

2009

What You Need to Know About the Fruit of the Spirit

Harold L. Willmington

Liberty University, hwillmington@liberty.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/will_know



Part of the [Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Willmington, Harold L., "What You Need to Know About the Fruit of the Spirit" (2009). . 54.
https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/will_know/54

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Willmington School of the Bible at Scholars Crossing. It has been accepted for inclusion in by an authorized administrator of Scholars Crossing. For more information, please contact scholarlycommunications@liberty.edu.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Any number of books has been written on the *gifts of the spirit*, but far fewer on the *fruit of the spirit*. It would seem to me that the *second* serves as the biblical foundation for the *first*. Here is a brief overview of this all-important foundation.

1. The commands to bear fruit

- a. God desires his new creation to do the same as he ordered his old creation to do – “And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth” (Gen. 1:28).
- b. God desires the believer to fulfill the prophecy concerning Joseph – “Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall” (Gen. 49:22).
- c. God desires his children to experience the blessings of Psalm 1 – “And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper” (Psa. 1:3).
- d. God desires his children of light to function today as his tree of life will function in eternity – “And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations” (Rev. 22:1-2).

2. The prerequisites for bearing fruit

- a. One must die to this world – “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit” (John 12:24).
- b. One must abide in the Savior – “I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. 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. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. 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. 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” (John 15:1-5). “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you” (John 15:16).
 - (1) In the Old Testament the nation Israel was God’s chosen vine vessel – “Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it” (Psa. 80:8).
 - (2) But Israel refused to bear fruit – “Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself: according to the multitude of his fruit he hath increased the altars; according to the goodness of his land they have made goodly images” (Hos. 10:1).
 - (3) Thus, that nation was eventually set aside by Jesus – “Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof” (Matt. 21:43).

- (4) In the Gospels, Christ was God's chosen vine vessel while he was on this earth – "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman" (John 15:1). (See also Isa. 11:1; 53:2.)
- (5) In the present dispensation since Pentecost the believer is to be God's vine-branch vessel – To be this one must submit to pruning. "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Heb. 12:11).
- (6) This pruning and purifying process is absolutely vital to fruit-bearing according to Jesus – It will result in:
- (a) Fruit – "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it" (John 15:2).
 - (b) More fruit – "That it may bring forth more fruit" (John 15:2).
 - (c) Much fruit – "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.... Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples" (John 15:5, 8).
 - (d) And permanent fruit – "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you" (John 15:16).
- (7) Jesus told his disciples they were to be branches – The only useful function of a branch is to bear fruit. A branch does not produce fruit, it simply bears it.

3. The two kinds of fruit

- a. Outer fruit: soul winning (John 4:35-36; Rom. 1:13) – "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise" (Prov. 11:30).
- b. Inner fruit: Christlikeness (Gal. 5:22-23; Eph. 5:9) – "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" (Gal. 5:22-23).

It should be noted that the word fruit in both of these passages is in the singular. Paul does not say "the fruits of the Spirit are," but rather "the fruit of the Spirit is." The reason is this: all the fruit of the Spirit, unlike all the gifts of the Spirit, are to be possessed by every believer.

Consider the following illustration: Upon salvation the believer is ushered into an orchard and a vineyard.

- (1) The official name of the orchard is the Gifts of the Spirit orchard. Upon entering, the believer notes that there are 18 "apples" (gifts) hanging from each tree. The Holy Spirit then selects several "apples" and gives them to the believer.
- (2) The official name of the vineyard is the Fruit of the Spirit vineyard. Upon entering, the believer notes that there are 11 "grapes" hanging from each cluster on the vines. The Holy Spirit then selects an entire cluster and gives it to the believer. In other words, the Christian receives some of the apples, but all of the grapes.

4. The elevenfold fruit of the Spirit

- a. Love – "And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness" (Col. 3:14). In the Greek vocabulary there are four main words for love:

- (1) *Stergein* – Stergein is a natural, gravitational love; an instinctive concern for one's offspring. It is found in animals and humans alike, and used but two times in the Greek New Testament. "Without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful" (Rom. 1:31). "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good" (2 Tim. 3:1-3).
- (2) *Eros* – Eros is a sexual, passionate (and often lustful and perverted) love. In mythology Eros was the son of Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love. This word for love is not found in the Greek New Testament.
- (3) *Phileo* – Phileo is a beautiful and friendly love. This is the love that David had for Jonathan. "And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul" (1 Sam. 18:1).

