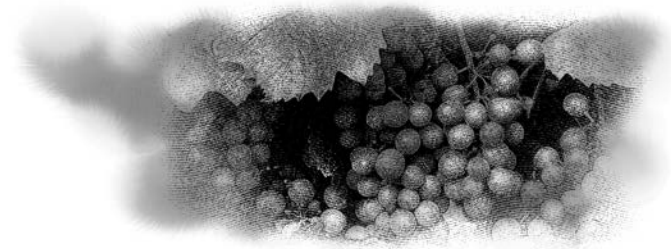


The Holy Spirit *and* *the* Fruit of the Spirit



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *John 15:1–11, Gal. 5:22, 1 Corinthians 13, Rom. 14:17, Eph. 5:9, Matt. 5:5.*

Memory Text: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law” (*Galatians 5:22, 23, NASB*).

The fruit of the Spirit is the true essence of the Christian life. While the apostle Paul lists nine different aspects of this fruit, it is nevertheless one fruit and has to be seen in its entirety. The fruit of the Spirit does not tell us what a person might be able to do for God through spiritual gifts and talents. Rather, it shows how the person lives for God. It tells who the person is. All the virtues that are listed in Galatians 5:22, 23 are present in Jesus Christ. Hence, the fruit of the Spirit is the life of Jesus Christ in us, made possible through the power of the Holy Spirit.

The fruit of the Spirit is not something we achieve by purely human effort. It is possible to produce and display some of the same virtues through the exercise of our willpower. But that is not the same as what the Holy Spirit does in us. What we produce ourselves is like a wax fruit compared to the real. Wax fruits are artificial. From a distance they look just as beautiful, but the taste is immeasurably inferior to the real. Real fruit is not manufactured. It grows out of a relationship. When the Holy Spirit connects us with Jesus, through His Written Word, His characteristics begin to be revealed in our own lives.

* Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, February 18.

The Condition of Fruitfulness

Read John 15:1–11. Why can fruit come forth only out of a living relationship with Jesus, the Vine? Why is abiding in Jesus so important? How do we abide in Him?

The first secret to genuine Christian fruit bearing is to abide in Christ. Apart from Christ, we cannot produce genuine spiritual fruit. The fruit of the Spirit is not imposed upon us from outside but is the result of the life of Christ within us. In John 15:1–11, Jesus tells us that fruit bearing is the result of the life of Christ, the Vine, flowing through the branches of the believers. The growth of the fruit is God's work through Jesus Christ.

The responsibility of the believer is to abide in Christ. When Christ dwells in our thoughts, He will become visible in our actions. Jesus lives His life in us. The life Christ lived will be reproduced in us, in the sense that we will reflect His character.

The fruit of the Spirit is the character of Jesus, produced by the Holy Spirit in the followers of Christ. When Christ dwells in us, we will “walk by the Spirit, and . . . will not carry out the desire of the flesh” (*Gal. 5:16, NASB*).

In the words of Jesus: “ ‘Every good tree bears good fruit; but the rotten tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a rotten tree produce good fruit’ ” (*Matt. 7:17, 18, NASB*). The good fruit is the natural product of our abiding relationship with Jesus through the Holy Spirit. When we cooperate with the Spirit's inner promptings on our hearts, the fruit of the Spirit becomes evident in our lives. Our characters will be transformed to reflect the character of Jesus Christ in what we say and do and even think. The Holy Spirit will give us power to live victoriously and to develop the virtues that are characteristic of those who are God's children.

In 2 Timothy 3:5, the apostle Paul describes people who “will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly” (*NLT*). What is the difference between a religious life and a life that is filled with the Holy Spirit? How can we know which kind of life we ourselves are living?

The Fruit of Love

Read Galatians 5:22 and 1 Corinthians 13. Why is love the first and foremost aspect of the fruit of the Spirit? How does love affect all the following aspects of this fruit?

Love appropriately leads and crowns the various characteristics of the fruit of the Spirit and permeates the whole fruit. In a sense all other qualities listed can be seen as aspects of love. Because God is love (*1 John 4:8*), the greatest Christian virtue is love (*1 Cor. 13:13*). God's love is the foundation and source of every other goodness. God's love is poured out to us within our hearts through the Holy Spirit (*Rom. 5:5*). Love is the evidence that we are God's children.

