

The Fruit Of The Spirit Is The Spiritual DNA Of Christ

Galatians 5:22-23

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So much of what defines popular Christianity are sensational appeals to alleged miraculous gifts, to the worldwide outreach of a ministry, to the amassed wealth and resources of a church, to the many programs that are offered by a church for every member of the family, or to the entertaining message and musical experience of a pastor and his music team. But these are not the criteria given to us by the Lord Jesus Christ by which we are to evaluate whether a church or a Christian has the life of Christ living and abiding within. For churches and Christians may have a name that they are alive, but Christ Himself may deem them to be dead. Christ says to the Church of Sardis: “Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die” (Revelation 3:1).

Churches and Christians may even be sound in doctrine and worship, faithful in contending for the faith once delivered to the saints, and may be bold in exposing backsliding churches and false teachers, and yet the very life of Christ may be missing in a dead orthodoxy. Christ says to the Church of Ephesus: “Thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars” (Revelation 2:2). And yet the Lord Jesus reproves this church and threatens to remove its candlestick (as a lightbearer for Christ). Why? “Because thou has left thy first love” Revelation 2:4).

Dear ones, I would never minimize the doctrine and worship of Christ that we as Christians and as a church should profess and practice, however, let us not mistake mere doctrine and worship for the very life of Christ (which is summarized by Christ as being love—“thou hast left

thy first love”). As important as is orthodoxy in upholding faithful doctrine, worship, church government, and lawful covenants, if the fruit of love for Christ and for one another (which is the first fruit of the Holy Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22-23 and from which the rest of the fruit flow), if love and the fruit of the Spirit are missing in our lives and in our church, we are nothing no matter how sound we may be in doctrine, worship, government, and covenant-keeping (1 Corinthians 13:1-3).

Do we merely have a name that we are alive, or do we have the life of Christ in us in the form of the fruit of the Spirit? Beloved, I submit to you that the fruit of the Spirit is the very evidence that we are alive in Christ, that we are truly identified with Christ (that we have, if you will, “the DNA of Jesus Christ). How will all men know that we are Christians? Jesus answered that question: “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35). Love for one another (with the other fruit of the Spirit) is the DNA which demonstrates we are alive in Jesus Christ, that God is our Father and that Christ is our Elder Brother, that we not only have the name and orthodoxy of Christ, but that we have the very life of Christ.

Dear ones, love (and the other fruit of the Spirit) are not simply an aspect of the Christian life and of the Christian Church, it is the evidence of life (it is the pulse, the heartbeat, and the breath of life). And Paul even states (in 1 Timothy 1:5) that the end (or goal) toward which the commandments of God (or we might add, the doctrines of Christ) look is love (and no doubt, the other fruit of the Spirit that flow from love): love for God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength; and love for our neighbor as for ourselves.

Thus, let us not move the faithful landmarks of our forefathers one inch in professing and practicing that doctrine, worship, church government,

and covenant-keeping found in Scripture and defended by our faithful forefather, but dear ones, the very life of Christ must be flowing through us (in the love of Christ and the other fruit of the Spirit), otherwise we will be unfruitful, lifeless, orthodox Christians (having only a name that we are alive), rather than being fruitful, living, orthodox Christians (having the very life of Christ).

As we embark this Lord's Day upon our study of the Fruit of the Holy Spirit, I would like to focus my attention upon the question: What is the nature of the fruit of the Spirit given to us in Galatians 5:22-23? Thus, in the remainder of the sermon, I would like to list a number of qualities of the fruit of the Spirit and to make some distinctions regarding the fruit of the Spirit: (1) The Fruit of the Spirit Is The Life Of Christ; (2) The Fruit Of The Spirit Is Spiritual Fruit; and (3) The Fruit Of The Spirit Grows By Means Of Communion With Christ.

I. The Fruit Of The Spirit Is The Life Of Christ.

A. If you want to know what Christ is like, He is the embodiment and full realization of the fruit of the Spirit. To have Christ is to have the fruit of the Spirit. To manifest Christ is to manifest the fruit of the Spirit. As I mentioned earlier, the fruit of the Spirit is like the DNA of Jesus Christ within us. The fruit of the Spirit is the very moral character and nature of Christ that has been given to the child of God in the new birth (or regeneration).

