

## Fruit of the Spirit

### What We Believe

The Family Talk Blog of December 26, 2021, discussed the growth of fruit as something productive or helpful. Many things grow from a seed into maturity or from an idea into a completed work. Writing grows from printing characters into writing letters, journals, and novels. The initial ability to pick out a tune on an instrument can mature into a concert musician. When we consider the fruit of the Spirit, however, we find a list of several things, not as different fruits, but as one single fruit representing a mature child of God following Christ.

Looking at Paul's letter to the Galatians, we find a listing of characteristics and emotions that make up the single fruit. *"But the fruit of the Spirit is **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control**; against such things there is no law"* (Galatians 5:22-23). Although we might consider each item in the list individually, and for a pure definition, we might try, but all must be integrated together for the Christian to reach maturity. There are not several fruits of the Spirit but only one fruit, only one Christ-like nature, that can grow out of a study and conformity to the gospel of Christ.

In many Bibles, the publisher provides section titles, hinting at the subject of the following few verses. In my Bible, Romans 12:9-21 is titled, "Marks of a True Christian." It's like Paul writes about the same fruit of the Spirit to the Romans but uses descriptions rather than the listing. **Love** in verse 9 combined with **joy** in verses 12 and 15. **Peace** is the subject of verse 18. **Patience** is woven throughout the passage, dealing with self, brethren, and tormentors. Verses 13, 14, 20, and 21 describe **Kindness** and **goodness**. The devotion of **Faithfulness** to each other and Christ is in verses 10 and 11. **Gentleness** is the command for the actions of verses 15 and 16. And **self-control** is the advice offered in verses 14 and 17-21.

The complete passage reads: *"Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in Spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation. Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "vengeance is mine, I will repay," says the Lord. "But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good"* (Romans 12:9-21).

Paul also wrote that we all have different talents and abilities. There are many jobs to be accomplished in the church. There are many more to be performed in the world to guide the lost to Christ. *"For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another"* (Romans 12:3-5). No matter the job, among the brethren or in the world, the fruit of the Spirit should lead and control our actions. Paul recorded this for the brethren in Colossi, *"Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father"* (Colossians 3:17). The Gospel of Christ is the medium that helps us grow in the Spirit, and we demonstrate, in

our lives, the whole fruit of the Spirit. As Paul wrote to the Romans, "*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. For in it **the righteousness of God is revealed** from faith to faith; as it is written, "but the righteous man shall live by faith"* (Romans 1:16-17). Our faith that God is, that He is perfect, and that He has determined that we will be like Him concerning right and justice, persuades us to be like him. "*As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, you shall be holy, for I am holy*" (1 Peter 1:14-16).

How is your progress in developing the fruit of the Spirit?