

Fruit Of The Holy Spirit

'The fruit of the Holy Spirit (that is the work which His presence within us accomplishes) is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness (meekness), self-control (self-discipline); against such things there is no law' (Galatians 5:22 & 23).

'For the fruit (the effect or the product) of the Light (the Holy Spirit) is in all kindly goodness, righteousness of heart and truth' (Ephesians 5:9).

The fruit of the Holy Spirit is from the Holy Spirit, and it is the will of God for every believer to bring forth His fruit. Jesus said we can easily know the difference between a believer and a non-believer by their fruit (Matthew 7:16 to 20); that is their attitudes and actions. There is also a difference between the fruit of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit. Gifts are received with one swift transaction and they are freely given. Fruit on the other hand, comes by a process of gradual growth and the fruit needs to be cultivated. To highlight the differences between the fruit and gifts of the Spirit, we can look at two types of tree; a fruit tree bearing fruit, and a Christmas tree bearing gifts. The fruit from the fruit tree comes by a process of cultivation and gradual growth. The gifts from a Christmas tree are taken by a single brief act, then the gifts are received and used. Spiritual gifts represent our ability, while Spiritual fruit represents our character.

Paul indicates that to cultivate the fruit of the Spirit takes hard work. 'The hard-working farmer (or labourer) must be the first to partake of the fruit' (2 Timothy 2:6). To cultivate the fruit of the Spirit, we must earnestly study the Word of God and learn to live by it. 'Study and be eager to do your utmost to present yourself to God approved and tested, a workman who has no cause to be ashamed, correctly analysing, rightly handling and skilfully teaching the Word of Truth' (2 Timothy 2:15). We need to spend a lot of time in prayer. That means, not just talking to God, but also listening to God. Jesus' whole ministry was based on His relationship with His Father. To cultivate that relationship, Jesus spent plenty of time in prayer, and sometimes He prayed all night (Luke 6:12). We need to cultivate fellowship with other believers. It is not a good idea to try to walk the Christian life alone. It is the desire of Almighty God to make all of us members of one body (1 Corinthians 12:18) and we all need each other. 'Do not forsake (or neglect) to assemble together as believers ...' (Hebrews 10:25). Every believer should regularly attend church so they can fellowship together, grow spiritually and cultivate their Spiritual 'fruit'.

The fruit of love. Love is the first fruit mentioned in Galatians 5:22. It is not only fruit as the other eight fruits are, love is a commandment; 'A new commandment I give to you; that you should love one another. Just as I have loved you; so you too should love one another. By this, all men will know you are My disciples, if you have love one for another' (John 13:34 & 35). We need to see that love is a commandment not an option. We cannot choose who to love in our churches, we need to love them all. If we do not love one another, we are disobeying the Lord Jesus' new commandment to all believers. From faith, hope and love, the greatest of these three is love (1 Corinthians 13:13). Love is the epitome of God's character. 'Beloved, let us love one another, for this love is from God and he who loves his fellow believer is born of God. He who does not love, does not know God, for God is love' (1 John 4:7 & 8). Having love for fellow believers is the real test of discipleship. 'Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another, for he who loves his neighbour, has fulfilled the Law ... Love does no wrong to a neighbour, love is therefore the fulfilment of the Law (Romans 13:8 & 10). 'For in Jesus our Messiah ... we must have faith working through love. The whole Law is fulfilled in one word – love; you shall love your neighbour as yourself' (Galatians 5:6 & 14).

The centre of our whole faith is expressed through love. It is especially important for church leaders to take pre-eminence over all other forms of fruit. It makes a difference to the ministry. 'The goal of this command is love from a pure heart, a clear conscience and a sincere faith' (1 Timothy 1:5). What is Paul saying? All Christian ministry is to produce love and we all need to test our own ministry by using this standard. Are we producing people who love one another? If we sit in church, pay our tithes, spend time serving God, sing hymns and get to church on time wearing beautiful clothes, yet do not love one another, we are wasting our time and are just clanging cymbals, because the greatest of the nine Spiritual fruits is love (1 Corinthians, all of chapter 13).

