



The Fruit of the Spirit

Background

In the second of our studies about the Holy Spirit, we looked at the Gifts of the Spirit and the instruction we are given as believers to earnestly seek or eagerly desire the spiritual gifts. We also learned about the purpose of the Gifts of the Spirit - the edification of the church and salvation of others. There is a clear sense that if we are blessed with the Gifts of the Spirit then the fruit of this outworking of the Spirit in our lives shall be very much in evidence - why else would God bless us with the Gifts? It is incredible then that those who live in God's light will produce fruit of moral and ethical character (Ephesians 5: 8- 9), and that the fruit may be realised in two distinct ways as we shall see in this study.

The Message

Fruit that will last

Jesus tells us that He has chosen us and appointed us:

“to go and produce fruit that will last, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, He will give it to you.” (John 15: 16)

So often, the fruit we may see in the sense of the world is not fruit that will last. God's fruit, by comparison, endures. There are also occasions when it takes some time for the fruit to become evident - for example the mission field. Read also 1 Corinthians 3: 6 - 11. One plants, one waters - but God causes growth. It is easy for us to expect 'overnight' results, when in reality it may take time. We must therefore be careful not to become judgmental; firstly because the fruit may take some time to be realised, and secondly we have no right to be the judge (Matthew 7: 1 - 5). It is simply important to discern and understand what is the fruit that will last. As we shall see, by comparison the Fruit of the Spirit is likely to be evidenced within a much shorter time-frame as a result of the Holy Spirit at work within and through us, reflecting to some extent the maturity of our faith and the Gifts He has given to us.

Since Jesus Himself has chosen us and appointed us, there is a clear sense of calling! At the end of our days do we want to be able to say *“I have fought the good fight. I have completed the race. I have kept the faith”*? (2 Timothy 4: 7)

Not only can we be unaware of the Gifts that God has blessed us with, but we can also be ignorant of the fruit that they produce. For example, has there ever been a time when you have really been blessed by the word you were given by a preacher in a sermon, or a friend in conversation or prayer and not said anything to them?



God tells us:

“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. “For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle; and it shall make a name for the LORD, an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.””
(Isaiah 55: 10 - 13)

Good fruit and bad fruit¹

Not all ‘fruitfulness’ is good; it is possible to bear bad fruit too. Fruit is also something that comes from within and is expressed outwardly through our speech and actions. Someone who is evil will do evil deeds, and someone who is good will do good deeds. This is covered in Luke’s gospel:

“For a good tree does not produce rotten fruit, nor does a rotten tree produce good fruit. For each tree is known by its own fruit. For they do not gather figs from thorn plants, nor do they pick a grape cluster from a thorn bush. The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces the good [thing], and the evil person out of the evil treasure of his heart produces the evil [thing]. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.” (Luke 6: 43 - 45)

We must also remember that Satan will try and corrupt everything that is of God. He quoted Scripture out of context during the temptation of Jesus:

“Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the Devil [literally Slanderer]. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, afterwards He was hungry. The Tempter approached Him and said, “Since You are God’s Son, speak, so that these stones shall become loaves of bread.” But Jesus answered and said, “It is written, ‘A person will not live on bread alone, but on every word coming out through [the] mouth of God².’” Then the Devil took Him along to the holy city and set Him on the pinnacle of the temple, and

¹Our study on Discernment provides additional context on this

² Deuteronomy 8: 3



said to Him, "Since You are God's Son, throw yourself down, for it has been written, 'He will give orders to His angels concerning You,' and 'they will lift You up on [their] hands, lest You strike Your foot against a stone³.'" Jesus said to him, "Again, it has been written, 'You will not put the LORD your God to the test⁴.'" Then the Devil took Him along to a very high mountain and showed to Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, and said to Him, "All these I will give to You, if having fallen down, You prostrate Yourself in worship before me." Then Jesus said to him, "Be going away behind Me Satan ["Adversary"]! For it has been written, 'The LORD your God you will prostrate yourself in worship before, and Him only will you sacredly serve⁵.'" Then the Devil left Him. And look! Angels came and began ministering to Him." (Matthew 4: 1 - 11)

Satan has established false prophets:

"But be watching out for the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. By their fruits you will know them. They do not gather a grape cluster from thorns, or figs from thistles, do they?" (Matthew 7: 15 - 16)

"For such ones are false apostles, deceitful labourers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore, it is not a great thing if also his servants are disguised as servants of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works." (2 Corinthians 11: 13 - 15)

Note in the account from Matthew, it reads "By their fruits you will know them".

