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ABSTRACT

A BIBLICAL OVERVIEW OF THE CONCEPT OF FRUIT
WITH AN EMPHASIS ON THE “FRUIT OF
THE SPIRIT” IN GALATIANS 5

by

Timothy Selinger

Adviser: Kim Papaioannou

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Thesis

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: A BIBLICAL OVERVIEW OF THE CONCEPT OF FRUIT WITH AN EMPHASIS ON THE “FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT” IN GALATIANS 5

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Problem

The topic of the Holy Spirit and especially the meaning of “being filled with the Spirit” is a relevant topic. Generally, it is thought to be related to miracles, healings, and explosive church growth among Adventists or to speaking in tongues and other manifestations, especially among Charismatic Christians. Few identify the fullness of the Spirit with holiness of character.

In Paul, the presence of the Spirit in the life of the believer results in the presence of the “fruit of the Spirit” (Gal 5:22). Just like an apple tree produces apples, a person filled with the Spirit will produce the fruit of the Spirit. By understanding the nature of fruit, one can thus understand better what being filled with the Spirit entails.

Method

To that aim, this investigation focused on an inter-biblical thematic study of the word “fruit” with its corresponding Hebrew and Greek terms פֵּרִי and καρπός.

Results

The results of this investigation were the following: (1) that fruit in the spiritual realm has to do with character traits and (2) to be filled with the Spirit has less to do with giftedness but more with holiness of character.

Conclusions

The concept of fruit is a major theme throughout the Bible. God is not only Creator and Provider of all fruits in nature but also in the spiritual realm where He additionally performs a cleansing work to increase the fruit. In the NT, where the concept of fruit is related mainly to the spiritual realm, it has to do with character traits and sanctification. This sanctification process is illustrated by the properties of the growing and maturing of the fruit. To be fruitful is not a goal in itself but has the purpose of glorifying the Father, to prove to be Jesus’s disciples, to prepare the harvest for the Second Coming, and to determine one’s true essential nature.

In Gal 5 where Paul describes the “fruit of the Spirit,” he uses four distinctive verbs to indicate how a fruitful Spirit-filled life can be obtained so that God’s holy character can be restored in the life of the person.

While most Christians associate the work of the Spirit with supernatural exciting manifestations, it actually has to do with holiness of character. The work of the Holy

Spirit during the latter rain is to prepare the character of God's people for the kingdom of God.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

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WITH AN EMPHASIS ON THE “FRUIT OF
THE SPIRIT” IN GALATIANS 5

A Thesis
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Religion

by
Selinger Timothy
2019

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A thesis
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Timothy Selinger

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BDAG	<i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i>
EDB	<i>Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
L&N	<i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains</i>
NAC	New American Commentary
NBD	<i>New Bible Dictionary</i>
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The topic of the Holy Spirit is an especially relevant topic concerning which many misunderstandings prevail. This is especially so when it comes to the *fruit of the Spirit* and the *gifts of the Spirit*. And even more when it comes to the *baptism of the Spirit* and the concept of being *filled with the Holy Spirit*. The rise of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements as well as a conviction among many Christian confessions that we live in the end times, a time when a special outpouring of the Spirit is anticipated, make this topic one of much interest both in popular discussion as well as in academic analysis. The meaning of being filled with the Spirit is understood today in Christianity in various ways. In the charismatic movement, being filled with the Spirit is related to speaking in tongues¹ and other manifestations like falling down² and “holy laughter.”³ Other Christians understand it as something mystic or related to something supernatural.⁴

¹ Mel Storm, *Living Lord, Empowering Spirit, Testifying People: The Story of the Church in the Book of Acts* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014), 28.

² Candy G. Brown, ed., *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Healing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 217.

³ Watchman Nee, *The Latent Power of the Soul* (New York: Christian Fellowship, 1972), 54. Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 52.

⁴ Juanita Vinson, *Do You Want to Know God?* (Bloomington: Xlibris, 2006), 56.

However in the writings of Paul, the fullness of the Spirit is related to the fruit of the Spirit and not to the gifts of the Spirit.

The Problem

Within the Adventist Church, there is a certain ignorance and lack of proper understanding of what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit. And since in general, to be filled with the Holy Spirit is related to the phenomenon of speaking in tongues or other charismatic manifestations, many church members have a certain fear to seek for the fullness of the Spirit.

In this thesis, I have five chapters where I endeavor to demonstrate that to be filled with the Spirit, it has less to do with giftedness and more with holiness of the character. Chapter 2 is a background study of the literal and metaphorical uses of fruit in the Bible for a better comprehension of the concept of fruit. Chapter 3 is dedicated to the fruit and the work of the Spirit in a spiritual way and serves as background. Chapter 4 focuses upon the concept of *fruit* in Pauline Writings and especially, the fruit of the Spirit in Gal 5. Chapter 5 discusses the conclusions and implications.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to clarify the relation between the fullness of the Holy Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit, as well as to tear down the inhibition to search for the fullness of the Holy Spirit caused by the improper understanding of this topic.

Significance of Study

The significance of the study is that it should help to improve the spiritual life of any believer and awaken the desire to search for a deeper relationship with Christ and a Spirit-filled life.

Limitations

This thesis is not exhaustive but focuses primarily on the word “fruit” (Hebrew term, פֶּרִי and Greek term, καρπός).

Methodology

The methodology used in this particular study is interbiblical thematic study and it did not involve detailed exegetical work nor the study of historical context, literary gender, and other such background information.

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND: LITERAL AND METAPHORICAL

USES OF FRUIT IN THE BIBLE

Introduction

This chapter is dedicated to the background study of the literal and metaphorical uses of fruit in the OT and NT for a better understanding of the different properties of fruit and their implications in the spiritual life. In the OT, the Hebrew term פֶּרִי (fruit) and in the NT, the Greek term καρπός (fruit) have been examined and classified into four and three thematic groups, respectively.

Old Testament Background: Literal and Metaphorical Uses

The concept of fruit is significant in the OT. In its first chapter, God is portrayed as the creator of the whole universe. He is the One who created all kinds of plants with seeds and fruit as nutrition for mankind (Gen 1:29).¹ The fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, that stood in the midst of the Garden of Eden, played an essential role

¹ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, WBC 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 33: “Westermann (1:163–64) cites other texts to show that there was a widespread belief in antiquity that man and the animals were once vegetarian.” Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), para. 76: “Herbs and fruits must be his meat, including corn and all the products of the earth; these were allowed him, but (it should seem) not flesh, till after the flood, *ch.* ix. 3.”

because its fruit was the only one Adam and Eve were not allowed to eat (Gen 2:17; 3:3). After being seduced by the serpent, both tasted the forbidden fruit and sinned against God. Later, God expressed a blessing “which carries the connotation of being prosperous”² upon Israel that He would bless “the fruit of their trees” (Lev 26:4; Deut 7:13; 28:4, 11; 30:9; Pss 72:16; 107:37; Ezek 34:27; 36:30; 47:12; Amos 9:14; Sach 8:12; Mal 3:11) and “the fruit of their womb” (Deut 7:13; 28:4, 11; 30:9) if Israel would stay faithful to Him and walk in His commandments. Conversely, He would hold back the blessings and curse “the fruit of their trees” (Lev 26:20; Deut 28:18, 33, 42, 51; Pss 105:35; 107:34; Jer 11:16; Ezek 25:4) and “the fruit of their womb” (Deut 28:18, 51, 53; Pss 21:11; Isa 13:18) if they would go after other gods.

Throughout the OT, there are 119 passages where the Hebrew term פֶּרִי (fruit)³ appears and they can be classified into four thematic groups. The largest group with fifty-nine occurrences is *fruit of plants* where all kinds of fruit related to trees, the ground, and the land is meant. The second largest group with twenty-two occurrences is *fruit of persons or nations* where the concept of fruit is related to an individual person like the bride or husband in the Song of Solomon (Song 2:3; 4:13, 16; 8:11, 12), to a whole nation like Israel (Ezek 17:8, 9; 19:12, 14; Hos 10:1), or one of the twelve tribes like Judah (2 Kgs 19:30; Isa 37:31; Jer 11:16) or Ephraim (Hos 9:16; 14:9). The third group with twenty-one occurrences is related to the *fruit of acts* where one can distinguish between the fruit of the Spirit and the fruit of flesh according to good and evil deeds. The last and

² Duane L. Christensen, *Deuteronomy 21:10-34:12*, WBC 6B (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 672.

³ James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1997), s.v. “פֶּרִי.”

smallest group is the *fruit of the womb* with seventeen occurrences where it is related to the offspring of man (13x) or animal (4x).

Fruit of Plants

In the largest category—fruit of plants—the concept of fruit is mentioned as “fruit of the trees” twenty-four times (Gen 1:11 [2x], 12, 29; 3:2, 3, 6; Exod 10:15; Lev 19:23, 24, 25; 23:40; 26:4, 20; 27:30; Neh 10:36, 38; Ps 148:9; Prov 27:18; Eccl 2:5; Ezek 36:30; 47:12[2x]; Joel 2:22); “fruit of the ground” fourteen times (Gen 4:3; Deut 7:13; 26:2, 10; 28:4, 11, 18, 33, 42, 51; 30:9; Ps 105:35; Jer 11:16; Mal 3:11); “fruit of the land” eleven times (Lev 25:19; Num 13:20, 26, 27; Deut 1:25; Neh 9:36; Pss 72:16; 107:34, 37; Isa 4:2; Jer 2:7); “fruit of the vineyard” (2 Kgs 19:29; Isa 37:30; 65:21) and “fruit of the garden” (Jer 29:5, 28; Amos 9:14) three times respectively; and “fruit of the vine” (Sach 8:12), “fruit of the field” (Ezek 34:27), “fruit of the mountain of Israel” (Ezek 36:8), and “fruit” (Ezek 25:4) one time each.

In Gen 4, one is confronted with Cain who disobeyed God’s instructions and brought the fruit of the ground instead of an animal sacrifice as an offering to the Lord.⁴ Moreover, God had no regard for Cain’s offering (Gen 4:3-5).

⁴ John Walton, *Genesis*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), Accordance electronic ed., 262. The traditional understanding of the unacceptable offering of Cain is due to his sacrifice without blood; even in the last decades, no major Evangelical commentary about Genesis endorses it. Cain’s *offering* as well as Abel’s is described with the same term תְּבִיאָה, which can be a grain offering (Lev 2:1-7; 6:12-14; Num 15:1-16) as well as an animal offering (1 Sam 2:17). The fact that by faith, Abel offered an acceptable sacrifice to God and was commended as righteous (Heb 11:4) and because without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins (Heb 9:22), it is sustained that Cain disobeyed the prescribed sacrifice by God.

When Israel entered the promised land, God gave them instructions on how to proceed with its acquisition. They should consider any tree they would plant during the first three years as forbidden to eat. At the fourth year, the fruit of the trees should be holy and dedicated to God as a praise offering. In the fifth year, the Israelites were allowed to eat the fruit of the trees they planted, and God promised them to increase their yield if they would follow His instructions (Lev 19:23-25). “First fruits” (Deut 26:2, 10; Neh 10:35) and “contributions for priests” (Neh 10:37)⁵ were given as offerings to the Lord; the fruit of the trees and the fruit of the ground also played an important role in Israel’s worship.