1. When the Apostle Peter states (in 2 Peter 1:4) that Christians are "partakers of the divine nature", he certainly did not mean that we become partakers of the essence and being of God, so that we become infinite, omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent. That is impossible, for there is only one God and there is none like Him (Isaiah 43:10; Isaiah 45:5). What Peter has in view is that Christians become

partakers of the moral nature and character of God when the Holy Spirit makes of us a new creation in Christ and implants within us the fruit of love, joy, peace longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance.

2. Dear ones, the amazing truth about the fruit of the Spirit is that these spiritual fruit are your participation in the moral nature of Christ and are the Lord's DNA freely and graciously given to you when you were born again (or made alive by the Holy Spirit). Thus, the fruit of the Spirit is the character and image of Christ implanted in you and growing in you in ever greater conformity to Christ as you are progressively sanctified in this life.

B. The fruit of the Holy Spirit is also the reflection of God's Law (that is why Paul says in Galatians 5:23, "against such there is no law"—God's Law is indeed against "the works of the flesh", but the fruit of the Spirit is no way against "the fruit of the Spirit"). There is absolutely no enmity between the fruit of the Spirit and the Law of God—for both reflect the same moral image of God. Though implanted as seed within the child of God at regeneration, it grows and grows throughout the Christian life unto ever greater conformity to the image of Christ until you are fully conformed to Christ's moral image at death and perfected in the fruit of the Spirit. Thus, the fruit of the Spirit is not simply something we do, but is who we are—the fruit of the Spirit identifies us with Jesus Christ as having His DNA within us.

II. The second quality of the fruit of the Spirit is this: **The Fruit Of The Spirit Is Spiritual Fruit** (i.e. it is fruit that is produced by the Holy Spirit). Note the following distinctions.

A. **It is spiritual fruit, and not spiritual gifts.**

1. Spiritual gifts are sovereignly apportioned to Christians differently and to varying measures as the Spirit wills and determines (1 Corinthians 12:4-6,14-18). Spiritual fruit is the gracious bestowal of the same life of Christ (the same DNA of Christ) into the lives of all God's chosen children (note that it is called by Paul "the fruit [singular] of the Spirit", because it is one cluster of grapes given to all Christians—it's a package deal, if you will, rather than individual gifts distributed differently to Christians). There are differences made in regard to spiritual gifts among God's children (some have more some less as God sees fit), but there are no differences made in regard to the life of Christ (as it relates to spiritual fruit) that is implanted in the life of God's children at regeneration (although we will see that among God's children there are differences as to the speed and abundance of growth in regard to spiritual fruit).

2. Spiritual gifts are given in order to tell us how we are to particularly function as members within Christ's body. Spiritual fruit is given in order to tell us whose we are (namely, Christ's—we have His DNA) and into whose image we are being conformed (into Christ's image). In other words, spiritual gifts give us our role, whereas spiritual fruit gives us our identity—we are partakers of Christ's moral nature. And yet how often do Christians get all excited about the subject of spiritual gifts, have seminars and small groups about spiritual gifts, and become proud and want others to see their spiritual gifts and to confirm for them their spiritual gifts. But how often do Christians jump up and down for joy that the fruit of the Spirit (the life and DNA of Jesus Christ) has been implanted within them and is growing in their lives. It is very telling about us, dear ones, that we are more concerned with our role and how others perceive us, than we are with our identity and who we are in Christ. Because we have the very life of Christ, we are the children of God, the heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ (and we have the DNA to prove it—the fruit of the Spirit).

3. We ought not to waste the gifts that God gives to us (even those that the world esteems to be ever so lowly), but let us also never make our identity (through the spiritual fruit that is ours) to depend upon the gifts (or lack of certain gifts) that God has given us. Though how we function within Christ's Church is important, our identity (through the spiritual DNA and fruit of the Spirit) is more foundational to our Christian life and without that firm foundation, we will not be able to use the gifts God has given to us for His glory, for the good of our neighbor, and for the building and reforming of Christ's Church. If the fruit of the Spirit is not alive and growing in our Christian lives, we will be using the gifts God has given to us in order to promote ourselves and to seek the approval and applause of others (1 Corinthians 12:31).

