

The Fruits of the Spirit

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law (Gal. 5:22-23).

A Pastoral Challenge

The Fruits of the Spirit are the crown of the indwelling, sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. They reflect His work of conforming us to the image and likeness of Jesus. They are progressively developed in our lives in varying degrees, and they are opposed by the working of the fleshly sinful nature best characterized by a hard-hearted selfishness.

Here are some challenging questions for each of us. What would your life look like and be like if the Fruits of the Spirit were consistently being evidenced in your life? If you set about applying all effort, how would you go about mastering the fruit of the Spirit? Having grown in the grace and the knowledge of Christ so that you are consistently manifesting the fruit of the Spirit, how would you teach others to grow in that same way?

In an endeavor to address these questions in my own life I have begun by seeking to establish a Biblical definition of each of the fruits. I have purposed to particularly focus on one fruit each day and then evaluate and correct any failures and further enhance all successes. May I encourage and challenge you to join me!

Introduction

When Paul introduces these fruits in Galatians 5:22, he does not say *fruits* but *fruit* (singular), and many have taken this to mean that there is only one fruit *love*. The rest of the list is taken as love's characteristics or its attributes as we can see several of these used in this way in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. Others point out that *fruit* in the singular can also be used in the plural. In other words, *fruit* can be used for *fruits*. Additionally, grammatically these verses read like a list of qualities of equal status. It is plain to see that there is an inner connectedness between love and all of the other qualities that are listed, and certainly if love is missing from any manifestation of any of the other qualities the essence of that quality is missed and the quality forfeit (cf. 1 Cor. 13:1-3).

As you read the definitions and some of the other Scriptures where they are used you will also recognize that certain qualities are directly related to other qualities. In fact, we can see three groupings which Paul implicitly suggests by the order he gave his list. Note how closely *love, joy, and peace* are interdependent especially in their dependence upon *love*. *Patience, kindness, and goodness* are interrelated around *kindness*. Finally, *faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control*

are also connected as core discipleship qualities. They flesh out the commitment needed by someone who would be a devoted follower of Jesus.

The last insight is that all of these qualities are first displayed in God, the Father. They are then found in the example of Jesus to whom we are to be conformed. Lastly, they are supernatural in that they are to be wrought within us by the indwelling work of the Holy Spirit, though this is cooperatively accomplished as we are called to *work out our salvation* (Phil. 2:12) and to *make every effort to supplement your faith* (2 Pet. 1:5). Here is the critical insight. Until we experience these qualities in our own knowledge and fellowship with God, the Father, and see and taste their beauty in Jesus, it will be like attempting to paint a picture which we cannot see. It is through the work of the Spirit and His quickening of God's Word that we are enabled to experience these qualities coming from God to us (cf. Rom. 5:5), and then with this experience of having come to Jesus to drink deeply and often of His grace Scripture is fulfilled in us, *Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water* (Jn. 7:38).

The Definitions of the Fruits of the Spirit

1. Love is the sincere, sacrificial, enduring affection, goodwill, and the help of God to make me successful in His kingdom. Only as we experience the love of God in Christ for ourselves can we then obediently go on to love one another with this same kind of love. The demonstration of such love toward others is characterized by the rest of the Spirit's fruit.

Romans 8:31, 38-39, What then shall we say to these things? If God [is] for us, who [is] against us? ...38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Ephesians 2:1, 3-4, And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,.... 3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, (cf. John 3:16).

1 John 4:7-11, Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. 9 By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son [to be] the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another (cf. Eph. 5:1-2).

(See Jn. 3:16; Rom. 8: 28-39; 13:8-10; 1 Cor. 12:31-13:8; 2 Cor. 5:14-15; Eph. 2:1, 3-4; 5:1-2; 1 Pet. 5:6-7; 1 Jn. 4:7-11; Ps. 56:8-9; Rev. 1:4-6; cf. Jn. 13:34-35.)

2. Joy is my response to acknowledging God's benefits for me in the Gospel, namely, that He loves, cares, provides, protects, assures me of eternal life, and that nothing can separate me from Him and His love for me. It is the joy of salvation, the joy of fellowship with God through the work of Jesus and applied by His indwelling Holy Spirit. My joy results not from my circumstances but from the input of the Holy Spirit through my faith in God's promises, so that I thankfully, consistently, and consciously am basking in God's love, my fellowship with my Lord, and the benefits of the Gospel. It is closely associated with my hope, peace, patience, and thankfulness to the Lord.

Philippians 3:1, Rejoice in the Lord.

Philippians 4:4, Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I will say, Rejoice.

James 1:2-4, Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. 4 And let endurance have [its] perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

(See Jn. 15:11; Acts 13:52; 16:25; Rom. 5:1-5; 14:17; 15:13; Gal. 2:20; Phil. 3:1; 4:4-6; Col. 1:11-12; 1 Thess. 1:6; 5:16; Heb. 2:10; 5:7-8; 12:2; Jas. 1:2-4; 1 Pet. 4:1-3; 5:7; Ps. 51:12.)

