

# Fruit of the Spirit Overview

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Preacher: Lee Roberts

[ 0 : 00 ] We're continuing to work our way through the text that we know is Galatians chapter 5 verses 16 through 26.

! Tonight we'll start looking at the fruit of the Spirit. So let's read the entire section now. Here are Galatians chapter 5 verses 16 through 26. But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh. For these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident. Sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these.

I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

[ 1 : 30 ] Against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. Here's a reminder of the main idea for the entire section.

The Holy Spirit within believers battles our worldly desires and enables us to become more and more like Christ. The Holy Spirit within believers battles our worldly desires and enables us to become more and more like Christ.

We will be reminded again tonight that these verses apply only to true believers. In other words, the verses apply to people who have the Holy Spirit living inside of them.

That is even more obvious for tonight's passage. Having the fruit of the Spirit is impossible without being indwelt by that Spirit. Let's review some of what we've already seen in this passage.

[ 2 : 35 ] Verses 16 through 18 included Paul's command. That command is to walk by the Spirit. And we know that when Paul mentions walk in this context, he's talking about a daily pattern or lifestyle.

To walk in the Spirit or to be led by the Spirit means to go where the Spirit is going, to listen to his voice, to discern his will, and to follow his guidance. Galatians 5, 19 through 23 have Paul's contrast.

And Paul contrasts the works of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit. And to illustrate the works of the flesh, Paul provides several examples of sins. And we looked at the works of the flesh last week. We saw where the long list is only a sample of the works of the flesh. And we could tell that list is only a sample because after the list, Paul wrote in things like these.

Now we're ready for the verses that have another long list. And this second list has the characteristics of the fruit of the Spirit. Some people refer to these as virtues.

[ 3 : 41 ] And some refer to these characteristics as graces. And so we'll use all three of these designations interchangeably as we go through the fruit of the Spirit. Paul lists the details of the fruit of the Spirit in verses 22 and 23.

So let's look at those verses again. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Against such things there is no law. Tonight's study will be an overview of spiritual fruit, including answers to some common questions about spiritual fruit.

Starting with next week's lesson, for as long as it takes, we'll dig deeper into each characteristic. For tonight's overview, we'll be looking at a lot of Scripture outside of Galatians, so hang with it.

Remember that a characteristic of the fruit of the Spirit is patience. If I do my job well, all the Scripture references should work together to make sense. But also remember that four other characteristics of the fruit of the Spirit are love, kindness, gentleness, and self-control.

[ 4 : 54 ] So if everything fails to make sense by the end of the lesson, then you at least have the opportunity to demonstrate some of the fruit of the Spirit toward me. So either way, you'll come out ahead. Most Christians have Romans 8.28 memorized, but Romans 8.29 may be even more significant.

Romans 8.29 tells us what God is doing in our lives. Listen to Romans 8.29. Everything God does in believers' lives and everything that God allows into believers' lives has one main purpose. That's to conform us to the image of Christ, who's described in Romans 8.29 as the firstborn among many brothers. Paul's reference in Romans 8.29 to Christ being the firstborn among many brothers is consistent with what we've seen so far in Galatians.

True believers, regardless of whether they are male or female, have become brothers to Christ because God adopts us all as sons. Remember that when we are adopted as sons, we also receive the Holy Spirit to live inside of us.

And we learned about our adoption as sons and the presence of the Holy Spirit within us in Galatians 4.4-7. Here are Galatians 4.4-7.

[ 6 : 24 ] But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father. So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

Remember that Paul is elevating women's status here. In the Galatians' day, only sons could inherit from their fathers. So in these verses, Paul is telling women believers that God gives them the same inheritance that a father would give his son.

In our overview of the fruit of the Spirit, the first thing we need to see is that the fruit of the Spirit is Fruit of the Spirit with a capital S. Paul is talking about the Holy Spirit here.

Only people who have the Holy Spirit inside of them can produce the fruit of the Spirit. And only people whom God has adopted as sons, meaning all true believers, have the Holy Spirit dwelling inside of them.

[ 7 : 34 ] So here's a common question that we'll look at first, and that is, why is the fruit of the Spirit singular? Well, all of these questions collectively make up Christ-likeness.

As we abide in Christ, all of the characteristics get produced. That's not to say that each one of us is as strong in us as the others, but simply that the Spirit is shaping us in every way into Christ-likeness.