In Deut 28, God promised the Israelites to set them above all nations and make them abound in prosperity if they would obey the voice of God and keep His commandments faithfully (vv. 1-2). God promised to open the heavenly treasures in order to give rain to the land in its season and to bless all the work of their hands (v. 12). But the blessing was not restricted to the fruit of the ground but also valid to “the fruit of the womb” and to “the fruit of the cattle” (vv. 4, 11). Conversely, God warned the Israelites with several curses if they would not follow His commandments carefully (v. 15). Cursed would be “the fruit of the ground” and “the fruit of the womb” (v. 18). These curses would be executed by a nation that would eat up “the fruit of the ground” (v. 33) and locusts that would consume all the trees and “the fruits of the ground” (v. 42). A nation

⁵ Knute Larson and Kathy Dahlen, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*, Holman Old Testament Commentary 9 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2005), 245. This encompassed everything else specified before, yet more. It included those items made by man—ground meal, wine, and oil—things that had to be processed and refined. These were not the first of the harvest but the best.

from afar would eat “the fruit of your cattle” and “the fruit of the ground” until Israel would be destroyed (v. 51), and the same nation would besiege Israel throughout the land, and Israel would eat the fruit of their womb, the flesh of sons and daughters (vv. 52-53).⁶ These last verses describe a curse of unspeakable horror. Father and mother would eat their own sons and daughters because of extreme famine. This awful prophecy found a threefold fulfillment: in the siege of Samaria by the Syrians (Arameans under Benhadad II, approximately 850 BC;⁷ 2 Kgs 6:26-29); in the siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar (Lam 2:20; 4:10), and in the siege of Jerusalem by the Roman emperor, Titus in 70 AD.⁸

Fruit of the Womb

The first time fruit of the womb appears in the OT is in the story of Jacob and the unfruitful Rachel (Gen 30). Rachel in her envy of not being able to give Jacob a descendant as Lea, her fruitful sister did, requested from Jacob to give her children or she would die (v. 1). Jacob became very angry with Rachel’s request and said, “Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you ‘the fruit of the womb’” (v. 2, ESV)?⁹ Jacob was conscious that God is the one that has the power to give him an offspring and to make Rachel’s womb fruitful or withhold the blessing of a descendant by leaving her

⁶ Cf. Lev 26:29; Jer 19:9; and Ezek 5:10.

⁷ Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, NAC 4 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 367.

⁸ Francis D. Nichol, ed., *Matthew to John*, Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary 5, rev. ed. (Washington: Review & Herald, 1976–1980), 1055.

⁹ All quotations are from the ESV.

womb unfruitful.¹⁰ Jacob had no influence upon the fruitfulness of Rachel because it was not in his power.

In Deut 28, as noted, one can see that it is God who blesses the fruit of the ground as well the fruit of the womb either of man or animal (vv. 4, 11) or withholds the blessing by cursing the fruit of the womb or closing the womb (vv. 18, 51, 53). As God is merciful and gracious and forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin (Exod 34:6-7), He promises to withdraw the curses and bless the repentant Israel again when they would obey the voice of the Lord, making them abundantly prosperous in all the work of their hands and would bless the fruit of their womb, fruit of their cattle, and fruit of their ground (Deut 30:8-9).

There are not only a warning or curse messages against Israel but in God's judgment over Babylon in Isa 13, there is also a curse prophecy over a pagan kingdom. Through the prophet Isaiah, God prophesied that Babylon—the glory of kingdoms with all its splendor and pom—would be destroyed and razed to the ground by the Medes like Sodom and Gomorrah centuries earlier (vv. 17, 19). The bows of the Medes would strike down the young men, and they would have no mercy on the fruit of the womb nor pity for the little children (v. 18). This prophecy found its fulfillment when “the Medes as the

¹⁰ In Isa 66:9, the Lord declares that He is the one who brings forth birth and the one who shuts the womb. Even Sarai recognized that it was the Lord that kept her from bearing children (Gen 16:2). Abraham prayed for the household of Abimelech so they may bore children again because “the LORD had closed all the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife” (Gen 20:18).

major partner in Cyrus's Medo-Persian kingdom, were destined to conquer Babylon under Cyrus in 539 BC."¹¹

In the book of Micah, the sinner asks himself the question, "With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high?" (Mic 6:6). The repentant sinner is not sure with what sacrifices God would be pleased to forgive his transgressions. If he should come with burnt offerings, with calves of one year, thousand rams, ten thousand rivers of oil, or even give his firstborn, "the fruit of his body"¹² for his transgressions and the sins of his soul (v. 7)? To give the firstborn as a sacrifice was a pagan custom common in ancient times and even though it was forbidden to the Israelites, some of their kings practiced it (Lev 18:21; 20:2; 2 Kgs 3:27; 16:3; 23:10; Pss 106:37, 38; Jer 7:31). There is no need to sacrifice thousands of animals or even firstborns because an acceptable sacrifice for God "is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart" (Ps 51:17).¹³ What the Lord requires is to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with Him (Mic 6:8).

For God, sacrifices of babies could never please Him nor bring forgiveness for sins nor are acceptable to Him because as creator and redeemer of man, He is the life

¹¹ Derek Kidner, *Isaiah*, New Bible Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), Accordance electronic ed., 641.

¹² The word "body" in this verse is the same Hebrew word *בֶּטֶן* translated in other verses as "womb."

¹³ Gerald H. Wilson, *Psalms 1*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 777: "The object is not the absolute rejection of all substitutionary animal sacrifice. The psalmist instead intends to demonstrate forcefully what sacrifice is really about and what gives true efficacy to the outward, ritual acts."

giver of every living creature.¹⁴ Apart from being the life giver, children are seen as a heritage from the Lord and the fruit of the womb as a reward from Him (Ps 127:3). An offspring was considered as a gift from God and played an important role in the promises of the coming Messiah. The Lord swore to King David an oath that He would set upon his throne “the fruit of your body”¹⁵ (Ps 132:11). Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, filled with the Holy Spirit prophesied about the coming Messiah, Jesus, saying that God would raise up a horn of salvation for Israel in the house of His servant David, as He prophesied through His prophets in the past (Luke 1:68-70). Peter in his Pentecost speech (Acts 2:29-36) makes another reference to this promise given to David and affirms that the promised descendant is Jesus Christ who was crucified but had been resurrected and exalted at the right hand of God (vv. 31-33).

Fruit of Persons or Nations

When King Sennacherib of Assyria came around the year 701 BC¹⁶ against all the fortified cities of Judah and seized them (2 Kgs 18:13), the Judean King Hezekiah

¹⁴ In Genesis, the creation of this world is narrated especially that God has created man from the dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life (Gen 2:7). There are many other texts apart of the Creation story where God is recognized as the life giver. “The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life” (Job 33:4). God “Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things” (Acts 17:25). “You [Lord] give life to all of them” (Neh 9:6). God “gives life to all things” (1 Tim 6:13).

¹⁵ The word “body” in this verse is the same Hebrew word **בֶּטֶן** translated in other verses as “womb.”

¹⁶ Gary Inrig, *I & II Kings*, Holman Old Testament Commentary 7 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 315: “Sennacherib of Assyria, who succeeded Sargon in 705 B.C., had no intention of allowing Hezekiah’s rebellion to go unpunished. That would encourage other vassals to attempt the same. At the same time he intended to attack Egypt, and he could not afford to have a hostile state at his rear. So in 701 B.C. he attacked all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them.”

searched for help through the prophet Isaiah. When Hezekiah went to the temple to pray, God answered him through Isaiah, giving him a sign of divine protection. The sign was that they should eat for two years the fruit that grow on their own and in the third year sow and reap, plant vineyards, and eat their fruit (2 Kgs 19:29; Isa 37:30). “And the surviving remnant of ‘the house of Judah’ shall again take root downward and bear ‘fruit’ upward. For out of Jerusalem shall go a remnant, and out of Mount Zion a band of survivors. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this” (2 Kgs 19:30-31; Isa 37:31-32). Even if there was an extensive devastation as a result of the Assyrian invasion in Judah, there remained a remnant and the king of Assyria could not conquer Jerusalem because the angel of the Lord went out and struck 185,000 (2 Kgs 19:35) of the Assyrian soldiers and Sennacherib, king of Assyria was forced to return home to Nineveh (2 Kgs 19:32-36; Isa 37:33-37). To this small remnant of Judah was given a message of hope and courage, that even though they are little, they would grow again and multiply, “the surviving remnant of the house of Judah shall again take root downward and bear ‘fruit’ upward” (2 Kgs 19:30; Isa 37:31).

Because of the evil of the house of Israel and the house of Judah by breaking the covenant with God and offering incense to Baal, God pronounced doom against them and their downfall. Yes, even though the Lord planted them and called them “a green olive tree, beautiful with good fruit” (Jer 11:16), He prophesized their destruction using the roar of a great tempest as symbol which would burn down the olive tree and its branches, representing the ruin of the house of Israel and the house of Judah (v. 17).

In the Book of Amos, there is another judgment over the house of Israel and the house of Judah because Moab burned to lime the bones of the king of Edom (Amos 2:1), Judah rejected the law of the Lord and had not kept His statutes (v. 4), Israel was unjust

by selling the righteous person for silver, and committing all kinds of cruelty, incest, and idolatry (vv. 6-8). After detailing all the evil, God started to enumerate some of the good deeds He made for the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. That it was He who destroyed the strong Amorites before them by destroying the fruit above and the roots beneath the Amorites (v. 9) and brought them up from the land of Egypt so they might possess the land of the Amorites (v. 10). It was the Lord who led them for forty years in the wilderness (v. 10) and raised up prophets out of their sons (v. 11). But even though God treated Israel and Judah so well and cared for them, they had turned their backs to Him and went after other gods and injustice.

Another curse message against the house of Israel is found in Ezek 17 in the form of a riddle and a parable of two eagles and a vine. The two eagles represent the king of Babylon and the pharaoh of Egypt while the vine, the house of Israel. The king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and took its king and princes away and brought them to Babylon and made a covenant with Zedekiah, king of Judah (2 Kgs 24:17), putting him under an oath (Ezek 17:12-13).

However, Zedekiah instead of keeping the covenant with the Babylonian king, rebelled against him by sending his envoys to the pharaoh of Egypt asking for their assistance with horses and many troops (vv. 14-15). In this breach of trust and apostasy to the king of Babylon, the Lord accuses Israel of having “been planted on good soil by abundant waters, that it [Israel] might produce branches and bear fruit and become a noble vine” (Ezek 17:8). Israel would have been prosperous if it would have remained loyal to the king of Babylon but as they were disloyal by joining the Egyptians, Israel would not thrive. Babylon would “pull up its roots and cut off its ‘fruit’” (v. 9) so that the whole vine with its sprouting leaves withers.

However, there is a message of hope of the future restoration of Israel in the last verses of the chapter. The Lord says, “I myself will take a sprig from the lofty top of the cedar and will set it out. I will break off from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one, and I myself will plant it on a high and lofty mountain. On the mountain height of Israel will I plant it, that it may bear branches and produce fruit and become a noble cedar. And under it will dwell every kind of bird; in the shade of its branches birds of every sort will nest” (vv. 22-23). The tender twig which God will plant on the mountain height of Israel is a prediction concerning the Messiah¹⁷ and His fruitful harvest as a result of His sacrifice. Nevertheless, even though there is the promise of the future Messiah, the curse message over the house of Israel is repeated again in the lament for the princes of Israel two chapters later in Ezek 19 because of Israel’s idolatry and unfaithfulness. “But the vine was plucked up in fury, cast down to the ground; the east wind dried up its fruit; they were stripped off and withered. As for its strong stem, fire consumed it. . . . And fire has gone out from the stem of its shoots, has consumed its fruit, so that there remains in it no strong stem, no scepter for ruling. This is a lamentation and has become a lamentation” (Ezek 19:12, 14). These verses describe the captivity and deportation of Jehoiachin and a part of the people to Babylon in the eighth year of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign “towards the end of 598 BC and lasted until February 597 BC”¹⁸ (2 Kgs 24:10-16)

¹⁷ Lamar E. Cooper Sr., *Ezekiel*, NAC 17 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 183: “The words translated ‘shoot’ in vv. 4 and 22 are both derivatives of a verb meaning ‘to suck’ (Job 3:12; Song 8:1; Isa 60:16). Another derivative (*yōnēq*) is used of the messianic figure in Isa 53:2, where it is translated as ‘tender shoot.’”

