

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT – FILLED LIFE (SPIRITUAL MATURITY)

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TEXT: *But 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)

PREAMBLE

Our Eternal Father's expectation for our lives is to be like a fruitful garden. Paul says in **1 Corinthians 3:9** that we are God's field. "**For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building**" (**1 Corinthians 3:9 NKJV**). For we are God's fellow workers; **you are God's harvest field**, God's building. (**1 Corinthians 3:9 TCNT**) we are God's farmland. J.B. Phillips translations has "**You are a field under God's cultivation**". The Greek says, literally, "you are God's tillage" "for of God we are fellow-workmen; **God's tillage, God's building ye are**". (**1 Corinthians 3:9 YLT**)

Our saviour Jesus Christ repeatedly stressed the Christian's call to fruitfulness. "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". (**John 15:5 NKJV**) "**Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit**". (**Matthew 7:17 NKJV**)

It must be our purpose to make our lives a garden of God by nurturing the fruit of the Spirit. "**Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life**". (**Galatians 6:7-8 NKJV**) Here, Paul emphasises that the kind of harvest we reap in this life and beyond depends on the kind of planting we do: **Either we are sowing after the flesh or after the spirit!** The Holy Spirit dwells in us, then, not as an award-winning exhibit to be showcased but as a **refreshing power to permit spiritual fruitfulness**.

Let us look more closely at what this means by focusing on three key words **{Fruit, Spirit & Love}** from **Galatians 5:22**.

FRUIT

Paul contrasts the "**fruit**" of the Spirit with the "**works**" of the flesh. "**Works**" suggest something made, produced, crafted, fabricated or manufactured. The things we make are dead; no life in them. The works of the flesh lead only to death. "**Fruit**" suggest, not something which is made, but something which grows. Fruit is the evidence of life.

The word "fruit" suggest some characteristics which all things growing in a garden have in common;

- ✚ **They Live.** Mankind have never been able to produce a single living thing. The things we make always belong to the realm of death and carry within themselves the element of disintegration. If we build a building, we use dead materials and while it is still in the construction process, nature has already begun to pull it down.
- ✚ Fruit, on the other hand, belongs to the realm of life and carries within itself the power of propagation. Life is of God – it owes its origin to God. Fruit is God's work! Then God said, "**Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth**"; and it was so. (Genesis 1:11 NKJV) **Christianity is life. Spirituality is life. The fruit of the spirit cannot be manufactured; it must be grown!**
- ✚ **They Grow.** Living things do not remain the same; they grow! There is a process of graduation: from seed, to sprout, to shoot, to enlarging plant, to blossom, to fruit.



The life of the Spirit is not a static or stationery thing. It is a process of gradual, continual growth and development. (Ephesians 4:15, 1 Peter 2:2, 2 Peter 1:5-9 & 2Peter 3:18).

The mistake made by those who seek a modern Holy Spirit Baptism or Miraculous Indwelling of the Holy Spirit is that they are looking for a complete, fully – finished, finalized work of the Spirit – not a growing spirituality.

- ✚ **They Require Cultivation.** Bountiful harvest from the farm or plantation is not possible without careful cultivation. See picture of a careful cultivation





Picture of Unkempt farmland

Jesus said **"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.** (John 15:1-2 NKJV)



It is not man who cultivates or nurtures, but God! He is the Husbandman and we are the garden. God cultivates spirituality in us partly through the tool of His word. {1 Peter 2:2, John 17:17} But God also providentially uses the trails and troubles of this life to cultivate us for greater fruitfulness. (Hebrews 12:6, Romans 5:3-5) **God knows what He is doing with us. He prunes away dead branches and He uses troubles and trails to perfect the fruit.**

The presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives is not for the purpose of handling us ready-made virtues on a platter; but to empower us to grow fruit!

