

the FRUIT

love joy peace

of the SPIRIT

longsuffering gentleness goodness

of JESUS

faithfulness meekness temperance

CHRIST



**Reformed Free Publishing
Association**
Jenison, Michigan

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Richard J. Smit

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*To my fellow saints of like precious faith
in the Philippines and abroad
“that ye should go and bring forth fruit,
and that your fruit should remain.”*

John 15:16

*I am the vine, ye are the branches:
He that abideth in me, and I in him,
the same bringeth forth much fruit:
for without me ye can do nothing.*

John 15:5

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The Fruit of the Spirit of Jesus Christ originated from a series of sermons based on Galatians 5:22–23 that I preached for the customary applicatory worship services, following the Lord’s supper worship services, in the Immanuel Protestant Reformed Church in Lacombe, Alberta, Canada, during my pastorate there from 2004 to 2009.

Of course, other Reformed books have been written on this truth of the fruit of the Spirit so that this book offers the reader nothing essentially new. Nevertheless, for those who might not have access to earlier writings on this truth, we trust that this book will fill a need for meditation on and instruction in the truth of the believer’s life of thankfulness.

Hence the primary goal is that this material may promote faithful piety and godly living among God’s saints that grow out of the doctrines of God’s sovereign, particular grace, while at the same time giving due honor to the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the work of the sanctification and preservation of his saints.

Finally, we acknowledge with humble gratitude the commitment and guidance of the Reformed Witness Committee of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Walker, Michigan, USA, to publish this material so that it can serve, among other needs, the need

The Fruit of the Spirit of Jesus Christ

of a teaching tool for the Protestant Reformed Churches' mission labors in the Philippines about the Reformed believer's daily life of godliness and thanksgiving. May the Lord cause it to be useful to this purpose.

INTRODUCTION

The apostle Paul warns us in the book of Galatians to avoid two extremes: the error of believing and living as though justification is by faith and also by and because of our obedience to the law and the error of believing and living as though our liberty in Christ is an opportunity to serve the lusts of the flesh. Instead of walking in either of these two evils of legalism or of antinomianism, we are called by the Lord to walk in the life to which he saves us.

What constitutes that new life in Jesus Christ and how that new life comes to visible expression in and through us is described, in one of many ways in Scripture, by Galatians 5:22–23. There the apostle teaches that our liberty and life in Jesus Christ become visibly manifest in “the fruit of the Spirit.” That fruit of the Spirit, which he sovereignly works in the regenerated, believing, justified, and sanctified children of God, is “love, joy, peace,

longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.”

I will examine extensively the fruit of the Spirit, considering in general the truth of the fruit of the Spirit in this chapter and then examining more closely each individual part in subsequent chapters.

The spiritual fruit evident in the child of God is the fruit *of the Spirit*. He is the Spirit of Christ. He in his sovereign power unites us to Christ in the living bond of faith. He took hold of us, who were dead branches in the dead tree of mankind, and ingrafted us into the living tree, Jesus Christ. Through that divinely established and maintained bond of faith, we receive the new life of Christ. Christ’s purpose in joining us to himself by his Spirit is that we might bring forth fruit abundantly unto the glory of God.

Verses 22–23 of Galatians 5 emphasize the Spirit as the agent and worker of that fruit of the new life of Christ. He is sent into us by the Father and the word to bring to reality the covenantal bond between Christ and us. He is the one who sovereignly preserves and nurtures the bond by his almighty and irresistible grace. The Spirit brings us into that new life of the liberty of our Lord Jesus Christ. He raises us out of death into life. He calls us out of our darkness into his marvelous light. He joins us to Christ in the bond of faith and works that

faith unto believing and a faithful confession of the faith. He applies to us the blessings of justification and as a result purifies us in the life of holiness and godliness. He preserves us daily until the day when we shall be like Christ in body and soul.

Unto that goal the Spirit then works in us his fruit. He works in and through us the production of his fruit. This work of the Spirit of Christ is not a cooperative effort between us and him. Rather, just as a grafted branch in an apple tree receives its life, nutrients, and support from the tree into which it has been grafted, so also our life, nutrients, and support come from the Spirit of Christ. We are his living and lively branches to bring forth much fruit.