We saw that from Romans 8.29. Additionally, the fruit of the Spirit is, as a whole, basically a character sketch of Christ himself. And what's the Spirit doing within us?

He's conforming us into the image of Christ, the one who perfectly embodied love and every other virtue that's mentioned. So here's another question.

How do we know that we're going to bear fruit if we abide in Christ? We'll turn over to John chapter 15. Jesus was speaking in John 15.

[ 8 : 35 ] And we'll look at what Jesus said in John 15, verses 1 through 5. Jesus said, I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine dresser.

Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, he takes away. And every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you.

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.

I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit. For apart from me, you can do nothing.

You see that Jesus says very clearly in John 15, verse 5, Whoever abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit.

[ 9 : 39 ] So that may make you think of another question. As a believer, must I do anything for spiritual fruit to be produced? The answer to that one is a little more complicated, because the answer to that is both yes and no.

Every true believer will bear some fruit. As John MacArthur says, sometimes we must use a magnifying glass to see a believer's fruit. But if a person is a believer, that person will produce at least a small amount of fruit.

Still, believers can do things to help increase the amount of fruit that we produce. And the best thing we can do to help the Holy Spirit produce more fruit in us is to walk in the Spirit.

That's how Paul's command in verse 16 ties into the verses that we're studying now. We know that the Holy Spirit within us is at war with our natural tendency toward works of the flesh.

And if we quit inviting enemy soldiers into the camp by doing works of the flesh, the Spirit will need less time to do battle, and will have more time to produce fruit. Listen to what Jesus told the Pharisees in Matthew chapter 12, verse 33.

[10:55] Again, Jesus is speaking here in Matthew 12, 33, and he said, Either make the tree good, and its fruit good, or make the tree bad, and its fruit bad.

For the tree is known by its fruit. When we walk by the Spirit, we are helping the Spirit make good fruit. Consider also what we can learn from the parable of the soils.

Jesus taught that the seed sown on good soil is the seed that produces much fruit. Listen to what Jesus said in Matthew chapter 13, verse 23.

Here is Matthew 13, verse 23. Jesus said, As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it.

He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case, a hundredfold, in another case, sixty, and in another, thirty. Jesus confirms here that believers are going to bear fruit in different quantities, but that believers will bear fruit.

[12:01] God causes us to grow at different speeds spiritually. None of us, of course, should be content with our degree of fruitfulness. We should mourn our lack of growth, and we should hunger and thirst for righteousness.

But we must never forget that God is sovereign in our sanctification, just like he's sovereign in our salvation. So here's another question that may have crossed your mind, and that is, is fruit bearing just a New Testament concept?

Well, the Bible has much to say about fruit. It's mentioned 106 times in the Old Testament and 70 times in the New. Even under the covenant of the law, a believer produced good fruit only by God's power and not his own.

Israel in the Old Testament often is compared to a vineyard. Listen to these verses about Israel in Isaiah chapter 5, verses 1 through 4.

God clearly is upset with the lack of fruit bearing from his vineyard, and that, of course, is Israel. Here are Isaiah 5, 1 through 4. Let me sing for my beloved my love song concerning his vineyard.

[13:14] My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. He dug it and cleared it of stones and planted it with choice vines. He built a watchtower in the midst of it and hewed out a wine vat in it, and he looked for it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes.

And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. What more was there to do for my vineyard that I have not done in it?

When I looked for it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes? Then going to Psalm 1, Psalm 1 compares a righteous man to a tree yielding fruit.

Listen to Psalm 1, verses 1 through 3. In all that he does, he prospers.

Then Hosea, chapter 14, verse 8, clearly identifies the source of fruit. Here is Hosea 14, 8. God is speaking through Hosea here.

[14:45] It says, O Ephraim, what have I to do with idols? It is I who answer and look after you. I am like an evergreen cypress. From me comes your fruit.

So once again, we see that, as always, the Old Testament and the New Testament are consistent with each other. So here's another question. How is the fruit of the Spirit different from spiritual gifts and also the gift of the Spirit?

Well, spiritual gifts are a unique set of abilities that God provides each of us. Our gifts are designed to serve God and His church. None of us will have every possible spiritual gift.

The fruit of the Spirit, on the other hand, pertains to our character, and the fruit will contain all of the characteristics that Paul mentions here and some more. Warren Wiersbe explained the difference this way.

