

Sermon outline and notes prepared by:  
Pastor Stephen Felker  
Swift Creek Baptist Church, 18510 Branders Bridge Rd., Colonial Heights, VA 23834  
7/25/04

Gal. 5:22-23 “The Fruit of the Spirit” (Read vv. 19-23)

Intro. Are you a Christian? I did not ask if you are a church member. I did not ask if you attend church. I ask a question that every person should consider, “Are you a Christian?” I am talking about a true, born again Christian. Jesus warned in Matthew 7 that many think that they are Christians, when in fact they are not. So how do you know? He tells us in Mt. 7:17, which says, “...every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.” So look at your life. Do you see bad fruit or good fruit? In the message today, I will show you some of the good fruit that should be evident in your life if you are truly a Christian.

Let’s take it a step further. Are you a spiritual Christian? Recently we talked about walking by the Spirit from v.16. This has the effect of causing the believer to put away the habitual, ongoing evil deeds of the flesh that we read about in vv. 19-21. But God is not just interested in us avoiding sin. He also wants to produce a positive goodness. Too many Christians measure their spirituality by what they don’t do. But there’s another side of spirituality, and that’s the positive character qualities produced by the Holy Spirit.

I want us to do some serious self-examination today. First, make sure you are truly a Spirit-indwelt believer in Christ. Secondly, make sure you are Spirit-filled, fully manifesting the wonderful fruit of the Spirit. And if you are not where you should be, I will show you how to become the kind of person described here in my text.

So let’s learn more about this very important way to determine your spiritual condition. First of all, let’s see:

## I. THE CONTRAST IN FRUIT VS. WORKS

There is a strong contrast between the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit. Let’s consider some of these contrasts. First of all, there is:

A. A Contrast in Source - What we do and how we react to situations will be determined by our nature. As I said earlier, our Lord taught that a good tree produces good fruit and a bad tree produces corrupt fruit. So on the one hand, a person possessing only a fallen, sinful nature will inevitably manifest “the works of the flesh” (v. 19). All the preaching of moralists and all the struggles after self-improvement are reduced to impotence and vanity by the brief words of Jesus, “a bad tree bears bad fruit.” Some unbelievers, by natural temperament, have a inferior imitation of some of the fruit of the Spirit, but the flesh can never truly produce all the fruit of the Spirit, and will produce the works of the flesh.

On the other hand, only the Holy Spirit can produce the good character qualities mentioned in vv.22-23. A Christian’s born again nature is the “good tree” of Mt. 7:17, and the Holy Spirit may be compared to the sap that produces fruit. Christian graces are the products of the indwelling divine life, and nothing else will succeed in producing them. So I hope to convince you that you need the Holy Spirit, and you need the new birth experience in order to manifest the kind of fruit described in vv. 22-23. Doesn’t it make sense that the source determines the fruit?

B. A Contrast in Means – How do you produce a life that is pleasing to God? Though there is a place for good works in the Christian life, we should begin with the concept of bear fruit. The metaphor of fruit implies an organic relationship which is absent from “works.” Indeed, whereas “works” are essentially associated with self-effort, fruit is not. Fruit is the beautiful and quite unfolding of life. It is the natural result of life and health. Furthermore, fruit is a picture of divine enablement. The image of fruit has a certain sense of passivity to it; the life of the Spirit of God produces such fruit.

Thus, our first responsibility is not to work at producing these character qualities. Not one of the fruit named here can be secured merely through human effort. Our first responsibility is to make sure we are indwelt by the Spirit, and then to depend upon the Spirit. The Christian is responsible to let the Spirit be operative in his or her life. Jesus said in John 15:5, “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.”