The kind of love we are talking about is not the love between families, it is God's love which is borne from the Seed of God's Word that is received into a believers heart. 'Since you have in obedience to the truth, purified your hearts for the sincere love of God's people, see that you love one another from a pure heart. You have been born-again, not from mortal seed, but from One that is immortal by the everlasting Word of God' (1 Peter 1:22 & 23). It is the fact that we were born of the seed of God's Word, that makes it possible to love one another with the love of God. Every person who is born of God should be manifesting that kind of love, and has no scriptural basis for claiming to be born of God unless they show the fruit of love. Love is poured out by the Holy Spirit. 'God's love has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit, Who has been given to us' (Romans 5:5). The heart of the born-again believer becomes a vessel for God's love. Cultivating this kind of love requires the cooperation of our will, not our emotions. This love is expressed in action. 'No one has greater love than to lay down (or give up) his life for his friends' (John 15:12 & 13). This is a commandment not an option, and we are to love one another by laying down our lives just as Jesus did for us. That is an obligation as a believer. 'We know love; that He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren (God's people)' (1 John 3:16). This does not mean we have to experience physical death, but by making ourselves available; by giving up what we possess; by going where God tells us; and to help when help is needed, we are showing God's eternal love.

The fruit of Joy. Joy is a deep inner gladness; a deep gratitude for our salvation. We have escaped the eternal death penalty due to all mankind, by accepting the shed blood of Jesus as our only way of escape. That gives us joy. Joy is not happiness which occurs in the soul; nor is it pleasure which occurs in the body. Joy is satisfaction that occurs in the God-given spirit; happiness and pleasure depend on earthly circumstances. An illustration of this, is a young Christian man with a new sports car. Driving the car makes him happy and gives him pleasure. If however, the car was stolen and written off in a crash, the young man would not be very happy about that, but he would still have joy in the Lord. So we see that joy does not depend on earthly circumstances. Our joy depends on Someone Who never changes – God Himself. Because God never changes, joy need never change either. If we live only in the realm of the body and soul, we can know pleasure and happiness but that does not include joy. Joy comes from a strong, continuing relationship with God.

When things are pressing in all around us, when we are under pressure and life is not going smoothly, we can feel very unhappy, but we can still have joy, because our joy is in the Lord. The scriptures say: 'Then I will go to the altar of God, to God, my exceeding joy; yes, with the lyre will I praise You, O God, my God' (Psalm 43:4). God is our exceeding joy. Joy is not in our situation – it is in our relationship with God. We all need to have that kind of relationship with God, so we can find that open door to receive joy when pressure becomes too much. We need to keep that 'channel' open through prayer and worship. We

cannot feel sad when we are praising God. Even if we are not finding happiness and pleasure in our lives, we can still find His joy. 'He shall not often reflect on the days of his life, because God fills him with the joy of his heart' (Ecclesiastes 5:20).

To a certain degree, joy is a choice or an act of our will; it is a decision. Everything that humans rely on, was cut off from Habakkuk, but he still chose to praise the Lord. He did not give up; he turned to God (Habakkuk 3:16 to 19). David said; 'I will go to the altar' (Psalm 43:4); Habakkuk said; 'I will exult in the Lord'. They chose to have joy and they chose to express their joy. This is not emotion, it is an act of our will. Paul gives an interesting progression of joy in Romans 5:2 to 11. The mark of a mature Christian is one who finds joy in all circumstances and in God Himself. 'The disciples were continually filled with joy and the Holy Spirit' (Acts 13:52). When Paul and Silas were in chains in the dungeon, they had been beaten with rods, whipped across their backs, then put in stocks; they would not have been happy, nor would the circumstances have given them pleasure, but they were filled with joy and sang praises to God so loudly the other prisoners could hear them. Their wonderful attitude brought about a supernatural response from God the Father, Who opened the prison doors and set them free, which in turn brought about the salvation of others (Acts 16:22 to 25). Here we can see a big difference between happiness, pleasure and the fruit of joy.