¹⁸ John J. Bimson, *1 and 2 Kings*, New Bible Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 383.

and Zedekiah's revolt from Nebuchadnezzar causing the conquest and exile of the Israelites to Babylon in July 587 BC¹⁹ (2 Kgs 25:1-17).

In the Book of Hosea, there are different curse messages and judgments against Israel and Ephraim. "Israel is a luxuriant vine that yields its 'fruit.' The more his 'fruit' increased, the more altars he built" (10:1). Israel had fallen very deeply in depravity and idolatry so there was only hostility in the house of God (9:8-9). The punishment for their iniquities and idolatry came through God's curse to struck Ephraim so they would become extinct. God would dry up its root so "they shall bear no fruit" and "even though they give birth, I will put their beloved children to death" (9:16).

However, God gave Israel and Ephraim a message of hope that if they would repent and return to the Lord (14:1), He would restore their kingdoms. While Israel would be restored, "blossom like the lily" (v. 5), attain to "beauty like an olive tree" (v. 6), and take root and have the fragrance like the cedars of Lebanon (vv. 5, 6) because of their repentance, Ephraim would be extinguished because of their lack of repentance and their idolatry. God expressed a lament over Ephraim asking them, "What have I to do with idols?" (v. 9) emphasizing that the northern kingdom had not given up their gods. Even in this situation, God tried to win the house of Ephraim back by expressing His care and love for them by saying that He is the one who answers their prayers and cares for them (v. 9): "I am like an evergreen cypress; from me comes your fruit" (v. 9). There is a noteworthy contrast between the dried-up root of Ephraim (9:16) and God as an "evergreen cypress" (14:9) who is the fruit giver. Notwithstanding that God was the

¹⁹ Ibid., 384.

Provider for the fruit of Ephraim and the house of Israel, Ephraim hardened their hearts and did not repent.

Jeremiah's prayer (Jer 12) describes how the prophet struggles with his conviction of a righteous God and the prosperity of the wicked while he himself and the house of Israel suffer injustice. "Why is it that the Lord planted the wicked and they took root, grew, and produced 'fruit' (v. 2), whereas he and Israel suffer calamity and injustice (vv. 4-6)?" God answers Jeremiah clarifying the situation by telling him that He will displace the wicked and bring Israel to their inheritance (vv. 14-15). Then will the wicked learn from God's people to swear by His name and be build up in the midst of Israel. However, if they will not listen, then God will uproot the wicked and destroy them (vv. 16-17). God tries to save the wicked by giving them a time of grace and several opportunities, so they may turn back from their idle ways. Since "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Ezek 33:11), says the Lord.

In Jer 17, there is a contrast between the man whose trust is in humans (v. 5) and the man whose trust is in the Lord (v. 7). The one who trusts in mankind and makes flesh his strength and whose heart turns against the Lord (v. 5) should be cursed and will be like a bush in the desert and live in stony wilderness in an uninhabited salt land (v. 6). However, "blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD. He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it

does not cease to bear fruit” (vv. 7-8). The man whose trust is in the Lord will not cease to bear fruit despite the difficulties and hard times of life.²⁰

An equal contrast between the righteous and the wicked is seen in Ps 1 where the righteous man is compared with “a tree planted by streams of water that yields its ‘fruit’ in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers” (v. 3). Those planted by streams of water—or expressed in other words, who remain connected to the Lord—will prosper in everything and bear many fruit independently even through hard and severe times.

In Song of Solomon, there are five occurrences of the word “fruit” (Song 2:3; 4:13, 16; 8:11, 12). The bride compares her bridegroom to an apple tree under whose shadow she sits with great delight and whose fruit is sweet to her taste (Song 2:3). This tree provides both protection and pleasure to the bride. On the other hand, the bride is described as a locked garden where her “shoots are an orchard of pomegranates with all choicest ‘fruits’” (4:13) and with a garden fountain a well of living waters and flowing streams (v. 15). She desires that her “beloved comes into his garden and eat its choice fruits” (v. 16). And finally, in chap. 8, the bride is compared with a vineyard that brings forth its fruit (vv. 11-12).²¹

²⁰ The figure suggests a person who can endure life’s adversities without anxiety and is stable and productive. F. B. Huey Jr., *Jeremiah*, NAC 16 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1993), 173.

²¹ The bride renews her vows to her husband. She speaks of herself as the keeper of her own vineyard but she transfers these rights and privileges to her husband. Francis D. Nichol, ed., *I Chronicles to Song of Solomon*, Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary 3, rev. ed. (Washington: Review & Herald, 1976–1980), 1124.

Fruit of Acts

In this category, there is an amplitude of fruit like “the fruits of deeds” (Isa 3:10; Jer 17:10; 21:14; 32:19; Mic 7:13), “the fruits of the hands” (Prov 31:16, 31), “the fruits of the mouth” (Prov 12:14; 13:2; 18:20, 21), and other kinds of fruits related to God’s and human’s acts. In this category, it is noteworthy that God searches the mind and heart of every man (Jer 17:10) and will reward everyone “according to his ways, according to ‘the fruits of his doings’” (Jer 17:10; 32:19). Each person’s acts determine the future outcome. Not only because God searches hearts and ways to reward everyone according to his deeds but because every good decision taken and every good act performed will bring forth noble fruit. The same happens in a negative way with every bad decision or every evil act performed. The principle is very simple “for whatever one sows, that will he also reap” (Gal 6:7). So, one can conclude that there are two outcomes for all actions: life and blessing or death and curse (Deut 30:19). In Isa 3, where the judgment over Judah and Jerusalem is depicted and where Jerusalem has stumbled and Judah has fallen as they speak and act against the Lord, God gives a message of hope to the righteous, that it shall be well with him: “For he shall eat ‘the fruit of his deeds’” (Isa 3:10). But “woe to the wicked! It shall be ill with him, for what his hands have dealt out shall be done to him” (v. 11). “Every man reaps that which he himself has sown. The righteous sows good seed, which will bring forth a harvest of good.”²² The lesson man has to learn is “whatever we sow we will reap” and this principle is portrayed in a blessing message for the righteous and a curse message for the wicked (Isa 3:10-11). In the words of exhortation and

²² Francis D. Nichol, ed., *Isaiah to Malachi*, Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary 4, rev. ed. (Washington: Review & Herald, 1976–1980), 114.

judgment against the house of the king of Judah (Jer 21), God expresses through the prophet Jeremiah that He would punish the kingdom according to “the fruits of their deeds” (Jer 21:14). Since they performed injustice judgments (v. 12), God would kindle a fire which shall devour all that is around the city of Jerusalem. The same idea of judgment is found in Mic 7:13 where the land of the heathen would be desolated because of the fruit of their deeds when the Lord would judge Israel’s enemies (vv. 8, 10) and deliver His people from oppression.

There are not only warning messages and judgments against God’s people but also against God’s enemies. In Isa 10, one can find that God would judge and punish the arrogant king of Assyria because of “the fruit of the stout heart” and the high looks of the Assyrian king (Isa 10:12). The fruits of the arrogant heart of the Assyrian king were self-confidence, proudness, self-exaltation, megalomania, self-trust, etc. (vv. 13-15). Before God could punish Assyria for its pride and arrogance, He had a task to accomplish, that is, bringing judgment upon Zion and Jerusalem (v. 12). Assyria was to be the tool God would use to perform judgment over His people.²³ God’s purpose for His people is not to destroy them when they apostatize but to lead them to repentance and to bring them back to love and worship Him. This is seen once again in the words of redemption for Israel in Isa 27. In v. 6, one can read about the future of Israel, “in the days to come Jacob will take root, Israel will blossom and sprout, and they will fill the whole world with ‘fruit.’” Nevertheless, to reach this purpose for Israel, God cannot strike nor slay them as He did with the heathen. He has to send them into exile (vv. 7-8). Referring here probably to the

²³ “ASSYRIA IS THE ‘rod’ that is held in God’s upraised hand (9:12, 17, 21; 10:4), and it is raised up to punish ‘a godless nation.’” John N. Oswalt, *Isaiah*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 161.

Babylonian exile, God declares that by this exile, the “guilt of Jacob will be atoned” and the “fruit of the removal of his sin” would be repentance and returning back to God by removing all the pagan altars Israel had built (v. 9). The exile God brought over Israel was the instrument He used to make Israel aware of its apostasy and to bring to the point of giving up the idle gods. The fruit of God’s grace and love led Israel to give up and remove its idolatry.

In the Book of Amos, one can find that Israel turned justice into poison and “the fruit of righteousness” into wormwood (Amos 6:12). Israel was called to be a light to the world and to reflect the character of God in their lives. Nonetheless, instead of defending justice and righteousness, they brought forth just bitterness and poison to themselves and to the surrounding nations. Because of their pride and ease, God punished Zion by declaring, “I will deliver up the city and all that is in it” (v. 8). There is a punishment over those who turn justice into poison and righteousness into unjustness. However, the righteous will eat “the fruit of his deeds” (Isa 3:10) and “there is a ‘reward’ (fruit)²⁴ for the righteous; Surely there is a God who judges on earth!” (Ps 58:11). These words of David express the hope and joy of the righteous when he sees the vengeance of God upon his enemies (v. 10). The righteous person does not try to execute judgment by himself but waits for the righteous judgment of God who will judge his enemies and deliver him from them. Yes, “the fruit of the righteous is a tree of life” (Prov 11:30). The righteous man is a blessing for others as his fruit, which consists of wise and honest words and actions.

²⁴ The word פְּרִי, which is translated as “fruit,” has been translated in this verse as “reward.”

Solomon, in the Book of Proverbs, affirms that when the words are used properly, “the fruit of the mouth” will satisfy man with good and fill his stomach (Prov 12:14; 18:20), and “the fruit of the lips” will satisfy man so that he will enjoy all good things (13:2; 18:20). “Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its ‘fruits’” (18:21). “Small as it is, the tongue can do vast harm. Used in harmony with the will of God to bless and to cheer or to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom, the tongue can do great good.”²⁵ Those who use their tongue to bless and encourage others are like the tree of life who gives life to those who eat the fruit.

In Prov 31:10-31, Lemuel’s mother (v. 1) describes the virtuous woman in the form of a skillful “acrostic of twenty-two verses beginning with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, a poetic form which suggests a complete exploration of its subject.”²⁶ The virtuous woman or the excellent wife is the one who considers a field and buys it and with the “fruit of her hands,” she plants a vineyard (v. 16). The virtuous woman invests her earnings by buying a fruitful field and working on it by planting a vineyard to obtain an even greater profit. She is wise because she produces new wealth by her good management and prevents any distress and necessity in hard times. “My fruit,” declares wisdom, “is better than gold, even fine gold, and my yield than choice silver” (Prov 8:19). A wise woman is worth much more than all a person could own even more than treasures of precious gold and a blessing for the whole family and especially for her husband. A woman who fears the Lord should be praised (Prov 31:30) because she alone

²⁵ Nichol, *I Chronicles to Song of Solomon*, 1009.

²⁶ John Goldingay, *Proverbs*, New Bible Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 606.

has true beauty and charm which is not deceitful nor in vain nor temporary. To the God-fearing woman should be given “the fruit of her hands” and her deeds should praise her in the city gates (v. 31). In the gates of the city where the judges sat to judge all inhabitants of the city, the fruit of the work of the virtuous woman would speak on her behalf and she would enjoy the fruit of her efforts and righteous deeds.

