

Galatians 5:22-26

Gal 5:22 (NKJV) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.²⁴ And those *who are Christ's* have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.²⁵ If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

Now, it is important to appreciate that the word “**fruit**” is in the singular. Many of the commentaries interpret that to mean that the word “**love**” is the real fruit, and the other eight attributes listed are merely an explanation and spiritual expansion of the word “**love**”. Personally, I do not favor or agree with that position. First of all, Paul always uses the word “**fruit**” in the singular with only one exception. It is just the way that he communicated. It was his normal speech pattern, so there is no good reason to think that he is making some kind of special point by using the singular form of the word here in [Galatians 5:22](#).¹ The best explanation is simply that the singular form of the word “**fruit**” speaks of the unity of the character that is being produced.² The “**fruit of the Spirit**” involves all of these attributes and all of them will be produced in the believer as part of the sanctifying process. Stated another way, the Holy Spirit is not just doing one thing in your life He is producing Christlikeness in you, and that includes multi-faceted qualities, many qualities at one time. When we think of the fruit of the Spirit, we do not want to do so by taking each one in isolation from the other. To the contrary, they are all being intricately interwoven into our life as one. If we had been able to have been with Christ, and to have followed Him and watched Him, all of these attributes would have been visible all of the time in His life. These attributes would not have been somehow mysteriously disconnected from one another, but in a kind of spiritual unity they were the ongoing and visible, noticeable, and evident attributes of His life. The same should be true of each of us as we grow in Christ. Each of these spiritual characteristics are being constantly developed in our lives. My wife and children, we are one family. In the same way, these nine attributes are one work of the Holy Spirit and cannot be divorced from one another. My personal opinion is that they are all being worked into our life at the same time – all nine. It is not like the Holy Spirit develops love, we get that, then He moves on to developing joy in our life. Once we get that, then He moves on to peace. It is not that way at all. These are the fruits growing on His tree.

One of the important factors for us to realize is that each of these qualities mentioned are not something that we can personally manufacture in our life. The apple on the tree or the orange on the tree or the plum on the tree, in reality they are all passive in what is happening to them. They are only growing because they are attached to the vine. They are receiving all of their nutrients for growth from the tree to which they are connected. I am personally convinced that the work of sanctification, even though it is the one area in the Order of Salvation that we get to participate in, is still a divine and sovereign work of God in the believer. God is the One that is working in us for His good pleasure. Listen very carefully. That is why these spiritual attributes are called the “**fruit of the Spirit**”. This is not called the fruit of the believer. Why? It is because the believer is not the source that is producing this fruit in their life – not at all. This is something specifically attributed to the Holy Spirit. That is one of the reasons why if

¹ Moo, 363.

² Vine, 463.

we do not see any of this kind of spiritual fruit in a person's life that we really have no basis whatsoever to actually think that they are saved. Spiritual fruit is always the evidence of genuine salvation.

The phrase “**of the Spirit**” is called the “genitive of source” which simply means that the Holy Spirit is the ONLY source for the production of this fruit in our lives. The genitive of source refers to the source from which the modified word is derived. I.e., the source of the fruit is the “**Spirit**”. It is not my fruit, not your fruit, but His fruit that is being produced in our life. This fruit is not the by-product of our personal efforts or our personal strength. They are the by-product of “**abiding in the Vine**” in [John 15:1-8](#). They are the by-product of “**walking in the Spirit**”, of being “**led by the Spirit**”, and of “**living in the Spirit**”. There is not one single word in any of those phrases that even suggests that the believer is responsible for developing these qualities in his life. These are not attributes that the believer can simply cultivate and develop because of his personal resolve and will – not at all.³ If that were the case, then the Holy Spirit would not even be needed. In fact, the more that the believer tries to produce this fruit, the greater will be his frustration. He will fail, and fail miserably. There is not one single word in this entire passage that is calling on the believer to summon up some kind of personal strength that they have to develop this fruit in their life. This is entirely a supernatural work of God in the believer. The one thing that the believer is to do is to abide in the Vine. Just keep abiding in Christ, just keep studying His Word, just keep seeking His guidance, just keep asking for His grace, just keep fellowshiping with His people, just keep obeying His Word – that is abiding. It is the one critical element that must be present.

I have to say that I just love this. I love what the Word of God is teaching us about how He works in our life. He does not want us to live the Christian life. To the contrary, He wants to live His life in us and through us. What He wants us to do is simply trust that what and how He has asked us to live is exactly what will supernaturally create these kinds of qualities in our life. He is not telling us how to love, or how to have joy, or how to have peace. There is not one word in these two verses about “how” we learn to be longsuffering or “how” we learn to be kind. Why is that? It is because the “how” is someone. The “how” is the Holy Spirit doing what only He can do. These qualities are what the Holy Spirit produces in our lives as we simply yield ourselves to His sanctifying work in us. We can resist Him, we can think that we are smarter than He is, we can refuse to be obedient, and we can complain about what we do not want to do when He directs us to do something. At that point, all we are doing is wasting our life away and in the end achieving nothing of any eternal value. I have taught all along that this entire passage is about the Holy Spirit, about how He works, about what He does in our life, and these two verses are the culmination of what He wants us to glean from that realization. He wants us to glean that **His fruit is better than our fruit**. Just read v19-21 again. Once again, that is why He begins v22 with the word “**but**”. It is a contrastive conjunction which means that it is contrasting the works of the flesh (which any of us can produce in our life if we so choose) with the fruit of the Spirit (which none of us can produce in our life just by choosing to do so). These attributes, this work, this fruit – this is from God and is solely a by-product of His work in us through the Holy Spirit. We live in the Spirit and we walk in the Spirit. We derive all of our spiritual life from the indwelling Spirit. He is the genitive of source,

³ Schreiner, 348-349.

the sole possessor of spiritual life. So, just do what He reveals to you to do in His Word, and these attributes will continue to grow and expand and develop in your life as you make that right choice.

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