C. A Contrast in Product - The Apostle designates the results of the Spirit as fruit, in strong and intentional contrast with the results of the flesh. What a contrast between the catalogue of corruption found in vv.19-21 and the beautiful fruit found in vv.22-23. As the repulsiveness of the works of the flesh should deter us from yielding to the evil nature, so the attractiveness of the fruit of the Spirit should influence us to yield to the Spirit. We should understand and accept that vv. 22-23 give us an idea of the goal we should set for ourselves in terms of character. The ungodly world is described in vv. 19-21. And you see a whole lot of that manifested on TV, the movies, and so forth. Don’t make that your goal. Make it your goal to be like Jesus, and live the kind of life described in vv. 22-23.

Finally, I also want to point out to you that there is a:

D. Contrast in Number – “Works” is plural and “fruit” is singular. A given person may habitually practice only a few of the sins Paul mentions here. If you are really bad, you will habitually practice all of them. But the fruit of the Spirit is always produced to some degree in every believer. The singular is used to show that all of the elements of character spoken of in these verses are a unity, making for a well-rounded and complete Christian life.

One analogy we can use is a cluster of grapes. There is hardly ever just one grape. So the produce of the Spirit is a cluster of fruit. The graces are all connected, springing from one root and constituting an organic whole. Whereas the gifts of the Spirit are given only in part, it is God’s will that we receive all of the fruit of the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit should characterize the lives of all believers. In fact, all nine manifestations of the fruit of the Spirit are commanded of believers in the New Testament.

So we’ve seen the contrast in works of the flesh versus the fruit of the Spirit. Next, let’s consider together:

## II. THE CATALOGUE OF THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

The fruit of the Spirit is an essential aspect of true spirituality. What we have here is the ideal of the Christian character. Of course, these virtues were illustrated par excellence in the life of Jesus. God’s goal for your life is for you to be like Jesus (Rom. 8:29). Allow the Holy Spirit to produce this fruit in your life, and you will be like Jesus.

The 9 virtues listed here can be grouped into 3 categories:

## A. Spiritual Qualities

1. Love (*agape*) - Of course, this heads the list, for this is primary, as Paul has just declared (v.14). Like Paul said in Col. 3:14, “above all these things put on love.” One reason this heads the list is because most of the other fruit are manifestations of love.

What kind of love is Paul talking about here? This is not mere human love, but the love that is an attribute of the very nature of God. It is an unconditional love. Such love is willing to sacrifice for the benefit of the one loved (Rom. 5:8; John 15:13). Love is always doing something for others (1 John 3:16, 17).

True *agape* love is a sure mark of salvation, the primary fruit of a redeemed life. John says, “We know that we have passed out of death into life because we love the brethren...Everyone who loves is born of God and knows God” (1 John 3:14; 4:7). Such love is the result of the new birth, and the presence of the Spirit (Rom. 5:5). Do you have the kind of love described here?

2. Joy (*chara*) - When love is present, joy cannot be far behind. Joy is the product of a right relationship with God. Did you hear that? I want to say it again, “Joy is the product of a right relationship with God.” As in the case of love, joy is a part of God’s own nature. Jesus said in John 15:11, “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.” Likewise, He also said in John 17:13, “But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves.” Furthermore, this joy is not conditioned upon favorable circumstances. Not only that, but we can experience the greatest joy when we go through a trial. Remember, Paul said, “Rejoice in the Lord *always*” (Phil. 4:4). Do you remember the story in Acts 16 of Paul & Silas in prison, and at midnight they were singing joyful praises to God? Yes, true joy is independent of circumstances. Instead of having its source in externals, its true source is from within. Is a song in your heart?

The world looks for a cheap substitute called “happiness.” They have what they call the “happy hour” in cocktail parlors all across our land. People don’t look too happy when they go in, and they sure don’t look happy when they come out! The ongoing joy that I have as a Christian is far better. Besides, we Christians can experience clean fun and happiness in addition to inward joy!