The Spirit is pleased to work his fruit within and through us by dwelling in us. The Spirit comes irresistibly and breaks down the wall of enmity and pride of our dead hearts. He never waits for us to make the first move. He comes irresistibly into our hearts, and once there he remains in the new life of our regenerated hearts to work in us all things according to God's good pleasure. It is God's good pleasure that he causes us to produce spiritual, visible, holy fruit.

What is this good fruit, generally speaking? This good fruit can be described as the good works "which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10). These are the works that we perform out of the true faith of

that living union to Christ, according to God's commandments and ordinances and unto the glory of his name alone. This fruit becomes evident in our confession and walk of life. This fruit is spiritually sweet and delightful not only to our Father in heaven, but also to our fellow saints. As a result of its spiritual pleasantness, our earnest desire is that Christ will work in us mightily by his Spirit this delightful fruit of his Spirit.

What does this fruit really look like in this life?

Galatians 5:22 teaches that this fruit is *one* fruit with nine different aspects. We do not read of fruits, but of *fruit*. The fruit of the Spirit can be compared perhaps to an orange. The orange is one fruit in our hand, but once we peel it open, we see that it has many distinct sections to it. Even though it has many sections to it, it remains one fruit joined together by its sweetness and goodness that fill each individual wedge.

Similarly, the Spirit produces in his living branches this delightful, covenantal fruit. A heavenly and spiritual sweetness and goodness characterize and permeate the whole fruit. Yet, the Spirit shows us in Galatians 5:22–23 that this one fruit has many distinct sections, which in their own unique way are filled with the spiritually delicious sweetness and goodness of the Spirit.

What is that delicious sweetness and goodness that permeates the whole of the fruit?

It is the love of the Spirit, which is mentioned first in the list of Galatians 5:22. The love of the Spirit of Christ is that bond of perfection, the bond in which we are knit to Christ by his Spirit and the bond in which he seeks us and takes us into the love-life of covenantal fellowship. That love of Christ is the unifying substance and sweetness that permeate the entire fruit of the Spirit. In this love we love God and the neighbor, which is in principle our whole life and duty in this new life and liberty of Jesus Christ. This love of the Spirit of Christ is fundamental to the joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and temperance that the Spirit sovereignly works in and through us by his grace. That is the fruit that is delightfully tasty to our Father in heaven and also to our fellow saints upon earth who see and taste this fruit and are consequently delighted by it.

The Spirit is pleased to work this fruit in us through the way of leading us to crucify “the flesh with the affections and lusts” (Gal. 5:24). Those works and affections of the flesh are listed in verses 19–21: “adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like.” These works of the

flesh work death and misery. Those who walk and continue therein “shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (v. 21). In that way one brings forth what is repulsive, rotten, bitter, and dead. While the fruit of the Spirit is unified and harmoniously full of goodness and sweetness, the works (notice the plural) of the flesh are divided, miserable, and bitingly bitter.

In that light we must regard our sinful natures as repulsive and evil. We must not view our lusts as something with which to play. We must not attempt to get as close as possible to the fulfillment of those lusts without actually falling into sin completely and getting caught in that sin. Rather, we must flee those works of the flesh like fleeing a plague of death. We must treat these works of the flesh as rotten fruit to be cast away.

This is the life of putting to death the works of the flesh and the sinful nature. It is a life of warfare against the lusts of the flesh. It is a life of daily seeking refuge at the cross of Calvary for the perfect obedience of Christ and for his strength to fight faithfully against our sins. It is a life of submitting to the word of God and willingly submitting to the knife of God’s word to do its surgery on us: the slaying of our sins and wickedness and the building up of the faith and goodness of Christ within us.

We learn by the work of the Spirit in us that fruit-bearing does involve the painful process

of being pruned from the works of the flesh unto the production of the fruit of the Spirit. Although the process is spiritually painful and grievous, the blessed goal is growing in the blessed life of producing the good fruit of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance.

Therefore, by the gracious wonder of the Spirit and grace of God, we are created in Christ Jesus to be bearers of the good fruit of the Spirit according to the measure that God has determined for the glory of his name.

