

The Fruit of the Spirit

Galatians 5:22-26

With Study Questions

*Pastor Paul Viggiano
Branch of Hope Church
2370 W. Carson Street, #100
Torrance, CA 90501
(310) 212-6999
pastorpaul@integrity.com
branchofhope@juno.com
www.branchofhope.org
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But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. ²⁴And those *who are Christ's* have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. ²⁶Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another (Galatians 5:22-26).

Fruit

Though, as we have previously learned, we are justified by faith alone, saving faith is not a benign rock which merely lodges itself in depraved human flesh patiently waiting for death. Saving faith produces fruit.

We have learned of the works of the flesh, now we learn of the fruit of the Spirit. It is fruit rather than work – the metaphor inclining our thoughts toward that which is useful and refreshing. All Christians are thoroughly filled, or baptized, by the Spirit of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). With this in mind we ought to be both thankful and circumspect. As Spurgeon wrote,

**He (the Holy Spirit) stays though sin intrudes into his temple!
He makes his royal abode where evil assails his palace! Alas, that
a heart where the Spirit deigns to dwell should ever be made a
thoroughfare for selfish or unbelieving traffic!¹**

Fruit is also appropriate since it more properly describes the nature of Christian conduct. Fruit is that which is produced by the inherent energy or nature of a living organism. We were dead in our sins but now we have been made alive (Ephesians 2:5); we are a living organism which produces fruit. When, by the grace of God, we perceive the lies of the false teachers teaching salvation by works – when instead we trust in Christ alone, the seed has been planted and God will bring forth the fruit. Hear Ezekiel!

**I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in
My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do *them*
(Ezekiel 36:27).**

Love

Paul begins with an attribute which, if understood correctly, should be sufficient for the whole list; for love, in a certain sense, is the opposite of sin. As sin is lawlessness (1 John 3:4), love is obedience to the law.

¹ Spurgeon, C. H. 1998. *Spurgeon's Sermons: Volume 30* (electronic ed.). Logos Library System; Spurgeon's Sermons. Vol. 30. Ages Software: Albany, OR

**For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments
(1 John 5:3).**

Of course a thorough study of Christian love goes much deeper than we can pursue here. 1 Corinthians 13 is Paul's treatise on Christian love. We know that we love God because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). Love involves that which is both inward and outward (Exodus 20:17). And though we might place higher value on the inward, in human relationships love can be known only from the actions it prompts. Empty speeches about love unaccompanied by faithful actions are indeed empty.

If we are to seek to love as God loves, our love is not drawn out by any excellence in its objects. God's love for us is an exercise of the Divine Will in deliberate choice made without assignable cause save that which lies in the nature of God Himself.

And for those of us who can't seem to drum up the proper affections, we can be comforted in knowing that Christian love is not an impulse from the feelings. There may be feelings, but there may not be those natural inclinations which we normally, viscerally and sentimentally, associate with love.

Joy

It takes no stretching at all to see that a person or community of people, committed to the greatest attribute (love) will also be blessed by the next on the list, joy. Joy, or delight, is a Christian imperative. We are continually commanded to be joyful (Romans 15:10).

Since the context of this list is the Church, it is hard to avoid the connection between what a person believes and their attending joy. Luther, therefore taught,

God loves not heaviness of spirit; He hates comfortless doctrine, heavy and sorrowful cogitations, and loves cheerful hearts. For therefore has He sent His Son, not to oppress us with heaviness and sorrow, but to cheer up our souls in Him?

The Christian life should not be an exercise in misery. Maybe some people ought to lighten up a little and enjoy God and the life He has given us.

Peace

We see three types of peace enumerated in Scripture. As a result of justification by faith we have peace with God, the broken relationship having been reconciled. As a result of that reconciliation men have a feeling of peace and rest. This may be strong at times and weak at other times (this is likely the peace of which Paul writes here). Finally there is the ultimate eschatological peace where our reconciliation with God is fully known and appreciated in heaven.

² Luther, M. 1996. *Commentary on Galatians*. Index created by Christian Classics Foundation. (electronic ed.) (Ga 5:23). Christian Classics Foundation: Simpsonville SC

Patience

Now we move to an attribute we all enjoy in others, patience, or longsuffering. Those full of love, joy, and peace generally excel in patience. Many of us think we're patient until we're provoked, "I'm a very patient person until someone upsets me." But of course patience is the quality of self-restraint in the face of provocation. The patient person does not retaliate in a hasty manner. He is slow to speak, quick to listen, and slow to anger (James 1:19). He does not surrender to circumstances or succumb under trial.