Now even though joy is a product or fruit of a right relationship with God, we are responsible to express joy. Paul commanded the Philippians to “rejoice in the Lord *always*.” We should not allow our natural emotions to control our lives. We are to yield control of our lives to the Spirit (Eph. 5:18), who wants to produce joy. Don’t you think it is OK for you to have a pity party for hours and days at a time. The Spirit wants to help you experience joy on a regular basis, and to express that joy as a witness for Jesus, and to the glory of God. Do you have this kind of joy on a regular basis?

3. Peace (*eirene*) - This is an inner peace that is first based upon a consciousness of a right relationship with God. Rom. 5:1 says, “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Furthermore, true peace comes not from the absence of trouble, but from faith in God and from the experience of the presence of God. Even in bad circumstances, we have peace for we know “that God causes all things to work together for good (Rom. 8:28). That is why Jesus could say, “Let not your heart be troubled” (John 14:1). There is absolutely no reason for a believer to be anxious or afraid. Do you have this kind of peace on a regular basis?

Once again, the world seeks another cheap substitute of peace. They look for peace in a bottle of alcohol. They look for peace in a pill, or peace in a place, such as a tropical island. But Jesus told us that He would give us a peace, “not as the world gives” (John 14:27). It is far better,

far more lasting, and it is a peace that doesn't create a dependency or addiction.

Based on the contrast of the works of the flesh, which includes hatred & strife, the peace may include a condition of peaceableness toward men. And this leads to the next grouping of the fruit of the Spirit:

B. Social Qualities - This triad is arranged in an ascending scale; longsuffering is passive. Kindness is more neutral, a kindly disposition towards others; and goodness, which is an active goodness. Let's look at these 3 together:

1. Longsuffering (*makrothumia*) - This is a patient endurance under ill-treatment or provocation, without an outburst of anger or thought of revenge. How true this was of Jesus! Are you about to be sweet and serene under provocation? Or are you quick-tempered and easily provoked? Do you lash out at people with your tongue, or with physical violence? This is a fruit of the Spirit for this is an attribute of God that is mentioned often in the Bible (Ps. 86:15; 2 Peter 3:9). He is slow to anger and slow to inflict judgment. Paul indicates that longsuffering is not a sign of weakness (Col. 1:11), but a sign of moral strength. It takes great strength to keep from striking back at someone with angry words or an angry blow.

Once again, let's do some fruit inspecting. Are you generally longsuffering toward people?

2. Kindness (*chrestotes*) - It means to be kind, good, and pleasant. We can even use the word "sweet" to describe this disposition. It includes thoughtful consideration, courteous and kindly action. Doesn't this also describe Jesus? The Gospels contain numerous illustrations of Christ's kindness shown to sinners. Would people describe you as kind and pleasant to be around?

3. Goodness (*agathosune*) - This is love in action. 2 Th. 1:11 lists this as an attribute of God. Paul said in Rom. 15:14, "Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness [*agathosune*]..." He knew this fruit of the Spirit would manifest itself in the lives of true believers. Believers are commanded to exemplify goodness. He later said in this epistle, "Let us do good" (Gal. 6:10). If you are indwelt by the Spirit, and filled by the Spirit, you will be prompted from within to do good deeds for people. That may include visiting a lonely person, or helping a young mother care for her young children.

Do you generally practice goodness toward people? Let me tell you another reason to make manifesting these fruits of the Spirit your personal goal in life. Kindness and goodness not only makes life sweeter, it may make it longer according to researchers at the University of Michigan. Stephanie Brown, Ph.D, asked 423 older couples if they had helped a friend or neighbor at least once in the previous year. Five years later, those who had were 50% more likely to outlive those who hadn't. "Research has shown that social contact is good for us, but we always assumed the benefit came from being on the receiving end," says Brown. "It turns out that the benefits may actually be rooted in the contributions we make." We're not talking about donating a kidney here—simply giving a friend a ride could offer the life-lengthening benefits.<sup>1</sup>

### C. Principles of Conduct

1. Faithfulness<sup>2</sup> - Here the word means loyalty, fidelity, and trustworthiness. This character quality is where God and man can count on you to do what you say you will do. Once again, this is an attribute of God. He is faithful. In fact, Jeremiah declared, "Great is Thy

---

<sup>1</sup> *Reader's Digest Health*, '03 or '04 (month not known), Illus.#C-594.