He said, The fruit of the Spirit listed in our passage has to do with character. It is important that we distinguish the gift of the Spirit, which is salvation, and the gifts of the Spirit, which have to do with service, from the graces or fruit of the Spirit, which relate to Christian character.

[16:02] It is unfortunate that an overemphasis on gifts have led some Christians to neglect the graces of the Spirit. Building Christian character must take precedence over displaying special abilities.

So here's one last question. If these are fruits of the Spirit, why do some believers seem to be better at demonstrating those qualities than other believers are?

Well, unregenerate people may be kind, loving, and patient, or any of the other characteristics. In fact, it can be difficult to distinguish the kindness of a renewed man from that of an unregenerate person.

The difference lies, though, in the motive, which for believers is love for God and for others. Love is the chief grace, and out of love flows all the other graces.

Unsafe people never love God. They may love a God of their own making, but they never love the God of the Bible. Remember what Paul told us in Galatians 5, verses 13 and 14.

[17:11] Galatians 5, 13 and 14 say, For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another, for the whole law is fulfilled in one word.

You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Becoming a Christian involves having Christ's own nature and spirit in personal residence within us.

Motivation to obey the commands and restrictions of the New Testament becomes internal rather than external. The Christian has the glorious privilege of living under the internal guidance, restraint, and power of the Holy Spirit.

And the Holy Spirit energizes him to obey the will of God. Here are some other things to keep in mind as we look at the fruit of the Spirit.

And some of these we've already touched on. The fruit of the Spirit is an outward indicator of salvation. A believer's sonship to God and citizenship in his kingdom are manifested by the fruit of the Spirit that's produced in his life.

[18:20] The nine characteristics together are the fruit that mark the Christian like a cluster of nine grapes. With this cluster concept, we begin to discover the difference between the kind and patient non-Christian and the truly renewed man or woman.

The Christian produces and possesses all the fruit. The renewed person should have some balance and some symmetry of character, although by no means will that person be perfect.

Each of us has his or her own weaknesses of character, but there will be some element of each of these graces in the life of every true Christian. Another thing to keep in mind is that all of the nine manifestations of the fruit of the Spirit also are commanded by believers in the New Testament. These are not optional things. These are commanded of all of us. Like the catalog of the deeds of the flesh, this catalog of fruit of the Spirit is representative.

In many of his letters, Paul lists similar catalogs of God's good fruit. So as we examine our hearts, we must not stop with just these nine, although they're a good place to start.

[19:31] Let's look at a couple other catalogs of fruit of the Spirit. Colossians 3, verses 12-15 have another of Paul's list of fruit.

Colossians 3, verses 12-15 say this, Put on, then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another, and if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other.

As the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these, put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body, and be thankful.

Notice that that list has some overlap, but there are some other things added into that list as well. Also, like our list in Galatians, Paul expected the Colossians to do all of those things.

Here's another list of spiritual fruit, but this one is from Peter. Let's look at 2 Peter 1, verses 5-8.

[20:48] Here are 2 Peter 1, verses 5-8. For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.

For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. So Peter, like Paul, expects believers to do all these things.

The character of the heart will manifest itself in outward acts, but the heart of the matter is the heart. We're not talking about a legalistic conformity to external standards, or we're not talking about outward acts.

We're talking about the heart that is being transformed. In Galatians, Paul's not talking about role-playing. We can all put on our Sunday go-to-meeting face. We know how to play the role. We can give the appearance of being patient, kind, and gentle. But instead, Paul and Peter describe the internal reality of who we are. Are you starting to see why the type of fruit that Paul is talking about here in Galatians is more than a personality trait?

[ 22 : 18 ] The only way we can hope to manifest all of these characteristics is through the help of the Holy Spirit. And only the Holy Spirit can make us more like Christ.

Let's briefly look at definitions for each of the characteristics. And these definitions should whet our appetites to learn more about each characteristic over the next few lessons.

Our goal in looking at this list is not to observe the virtues and then try to make ourselves better in our own strength. The tendency is to look at each one and say, I'm doing all right here, but not so much there.

Maybe I need to work on patience now. And sometimes the tendency is to look at the person sitting next to you and think that person needs to work on certain things as well. But the point is that you must walk by the Spirit and then the virtues grow out of that relationship with God.

These virtues must flow from our union with Christ, not from our own behavior modification. Love is the first characteristic.

[ 23 : 23 ] We learned in Galatians 5, verse 6, that faith works through love. And we just read Galatians 5, 13 and 14, where it said that our obedience must spring from love.