3. Peace is that experience of knowing with all assurance that God is not against me, but He declares that He is completely for me. Knowing this, I can securely embrace all circumstances with joy being assured that He works all things to the good of my salvation and that nothing can separate me from His love for me in Christ Jesus! Further, this peace so permeates the very life of Christ's Church that it enables them by the work of the Holy Spirit to live in harmony with one another. This peace is so precious that the Church is pledged to honor and keep it to their own hurt. This bond of peace is not only a bond of peaceful brotherhood between believers, but in turn they are to be agents of reconciliation in the world extending this peace even to their enemies. Our peace is dependent upon our hope and joy, and it is of necessity associated with love, forgiveness, forbearance, unity, and thankfulness.

Romans 8:28, 31-32, And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to [His] purpose. ...What then shall we say to these things? If God [is] for us, who [is] against us? 32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

Colossians 3:11-16, ...there is no [distinction between] Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all. So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. 14 Beyond all these things [put on] love, which is the perfect bond of unity. 15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms [and] hymns [and] spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

Lk. 2:14, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!

(See Lk. 2:14; Jn. 14:27; Rom. 8:28-39; 12:14-21; 14:17; 15:13; 2 Cor. 5:14-21; Gal. 3:26-28; Eph. 2:13-17; 4:1-6; Phil. 4:4-7; Col. 3:11-15; Heb. 12:14-15; Jas. 1:2-4.)

4. Patience is the ability to restrain one's anger, retaliation, and revenge in the face of provocation, thus it is being *slow to anger* and *long suffering*. The experience of patience begins with God's patience with me which is then to be extended toward others. The practice of patience encompasses not only my actions but especially my words and attitudes. It forbids being critical, judging others before its time, grumbling, gossiping, whining, and complaining. It is the result of the Holy Spirit's strengthening, and it is motivated both by our hope in the Lord and its ensuing joy. Further, it is associated with love, forbearance, forgiveness, perseverance, and thankfulness toward those who provoke and offend us. The proper response of those receiving patience is repentance.

James 5:7-11, Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. 8 You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. 9 Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door. 10 As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 11 We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and [is] merciful.

Col. 1:11-14, strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. 13 For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the

kingdom of His beloved Son, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

(See Rom. 2:4-5; 9:22; 2 Cor. 6:6; Eph. 4:2; Col. 1:11; 3:12; 1 Thess. 5:14-15; Jas. 5:7-11; 1 Tim. 1:16; 2 Tim. 3:10; 4:2; 1 Pet. 3:9, 15; Heb. 6:12.)

5. Kindness is directly associated with patience or long-suffering. Patience is basically restraint, while kindness is restraint and more. Kindness is not simply the absence of retaliation, but its definitional accent is on its positive action. It is a gesture which not only restrains arrogance, harshness, pain, or evil, but positively it seeks only good for the other which is extended humbly, in sweetness, softness, gentleness, usefulness, and graciousness. It is the positive gentle work of the Holy Spirit moving God's kindness through our souls then extending that kindness to others through us. It is supremely displayed in God's saving acts in Christ which are motivated by His love, mercy, and grace. Thus, kindness is motivated by love and is an expression of goodness.

1 Corinthian 13:4, Love is patient, love is kind [and] is not jealous; love does not brag [and] is not arrogant,

Matthew 11:30, "For My yoke is easy [kind] and My burden is light."

1 Peter 2:3, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

(See Mt. 11:30; Lk. 6:35; 1 Cor. 13:4; 2 Cor. 6:6; Rom. 2:4; 3:12; 11:22; Gal. 5:22; Eph. 2:7; 4:32; Col. 3:12; Titus 3:4; 1 Pet. 2:3.)

6. Goodness is a heartfelt, moral quality of desiring and being of benefit to others according to God's will. It is a moral quality because goodness can have no part in any kind of evil. Thus, its motivations and actions must be morally pure. Goodness must be good. Kindness is a category and demonstration of goodness. It is goodness without any harshness only gentleness, while goodness itself is the larger quality and behavior and encompasses both the ability to be soft and kind (kindness), as well as, the ability to be tough, stern, and firm when good calls for it. For example, we see Christ's goodness in His sternness when cleansing the temple and denouncing of scribes and Pharisees because God's good purpose was best served by confronting these evils. The moral nature of God which revealed in His moral law defines the standard of goodness.

Romans 8:28, And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to [His] purpose.