SPIRIT

Christianity is life: that life comes from the Holy Spirit. It is not possible to produce the fruit of the Spirit apart from the life of the spirit. It may be possible to imitate or counterfeit the true fruit of the Spirit, but without the power of the Spirit it is not possible to actually produce it. Men can produce artificial fruit which may seem realistic and convincing to the eye. But it's only a sham, an imitation. There has never been any life in it and there never will be. Without the Spirit there is no life: **"But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His".** (Romans 8:9 NKJV)

The link between the Holy Spirit and our own spiritual life is two-fold;

1. Spiritual Life Is Generated In Us By The Holy Spirit. In John 3:5, Jesus insisted that before we can have spiritual life we must be born again of the water and the spirit. 1 Peter 1:23 says that we” **have been born anew, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God;** (1 Peter 1:23 RSV). **In nature, life is propagated through seed. The seed of spiritual life is the word of God which has been revealed by the Holy Spirit.** (Luke 8:11)

“In accordance with His will He made us His children through the Message of the truth, so that we might, in a sense, be the Firstfruits of the things which He has created”. (James 1:18 WNT) when we obey the truth which the Holy Spirit has revealed to us in scripture, we are born again. **It takes water – moisture – for a seed to germinate. Baptism is a necessary precondition of the new birth.** **“Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life”.** (Romans 6:3-4 NKJV)

Spiritual Life Is Nourished In Us By The Holy Spirit. (Romans 8:10-26) **The Holy Spirit gives us aid and power in living the Christian life.** This takes place, not in any miraculous sense, but, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as discussed previously. The presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives brings a dimension of spiritual power to us. Ephesians 3:20 says “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, **according to the power that works in us**”.

Romans 15:13 says that we may be filled with joy, peace and hope “by the power of the Holy Spirit”.

Just as the plant receives nourishment from rain, sunshine and soil, so we are nourished and sustained by the Holy Spirit.

LOVE

Paul in Galatians 5:22 does not refer to the “fruits “ (Plural) of the Spirit but to the “fruit” (Singular) of the Spirit. This is true both in the Greek and our English translations. Many Commentators are puzzled while Paul should use a singular noun instead of Plural noun because of the adjoining sentence. They have tried to explain, usually in a not very convincing manner, why Paul chose to speak this way.

As Campbell Morgan has well observed, **there really is only one fruit of the Spirit – love!** There are two things in the text of our Bible that were introduced by man; verse numbers and punctuations and chapters. As to chapter divisions, in 1228 Stephen Langton divided the Bible into chapters. The division of the New Testament into verses was accomplished by Robert Stephens in 1551. Record has it that Masorities {These were group of Jewish scribe-scholars who from about the 6th to the 10th century CE worked to reproduced the original text of the Hebrew Bible) had previously divided the Old Testament into verses.

Back to our discussion on the fruit of the Spirit, the reason this verse 22 seems difficult is because of the way it has been punctuated by English translation. A better reading would be: “The fruit of the Spirit is love – joy, peace, etc.” Love is the sum of all these other qualities. They are ways in which love expresses itself. **If you have love you have all these things - joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control}; If you lack love you lack all these qualities.** I will expand on this as we make progress in our discussion.

The greatest truth we learn about God in the Bible is 1John 4:8: “God is love”.

The greatest truth we learn about Christian living in the Bible is Galatians 5:22; “The fruit of the Spirit is love....”

A Christian is a person who understood-perfectly, controlled, propelled, encouraged and dominated by love.

The Love Cluster

Love expresses itself in these characteristic ways;