Love, therefore, is the motivating principle of the other eight because love is the form that faith takes. Love gives rise to the other eight. The type of love that Paul listed here is agape love. Agape love is the form of love that most reflects personal choice. It refers not simply to pleasant emotions or good feelings, but willingness and self-giving service.

Agape love is an act more than an emotion. We will cover love in depth next week, so we'll skip looking at very many cross-references today.

But with this being Passion Week, we should reflect on the supreme example of love. That supreme example, of course, is Jesus Christ willingly giving his perfect life for us so that we could be reconciled to God.

[ 24 : 32 ] Let's look at Matthew 20, verses 17 through 19. In Matthew 20, verses 17 through 19, we see Jesus going toward his own crucifixion instead of running away from it.

Here are Matthew 20, 17 through 19. You can see why Jesus was the supreme example.

He was the supreme example of love. He willingly went to Jerusalem, even though he knew what awaited him there. So he is the supreme example of love, but here's a spoiler alert.

Jesus is the supreme example of each of these characteristics. That's why they make us more Christ-like when we do them. Joy comes next on the list of spiritual fruit characteristics.

A Christian's joy is much different than a non-Christian's joy. Perhaps that is one of the reasons why the New Testament mentions joy so often. Joy is used 70 times in the New Testament, always to signify a feeling of happiness that is based upon spiritual realities.

[ 26 : 08 ] Joy is the deep-down sense of well-being that abides in the heart of the person who knows all is well between himself and the Lord. It's not an experience that comes from a favorable circumstance or even a human emotion that is divinely stimulated.

Joy is God's gift to believers. That's important for us to remember. Joy is God's gift for believers. In Nehemiah 8.10, Nehemiah declared, The joy of the Lord is your strength.

Joy is a part of God's own nature and spirit that he manifests in his children. Joy is different than happiness. Happiness can be fleeting.

Listen to part of the definition of joy again. Joy is the deep-down sense of well-being that abides in the heart of the person who knows all is well between himself and the Lord.

It is not an experience that comes from favorable circumstances or even a human emotion that is divinely stimulated. It is God's gift to believers.

[ 27 : 15 ] Someone else described joy like this. Joy is an attitude of delight, security, and comfort that we have as we trust in God.

Because we trust in God, we may maintain this delight and security in all circumstances. Joy comes out of the realization that God is our portion and our inheritance.

Therefore, we are complete in him. He loves us and will do only for us that which is best. Therefore, we may rejoice even in our trials.

Joy is resting with quiet submission in God, who has promised he will never leave us or forsake us. Peace comes next on the list.

Peace refers to the tranquility of mind that comes from a saving relationship with God. So peace refers to the tranquility of mind that comes from a saving relationship with God.

[ 28 : 14 ] That means that everything is in its place and as it ought to be. Peace comes when God, who has been opposed to us as his enemies, lays down his weapons against us.

He does this because Christ Jesus has satisfied his justice and made us his friends and his children. The important thing to remember is that this peace is an objective reality.

Romans 5, 1 and 2 tell us about this objective reality of peace with God. Listen to Romans 5, verses 1 and 2.

Let's move on to patience next.

Kindness comes next.

[ 29 : 43 ] Kindness is the gracious attitude that seeks the well-being of our neighbor. It's the positive step beyond long-suffering. Kindness is the exercise of compassion and tenderness.

Although some versions translate a later fruit as gentleness, including the ESV, this fruit is really the exercise of gentleness. Kindness has nothing to do with weakness or lack of conviction, but it's the genuine desire of a believer to treat others gently just as the Lord treats that believer.

The next item on the list is goodness. And goodness is related to kindness. Goodness has to do with moral and spiritual excellence that is known by its sweetness and active kindness.

Goodness motivates us to do righteous acts to others, to behave towards each other on the basis of the law of God, and do good and to seek the well-being of our neighbor.

Goodness indicates a willingness to be generous. Faithfulness is a manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit that pertains to loyalty and trustworthiness.

[ 31 : 05 ] Faithfulness first refers to how we live before God. We receive, believe, and love all that God has said in His Word. And we take it to be our faithful standard of doctrine and practice.

Faithfulness describes someone who is honest and dependable. Second, faithfulness demonstrates itself most frequently in how we live among those around us.

The faithful Christian is the honest person and committed to honesty. His yes is to be yes and his no to be no. The Christian should desire to be known as someone who keeps His Word.