<sup>2</sup> The word that is used in the original (*pistis*) is often properly rendered "faith." However, here occurring in the context of kindness and goodness, the rendering "faithfulness" would seem to strike a more consistent harmony. In Romans 3:3 the word is likewise translated "faithfulness" in reference to God.

faithfulness” (Lam. 3:22). Christ is called Faithful and True (Rev. 19:11). Some professing Christians pledge themselves enthusiastically to do a service for God, but their faithfulness is short lived. The Spirit-filled Christian will be faithful to his God, faithful to his spouse, faithful to church, and faithful to his boss. Are you faithful?

2. Meekness (*prautes*) - This is the very opposite of vehemence, violence, and outbursts of anger. The meek Christian does not throw his weight around or assert himself selfishly. Instead, meekness is the right use of authority and power, as well as submission to authority. Moses is said to have been a meek man in this sense.

Meekness is also related to humility. The meek person has accepted God’s estimate of his own life. Compared to God and our vast universe, we really are insignificant. But paradoxically, God says that we are greater and more important than angels. Jesus identified Himself as meek & humble (Mt. 11:29).

Furthermore, the meek person recognizes that God is in charge. In meekness, we accept God’s dealings with us as good, and therefore without disputing or resisting. Do you display this fruit of the Spirit?

3. Self-control (*egkrateia*) - The person who is blessed with this quality possesses the power to keep himself in check. It is mastery and restraint of all our appetites and desires. The word is used in I Cor. 7:9 of the control of sexual desire. In I Cor. 9:25 it is used of the control of the athlete over his body and its desires during his period of training. The previous mention of immorality among the works of the flesh shows that it was very appropriate to list self-control as an opposing virtue. When someone says, “I couldn’t help myself,” he may be right. But with God’s help we can control our passions and desires. God can give you control over nicotine! He can give you control over food cravings.

Alexander the Great was one of the greatest generals of all time. In just a few years, he led his army to conquer much of the known world by the time he was just 32. Yet, he died a drunkard. It happened on a 2<sup>nd</sup> night’s carousal with 20 guests at table in Babylon. He drank to the health of every person at the table. After this, he called for the Hercules’ cup, which had a huge capacity. Filling it, he drank it all down in acknowledgement to one of the guests. Shortly thereafter, he fell to the floor. He became fever stricken, and a few days later he died. Think of it. He could control his powerful army, and control most of the known world, but he couldn’t control his own passions & desires.<sup>3</sup>

Notice that Paul’s use of the word “such” following this list. This probably indicates that the list is not exhaustive. This list of the fruit of the Spirit is not comprehensive but is contextually determined. This is an important list for a church like the one in Galatia, a church full of conflict. Eph. 5:9 adds two others, & repeats one, “for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth.” (See also the list of character qualities in Col. 3:12-14).

Again, he contrasts the way of the Spirit against the way of legalism. He says in v.23, “Against such there is no law.” These virtues fully meet the requirements of the law. Where they are present, there is no need for law. With Spirit-control producing self-control, you do not need legal control! And as we have already seen, where love is present, it will fulfill the requirements of the law.

---

<sup>3</sup> Paul Lee Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations* (Rockville, Maryland: Assurance Publishers, 1979), 121 [Illus.#C-996].

### III. THE CULTIVATION OF THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

When I look through the list of virtues in the fruit of the Spirit, I become befuddled over the church. Why do I see at times more of the works of the flesh than I see the fruit of the Spirit? Why is the Christian church so torn and divided. Why is it that Christians claim to have the Spirit but show little of His fruit, or the fruit is so small you can hardly see it? [Hold a big tomato next to a very small one]. In fact, when I look at the fruit of some Christians, I feel like quoting Jed Clampit, “Pitiful, pitiful, pitiful.”

