

The Fruit of The Spirit

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Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, Yeshua:

The fruit of the Spirit is the fruit of our character as we live a holy life dedicated to the Lord. It is the character of Christ produced by the Spirit of Christ within us and is the greatest treasure of the believer. We read: *"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23, NKJV);ⁱ "(The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:9-10); "Now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life" (Romans 6:22).ⁱⁱ*

While many gifts are mentioned in scripture that we will soon discuss, there is only "one" (singular) fruit of the Spirit: Love. Therefore, Galatians shows us eight characteristics of love producing Godly character, as God is love.ⁱⁱⁱ However, defining God's loving nature requires far more than eight characteristics. A careful search of scripture reveals other fruit of the Spirit, possibly an endless number of virtues that define some aspect of God's love.^{iv}

Jesus said: *"By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35).^v* Another way to look at these characteristics would be to say love is joy, love is peace, love is longsuffering and patient, love is gentle and kind, love is good and righteous, love is faithful and trustworthy, love is meek and slow to anger, and love is tempered and self-controlled.^{vi} D.L. Moody said: joy is love exulting, peace is love reposing, longsuffering is love untiring, gentleness is love enduring, goodness is love in action, faith is love on the battlefield, meekness is love under discipline, and temperance is love in training.^{vii}

Paul emphasized these characteristics in a slightly different way, saying: *"Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails" (1 Corinthians 13:4-8).*

And he said: *"Whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things" (Philippians 4:8).*

Notice he emphasized our focus on what is true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of a good report.

Desire these loving Godly qualities in ourselves and likewise take notice of them in other people filled with the Holy Spirit.

These eight characteristics of love are not imposed on us from anything external but result from the Spirit of Christ dwelling within us. They are essential to our growth and spiritual maturity as we become Christ-like. Christlikeness is more than an imitation of Christ; it means that we have become a "partaker" in His divine nature.^{viii} Eighty-five times in the New Testament, we are told that we are "in Christ." Being in Him means that we have become part of His very being. Paul said, *"For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones" (Ephesians 5:30)*, bone of His bone, and flesh of His flesh.

We also read about the fruit of the Spirit in the Old Testament: *"He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper" (Psalm 1:3)*. The analogy of a tree bearing fruit tells us that the purpose of a life dedicated to Christ is to produce fruit. Fruit is not made; it grows. Good trees yield good fruit, while bad trees grow rotten fruit. However, we must be careful not to think that good works can produce the fruit of the Spirit. Nor should we assume the Spirit was accessible before Christ's death and resurrection to make us a new creation in Him, as the promise of the Holy Spirit is a gift of the Father and Son.

The reference in the Psalms to prospering also tells us that fruit is the product of our labor. Jesus said: *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16)*. In other words, Jesus is saying: "Let your Godly character shine so that all people will take notice of your good actions and glorify God." Hence, the fruit of the Spirit is manifest and cannot be hidden.

The good works that Jesus speaks about require the gifts of the Spirit, and while they are not the same, it is essential that they operate together. Paul tells us that the gifts without the fruit are powerless and of little use. He said: *"And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing" (1 Corinthians 13:2)*.

The development of our Christ-like nature must occur before any use of the spiritual gifts. The gifts accompanied by the fruit of the Spirit are powerful and of tremendous benefit in ministering to the Lord. While the gifts of the Spirit relate to our spiritual capabilities and service to the Lord, the fruit of the Spirit has to do with our character in Christ.^{ix} God is as interested in our nature as He is in the impact we make for His Kingdom.

It is essential to recognize characteristics similar to the fruit and gifts of the spirit inherited at birth and naturally exhibited. For example, people naturally love their parents, spouses, and children. They may have been born with a patient temperament and find joy and happiness in material comforts and even peace in spiritual practices, such as meditation. People can act morally, ethically, decently, friendly, honorable, and patient. Concerning natural gifting, some are adept at public speaking, singing, or playing music. Through schooling and training, people can

enhance their natural character and abilities and become educated, philosophical, cultured, and well-informed.

