

Fruits of the Spirit

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Sermon by Bijoy.

First of all, let me thank God and the Pastors, Elders of our church for giving me this opportunity to share this morning.

Today I would like you to turn your attention to a passage from the Gospel of Galatians 5:16-25.

“So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

But the fruit of the Spirit is Love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”

We have studied different aspects of The Holy Spirit in the last couple of weeks. We have briefly looked into the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the Promise of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, this week and next week, we will be looking into the fruit of the Spirit and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, respectively. In our study, we understood from the Scripture that Holy Spirit indwells us and, empowers us, and also helps us in the process of sanctification. As a result of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, fruits of the Spirit are produced in us. And through the evident outworking of the fruits of the Spirit, we are called to reveal and proclaim the goodness of God through our life.

We live in an increasingly divided society. Cultures, social status, colour and even our political affiliations bring more division than unity in society. In other words, our upbringing and cultural backgrounds shape our behaviour and worldview to a certain extent. Adhering to familial Hierarchy is an important aspect of Pasifika culture, and so is the hospitality and extended family bonding. My Pacifica friend once jokingly told me that “everyone in Samoa is my cousins except my wife and in-laws.” But unfortunately, western culture has become increasingly individualistic. Everybody is busy in their own world and led by their own philosophy of life. But Paul here talks to the universal church (even though he is talking to Galatians, the message is for the universal body of Christ). Therefore, the fruits of the Spirit are not just for a particular community or denomination but for everyone in the body of Christ.

Therefore, God’s intention for the body of Christ is to be the imitators of Christ in all Godliness, even though it’s a continuous progressive journey. When Paul talks about the gifts of the Spirit, He says, to another gift of prophecy and to another gift of interpretation and so on. However, when it comes to the fruit of the Spirit, we all are called to continuously grow and manifest every fruit of the Spirit.

Kenneth Taylor says, “Does my character make people want to believe the gospel?” not just my ability to articulate the gospel that makes people want to believe it?” but my character, does it make people see the indwelling Christ in me?

Fruit is a consequence of regeneration/new life.

The first thing we need to realise is that fruit is a consequence of regeneration/new life. In the Epistle of Galatians, Paul is explicitly making it clear that nobody should fall into the false gospel, which is salvation through works such as circumcision. He made it clear in chapters 1,2, and 3 that salvation is by faith alone through grace alone. So the fruit of the Spirit is not a good virtue that everyone should pursue for a better society or for the common good of humanity. But rather, fruit is the initiation of the Spirit in a believer. This is not an artificial character modification or temporary fake improvement. But it is the wonder of God’s grace to us in Jesus. Paul says in verse 24, “Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh

with its passions and desires,” recognising all that is involved in being converted. So the fruit is not produced *by* us; it is produced *in* us. It is organic; it is not mechanical. Now let me make it clear, an outward change in the habit without an inward change in heart is not the fruit of the Spirit. Due to their guilty conscious, many people try their best to be better human beings, trusting in their own ability and discipline. And I’m pretty sure it will be excruciating for them because it is merely an outward attempt to change our character without inward transformation. Oh no, that’s a trap of the devil. Let’s not fall into it. And it is frustrating because it doesn’t work. It doesn’t work because it *can’t* work. Because the life that produces the fruit is the life of Christ implanted within the believer. However, that doesn’t mean the fruit automatically grows in us without our knowledge. 2 Peter 1;5- 7 says, “For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love.” Yes, Peter asks us to make every effort. Now, the Spirit in you initiates the fruit and gives you the inclination towards Godliness and helps you to pursue the things that please Lord. And the more you YEILD to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the more fruit evidently grows in you. And it’s a journey until eternity.

The Fruit of the Spirit: Love

Now for today, let me specifically look into the fruit of the Spirit: Love. “The outpouring of the love of God is the story of the Bible”. Romans chapter 5, says, “God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” It’s a wonderful picture, isn’t it? It says that it has been lavished in. It has been poured out upon us. And this is the work of the Spirit of God. Now this is something we must understand, God doesn’t show Love, But He himself is Love. It is who God is; He is Love. Usually, our expressions of Love are directly related to the attractiveness or the worthiness of the object of our affection. So, we will express Love because we find the person attractive or because we believe they are they are worthy somehow or another. But that is not the Love of God. The Love of God is unconditional; it doesn’t keep any records of wrong, it forgives, and it is not self-seeking; it protects, trusts, hopes and perseveres (1 Cor 13:4-7, paraphrased). Once, I served in Indonesia as a missionary, and I had a wonderful Indonesian pastor with me, and we were

serving in a religious fanatic area. The people there don't like Christian missionaries, and they have hurt my pastor and his family quite a few times, yet the pastor showered them with Love. I wondered how he could do that. And one day, I asked him, "They have done such horrible things to you, and how can you show so much Love to them" and he replied, "We are called to love everyone, not just the lovable" What a profound truth it is. Romans 5:8 says, "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

Source of Love

Where does this Love come from? This is supernatural Love. Now some of you might say I was born and raised in a loveless environment. Or you might even say I grew up in bitter and hurtful surroundings, and I don't have any love in me to show others. What shall I do? I think that's a very legitimate question. But the Bible has good news for you. In Mathew 11:28, Jesus says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. "Come to him and bring all your past hurts, pain and brokenness at his feet. He will give you rest, and he will fill you. In John 7: 37-39 says, "On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." By this, he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive."

Therefore, let us come to the fountain of Love, which is the cross and gaze upon the beauty and glory of our saviour; there surely shall our hearts be filled by Love.

Questions for the connect group discussion.

- 1, what is the difference between the secular/ worldly understanding and the scriptural understanding of Love?
- 2, An incident in your life where you have seen the Love of Christ through someone (could be a stranger/or someone close to you) and share it for the edification of people
- 3, what are some practical steps we can take to grow in the fruits of the Spirit?

Finally, pray for each other.