In Ps 104, God is praised as the Creator and especially for His welfare for all His works. “From your lofty abode you water the mountains; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of your work” (Ps 104:13). God satisfies the needs of all His creation. He provides the rain to moisten the hills and valleys so that every kind of growth can flourish and bring forth its fruit. The vegetation serves as living place, protection, and source of food for man and all kinds of animals. God is the life Giver, Sustainer, and Redeemer of all His creation. Without the care and blessing of the Lord, anything would flourish but everything would cease and lose its existence.

In contrast to “the fruit of wisdom,” which is better than gold and choice silver (Prov 8:19), those who reject God’s wisdom are delivered to eat “the fruits of their own way” (Prov 1:31). Solomon describes the calamities of “their own ways” with terror strikes, distress, and anguish (vv. 26-27). Israel by itself had “eaten the fruit of lies” (Hos 10:13) because they trusted in their own ways and were self-confident and they self-trust. The consequences of their self-confidence and self-trust were plowing iniquity and reaping injustice. The curse which should come over those who reject God’s wisdom are war, destroyed cities, and cutting off of the king of Israel (vv. 13-15). In Jer 6:19, God expresses a judgment over Judah and would bring disaster upon the people of Jerusalem as a result of “the fruit of their thoughts.” Judah fooled themselves by rejecting God’s

Law, thinking she could substitute rituals for obedience.²⁷ Not only behaviors or ways could be malignant but also thoughts. It is more so as thoughts determine actions. Jesus states, “The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks” (Luke 6:45).²⁸ The outcome of Judah’s thoughts was rebellion against God by not paying attention to His word and rejecting His law (v. 19).

New Testament Background: Literal and Metaphorical Uses

The concept of fruit is not only found in the OT but also in the NT. There are sixty-six occurrences of the word καρπός²⁹ in the NT and in contrast with the OT, where פֶּרִי can be categorized into four thematic groups, in the NT καρπός can only be classified into three of these thematic groups. The category of fruit of persons or nation is not alluded to in the NT but the other three categories of fruit of plants, fruit of acts, and fruit of the womb appear in the same order of occurrences like in the OT. The largest group as in the OT is fruit of plants with forty-four occurrences of the word καρπός. Following this group, fruits of acts is mentioned twenty times and finally fruit of the womb, twice.

²⁷ Charles H. Dyer, *Jeremiah*, Bible Knowledge Commentary (Wheaton: Victor, 1985), Accordance electronic ed., 1:1138.

²⁸ Johan Lust, Erik Eynikel, and Katrin Hauspie, “καρδία, -ας,” *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint* para. 15111; James Strong, “καρδία,” *Strong’s Greek Dictionary of the New Testament* para. 2604. The heart can be understood as the faculty of thought or understanding (Job 17:4) and its figurative meaning are thoughts or feelings.

²⁹ Friedrich Hauck, “Καρπός, Ἄκαρπος, Καρποφορέω,” *TDNT* 614.

Fruit of the Womb

Even though there are only two references of the fruit of the womb but they are of great significance as they deal with Jesus's birth and resurrection. The first mention occurred as Mary, being pregnant with Jesus, went to a city in the Judean countryside to visit her relative Elizabeth who was expecting her son, John the Baptist. In the moment Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the child leaped in her womb and Elizabeth being filled with the Holy Spirit exclaimed with a loud voice, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the 'fruit of your womb!' And why is this granted to me that the mother of 'my Lord' should come to me?" (Luke 1:42-43). Elizabeth recognized that the child in Mary's womb was not a common child but the Lord and Savior of the whole world and her personal Savior as well by making the proclamation "my Lord."³⁰ "Here 'Lord' is clearly a Christological title and refers to Jesus."³¹ The blessed fruit of Mary's womb became a blessing for all people and all nations would call him blessed (Ps 72:17).

The second mention is pronounced by Peter in his Pentecostal speech making reference to Christ as the resurrected one. In his speech, Peter reminded the audience that the patriarch David being a prophet "and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses" (Acts 2:30-32).

³⁰ I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), Accordance electronic ed., 81: "The use of κύριος in narrative to refer to Jesus is distinctive of Luke" (Luke 1:76; 2:11; 7:13, 19; 10:1, 39, 41; 11:39; 12:42; 13:15; 17:5; 18:6; 19:8, 31, 34; 20:42, 44; 22:61; 24:3, 34).

³¹ Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, NAC 24 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 90.

The one through whom all people would be blessed was promised to David with an oath and came to be fulfilled during Christ's birth and resurrection.

By Jesus's birth, God overlaid humanity and became one like humans and by His substitutionary death at the cross, He became a blessing for all people. On the other hand, by Jesus's resurrection and enthronement in the heavenly sanctuary, all believers are blessed by His intercessory work as high priest and advocate (Heb 4:14-16; 1 John 2:1). The promise given to Abraham in Gen 22:18 "in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" found the complete fulfillment in Christ (Gal 3:16).

Fruit of Plants

One of the most important lessons Jesus taught is that every tree is known by its fruit (Matt 12:33). A good or healthy tree does not bear bad fruit nor a bad or diseased tree, good fruit (Matt 7:17-19; Luke 6:43-44). Or in other words, "figs are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush" (Luke 6:44). Jesus used this image of the tree to compare the fruit of the tree with the deeds of the human heart. He enforced this teaching with the words: "The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks" (Luke 6:45). Jesus warned also about false prophets, who outwardly appear like sheep but inwardly are ravenous wolves. False prophets will be recognized by their fruit (Matt 7:16, 20). John the Baptist urged his audience to bear the fruit of repentance (Matt 3:8; Luke 3:8) because the axe is laid to the root of the tree that does not bear good fruit to be cut down and thrown into the fire (Matt 3:10; 7:19; Luke 3:9). These examples show that not only good words and good deeds

come out of a repentant heart but it also reveals the destination of an evil-oriented person, that is, eternal destruction.³²

In the Parable of the Sower (Matt 13, Mark 4, Luke 8), the seeds are sown on four different soils. Three of the grounds were unprosperous and only one produced a hundredfold time fruit. The seeds that fell along the path were devoured by the birds. Those that fell on rocky ground sprouted immediately but because they had no deep roots, they were scorched by the hot sun. In the third unprosperous ground, fruit is mentioned specifically. It is the soil where the seeds fell among thorns and the thorns choked the seed, so it yielded no fruit (Mark 4:7). However, the good ground which is the prosperous ground produced fruit up to a hundredfold (Matt 13:8, Mark 4:8, Luke 8:8). In this parable, Jesus compares the seed with the “word of the kingdom” and the soil with the human heart (Matt 13:19). In this parable, the thorns among the word of God is sown and does not bear any fruit, which represents the cares, riches, and pleasures of life (Luke 8:14). Both challenges and gratifications of life have a negative impact over the growing process of God’s word in the human heart, so that faith remain fruitless. On the other hand, the good and fruitful heart is where the word of the kingdom is understood and held fast so it can produce fruit with patience (Luke 8:15). This is the heart where the word of God produces fruit and faith is multiplied a hundredfold.

Jesus told the Parable of the Fig Tree (Luke 13:6-9) where a man was seeking fruit for three years without any success. The man was determined to cut down the fig

³² Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 60: “The tree that lacks such fruit will be totally destroyed.” Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC 22 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 78: “The fire, as v. 12 makes clear, stands for eternal punishment.”

tree but the vinedresser asked him for extra time to give special care and treatment to the fig tree to see if it would give some fruit. They agreed to cut down the fig tree after this special care if it would not bear any fruit. Once again, Jesus taught that any tree that does not bear any fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. What this parable makes special is, that the vinedresser, Jesus Himself,³³ pleads with the Father for extra time to give special care to the unfruitful heart of man in the hope that man would repent and bring forth fruit of repentance so he can be spared from being cut down and thrown into the fire. There is another incident with Jesus and a fig tree, while He was coming from Bethany to Jerusalem. Being hungry and coming to the fig tree and finding only leaves, Jesus cursed the fig tree because of its unfruitfulness and the tree withered at once (Matt 21:18-19; Mark 11:12-14). In this incident, Jesus executed the final penalty that will one day befall every fruitless tree.³⁴

In the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen narrated in the three Synoptic Gospels (Matt 21:33-43; Mark 12:1-11; Luke 20:9-18), the fruits of the vineyard were kept by the tenants and not given to the master. The wicked tenants not only rejected to give the fruit to the master to whom they belong but they also beat one of his servants; killed another; and another, they stoned. Finally, the master sent his own son thinking that the tenants would respect his son but they took the son and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. Jesus ends the parable with the words: “The kingdom of God will be taken away

³³ Adam Clarke, *Luke*, vol. 5 of *Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Altamonte Springs: OakTree Software, 2004), para. 39270: “The vine-dresser—the Lord Jesus, for God hath committed all judgment to the Son, John v. 22.”

³⁴ In the parable about the unfruitful fig tree, the owner wanted to cut it down (Luke 13:6-9) and in Luke 3:9, Jesus said that every tree that does not bear good fruit is to be cut down and thrown into the fire.

from you and given to a people producing its ‘fruits’” (Matt 21:43). The chief priests and the Pharisees that heard the parable understood that they represent the wicked tenants. That is the reason why they sought to lay hands on Jesus at that very hour, for He had told this parable against them (vv. 45-46). This parable found its ultimate fulfillment with Jesus’s death outside Jerusalem. With the stoning of Steven (Acts 7), the prophetic time of seventy weeks determined for the people of Israel and the holy city (Dan 9:24-27) came to its end.³⁵ This is because the chosen people of God had rejected to bring forth the righteous fruit of His kingdom and have nailed Jesus at the cross of Calvary. Since they killed Jesus, the Son of God, the heavenly kingdom has been taken away from them and given to all people who produce its fruit.³⁶

After the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem in the Temple, some Greeks sought to see Him. In this context Jesus said, “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much ‘fruit’” (John 12:24). In the same way as a grain needs to *die* by being planted into the ground, to be able to bring forth fruit, man has to *die* by denying himself and taking up his cross to bring forth a fruitful life. “Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it

³⁵ Nichol, *Isaiah to Malachi*, 854-855: “This week, the 70th, began in A.D. 27 with the opening of Christ’s public ministry at the time of His baptism. It extended beyond the crucifixion ‘in the midst of the week,’ in the spring of A.D. 31, to the rejection of the Jews as the covenant people in the autumn of A.D. 34 (490 years after 457 B.C. is A.D. 34). The ‘vineyard’ was then ‘let out . . . unto other husbandmen’ (Matt 21:41; cf. Isa 5:1-7).”

³⁶ R. T. France, *Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC 1 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 313: “This is not the Gentiles as such (that would require the plural *ethnesin*, not the singular *ethnei*), but a people of God derived from all nations, Jew and Gentile, who now, as 1 Pet 2:9 makes clear, constitute the ‘holy nation, God’s own people’, which was Israel’s prerogative according to Exodus 19:5-6.”

for eternal life” (John 12:25). As long as one clings to egoism and personal desires, the heart cannot be changed and bring forth the fruit of the Spirit like love, patience, kindness, and goodness, which are mentioned in Gal 5. Because the fruit of the Spirit is life, while the work of the flesh is death.

