

## ***THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT (Part I)***

### ***Galatians 5:22***

A Christian is a person in whom the Spirit of God dwells. He is a man of the Spirit. But what is the proof of the indwelling Spirit? What kind of impact does He make on a life? How does He affect a life? About these matters we can be sure. Spiritual persons are those who have Christian character. The indwelling Spirit will produce in them the fruit of Christian character. With this list of nine qualities, the Apostle identifies the "fruit of the Spirit."

Jesus likened the Christian to a branch. He claimed, "I am the vine, ye are the branch." While fruit does appear on the branch, it is really the product of the vine. The vine provides everything that is necessary for the growth of the fruit. The branch simply bears the fruit. All that a branch can ever do is abide in the vine. So the fruit God desires from your life is the result of the enablement of the Holy Spirit within.

These nine qualities were each evident in the daily walk of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was everything that God desires in every relationship of life. You could write the verse, "The fruit of the Spirit is Christ-likeness" and not be far away from the heart of the matter. God was responsible for the character manifest in Jesus, so if He develops character in you it will be of the same kind.

Dr. G. Campbell Morgan contended that the word "fruit" is single because the verse means that the fruit of the Spirit is "love", and that the other eight qualities grow out of that love. While it is true that love occurs first because it is primary, that does not seem to be the best exposition of the verse. Rather we should see the three qualities grouped around the different relationships of life. The first three point us Godward. The next ones point us toward our fellowman. The last ones point us to our relationship to self. So character in all of its dimensions is the fruit of the Spirit. In this study we will consider only the first three, the Godward side of the character. Toward God there will be "love, joy, peace." However, the singular one of "Fruit" reminds us that all nine qualities actually make up one cluster of fruit.

### ***I. THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS LOVE.***

This part of the cluster of fruit is put first because it is first. None of the other qualities would really be possible without this one. The Holy Spirit will produce in you "love."

I do not want to bore you with another listing of the different words used by the Greeks for love, but it becomes almost essential because of the poverty of our language. We use the word "love" for almost everything, but the Greeks were much more specific about it. When you told a person in Greek "I love you", they

knew what you meant. If you were making a proposal for a sexual relationship, it would be evident by the word that you used. If you were expressing a warmth and affection for them, this too would be evident by the word that you used. But if you were suggesting that you were committed to meet whatever need that they might have, that you would make any sacrifice necessary to bring them happiness, you had a word for this. It was the Greek word that we transliterate into English as Agape. It was the word most commonly used by the New Testament writers to refer to God's love for us. God is the source of all agape love. He expressed such love for us in the sending of His Son. This is the kind of love that the Holy Spirit produces as fruit in the Christian. He fills the life that He controls with agape.

Who is object of this Agape? Surely God must be the first object. The Holy Spirit draws the heart of those He indwells toward God in devotion and service. This devotion will express itself in making God supreme in the life, and in sacrifice to the Supreme One. An interesting thing has come to light in the Jonestown tragedy of these past few days. There is a real logic in what those poor souls did in Jonestown. When you understand what happened, it does make sense. That group of souls had accepted James Jones as being divine. They called him "father". They were committed to the promise that He was their hope and messiah. Believing that, they obeyed what ever command he gave. It seemed logical that if their god had said to them, "Drink this poison brew", that they would drink it. Are you not grateful that the God we know is a God of love, that He is the Giver of life. But the indwelling Spirit will bring about in you the kind of devotion toward God that will make any sacrifice, and will obey any command. Jesus went even to the cross---not to a suicide, but to a death at the hand of others, because it was the will of His heavenly Father. He will produce this kind of Godward devotion in us.

But this love toward God will also express itself in agape toward our fellowman. Love for God is primarily expressed in service to those who are in the image of God. So the first fruit of the Spirit is love. When you find a life that is devoid of love, you have found a life that is devoid of the Spirit of the God of love.

## ***II. THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS JOY.***

There is a brightness and gladness in Christian character, A distinction needs to be made about words however. The fruit of the Spirit is not happiness. The very word happiness itself suggests that it depends on what happens. It is a response to an external stimuli. Joy goes deeper than this. It is something almost independent of the outward circumstances.

The root of this "joy" is God himself. The "joy" of the Christian is a "joy in the Lord. This is the reason for the oft repeated admonition to "rejoice in the Lord".

Another word for it would be "delight". The fruit of the Spirit is "delight in the Lord." There is a delight in Who God is, and in what God has done.

It will be easy to identify a life in which the Holy Spirit is producing the fruit of joy you will often hear them speaking of how good God is. The outlook on life will be one of gladness because they know their lives to be the object of the care of a loving God. You will catch it when they pray--their prayers will be filled with more praise than Petition. When something good happens in their life, they will be giving God the credit for it. They will be joyful about the Lord and what He has done, and is doing it their lives. Do you have this kind of joy? It is possible to have it and then lose it. After his grievous sins David was made to pray, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation." He had lost his delight in the Lord and in what the Lord was doing in His life. It was no longer a joy to fellowship with God. He did not have a song of gladness when he went to the temple. He did not write any twenty-third Psalms during that time.

Have you ever tried to make yourself joyful? If you have, you have found it to be frustratingly impossible. This deep joy in the Lord is something that is a fruit of the indwelling Spirit. He causes us to delight in the Lord and in his goodness. He makes it a joy to know and to serve the Lord.

### ***III. THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS PEACE.***

Peace is a beautiful Gospel word. Jesus was labeled by the prophet as the "Prince of Peace." Peace was surely a mark of His life. The word means much more than just the absence of hostility. Our President has been attempting to negotiate a "peace" between Israel and Egypt, but not in the Biblical sense. He is just trying to negotiate an absence of hostility. He wants them to agree to live together in the Middle East without any attempts to hurt or destroy each other. In Biblical language peace means for them to be a whole and healthy relationship.

The peace that the Holy Spirit bears in the Christian life is a tranquility of mind based upon a right relationship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. It is that inner calm that fills the heart when you know that you are right with God and that you are under the care of God.

A wealthy man commissioned an artist to paint a picture illustrating the idea in the word "peace" some years ago. He did it by offering a prize to the painting that best presented the idea. A number of capable and trained artists made an attempt. Most of them were of quiet, tranquil nature scenes. However, the one that won the prize was most unusual. It was the picture of a storm-swollen brook dashing among its stones, the overhanging foliage being whipped by the wind. But over the spray there was a branch with a little nest on it, and in the nest a mother bird, with her little ones peering contentedly from under her wing. This is peace! The Holy Spirit makes us aware that through the Lord Jesus Christ, we are under the

favoring wings of our God, and that under those wings we have nothing to fear. The God who overshadows us is fully able to meet our every need, and will not fail. What should we fear? Why should we be afraid of what some man might do to us? Why should we fear any circumstance that might develop. The opposite of this peace is fear and anxiety. The Holy Spirit brings into the heart of the Christian a sense of soul-rest that sustains them in the storms of life. They have peace because they know that they have God.

Paul knew about this peace! He lived and served in a constant storm, but never without the peace of God to attend His path.

***CONCLUSION:***

Are you ready for the Holy Spirit to produce this kind of crop in your life? Acknowledge to Him your need and your desire. Acknowledge that these are not native to the soil of your flesh. Depend upon Him! Yield to Him! He will do the rest.

You do not come to know love, joy, and peace by effort, but rather by walking in the Spirit. You walk in the Spirit when you depend upon Him and follow His leadership.