To excite in us an earnest desire to see that the Spirit continues his work in us, we read in Galatians 5:23, concerning producing the fruit of the Spirit: “against such there is no law.” It is not a crime to produce this fruit of the Spirit. The world may legislate against it. The world may persecute us for it. However, as far as the supreme court of God’s tribunal is concerned, there is no ordinance in his law that states that we may not produce this fruit or that our production is limited strictly to a very meager quota. There are no human regulations, bylaws, or marketing boards that restrict or stifle fruit production. Never should there be a fear of over production.

Our production of the fruit of the Spirit falls within the realm of true Christian liberty. Just as it is the freedom of a rainbow trout to swim and to live within the God-ordained boundaries of

its providentially appointed lake, so also it is our God-ordained and God-given life and freedom to produce the fruit of the Spirit according to his good pleasure and to the quantity that he has determined. It is our liberty to enjoy and bring forth this fruit of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and temperance. Therefore, you will find no divine law prohibiting you from pursuing that life of bringing forth the fruit whose sweetness and goodness are delightful to the Father and to your fellow saints. Rather, the Lord works in us and encourages in us by his word and Spirit the pursuit of daily fruit-bearing.

It is important that we seek in daily prayer that God by his Spirit may work in us the fruit of the Spirit. This is important because fruit-bearing is vital to the communion of the saints. By fruit-bearing, God is glorified among his saints. In our life of fruit-bearing, we are thereby assured of our eternal salvation. In this life of bearing forth the fruit of the Spirit, we are equipped to bear one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2) and to enjoy the liberty and peace of Christ with our fellow saints in the body of Christ.

As the Spirit works the beginning of that fruit-bearing within us in this life, we have blessed hope. It is true that our best works are polluted with sin. There appear on the fruit many spots of sin, and there hide in our best works worms of wickedness. But thereby the Spirit makes us

long for the day when we shall be planted as living trees by the streams of living water that flow forth from the throne of God. There we shall bring forth abundantly, continuously, and sinlessly the heavenly, wholesome, pleasant, and sweet fruit of the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ for the honor and glory of our heavenly Father.

Questions for Discussion

1. Does the sovereignty of the Spirit of Christ in our salvation and sanctification mean that we are inactive?
2. Does the doctrine of sovereign grace make the believer careless and uninterested about the production of the fruit of the Spirit in his daily life?
3. What are the differences and the connections between calling and sanctification?
4. Why is it necessary for the believer to perform good works?
5. Prove from the word of God that God is the admirable author of our good works.

LOVE

According to Galatians 5:22 the first of the nine parts of the fruit of the Spirit is love. Being first in the list does not mean that it is the first link in a long, loosely connected chain. Being first in the list means that love is fundamental to the whole fruit of the Spirit. Love is fundamental to the life of the justified and sanctified believer. Because it is fundamental and vital to our new life in him, Christ commands us to live in this love. In John 13:33–34, he said, “Little children... a new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” He who by the working of the Spirit heeds that command of Christ and bears forth that pleasant fruit of love will then also be energized to bring forth the sweet fruit of joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and temperance.

It is worthwhile to note that when Scripture speaks of the child of God and of love together, it frequently connects the two in the form of

an exhortation. However, that is not so in Galatians 5:22. The Lord through the inspired apostle Paul does not exhort us to produce the fruit of love. The exhortation to love God and the neighbor may certainly be implied, but it is not explicitly stated.

What is the significance that Galatians 5:22 speaks of love as part of the fruit of the Spirit and as a spiritual reality in the sanctified child of God, but the verse does not exhort us unto that love? The absence of the exhortation reminds us that the love that the redeemed and renewed children of God must express to God and the neighbor is the fruit of the Spirit. This love is not our work; and its existence in our lives does not have its source in us, nor is its continued existence dependent or conditioned on us, our faith, or any of our works. The Spirit of Christ is the miracle-worker of the fruit-life in and through his people. The Spirit cultivates and nurtures the living branches who have been ingrafted by him into Christ Jesus. The Spirit is the agent of the Father and of Christ to work by his sovereign, almighty, and irresistible grace in his elect, regenerated people the fruit that God has foreordained that they must produce. When in this life we begin to learn and enjoy that fruit-life of love, that reality is not due to us, but it is the work of the Spirit. The Father, Christ, and the Holy Spirit receive all the glory and the credit for this wonder of the

fruit-life of love appearing and being exercised in us and by us.