But none of these efforts produce the fruit of the Spirit if it is devoid of the Spirit of Christ. In other words, if our character and works are not God-centered, they are man-centered. Paul said, *"I consider them [knowledgeable gains as] garbage, that I may gain Christ"* (Philippians 3:8). If man-centered, they can only produce an imitation of the fruit and gifts of the Spirit. This imitation leads to humanism, an outlook or system of thought attaching prime importance to human rather than divine or supernatural matters. This humanistic view of the world has deceived and infected every religion, including some Christian denominations. If we are deceived by humanist values that, on their surface, appear Godly, we will focus on the intrinsic importance and goodness of human beings, emphasizing everyday human needs and seeking solely rational ways of solving human problems.^x

Paul contrasts the fruit of the spirit with the works of the flesh. We read: *"Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like"* (Galatians 5:19-21). These actions would be considered carnal, meaning "following our will and emotions that lead us to walk contrary to the will of God." Christians can also walk according to the flesh. Therefore, we need to recognize that the fruit of the Spirit is not an indicator of our salvation. It merely reflects our Christ-like character growth and spiritual maturity that increases as we further surrender to Christ.

The same is true of the gifts of the Spirit. A person may have been born with natural abilities that God can enhance and transform into spiritual gifts. Or God can give us new physical skills and spiritual gifts to serve Him. The Lord often takes our physical talents, enhances them with a spiritual anointing and power, and transforms them into spiritual ministry service. Paul said these imparted spiritual gifts are irrevocable, meaning God does not take them away just because we abuse them or use them for our selfish gain.^{xi} Nor does He take them away if we use them without the fruit of the Spirit, thinking we are serving God but operating without His love and the Spirit of Christ.

The works of the flesh, in contrast to the fruit of the Spirit, demonstrate the struggle between our self-will and the will of Christ. Hence Paul says: *"Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh"* (Galatians 5:16). The flesh produces works, and the Spirit produces fruit. Works require self-effort, but to produce fruit only requires our submission to the Holy Spirit and His inner workings. One is manufactured while the other is grown. Works are dead, but the Spirit is alive; one glorifies man, and the other glorifies God. A Spirit-filled life demonstrating Godly character coupled with good works should be the desire of every Christian.

Jesus gave us the secrets of fruit-bearing, saying:

"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear

more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples" (John 15:1-8).

Seven times Jesus says that we are to "abide" in Him. Unfortunately, many baptized in the Spirit fail to live a life in the fullness of the Spirit. Jesus warned that every branch that does not bear fruit is withered, taken away, thrown into the fire, and burned. But He also promised that every branch that bears fruit would be pruned, implying testing and chastening, so it produces even more fruit.^{xii}

So, what does it look like to abide in Christ? Jesus used the analogy of a branch connected to its vine, saying, "Without Me, you can do nothing." The branches are not just "vine-like" but are part of it. Likewise, our fruit does not merely resemble pomegranates, for example, but is a pomegranate on every molecular level. However, the fact that Jesus implied the possibility of separation from the vine infers that we, as Christians, can live a life apart from Christ.^{xiii} However, such a life will produce no fruit of the Spirit and no good works of value to God's Kingdom. To abide in Christ means that we must live in the Spirit, be led by the Spirit, and walk in the Spirit.^{xiv}

We must continually rejoice in the saving grace of Jesus, knowing that we are redeemed, justified, reborn into God's family, and adopted as sons and daughters of God, and therefore, joint heirs with Christ. While the gifts of the Spirit were a manifestation of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, the fruit of the Spirit did not come from this outpouring. It only comes from our rebirth and abiding in Christ.

Amen!

ⁱ All Scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Bible (NKJV) unless otherwise noted, Thomas Nelson Inc., 1982.

ⁱⁱ Matthew 7:16-18, 20. Psalm 1:3.

ⁱⁱⁱ 1 John 4:7-8.

^{iv} Duffield, Guy P. and Van Cleave, Nathaniel M. *Foundations of Pentecostal Theology*. Foursquare Media. 1910.

^v Luke 6:27-28. Romans 5:5.

^{vi} Romans 14:17. Nehemiah 8:10. Psalm 16:11, 86:15. John 14:27. Philippians 4:9. 2 Peter 3:9. James 1:4. 2 Timothy 4:2. 1 Corinthians 6:12-14, 6:19-20, 13:6-7. Ephesians 5:9. Matthew 5:5, 11:29, 25:21-23. Proverbs 16:32. Galatians 5:22-23.

^{vii} Moody, Dwight Lyman. *Notes from My Bible: From Genesis to Revelation*. New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1895. 166.

^{viii} 2 Peter 1:4.

^{ix} 1 Corinthians 12:11.

^x Oxford Dictionary.

^{xi} Romans 11:29.

^{xii} Hebrews 12:11.

^{xiii} 1 Corinthians 1:7. 1 Samuel 10:10-11, 16:14, 19:23-24. Numbers 22-24.

^{xiv} Galatians 5:16-25.