought. The fruit of the Spirit testifies that what people see in our lives has been produced in Him. The fruit of the Spirit is the outward evidence of an inner salvation. (See Matthew 7:15-20)

God is glorified by much fruit being produced in our lives. Jesus said in John 15:5-8 (NKJV): *"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples."*

What is in our fruit basket? Is it real or imitation? Is it good fruit? Is it mature fruit? Is it much fruit? Does it reflect the image and likeness of Jesus?

¹Keener, C. S., & InterVarsity Press. (1993). *The IVP Bible background commentary: New Testament* (Ga 5:23). Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press.