

**Subject: *Bearing Spiritual Fruit – LOVE***

**Scripture: *Galatians 5:16-23***

This is the classic text in Scripture on the spiritual fruit that every true Christian is to bear. Some bear more fruit and some less fruit, but all believers bear fruit. Where there is spiritual life, there is spiritual fruit. No fruit means no life.

### **1. What is “the fruit of the Spirit”?**

What do we mean by “the fruit of the Spirit?” We can define it in several ways: 1) it is true Christian character or the qualities we find in a true believer; 2) it is the very character of Christ, so this is the picture of a Christ-like person; 3) it is the very life of God in the soul of a person; it is what a godly person looks like. So the fruit of the Spirit is the unmistakable evidence of God’s presence in someone’s life; it is what sets him apart from the world; it is the mark of real Christianity.

It is described as the fruit of the Spirit because the Holy Spirit produces it in a believer’s life. Look at the clear contrast: vs. 19-21, what we do in the flesh (unredeemed human nature) or what we do as unsaved people; vs. 22-23, what God does in the lives of saved people.

The contrast between the lust of the flesh and the fruit of the spirit is black and white; it’s the worst kind of behavior and the best; it’s who we are when we are left to ourselves and who we are when God changes us and controls us by His grace; it’s the ultimate before and after.

### **2. How does God produce the fruit of the Spirit?**

There is another important passage where we find the answer to that question.

***John 15:1-8***

In this text we find the last of seven “I AM” statements that Jesus made in the Gospel of John: 1) the Bread of life; 2) the Light of the world; 3) the Door of the sheep; 4) the Good Shepherd; 5) the Resurrection and the Life; 6) the Way, the Truth, and the Life; and 7) the True Vine.

Christ is the vine and the disciples are the branches. The branches must be IN the vine and ABIDE (*meno*, remain, stay) in the vine. This is a picture of the believer being in Christ and abiding (remaining) in Christ. This is a living connection. It is essential for spiritual life. When the believer is in Christ there is a union or connection that brings spiritual life, sustains life, and then produces fruit in the believer’s life because he is in Christ.

The branches must be connected in the vine and remain in the vine to produce fruit. We understand how this works. A branch in an apple tree produces apples because it is connected to the tree. The branch can’t produce apples on its own apart from the tree. We see this same thing play out with flowers. We can tell the difference between real flowers and artificial flowers, but even the real flowers will die because they have been cut off from their source of life. We can tell the difference between a real Christmas tree and artificial tree. Give it a little time and the real tree will show that it’s dead because it was cut off from its source of life.

This is what does in salvation and sanctification. He gives us eternal life in Christ and then produces fruit in our lives. Real salvation is a living relationship with the life of Christ in the believer...just like the vine and the branches. That's totally different than a religious person who takes Christ and attaches Him to his life when it's convenient. So the fruit of the Spirit is produced only when there is a real connection to Christ and His life.

*1 John 5:11-12* <sup>11</sup> And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. <sup>12</sup> He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

*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.

What is the fruit of the Spirit? It is the life of God in the soul. It is the presence of the Lord in the believer.

How does God produce the fruit of the Spirit? There is a saving connection between Christ and believers, just like the vine and the branches. And through that eternal life connection the Holy Spirit produces fruit in the believer's life.

*Romans 5:5* the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us.

Our text in Galatians 5 tells us about nine kinds of spiritual fruit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering (patience), gentleness (kindness), goodness, faith (faithfulness), meekness, and temperance (self-control). Like the many works of the flesh are suggestive and not exhaustive, this list is not exhaustive. Other qualities like holiness, wisdom, and humility can be thought of as spiritual fruit.

### **3. What is the spiritual fruit of love?**

Love is the first thing in the list because it is the greatest, the supreme quality.

*1 Corinthians 13:13* And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

We use the word "love" for many things, but the NT word for love is a special word. It is the word *agape*. In NT times the Greek language had several words for love: *eros*, used of physical love, the romantic love between a man and woman; this word is not found in NT at all; *storge*, used of family love and affection; *philia*, friendship, affectionate regard for someone; *agape*, divine love, the love of God the Father for His Son, and for His people; the very nature of God is love (*agape*); this love involves the mind, will, and emotions; it is more than a feeling, it is the love of choice; *agape* can best be defined as seeking the highest good for someone else. This is God's love in the life of a believer. It is a love that comes from God to the believer who is abiding in Christ.

In John 15, when Christ spoke about Himself as the vine and the disciples as the branches, he also made specific mention of the fruit of love and joy in that passage.

**John 15:9-11** <sup>9</sup> *As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.* <sup>10</sup> *If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.* <sup>11</sup> *These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.*

A. It is unique love

It is unlike any other kind of love. It is different from other kinds of human love. It is a higher kind of love than ordinary human love. Even lost people have a natural love for others. Husbands love their wives and wives love their husbands; parents love their children and children love their parents; brothers and sisters love one another; but all of this is ordinary, natural human love. The spiritual fruit of Christian love is much higher and deeper and stronger.

**Ephesians 5:25** *Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it. Only a Christian husband can love his wife like that.*

B. It is unconditional love

It is not limited to people who are lovable. It is not limited to people we love and we know they love us in return.

**Matthew 5:43-48** <sup>43</sup> *Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy.* <sup>44</sup> *But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;* <sup>45</sup> *That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.* <sup>46</sup> *For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?* <sup>47</sup> *And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?* <sup>48</sup> *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*

C. It is unlimited love

**Matthew 22:37-39** <sup>37</sup> *Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.* <sup>38</sup> *This is the first and great commandment.* <sup>39</sup> *And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.*

D. It is unmistakable love

There is a lot of love that is fake; it's not real; it's all words and no action. Wherever there is real Christian love, it proves itself to be real. The real fruit of love is seen in its true devotion and loyalty to God. It is seen in what it does and what it does not do.

**John 14:15** *If ye love me, keep my commandments.*

**1 John 2:15** *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

**1 John 3:18-19** <sup>18</sup> *My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.* <sup>19</sup> *And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.*