

Unit Theme: The Fruit of the Spirit

April 28, 2024 (Lesson 9)

THE SPIRIT PRODUCES LOVE, JOY, PEACE

1. **Love by the Spirit** (Galatians 5:22-23; Colossians 3:12-14; 1 John 3:16-18)
2. **Joy by the Spirit** (1 Thessalonians 1:5-7; Luke 10:17-21)
3. **Peace by the Spirit** (John 16:33; Romans 12:18-21; Philippians 4:4-7; Colossians 3:15; Romans 5:1-2)

Central Truth: The Holy Spirit produces love, joy, and peace in the believer.

Focus: Understand the importance of—and seek to have in our lives—love, joy, and peace by the Holy Spirit.

Evangelism Emphasis: A sinner can experience godly love, everlasting joy, and profound peace through faith in Christ.

Golden Text: “My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth” (1 John 3:18).

The work of the Holy Spirit within us is described in the Bible by the metaphor “fruit.” The fruit of the Spirit refers to a list of spiritual qualities developed in us by the Holy Spirit. These qualities relate to Christian character and moral excellence. The word *fruit* suggests a natural, organic process of growth and production. If we continue to be connected to Jesus Christ (John 15:1-8) and if we live in the Spirit and walk in the Spirit, we will manifest the fruit (attitudes and actions) of the Spirit and will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh (Gal. 5:16, 22-25; 1 John 1:7). A lack of fruit-bearing is a sign we are not “abiding” in Christ and not walking in the Spirit (Matt. 7:16-20; Luke 13:6-9).

Fruit-bearing is evident in the life of the person described in Psalm 1: He “walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season” (vv. 1-3 NKJV). In order to bear fruit, we must turn away from negative evil influences and, instead, surrender to the influence of the Word of God. As fruit-bearing believers, we love God’s Word, “delight” in it, and “meditate” in it continually.

Nine specific fruits should be manifested in a Spirit-controlled life, according to Galatians 5:22-23. Today's lesson focuses on the love, joy, and peace that should be evident in our lives as Christ's followers.

1. LOVE BY THE SPIRIT

A. Put on Love (Galatians 5:22-23; Colossians 3:12-14)

Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

Colossians 3:12 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. 14 And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

In his description of the fruit of the Spirit, the Apostle Paul gives priority to love. However, before turning to the subject of love, a brief comment about Paul's use of the word *fruit* is in order. Observant Bible readers have noticed Paul uses the singular "fruit" rather than the plural "fruits," even though he lists nine fruits. Paul can do so because the word *fruit* can be a counted or uncounted term, meaning the singular *fruit* can refer to either one kind of fruit or to many different kinds of fruit collectively (see Rosemary Allen, *All About Grammar*). For example, when the Bible says the Israelite spies "took of the fruit of the land in their hands" (Deut. 1:25), the word *fruit* is referring to various kinds of fruit. However, the Bible also states the Tree of Life "bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month" (Rev. 22:2 NKJV).

Therefore, it is correct to say Paul mentions nine "fruits," but it is also correct to say that together the nine fruits form "the fruit of the Spirit." By using the singular form, Paul emphasizes

the unity of the fruits and their common source in the Holy Spirit. He could have chosen to use the plural form “fruits,” which would have emphasized the individuality of the fruits; but he did not. Therefore, when talking about the entire list, we are correct in using the singular *fruit*; but when talking about multiple items on the list, we should use the plural *fruits*.

The fact that Paul mentions *love* first suggests it is the most important of the fruits. *Love* is a “fruit of the Spirit,” which means it is given to us by the Spirit. In Romans 5:5, Paul says “the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us” (NKJV). It is only with God’s help that we are able to love as God wants us to love. This kind of love comes from God because “love is of God; and . . . God is love” (1 John 4:7-8 NKJV). God pours out His love on us and enables us to love. Love for others is the hallmark of the Christ-life (John 13:34-35; 15:9-13; 1 John 4:7-11). Jesus declared the primacy of love, saying, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets” (Matt. 22:37-40 NKJV).

The priority of love is also stressed in Colossians 3:12-14, where Paul describes the caring nature of the church. He says we as believers should be merciful, kind, humble, meek, and patient with each other. We should be quick to forgive each other, just as Christ is ready to forgive. “Above all [these]” very positive qualities, we must “put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity” (v. 14 CSB). Love is superior, binding together all of the relational dimensions of the Christian life. Mercy, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, and forgiveness are tied together by Christian love. The uniting quality of love is possible because love is sacrificial, it puts others first, and it prefers giving rather than receiving. Therefore, love is the identifying fruit and the primary characteristic of Christian community. Jesus said, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love

one to another” (John 13:35).