See also 1 John 4: 1; Matthew 15: 14; Acts 13: 6 - 12; Revelation 2: 2.

He has also established false teachers:

"But also false prophets came to be among the people, as also false teachers will be among you, who will secretly bring in destructive, heretical sects, and denying the Master having redeemed them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves."

³ Psalm 91: 11 - 12

⁴ Deuteronomy 6: 16

⁵ Deuteronomy 6: 13



(2 Peter 2: 1)

“Now the Spirit explicitly says that in latter times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, in hypocrisy of liars, having been seared in their own conscience.” (1 Timothy 4: 1)

See also 2 Timothy 4: 3 - 5; James 3: 1 - 12

Finally he has established false miracles:

“ The coming of the lawless one will be accompanied by the power of Satan. He will use every kind of power, including miraculous signs, lying wonders, and every type of evil to deceive those who are dying, those who refused to love the truth that would save them. For this reason, God will send them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie. Then all who have not believed the truth but have taken pleasure in unrighteousness will be condemned..” (2 Thessalonians 2: 9 - 12)

“Not every one saying to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter into the kingdom of the heaven, but the one doing the will of My Father, the One in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, we prophesied in Your name, and cast out demons in Your name, and did many miraculous works in Your name, did we not?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, the ones practising lawlessness!’” (Matthew 7: 21 - 23)

See also Acts 8:9-13; Exodus 7: 8 - 12, 20 - 22; 8: 6, 7, 17 - 19; Matthew 24: 24

Jesus himself said *“Listen! I am sending you out like sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore, continue becoming wise as the serpents and innocent as the doves.”* (Matthew 10: 16) We must therefore be on our guard and remember that implicit in Jesus’ command is the fact that becoming wise is a process - we must ***continue*** becoming wise. It is not something that happens immediately.

The Fruit of the Spirit

The Fruit of the Spirit then should form the foundation of our life in Jesus on which all things rest. The Fruit of the Spirit in our lives affects everything we do and say, and the way we rationalize things; without it, everything is affected by sin. It has been said that for the shortest and most complete biography of Jesus, look at the Fruit of the Spirit. When people see the Fruit of the Spirit in our lives they should see Jesus. We should also remember that the Fruit does not come from efforts, simply by legalistically following the law but grows naturally out of trust, out of relationship and out of covenant. This is the essence of mission and captures the principle of



practising what we preach. In Galatians 5: 23 we read that against the Fruit of the Spirit “*there is no law*”.

If we ever wanted a measure against which we could determine our ‘rightness’ with God and every aspect of relationship - whether with God or each other, then we should look to the Fruit of the Spirit. It is also worthwhile looking at what causes the opposite of each aspect of the Fruit to be realised in our lives and bring that before the foot of the cross. Only when we identify barriers to each aspect and bring these before the Lord can we hope for the barriers to be overcome.

The Bible tells us of the Fruit of the Spirit in 4 main places - Galatians, 2 Corinthians, Ephesians and Colossians. Before we continue, read Colossians 3: 12 - 17. It is also important to look at what the Bible tells us of love in 1 Corinthians. Table 1 below sets out each mention of aspects of the Fruit of the Spirit, providing some additional context and finally the corresponding reference to where mentioned in the Bible. You may wish to look at this list in more detail in your own time.

What is apparent then from a comparison between the ‘Fruit of the Spirit’ and the fruits from our life in God and faith is that the Fruit of the Spirit affects the way we are at the core of our being, and is very much a sign of the indwelling Spirit. The fruits from our life in God tend to be realised through the outworking of our faith on others.

Table 1 The Fruit of the Spirit

	<i>Aspect</i>	<i>Context</i>	<i>Reference</i>
1	Love (1)	From the Greek ‘agapē’: affection or benevolence. Sincere love	Galatians 5: 22
	Joy (1)	From the Greek ‘chara’: cheerfulness, calm delight and gladness	Galatians 5: 22
	Peace (1)	Equivalent to ‘shalom’ - completeness from the Hebrew. Quietness, rest, being set at one again. Freedom from anxiety	Galatians 5: 22
	Patience (1)	Longsuffering and forbearance	Galatians 5: 22
	Kindness (1)	Moral excellence in character and goodness	Galatians 5: 22
	Goodness (1)	Virtue or beneficence, generosity	Galatians 5: 22
	Faithfulness (1)	Moral conviction of God’s truth, absolute reliance on Christ for salvation; assurance, belief and fidelity	Galatians 5: 22
	Gentleness (1)	Meekness and humility, considerateness	Galatians 5: 23
	Self-Control (1)	Temperance	Galatians 5: 23
2	Purity (1)	Cleanness and blamelessness	2 Corinthians 6: 6