How does the Spirit cultivate and nurture that fruit of love in and through us throughout our lives? He cultivates and nurtures love by the means of grace: the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. Powerfully and irresistibly the Spirit calls us unto newness of life. In the justified, he works by the means of grace to purify us unto the production of love. He turns us from the hatred of our old flesh and leads us forth into the love of our new nature in Christ Jesus.

Consequently, it is vitally important that we attend a church where the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is most purely preached and the sacraments are faithfully administered according to the ordinances of Christ. By the means of grace, the Spirit uses many passages in Scripture, including John 13:34-35, to work in us the fruit of the exercise of true love. By the living word of Christ, the Spirit of Christ cultivates, fertilizes, waters, and rigorously prunes us unto faithful production of the sweet fruit of love.

What is this fruit of love? True love is first of all love toward God. "I will love Thee, O LORD, my strength" (Ps. 18:1). True love is the spiritual activity of knowing Jehovah and delighting in him. It is the pursuit of fellowship and communion with the triune God in the

knowledge of Christ Jesus. He that loves God desires to know him in all his glory and truth, especially as the God of his salvation in Christ Jesus. This is evident from the psalmist's confession in Psalm 18, in which he not only declares that he loves Jehovah, but also declares the reasons for his delight in communion with Jehovah: "The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower" (v. 2). For those glorious reasons, true love delights in God as our God in Christ Jesus and pursues blessed communion with him.

As the apostle John reminds us frequently in 1 John 3-4, we must love God, and we must love our neighbor who is brought providentially upon our pathway. True love for God is demonstrated in our love for the neighbor. Therefore, in 1 John 3:23, the apostle John declares, "And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment." We learn that true love toward the neighbor seeks spiritual communion and fellowship in God and the Lord Jesus Christ. That is fellowship sought not in just anything, such as sin or false doctrines of men, but in a faithful confession of the name of Jesus Christ according to his word and the truth. This we must exercise toward one another.

Now, to understand the quality and characteristics of this love that we must exercise, the Lord in John 13:34 adds the sole standard of that love: “as I have loved you.” Do you want to know what this love is that we must exercise toward one another? Look at Christ’s love toward you. Have you seen and tasted that love? According to the standard of the quality, sweetness, and beauty of Christ’s love toward you, so love one another.

As a result, what this love should be and how it ought to be exercised are not to be determined against the standard of what we feel like doing or not doing. We often attempt, and then fail, to exercise love in that way. Often our standard of love is whether it feels convenient or seems right to us in our own eyes. But that is not correct. The true standard that we are called by Christ to follow is clearly stated: “as I have loved you.”

How did Christ love us?

He gave himself for us. He did not take anything from us except our guilt in order to satisfy God’s justice for our justification. In all his work for us, he gave himself for us who by nature are nothing and totally unworthy. Even though while he died for us we hated him, yet he gave himself for us.

He loved us unconditionally. He did not love us because we loved him. He does not love us now because we love him. He will not love us tomorrow because we love him. He will not embrace us in his covenantal love only if we

embrace or desire to embrace him first. We are not required to meet certain conditions before he seeks us and draws us unto himself. Christ loves us unconditionally.

He loved us entirely. He did not withhold from us part of himself. When he redeemed us by his complete sacrifice on Calvary, he did not hold anything back. He gave his heart, mind, and strength for us and to us. He even poured out his soul unto death for us.

Christ loved us faithfully. He never gave up on us half way or near to the end of his work of our redemption. It is not true that he loves us today, but tomorrow maybe he will not. His love was, is, and shall be unswervingly faithful unto us.

Christ loved us to the greatest extent of the required self-denial. He wanted not his will, but the Father's will to be done. Whatever was necessary for the salvation of his people, that was his will. Unto the fulfillment of that will of God, he denied himself totally.

Christ loved us with a purpose. His purpose was always our salvation. He did not love, except unto the salvation of the objects of his love. Those whom Jesus loved were those whom the Father gave to him from eternity. All those whom the Father chose in Christ, Christ loved unto the end of his earthly life on the cross. And such alone he continues to love with the purpose of their eternal salvation in glory with him.

Finally, Christ loved us with a holy love that was always consecrated unto the Father first. His love is pure. His love is sinless. His love was and always is in harmony with the glory of the Father. Because Christ loved and loves the Father, Christ loved and loves us whom the Father gave to him eternally. In his love unto us, Christ always has one eye of delight upon the glory of the Father.