This love is far more than mere human affection. It cannot be produced by human effort. It comes as a result of abiding in Christ. Such love is generous and unmerited. It alone has the power to transform. In its tender yet strong nature, divine love leads the sinner to repentance and awakens the desire for something better. Love has the power to unite—even those who formerly were enemies (*Luke 6:27, 28; Rom. 5:8*). Thus, by our love for each other the world will know that Christians are indeed followers of Jesus Christ (*John 13:35*). This fruit of love will also lead Christians to manifest understanding and sensitivity toward others.

It is interesting that the master description of love in 1 Corinthians 13 comes right between chapters 12 and 14. Those two chapters deal with the gifts of the Spirit. Chapter 13, however, deals with love: the fruit of the Spirit. Even the superior gifts are nothing without love. The gifts of the Spirit without the fruit of the Spirit are powerless and do not produce the blessing that God intends. Love, however, is the glue that binds all other virtues of the fruit of the Spirit into a united whole and gives authenticity to everything we do.

Where does your life lack the quality of love? Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you with love toward those people with whom you are dealing on a daily basis. Remember that God also loves us through other people. How can you show others love? How does love affect those other virtues mentioned in the fruit of the Spirit?

Joy, Peace, and Patience

Romans 14:17 reads: “for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (*NASB*). That is, joy is love’s reaction to the blessings of God and His great mercy and forgiveness.

Now, human joy often is focused upon earthly things and is affected by the conditions that surround us. The joy that is rooted in the fruit of the Spirit, however, focuses on God and what He has done for us. It is not motivated by surrounding conditions. As God’s people, we are to be joyful. This does not mean that we have to smile all the time, even though a friendly smile expresses much. But our trust in God will give us abundant reasons to rejoice with unspeakable joy over what He has done for us and in us. Spiritual joy is the result of active faith.

Read John 14:27 along with Romans 14:17. How is peace related to the work of the Holy Spirit?

Peace is more lasting than joy. Peace comes as a result of being justified by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ (*Rom. 5:1*). When we are at peace with God, the Holy Spirit will lead us to be peaceful and patient toward others. Because the God of peace will be with us (*Phil. 4:9*) through the Holy Spirit, we will not be quarrelsome and vengeful toward others. Instead, we will seek to live as peaceably as possible with everyone (*Rom. 12:18*).

Read 2 Peter 3:9. How does patience reflect the character of God?

Patience is not a prevalent characteristic of human beings. It means putting up with others or with circumstances, even when things do not run smoothly. Yet, even in trials, we are not alone. God sustains us through His Holy Spirit and builds patience, which is a characteristic mark of the believers in the end time (*Rev. 14:12*). Only those who aim at a worthy goal can be patient.

Joy, peace, and patience. How much of this fruit do you experience in your life? In which of these areas do you need more work done in you?

Kindness, Goodness, and Faithfulness

Read 1 Corinthians 13:4. Why does genuine kindness have such positive appeal to other people? Where do you see God's kindness in His dealings with humanity?

“Kindness” is the word frequently used in describing God's dealings with His people. Kindness also describes our dealings with others in their failures. God could be quite harsh in dealing with our faults. Yet, He treats us as a loving father would treat a learning child (*Hos. 11:1–4*). Perhaps nothing discredits our Christian testimony and ministry more frequently than unkindness. It does not cost money to be kind, but it can open the door to the heart of the other person. No matter how firm we must be in reproof, we need not become unkind in our dealings with others, whatever their faults and issues. To reprove in kindness is perhaps the greatest sign of nobility of character.

Read Ephesians 5:9. What accompanies goodness in this passage?

Goodness is love in action. The goodness that grows as the fruit of the Spirit also includes works and acts of goodness. It is goodness shown to others in practical works of love. When the Holy Spirit lives in us, there will be a positive outflow of goodness to the people with whom we come in contact.

Read Galatians 5:22. Why is it important to be trustworthy and faithful in our Christian walk with God?

