



“Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ” (Ephesians 4:7).

The Relationship of Gifts and Fruit

Central Truth: The Holy spirit produces the character and the ability to serve God effectively.

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Topic: Holy Spirit: Fruit of; Holy Spirit: Gifts of.

The brother was almost angry as he insisted, “But there are only three gifts of the Holy Spirit available today. They are faith, hope, and love as mentioned in I Corinthians 13:13.” In spite of his love of Bible truth and sincerity to hold to it, he made a common mistake. He confused the fruit of the Holy Spirit with the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The fruit of the Spirit is quite distinct from the gifts of the Spirit. Compare the list of fruit (love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control) with the gifts of the Spirit (serving, teaching, exhorting, giving, leading, showing mercy, and others). See how they differ?

The fruit of the Spirit relates to what we are. The gifts of the Spirit relate to what we do. The fruit of the Spirit relates to character. The gifts of the Spirit relate to conduct. Confusion of the gifts and the fruit of the Spirit can hinder spiritual growth and reduce effective service for God. That is why this week's study is devoted to an understanding of those two distinct though complementary ministries of the Holy Spirit.

The central truth of the study is that the Holy Spirit produces in us the character (His fruit) and the ability (His gifts) to serve God effectively.

I. FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT RELATES TO CHARACTER

Galatians 5:22, 23 list the ninefold fruit of the Holy Spirit. They fall

naturally into three equal groups. Each group relates to our need in the three vital areas of human relationships: self, others, and God. The fruit of the Spirit in your life testifies that He is working in you.

A. The fruit of the Spirit affects how you relate to yourself. He produces love, joy, and peace in your inmost being.

The love produced in you by the Holy Spirit is more than honorable human affection. It is the love of God! Its presence in you testifies that you are truly saved (1 John 3:14) because the Holy Spirit makes it abound in your heart as a child of God (Romans 5:5). Its presence is important, for God teaches us to love one another.

The joy of the Lord is produced in you by the Spirit. You rejoice in the experience of salvation (Isaiah 61:10). You rejoice in learning the Word of God and meeting God in His Word (Jeremiah 15:16). You rejoice at the very thought of Jesus (1 Peter 1:8). The Holy Spirit makes you joyful in the Lord.

The peace of God governs each person who is filled with the Holy Spirit. In fact, the very essence of the kingdom (reign) of God in you is your experience of *“righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost”* (Romans 14:17).

If you find your heart filled with love, joy, and peace, it is proof that the Holy Spirit is working to make you like Christ.

B. The fruit of the Spirit affects how you relate to people. What a blessed threefold influence He has over our personal relationships.

The Spirit makes you long-suffering. His strength makes you able to be patient and suffer long, even with joy (Colossians 1:11). You will be no more ready to retaliate in anger than Jesus was. Forbearing others is a mark of spiritual fruit.

The Spirit makes you gentle. It is one thing to suffer long; it is a different thing to suffer long with a gentle spirit. No thoughts of retaliation or vengeance mark the one who is made gentle by the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit makes you good. But be careful here. It is not good in the sense of the absence of bad. It is good in the sense of being good for something. The Spirit makes you helpful, even in the presence of injustices.

If you find yourself willing to suffer and bear it patiently, without anger or desires of vengeance, so that you are helpful to people about you while you suffer, the fruit of the Holy Spirit is being borne in you.

C. The fruit of the Spirit affects how you relate to God. He produces in you faith, meekness, and temperance.

Faith is certainty concerning unseen realities. It is trusting God to do as He said, even when we do not see Him or know how He will work to fulfill

His promises. It is accepting God's promise and saying "thank you" before we see any proof. Without it, it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6).

Meekness is not weakness, as some might imagine, for that would make a person less than he was. It is disciplined strength, power without pride, humility of heart that governs actions. God places great value on "*a meek and quiet spirit*" (I Peter 3:4). The Holy Spirit produces it in believers because it is a reflection of the Christ who said, "*I am meek and lowly in heart*" (Matthew 11:29).

Temperance is self-control. The person in whom this fruit of the Spirit is developed is greater than all the leaders who ever ruled a nation or directed an army to victory (Proverbs 16:32). It is one of the eight blessed graces which the Christian is to give all diligent effort to develop (II Peter 1:5-7); It is an essential grace, for the whole body and personality (including mind, emotion, and will) must be disciplined to obedience to Christ.

A review of the ninefold fruit of the Holy Spirit makes clear that the fruit has to do with character — what one is. What would the Holy Spirit do if He had His perfect will in your life? (1) He would produce in your heart the graces of love, joy, and peace. (2) He would govern your relationships with people to make you long-suffering, gentle, and good. (3) He would develop your attitude toward God so you would exercise faith, humility, and self-control. That is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Cooperate with Him as He develops it in you.

II. GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT RELATE TO CONDUCT

A person must be what he should be in order to do what he should do. So the fruit of the Holy Spirit (which relates to what you are) complements beautifully the gifts of the Holy Spirit (which relate to what you do). Fruit and gifts are in perfect harmony though evidently distinct.

A. Gifts are to be used to serve others. Have you known a person with a great natural talent who never developed it? What a waste! But how much worse it is for a Christian to have a gift of the Holy Spirit and not devote his life to serving in the area of his divine ability.

Gifts are to be used. Read I Peter 4:10, 11. It teaches that you have a gift, so "*minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*" If you have a speaking gift, speak for God. If you have a serving gift, serve people in the name of God. Romans 12:6-8 makes the same emphasis. If you have the gift of prophecy, prophesy; of teaching, teach; of serving, serve; of exhorting, exhort; of giving, give; of leading, lead; of mercy, show it with cheerfulness. Gifts are not a sign of super

spirituality; they are not a “religious merit badge.” They are given to be used.

B. The gift is identified by the work it enables. The person who drives a bus is called a driver. The person who tills the soil is called a farmer. The person who installs or repairs plumbing is called a plumber. The profession is identified by the type of work that is done.

You will identify the spiritual gift God has conferred upon you by the type of work you do in His service. One with a gift of teaching will not find fulfillment and be most effective in an administrative position. One with a gift of showing mercy will not be content or most effective if he is required to teach and is restrained from showing mercy. There will be an inner witness that identifies for the sincere seeker the area in which he is to serve God. One can minister outside the area of his primary gift, but he will be most productive and best satisfied if his ministry is in the area of his gift.

Do not expect every believer to have every gift. Do not think each believer should have the same gift you have in order to be spiritual and to serve God. The Holy Spirit knows what ministries are needed in each place. So He sovereignly gifts believers and places them in the church where they can serve God most effectively. Be content with His choice, type, and place of ministry.

C. The gifts are acknowledged by the servants of God. The apostle Paul recognized that it was God's gifting which made him an effective servant of Jesus. *“I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, . . . putting me into the ministry”* (I Timothy 1:12). What happened to Paul? He had been *“enabled”* (qualified, equipped, certified and strengthened) and put *“into the ministry.”* Note that the enabling preceded the putting. Paul was gifted for the work of his ministry before he began that work. Who did that enabling and putting into the ministry? It was no other than *“Christ Jesus our Lord.”* No wonder Paul was such an effective missionary, evangelist, church planter, and theologian. Christ Jesus himself had equipped and commissioned him. And He has done the same for you!

Jesus has *“made us able ministers of the new testament”* (II Corinthians 3:6). We are not merely commissioned to serve. Far more is involved. He has made us His ministers (servants) by His own choice and gifts. But He has made us *“able ministers”* (competent servants, sufficient as ministers) of the new covenant of grace. Never say, “I cannot serve.” Find your gift and use it.

D. Gifts are essential to spiritual service. Christians are involved in a spiritual warfare. They cannot fight successfully in the talents of the flesh. There must be spiritual equipment, spiritual enabling, to engage a spiritual

foe. *“The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds”* (II Corinthians 10:4).

Do you remember Timothy? He was a young man of Lystra who was led to Christ by Paul's testimony. Afterward Timothy became an associate of Paul in his missionary labors. That young man grew spiritually until Paul was willing to entrust serious ministry responsibilities to him. Even so, he wrote to Timothy, *“Neglect not the gift that is in thee”* (I Timothy 4:14). Some two or three years later Paul wrote to him again and counseled, *“Stir up the gift of God, which is in thee”* (II Timothy 1:6). Even an experienced minister like Timothy could not work effectively apart from the spiritual gift he had received.

How can you serve God? Find the area where He has enabled you and devote your life to Him in that ministry. As you continue this study, the way will become dearer on how to discern which gift He has given you. Keep your heart open to the Spirit's instruction, and be willing to serve Him in any area He chooses.

Cooperate with the Holy Spirit as He develops His fruit in you, making you the kind of person He wants you to be. And be ready to prepare and serve as He makes your ministry dear. The fruit and the gifts make you able to serve God.

Questions

1. What is the fruit of the Holy Spirit?
2. What is a gift of the Holy Spirit?
3. Why are both needed in Christian service?
4. How does the fruit of the Spirit influence your attitude?
5. How does it govern your relationship with God and people?
6. Why is each spiritual gift designed to serve others?
7. Why does God give a different gift to different people?
8. How does a gift enable one to serve God?
9. How does II Corinthians 10:4 relate to spiritual gifts?
10. How can you apply this study to make you a better worker for God?