

Text: Gal 5.22-23

Tonight, we turn to the fruit of the Spirit. We are working through Galatians, and we keep Tom Constable's outline in front of us as we start these sessions.

- I. Introduction 1:1–10
- II. Personal defense of Paul's gospel 1:11–2:21
- III. Theological affirmation of salvation by faith 3:1–4:31
 - A. Vindication of the doctrine ch. 3
 - B. Clarification of the doctrine ch. 4
- IV. Practical application to Christian living 5:1–6:10
 - A. Balance in the Christian life ch. 5
 - 1. Living without the Law 5:1–12
 - 2. Living without license 5: 13-15
 - 3. Living by the Holy Spirit 5:16–26¹

We are working on the general them, “Living by the Holy Spirit.”

As we think about living by the Spirit in the context of this description of the fruit of the Spirit, there are a few things we need to keep in mind.

1. This is the fruit of the *Spirit*, not the flesh or the self.
2. The word “fruit” is singular, so these qualities are facets of one thing, rather than differing qualities in someone that in some is more *love* and someone else more *peace*, for example.
3. Various attempts are made to classify and organize these qualities, usually as three groups of three qualities, but (in my opinion) these classifications are irrelevant.
4. Though the list doesn't end with “and such like” indicating it is representative, not exhaustive, the fact that the NT uses synonyms of these virtues in other places, each with a particular nuance, suggests that our list is not exhaustive.

Two other comments with which I'd like to begin:

Charles Ryrie: “The evidence that the Holy Spirit is in control of a life is not found in manifestations of the Spirit, but in the display of Christ. The fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22–23) is a perfect description of the character of Christ; thus, the Christian who is spiritual will display love, joy, peace,

¹ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Galatians, Introduction, Outline.

longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and self-control.”²

Timothy George: “we should sit back and contemplate the beauty of this image rather than overinterpreting and analyzing it to death”³

Especially in light of that last one, we will probably immediately go against his advice, but we do want to at least define what it means when the Spirit displays Christ in our life in one of these lights.

I. The fruit of the Spirit is love

A. Dealing with a popular misconception I once formerly taught

1. The term is *agapē* – used over 100 times in the NT (verb and noun)
2. Popular notion: the love of self-sacrifice
3. Except John 3.19

Jn 3.19 “This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men **loved** the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.

- a. The notion of self-sacrifice usually conceived as a noble notion
- b. The usage in Jn 3.19 is certainly not noble, no matter how much of the self that is sacrificed

B. Reflecting the “love of Christ” (phrase 3x in NT)

1. The enduring and keeping love of Christ: Rm 8.35

Rm 8.35 Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

² Charles C. Ryrie, “What Is Spirituality?,” *Bibliotheca Sacra: Dallas Theological Seminary* 126, no. 503 (1969): 208.

³ George, 400.

2. The constraining and motivating love of Christ: 2 Cor 5.14 (see whole ¶, vv. 11-15)

2 Cor 5.14 For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died;

3. The personal object of worship of a lifetime: Eph 3.19

Eph 3.19 and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.

C. Some application of the concept

1. This is the focus of the Great Commandments (Love God, Love Neighbour)
2. As the Christian matures, love should abound
 - a. When we look at the lost, are we disgusted, or brokenhearted?
 - b. When we look at other saints, do we value and appreciate them (despite their many faults)?
 - c. When we look at the Lord, does he really grow in our estimation? Do we think less of ourselves and more of him?

II. The fruit of the Spirit is joy

A. The connection of joy to grace

1. In Gk, the same root for both words
2. Grace doesn't depend on the qualities of the one receiving it (unmerited favor)
3. Joy doesn't depend on the quality of the environment in which it manifests itself

“deep-seated gladness regardless of circumstances”⁴

⁴ Constable, *Expository Notes*, Gal 5.22.

B. A comparison between worldly joy and Christian joy

1. Aristotle:

“In the Aristotelian morphology of human virtues, joy was defined as finding the ideal mean between the excesses of pleasure (satiety) and pain (suffering). Joy in this sense depends upon an environment of pleasant circumstances.”⁵

2. Christianity:

“Christian joy, however, is lived out in the midst of suffering. Christian joy is marked by celebration and expectation of God’s ultimate victory over the powers of sin and darkness, a victory actualized already in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who ‘for the joy set before him endured the cross’ (Heb 12:2) but now has been exalted to the right hand of the Father whence he will come in power and great glory.”⁶

C. Some application of the concept

1. We talk to ourselves about “joy despite circumstances” a lot

- a. Bad life experiences, we know Christ, we have joy
- b. Personal losses, we know Christ, we have joy

My dad passed ten years, almost eleven years ago now. I experienced a lot of emotional pain when that happened, but I taught myself that I also had joy.

- Joy because of his Christian testimony
- Joy because his suffering ended
- Joy because God gives grace in time of need

2. Do we really have a depth of joy? Consider this year, the year of Covid?

- a. How many Christians have joy in this year, the longer it drags on?

⁵ George, *Galatians*, 401–2.

⁶ George, *Galatians*, 401–2.

b. How many Christians have anger instead?

1) At the government

2) At others who disagree with them about mask/no mask, etc.?

3) At family members, just because...

In many ways, this year we are living out (more than a year now) is the greatest test of our joy (our spiritual life) we have ever experienced.

Conclusion:

Well, I think we will stop with the first two. I had thought to get one more in, but let's let these two sink into our hearts tonight.

Love: where are you at with the love of Christ?

Joy: where are you at with the joy of Christ, especially this year?