

THE FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." Galatians 5:22-23.

The figure of fruit-bearing occurs frequently in the scriptures. Christ said, "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit" John 15:16. After He had enumerated eight Christian graces Peter said, "For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" II Peter 1:8. In our text Paul presents the ninefold manifestation of the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

An examination of this fruit reveals that it presents a perfect portrait of Christ. In His life this fruit was borne with a profusion never seen before or since. It also presents an excellent delineation of the ideal Christian life, for true Christian character is the fruit of the indwelling Spirit. The beauty and attractiveness of the fruit is enhanced by the inky blackness of the background against which it is set.

Immediately preceding the fruit of the Spirit, Paul catalogued the works of the flesh. Seventeen of them are given, but this by no means exhausts the number for the apostle adds, "And such like." What a foul brood they are! The works of the flesh far out number the fruit of the Spirit. As we make our way through the sorry list, and remember that our own hearts are capable of harboring every one of them, with what relief do we turn to the sweetness and fragrance of the Spirit's fruit.

It will be noted that Paul contrasts the "words (plural) of the flesh" with the "fruit (singular) of the Spirit". The works of the flesh are separate acts performed by the individual, but the ninefold fruit of the Spirit is the issue of the one life within. They are not conceived of as separate graces, but as all springing from the same root, and constituting an organic whole, which, in its entirety, is the creation of the Holy Spirit. It is entirely beyond the power of man either to produce or to imitate. It must be inwrought by the Spirit Himself, for the fruit is what we are rather than what we say and do.

When the Holy Spirit comes into one's life, He begins to bear fruit. There can be no fruit apart from Him. The flesh can produce works, but it cannot produce fruit. Works are produced from outward action. Fruit is produced from inward life. Works are wrought. Fruit is grown. Before there can be true fruit, there must be the life of the Spirit within. Fruits are never artificial. Fruit must always come from within. Works always come from without. Works can be produced by man, but only God can produce fruit.

No farmer can raise a crop. No horticulturist ever produces fruit. He can only sow or plant, and then cultivate. He must trust God for the rest. He might sow, plant, and cultivate with all diligence, and yet have no crop. He cannot make one seed sprout or one plant grow. He can only cooperate with God by fulfilling the conditions of nature. He may plant and water, but it is God who gives the increase. If God fails, all fails. The fruit of the Christian is not artificial. He, himself, does not produce it. He can only cultivate himself by pulling out the weeds, by keeping the soil loose, and by frequently watering. This he does by pulling out the weeds of sin, cares of this life, deceitfulness of riches and lusts of other things; by plowing deeply in the rich soil of God's productive

Word; and by watering frequently with much prayer. God will do the rest.

There have been many beautiful analyses of this charming outcome of the Spirit's activity in the surrendered life.

Evan H. Hopkins used this effective outline:

1. Condition - Love, joy, peace; disposition of soul
2. Conduct - Long-suffering, gentleness, goodness; external manifestations.
3. Character - Faith, meekness, temperance; personal results in life.

Dr. Alexander Maclaren, in his matchless "Expositions" has a slightly different outline:

1. The life of the Spirit in its deepest aspects -- love, joy, peace.
2. The life of the Spirit in its manifestations to men -- long-suffering, gentleness, goodness.
3. The life of the Spirit in its relation to the difficulties of the world and of ourselves -- faith, meekness, temperance.

Dr. Griffith Thomas classifies the cluster of fruit as Relation to God -- to man -- to self.

Archbishop Harrington Lees has presented the fruit of the Spirit under the similitude of a garden. In it grow nine flowers: the honeysuckle of love, the rose of joy, the lily of peace, the snowdrop of longsuffering, the mignonette of kindness, the violet of meekness, and the wallflower of self-control.

Dr. C. J. Rolis characterises the fruit as the eight elements of love. Joy is love's cheerfulness. Peace is love's confidence. Long-suffering is love's composure. Kindness is love's considerateness. Goodness is love's character. Faithfulness is love's constancy. Meekness is love's comeliness. Self-control is love's conquest.