The fruit of peace. Some people think peace is merely the end of conflict. That is not quite right. Peace comes when there is forgiveness and total reconciliation. There is conflict between God and Man, and when we turn to God and are forgiven and reconciled, then we begin to experience His peace that passes all human understanding (Philippians 4:7). Our reconciliation came when we accepted the death and resurrection of Jesus on the cross. Unless we believe that and accept God's provision of salvation for us, then there cannot be reconciliation and then peace in our hearts. There is no other way to salvation and peace but through Jesus (John 14:6). He was wounded, bruised, crushed and chastised so we could have healing and peace (Isaiah 53:5). Jesus paid the penalty and took our punishment for our sin, and thus brought reconciliation and peace with God. 'God purposed that through Jesus, all things should be completely reconciled back to Himself, whether on earth or in heaven. God the Father made peace by means of the blood of Jesus' cross' (Colossians 1:20). The purpose of the death of Jesus was to bring reconciliation between God and His greatest creation – mankind. We are justified through faith. Let us grasp the fact that we have the peace of reconciliation; peace with God through our Lord Jesus, our Messiah, the Anointed One (Romans 5:1). He is Himself, our peace and has made us both (Jew and Gentile) one body and He has broken down the hostile divide between us ... making us one new man so making peace, and He designed to reconcile to God both Jew and Gentile in a single body by means of His cross, killing off the mutual enmity, and He came and preached peace to you, who were afar off and to those who were near (Ephesians 2:14 to 17). Jesus reconciled us with God the Father, plus, He reconciled all Gentiles with His brethren, the Jews. Mankind can never know true peace except through the cross of Jesus as we read in the scriptures above. There is no peace for the wicked (Isaiah 57:21), and God calls all non-believers wicked. The full meaning of peace is summed up in one Hebrew word: Shalom. It means wholeness, completeness and well being. Peace is not just the absence of strife – it is wholeness for the whole man. The peace given to us by God will never end, and only those who live under God's government can know His peace (Isaiah 9:7). To have God's peace we need to hear and obey God's voice (Isaiah 48:18). Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice. I know them and they follow Me" (John 10:27). The mark of a true disciple of Jesus, is that they hear His voice and follow Him. Just before He left this earth, He said, "My peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you" (John 14:27).

The fruit of patience. Patience is steadfastness in enduring trouble, and slowness in avenging wrong. Teachers must have enduring patience with their pupils, and parents need to have enduring patience with their children. Good Christian parents have much patience with their children especially when they are young. Good teachers must have endless patience with their newest pupils. Without these types of patience, our self-discipline is incomplete. Some people are steadfast in trouble but are very quick to avenge themselves. Other people are slow to avenge themselves, but are not very steadfast. To have true scriptural patience in the complete fruit of the Spirit, we need to combine these different aspects of patience. The way into God's Kingdom is through many tribulations (Acts 14:22). We are to patiently endure if we are punished unjustly. Jesus was guilty of no sin but He entrusted His unjust punishment to the Father (1 Peter 2:20 to 23). When we are punished unjustly, we should endure it with patience and not avenge ourselves for we have been called for this purpose. What purpose? To patiently endure wrongdoing and unjust treatment (1 Peter 4:1 & 2). We haven't just been called to do exciting things for God, we have been called for this purpose also. Remember Jesus was punished unjustly and did not deserve any of the suffering that came upon Him. Vengeance belongs to God, and we need to leave that to Him, for He will repay on our behalf (Hebrews 10:30). We are clearly required to follow the example of Jesus in enduring suffering, and not try to avenge ourselves. The way in which Jesus responded to the unjust treatment came from the confidence in the Father. He endured mistreatment, wrongdoing, false accusations and rejection, patiently and without fighting back, because He trusted His Father to work it all out on His behalf. This is the patience we need to have. To renounce the desire to justify ourselves or to avenge ourselves, and while we continue to try to justify and avenge ourselves, we have not developed the fruit of patience. The provision for us to be made dead to sin was through the death of Jesus, but the working out of it in our lives, comes through suffering which produces patience (James 5:10).