The parable about fruit in the teachings of Jesus that is par excellence is the Parable of Jesus, the True Vine. In this parable, Jesus declares that He is the true vine, His Father is the vinedresser, and the people are the branches (John 15:1-2).³⁷ Every branch that does not bear fruit, the Father will take away and throw into the fire (vv. 2, 6). The only way to bear fruit is to abide in Christ because apart from the Source of life, one is not able to improve any kind of fruit (vv. 4-5). Nonetheless, all branches that are connected to Jesus and bear fruit, the Father will prune so they may bear even more fruit (v. 2). The ultimate purpose of bearing much fruit is to glorify the Father and to be Jesus’s disciple to the world (v. 8). This parable teaches that (a) people by themselves are not able to produce nor improve any fruit and that to be fruitful, people should depend on God. (b) Jesus is the One who produces the fruit in a person’s life. Through an active and vivid connection with the Savior, shown in a personal relationship with Him, people are able to bear fruit. (c) God the Father takes care of humans by purifying and sanctifying their lives in order to bear more fruit, like how the vinedresser cleans, trims, and cuts back the vine to generate more and greater fruit. It is God who multiplies the fruit in a person’s life through His care and welfare. (d) There is no permanent place for those who

³⁷ B. W. Johnson, *The People’s New Testament* (Altamonte Springs: OakTree Software, 1999), Accordance electronic ed., para. 2812: “In the Old Testament the Vine is often used as the type of Israel, planted and tended by the Almighty as the husbandman. See Isa 5:1; Ps 80; Jer 2:21. Israel, however, had proved a wild and fruitless Vine. Instead of it, therefore, Christ had now been planted by the Father as the True Vine.”

claim to be connected to Jesus, the True Vine, but bear no fruit. Just being connected to Jesus does not guarantee a part with Him. Even more, those who do not bear fruit are just consuming the sap and squandering the power of the vine. For this reason, every branch that is fruitless is cut down and thrown into the fire. And (e) bearing fruit is a distinguishing sign of every disciple connected to Christ with the purpose of glorifying the Father and serving and blessing fellow human beings. As Jesus said, “By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35). And love is mentioned by Paul as one of the qualities of the “fruit of the Spirit” (Gal 5:22).

As seen above, all the parables and teachings of Jesus have a metaphorical use of fruit. Other NT books use the literal meaning of fruit to present some spiritual reality. Paul, defending his rights as an apostle, asks the Corinthians: “Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its ‘fruits’” (1 Cor 9:7)? The purpose of this question is to defend the right of any preacher of the Gospel to receive his living by the Gospel (vv. 13-14),³⁸ even Paul affirms not having made use of any of the rights that any apostle or preacher of the Gospel should have (vv. 15, 18). To Timothy, Paul writes about a good soldier of Jesus Christ using three illustrations. He encourages Timothy to share in suffering the Gospel as a good soldier knowing that any soldier does not get entangled in the affairs of life in order to please the one who enlisted him (2 Tim 2:3-5). The second illustration is about an athlete who is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules (v. 5).

³⁸ Craig L. Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 175: In vv. 13-14, Paul continues providing the final two arguments in defense of his right to receive remuneration: “the analogy of priests and Levites in the Jewish temple (cf. Num. 18:8–31) and the express words of Jesus during his lifetime (Luke 10:7b).”

Then, he continues using as third illustration: “the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops” (v. 6). The farmer has the right and the privilege to eat from the first fruit of his hard labor. In these illustrations, Paul emphasizes his advice of being a good soldier by the general principle of a single-minded and military-task oriented soldier, the importance of sticking to the rules of an athlete, and the reward of a hard-working farmer.

James, writing about the importance of being patient in suffering until the coming of the Lord, uses as metaphor the farmer who “waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains” (Jas 5:7). The harvest has to mature. In the same way as the farmer cannot accelerate the process of maturing the crop but has to be patient until the harvest is ready to be reaped, believers should be patient and establish their hearts until the coming of the Lord (v. 8). In the context of the power of the prayer of faith for a suffering person (5:13-20), James mentions Elijah who was a man with a nature like everyone and prayed that it might not rain. For three and a half years, no rain fell and after he prayed again “heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its ‘fruit’” (v. 18). James cites an OT prophet in order to illustrate the truth that “the prayer of a righteous person has great power” (v. 16). Using the example of Elijah’s powerful prayers who was of the same nature and with the same limitations as everyone, James assures that any righteous person can offer an effective prayer in behalf of someone who is suffering and needs help.

In the last two chapters of the Book of Revelation, John portrays the New Heaven and the New Earth with the New Jerusalem. He describes the New City with the river that contains the water of life and on both side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit (Rev 22:2). The first time one can come across the tree of life is in the

Garden Eden where it stood in the midst of it (Gen 2:9) and provided longevity to Adam and Eve (Gen 3:22). After Adam and Eve sinned, they were sent out of the Garden of Eden and the entrance to the tree of life was refused to them and to all humanity by “the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life” (v. 24). It seems that with the Flood, the Garden of Eden and the Tree of Life were removed from the earth³⁹ and will be restored in the New Jerusalem to provide healing to the nations through the fruit it yields every month (Rev 22:2).⁴⁰ This tree and its fruit are real which will offer healing and longevity to the saved in the New Jerusalem.

Fruit of Acts

Jesus’s warning about false prophets (Matt 7:15) gives an advice not to let oneself be dazzled by their appearance, as they appear like sheep but inwardly are ravenous wolves. Instead of testing a prophet’s ministry by his appearance, people should test it by

³⁹ Ellen G. White, *Maranatha* (Silver Spring: Ellen G. White Estate, 2017), 354: “The Garden of Eden remained upon the earth long after man had become an outcast from its pleasant paths. The fallen race were long permitted to gaze upon the home of innocence, their entrance barred only by the watching angels. At the cherubim-guarded gate of Paradise the divine glory was revealed. Hither came Adam and his sons to worship God. Here they renewed their vows of obedience to that law the transgression of which had banished them from Eden. When the tide of iniquity overspread the world, and the wickedness of men determined their destruction by a flood of waters, the hand that had planted Eden withdrew it from the earth. But in the final restitution, when there shall be ‘a new heaven and a new earth’ (Revelation 21:1), it is to be restored more gloriously adorned than at the beginning.”

⁴⁰ Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 2nd ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2009), 604: “This is an allusion to the Garden of Eden with the tree of life on the bank of the river flowing from the garden (Gen. 2:9). To eat from the tree of life in Eden meant ‘to live forever’ (Gen. 3:22). It was after Adam and Eve were banished from the garden that they were forbidden to approach the tree of life and eat from it (Gen. 3:23-24). The tree of life in the new Jerusalem symbolizes eternal life free of death and suffering. On the new earth—the restored garden of Eden—the tree of life is no longer forbidden; it is located in the midst of the new Jerusalem, and all the redeemed have access to it. Once again human beings will share in the gift of eternal life that Adam enjoyed before sin entered the world.”

his fruits (Matt 7:16, 20). In the same way as a healthy tree bears good fruit and a diseased tree bad fruit and a healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit nor a diseased tree, good fruit (Matt 7:17-18), a right prophet will bear good fruit. By smooth and flattering words, a false prophet could appear to be a good and right one. Nevertheless, the character traits with the corresponding deeds of a prophet are the real test that reflects his true nature; not his outward appearance.

In the Parable of the Tenants in Matt 21, where Jesus used the image of the vineyard, the meaning of fruit as a character trait and act was reinforced. Jesus said that the master sent his servants to the tenants when the season for fruit drew near (Matt 21:34). Nonetheless, as the tenants beat and killed the servants and even the master's son: Jesus affirmed that "the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its 'fruits'" (v. 43). Jesus was not speaking about grape branches for the kingdom of God but about the character which reveals the principles of the kingdom of heaven. The leaders of Israel showed that they were not bearing the fruit of the kingdom of God, as they brought to fulfillment this prophecy, narrated in a parable, by crucifying Jesus at the cross. For this reason, the main message of John the Baptist as well as of Jesus was "repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt 3:2; 4:17). The spiritual leaders and many of Israel had a very selfish attitude and their characters did not reflect the noble principles of God's character which is love (1 John 4:8). That way, John added to his appeal for repentance to "bear fruits in keeping with repentance" (Matt 3:8). When a person really repents from his sins, his character and acts will change and reflect more and more the pure and noble character of Jesus.

In the beginning of his letter to the believers in Rome, Paul states that he often intended to come to them but was hindered several times. His desire was to reap some

fruit among them just as he had among other Gentiles (Rom 1:13). The fruit Paul was desiring was to lead men to repentance through the “knowledge of Jesus Christ or to an increase of faith and good works.”⁴¹ Later, Paul put in contrast the fruit before and after the conversion of a person. He asked the converted believers which fruit they were getting from the things they were now ashamed, without specifying the fruit but highlighting the end of those things: death (Rom 6:21). In contrast, having become servants of God, their fruit leads to sanctification and its end is eternal life (v. 22).

In Rom 7, one can find a similar juxtaposition of Paul where he exhorts believers to bear fruit for God, whereas while they were living in the flesh the sinful passions worked in the members to bear fruit for death (Rom 7:4-5). While sinful passions and a selfish and evil character leads to eternal death, the end of a repentant and sanctified character is eternal life. Sanctification is understood as a process in which the character of a person is polished and made in the likeness of God’s character. This transformation of character cannot stay unnoticeable to fellow men because the deeds of a converted person change radically from shameful to noble acts.

After Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well (John 4:5-42) and revealed to her the truth about her illicit civil status, the woman went back to the town forgetting her water jar and invited all the inhabitants to come and see if Jesus could be the Messiah (v. 29). In this context, Jesus said to His disciples, “Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest. Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice

⁴¹ Francis D. Nichol, ed., *Acts to Ephesians*, Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary 6, rev. ed. (Washington: Review & Herald, 1976–1980), 475.

together” (vv. 35-36). The one who dedicates his life to the kingdom of heaven is receiving wages here on earth and gathering fruit for eternal life. On one hand, there is the transforming power of the Holy Spirit which transforms and sanctifies the character. And on the other hand, the attitude to serve one’s fellow man, as Jesus did, polishes the character. Both the sanctifying act of the Holy Spirit and the servant’s attitude lead to fruit for eternal life.

A similar contrast is found in Gal 5 where Paul emphasizes the divergence between the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit. All who practice the immoral works of the flesh, Paul warns that they will not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal 5:20-21). Then Paul catalogues the different aspects of the fruit of the Spirit: namely, “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (vv. 22-23). This list of noble character traits is not closed in itself because “‘the fruit of light’ is found in all that is good and right and true” (Eph 5:9). On one hand, “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5). On the other, Jesus affirms, “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12; 9:5). Thus, it can be affirmed that the “fruit of light” represents God’s noble and perfect character which is found in all that is good, right, and true. The contrast between the works of the flesh, darkness, and the fruit of the Spirit, light, is immense. On one side there is an immoral and unethical character which brings forth all kind of sinful and dishonorable behaviors, while on the other side a sanctified character through the Holy Spirit brings forth all kinds of good and noble deeds. As Jesus confirms, “Each tree is known by its own ‘fruit’” (Luke 6:44). Every person is known by its character and deeds. While the actions of a person reveal his character, the character itself brings forth the deeds.

Paul prays for the believers in Philippi that their love may increase as well as their knowledge in order that they may be able to discern what is excellent and become pure and blameless for the day of the Lord (Phil 1:9-10) “filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God” (v. 11). The “fruit of righteousness” is a gift from Jesus and represents His sinless and righteous character which is imparted to the believer by accepting the sacrifice of Jesus in his behalf. Christ’s character restored in the life of the Christian through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit is essential for salvation. This restoration process happens also through moments of discipline that seems painful rather than joyful (Heb 12:11).⁴² However, the outcome is the “peaceful ‘fruit of righteousness’ to those who have been trained by it” (v. 11). When a person overcomes tests of character, the righteous character of the person is reinforced and strengthened. It reflects the words of Jesus in John 15 where he affirms that the branches that bear fruit will be pruned in order to bear more fruit (John 15:2).

