

Fruits of the Spirit

Developing Christian character through the Holy Spirit

The Source of All Spiritual Fruit

John 15:4-5

[4] Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. [5] I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

Galatians 5:22-23

[22] But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, [23] Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

Philippians 1:11

Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

Colossians 1:10

That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

The fruit of the Spirit flows not from human effort but from vital union with Christ. Jesus declared, 'Abide in me, and I in you.

As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.' The branch possesses no inherent ability to produce fruit—it must draw life from the vine through continuous connection. Similarly, believers cannot manufacture spiritual graces through self-effort, religious discipline, or moral striving.

These fruits are the Spirit's work, produced supernaturally in yielded hearts as believers maintain intimate fellowship with Christ. We are filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

As we walk in the Spirit, abide in Christ's word, and maintain prayerful dependence, the Spirit reproduces Christ's character in us.

Love, Joy, and Peace—Godward Graces

1 John 4:19

We love him, because he first loved us.

John 15:11

These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

Romans 5:1

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

Philippians 4:7

And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

The first three fruits primarily concern our relationship with God. Love heads the list because it encompasses all other virtues—we love because He first loved us.

This divine love, shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, enables us to love God supremely and our neighbor sacrificially. Joy is Christ's own joy abiding in us, making our joy full—a deep gladness rooted not in circumstances but in our union with Christ and confidence in His sovereign purposes.

Peace represents both objective reconciliation with God ('being justified by faith, we have peace with God') and subjective tranquility of soul ('the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds'). These three graces flow from knowing God, resting in His promises, and experiencing His presence.

They mark the inner transformation that salvation produces.

Longsuffering, Gentleness, and Goodness—Outward Graces

Colossians 3:12-13

[12] Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; [13] Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.

Ephesians 4:32

And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Romans 12:17-21

[17] Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. [18] If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. [19] Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. [20] Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. [21] Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

Titus 3:4-5

[4] But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, [5] Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

The next three fruits govern our treatment of others, particularly those who try our patience or deserve judgment. Longsuffering is patience with people—forbearing one another and forgiving one another even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven us.

It reflects God's own longsuffering toward rebellious humanity, being slow to anger and rich in mercy. Gentleness, or kindness, manifests in tender compassion and beneficial action toward others.

Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving—this kindness mirrors the kindness and love of God our Savior toward mankind. Goodness combines moral

excellence with benevolent action, not merely abstaining from evil but zealously performing good works.

Overcome evil with good, extending blessing even to those who curse or persecute. These graces contradict natural human responses, demonstrating supernatural transformation and reflecting God's character to a watching world.

Faith, Meekness, and Temperance—Inward Character

Galatians 2:20

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Numbers 12:3

(Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.)

1 Corinthians 9:25-27

[25] And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. [26] I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: [27] But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

Proverbs 16:32

He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.

The final three fruits concern inward spiritual character and self-governance. Faith here denotes faithfulness or trustworthiness—reliability in word and deed, steadfast commitment to duty, and perseverance through trials.

'I live by the faith of the Son of God,' Paul testified, demonstrating consistent fidelity to his calling. Meekness is strength under control, humility combined with courage—not weakness but power submitted to God's authority.

Moses was very meek, above all men, yet he confronted Pharaoh and led a nation.

Temperance is self-control, mastery over appetites and passions through the Spirit's enabling.

Those who strive for mastery are temperate in all things, keeping their bodies in subjection. He that rules his spirit proves mightier than he who takes a city.

These graces develop as believers yield to the Spirit's sanctifying work, growing in grace and in the knowledge of Christ.

The Unity of the Fruit

Galatians 5:22

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

Ephesians 4:13

Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

Colossians 2:19

And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.

2 Peter 1:5-8

[5] And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; [6] And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; [7] And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. [8] For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Scripture speaks of the 'fruit' of the Spirit in the singular, not 'fruits' in the plural. This grammatical detail carries theological significance—these nine qualities constitute one integrated whole, not separate virtues selectively distributed.

Like a cluster of grapes or segments of a single orange, these graces develop together organically. Where genuine love flourishes, joy and peace accompany it; where patience grows, kindness and goodness emerge alongside.

The Spirit does not produce love without self-control, or gentleness without faithfulness. Peter exhorted believers to add virtue to faith, knowledge to virtue, temperance to knowledge, patience to temperance, godliness to patience—a comprehensive development of Christian character.

If these things be in you and abound, they make you neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. The mature believer exhibits all these graces proportionally, growing toward the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

Fruit Versus the Works of the Flesh

Galatians 5:19-21

[19] Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, [20] Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, [21] Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

Romans 8:5-8

[5] For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. [6] For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. [7] Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. [8] So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

Colossians 3:5-10

[5] Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: [6] For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: [7] In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. [8] But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. [9] Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; [10] And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

Ephesians 2:1-5

[1] And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; [2] Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: [3] Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. [4] But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, [5] Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

Paul's listing of the Spirit's fruit immediately follows his enumeration of the works of the flesh—adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like. The contrast proves instructive.

Works suggest human labor and effort; fruit implies natural growth from living union. Fleshly works manifest from unregenerate human nature; spiritual fruit grows from the indwelling Holy Spirit.

The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh—these are contrary one to another. They that are in the flesh cannot please God.

Believers must mortify the deeds of the body, put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him. Where the Spirit reigns, the fruit appears; where the flesh dominates, its corrupt works emerge.

Cultivating and Growing Spiritual Fruit

2 Peter 3:18

But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

Hebrews 5:14

But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

Philippians 2:12-13

[12] Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. [13] For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

John 15:2

Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

Though spiritual fruit comes from the Spirit, believers bear responsibility to cultivate conditions favorable for growth. First, maintain intimate communion with Christ through prayer, Scripture meditation, and obedient surrender—abiding in the vine ensures fruitfulness.

Second, submit to the Father's pruning—'Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.' Trials, discipline, and sanctifying affliction remove hindrances to growth. Third, exercise spiritual faculties through practice—'strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.' Fourth, work out your salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that God works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

Fifth, feed upon God's Word—the sincere milk of the Word promotes growth. Finally, cultivate the soil of your heart through confession of sin, resistance of temptation, and deliberate pursuit of holiness.

Fruit as Evidence of Genuine Faith

Matthew 7:16-20

[16] Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? [17] Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. [18] A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. [19] Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. [20] Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

John 15:8

Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

James 2:17-18

[17] Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. [18] Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.

1 John 2:3-6

[3] And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. [4] He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. [5] But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. [6] He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

The presence or absence of spiritual fruit provides evidence concerning the reality of one's profession. Jesus warned, 'Ye shall know them by their fruits.

Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.' A tree is known by its fruit.

Herein is the Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be His disciples. Fruitfulness demonstrates authentic discipleship.

Faith without works is dead, being alone—mere profession without corresponding fruit proves spurious. We know that we know Him if we keep His commandments; he that saith he abides in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked.

While works cannot save, genuine faith inevitably produces fruit. Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves.

The Spirit's fruit, progressively increasing, evidences the Spirit's indwelling and validates the believer's profession.