
The Fruit of
The Spirit

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The Fruit of The Spirit

After a terrible list of the Works of the Flesh, Galatians 5:22, 23, tells that the Fruit of the Spirit, is Love, Joy, Peace, Longsuffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Meekness, Self Control.

Galatians 6, which remember is written to the **Christians** of Galatia, says in the 7th and 8th verses, "Be not deceived: God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

What is your goal in the Christian life? What is mine? If we have set corruption before us as our great objective we need not err, we can steer a straight course, for God's Word is clear and definite and shows exactly how to reach that goal. "Just go on sowing," says God, "to the flesh" and "he that soweth to the flesh SHALL of the flesh reap corruption"—a certain harvest, rich and full. But you say, "What

a foolish assumption, no Christian wants to reach such a goal or reap such a harvest." Then why do we sow seed that can grow only corruption if we don't want to reap it? Why do we sow to the flesh if we don't want the harvest, the fruitage that God's Word says it must inevitably bring forth?

You see a farmer sowing dock seed and you ask him, "Do you want to reap a harvest of weeds?" "Oh no," he says, "I am hoping against hope that God, Who is good, will by some strange means give me a harvest of wheat." How many of us are like that in spiritual things. We say, "I know I have sown a lot to the flesh, but somehow or other I am hoping that God, Who is good, will hide my harvest at the Judgment Seat of Christ."

God, Who is first true before He is kind, says, Be not deceived you Galatian Christians, and you 20th Century Christians, be not deceived, God is not mocked, whatsoever you are sowing that shall you also reap. If to the Flesh, Corruption; if to the Spirit, Life Everlasting.

When you and I read that terrible list of the Works of the Flesh in Galatians 5: 19, we start at the top, "Adultery, Fornication, Uncleanness," and then we stop and say, "Thank God I am not sowing to the Flesh." We don't go far enough down the list—"Variance, Strife, Envy."

Are we at variance with a Christian Brother or Sister; do we ever envy anyone who is more gifted, has more money, or is more popular than we are. It is a manifestation of the Flesh, and God has pledged His Word that the harvest will be sure—Corruption. Exactly the same harvest as is yielded by those other greater sins we pride ourselves in not committing.

There is a general misconception about sin and sowing to the flesh. We think of the gross and low down sins. We forget there are two sinners in Luke 15. The Younger Brother we call The Prodigal, who sinned low down in his flesh, fornication and lasciviousness, and the Elder Brother who sinned high up in his disposition, envy and unbrotherliness. We should note that Christ ends

the story with the Younger Brother, who had sinned so grossly, repentant and forgiven, and back in communion at the Father's table, while the Elder Brother, whose sins were sins of the disposition, which we condone in ourselves, is left unrepentant outside with communion broken.

Let us cease to sow to the flesh in both its gross and refined forms, and avail ourselves of the power God has put at our disposal and commence sowing to the Spirit, "For he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." It is not only longevity God is referring to, but quality—fulness of life here and hereafter—life that is life indeed. Galatians 5: 22, tells us what the fruitage of that life is, but note this is not what we sow, this is the harvest, the fruitage—Love, Joy, Peace, Longsuffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Meekness, Self Control.

In Matthew 7 Christ says not by their affirmations, not by their doctrines, not by their quotations of Scripture, but "by their **fruits** ye shall know them." Let us examine ourselves in God's presence.

Let us stand off from ourselves, as it were, beside the Husbandman who has planted us. Let us feel his heartache as he searches for fruit and finds none or maybe finds wizened and immature fruit that promised well till it was blighted by the cankerworm of the flesh. Surely He deserves to find fruit for He has been a faithful Husbandman. He has grafted us into Himself the True Vine, He has fertilised us with His Own Spirit, He has poured through us His Own Life, He has sheltered us from the noontide sun with the shadow of His Wings, He has pruned us with His Own Pierced Hands, and has nurtured us with the tenderness of a mother's care. Let us stand by Him and see what fruit we have borne as tested by His Own Word. We may not all be gifted to preach or teach, but we are all fitted to bear the Fruit of the Spirit.

The Hand of the Lord has come upon every Christian in divine ordination. Hear His words in John 15: 16, "I have chosen you and **ordained** you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain."

Let us take them in order. Have we got the First Fruit of the Spirit, LOVE? I remember one day thinking of my love for Christ, and I said to myself, "Do I love my Lord better than I love my wife, and my little girl, and my two boys? If He saw fit to take them away from me, would I question His love?" and as I ruminated a voice seemed to say, "The test of your love for your Lord is not whether you are willing to give up your loved ones in death, but are you willing to **give yourself** in life?" Have we this first fruit of the Spirit. True love is **mutual self surrender**. God has given Himself to us, not what He has, but What He is. Have we tried to give Him what we have as an expression of our love while holding back what we are, ourselves?

