

## **The Fruit of the Spirit 2025 – Session 9**

### **Resource, Growing in the Fruit of the Spirit, by John Blattner**

**Song** – Thy Word by Amy Grant

#### **Prayer**

*O Holy Spirit, soul of my soul, enlighten, guide, strengthen and console me. Tell me what I ought to do and command me to do it. I promise to be submissive in everything that you permit to happen to me, only show me what is your will.*

“The fifth chapter of Paul’s letter to the Galatians contains a secret. It is the secret of how you can become more like Christ. The secret is to learn to live by the power of the Holy Spirit. How can you tell if someone has learned the secret. You will see the fruit of the Spirit in their lives.”

I read this passage on the back of a book 40 years ago just after I had been prayed with for New Life in the Spirit and I was hungry to learn more about the Holy Spirit. I learned a lot then and I am still learning 40 years later. I am grateful for this opportunity to again refresh my understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of a Christian. Your life as a baptized Christian is never ended in this life. It is vibrant and alive and always open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

Years ago as I was preparing a talk on gentleness, I felt the Spirit moving me to change my topic to the Fruit of the Spirit and here is the reason why.

Most of us are familiar with the Scripture passage in Galatians 5: 22-23, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness and self-control.”

When we read this passage we interpret it as saying, “fruits of the Spirit are...” It is really singular and not plural. It says, “The fruit of the Spirit is..” Each quality is not meant to be separate and distinct, they are part of a whole. “St. Paul is not talking about a bunch of separate traits that exist and operate independent of one another but about a single reality.” It is not about a fine collection for fine jewels but about different facets of one gem. The fruit of the Spirit is what grows within us as a result of the Holy Spirit living within us. It is the kind of person we become as we grow to be more like Jesus. The fruit of the Spirit is a life conformed to the character of Jesus. God’s purpose is to make us like Jesus and he has sent His Holy Spirit to dwell inside us at our baptism in order to bring that about. He gives us the Eucharist to nourish us on our journey to holiness and Penance to give us a fresh start and Confirmation to strengthen us to live a life reflecting God’s love to others.

If we go back to Galatians 5 and look at the whole quote 19-23 we find that Paul compares the fruit of the Spirit with the works of the flesh. It is easy to equate the fruit of the Spirit with feelings. God is not concerned that we feel loving but actually that we love one another.

Galatians 5:19-23

Now the works of the flesh are plain: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Paul contrasts the “works of the flesh” with the fruit of the Spirit. It helps if we think of the fruit of the Spirit not as feelings but characteristic ways of behaving. The works of the flesh all have to do with behavior. Does the way you live reflect that you are becoming more like Jesus.

We must grow in the fruit of the Spirit by learning more about what God is like. The best way to find out what God is like is by looking at Jesus. Jesus is God’s expression of himself. We can read about what God has said about Himself in the Bible.

Colossians 3:12-14

Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience, forbearing one another and, if one has a complaint against another forgive each other as the Lord has forgiven you, so you must forgive. And above all these put on love.

1 Timothy 6:11

But as for you, man of God...aim at righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, and gentleness.

1 Peter 3:8

Finally, all of you have unity of spirit, sympathy, love of brethren, a tender heart and humble mind.

2 Peter 1:5-7

Make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love.

These character traits along with others mentioned in scripture describe what God is like and what he wants us to be. They are all the “fruit of the Spirit”.

In conclusion, the word fruit suggests something that grows from a seed and with time ripens to maturity. This is true with the fruit of the Spirit. How do we do this? By following the four principles of spiritual growth –

1. Have God’s life within you through Baptism and reception of the Sacraments.
2. Dwell in God’s presence through prayer, Mass and other forms of communal worship and adoration.
3. Imitate Jesus and the Father by reading scripture and making a conscious effort to be like them.
4. Welcome testing and trials to make us able to obey, serve and be fruitful. To know that we are really what we profess to be.

The fruit of the Spirit is a life conformed to the character of Christ.

## **The Fruit of the Spirit**

**Love** is the trait that most characterizes God. He who abides in love, abides in God. (1John 4:16) God wants us to know and understand His love for us, our love for Him and our love for one another. God's description of Himself can be found in Ex 33:19, 34:5-7. He is saying to us: "This is what I am like. This is my nature. If you want to be like me and dwell in my presence, this is what you, too, must be like."

**Goodness** is having the good of another at heart. To be good involves acting and speaking in such a way that the highest good of those around us is our highest priority. "We know that in everything God works for the good with those who love Him, who are called according to his purpose." (Rom 8:28)

**Kindness** is very similar to goodness. Kindness means doing good to others, loving them by putting ourselves in the service of others. Goodness describes our motive in relating to others, kindness describes the things that we do as a result of that motive.

