

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

The Fruit of the Spirit and the Gifts of the Spirit

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The Scriptures tell us that there are fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23) that are Christian qualities and virtues that are the direct opposite of the vices of the flesh and that there are gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor 12-14) “which empower believers to perform a particular ministry for the edification of others” (*EDT*, p. 1042). Fruit and gifts are not the same because they operate in the spiritual life of the believer for different purposes.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit are distributed “to each one individually as He wills,” and “to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (1 Cor. 12:7, 11). They edify the believer’s spiritual life and train him for the work of the ministry. The gifts of the Spirit are given by Spirit-filling to enable us to bring spiritual light and life to others, as the Scriptures say, “He gave some . . . for the equipping of the saints” (Eph. 4:11-12), that is, to build up Christ’s body—the church. The word “equip” (*katartismos*) is derived from a root which signifies in its verbal form “to mend or prepare” nets for the task of fishing by cleaning, mending, and folding them together (Matt. 4:21), or for disciples to be “fully trained” to be like their teacher (Luke 6:40). Also, it can mean “to restore” to a right position as those Christians in Galatia who had lapsed into sin (Gal. 6:1), or “to complete” what is lacking in the spiritual growth of the Thessalonian Christians (1 Thess. 3:10). Thus it follows that God’s chief purpose for the manifestation of different spiritual gifts in the church is not primarily for the benefit or growth of the recipient, but it is for the edification and training of the church as a whole. On this point Leon Morris notes, “Spiritual gifts are always given to be used, and the use is for the edification of the whole body of believers” (*TNTC*, 1 Corinthians, p. 170). So, gifts are primarily for “the building up of the body of Christ” through Spirit-filling (Eph. 4:12).

The fruit of the Spirit, however, is produced by the fullness of the Spirit and is chiefly for the benefit and growth of the believer’s own spiritual life. Although the fruit of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit are different in nature and purpose, they are not totally unrelated. Possessing both permits a believer to live an overcoming, virtuous life and to serve the Lord powerfully and effectively at the same time. When Spirit-filling occurs the result is immediate and the process may be repeated frequently. Spirit-fullness, however, is a process in the believer’s life that takes time to bud, blossom and produce fruit which will mature gradually. Spiritual fruit such as “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Gal. 5:23, also see 2 Pet. 1:5-7) matures step by step and from faith to faith in much the same manner that “the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith” (Rom. 1:17), that is, from one degree of faith to another. A believer’s possession of the fruit of the Spirit gives clear evidence that he is full of the Holy Spirit. So, being full of the Spirit is the cause of a believer’s mature spiritual life, and the fruit of the Spirit is the effect of that fullness, as Alan Cole says, “by the presence of the ‘fruits,’ the presence of the Spirit is proved” (*TNTC*, Galatians, p. 167).

Thus, the fruit and the gifts of the Spirit are complementary to each other. Being full of the Holy Spirit results in spirituality, whereas Spirit-filling bestows spiritual gifts and empowers the believer for specific service. God desires that the believer may both have a heavenly life full of Christian character and possess spiritual power and gifts to serve Him with competency and vitality. Therefore, even if we have the filling of the Spirit and possess His gifts to work effectively and powerfully, we still must pursue the fullness of the Spirit which will enable us to be kind to one another, to encourage one another and to live a life of love toward the brothers and sisters. Conversely, if we are full of the Spirit and have a strong spiritual life characterized by much spiritual fruit, we should also earnestly desire Spirit-filling in order to be gifted to edify and equip the church. Our spiritual life shows that we are children of our heavenly Father and enables us to manifest His likeness, whereas, our spiritual gifts equip us to be servants of the King of kings. Both in their proper proportion will prevent an unbalanced growth that makes us like an “unflipped spiritual pancake.”