B. A second distinction that better helps us to understand the nature of the fruit of the Spirit is this: **It is spiritual fruit, and not natural personality traits.**

1. A natural disposition or personality trait may be in the lives of those who never become Christians (whether it be a kindness, a benevolence, a happiness, a hopefulness, a self-discipline etc.). But that is not the same as the spiritual fruit that is implanted by God's grace in God's chosen children at the new birth. This spiritual fruit (of which Paul speaks in Galatians 5:22-23) is supernatural, for it is the very life of Christ. It is the image of God created anew within God's chosen children. It is the reflection of God's righteous Law.

2. A natural disposition that has some beauty to it is bestowed by God's common grace, whereas the fruit of the Spirit has Christ's beauty and is bestowed by God's saving grace. We can be thankful that God gives by His common grace even to those who are not Christians a natural temperament that is agreeable and that is sociable (rather than a personality that is so disagreeable that no one wants to be around him/her), but let us never confuse such natural personality traits

or temperaments in the life of one who is not a Christian with the supernatural fruit of the Spirit. And dear ones, is it not to our own shame that at times there really is no difference that can be seen between the professing Christian and the non-christian due to the natural personality traits of the non-christian appearing to be more kind, considerate, patient, and serving than the supernatural fruit of the Spirit that ought to be exhibited in the life of the Christian? The common grace to the unsaved ought to humble us, dear ones, that the supernatural grace to us as Christians does not outshine all that is common and ordinary.

C. A third and final distinction that better helps us to understand the nature of the fruit of the Spirit is this: **It is spiritual fruit, as distinguished from works of the flesh.**

1. The works of the flesh are those evil works produced by the flesh (i.e. by our corrupt nature, Galatians 5:19-21). These works of the flesh proceed from the evil heart and corrupt nature we have inherited from Adam (even as Christ described in Matthew 15:19-20). The presence of the flesh (a corrupt nature) and the presence of the Spirit in the Christian produces a battle that wages in the heart of every Christian according to Galatians 5:17 (note Paul's own personal testimony of this battle within himself in Romans 7:22-23). Thus, there is a very real battle in the soul of every Christian to die daily to the flesh and its works, and to live anew to the Spirit and His fruit.

2. But this contrast between the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit is also seen in the use of the two different terms: works and fruit. In Galatians 5, Paul is drawing a contrast between works and fruit, so as to give hope to the Christian that the fruit of the Spirit will be victorious in our lives, because it is the fruit, the very life of Christ produced by the Almighty Spirit of God. Our comfort is that we do not win this battle by the mere works that we produce from our self-determination and resolve of the flesh, but we win this battle and will

win this battle because the fruit of the Spirit is the victorious life of Christ over death. This life of Christ (or fruit of the Spirit), which is worked within us by the Holy Spirit, must overcome the works of the flesh.

3. This is not to say that there is no effort required by the Christian in putting the lusts of the flesh to death and in growing the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. We must flee temptation and must deny ourselves, take up our cross by faith and apply our union with Christ in His death to our death to sin. We must exercise ourselves to godliness (1 Timothy 4:7). We must water the fruit of the Spirit in our lives by daily reading Christ's words, meditating upon Christ's words, embracing by faith the promises in His word, and delighting in time spent with Christ in prayer (so that it is a joy rather than a burden, so that it is offering our heart to Christ, rather than uttering a few words). Yes, we must work out our salvation with fear and trembling with a holy fear and reverence of God, trembling at the thought of falling into sin (Philippians 2:12), but this is not impossible to the Christian because God is at work within you both to will and to do His good pleasure (Philippians 2:13). There is the certain, confident hope of the fruit of the Spirit being victorious over the works of the flesh because the fruit of the Spirit is the life of Christ which no sin or no devil can overcome. The battle continues, but the victory is assured.