What is in view here is the faithfulness of character and conduct brought forth through the Holy Spirit. Faithfulness means trustworthiness or being reliable. Those who are faithful do what they promise to do. Faithfulness is also a characteristic of Jesus Christ, who is called “the faithful witness” (*Rev. 1:5, NASB*), and of God the Father, who keeps His promises and is faithful in what He does (*1 Cor. 1:9, 10:13, 1 Thess. 5:24, 2 Thess. 3:3*). In our faithfulness, we reflect the image of God in our lives. “It is not the great results we attain, but the motives from which we act, that weigh with God. He prizes goodness and faithfulness more than the greatness of the work accomplished.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 510, 511.

Gentleness and Self-Control

Read Galatians 5:23 and Matthew 5:5. Why is meekness, or gentleness, so important for Christlike leadership?

Gentleness, or meekness, does not mean weakness. It is not cowardice or lack of leadership. On the contrary, Moses was called the meekest man on earth (*Num. 12:3*); yet, he was a powerful leader of God's people. Meek people are not boisterous, quarrelsome, or selfishly aggressive. Instead, they serve in a gentle spirit. Meekness can be the outward expression of an inward faith and confidence, not in oneself, of course, but in the power of God, which works within us. Oftentimes, those who are loud, boisterous, and assertive are covering up insecurities and fears.

Read Galatians 5:23 and Proverbs 16:32. What misery comes when we do not exercise self-control? What blessings do we gain if we are self-controlled and temperate in our lives?

The last aspect of the fruit of the Spirit is temperance or self-control. Here is where we all need to be careful, for who doesn't struggle, in one area or another, with self-mastery? Before one can rule a city, a community, or a church, one has to be able to control his or her own spirit. True temperance is control, not only over food and drink but over every phase of life.

All the above-mentioned aspects are part of the one fruit of the Spirit. When the Bible describes God's work in our lives, the ethical aspects of holiness have priority over the charismatic gifts. Christlikeness in all its facets is what really matters in the life of the believer. Because the fruit of the Spirit is the common distinguishing mark of all believers everywhere, it produces a visible unity in His church.

Think about areas of your life in which you should be more self-controlled. Perhaps you are in one area but not so much in another. Why is it important to have, through the power of God, control over all areas? Bring your answer to class on Sabbath.

Further Thought: “In modern language the passage in Galatians 5:22, 23 could read something like this: ‘The Fruit of the Spirit is an affectionate, lovable disposition, a radiant spirit and a cheerful temper, a tranquil mind and a quiet manner, a forbearing patience in provoking circumstances and with trying people, a sympathetic insight and tactful helpfulness, generous judgment and a big-souled charity, loyalty and reliability under all circumstances, humility that forgets self in the joy of others, in all things self-mastered and self-controlled, which is the final mark of perfecting. This is the kind of character that is the Fruit of the Spirit. Everything is in the word Fruit. It is not by striving, but by abiding; not by worrying, but by trusting; not of works, but of faith.’ ” —S. Chadwick, in Arthur Walkington Pink, *The Holy Spirit* (Bellingham, Wash.: Logos Bible Software, n.d.), chapter 30.

“If the love of the truth is in your heart, you will talk of the truth. You will talk of the blessed hope that you have in Jesus. If you have love in your heart, you will seek to establish and build up your brother in the most holy faith. If a word is dropped that is detrimental to the character of your friend or brother, do not encourage this evil-speaking. It is the work of the enemy. Kindly remind the speaker that the Word of God forbids that kind of conversation.”—Ellen G. White, *Ye Shall Receive Power*, p. 76.

Discussion Questions:

- ❶ In class, talk about the final question at the end of Thursday’s study regarding the need for self-control. Why, if we are saved by grace, is victory over sin so important? After all, isn’t the gospel about forgiveness of sin? At the same time, think of the character of Judas and what the sin of covetousness did to him. What can we learn from his example about the answer to the question about the need for victory? Also, how does what Ellen G. White says here help shed light on the question of the need for victory? “One wrong trait of character, one sinful desire cherished, will eventually neutralize all the power of the gospel.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 53.
- ❷ Why is the fruit of the Spirit more important than any gifts of the Spirit?
- ❸ Read aloud 1 Corinthians 13 in class and talk about what it means. Why does Paul put such a big emphasis on the need for love? How can we learn to love the way that Paul talks about showing love here? Why is death to self and abiding in Christ so crucial, especially in loving those whom we truly dislike?