The fruit of kindness. Kindness is treating people as we wish them to treat us. 'Whatever you desire that others would do for you, do also for them' (Matthew 7:12). 'As you would desire that men would do to you, do exactly to them' (Luke 6:31). If we study the whole discourse, Jesus mentioned various acts of kindness; loving our enemies; doing good to those who hate us; blessing those who curse us; praying for those who mistreat us; give to those who want to take from us; give to those who ask of us even when we know we may not be paid back, do not judge, give gifts, and whatever we deal out to others, will be what is dealt out to us. We must do what the Word says, not just hear it (Luke 6:27 to 49). This is all kindness in action. In the sermon on the mount (Matthew chapters 5 to 7), Jesus returns to this principle. It is amazing that the Law was based on one simple principle; that whatever you want others to do to you, you do to them first. How we treat others, will one day return to us. 'Whatever a man sows, that and that only is what he will reap. Let us not lose heart, for in due time we shall reap' (Galatians 6:7 & 9). Kindness in this sense is just enlightened self-interest. What we give out is what we will get back. Sometimes we need to wait a very long time to reap what we have been sowing, but Paul tells us not to lose heart but be patient for our reward will come. There is sometimes an interval between sowing and reaping. There is great emphasis in the scriptures in applying this principle to the poor. The Bible has a lot more to say about helping the poor than most people realise. In the Bible, there are 174 references to the poor, 61 references to the needy, 194 references to helping. When we help the poor, we are lending to the Lord and the Lord will repay us (Proverbs 19:17). We need to give without expecting anything in return, like the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30 to 35). 'Cast your bread upon the waters and in many days it will return to you. Give a portion to seven, yes even to eight, for you know not what evil may come upon the earth' (Ecclesiastes 11:1 & 2). What Solomon was saying here, is seven is the number of duty, eight is beyond duty, so give beyond what we need to

because we never know when we will need help. Being kind is not just about giving. It is also about our attitude to others. We especially need to be kind to our children. Many parents are kind to others in the church, but speak viciously to their children. That will one day come back upon them when their children grow up and are able to treat their parents in the same way they were treated and spoken to as youngsters. Mums and Dads need to keep this in mind next time they shout at their children – one day that impatient, unkind attitude will come back to bite you.

We must show kindness and not judge other Christians. Read what Jesus says about judging others. We will be judged exactly, according to how we judge others; no more and no less (Matthew 7:1 & 2). Jesus also said 'Blessed are the merciful for they shall see mercy' (Matthew 5:7). If we want mercy from God, we need to show mercy to others. We all need the mercy of God so we cannot dare not to show mercy. We need to show mercy to those who fall into sin, because we are also vulnerable to sin (Galatians 6:1). Being Spiritual is not being dogmatic and severe, it is being gentle, kind and merciful to others when they are in trouble. The reason being, that the same weaknesses that are in them could appear also in us. 'Judgement will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy' (James 2:13). If we are not merciful in our judgement of others, we will be judged without mercy ourselves, and of course, there would no doubt be things in our lives for which God could judge us. God is a God of mercy – but He is also a God of judgement. We usually judge people by our words and those same words could bring down judgement upon us. 'By your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned' (Matthew 12:37). How we can know we will receive mercy from God on judgement day, is by showing mercy to other people on earth – even if we disagree with their life-style. Kindness is living in harmony with the laws that govern the universe, especially the laws that govern our conduct.