In the New Testament this love is often referred to, as seen by the following:

- (a) Jesus' love for John (John 20:2)
 - (b) Jesus' love for Lazarus (John 11:3)
 - (c) The Father's love for Jesus (John 5:20)
 - (d) Christians' love for Paul (Titus 3:15)
 - (e) The love that all Christians should have for each other (Rom. 12:10; Heb. 13:1)
 - (f) The love a pastor should have for his people (Titus 1:8)
 - (g) The love husbands should have for their wives (Eph. 5:25)
- (4) *Agapao* – Agapao is a divine love, found only in God. This love is not dependent upon the beauty of the object being loved. It is found 320 times in the Greek New Testament, but rarely in classical writings. Homer used it two times, and Euripedes used it three times.

"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8).

This love is never found in the heart of any man prior to the ascension of Christ. In fact, Jesus asks Peter on three occasions if he really loved him. "So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me" (John 21:15-19).

The first two times Jesus uses the fourth kind of love and asks the following question: "Peter, do you agapao me?" On both occasions Peter answers by choosing the third word. He says, "Lord, you know I phileo you." Finally, our Lord uses the third word also. The reason for all this (as Peter would later find out) is explained by Paul in his epistle to the church at Rome. "And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Rom. 5:5).

Thus, the reason why Peter answered the way he did was because the Holy Spirit had not yet come at Pentecost and it was therefore impossible for him to love Christ with this divine agapao love. In John 11 we have a similar case where we are told that Lazarus loved Jesus with a phileo love, but that Jesus loved Lazarus with an agapao love. "Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.... Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus" (John 11:3, 5).

There are two beloved New Testament passages where this agapao love is in view. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Eph. 5:25).

- b. Joy (Gal. 5:22; Rom. 14:17; 1 Thess. 1:6) – This is the same kind of joy that:
- (1) The angels brought to the shepherds – "And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people" (Luke 2:10).
 - (2) The wise men experienced when they found Christ – "When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy" (Matt. 2:10).
 - (3) The angels have when a soul is saved – "Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke 15:10).
 - (4) Faithful and rewarded servants will someday have – "His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matt. 25:21).
 - (5) The women had at the news of the Resurrection – "And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word" (Matt. 28:8).
 - (6) The Savior had in redeeming us – "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:2).
 - (7) The disciples had at the ascension of Christ – "And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy" (Luke 24:52).
 - (8) This joy may be experienced even in terrible trials – "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations" (James 1:2). "Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations" (1 Pet. 1:6).
- c. Peace – There are two kinds of peace.
- (1) The peace with God – "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1). This peace is positional peace and includes all believers at the moment of their salvation.

(2) The peace of God – “And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:7). This peace is experienced, and includes only those believers who are filled with God’s Spirit. It can be defined as reassurance in tribulation.

“Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them” (Psa. 119:165). “I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety” (Psa. 4:8). “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27).

d. Long-suffering – Long-suffering is the ability to gracefully bear an unbearable situation and to patiently endure the unendurable. “By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned” (2 Cor. 6:6).

e. Gentleness – Gentleness is a quiet and respectful kindness. “And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient” (2 Tim. 2:24). “To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men” (Titus 3:2).

f. Faith – This is sanctifying faith and seems to include, among other things, the ability to trust God for those things one cannot see. “For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith” (Rom. 1:17). “Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked” (Eph. 6:16). “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb. 11:6).

This sanctifying faith also includes the ability to trust him and accept those things one cannot understand.

(1) As demonstrated by Job – “Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, and said, Naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord” (Job 1:20-21).

(2) As demonstrated by Abraham – “Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be” (Rom. 4:18). “By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son... accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure” (Heb. 11:17, 19).

g. Righteousness – Righteousness may be defined as right acts; going the appointed mile. “For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth” (Eph. 5:9). “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (Heb. 12:11).

h. Goodness – Goodness may be defined as wholesome acts; going the extra mile. “And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain” (Matt. 5:41). (See also Eph. 5:9.)

i. Meekness – Meekness may be defined as subdued strength.

- (1) Paul used this trait in dealing with the Corinthian church – “What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?” (1 Cor. 4:21).
 - (2) This is the trait to be used by spiritual people in restoring a backslider – “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Gal. 6:1).
 - (3) It is the trait to be used in keeping unity within a church – “With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:2-3).
 - (4) It is the trait to be used in dealing with all men – “And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth” (2 Tim. 2:24-25).
- j. Temperance – Temperance may be defined as self-control. The great New Testament example of this is the Apostle Paul. Observe his testimony:
“For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel’s sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you. Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. 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. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: 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” (1 Cor. 9:19-27).
- k. Truth – Truth may be defined as living an open life, without guile and hypocrisy.
“Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God” (2 Cor. 4:1-2).