Romans 12:2, And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Philemon 12-16, I have sent him [Onesimus] back to you in person, that is, [sending] my very heart, 13 whom I wished to keep with me, so that on your behalf he might minister to me in my imprisonment for the gospel; 14 but without your consent I did not want to do anything, so that your goodness would not be, in effect, by compulsion but of your own free will. 15 For perhaps he was for this reason separated [from you] for a while, that you would have him back forever, 16 no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, a beloved brother, especially to me, but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

2 Thessalonians 1:11-12, To this end also we pray for you always, that our God will count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power, 12 so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and [the] Lord Jesus Christ

(See Mt. 7:15-20; Mk. 10:18; Jn. 5:29; Rom. 2:10; 8:28; 12:2, 9, 21; 13:3; 15: 14; Gal. 6:10; Eph. 2:10; 4:28; 5:9; 6:8; 1 Thess. 5:15; 2 Thess. 1:11; Phile. 14; 1 Pet. 3:11, 13; 3 Jn. 11.)

7. Faithfulness is being diligent and tenaciously persevering to fulfill a trust given to me. It is being true to my word to others and especially consistently demonstrating my fidelity to Christ in every detail. It is the quality of enduring and consistent reliability. By the Holy Spirit our faithfulness is to reflect and witness to Christ's faithfulness to God, the Father, and to us.

Revelation 19:11, And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it [is] called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war.

Revelation 2:13, "I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells."

Ephesians 1:1, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus.

1 Corinthians 4:2, In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy.

Titus 2:9-10, [Urge] bondslaves to be subject to their own masters in everything, to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, 10 not pilfering, but showing all good faith so that they will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect.

(See Mt. 24:45; 25:21, 23; Acts 16:15; 1 Cor. 1:9; 4:2, 17; 10:13; 2 Cor. 1:18; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:2, 7; 4:7, 9; 2 Thess. 3:3; 1 Tim. 1:12; 3:11; 2 Tim. 2:2, 13; Heb. 2:17; 3:2, 5; 10:23; 11:11; 1 Pet. 4:19; 5:12; 1 Jn. 1:9; Rev. 1:5; 2:13; 3:14; 17:14; 19:11.)

8. Gentleness (meekness) is first and foremost the necessary, heartfelt condition of mind which humbly accepts and surrenders to the Word and will of our heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of positive faith. Meekness stems not from weakness but from the inner strength to be obedient to God's will and to restrain selfish ambition, self-assertion, hardness of heart, and resistance to God's will, as well as, grumbling and complaining. Its essence is the enthusiastic surrender, a joyful running to do God's will. Gentleness is exercised toward others by imitating the meekness of Christ. Such meekness is especially needed when correcting and admonishing others. It is generally to characterize our dealings with everyone.

Matthew 11:28-30, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. 29 "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (cf. 2 Cor. 10:1)

Titus 3:1-3, Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, 2 to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men. 3 For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another (cf. 2 Tim. 2:24-25).

(See Mt. 5:5; 11:29; 21:5; 1 Cor. 4:21; 2 Cor. 10:1; Gal. 5:23; 6:1; Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:12; 1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 2:25; Titus 3:2; Jas. 1:21; 1 Pet. 3:4.)

9. Self-Control is first self-denial, saying no to self, and then it is yielding and disciplining oneself by the Holy Spirit to obediently serve the Lord. Gentleness (meekness) and self-control go hand in hand. To be surrender I must be self-control. Such is being filled with the Spirit and to have the mind of Christ. Self-control enables me to live not to please myself but to please the Lord and to live for His glory.

2 Cor. 5:9, So whether we are at home or away we make it our aim to please him.

Mt. 16:24, Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.

Titus 2:11, For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, 12 instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age,

Eph. 5:18, And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit,

1 Pet. 4:1, Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, 2 so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.

Rom. 12:1-2, Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, [which is] your spiritual service of worship. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

(See Mt. 16:24; 26:34-35, 75; Mk. 8:34; Lk. 9:23; 12:9; Jn. 13:38; 14:31; Acts 24:25; Rom. 12:1-2; 1 Cor. 2:15-16; 7:9; 9:25; 10:31; 12:16; Gal. 5:23 Eph. 5:18; Phil. 2:6-11; Col. 1:10-12; 1 Tim. 4:6-12; 5:8; 2 Tim. 2:12; 3:5; Titus 2:12; Heb. 10:7; 12:1-12; 1 Pet. 1:6; 4:1-2, 11; Rev. 2:13; 3:8.)

Conclusion

Concentrate daily on developing the fruit of the Spirit in your life. Specify a targeted fruit for each day. Endeavor daily to make progress on that fruit. This must be followed up with an evaluation of progress and failures correcting and improving these. Plan, Do, Correct, Adjust (PDCA).

Heidelberg Catechism Question 1

What is my only comfort in life and in death?

That I belong – body and soul, in life and in death – not to myself, but to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ, who at the cost of His own blood has paid for all my sins, and He has completely freed me from the dominion of the devil; that He protects me so well that without the will of my Father in heaven not a hair can fall from my head, indeed that everything must fit His purpose for my salvation.

Therefore, by His Holy Spirit, He assures me of eternal life and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for Him.