The fruit of goodness. In the Bible, the word 'good' denotes excellence; especially moral excellence; complete uprightness; perfect honesty; perfect justice. In its strictest use, it applies only to God Himself. Jesus said; 'No one is good except God alone' (Mark 10:17 & 18). In this context, 'good' means morally and essentially perfect. Goodness is based on God's very high standard. If we are to be good in any sense, we need to become vessels of the life and nature of God, then God's goodness is manifested in us and we are able to show unbelievers what God is really like. Goodness in this sense is living a life that bears witness to the existence of God. We need to live our lives in such a way that would not make sense if God did not exist. We need to live in a way that the people of this world cannot comprehend – like a mystery – never compromising with the world – shunning all evil and sin – keeping our speech pure at all times. This confronts the world and they can see there is something 'different' about us, but it confounds them until they can understand that it is because of our relationship with God. People may not want to read the Bible, but if our lives show God to others, they can be won into the Kingdom of God by our behaviour as we live the Bible, not just read it. We need to remember that our Christian lives may be the only 'Bible' that people will ever see, and we need to take care that we do not make them stumble. We need to yield to God and allow Him to live His life through us. Paul said, "I have been crucified with Jesus. It is no longer I who lives but the Messiah Who lives in me" (Galatians 2:20). How do we live the Christian life that others can see? By living with the resurrected Messiah everywhere we go, day and night. We cannot let our guard down. We must show God to the world at all times, just like Paul did. 'For me to live is Jesus' life in me, but to die is to gain the glory of eternity' (Philippians 1:21). Paul's life was not his own, but it was the life of Jesus lived through Paul. By living pure lives we do not go on to sin (Romans 6:11 to 14). Sin will not be our master if we let God live through us. Goodness of this kind will never compromise with evil. We are to; 'abhor that which is evil; love that which is good' (Romans 12:9); or, love righteousness and hate wickedness

(Psalm 45:7). To love righteousness requires us to hate wickedness. 'Hate evil, you who love the Lord' (Psalm 97:10). The only power strong enough to overcome evil, is good (Romans 12:21).

The fruit of faithfulness. Faithfulness is being dependable and trustworthy despite situations that may tempt us to act otherwise. God is faithful to man. This is written eight times in the Bible; in Deuteronomy 7:9; 32:4; Psalm 71:22; 89:8; 98:3; 1 Corinthians 1:9; 10:13; 2 Corinthians 1:18. God wants us to be faithful to Him. 'He who is faithful in a little, is faithful also in much' (Luke 16:10). Faithfulness starts with small things, like keeping a promise for example. If you promise an elderly neighbour you will rake her garden, then you must do it. To you it may not be much, but to the elderly lady, it might mean a lot. Even if we think there is something we do not need to give attention to, God sees it and we need to be faithful in the small things first. Taking care of the small humble things shows our character. Are we too proud to take care of a neighbour's garden or humble enough to get our hands dirty for her? In God's Kingdom, if we are not faithful in the small things, we will never be promoted to the big things.

We can check our faithfulness by asking ourselves four questions. (1) Do we make promises then break them or forget we made the promise?

(2) Do we turn up late for an appointment? Everything that God is responsible for, is punctual. The sun rises and sets on time; the snow falls in its season; the animals breed in their own season; the salmon swim upstream at the same time every year. If we are late and unpunctual, then we are not displaying God's faithfulness.

(3) Do we allow our accounts to become overdue? We are told to keep out of debt and owe no man anything (Romans 13:8), so we must pay our bills on time, and that includes paying our taxes (Romans 13:7).

(4) Do we borrow things from others and not repay or return it when we promised? 'The wicked borrow and do not pay back' (Psalm 37:21). If we borrow money or any other thing and do not repay or return the item, that is an area in our lives that is not reflecting the faithfulness of God. Do you have in your possession a book that you borrowed? Should it be returned? Do you owe somebody a sum of money? It is true that money is not spiritual, but this is not about money – it is about our character. 'If you have not been faithful with unrighteous mammon, who will entrust you to true riches?' (Luke 16:11).