J. B. Kenyon compares this fruit to a large, rosy apple. He compares love to the core of the apple, for around it the rest is formed, and imbedded within it are the seeds that will produce other apples. Joy is compared to the color of the apple. As the color of the apple attracts us to it and makes us desire it, so the joy of the Christian life is the chief element that attracts others and causes them to desire it. Joyful and victorious Christians may be compared to a cafeteria where the food is on display and arouses the latent appetite. With the very sight of such Christians the sinner is made hungry for spiritual food. Formal and joyless Christians may be compared to a restaurant where only a menu is handed to the patron. The creed of such professing Christians may be compared to the menu. It is just something to read. It does not have any attractive aroma. There is nothing about it to arouse spiritual desire.

Peace may be compared with the meat of the apple. Peace is the staple of the Christian life. It is strictly for our own use and enjoyment. While love and joy affect others through us, peace terminates with us.

Long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance may be compared with the seeds of the apple. They are nestled down deeply in the core of love. These are the seeds which are apt to produce other Christians besides ourselves and produce more fruit to the glory of God. But these seeds are only productive as they come from the core of love. Without love they will be sterile.

As fruit is to be eaten, so Christians are for the use and enjoyment of God and the people. God is growing us for Himself and for others. All the graces and talents He gives us are to be expended in His service and for our fellowmen. The great purpose of our salvation and sanctification is to bear fruit to the glory of God.

The nine virtues, which constitute the "fruit of the Spirit," are woven into one golden chain in our text. It falls into three groups.

I. Those Related Primarily To God.

1. Love.

Love is given first place in the catalogue, for all of these manifestations of the fruit are but various forms of love, which is the foundation and the moving principle of the other eight virtues. The love here referred to is not human love, but the manifestation of "the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit." Romans 5:5. The Spirit produces in the heart a deepening sense of God's love, and the disposition to love Him in return. This love is shown in different ways: --

- (1) A desire for fellowship with God.
We desire to have fellowship with Him Whom we love. Any who do not desire to have fellowship with God, definitely do not love Him.
- (2) A devotion to God's Word above all earthly treasures.
"And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved."
Psalm 119:47. "O how I love thy law! it is my meditation all the days."
Psalm 119:97. If there be those who care nothing about coming to hear the Word of God, it is because they do not love God.
- (3) A love for them who love God.
Before the Master went away He told His disciples, "A new commandment I give unto you, That you love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if you have love one to another." John 13:34-35.

2. Joy.

The fruit of the Spirit is joy, not mere happiness or merriment, but real joy. Joy dwells in the heart of love. There cannot be any joy where there is no love. People who do not love are miserable.

Our Saviour was anointed with the oil of joy, and naturally He shares it with His disciples. This joy is infectious. It strives to make those around us joyful, too. Joy in the Lord gives a new glow to life. Joy is the beaming countenance, the elastic step, the singing voice of Christian goodness. This joy, which is a product of the Spirit, is something which none can take away and something which no sorrow can quench. Without proper relationship to the Lord there cannot be any real joy. There is a distinction between happiness and joy. Happiness depends upon what happens; joy is independent of all circumstances. Blessed joy is ever ours as we place Jesus first, others second, and self last.

3. Peace.

The heart in which love for God and mankind dwells, which is full of inexpressible joy because Christ dwells in it, knows an inward peace that passeth all understanding, which preserves our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. This inner tranquillity was also a part of Christ's legacy to His disciples. "My peace I give unto you." In a world of tribulation we may have perfect peace. This peace is not drawn from circumstances, but is the supernatural product of the Spirit. Peace, built on love and joy, is not the absence of trouble, but the realization of the presence of God in all circumstances, pleasant or painful.

The exhibition of these three graces, love, joy, and peace in the life of the believer is possible only because they were present in infinite perfection in the Lord to whom he is united. There is no limit to the measure in which they may be experienced by the Spirit-filled man. He may enjoy "the love of Christ that passeth knowledge", "joy unspeakable and full of glory", and "the peace which passeth all understanding". God bestows all of His blessings in the superlative.