The Second Fruit is JOY. You remember when you fell in love that it was a time of great joy. Your whole outlook was changed. There was a song in your heart, and it is just the same when, By the Holy Spirit, we fall in love with Christ. Some Christians have the idea that to surrender to the Holy

Spirit will lead to a doleful life, whereas joy supernal floods and overflows the heart, so Joy the second fruit of the Spirit comes in natural sequence; it is a **joyous self surrender**.

Joy runs through the N.T. like a refrain. It follows close upon the heels of love. Love gave Jesus to die, and that was sorrow upon sorrow. It broke the disciples and drove them into dependency, but Calvary had an Easter Morning, and that changed sadness to gladness, so that to-day we walk not the Via Dolorosa, the way of sorrows that led to the Cross, but the Emmaus Road with burning hearts and superabounding joy, or as Christ puts it in John 15: 11, "That My joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full." Have we got it, FULL FRUITED JOY? It is an inner joy independent of outer circumstances. It wells up from within. We find it in bedridden saints and in Paul and Silas, persecuted apostles in prison. By the alchemy of the Spirit pain is transmuted into joy like the pearl in the oyster which turns an irritation into a jewel.

The Third Fruit is PEACE, for the next step is mutual trust or perfect confidence in each other—no secrets withheld and no fears entertained, resulting in perfect peace. It is not a peace drawn from circumstances, which too often are the source of our peace. Our children are well—our finances are sound—our friends are kind, and we are at rest, but when things suddenly change we discover to our dismay that our peace was drawn from our circumstances, and not from the Lord of our circumstances. No, that is not the peace that is the Fruit of the Spirit. That is the fruit of environment, and environment changes like the weather.

Where is this Fruit of the Spirit born—on the Bosom of the Lord. Have you ever put your weary head there, and felt His great loving arms go about you? Have you known the fulness of His Understanding Heart, have you heard Him whisper "I know, I understand, I will undertake," and the heart is at perfect peace about that sick child, that difficult financial position, about

those unanswered prayers, and those happenings hard to be understood.

Peace, perfect peace,
With sorrow surging round;
On Jesus' Bosom
Naught but peace is found.

The Fourth Fruit is LONGSUFFERING. Not retaliating. Said a tyrant who had a Christian in his grasp financially, "What can Christ do for you now?" "He can help me to forgive you" said the Christian. Do we know anything about that as a Fruit of the Spirit? David says in Psalm 18: 35, "Thy gentleness hath made me great," and Paul says in 2 Cor. 10: 1, "I beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ."

The Sixth Fruit is GOODNESS. An unsoured spirit overcoming evil with good; not only just, but generous; not only righteous, but good, showing to all men the kindness of God.

The Seventh Fruit is FAITHFULNESS (R.V.). Faithful, not fearful. Faith leads to confidence, courage, certainty. Fear leads to doubt, cowardice,

lack of assurance. Faithfulness means full of faith, and therefore of fidelity and dependability. A man full of faith is full of confidence in God, and is therefore true to God.

Can God always count on you and me? In Numbers 12: 7, God says, "My servant Moses who is faithful in all Mine House, with him will I speak mouth to mouth." Is God so sure of us that we will faithfully do what He says that He can come and speak to us mouth to mouth?

The Eighth Fruit is MEEKNESS. Humility, not pride and arrogance. Before the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, the disciples were quarrelling as to which should be the greatest, after Pentecost they were rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name. Before, they were living on a basis of self assertion, but now they are on a basis of self abnegation. Before the Spirit came they were seeking a crown, but after they were indwelt, we find them taking up a cross.

We say in our carnality, "The aggressive shall inherit the earth." Christ

says in Matthew 5: 5, "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth." The arrogant Peter of the old days, now Spirit filled, in the 3rd chapter of his First Epistle tells us that a meek and quiet spirit is, in the sight of God, of great price. The reason we get so easily hurt is because we are not humble enough. If we were seeking a cross and not a crown, if we were after the low place and not the medium or high, we would find we had no competitors, and so we would hurt no one and be hurt by no one.

The Ninth Fruit is SELF CONTROL. The Fruit of the Spirit starts with love for God and man, and ends with victory for the Spirit and the defeat of the flesh in self control, but we will miss the point altogether if we don't see this—self control spoken of here is the Fruit of the Spirit, not the result of the energy of the flesh. IT IS NOT MY CONTROL OF HIS FRUIT BEARING IN ME, BUT MY ABANDONMENT TO HIS HUSBANDRY OF ME.