We must avoid the more flagrant types of lying, and we must avoid self-exalting exaggerations along with little white lies. Gentleness is next on the list in the ESV, but you probably remember that we said earlier that kindness is better translated as gentleness.

The word translated here as gentleness in the ESV is better translated as meekness. Meekness is similar to patience and kindness, but it's different.

[ 32 : 19 ] Meekness has to do with a disciplined attitude about ourselves before God and one another. And we sometimes hear meekness defined as power under control.

When you think of meekness as power under control, you can see why Jesus is the supreme example of meekness. Listen to what Peter wrote in 1 Peter 2, verses 22-24.

Here are 1 Peter 2, 22-24. Speaking about Jesus, Peter wrote, He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.

When he was reviled, he did not revile in return. When he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds, you have been healed.

[ 33 : 23 ] As God, Jesus could have done anything he wanted, but he demonstrated power under control. He disciplined himself to follow God's will, and he disciplined himself to do that for our good and for God's glory.

We could use the same scripture in 1 Peter for the final characteristic on Paul's list of nine. That characteristic is self-control.

Self-control refers to restraining passions and appetites. A person who is truly self-controlled governs himself. Self-government begins with submission to the will of God and God's word. We learn to control our emotions regardless of the circumstances. Emotions are reactive. We cannot immediately control the emotional response, but we can learn to discipline the expression of that response.

We should seek to bring our responses and reactions into a quiet, peaceful submission to God and not be blown about by every adverse circumstance that comes along. When we get into the more detailed study of self-control, we will see that this characteristic also applies to our appetites and our bodies.

[ 34 : 42 ] So there's the overview of the fruit of the Spirit. If any of you is doing those perfectly, exactly like Jesus did them, feel free to leave now. You can pick up the study in a few weeks after we've finished looking at the detail of all of these.

But considering that none of you seems to be getting up to leave, you must know, as we all should know, that we have room for improvement in every one.

But here's some good news. Because we are in Christ and have been adopted as God's Son, our imperfect fruit-bearing is acceptable before God for Christ's sake.

Perfection in the fruit of the Spirit could never make you more commendable to God. We are to strive for perfection, but we will never make perfection, and that will never make us more acceptable to God.

Because you are in Christ, God takes delight and pleasure in you and your fruit. He will cultivate it. He will prune you and develop you, but He takes delight in your fruit and its growth.

[ 35 : 47 ] So don't be discouraged with your small beginnings. God will continue to do His work in you. Charles Spurgeon said, Fruit does not start from the tree perfectly ripe at once.

First comes a flower, then a tiny formation that shows that the flower has set. Then a berry appears, but it is very sour. You may not gather it.

Leave it alone a little while, and allow the sun to ripen it. By and by it fills out, and you have the apple in the full proportions of beauty, and with a mellow flavor that delights the taste.

Remember the main idea for Galatians 5, verses 16 through 26. The Holy Spirit within believers battles our worldly desires, and enables us to become more and more like Christ.

Direction is more important than perfection. We always need to remember that. Direction is more important than perfection. Having examined the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit separately, it should be even clearer to us than before that the flesh and the Spirit are in active conflict with one another.

[ 37 : 02 ] They are pulling in opposite directions. That comment about the conflict between the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit was a quote from John Stott, and he went on to say, This is the Christian conflict, fierce, bitter, and unremitting.

Moreover, it is a conflict in which by himself, the Christian simply cannot be victorious. Is that the whole story some perplexed believer will be asking? Is the tragic confession that I cannot do what I want to do the last word about a Christian's inner moral conflict?

Is this all Christianity offers? An experience of continuous defeat? Then he says, Indeed, it is not. If we were left to ourselves, we could not do what we would.

Instead, we would succumb to the desires of our old nature. But if we walk by the Spirit, as verse 16 tells us, then we shall not gratify the desires of the flesh.

We shall still experience them, but we shall not indulge them. On the contrary, we shall bear the fruit of the Spirit. Remember Paul's words in Philippians 1, verse 6.

[ 38 : 19 ] Paul said in Philippians 1, 6, And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for the reminder that you expect all believers to demonstrate all the characteristics of the fruit of the Spirit.

We thank you even more, though, that you have given us the Holy Spirit within us to help us develop and manifest those characteristics. We know that is the only possible way for us to keep growing in the Spirit.

Help us to yield more and more to the Spirit so that we produce more and more fruit. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.