

Christ Is the Fruit of My Life – Gal 5:22-23

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The “fruit of the Spirit” is produced by allowing the Holy Spirit to control one's life through His Word (Eph. 6:17). This triple triad of Spirit-made virtues is embodied to perfection in the Christ. When these characteristics are seen in us then Christ lives in us (Gal 2:20; 4:19; Col. 1:27). Indeed, “Christ” (a life patterned after His) is the fruit which the Spirit produces if we submit our wills to the Will of God through earnest study and practice of His holy Word!

Love leads this distinguished list. This is the *agape* that caused God to send His Son for our salvation (John 3:16). This is not the love of family, sexual passion, or mere emotion. This is a willed love that does not depend upon the worthiness of its object. This is the kind of love that seeks the best for others, friend or foe. Its fullest demonstration was the Lord on the cross— “Because He loved me so.” Love is the basis of all godly traits and is emphasized by being placed first: “The greatest of these is love” (1 Cor. 13:13). The other parts of the fruit of the Spirit can never flourish nor mature without this love.

Joy is the spiritual delight and exuberance we have in Christ. It is the natural product of gratitude to God and His Son. It flows naturally from the love we have for Christ and all men. True joy does not fade and fail under adversity. The apostles were beaten and forbidden to preach, but they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer (Acts 5:41). Paul rejoiced and urged the Philippians to rejoice even while he was in prison (Phi. 2:17; 4:4). Many live far below that fullness of joy that is their privilege to claim through the Gospel (1 John 1:4).

Peace is the absence of strife and schism. It is at the heart of the religion of Christ. God, Christ, the cross and Gospel are all concerned with peace (Rom. 16:33; Isa. 9:6; Eph. 2:14-18; 6:15). We are to be peacemakers, if possible (Mat. 5:9; Rom. 12:18; 1 Pet. 3:11). It is our privilege to know peace “which passeth all understanding” (Phi. 4:7). However, a “peace” based on error and compromise of the Truth is sinful. The “Prince of Peace” declared that His teaching would sometimes bring a sword and division (Mat 10:34; Luke 12:51). We must follow His example.

Longsuffering is the passive and patient endurance of sufferings and trials. It is slow to anger and to take vengeance toward its enemies, as God is toward us (Exo. 34:6-7; 2 Pet 3:9, 15, 20). The longsuffering of the Lord is seen in His statement from the cross, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). Perhaps there is no trait that needs more cultivation in all of us to make us more like Christ.

Kindness is a gentle and benevolent disposition toward others – the attitude that should control thought, word and deed in the Christian. Meanness, rudeness and harshness that fails to consider others is forbidden by kindness. God and His Son are our examples: “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you” (Eph 4:32). Kindness does not forbid strongly standing for the Truth and opposing error. Christ was perfectly kind, yet never shrank from exposing error and its proponents. Neither should we.

Goodness goes beyond passive endurance or benevolent disposition. It is the active principle of doing good things for others. Christ, our example, “went about doing good” (Acts 10:38). “Good” can only be judged by the objective standard of God’s Word which furnishes us “completely unto every good work” (2 Tim 3:17). To be like our Lord we must be “zealous of good works” (Tit 2:14). Sadly, some are “unto every good work reprobate” (Tit. 1:16).

Faithfulness is loyalty, dependability and reliability. It is “faith working through love” (Gal 5:6). God does not require us to be handsome, wealthy or multi-talented. He requires one thing – faithfulness (1 Cor 4:2). Abraham, Moses, Paul, Timothy and Antipas the martyr, are called “faithful” Certainly one is not “faithful” who will forsake the assembly (Heb 10:25), but this term applies to all of one’s daily responsibility to be pure in heart and life. It includes loyally defending and proclaiming the Truth, even when it brings inconvenience or opposition. In these troubled days, faithfulness is direly needed in all of God’s people.

Meekness is the word the ancients used to describe a wild horse that had been tamed to the bit and bridle. It still had all of its strength, but it was now gentle and mild. The person who is meek is not weak, but his strength is controlled with a gentle demeanor until it is needed. Moses was meek – strong yet controlled (Num. 12:3). The Lord was the perfect example of meekness (Mat.11:29) and He urged this quality upon all (Mat. 5:5).

Self-control is the necessary virtue to be able to practice all of the other virtues. This term literally means to hold oneself in. It strikes a deadly blow at those who urge us to discard all inhibitions. At the root of self-control is the daily self-denial to which the Lord called all who would be His disciples (Luke 9:23). Self-control will keep our time, money, influence and talents at work for the only proper Master. It will also keep us free from the moral corruption all about us (1 Cor 9:27; Rom. 12:1-2). The Lord was always in perfect control of Himself.

Paul emphasized the beauty and universally recognized worth of these nine traits by stating that there is no law against them. It is certain that there is no law of God against them—they are ever urged upon us in the Scripture. It also is likely that even in the most wicked and decadent codes of men none would be so foolish as to proscribe these virtues.

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