James makes a similar comparison by contrasting the earthly, unspiritual, and demonic wisdom (Jas 3:15-16) with the wisdom from above (vv. 17-18). While the earthly wisdom is characterized by jealousy, selfish ambitions, disorder, and every vile practice, “the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and ‘good fruit,’ impartial and sincere. And a ‘harvest (fruit) of righteousness’

⁴² Ray C. Stedman, *Hebrews*, IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), Heb 12:4: “The trials, disappointments, hardships and even physical attacks which sometimes constitute God’s discipline may be painful to bear. No one enjoys such experiences. As C. S. Lewis notes, ‘God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to arouse a deaf world’ (1978:81). But the pain is not the whole story. There is always a later on which follows. There is a *harvest of righteousness and peace* which invariably will come *for those who have been trained by it* (the discipline).”

is sown in peace by those who make peace” (vv. 17-18). There is not only an immense contrast between the earthly character or the works of the flesh and the heavenly character or the fruit of the Spirit but also between human wisdom and heavenly wisdom. James compares the result of “envying and strife” with the reward of peaceful aims. James highlights that a righteous character can be developed only by those who live in peace (v. 18) and for this, the wisdom from above is indispensable (v. 17).

The “fruit of lips”⁴³ is a sacrifice of praise offered to God that acknowledges His name (Heb 13:15). Interestingly, Paul states, “Be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph 5:18-20). In other words, by worshiping God through hymns and spiritual songs and praising God for all His care and love, one will be filled by the Holy Spirit and offer God the fruit of lips. The restored character by the Holy Spirit is not only expressed by deeds but also by the fruit of lips giving thanks to God for all His mercy, love, and power.

In Paul’s letter to the Philippians, one can perceive that “he is tossed to and fro between the desire to labor for Christ here on earth and the desire to be united with him in death.”⁴⁴ For him, “to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Phil 1:21). As he does not know which to choose, because personally he would prefer to depart and be united with Christ

⁴³ Ibid., Heb 13:7: True faith is manifested “with the sacrifices of genuine praise, and compassionate sharing and help. Worship and service: these are the fruits produced by genuine life from God.”

⁴⁴ Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), Accordance electronic ed., 124.

but to remain in the flesh is necessary to help believers grow in Christ and help strengthen their faith (vv. 22-24), he desires to honor Christ with his body, whether by life or by death (v. 20). “If I am to live in the flesh, that means ‘fruitful labor’ for me” (v. 22). With fruitful labor, he certainly refers to the reward of his work as an apostle of gaining new converts for Christ and strengthening the faith of believers as he seeks “the ‘fruit’ that increases to your credit” (Phil 4:17). Paul by laboring in favor of the believers seeks in them the fruit of a sanctified character and a strengthened faith in Christ. However, by laboring on behalf of others, he also experiences the truth that discipline “yields the peaceful ‘fruit of righteousness’” (Heb 12:11) in his proper life, in the sense that his own character is polished and sanctified by the service for others.

Conclusion

The concept of fruit is a major theme throughout the Bible. The term fruit can be classified into four thematic groups in the OT and into three thematic groups in the NT.

The OT emphasizes God’s creative power and His desire to bless people with all good fruits. God is not only the Creator of all fruits but also the Donor of all fruit that multiplies and increases the fruits. God’s blessings over Israel to multiply the fruits depended on their obedience to His commandments. Even when Israel was unfaithful and broke the covenant with God, there was always a message of hope for those who repented from their sins and returned to God.

The focus in the teachings of Jesus and the other NT writers lies upon the fruit as the nature of the heart and character. What has not been addressed in the OT is the special care and cleansing work of God (Parable of the Unfruitful Fig Tree [Luke 13:6-9] and the True Vine [John 15]) to increase fruitfulness. The two specific main purposes are to glorify the Father and to prove to be Jesus’s disciples.

In this chapter, the concept of fruit was examined in the natural realm while the following chapter looked at the concept of fruit in light of ethics and spirituality, from which it follows that the concept of fruit stands for character. The same properties of the fruit in nature as growing and maturing are also applicable in spiritual life and just as there are good and bad fruits in nature, there are also good and evil fruits in spiritual life. Just as it is God's work and power that produce and increase the fruit of the land, it is God who produces a noble character in the life of a person.

CHAPTER 3

BACKGROUND: THE FRUIT AND THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT

Introduction

As already mentioned, Chapter 3 focused mainly on the fruit and the influence of the Spirit over it. Some texts are taken up again but are analyzed from a new angle, namely, from a spiritual point of view. The fruit in connection with the Spirit becomes another dimension and has to do with character traits. There are mainly two kinds of fruit: the fruit of the Spirit and the work or fruit of the flesh. Between good and evil, the Spirit and the flesh prevails a conflict and not only the works of the flesh are in antagonism with God but also the absence of good fruits. To be able to bear the fruit of the Spirit, it is necessary to be born again and live a new life in Christ. Just as the organic fruit can grow and mature, so too can the fruit of the Spirit. Finally, the focus is set upon the purpose of bearing the fruit.

The Fruit and the Work of the Spirit

Definition of Fruit: Character Building and Sanctification

The Sermon on the Mount—which is the “greatest exposition of ethics of all time”¹ and represents “the ethics of God’s kingdom”²—deals with moral matters and a part of it specifically with the concept of fruit (Matt 7:15-20) from where the definition for it can be drawn and has to do with moral character traits. In other words, fruit defines character and points to the nature of the heart.

The Sermon is connected to the appointment and ordination of the twelve disciples (Luke 6:12-20), which shows that Christ had set forth in it the conditions of citizenship for the kingdom of divine grace (Matt 4:23), expounding the true sense of the law against the shallow and perverted exposition of the Jewish spiritual leaders. In other words, Christ declared the nature of His kingdom and the essential character traits a citizen of the heavenly kingdom must achieve to measure up to the lofty ideals of the divine law. To show how the ethical teachings might develop character, Jesus emphasizes the principles and standards of conduct for the kingdom of heaven (Matt 5); the right motives in worship; service and human relations; as well as the aim of living for the kingdom of heaven and making the kingdom the first priority (Matt 6); the golden rule which is considered as the “summary of Jesus’ ethic”³; and the test of citizenship which

¹ Nichol, *Matthew to John*, 334.

² Craig S. Keener, *Matthew*, IVP New Testament Commentary Series 1 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), Matt 5:1.

³ France, *Matthew*, 149.

consists in obedience and self-discipline (Matt 7). Within the test of citizenship, Jesus reinforces that it is not the outward appearance or the acts that confirms citizenship but the inner motives and attitudes (Matt 5:28).

For this reason, Jesus warns believers to be aware of false prophets, who come in the appearance of sheep but inwardly are ravenous wolves (Matt 7:15). A prophet is “one who proclaims inspired utterances on behalf of God,”⁴ a spokesman who deplores immorality⁵ or is an “inspired preacher and teacher.”⁶ These false prophets which Jesus warns believers are teachers and preachers who lead people in the wrong way. Prophets in the Bible does not only mean a person who receives a vision or dream. They are also preachers and teachers. They are even able to perform great signs and miracles in the forms of prophetic speech, casting out demons, and many wonders (Matt 7:21-22). However, the appealing claims of these false prophets show clearly that the performance of miracles is not a proof of their genuine ministry nor that divine power has been in operation (vv. 21-23). A prophet must be recognized by the fruit (vv. 16, 20), so that the real proof of his truthful ministry is his character and not the performed miracles. The character is the yardstick against which true identity is to be tested, as “every healthy tree bears good fruit but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. . . . Thus you will recognize them by their fruits” (vv. 17-20).

⁴ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, eds., “προφήτης [prophet],” *L&N* 542.

⁵ Helmut Krämer, “prophētēs [prophet],” *TDNT* 954.

⁶ H. G. Liddell, “προφήτης [prophet],” *A Lexicon: Abridged from Liddell and Scott’s Greek-English Lexicon* 704.

Jesus emphasizes that the authenticity of a person, the nature of the heart, can only be ascertained on the evidence of its fruits, of its character. The Sermon on the Mount ends with a twofold parable of a wise man who builds his house on the rock and a foolish man who builds his house on the sand (vv. 24-27). Jesus compares everyone who hears these words and puts them into practice (v. 24) with the wise man who builds his house upon the rock which represents Jesus Christ (Matt 21:42-44; Acts 4:11; Rom 9:33; 1 Pet 2:4-8) while the house symbolizes the character of the person. The wise person builds his character on the foundation of Jesus Christ's ethical principles and puts his teachings into practice. A person with character of integrity will automatically display that character in his words and deeds.

Jesus also highlighted the importance of transformation and perfection of character to the point of being perfect as the Father in Heaven is perfect (Matt 5:48). God Himself is perfect, namely, true and upright in His dealings and therefore the Model for all His sons.⁷ This includes the capacity for the character to be sanctified until it reflects the perfect character of God. The concept of sanctification is not something that developed because of the life and ministry of Jesus but it is also widespread in the OT. In Isa 32:9-18, God speaks about the ease and complacency of the women of Israel, that they will be troubled about the unfruitful land of Israel until the Spirit from on high is poured upon them. Then, the wilderness would become a fruitful field in which justice and righteousness would abide. The effect of righteousness will be peace and its result

⁷ R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel 1-14*, Lenski's Commentary on the New Testament (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1961), Accordance electronic ed., 253.

quietness and trust forever. This text shows that it is the Spirit who produces fruitfulness and at the same time, the effects and results of the Spirit working upon a person transforming their bad character traits into good ones.⁸ He changes people from complacency and ease into a peaceful, quiet, and trustworthy character (vv. 16-17).

In the NT, one can find different teachings of Jesus about fruit. There are several teachings about trees and their fruit, like a tree is known by its fruit (Matt 12:33, Luke 6:43-44) or every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire (Matt 3:10, Luke 3:9). Speaking about the vine, Jesus affirms that every branch without fruit is cut and those that do bear fruit are pruned with the goal to bear even more fruit. At the same time, Jesus insists that no branch can bear fruit by itself because apart from the vine, which is Jesus Himself, humans can do nothing (John 15:1-8). In these lessons, one can see that the kind of fruit one bears depends on the personal connection with Jesus as He is represented by the true vine. The fruit is a character trait that externally demonstrate on which tree one hangs, and which sap nurtures one's life. At the same time, Jesus emphasizes that the branches that bear fruit are cleansed to bear more fruit. Alluding to the sanctifying work of God upon the character and hearts. In the Parable of the Sower, Jesus teaches that out of four grounds only one, the good soil, bears a hundredfold of fruit (Matt 13:1-9, 18-23). In this parable, the seed represents the word of God, while the soil

⁸ Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 1-39*, NAC 15A (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2007), 546: "The act of the Spirit being 'poured out' is a gracious gift from God and not something people earn or deserve. The coming of God's Spirit will transform nature and people. . . . The Spirit gives new life, revitalizing the created order back to its original design and purpose."

represents the human heart and the fruit, the transformed character of the person.⁹ “Such a pure heart is the product of regenerating and sanctifying grace alone.”¹⁰ Finally, one can find the word of Jesus when He was sought by some Greeks in the temple: “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life” (John 12:24-25). In this instruction Jesus not only shows the importance of renouncing one’s personal life but also the importance of putting one’s ego and own wishes or desires to death, in order to reap a noble character and eternal life.

Peter in his letter to the believers of the Dispersion¹¹ mentions that the sanctification of the Spirit should lead believers into obedience to Jesus Christ (1 Pet 1:1-2). In other words, sanctification should transform the character so that more and more of Christ’s perfect character is attained in people’s lives.

⁹ Stuart K. Weber, *Matthew*, Holman New Testament Commentary 1 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 197: “Crop represents the tangible results of a life of faith, including godly character (Gal. 5:22–23).”

¹⁰ Lenski, *Interpretation of St. Matthew’s Gospel*, 227.