If we have not yet achieved a mature godly life which blesses our own soul as well as enriches our conduct toward our fellow-believers and neighbors, we should not despair because in contrast to the immediate Spirit-filling that occurs as the need arises to perform a specific task, the spiritual life is attained through a gradual molding process. How long should the gradual molding process take to produce a believer full of the Spirit? Here are some examples. Paul’s first visit to Corinth was probably in the year 51 or 52 AD. He wrote his first letter to the Corinthian believers while he was in Ephesus, perhaps early in 55 AD. God’s revelation through Paul indicates that the believers at Corinth should have been spiritual by the time that he wrote to them saying “I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to babes in Christ [on his first visit in 52 AD] . . . for you are still fleshly [when he wrote in 55 AD]” (1 Cor. 3:1-3). Thus, according to Paul’s thinking, the saints in Corinth should have been full of the Spirit in three or four years. Unfortunately, they were not and their carnality was manifested by strife, jealousy, immorality and law suits, even though they had all the gifts. Following His baptism, the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior and example, was immediately filled with the Spirit (Luke 3:22) and full of the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:1). Spurgeon, although he did not use the same terminology that we do, was probably filled with the Spirit at his new birth and his experience of fullness of the Spirit followed soon after. Let us follow these good examples in order to be powerful servants of God as well as His exemplary children.

How to Let the Holy Spirit Bear His Fruit in Your Life

The Bible is full of exceedingly great and precious promises which originate in heaven and whose realization is certain. The thousands of promises in Scripture may be classified as unconditional promises which are appropriated through faith alone or as conditional promises which the believer can realize only by fulfilling the condition or conditions stipulated. Salvation is an unconditional promise, that is, no works are involved and it is obtained by faith alone, whereas the fullness of the Holy Spirit is conditional. After appropriating his co-crucifixion with Christ by faith, the believer must fulfill certain conditions in order to enjoy the Spirit’s fullness and the fruit He produces in the believer’s life. Let us see what they are.

Walking at the Spirit's direction (Gal. 5:16, 18, 25). Following his new birth, the believer must choose to live his life by one of two principles: one is carnal—living by the energy of one's own flesh and blood; the other is spiritual—living by the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit. The flesh and Spirit oppose each other and can never live in harmony. Their warfare for domination of our lives provokes and agitates us time after time. None of us can act in complete independence of them. In the end we must obey either our fleshly nature or the spiritual nature and the one we obey will prevail. So if we want our spiritual nature to win the contest, so that we are continually co-crucified with Christ and constantly full of the Spirit, we must “walk by the Spirit” (Gal. 5:16).

The words for “walk” in Galatians 5:16 (“walk by the Spirit”) and 5:25 (“walk by the Spirit”) are not the same. The first is formed by the preposition *peri* (around) and the verb *pateo* (walk) and refers to the “journey” aspect of one's walk, and the phrase “by the Spirit” is a dative of direction. Thus the entire phrase “walk by the Spirit” in an expanded translation would mean “walk on your journey of life according to the Holy Spirit's direction.” The walk in Galatians 5:25 is *stoicheo* which occurs five times in the Scriptures and means “walk according to a set rule or standard.” In Acts 21:24 it is translated “walk orderly.” *Stoicheo* refers to the “training” aspect of one's walk and can be translated as “walk according to the rule of the Spirit.” One Bible translates Galatians 5:25, “If the Spirit is the source of our life, let the Spirit also direct our course” (NEB). So the Holy Spirit gives us direction regarding how to live according to His standard or rule. Alan Cole comments here, “As surely as we are living by the rule of the Spirit, let us walk by the rule of the Spirit” (*TNTC*, Galatians, p. 166). But whether the emphasis is on “walk on your journey” or “walk according to the Spirit's standard” both stress the believers' need to follow the Holy Spirit step by step in their daily lives, as the Scripture says, “Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit” (Gal. 5:18, NIV). The verbs in Galatians 5:16 and 25 (“walk in the Spirit”) are both active and denote that it is the believers' duty to follow the Holy Spirit's leading one step at a time moment by moment. The passive verb in Galatians 5:18 (“If you are led by the Spirit”) emphasizes the Holy Spirit's duty to lead believers. In other words, He leads; we are to follow. How can we learn to do this? The same way we do everything else. Practice.

Consequently, whoever walks continuously at the Spirit's direction and is constantly full of the Spirit enjoys the blessings of a double release. One blessing is that through obeying the guidance of the Spirit and realizing their co-crucifixion with Christ, believers are able to put off the works of the flesh (which are listed in Galatians 5:17-21 as fifteen sins representing all the evils of the perverted nature inherited from Adam) and bring forth the Spirit's fruit in their lives. In this manner believers fulfill the Scripture which says, “Walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh” (Gal. 5:16). The other blessing is release from the bondage of the law (Gal. 5:18). All mankind has a sin nature that cannot satisfy the requirements of the law. But through the fullness of the Spirit believers are able to appropriate all that is in Christ Jesus and bring forth the fruit of the Spirit over which the law has no power (Gal. 5:18-23). A life lived in the fullness of the Spirit satisfies the law and nullifies the power and authority of sin. Moreover, it brings forth a rich harvest of the fruit of the Holy Spirit which the law has no power to do.