The fruit of gentleness (meekness). Meekness is not weakness. Moses was the meekest; the most gentle, kind and humble man on the face of the earth (Numbers 12:3), but he most definitely was not weak and did not in any way lack authority. At 80 years old he led a nation to victory and twice, he climbed a mountain wearing only a robe and sandals. Moses developed this meekness through the course of time. Meekness is the demonstration of divine strength. When we come to the end of our own human strength, then God will come in with His strength (Isaiah 40:29), just like He did with Moses. People who shout, stamp their foot and abuse others, are not showing strength – they are showing weakness of character. Gentleness and meekness go together with authority. We need to lead by humility, meekness and example (1 Peter 5:2 & 3). What does God have to do to bring us to the point of meekness? He gives us time, just like He did with Moses. Moses was 80 years old before God called him. Most older people have reached the point where they realise that trying to 'help' God out, leads nowhere, plus people 'mellow' with age. At some point, we realise we do God's will; we do not try to help Him, and He will show us what He wants from us, and when. A meek person understands that when God calls us, we do not have to try anymore, we have to surrender. A surrendered will, will happily and meekly obey God's will, no matter what the cost.

The fruit of self-control. This is also self-discipline. God actually expects us to develop and exercise both self-discipline and self-control. The Holy Spirit does not control us – we have our own free will and we must choose to be of good behaviour and temperate in our conduct. We cannot exercise God's standard of conduct without the help of the Holy Spirit, and He will not do anything without our cooperation. Even our very salvation depends on our cooperation with the Lord. The whole process of salvation originates with God. 'Every athlete who goes into training, conducts himself temperately and restricts himself in all things. They do it to win a wreath that will soon wither, but we do it to receive an eternal crown that cannot wither. But I buffet my body (handle it roughly, discipline it) and subdue it for fear that after proclaiming to others the Gospel, I should become unfit (for the Kingdom)' (1 Corinthians 9:24 to 27). It is a sobering thought that even Paul, after all he did for the Lord, felt he might miss out if he did not keep self-control. Our motivation; our goal should be to have every area of our lives under control so we can accomplish God's purpose for our lives. That is more than just getting to heaven; it is serving God with all our hearts while on earth, to increase the Kingdom of God.

Self-control and self-discipline affect every area of our lives; every waking moment. For example, do we discipline our time; how much time do we set aside for prayer? Fasting? Fellowship? Bible study? Do we waste God's precious time by reading books or magazines of no spiritual value?

Do we discipline our food and liquid intake? Are we eating healthy foods? Are we eating too much food? Are we drinking too much soft drink? Are we secretly drinking alcohol? Are we drinking enough water?

Do we discipline our rest periods? God says we must have rest and he created in us the need for sleep, so we have to take care that we are meeting the requirements of our physical body by resting and sleeping according to our individual need. Some people need 10 hours sleep at night, others require 4 hours sleep. We need to discipline ourselves and get enough rest if we want to maintain optimum ability. On the other hand, we also need to be careful we do not become lazy.

Do we control the television or does it control us? What television shows do we keep watching? Do we watch questionable movies at home or in the cinema? We are not to allow our eyes to see evil. 'I will set no vile thing before my eyes' (Psalm 101:3), so we need to discipline that too. Do we listen to the devil's music?

Do we associate with questionable people? Are we influenced by them, or do we influence them? Are we trying to show our friends and family the way to eternal life?

Do we exercise self-control when away from home? When out driving, do we yell at other drivers? Do we insist on being 'in front' of larger vehicles? Do we insist on giving people a 'piece of our mind' if they annoy us? Do we smoke?

Do we control our temper? Are we moody? Do we shout at our wives or children? Do we slap the children when we are angry or in a foul mood? Are we showing God's patience and loving-kindness to our children?

To show the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit takes much self-discipline and love for our fellow man. If we are to be successful in leading others to salvation, then we must always be aware of the fruit that we have, entrusted to us by our Lord, and we need to 'use' it all day, every day.

Amen and God bless you.

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