This problem is caused by a combination of two reasons. First, I believe a significant number of professing Christians are not really saved and indwelt by the Spirit. You can't manifest the fruit of the Spirit until you are indwelt by the Spirit. And one reason Paul gives this list of the fruit of the Spirit is to help you see if you are really saved or not. If vv. 19-21 more closely describe you than vv. 22-23, then you are not saved! You need to get saved today, & I will tell you how in just a minute. Secondly, some people are saved, but are just not cooperating with the Holy Spirit in producing this fruit in their lives. Bearing the fruit of the Spirit is not totally a passive matter. Just as a plant bears fruit to the degree that it is cultivated, and receives sunshine and rain, even so we have a responsibility to cultivate the fruit of the Spirit in our own lives, and receive the spiritual nourishment that God provides. To produce good and abundant fruit, you need to cultivate your fruit tree. Even though we do not produce this fruit in our own strength, we still have a responsibility here.

How then can we cultivate this fruit in our lives? First, we must “walk in the Spirit” as v.16 says, trusting in His power, and following His lead. We must heed Paul's call in v. 25 to “let us keep in step” with the Spirit. I believe this is related to the command, “Be filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18). That includes the idea of yielding ourselves to the Spirit's control. Thus, we must not hinder the Holy Spirit's work by disobedience, and thus in grieving Him (Eph. 4:30). We must not quench the Holy Spirit (I Th. 5:19). Furthermore, we must nourish the fruit tree of our lives with such basics of the Christian life as Bible study, prayer, fellowship with God's people, and Spirit empowered service. Without nourishing your spiritual life with these disciplines, you will produce very little fruit.

Conclusion: Is all the fruit of the Spirit evident in your life? Since all Christians possess the Spirit, all Christians may be expected to display these virtues. A Christian without meekness or self-control is as much an anomaly as a Christian without love. As I said, if you lack the fruit of the Spirit, it may mean that you are not saved. We must make sure we are among those who repented of sin and “have crucified their flesh” (v. 24). Then we must turn to Jesus in faith, trusting in Him to give us a new heart, forgiveness of sin, and the Holy Spirit.

Or a lack of this fruit in your life may mean that you have just not been learning about what God wants to do in your life, or you have just not yielded your life to the control of the Holy Spirit. I encourage you to let this day be the first step in a walk by the leadership and power of the Holy Spirit. Start obeying Him today. Commit yourself to the spiritual disciplines of prayer, Bible reading, and church attendance that will nourish your Spiritual life. If you do, He will produce this fruit in your life. If He is leading you to make a public commitment, obey His voice.

Sources: Notes from author's sermon tape of 2/23/89; William F. Arndt & F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the NT & Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1957); W.A. Criswell, *Expository Sermons on Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973); Oliver B. Greene, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians* (Greenville, SC: The Gospel Hour, 1962); Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Theology* (Leicester,

England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1981), 561, 668, 920; William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Galatians & Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1968); Alvah Hovey, *An American Commentary on the New Testament: Galatians* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1887); J.B. Lightfoot, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1957); John F. MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Galatians* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1987); Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture*, Vol. 14 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977 reprint); J. Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible*, Vol. 5 (Pasadena: Thru The Bible Radio, 1983); Scot McKnight, *The NIV Application Commentary: Galatians* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [CD-ROM] (Ontario: Timnathserah Inc., 1996); Lehman Strauss, *Devotional Studies in Galatians and Ephesians* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1957); Curtis Vaughan, *Galatians: A Study Guide Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972); Dr. Jerry Vines (notes from his sermon tape on this text dated 12/2/84); Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Free: Galatians* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1975); Kenneth S. Wuest's *Word Studies From the Greek New Testament*, Vol. 1, Galatians (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1944, 1973). Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).