¹¹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, NAC 37 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 51: “The term ‘dispersion’ was often used of Jews who lived outside Palestine, who were scattered from their homeland because of their sin (Deut 28:25; 30:4; Neh 1:9; Ps 146:2; Isa 49:6; Jer 15:7; 41:17; cf. also *Jdt* 5:19; *2 Mac* 1:27; *Ps Sol* 8:28; 9:2). In the New Testament the word is used in only two other places, in both cases probably referring to Jews who were outside the land (John 7:35; Jas 1:1). In this instance, however, the word probably is used metaphorically. Peter was not writing to Jews but primarily to Gentiles, and hence he was hardly suggesting that they were the dispersed of Israel in the literal sense. And yet he signaled again that they were the people of God, who joined with believing Jews in the promises given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”

Different Kind of Fruit

In the Bible, one can find different kinds of fruit that are related to human behavior and character. And as Jesus said in Matt 12:33 that “the tree is known by its fruits,” there are honorable fruit and evil fruit. God says that He searches the mind and heart (Jer 17:10) of every man and will reward everyone according to his ways, according to the “fruits of his doings” (Jer 17:10; 32:19). Nevertheless, God’s call to all people of all generations is to “bring forth fruits worthy of repentance” (Matt 3:8) or in other words, “fruits of a changed heard” (Acts 26:20) and to choose life so they and their descendants may live (Deut 30:19).

Fruit of the Spirit

In the OT, one can find different persons in whom the Holy Spirit acted in a special way. Pharaoh when speaking to his servants referring to Joseph said, “Can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God” (Gen 41:38)? Pharaoh said this about Joseph because he could recognize in him that he had an unnatural ability of discerning and wisdom (Gen 41:39). At the same time, when studying the life of Joseph, it can be recognized that he has a noble character and a loyal behavior according to God’s commandments.

When God asked the Israelites to build Him a sanctuary, He spoke to Moses: “See, I have called by name Bezalel the son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship” (Exod 31:2-3). Here Bezalel the son of Uri is especially called and designated by God to realize the different works to build the sanctuary because he had special abilities given to him by the Spirit.

After the twelve spies came back from inspecting the promised land and ten of them said that it was impossible to conquer the land because of the giants that inhabited in the land, only Joshua and Caleb remained faithful in the power of God to give them the promised land. None of the congregation of Israel would enter the promised land except Joshua and Caleb (Num 14:28-30).¹² Numbers 14:24 says that Caleb had a “different spirit” because he had followed God fully. “Under the influence of God’s Spirit, Caleb was a man of bold, generous, heroic courage, above worldly anxieties and fears.”¹³ Joshua was later designated by God to guide the Israelites into the promised land instead of Moses. This was because Joshua was “a man in whom is the Spirit” (Num 27:18) and “was full of the Spirit of Wisdom” (Deut 34:9) so he would follow God’s instructions conscientiously.

Other examples of persons in the OT that revealed a godly character are King David, “a man after His [God’s] heart” (1 Sam 13:14), who prayed, “Renew a right spirit within me” and do “not to take your holy Spirit from me” (Ps 51:12-13); the prophet Elijah; as well as other major and minor prophets of the OT.

The book of Proverbs affirms that the fruit of the righteous is a tree of life (Prov 11:30). The fruit of righteousness is a life attribute of character and represents God in His nature, as He is a God of righteousness (Ps 7:9; Isa 30:18). Solomon continues to affirm

¹² Peter John Naylor, *Numbers*, New Bible Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), Accordance electronic ed., 190. The fulfillment of God’s oath to Joshua and Caleb is found in Num 26:63-65 where “not one of the first generation remained. This is why the census was commanded. Here is a sober reminder that God’s judgment is sure and certain. As he swore on oath, not one of the generation that rebelled were left, except Joshua and Caleb.”

¹³ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, eds., *Commentary, Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, vols. 1 & 2 (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1997), 1:106.

that when words are used properly, the “fruit of the mouth” will satisfy man with good and fill his stomach (Prov 12:14; 18:20) and the “fruit of the lips” will satisfy man so that he will enjoy all good things (Prov 13:2; 18:20). In Isa 57:19, one can read that it is God who will create the fruit of the lips to comfort and heal the contrite.

In the judgment over Judah and Jerusalem where it is depicted that Jerusalem has stumbled and Judah has fallen as they speak and act against the Lord, God gives a message of hope to the righteous, that it shall be well with them, “for they shall eat the fruit of their deeds” (Isa 3:10). But “woe to the wicked! It shall be ill with him, for what his hands have dealt out shall be done to him” (v. 11). Here, one can find the principle of “what we sow we will reap.”¹⁴ If one invests in spiritual issues like righteousness and character-building matters, one will reap the spiritual fruit for life and peace but if one focuses on the worldly matters or things of the flesh, one will obtain death because it is hostile towards God (Rom 8:5-8). If the Spirit of God and Christ dwells in a person, he or she is Spirit oriented (v. 9).

¹⁴ Max Anders, *Galatians-Colossians*, Holman New Testament Commentary 8 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 79. In Gal 6:7, this principle is mentioned by Paul. The teaching is that “each of us by our thoughts, attitudes, and actions is constantly planting for a future reaping. Time may pass before the crop ripens, but the harvest is inevitable.” Ibid.

The prophet Isaiah prophesizing about the ministry of Jesus¹⁵ ascribes the fruit of His labor to the Holy Spirit¹⁶ resting upon Him. The fruit is “the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD” (Isa 11:1-2).

In John 4:36, Jesus affirms that the one “who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together.” Jesus is not speaking about the normal crop harvest but of gathering together (reaping) the people that have heard the word of God, have accepted Jesus as their Savior, and are ready for the Kingdom of God.¹⁷ In other words, those who work for the heavenly kingdom by preaching the Gospel or leading persons to join the heavenly kingdom are gathering fruit for eternal life. The fruit of the Spirit should not only lead to personal sanctification but also to serve the community and being a blessing to others.

In Jas 3:15, there is a clear differentiation between the wisdom that descends from above and the wisdom that is earthly, unspiritual, and demonic. These two wisdoms are

¹⁵Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture* (Altamonte Springs: OakTree Software, 2006), Accordance electronic ed., para. 8240: “The King-Messiah thus brought on the scene is then described in regard to His character (v. 2), the nature of His rule (vs. 3–5), the universal harmony and peace which He will diffuse through nature (vs. 6–9), and the gathering of all mankind under His dominion.”

¹⁶H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., *Isaiah*, The Pulpit Commentary (London: Funk & Wagnalls, 1910), 1:202: “The human nature of our Lord required, and received abundantly, the sanctifying and enlightening influences of the Holy Spirit.”

¹⁷George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, WBC 36 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), Accordance electronic ed., 63: “Since harvest is a common eschatological symbol (e.g., Isa 27:12; Joel 4:13; Mark 4:1-9, 26-29; Matt 13:24-30; Rev 14:14-16), the saying of Jesus represents the gathering of people into the kingdom of God. . . . The arrival of harvest is underscored in v 36: the harvester is *already* receiving his ‘wages’ and gathering produce ‘for life eternal’; ie, he is bringing men and women under the saving sovereignty that has arrived, that they may enjoy the eternal life of the kingdom.”

depicted as antagonistic. Later on, James delineates the wisdom from above as “pure, peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere” (Jas 3:17). This shows that without God’s influence, these noble character traits are not possible.

These examples show that humans by themselves are not able to change their actions but the power of the Holy Spirit transforms by changing their hearts. The fruit of the Spirit is life changing and builds character traits for this earthly and future heavenly life.

Fruit of Flesh

In the judgment message over Jerusalem and Judah in Isa 3 and the warning message over Israel in Isa 32, the fruit of the flesh is also described apart from the fruit of the Spirit. Sinful speeches and deeds are depicted as well as ease and complacent behaviors.

Solomon—writing about those who do not fear the Lord and hate knowledge by rejecting all the counsels and reproofs of the Lord—states, “Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way, and have their fill of their own devices” (Prov 1:31) resulting in being slayed and destroyed (v. 32). The adage of “what we sow we will reap” is also true for a life without God. Through the prophet Jeremiah, God says that He will punish every person “according to the fruit of your doings” (Jer 21:14). The same idea is found in Mic 7:13 where the land would be desolated because of the “fruit of their doings.” “The fruits

of their evil deeds will cause God to destroy those rebellious inhabitants (cf. Isa 24:1–6; 26:21).”¹⁸

In Isa 10, it is found that God would judge the arrogant Assyrian king: “I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks” (v. 12). The fruits of the arrogant heart of the Assyrian king were the following: self-confidence, pride, self-exaltation, megalomania, self-trust, among others (vv. 13-15). Israel by itself had “eaten the fruit of lies” (Hos 10:13) because they trusted in their own ways and were self-confident.

In Jeremiah, another punishing message of God is found but this time, it is directed to the kingdom of the South, admonishing them to bring evil to the people because of “the fruits of their thoughts” (Jer 6:19). Not only behaviors or ways can be malignant but also thoughts. It is more so since the thoughts determine the acts, as what the famous proverb describes, “Watch your thoughts; they become words. Watch your words; they become actions. Watch your actions; they become habits. Watch your habits; they become character.”¹⁹ The wise Solomon wrote, “For as he thinks in his heart, so is he” (Prov 23:7; NKJV).

¹⁸ Gary V. Smith, *Hosea, Amos, Micah*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 557.

¹⁹ Galaxie Software, *10,000 Sermon Illustrations* (n.p.: Biblical Studies, 2002).

James alludes the following behaviors of bitter jealousy and selfish ambitions to the earthly, unspiritual, and demonic wisdom (Jas 3:14-15). Where the earthly wisdom reigns disorder and every vile practice (v. 16) is the day.²⁰

Summarizing, one can affirm that the fruit of the flesh with their corresponding malignant thoughts and actions have their origins in the absence of God's presence in the life of a person. In addition, every person will be judged according to their own works (Rev 20:13).

Conflict of Flesh and Spirit

In the book of Amos, one can find the conflict between good and evil and between the fruit of the Spirit and the fruit of the flesh in the behavior of Israel by turning justice into poison and the "fruit of righteousness" into wormwood (Amos 6:12). Israel was called to be the light to the world and to reflect in their lives the character of God. However, instead of defending justice and righteousness, they brought forth bitterness and poison to themselves and to the surrounding nations.

In Jer 13:23, when the Lord spoke to Jerusalem, He insisted that a person is not able to do good by himself, as the Ethiopian cannot change his skin nor the leopard its spots by himself.

²⁰ Douglas J. Moo, *James*, TNTC 16 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 138: "In this verse, James justifies his harsh verdict on false wisdom by describing the effects it produces. *Jealousy* (*zēlos*) and *selfish ambition* (*eritheia*) have already been singled out as characteristic of those who are making a false claim to wisdom (v. 14). Now James points out how egocentric, selfish attitudes inevitably lead to *disorder and every vile practice*. *Akatastasia* (*disorder*) is the noun form of the adjective James has used in 1:8 and 3:8 to characterize the 'double-minded' man and the 'double-speaking' tongue."

Jesus when speaking to Nicodemus emphasized that it is necessary that every person has to be born again to enter the kingdom of God. Each person has to be borne by water and the Spirit because by natural birth, humans are of fleshly nature and it is necessary to experience a second birth by being born again by the Spirit to obtain also a spiritual nature (John 3:5-7). On another occasion speaking to His disciples, Jesus affirmed that the Spirit is the life giver, while the flesh profits nothing (John 6:63).

Therefore, the need of being born again by the Spirit to obtain eternal life is evident, as the flesh does not profit anything. The natural fruit of the flesh of a person has to be transformed into honorable character traits which is the fruit of the Spirit by God's power.