III. The Fruit Of The Spirit Grows By Means Of Communion With Christ.

A. The concept of fruit carries with it the growth of fruit. All Christians bear fruit (because all Christians have the DNA of Christ, i.e. the fruit of the Holy Spirit). But not all Christians bear the same fruit as quickly or as abundantly ("which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundred fold, some sixty, some thirty" Matthew 13:23). However, when one professes to be a Christian and to be "in Christ" and

yet bears no fruit of the Spirit, Jesus teaches (in John 15:2) that such a one is not truly a Christian and does not actually have the life (or DNA) of Christ (but is a Christian and is “in Christ” in name only).

B. Why then is there a difference in the speed and in the abundance of the fruit of the Spirit that is produced in the life of all true Christians (who trust alone in Christ and His righteousness alone as the only ground for their justification)? The difference is due to the quality of our communion and fellowship with Jesus Christ (especially through the Word of God and prayer, and the sacraments as they are made available to us).

1. The necessity of communion with Christ to the growth of the fruit of the Spirit within our lives is graphically illustrated for us by Christ in John 15. Just as a branch will not bear fruit unless it is connected and daily drawing life from the vine, so likewise there will be no fruit in the life of one who professes to be a Christian unless he/she is united to Christ by faith and is delighting every day in drawing life from communion with Christ by means of abiding in His Word and spending time in fervent prayer with Christ (John 15:4,7). Abiding in Christ does not convey the idea of an estranged relationship, of a distant relationship, of a sporadic relationship, but rather abiding in Christ conveys the idea of a close, familiar, and frequent relationship (the Greek word for “abide” literally means “remain”). Are you fleeing from Christ, just bumping into Christ one in a while, or are you remaining and abiding in a blessed communion with Christ? Do you approach the Lord in prayer to rest in His loving arms, and to pour out your heart unto Him for His mercies, for His help, for His forgiveness, for the growth of fruit in your life, for the death of the works of the flesh in your life? Is communion with Christ a matter of simply beholding the feast set for you, and then quickly be on your way? Communion and feasting together were connected in the ancient world. Communion involved delight, time spent together eating together, not a

fast food trip in the car to give your order and be on your way. Are the works of the flesh raising their ugly heads in your life because you have no heart to commune with Christ? Charles Spurgeon noted so well,

He who prays without fervency does not pray at all. We cannot commune with God, who is “a consuming fire” (Deut. 4:24), if there is no fire in our prayers.

2. The life of Christ is received through abiding in Christ and His words abiding in you, which waters the seed of the fruit of the Spirit implanted in our lives and nourishes it so that it brings forth fruit and even much fruit (John 15:5). However, those who profess Christ and yet do not abide in Christ are a Christian in name only, and if they continue in that state, they will be cut off like a dead branch and thrown into the fires of hell (John 15:6).

3. Not only is the fruit of the Spirit grown in our lives by means of Christ’s words and fervent prayer, but also by means of suffering, tribulation, and trials (John 15:2—“he purgeth it” by pruning off the dead wood). This pruning process involves the many ways in which the Lord is using the suffering, afflictions, the waiting, the trials in your life, dear brother or sister, to produce “more fruit” in your life (Romans 5:4: James 1:3—“the trying of your faith worketh patience”). The trials and tribulations you face, dear Christian, are not due to God’s hatred, but rather due to God’s love—He is pruning you that you might bear more fruit of the Spirit, that the life and DNA of Jesus Christ might increase in your life bringing you into ever greater conformity to Christ, who is the fully perfected Fruit of the Spirit. Even as the life of Christ is in you, so the sufferings of Christ are in you in order to bring forth more brilliantly and abundantly the life of Christ and the fruit of the Spirit. In testimony of Christ’s rich love in pruning you, I likewise close with the faithful testimony of a fellow brother who was taught the love of Christ

through his sufferings (*Letters of Samuel Rutherford*, “Letter CLVIII”, p. 291):

I know we may say that Christ is kindest in His love, when we are at our weakest; and that if Christ had not been to the fore, in our sad days, the waters had gone over our soul. His mercy hath a set period and appointed place, how far and no farther the sea of affliction shall flow, and where the waves thereof shall be stayed. He prescribeth how much pain and sorrow, both for weight and measure, we must have. Ye have, then, good cause to recall your love from all lovers, and give it to Christ. He is afflicted in all your afflictions, looketh not on you in your sad hours with an insensible heart or dry eyes.

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