Therefore, believers can enjoy the Holy Spirit's fullness and fruit by continuously receiving by faith their co-crucifixion with Christ and living at the direction of the Holy Spirit who resides within them and enables them on the one hand to know and do the will of God and on the other to put off the works of the flesh. This fullness is not brought about by the strength of their fleshly nature nor by increased self-control or manly vigor but by believing and, therefore, resting in what God has done to accomplish their overcoming life, as a child believes and rests in the goodness of his parents. In Psalm 131 David expresses the idea very well: "LORD my heart is not proud, nor my eyes haughty, nor do I involve myself in great matters, or in things too difficult for me. Surely I have composed and quieted my soul; like a weaned child that rests against his mother, my soul is like a weaned child within me." While a child rests quietly in his mother's lap, he believes in his mother's goodness toward him, and does not fret for things he used to find essential.

Only those who live at the direction of the Holy Spirit, resting like the non-fretting child, can enjoy the results of being co-crucified with Christ and be constantly conscious of the Spirit's fullness and fruit. Only when we walk with such an attitude can the Spirit work freely in our intellect, our emotions, our will and in all our other mental faculties, empowering us to put off the sins of the flesh and stimulating the growth to full maturity of His fruit within us. Then the likeness of Christ will be manifested through our lives in a glorious demonstration of His spiritual qualities and virtues.

Not grieving the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30). This brief revelation shows that the Holy Spirit possesses the tenderness of a mother. Whenever believers offend the Holy Spirit, He does not withdraw Himself from those in whom He lives, but He is grieved by their attitudes and actions. Scofield said, "It is not strange that some have found in this susceptibility of the Spirit to be grieved, but not angered, the mother part of the divine love," (*Plain Papers of the Doctrine of the Spirit*, p. 54). How great is the Spirit's motherly love! According to the context of Ephesians 4:30, the command to "grieve not the Spirit" is not merely an offhand remark. It is connected to the commandment in verse 29 concerning "unwholesome" words. *Sapros* ("bad, evil, unwholesome, rotten") is used eight times in the New Testament and, other than here, refers to bad or rotten trees, food and fish. The broader context is indicated by the conjunction *kai* (and) at the beginning of verse 30, showing that all evil, bad or rotten speech is in opposition to His holy nature. Such words make Him extremely sorrowful because of our narrow view of His holiness.

Whenever believers contemplate or utter unwholesome, evil or rotten words, the Holy Spirit is grieved. In the phrase "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit" the word translated as grieve is *lupeo* and is translated in other parts of the New Testament as "to become sad, grieved, pained, sorrowful, or distressed." It is the same word used to describe our Lord's deep agony of spirit in the garden of Gethsemane on Thursday night before He, the Lamb of God, was crucified on Friday to take away the sins of the world. The horrible prospect of taking upon Himself the sins of the whole world grieved and distressed our gracious Lord to the point of death (Matt. 26:38, "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death").

The Holy Spirit is equally grieved over any unconfessed sins. When we deliberately cause the Holy Spirit such grief, we certainly are not full of Him. So we

must get rid of our sins by admitting them to God in prayer and asking Him to cleanse us from all of them. Consequently, we must be careful about our choice of words, even when we are very angry, if we want to be full of the Holy Spirit.

Not quenching the Spirit (1 Thess. 5:19). This admonition speaks of not quenching either any one thing (such as prophetic utterances—that is, Spirit-inspired preaching) or everything as a whole (“hold fast to that which is good”) that the Spirit does (1 Thess. 5:19-21). The word “quench” is a command in the present tense which indicates that as believers we should always refrain from extinguishing His activity, and, as verse 20 indicates, especially when we have been enlightened regarding our duty or faith by godly preaching. Dr. C. R. Erdman wrote, “The warning may be against neglect or abuse of our opportunities or abilities to testify for Christ, or against failing to act in accordance with the prompting and provision of the Spirit in the sphere of service.” (*The Spirit of Christ*, p. 49). To defuse the danger of quenching the Spirit, there are two things that we must constantly do: obey God’s commands and wait upon the Lord’s time.