Ongoing Cultivation

I grew up on a farm, and we had more than one hundred fruit trees, along with rows of grapevines and raspberries. Much work was required in order for those plants to produce good fruit. Throughout the seasons of the year, we would fertilize the plants, prune the branches, remove weeds, kill insects, and keep watch for diseases. Christian fruit-bearing requires a similar level of ongoing cultivation and attention.—Lee Roy Martin

B. Love in Word and Deed (1 John 3:16-18)

16 Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 17 But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? 18 My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

Genuine love is more than a warm, fuzzy feeling inside; and it is more than a romantic attraction. Genuine love is more than a sympathetic attitude toward someone. Real love is actively giving of oneself for others, exemplified in Jesus’ sacrificial death on behalf of the lost world. We know what real love is because Jesus laid down His life for us (v. 16); and if we truly love others, we will lay down our lives for them. Thus, our love is demonstrated in our deeds. If we have the ability to help someone who is in need but we do not help them, the love of God does not “dwell” in us (v. 17). To love our brothers and our sisters in Christ means we open our hearts to them and give our time, labor, attention, care, and finances—we lovingly give whatever is needed.

Verses 16 and 17 state love does not turn a blind eye to people in need. In case we missed the point, verse 18 declares love must be expressed not only in words but also in actions. Love must be

given not with our mouth alone but also “in truth,” which means “genuinely.” We as individuals and the church as a group must love others truly. To love truly means we go beyond preaching, singing, and talking about love. It is easy to “love everyone” with our words but, at the same time, to love no one with our deeds. People with needs are all around us: children, parents, the elderly, our neighbors, college students, coworkers, the sick, and shut-ins. How can we reach out and minister to the needs around us?

The Scripture passages for this lesson emphasize the importance of love within the Christian fellowship, but our love should extend outside the church. As the Holy Spirit works in our lives, He enables us to love not only our friends and neighbors but also our enemies! Jesus commanded, “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you” (Luke 6:27-28 NKJV).

§ *Answer the question in 1 John 3:17.*

2. JOY BY THE SPIRIT

A. Persevere Joyfully (1 Thessalonians 1:5-7)

5 For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. 6 And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost. 7 So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.

Another fruit of the Spirit is *joy*. Acts 13:52 says “the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.” Joy is an inward sense of happiness based on the knowledge that we are blessed by God. The joy that comes from the Holy Spirit is a lasting joy that does not depend on our circumstances. This joy continues to be present in all the circumstances of life (Phil. 4:4; 1 Thess.

5:16). It is generated by the continuing presence of the Spirit within us. Because of the Holy Spirit, we can be joyful even in the midst of pain, suffering, temptation, persecution, and trouble.

The Apostle Paul commended the Thessalonian believers for their joy, pointing to four reasons for their joy (and ours). First, he explained the Gospel came not only in word, “but also in power” (1 Thess. 1:5). The preaching of Paul was accompanied by signs and wonders, miracles and healings, and other gifts of the Spirit. When we experience the reality of God’s power, we are filled with joy. Knowing God is real and He can work wonders gives us great joy. Second, the Gospel came “in the Holy Ghost.” The signs and miracles were not the result of magical spells and incantations, and they were not the result of Paul’s eloquence or special training. The manifestations of God’s presence were a result of the Holy Spirit’s work in their midst.

Third, their experience of the power of God and the Spirit of God gave the believers great “assurance” (v. 5). They had no doubts regarding the reality and truth of the Gospel. Fourth, the believers saw a confirmation of the Gospel in the lives of Paul and those who ministered with him. Therefore, the believers “became followers” of Paul’s example (v. 6). When we see how God is working in the lives of other Christians, great joy is the godly response. We rejoice in the testimonies we hear from our leaders, our family, and other believers.

For these four reasons, the Gospel produced joy in the Thessalonian Christians. However, their reception of the Gospel produced something besides joy—it caused “much affliction” (v. 6). The affliction did not come from the Gospel itself but from the persecution that followed their conversion to Christ. The good news of the Gospel is always opposed by evildoers and other evil spiritual forces (see Eph. 6:10-18). Thankfully, the joy of the Lord cannot be drowned out by the opposition of Satan. The joy the Spirit gives will endure through all manner of affliction, resistance, and hostility. Because of their joy, the believers became examples to all believers living “in

Macedonia and Achaia” (v. 7). Let us express our joy and be examples to others!

What Is Joy?

Joy is not necessarily the absence of suffering; it is the presence of God.—Sam Storms

B. Rejoice in Salvation (Luke 10:17-21)

17 And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. 18 And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. 19 Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. 20 Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven. 21 In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.

Christians have many reasons to rejoice, and no reason is more compelling than salvation. *Joy*, therefore, is an essential element of the Kingdom, “for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 14:17 NKJV).

Jesus sent seventy of His disciples on a preaching mission. When they returned, they rejoiced because of the authority that had been given to them to heal the sick, cast out demons, and overcome the power of the enemy. Then Jesus explained although signs, wonders, miracles, and authority over demons are wonderful aspects of ministry, there is a greater reason to rejoice. He said to them, “Rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven” (Luke 10:20). Their names being “written in heaven” meant they were in a right relationship with God, they were forgiven by God, they were walking with God, and they could look forward to a future with God.