These nine fruits are a manifestation of Christ. Let the Holy Spirit have His way and He will beget in us the char-

acteristics of Christ, and it will not be an outward disguise, but an inward goodness, not an outward robe for men to see, but an inward reality for God to enjoy.

How often have we tried to cultivate these Spiritual Fruits and hung them on our carnal selves. We have tried to be more longsuffering, more joyous, more kind, more self controlled, but it has ended in failure again and again. We cannot make our bad selves good, or get good fruit from the old nature. **Let us change the process and start not with the cultivation of the fruit, but with the tree. Let the Holy Spirit have His way and He will bear His Own Fruit.**

What of the results as we have been examining ourselves in the Light of God's Word? Are our hearts filled with regret as we contemplate the wasted years? Does that Blessed Husbandman stand before a barren tree? Could not some of us repeat the words of that hymn written by a man who was converted on his death bed:—

And must I go, and empty handed,
Must I meet my Saviour so?
Not a sheaf with which to greet Him,
Must I empty handed go?

Thank God we must not. His Word is a message of hope. We need not spend years lamenting the barren past. With man the past is irretrievable, but with God all things are possible. Listen to His Promise in Joel 2: 25. "I will restore unto you the years that the cankerworm has eaten." Yes, with God, the fruitage of the wasted years that have gone can be made up. Do we really and sincerely want Him to restore them? He may have to use the pruning knife. Are we willing to hand ourselves unreservedly over to the Holy Spirit? Will we let Him dig about us and prune us, and maybe transplant us if He sees fit? If we will, God's Word says HE not we, "HE WILL RESTORE UNTO US THE YEARS THAT THE CANKERWORM HAS EATEN." Don't tell me this is a promise to Israel in a coming day. You and I belong to the true Israel of God. It is a message of hope for you and me. "I will restore" says the Lord and ye shall be full-fruited in the end.

Do we really want to make a fresh start. God's **promise** of restoration is in Joel 2: 25, and God's **condition** of restoration in verse 13 of the same chap-

ter. "Rend your hearts and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord." It is not to be an outward reformation that will fail us at the first crucial test, but an inward transformation with the Spirit in control. If you and I, who have been Christians for five, ten or twenty years, from to-day became Christlike, would our friends notice a change? We became Christians when we accepted Christ; the Spirit makes us Christlike when we surrender to Him.

The GIFT of the Spirit comes at CONVERSION (Acts 2: 38). The FULNESS of the Spirit comes at CONSECRATION (Rom. 6: 13). They may be close together or years apart.

The GIFT is the ENTRANCE of the Spirit (John 6: 63). The FULNESS is the EXIT of the old self (Col. 3: 9). Obviously we cannot be full of the Spirit if we are half-filled with self.

The GIFT is the BIRTH of the new man (John 3: 5). The FULNESS is the DEATH of the old man (Eph. 4: 22 and 23). The second may never happen for it is tragically possible to live and die a carnal Christian.

The GIFT of the Spirit comes on taking Christ as SAVIOUR. The FULNESS of the Spirit comes on CROWNING CHRIST as LORD. The first makes us saints, the second bond slaves.

The GIFT of the spirit comes by REPENTANCE and FAITH (Acts 20: 21). The FULNESS of the Spirit comes by SUBMISSION and FAITH (Rom. 6: 13 and 19; Rom. 12: 1). Neither comes by feelings and faith, nor by experience and faith.

The FIRST commits my SOUL to God. The SECOND commits my LIFE, myself to God.

Have you done this? I don't want to seem harsh, but there is a lack of sincerity is there not, **about committing the eternal soul to God, and holding back the mortal life**—professing to give Him the greater and withholding the lesser?

Supposing a man were to tell you that he had deposited £10,000 in a certain bank, and a little later you see him with £50 in notes, and you say—"That seems to be a lot of money to carry about in

one's pocket." "Well," he replies, "I am afraid to put this £50 in the bank, because I think the bank is not to be trusted." You would say he was either mad or insincere. He could not possibly convince you that while he was afraid to trust the bank with his £50 he really had trusted it with his £10,000, yet this is what many of us claim—that we have committed our immortal souls to His keeping but we are afraid to trust Him with our mortal lives.

Are we willing to speak to the Holy Spirit now? He is not outside, He is already within, God the Third Person of the Divine Trinity, whom Christ, the Second Person, said would abide with us forever. He is resident now; are we willing to make Him President? He is not a human partner, but a Divine Potentate, and as such we should reverence Him, fearing exceedingly to grieve Him. In the silence speak to Him now, and say, "Oh, God, Holy Spirit, Divine Resident, abiding within me; I now make thee President in supreme command of my life without reserve. Produce Thy Fruit in me."