Kindness, Goodness

Continuing in the portion of the list which contains the qualities we especially love to see in others is kindness and goodness. These two are quite similar with a subtle difference. Kindness is a sort of goodness expressing itself in tender actions as in Jesus' dealing with penitent sinners (e. g. John 7:37-50). Goodness may involve a much more stern disposition as when Jesus cleared the temple (Matthew 21:12, 13).

Faithfulness

A faithful person is firm in his conviction. He is not double-minded (James 1:8). He is not entertaining ways of ditching his commitment. Genuine biblical faithfulness involves three things: knowledge, assent, and trust. One knows what he believes, acknowledges that it is true, and surrenders to it in his conduct.

Gentleness or Meekness

A difficult word for which to find an English correlation, meekness is a description of the inwrought grace of the soul—first and chiefly exercised toward God. It is a temper of spirit where we accept His dealings with us as good and wise. Gentle or meek are wanting translations since they suggest weakness. But godly meekness is the fruit of power. It is not as if men are meek because they cannot help themselves. Jesus was meek because He had the infinite resources of God at His command.

Described negatively, meekness is the opposite to self-assertiveness and self-interest; it is equanimity (calmness) of spirit that is neither elated nor cast down, simply because it is not occupied with self at all.³

Self-Control

Self-control for the Christian is not a matter of self-will. It is actually quite the opposite. It is the subduing one's own will, desires, natural inclinations, etc., in the interest of pursuing that which is good and godly. It is self-restraint.

³ Vine, W. 1981; Published in electronic form by Logos Research Systems, 1996. *Vine's Expository dictionary of Old and New Testament words*. Revell: Old Tappan NJ

Unlike the animal or brute beast which does whatever he wills, the godly man is governed by loftier considerations.

Fruit Assessment

This is not to suggest that believers will, on this side of glory, ever remotely arrive at perfect adherence to these attributes. It is to say, however, that they are being conformed to the image of Christ in them all (Romans 8:29).

And those *who are Christ's* have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires (Galatians 5:24).

All Christians have crucified the flesh. It sure doesn't seem like it. It seems as if the flesh (my sinful nature) is alive and well. We must keep in mind that a crucified person is not yet a dead person. When he dies he is taken down from the crucifix and buried. The crucified man can still perform evil, but his crucifixion binds him. To push the metaphor, the crucified man can no longer rob or kill. He can't run around town causing strife. He no longer has dominion over his own life. And he knows that whatever strife remains within him will soon be gone altogether.

Similarly the Christian has crucified the flesh. The flesh, with all its evil desires, is still present. But it no longer has dominion. It cannot take its patient wherever it pleases; it has been bound by the sanctifying blood of Christ. The true Christian will ever repent. He may find himself occasionally entangled in the lusts of the flesh but he will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh (Galatians 5:16); that is, he will not bring that licentiousness to its full completion. Hodge stated it nicely.

The characteristic difference between the unrenewed and the renewed is not that the former are entirely sinful, and the latter perfectly holy; but that the former are wholly under the control of their fallen nature, while the latter have the Spirit of God dwelling in them, which leads them to crucify the flesh, and to strive after complete conformity to the image of God⁴

If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit (Galatians 5:25).

Paul's meaning I think is that since we are, by the Spirit of God, alive, let us not live as if we're dead. Dead people trust in their own dead works. Those who are Christ's trust in the blood of Christ alone and walk in His light.

Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another (Galatians 5:26).

Since this verse relates better to the passage we will find in Chapter 6, we will take it up there.

⁴ Hodge, C. 1997. *Systematic theology*. Originally published 1872. (Vol. 3, Page 248). Logos Research Systems, Inc.: Oak Harbor, WA

Questions for Study

1. What is a necessary product of saving faith (page 1)?
2. Discuss why the metaphor of fruit is appropriate for this passage (page 1).
3. How does love relate to the law of God (page 2)?
4. How can we observe love (page 2)?
5. What is our motivation for love? What is God's motivation (page 2)?
6. Discuss love and feelings (page 2)?
7. Why would joy be absent in the life of a Christian (page 2)?
8. What are the different types of peace of which the Bible speaks (page 2)?
9. What is the nature of patience (page 3)?
10. What is the difference between kindness and goodness (page 3)?
11. What are the three attributes of genuine faith (page 3)?
12. What does it mean to be meek (page 3)?
13. Define self-control (pages 3, 4)?
14. Will Christians, in this life, ever be perfect in exhibiting this fruit (page 4)?
15. Have Christians crucified the flesh? If so, what does this mean (page 4)?
16. What does it mean to live and walk in the Spirit (page 4)?