

# “The Fruit of the Spirit”

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Before one can understand "the fruit of the Spirit," one must understand the context of Galatians 5 where "the fruit of the Spirit" is revealed. In this chapter, Paul exhorts Christians not to allow their liberty to degenerate into a "yoke of bondage." Some individuals in the Galatian church had "fallen from grace" because they sought to be "justified by the law." The Judaizing teachers were binding the old law upon the church and, by such, had hindered some in obeying the truth (verse 7). These false teachers of Judaism were troubling the church (verse 12). However, as Christians, we have been called to liberty — liberty from the old law, from sin, and from the bondage of sin. Thus, Paul exhorts, "only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh" (verse 13). One reason we ought not use our liberty as a license to sin is because "we walk in the Spirit" (verse 16). To "walk in the Spirit" means to walk according to the Spirit's teaching through His sword "which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:17). This is the same as being "led of the Spirit" (verse 18), and it is the opposite of walking after the flesh. The Spirit and the flesh are at odds (verse 17). They are in constant conflict. They are opposed to one another. To further illustrate this conflict, Paul contrasts "the works of the flesh" (verses 19-21) with "the fruit of the Spirit" (verses 22-23).

In verse 16 of Galatians 5, Paul commands, "Walk in the Spirit." Let us be sure, there are certain results of walking in the Spirit.

There is the benefit of not fulfilling the lust of the flesh (Galatians 5:16). The same thought is declared by David in Psalm 119:11, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." When we engraft God's word upon our hearts, it will protect us against the fiery darts of Satan. Jesus knew this lesson when He was tempted of the devil (Matthew 4). Jesus guarded Himself from each temptation by the word of God. He answered the tempter's temptation with "it is written" (Matthew 4:4,7,10).

Also, if we walk in the Spirit, we are "not under the law" (Galatians 5:18). "The law" in this verse is the Mosaic law. Earlier in this chapter, we are told Christ is become of no effect unto those who justify themselves by "the law" (verse 4). To return to the Mosaic law is to abandon the law of Christ and is to fall from grace. Some believe this means we are not under any law. However, we are under "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus" which frees us from "the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:2). We are to "fulfill the law of Christ" by bearing one another's

burdens (Galatians 6:2). And, we are to look into "the perfect law of liberty" (James 1:25). Also, consider this: Since "sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4), to say we are not under law is to say we have not nor cannot sin. Clearly, we are under law – the law of Christ, but we are not under "the law" – the law of Moses.

Further, "the fruit of the Spirit" results from walking in the Spirit. Again, when we engraft God's word upon our hearts, "the fruit of the Spirit" will be seen within us. The qualities of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance will characterize us. The Spirit will produce these qualities within us by the word He has inspired.

"The fruit of the Spirit" is the produce of the Spirit. In other words, it is the product that is produced by the Spirit's influence. "The fruit of the Spirit" is not a Christian nor the fruit of a Christian which some have mistakenly taught. In fact, the fruit of a Christian is more than just a Christian. It is true that in the natural world, mankind, animals, and plants produce after their kind. Christians should also produce after their kind, and in this sense, the fruit of a Christian is another Christian. However, Christians produce other fruit besides Christians. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught, "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matthew 7:20). Within the context, Jesus is speaking concerning false teachers who come "in sheep's clothing" but inwardly are "ravening wolves" (Matthew 7:15). To illustrate how we can know a false teacher, He taught a good tree produces good fruit, whereas an evil tree produces evil fruit. Is the only fruit of a false teacher other false teachers? Of course not! False teachers cause division, false hope, and disillusionment to only name a few. So, it is with Christians. Christians should evangelize, but there are other fruits which they should bear, and one such fruit is "the fruit of the Spirit."

Since "the fruit of the Spirit" is the produce of the Spirit, then how does the Spirit produce the qualities of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance in men today? The Spirit influences men today by the Spirit inspired word. Peter wrote, "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:21). It is this word that will make us "wise unto salvation" (2 Timothy 3:15) and "is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Romans 1:16). It provides us with "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3). Thus, nothing else is needed for it is all sufficient and will produce the right fruit.

In the parable of the sower, Jesus taught that a sower sowed seed by the way side, upon a rock, among thorns, and on good ground (Luke 8:5-8). Later, Jesus

told us what the seed represents. He said, "The seed is the word of God" (Luke 8:11). So, the word was sown in the hearts of men, but sadly the hearts of some men were like the soil of the way side, the rock, and the thorny ground. Thankfully, when the word of God is sown in other men whose hearts are like the soil of the good ground, it "brings forth fruit with patience," that is with constant perseverance (Luke 8:15). What is "the fruit of the Spirit"? It is what the word provides and produces in the good soil of a person's heart.

Contrasted to the Spirit produced fruit, "the works of the flesh" are "the unfruitful works of darkness" (Ephesians 5:9,11). In other words, "the works of the flesh" do not yield a valuable or desirable fruit. "The works of the flesh" are the evil fruit of the evil tree. They bring forth no blessings and no real benefits.

Please take careful note that unlike the plural "works of the flesh," "the fruit of the Spirit" is singular. "Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance" are not separate fruits but are characteristics or attributes of the singular "fruit of the Spirit." Besides these nine characteristics, Paul adds "all goodness and righteousness and truth" in Ephesians 5:9. Thus, giving us a total of eleven attributes of "the fruit of the Spirit" — all of which are virtues of the highest moral and spiritual qualities.

These qualities or characteristics will be manifested in the lives of those "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:1,4; Galatians 5:16). Like the "graces" of 2 Peter 1, if "the fruit of the Spirit" "be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful" (2 Peter 1:8). In contrast, if they are not manifested in our lives, then we are not being "led of [or 'by'] the Spirit" (Galatians 5:18; Romans 8:14). And again, like the "graces" of 2 Peter 1, if they are lacking, then we are "blind, and cannot see afar off" (2 Peter 1:9). Thus, the proof of the tree is in the fruit. Jesus said, "the tree is known by his fruit" (Matthew 12:33). And, "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matthew 7:20). So, let us determine to always "walk after the Spirit" by following His word in order that we may manifest these marvelous traits — "the fruit of the Spirit."