<i>Aspect</i>	<i>Context</i>	<i>Reference</i>
Understanding (1)	Knowledge	2 Corinthians 6: 6
Patience (2)	Longsuffering and forbearance	2 Corinthians 6: 6
Kindness (2)	Moral excellence in character and goodness	2 Corinthians 6: 6
Love (2)	From the Greek 'agapē': affection or benevolence. Sincere love	2 Corinthians 6: 6
Truthful speech (1)	Truth	2 Corinthians 6: 7
Reliance on the power of God (1)	By God's miraculous power	2 Corinthians 6: 7
3 Humility (1)	Humbleness of mind; modesty and lowliness	Ephesians 4: 2
Gentleness (2)	Meekness and humility, considerateness	Ephesians 4: 2
Patience (3)	Longsuffering and forbearance	Ephesians 4: 2
Tolerance (1)	'To hold oneself up against'; put up with, bear with and endure	Ephesians 4: 2
4 Goodness (2)	Virtue or beneficence, generosity	Ephesians 5: 9
Righteousness (1)	Justification and equity of character	Ephesians 5: 9
Truth (2)	Truth	Ephesians 5: 9
Discerning what pleases the Lord (1)	Testing and examining what pleases God	Ephesians 5: 10
5 Hearts (bowels) of compassion (1)	Inward affection and tender mercy, pity	Colossians 3: 12
Kindness (3)	Moral excellence in character and goodness	Colossians 3: 12
Humility (2)	Humbleness of mind; modesty and lowliness	Colossians 3: 12
Gentleness (3)	Meekness and humility, considerateness	Colossians 3: 12
Patience (3)	Longsuffering and forbearance	Colossians 3: 12
Tolerance (2)	'To hold oneself up against'; put up with, bear with and endure	Colossians 3: 13
Forgiveness (1)	'To grant as a favour'; 'deliver from' - freely and frankly forgive	Colossians 3: 13
Love (3)	From the Greek 'agapē': affection or benevolence. Sincere love	Colossians 3: 14
Peace (2)	Equivalent to 'shalom' - completeness from the Hebrew. Quietness, rest, being set at one again. Freedom from anxiety	Colossians 3: 15
6 Love (4)	From the Greek 'agapē': affection or benevolence. Sincere love	1 Corinthians 13



Table 2 presents a commentary on the Fruit of the Spirit, by quoting a selection of relevant verses from Scripture. It would not be difficult to do separate studies

Table 2 Commentary on The Fruit of the Spirit

Aspect	Commentary
1 Love	<p><i>“And this is love, that we are walking about [fig. conducting ourselves] according to His commandments. This is the commandment, just as you heard from the beginning that you should be walking about in it.”</i> (2 John 1: 6);</p> <p><i>““Teacher, which [is] the greatest commandment in the Law?” Then Jesus said to him, ‘You will love the LORD your God with your whole heart [fig. your entire inner self] and with your whole soul and with your whole understanding.’ This is [the] first and greatest commandment. But a second [one is] similar to it, ‘You will love your neighbour as yourself’. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”</i> (Matthew 22: 36 - 40). Take a look in your own time and ask yourself is it possible to break any of the remaining commandments if these two are truly obeyed?</p>
2 Joy	<p><i>“Though not having known Him, you love Him; and even though you do not see Him now you believe in Him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, [the] salvation of your souls.”</i> (1 Peter 1: 8 - 9). Also covered in more depth in the study “A Biblical Perspective of Joy”.</p>
3 Peace	<p><i>“Stop being anxious about anything, but in every [thing] by prayer and by petition, with thanksgiving, be letting your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, the [peace] surpassing all understanding, will guard [or, protect] your hearts [fig., inner selves] and your thoughts in Christ Jesus”.</i> (Philippians 4: 6-7)</p>
4 Patience	<p><i>“The Lord is not slow concerning His promise, as some regard slowness, but He is waiting patiently towards us, not wanting any to be lost but [for] all to make room for repentance.”. . .“Bear in mind that our Lord’s patience means salvation.”</i> (2 Peter 3: 9, 15a). See also Proverbs 14: 29, 15: 18, 19: 11, James 1: 19 - 20.</p>
5 Kindness	<p>It is <i>“God’s kindness that is leading us to repentance.”</i> (Romans 2: 4) <i>“So we urged Titus to finish this work of kindness among you in the same way that he had started it. Indeed, the more your faith, speech, knowledge, enthusiasm, and love for us increase, the more we want you to be rich in this work of kindness. I am not commanding you but testing the genuineness of your love by the enthusiasm of others. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Although he was rich, for your sakes he became poor, so that you, through his poverty, might become rich.”</i> (2 Corinthians 8: 6 - 9)</p>
6 Goodness	<p><i>“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another.”</i> (Romans 15: 13 - 14) See also Titus 3: 4 - 7.</p>
7 Faithfulness	<p>Great Faith is a Gift of the Spirit. The context of faith in the Fruit of the Spirit is that of faithfulness...there is a sense of constancy, consistency, reliability and covenant. The Psalms, and indeed the whole of Scripture, contain numerous examples of God’s faithfulness to His people. With the Spirit indwelling in us, we too should reflect God’s faithfulness in our encounters. <i>“Hear the word of the LORD, O children of Israel, for the LORD has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land. There is no faithfulness or steadfast love, and no knowledge of God in the land; there is swearing, lying, murder, stealing, and committing adultery; they break all bounds, and bloodshed follows bloodshed.”</i> (Hosea 4: 1- 2) <i>“And I will make for them a covenant on that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land, and I will make you lie down in safety. And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the LORD.”</i> (Hosea 2: 18 - 20)</p>