As Christ loved us, so now must we love one another.

This does not mean that we can love entirely as Christ did. After all, Christ is our Lord and savior, and, as a result, it is impossible that our love could redeem ourselves or anyone else from sin and death. Furthermore, our love is rooted and totally dependent upon his redeeming love unto us. Although we may never attain to the glory and power of Christ's saving love, we must, nevertheless, pursue the standard of Christ's love in the new man of Christ. The love that is revealed in Christ must be a delight to us, and to imitate that love of Christ must also be our delight.

Is this an impossible standard for us to obtain? It certainly is for us. However, that forces us to see that Christ is not only the standard of this love, but Christ is also the perfection of that love that we must exercise to one another. Furthermore, Christ is the only and never failing fountain of that true love.

Since we are living branches united to Christ, our root and tree, in him we receive this love. Therefore, our desire must be that we produce this fruit of love out of him by the working of the Holy Spirit in and through us.

In that hope, we must love one another. We must love our spouses and our children, even in their most undeserving behavior. We must love our parents in spite of their weaknesses and faults. We must love our brothers and sisters in the Lord. In fact, we must love our neighbors, who can vary from time to time in God's providence. To such must we exercised the fruit of love.

Our love must give. It must not take and abuse for carnal and selfish motives. It must not give and expect that it be returned. It must forget self and deny self. As Christ gave himself for us, so we must give ourselves for the sake of others.

Love must not be exercised to one another only after certain conditions regarding the personality of the other person and how well he has treated us are first met. As Christ loved us, even when we were the least deserving of his love, so must we exercise the love of Christ toward one another.

Our love must be holy. Our love must not be carnal or motivated by lust or sin. True love cannot be enjoyed in the fellowship of sin and separation from God. Our love must

be consecrated first to God and then to the neighbor according to God's word. As a result, true love will not compromise and stray into paths of sin; in contrast it maintains a clear view of the beauty and glory of our holy Father and the spiritual salvation of one another.

Oftentimes we face the difficult and practical question of how to love someone who does not live in daily repentance but walks in a sin. How do we love one who by his walk of life or denial of the truth shows that he hates God and Christ? How can we love such a person?

It is true that we cannot love the wicked in their sin. There can be no communion with the ungodly, and there may be no attempts for the godly to have spiritual fellowship with the ungodly (2 Cor. 6:14-18). There can be no true fellowship with the impenitent in his sin. Unrepented sin remains a barrier over and around which the ebb and flow of true communion cannot pass. Until sin is forsaken and there is reconciliation, there can be no true fellowship of love in Jesus Christ.

Hence, to love the wicked means that we may not tolerate their sins. We may not let the impenitent have the satisfaction of soothed consciences in the thought that we no longer are offended by what they consider to be just another way of life. In one way or another, we must address sinners and their offenses, which divide and separate them from full

communion. The influence of our example, our conversation, or our attempts to call them to repentance should irritate and prick their consciences and force them to think about their sins and their duty to repent in the light of God's word.

In this way our love is both holy and purposeful. It is holy as God is holy. And it has the purpose to seek the repentance of the impenitent and their escape in Christ Jesus from spiritual ruin.

If the Lord so wills that the barrier of the offense is removed through the way of repentance and reconciliation, then communion and friendship may ebb and flow between two hearts joined in the Lord and in the peace of his shed blood. Therein will be enjoyed the sweetness of the fruit of true love as Christ has so loved us.

Let us seek the Lord earnestly in prayer for his grace and Spirit, in order that we may have this fruit of love more and more. What a delightful life and privilege it is to be the blessed recipients of the love of Christ and to love one another as he loved us.

Questions for Discussion

1. How does 1 John describe the fruit of love?
2. According to Psalm 139:21-22, may and must we hate others? Does this contradict Jesus,

who said, “Love your enemies” (Matt. 5:44)?
How do we love our enemies while at the same time not compromising our faith?

3. In what practical ways should we show love to our parents, siblings, spouses, or even unbelieving neighbors?
4. How is one's love of an unbelieving neighbor different from one's love of a fellow saint?
5. While living in this virtue of love, can we ever hate?
6. How does 1 Corinthians 13 describe the fruit of love?