**Graciousness** is basically the idea is that of a free and undeserved gift, of something which comes from God's grace and which could never have been achieved or attained or possessed by man's own effort. Our God then is generous. He loves us freely even though we have not earned it or deserve it by our sinfulness.

**Merciful.** God's love is merciful, compassionate. God is moved with pity or tenderness. God is moved by the needs of His people. The love of a parent for their child is a reflection of this aspect of God's character. "As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him. "(Ps 103:13)

**Longsuffering.** God said to Moses that he is "slow to anger". Paul says, "Love is not irritable, it bears all things" (1 Cor 13:5,7)

**Patience** is associated with longsuffering. "He who is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly". (Proverbs14:29) " a hot tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger quiets contention." (Proverbs 15:18) He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city." (Proverbs 19:11) Good sense makes a man slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense". (Proverbs 19:11) Patience is something we can grow into, it is not necessarily something predetermined. Endurance and perseverance have similar meanings and are the virtues that enable us to cope successfully with situations that don't go our way. Patience in the biblical sense is "calm determination". It means to stick with something, to see it through, even when the lack of immediate results tempts us to become frustrated. Intercessory prayer is an example of this patience and persistence. Patience is the calm determination to see things through without giving in to frustration, the perseverance to endure hardship for the sake of the hope we have in Christ.

**Faithfulness** is like a rock. “For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from him, He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress, I shall not be shaken. On God rests my deliverance and my honor, my mighty rock, my refuge is God. (Ps 62:2-7) Faithfulness requires reliability and dependability. We can be entrusted with responsibility and be counted on to carry things through. Honesty and integrity go hand in hand with faithfulness. Are we honest in our dealings with people and do we honor our commitments and promise?

**Joy** is the fruit of the Spirit that is an abiding character trait, something we should have at all times. “Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” (1Thes 5:16-18) Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. (Rom. 12:12) James tells us that we are to even rejoice when we are going through difficulties. “Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet various trials, for you know the testing of your faith produced steadfastness.”( James 1:2) The joy we need to have even in the trials of life comes from the work of the Holy Spirit. We are temples of the Holy Spirit. This is always reason for joy!

**Peace** is used in scripture to refer mainly to three things, a right relationship with God, a right relationship with others and order in our personal life. “Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Rom 5:1) As we grow in maturity as children of God, we experience more and more the blessings and benefits of living in his kingdom. When Jesus died on the cross, he made it possible for us to be reconciled with God and also to one another. He brings us together into one body, the church. St Paul offers us some advice. “Put on, then as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness and patience, forbearing on another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other, as the Lord has forgiven you, so also you must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful.” (Col 3:12-15) To have order in our personal life is to make good use of our time and resources to avoid confusion and disorder.

**Self-control.** We are God’s possessions, and he has appointed us to be stewards over ourselves- our lives, our talents, our desires, our actions. He wants us to “rule ourselves” wisely and on his behalf. Self-control enables us to grow in all virtues. The Holy Spirit is the source of all virtues, but we must actively cooperate with him if we are to grow. It is the virtue that enables us to triumph over obstacles, to conquer disabling habits, to maximize our effectiveness as servants of the Lord. True self-control is a source of great peace in our lives, and a doorway to tremendous spiritual growth. A

Christian who has grown in self-control will be joyful and fruitful in his Christian life. Scripture tells us we are confronted by three powerful enemies: the world, the flesh and the devil. The “world” is the system of unredeemed society that works apart from and even in opposition to God’s plan. The “flesh” is the habits and desires that continually goad us into wrong behavior. And the devil is Satan himself, with a host of rebellious spirits under his command. “A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls” (Prv 25:28) Self-control keeps our healthy desires within their proper limits. Those desires being -emotions, addictions (ex. Weight control, drink, smoking), hobbies, speech. Seven steps can help you grow in self-control.

1. Desire it.
2. Decide for it.
3. Work at it wisely.
4. Live in an environment of order.
5. Have faith.
6. Seek help and encouragement.
7. Guard your thoughts.
8. Pray for it.

### **Closing Song – When It’s All Been Said and Done by Robin Mark**

Let us pray-

“His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, that through these you may escape from corruption that is in the world because of passion, and become partakers of the divine nature. For this very reason make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these things are yours and abound, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore brethren, be the more zealous to confirm your call and election, for if you do this you will never fail; so there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. 2Peter1:3-11. AMEN