Doing whatever God commands. God desires that believers be both good children and faithful servants. He gives enlightenment by the Holy Spirit from His Word so that we can accomplish His heart’s desire for us to understand and do His will. When we believers fail to fulfill this responsibility, we both fall short of His glory and lose His blessing.

Scripture is full of believers who lost God’s blessing upon their lives through disobedience. Moses, God’s appointed leader of the Israelites, was full of the Holy Spirit. His meekness exceeded that of anyone upon the face of the earth. He enjoyed direct revelation from God, face to face, and was entrusted to look after God’s family, Israel. God Himself praised Moses for his outstanding faithfulness in His service (Heb. 3:2). When Moses disobeyed God’s Word at Meribah, not only was God’s name not exalted but Moses himself lost the blessing of entering the promised land. Jonah refused to go to Nineveh when God told him to go. As he fled to Tarshish from God’s will he was rebuked by sailors and then swallowed by a great fish. Without God’s special grace, Jonah would have lost his life, and a multitude of precious souls in Nineveh would have perished eternally. Samson’s loss of God’s power and blessing is a similar example. The consequences of any disobedience to God that leads to the quenching of the Spirit is frightening. Thus, it is very important that the disciple always seek the Lord’s way at the Lord’s time and never pursue his own way.

Waiting upon God’s time. To be pleasing to the Lord any work must be performed according to His heavenly timetable. Anyone who desires to be full of the Spirit and thus bear His fruit in his life must wait for God’s time and not impatiently rush ahead. A work or event that has the inner qualities and outward appearance of meeting God’s standard, but lacks His timing, does not please Him (See Ex. 2:11-15; Num. 14:39-45). Although Samuel had anointed David in his early youth to be King, David never took advantage of his numerous opportunities to overthrow King Saul. He waited until God cleared the way for him. **Waiting for God’s time is not wasting time.** Quite the contrary, much more will be accomplished by operating on God’s schedule.

Some may ask, “How does the believer know when it is time to move or when he should continue to wait?” The believer should not fret or worry. When God’s children sincerely desire to do His will, God knows very well how to instruct, lead and motivate them (John 7:17). **Waiting is our obligation; guidance is His duty.** Just as God let the believer know about the good news of salvation and enlightened his mind by the Holy Spirit to be saved; so will He let the believer who waits for Him with a pure heart know the time to move. Through making his requests known to God, the believer’s heart and thoughts will unconsciously be driven to understand God’s time and way (Prov. 3:5-6; Phil. 4:6-7).

Waiting upon God is not easy because people are always in a rush. God is not. If Abraham had had patience to wait a little longer for an heir through Sarah, instead of taking Hagar in an attempt to help God fulfill His promise for a son, there would be no deadly conflict between Arabs and Israel today. To proclaim the Gospel among the nations is tremendously important, yet to wait upon God’s time and place to go and how to minister effectively is crucial to becoming a missionary with spiritual results. All young people must remember that even the Son of God performed His ministry in the fullness of time (Gal. 4:4). Therefore, how much more should a missionary or minister today wait upon God for His guidance, choice of school and place of service. One who wishes to be full of the Spirit must learn how to wait—wait upon the Lord for one’s marriage partner, for one’s vocation in business, for the field one is going to minister in, for the answer to one’s finances, and so on; so that God’s guidance through His Spirit may not be quenched. In a word, all believers should wait upon the Lord with patience and do all that He reveals according to His time, His method, His means and with His power, that the fullness and fruit of the Spirit may become every believer’s daily experience.

In our desire to be full of the Holy Spirit and have His fruit manifested in our lives, we must remember that our Father loves us greatly and desires only our good. For His love’s sake toward us, He will always work for our good. As the Scriptures say, “Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end” (John 13:1) We need to firmly believe that He desires to give us the fullness of the Holy Spirit to develop His fruit in our spiritual lives to the maximum. Second, we must be “confident . . . that He who began a good work in [us] will perfect it,” that is, carry it to completion (Phil. 1:6). He initiated a spiritual work in us and He will finish what He started. As Paul says in Thessalonians 5:24, “Faithful is He who calls you, and He will bring it to pass.” God, too, desires that we be full of the Holy Spirit and manifest His fruit, and nothing is too difficult for Him. With hope and faith and the Holy Spirit’s presence in our hearts, His fruit will be increasingly manifested in our lives.

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