§ *What caused Jesus to “rejoice” (v. 21), and why?*

3. PEACE BY THE SPIRIT

A. Jesus Promises Peace (John 16:33)

33 These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

The fruit of the Spirit includes *peace*, and there are three kinds: (1) peace with God, (2) peace in our hearts, and (3) peace with other people. Furthermore, the Biblical concept of peace implies more than the absence of war or conflict. It signifies wholeness, well-being, security, safety, tranquility, relational harmony, and the flourishing of life. This level of peace is available to all believers through the Holy Spirit.

On His last evening with His disciples, Jesus taught them about the nature and the source of peace. He encouraged them with a simple yet profound strategy for peace they should follow in the days after His crucifixion. He said their peace would not come through circumstances, successes, accomplishments, or fame. Instead, Jesus himself would be their peace. The disciples would suffer tribulation, but they could have peace because Jesus overcame the world!

Along with the twelve disciples, the Apostle Paul learned how to have peace in Jesus; that is why he could say of Jesus, “He Himself is our peace” (Eph. 2:14 NKJV; see also Rom. 15:13). That is why he could declare, “I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:11-13 NKJV).

Enter In

A great many people are trying to make peace, but that has already been done. God has not left it for us to do; all we have to do is to enter into it.—D. L. Moody

B. Live in God's Peace (Romans 12:18-21; Philippians 4:4-7)

Romans 12:18 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.

Philippians 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. **5** Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. **6** Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. **7** And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Because peace is a fruit of the Spirit, we can have peace in the midst of trouble. We also can have peace with other people. We are called to live at peace with all people (Rom. 12:18), and Jesus said we should seek to be reconciled with those who consider themselves our enemies (Matt. 5:23-24). The writer of Hebrews said we should “pursue peace with all people” (12:14 NKJV).

The Holy Spirit gives us peace in our hearts, but maintaining that peace depends partially on our cooperation with the Spirit by rejoicing “in the Lord always” (Phil. 4:4 NKJV). We must throw aside all anxiety and take all our needs to the Lord in prayer (v. 6). We must rest in the Lord as we offer thanksgiving (v. 6), and we must guard our thoughts (v. 8). If we do these things, we will have “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding” (v. 7 NKJV), and “the God of peace” will be with us (v. 9).

§ *How does Philippians 4:7 describe the greatness and power of God's peace?*

C. Let Peace Reign (Colossians 3:15; Romans 5:1-2)

Colossians 3:15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

Romans 5:1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: **2** By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

The Apostle Paul understood the challenges Christians face; therefore, he encourages us to “let the peace of God rule” in our hearts. Paul was fully aware of King Solomon’s wise counsel: “Guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it” (Prov. 4:23 NIV). When Paul tells us to let peace “rule,” he means God’s peace should be in full control of our desires, our wishes, our words, and our actions. The mouth speaks from the heart (Luke 6:45), and “out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies” (Matt. 15:19 NKJV).

The peace of God rules when we are “thankful” (Col. 3:15), and when the “word of Christ” dwells in us (v. 16). Peace can rule in our hearts only when we are fully assured God has saved us and He is with us. Before we became Christians, we were the enemies of God (Rom. 5:10), but we have been reconciled to God. Now we are the children of God, and we have peace with Him through the Lord Jesus Christ (v. 1). We can have peace because we have full access to the grace of God and because our future is secure in Him (v. 2).

§ *How has the peace of God impacted your life as a Christian? How could you explain God’s peace to a non-Christian?*

WE ARE CHRIST’S BRANCHES

The Holy Spirit gives us love, joy, and peace. These fruits are produced by the Spirit, but they must be cultivated by our cooperation with Him. In short, we bear fruit as long as we are drawing life from the vine (John 15:1, 4). Jesus is “the vine” and we are “the branches.” When we abide in

Him, we bear “much fruit”; but without Him, we “can do nothing” (v. 5). If we do not bear fruit, we will be cut off; but if we bear fruit, our fruit will bring glory to God (vv. 6-8).

We should not seek after the gifts of the Spirit rather than the fruit of the Spirit, for both are important aspects of the Christian life, and both are meant to bring glory to God. It is not a question of gifts or fruit. The essential question is whether we are faithful in the use of our gifts and whether the Spirit is producing the fruit of righteousness in us. God desires that we grow both in giftedness and in character. Are our lives producing the fruit of the Spirit?

Daily Devotions

- M. Love God Wholeheartedly (Deuteronomy 10:12-22)
- T. Love Your Neighbor (Leviticus 19:11-18)
- W. Joy Expressed (Psalm 66:1-6)
- T. Joy in Heaven (Luke 15:1-10)
- F. Christ Gives Peace (John 14:22-29)
- S. Peace With God (Romans 5:1-11)