<i>Aspect</i>	<i>Commentary</i>
8 Gentleness	<i>"You have given me the shield of your salvation, and your right hand supported me, and your gentleness made me great." (Psalm 18: 35) It is wonderful that the Lord's gentleness can make us great. "I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Ephesians 4: 1 - 3)</i>
9 Self-Control	<i>"A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls." (Proverbs 25: 28) "Older men [are] to be temperate, worthy of respect, sensible, sound in the faith, in love, in patient endurance." (Titus 2: 2) "For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control." (2 Timothy 1: 6 - 7)</i>
10 Purity	<i>"He who loves purity of heart, and whose speech is gracious, will have the king as his friend." (Proverbs 22: 11) "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." (Matthew 5: 8)</i>
11 Understanding / Knowledge	<i>"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen" (2 Peter 3: 18) "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins." (2 Peter 1: 3 - 9)</i>
12 Truthful speech / Truth	<i>"Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart." (Psalm 51: 6) "Teach me your way, O LORD, that I may walk in your truth; unite my heart to fear your name." (Psalm 86: 11) "The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever." (Psalm 119 : 160)</i>
13 Reliance on the power of God	<i>"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." (Romans 1: 16) "For he was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but in dealing with you we will live with him by the power of God." (2 Corinthians 13: 4)</i>
14 Humility	<i>"Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourself. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others." (Philippians 2: 3 - 4)</i>
15 Tolerance / Patience	<i>"As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience." (Luke 8: 15) "He will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, he will give eternal life." (Romans 2: 6 - 7)</i>
16 Righteousness	<i>"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." (Matthew 5: 6) "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5: 10) "Beware of practising your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 6: 1) "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." (Matthew 6: 33)</i>
17 Discerning what pleases the Lord	<i>"And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him." (Hebrews 11: 6) "Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to live and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more." (1 Thessalonians 4: 1) "So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him." (2 Corinthians 5: 9)</i>



<i>Aspect</i>	<i>Commentary</i>
18 Hearts (bowels) of compassion	“ For the Lord will not cast off forever, but, though he cause grief, he will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love; for he does not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men.” (Lamentations 3: 31 - 33) “As a father shows compassion to his children, so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him.” (Psalm 109: 13)
19 Forgiveness	“Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven. “Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay what you owe.’ So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. Then his master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’ And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”” (Matthew 18: 21 - 35)

Think of situations you encounter in everyday life, whether at home with family, at work with colleagues, out with friends or out in the community. Consider for a moment each aspect of the Fruit of the Spirit in turn and think about those aspects which you really struggle with and why. Share this with the group and bring it before the Lord in prayer.

Remember, the opposite of each aspect of the Fruit of the Spirit serves to diminish our relationship - our rightness with God, but His mercy triumphs over judgement. (James 2: 13) And His grace is sufficient for us. (2 Corinthians 12: 9)