

*Ray Reynolds*

## FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

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*Galatians 5:22-23*

*One Main Thing*

The natural work of God's Holy Spirit is to produce fruit in the life of a Christian.

*Introduction*

In the book of Galatians, the apostle Paul expresses the need for true, genuine faith in Christ. He also encourages the church to see the conflict between the works of the flesh (Gal 5:19–21) and the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22–23). We must choose whether to feed our soul or our flesh. Paul provides a list of nine great characteristics of the Holy Spirit: "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." The fruit of the Spirit can be divided into three main groups: (1) Bearing Fruit for God (love, joy, peace); (2) Bearing Fruit for Others (longsuffering, kindness, goodness); and (3) Bearing

Fruit for Ourselves (faithfulness, gentleness, self-control). Let's consider these three groups.

### *Application*

#### *Bearing Fruit for God: Love, Joy, Peace*

Love should be natural because God is love (1 John 4:8). It was His love that compelled Him to send Jesus to the cross (John 3:16; Rom 5:8; 1 John 3:16; 4:16). Several commandments teach us to love God, love one another, love our enemies, and love ourselves. God is a God of love. Therefore, He wants His children to have the spirit of love (John 13:34–35). Paul defines love to the Corinthians (1 Cor 13:1–13). Are you bearing the fruit of love?

Joy should be natural because God is joy (1 Tim 1:11). God has always been full of joy (Gen 1–2; Isa 62:5). Jesus came to help His disciples fill their cups to overflowing (John 15:11). We need to be joyful if we hope to win others to Christ. People need to see that godly living is the way to true happiness. Unfortunately, there are many “sour” Christians who fail to represent adequately the image of Jesus. Paul loved to talk about joy (Rom 15:13; Phil 1:2, 7; 4:4). Are you bearing the fruit of joy?

Peace should be natural because God is peace (Rom 15:33). In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus encouraged the people to be peacemakers (Matt 5:9). Satan loves to cause division, but God is not the author of confusion (1 Cor 14:33). He wants us to be united in mind and judgment (1 Cor 1:10). Christians should hate conflict.

We should seek to reconcile others and ourselves to God. Paul teaches on this elsewhere (Rom 16:20; 1 Thess 5:23–24; 2 Tim 2:22). Are you bearing the fruit of peace?

*Bearing Fruit for Others: Longsuffering, Kindness, Goodness*

Longsuffering should be natural because God is longsuffering (Rom 2:4). We may think of the patience of Job or Paul, but no one is more patient than God! As we strive for maturity, we need to let patience work in us (Jas 1:2-4). It is hard to suffer long, but looking to Jesus' great example can help us. Think about His temptation, His trials, and His death. When hardship comes our way, we need to be more like Jesus. We must stand fast in the Lord and learn to suffer for Christ (Col 1:9–12; 1 Tim 1:17). Are you bearing the fruit of longsuffering?

Kindness should be natural because God is kind (Eph 2:4–7). We are made in the likeness—kindness—of God (Gen 1:27). To be kind is to be like God in every sense of the word. To be kind to others around us means to be humane, sympathetic, and understanding (Rom 2:3–4; 11:22; 12:10; Col 3:12–17). We should practice the golden rule and treat others like we want to be treated (Matt 7:12). Are you bearing the fruit of kindness?

Goodness should be natural because God is good (Jas 1:17). We remind ourselves that, "God is good all the time! All the time, God is good!" Paul teaches us that if we want to experience the goodness of God we have to walk with Him (Rom 15:14). As we walk with Him, He

will teach us His ways. He will teach us how to be good, to walk in righteousness, and guide others to the path of life (Ps 25:8; 136; 2 Thess 1:11–12; Titus 3:4–5). Are you bearing the fruit of goodness?

*Bearing Fruit for Ourselves: Faithfulness, Gentleness, Self-Control*

Faithfulness should be natural because God is faithful (Rom 3:3). The Old Testament confirms God's faithfulness. He is faithful to keep His promises (Ps 145:13). God will never leave us or forsake us (Heb 13:5) and He will be with us always (Matt 28:20). However, we have to take the steps of faith that are necessary for salvation because these promises are for His children (Acts 2:37–39). Paul truly understood the need for faithfulness in the church (1 Cor 4:14–17; 2 Tim 2:2). Are you bearing the fruit of faithfulness?

Gentleness should be natural because God is gentle (2 Cor 10:1). Later in his writings, specifically in Phil 4:5–7, Paul encourages us to make gentleness known to all of mankind. To be gentle means to practice humility (Rom 12:16). We cannot allow pride or jealousy to overwhelm us. Those are the ways of the world. Instead, we need to seek the mind of Christ (Phil 2:5). Jesus was meek, lowly, and humble (Matt 11:18–20). Are you bearing the fruit of gentleness?

Self-control should be natural because God has self-control (Eph 1:11–12). He is not tempted by evil (James 1:13). Paul was not afraid to speak about the need to

control yourself (Acts 24:15; Rom 6:20–23; 1 Cor 7:5, 9; Titus 2:1–6). It is interesting that Paul ends with self-control, which is arguably the hardest virtue. This fruit also bring us back full-circle to the works of the flesh. We have an obvious choice to make. Are you bearing the fruit of self-control?

### *Conclusion*

The natural work of God’s Holy Spirit is to help us to bear similar characteristics to God, our Heavenly Father. We are His children and we should be conforming to His image. When we are connected to Jesus the True Vine (John 15:1–8), it will produce natural fruit in our lives. Jesus is the source of all spiritual life (John 14:6). As we grow in Christ, we begin to bear fruit for God, for others, and for ourselves. This will be the evidence of a changed life.

Jesus encouraged His disciples to be the salt of the earth, the light of the world, and a city on a hill (Matt 5:13–15). God chooses to use us, and our example, to bring glory to Him (Matt 5:16; Phil 2:15). The world, of course, will hate us and reject us. They abhor the wholesome fruit of the spirit and the pure ideals of truth because they reject God. Instead, they seek after “adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like,” which lead them further away from God (Gal 5:19–21). Those

inside the kingdom of God refuse to follow the path of wickedness. We seek the straight and narrow road that leads to eternal life (Matt 7:13–14). Will you bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit?

### *Discussion*

1. Why should Christians bear the fruit of the spirit? What is the purpose?
2. What are the differences between the works of the flesh and the fruit of the spirit? How can we contrast the two lists?
3. What are the connections between the fruit of the spirit and the characteristics of God? Why is this necessary to emphasize?
4. What is meant by the phrase “against such there is no law”? Explain.