II. Those Related Primarily To Others.

1. Long-suffering.

The heart at peace with God has patience with others. "Love suffereth long." Long-suffering is love enduring. As Lightfoot said, "It is a patient endurance under injuries inflicted by others." It is a quality that is unnatural to man. The best of us are apt to be impatient over the faults of others. We are critically-minded, easily offended, and eager for reprisal. For the unsaved person nothing is sweeter than revenge. Long-suffering means forbearance, and slowness in avenging wrongs. Said a tyrant to a Christian whom he had in his grasp financially, "What can Christ do for you now?" The Christian replied, "He can help me to forgive you." Dr. Alexander MacLaren said, "It takes two to make a quarrel, and no man living under the influence of the Spirit can be one of such a pair."

A person may suddenly become ill, call the doctor, be sent to the hospital, and be told that he must undergo an operation. He submits willingly, goes to the operating room, lies down on the table, and is strapped so that he cannot move. He submits to all this, knowing that the surgeon will take his knife, cut open his abdomen and remove what is necessary. He also knows that the incision will be sewed up and that he will wear the scar to his grave. The operation proves successful and the patient will praise the surgeon and recommend him to others who suffer similar physical ailment.

But, it so often happens that when the preacher takes the Sword of the Spirit and tries to cut out that which is about to bring death to spiritual joy, happiness, and usefulness of some member of his congregation, that person goes out and criticizes the preacher with words that are very caustic.

2. Gentleness.

Gentleness can be translated "kindness" or "kindliness". It is a kindly

disposition towards others. It is that ability, given by the Holy Spirit, to hold all turbulent feelings in check. While worldly anxious state that knowledge is power and money is power, God's Word teaches that gentleness is power. "Thy gentleness hath made me great" Psalm 18:35. The power of gentleness is irresistible. A kind word is never out of place. The art of saying appropriate words in a kindly way is one that never goes out of fashion, never ceases to please, and is within reach of the humblest.

Somebody says, "You just as well say a thing as to think it." That is not true. You have a thought and it may be hurtful only to yourself. But when you express that thought it may become harmful to others. We would ~~be~~ well to remember these lines: --

"Thoughts unexpressed,
Fall to the earth dead,
But Heaven itself can't recall them,
When once they're said."

You sometimes hear one make the statement, "There is one thing you can say about me. I say just what I think." May God pity the person who always speaks what he thinks! That attitude or disposition is not the fruit of the Spirit.

3. Goodness.

This is active uprightness in heart and life. It is not only a kindly disposition, but a kindly action. It finds expression in deeds, as with Dorcas, who was "full of good works." Goodness is Godlikeness.

III. Those Related Primarily To Ourselves.

1. Faithfulness.

It is not faith in the sense of belief in God which is primarily involved here but the faithful discharge of entrusted duties. A faithful person is one who is full of faith, full of confidence in God, and, therefore, dependable and trustworthy.

Pentecost resulted in a marvelous transformation in the inward character of the disciples in this respect. Only a few days previously they had all proved faithless to their Lord, and had left Him to suffer and to die alone, forsaken by God and man. But, after they were filled with the Spirit, they proved faithful under the most fearful persecution, some even proving themselves "faithful unto death." It is to be remembered that the Master's "Well done!" is reserved for the "good and faithful servant" alone.

2. Meekness.

Instead of being an indication of weakness, it is an evidence of strength. Meekness is contrary to the spirit of this age. It is the opposite to self-parade, self-assertion, self-pride, self-will, and the high-mindedness so common today. It runs counter to the conceit of the natural heart. All that is selfish, resentful, and ~~vengeful~~ indicates the spirit of the world and not the Spirit of Christ. Never was the conquering power of meekness ~~more~~

more clearly shown than in Him who said, "I am meek and lowly in heart."

3. Self-control.

An illustration of the meaning of self-control is given by the Apostle in his reference to the Greek games. "Every man that striveth for the mastery is self-controlled in all things." But remember that this self-control is not the result of the energy of the flesh, but is the fruit of the Spirit.