- ❖ **JOY:** Love’s Outlook. The Bible associates joy with the Holy Spirit. {Romans 14:17, 1 Thessalonians 1:6} Joy is a translation of the Greek word CHARA meaning, gladness, cheerfulness, delight. Someone has said that real joy is a flower that grows only in the soil of love. When a young man and a young woman are deeply in love, their love colours their whole outlook...it glows! There is a sparkle of life in them.
- ❖ But the challenge is that we can either love wrong things or right things. If we love wrong things – like money, power or pleasure – then those are the things which give us joy. Judas Iscariot had great love for Money, to the extent of trading off his Master for Silver. (Luke 22:1-5). On the other hand, if we love God, then it is God who will give us joy. If the joy has gone out of your Christian life, then love is gone. **If serving God – worshipping, giving, discipleship, fellowship with one another – does not bring joy, then there is no love.**
- ❖ **PEACE:** Love’s Attitude. Peace is one of the warmest desires in the hearts of men and women everywhere in the world. Many need peace but don’t know how to get it. **Ephesians 2:13-18** shows the Biblical formula for peace. When we have peace with God we can have peace within us and with those around us. But without love there can be no peace. Jesus’ command to “love your enemies” is a far more practical basis for world peace than treaties, negotiation, or balance of power. If only the Russian President (Putin) had learnt this in the scripture and apply it, he would never have invaded Ukraine.
- ✚ **PATIENCE:** Love’s Habit. KJV has “long-suffering”. The Greek word used is MAKROTHUMIA which may better be translated as “Long tempered” – the opposite of “short-tempered”. **It refers to patient endurance under incessant provocation; this is the kind of love which bears all things and endures all things and never fails.** {1 Corinthians 13:7} There is a translation that renders “bears all things” as “knows how to be silent” [MNT].
- ✚ A Christian must “**not be easily provoked**” (1 Corinthians 13:5).
- ✚ Only love can enable us to endure unkind criticism, insult, grievances, slights, unkindness, and injustice without erupting!
- ✚ **Outbursts of anger are not a problem of temper, but of love.**
- ✚ **KINDNESS:** Love’s Conduct. Kindness is the willingness to help other people, even if it is inconvenient. Kindness {Greek word is CHRESTONES} is service even when it requires a sacrifice!

- ✦ **What word could better sum up the life of Christ? “He went about doing good...” (Acts 10:38) why? Because He was motivated by love!**
- ✦ **GOODNESS; Love’s Character.** Goodness is not just what we do, however it is what we are as children of God. It is character! **It is not only doing the right thing, it is being the right thing.** {Example the Job.....Custom officer!}. What makes us strive for goodness? The same thing that makes a little child strive to please his parents: LOVE! **Jesus said “if you love me you will keep my commandment”** (John 14:15). This is conditional statement; key driver for action is “Love”. When love is present – you will act right to obey the commandment of Jesus Christ. In the absence of the love for Christ, obedience to His commandment. Becomes a challenge!
- ✦ **FAITHFULNESS: Love’s Commitment.** The original word refers to fidelity, loyalty, dependability. It means being true to your duty. It is the ability to stick it out no matter how tough the going becomes. Jesus promised, **“ Be thou faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life”** (Revelation 2:10). Faithfulness is not easy. It is not hard to be a Christian or to be a husband or a friend for a little while.
- ✦ But day-in, day-out, continuing faithfulness in good times and bad is a challenge. What will keep us faithful to God and faithful to our commitments to one another? Nothing but Love. Love is the driving force behind faithfulness. Remaining faithful is love that lasts and lasts!
- ✦ **GENTLENESS: Love’s disposition.** Some translations have “meekness”. Meekness is not weakness, timidity or cowardice. Rather it is power; it is spiritual toughness. Gentleness or meekness is power which has been brought under control and yielded to God. Only two men in the entire Bible were called meek – Moses and Jesus {Numbers 12:3, Matthew 11:29}. **Both were men of great power and great restraint. Gentleness is power restrained, tamed and controlled by love.**
- ✦ **SELF - CONTROL; Love’s Victory.** The Greek word (ECKRAETIA) means to check, subdue, master all passions and desires. **Galatians 5:24 offers a great illustration of the meaning of self-control – “And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” (Galatians 5:24 NKJV)** It means saying “No” to the flesh. A big No to fleshly desires and lust! The evidence of a lack of self-control is everywhere in our society: sexual immorality, drinking, drugs, gluttony, angry outbursts etc. The corrective is love; “For the love of Christ controls us,”. (**2 Corinthians 5:14 RSV**)

CONCLUSION

The fruit of the Spirit is Love. Our local congregation will be able to fulfil its mission in our community and neighbourhood only to the extent that brethren are skilful, driven and controlled by love. Such love is not possible without the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

To grow the “fruit of the Spirit” in our lives we must walk in the Spirit, (**Galatians 5:16**) be led by the Spirit, (**Galatians 5:18**) and sow to the Spirit (**Galatians 6:8**). We must strive to be the right kind of tree to enable us bears the right kind of fruit; it’s only those branches in Christ that can bear much fruit (**John 15:5**). Are you cultivating the fruit of the Spirit?