Absence of Fruit

In the NT, John the Baptist and Jesus showed in different parables very clearly that not only the bearing of fleshly fruit is in rivalry to God's character but also the absence of good fruit is hostile against God. In Matt 3, John the Baptist said to the Pharisees and Sadducees while he was baptizing in the river Jordan that they should bear "fruits worthy of repentance" because to obtain salvation by being a descendant of Abraham is not sufficient.²¹ To reinforce his appeal, he used the illustration of every tree that does not bring forth good fruit is cut down and cast into the fire (vv. 7-10).

In the Parable of the Sower (Matt 13), the word of God which is sown among the thorns does not bear any fruit because the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of

²¹ Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 59: "The demand is hammered in with a reference to Jewish pride in descent from Abraham. To many Jews it was unthinkable that the great patriarch's descendants should ever be excluded from God's blessing. Thus they thought that because they could say, *We have Abraham as Father*, they had eternal security."

riches choke the Word (v. 22). By these words, Jesus shows clearly the damaging power of the worldly cares and the deceitful riches upon the heart-changing seed, the word of God. In this parable, it is shown what leads a person to be unfruitful and to run the risk of being cut down and thrown into the fire.

In the Parable of the Unfruitful Fig Tree (Luke 13), Jesus underlines the attitude of the owner of the vineyard searching for fruit on the fig tree. The man showed himself patient for three years but after finding no fruit on the tree, he decided to cut it down. The vinedresser asked him for one more year of mercy to try once more to bring forth fruit by the fig tree. What is prominent in this parable is that the owner, representing God,²² gives the fig tree one more chance to bear fruit after being deceived several times and that the vinedresser representing Jesus doubles his efforts trying to save the tree by giving it a special treatment so the tree would bear fruit.

In the parable of John 15, Jesus is symbolized by the true vine, while believers are illustrated by the branches. God the Father is the Farmer who cuts off every branch that does not bear fruit.²³ These branches would wither and be thrown into the fire (John 15:1-

²² Michael Wilcock, *The Savior of the World: The Message of Luke's Gospel*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 138-139: "For the fig tree and the vineyard are symbols of the Jewish nation, which God had cultivated and cherished over many centuries in the hope that it would be spiritually fruitful. But its special relationship with him had, by and large, turned into a barren religion."

²³ Gerald L. Borchert, *John 12-21*, NAC 25B (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 140: "The role of the Father in 15:2 is that of a master gardener who is responsible for removing/trimming/cleansing the branches, both positively and negatively. . . . The task of the master gardener, therefore, was one of distinguishing between productive and unproductive branches and dealing appropriately with them in both cases. The unproductive branches are eliminated/taken away/removed (*airei*) while the productive branches are cleansed/pruned (*kathaieti*) so that they will become more productive."

6). The key to bearing fruit, according to this parable, is to remain in Christ. To have a personal connection with the Source of life.

These examples show that there are not only those who bring forth fruit of the flesh and those who bring forth fruit of the Spirit but also a group of persons who are in the vineyard of God, believers in God, but do not bear any fruit. The outcome for those who bear fruit of the flesh or who do not bear any fruit is the same: thrown into the fire.

New Life in Christ

As seen above in the encounter between Jesus and Nicodemus, it is essential to experience a new birth in the spirit (John 3:5-7). This new birth changes the nature and enables the Holy Spirit to purify the character. There are different prerequisites a person has to fulfill to be able to bear fruit of the Spirit.

Jesus taught His disciples that “unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone. But if it dies, it bears much ‘fruit’” (John 12:24). In another occasion, Jesus expressed the following words: “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it” (Luke 9:23-24). Jesus showed the importance of denying human desires and wishes and to carry the cross on a daily basis, so one may bear fruit. If one is not willing to give up the will (ego), the Holy Spirit will not be able to work on the character to sanctify it.²⁴

²⁴ Gene L. Green, *The Letters to the Thessalonians*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 326. In the commentary of 2 Thess 2:13 where Paul writes that sanctification comes through the Spirit. “Paul exhorted the believers again and again to dedicate themselves to sanctification (1 Thess. 4:3, 4, 7), reminding them that sanctification was God’s will for them and that God called them to the same. But he also assured the Thessalonians that

In the parable seen above about the true vine and the branches of John 15, a condition to bear fruit is to be and to remain connected to Christ (John 15:1-5) who is the True Vine and the Source of life (John 14:6). Apart from Christ, no one has the ability to produce any spiritual fruit.

But the same parable shows another truth that when one is connected with Christ and bear some fruit, the Father prunes that person, so that he or she may bear more fruit (John 15:2). This shows that when the Father works in a human a purifying act and the more likeness in the character with Christ, the more fruit that person is going to bear.²⁵

In Matt 3, the message of John the Baptist to the people of Israel was to “repent because the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (3:2). To the Pharisees and Sadducees he said, “Bear fruit in keeping with repentance” (3:8). Another requirement to bear spiritual fruit and to have a Christ-like character is to repent from sins and failures committed.

Growing and Maturing of Fruit

As what have been developed above, the fruit is the character trait of a person. And as in the natural world that the fruit that grows on a tree goes through a process of maturing, the same happens with a person’s character.

sanctification was a work of God (1 Thess. 5:23) that effects through the agency of the Holy Spirit (1 Thess. 4:8).” Ibid.

²⁵ Jey J. Kanagaraj, *John*, New Covenant Commentary Series 4 (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2013), 152-153: God “enables the fruit-bearing branches to bear more fruit by pruning them (15:2). This metaphor shows that God enables the believer to live in union with Jesus and bear much fruit.”

What Makes the Fruit Grow?

In John 15, it is seen that there are two elements that have a direct influence on the growth and maturation process of the fruit. The essential one is to abide in Christ, the True Vine (John 15:4-5), and the other is the cleansing work of God, so that one may bear more fruit (John 15:2). Nonetheless, these are not the only components.

In the Parable of the Sower in Matt 13, the seed (word of God) that was sown on the good soil was a hundredfold fruitful because the person not only heard the word of God but also understood it (vv. 8, 23). In contrast to the seeds among the thorns, where the word was heard but choked by the cares of this world and the deceitful riches, that became unfruitful (v. 22). The same parable is reported in the three Synoptic Gospels in a complementary way. In Matthew, the good soil is described as those who hear the word and understand it (v. 23). The Greek word used for it is συνίημι (understand, comprehend, perceive, have insight into).²⁶ In Mark 4:20, the word παραδέχομαι (accept, receive, welcome, acknowledge, recognize)²⁷ is used with the meaning of “accepting” the word. And finally, in Luke 8:15, κατέχω (hold fast, keep, take, possess, hold back, restrain)²⁸ is used with the meaning of “to hold” or “retain.” Through these texts, one can see that it is not only about understanding the word of God but accepting it by putting into action what it teaches and retaining it as a valuable treasure.

²⁶Barclay M. Newman Jr., “συνίημι,” *A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament* 174.

²⁷ Barclay M. Newman Jr., “παραδέχομαι,” *A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament* 132.

²⁸ Barclay M. Newman Jr., “κατέχω,” *A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament* 98.

The word of God is living, active, and sharper than any two-edged sword to discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart (Heb 4:12) and is life changing (Deut 8:3). Peter writes the following: “Love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God” (1 Pet 1:22-23). The power of the word of God should not astonish, as the writers were moved by the Holy Spirit to write it down (2 Pet 1:21) and is the inspired word of God (2 Tim 3:16).

While Jesus was speaking with the Samaritan woman at the well of Jacob about the living fountain of water which He would give (John 4:14), referring to the Holy Spirit (7:38-39), the disciples of Jesus returned from buying food in the city. In this occasion, Jesus said to His disciples that the fields are ready for the harvest and “the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together” (John 4:36). As “the saying of Jesus represents the gathering of people into the kingdom of God,”²⁹ those who help gather together the people into the kingdom of God are accumulating “fruits for eternal life.” The more one dedicates life to witness God’s excellencies, the more the character is developed and polished. Everyone is called to give witness about the excellencies of God’s transforming power (1 Pet 2:9) and this is obtained more through the acts than the words, as a common proverb says, “actions speak louder than words.”³⁰

²⁹ Beasley-Murray, *John*, 63.

³⁰ James M. Freeman and Harold J. Chadwick, *Manners & Customs of the Bible* (North Brunswick: Bridge-Logos, 1998), 420.

Concept of Maturing

In John 15, the importance of abiding in Christ to be fruitful has already been developed. In 1 John 4:12-16, one can see that there is a direct relation between the Holy Spirit which is given to a person when he abides in God and God in him, and love which is perfected in the life of the believer. In v. 8 of the same chapter, John defines the essential nature of God. God is love and as long as a person abides in Him and God in the person, love which is a fruit of the Spirit will be perfected in him. The work of perfecting God's love in a person is the work of the Holy Spirit as the verb *perfecting* is in a passive tense.³¹ This underlines that it is not the efforts of trying to live a lovelier life by own efforts but that it is the maturing work of the transforming power of God's Spirit operating in the hearts.

James writes that believers should exercise patience until the coming of Jesus. Then, he illustrates the importance of being patient by the example of a farmer who waits for the early and latter rain to obtain a mature harvest (Jas 5:7). While the early rain was important for the growth of the grain and fruit, the latter rain was significant for the final maturing or ripening process of the grain and fruit.³²

³¹ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), Accordance electronic ed., 439: "The most common use of the passive voice is to indicate that the subject receives the action."

³² Kurt A. Richardson, *James*, NAC 36 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1997), 219: "The farmer could only wait for the early and the later rains—an allusion to the climatic conditions of Palestine. The early rain causes the seed to germinate and the plants to sprout. The later rain strengthens the stalks for the production of the buds, which will make for much harvestable grain when it ripens. In both cases the farmer waited for the sake of the grain in order that the grain (lit. 'fruit'; cf. 3:17) might be his at harvest time."

Purpose of Fruit

To bear fruit is not a goal in itself but to glorify the Father, give evidence of one's discipleship, prepare people for the second coming of Christ, and point out the essential nature.

Glorify the Father

As discussed above, there are two purposes mentioned by Jesus for being fruitful (John 15:8). One is that the Father is glorified when people bear much fruit and the other is to give evidence of being Jesus's disciples.

To glorify the Father was also the ultimate purpose of Jesus's life. In the High Priestly Prayer of John 17, Jesus prayed, "I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do" (John 17:4). Jesus never intended to seek His own glory (John 8:50) because if He would glorify Himself, His glory would be nothing. It was the Father who glorifies Jesus (v. 54). Throughout the life and ministry of Jesus, all His deeds, actions, as well as His words served to lead people to glorify the Father. In many of the miracles of healing, one can read that either the healed and or the crowd present glorified the Father for the miracle they had witnessed. Some of the healed persons who glorified God were the paralytic who was let down in his bed through the tiles by his friends (Luke 5:25), the woman with a disabling Spirit (13:13), the Samaritan who of the ten lepers was the only one to return to Jesus to give thanks and to glorify God (17:15-16), and the blind beggar near Jericho (18:43). In the healing wonder of the paralytic, not only did he glorify God but also the attending multitudes (5:26).

In Matt 15 where Jesus had liberated the daughter of the Canaanite woman from a demon and performed many miracles by healing the lame, blind, crippled, mute, and many others who were brought to Jesus, the witnessing crowd glorified the God of Israel

(vv. 21-31). Also, when Jesus raised the dead son of the widow of Nain, “fear seized them all, and they glorified God” (Luke 7:16). Nevertheless, not only the wonders which Jesus performed moved people to glorify God but also His appearance and behavior. The centurion after witnessing the crucifixion and death of Jesus “praised God, saying, ‘Certainly this man was innocent’” (Luke 23:47).

Just as men glorified God through the wonders of Jesus, they also glorified Him through the wonders of the disciples. After Peter and John had healed the lame beggar at the gates of the temple and were brought before the council because of the miracle (Acts 3), the council let them go after having threatened them “because of the people, since they all glorified God for what had happened” (4:21). But the ministry of the disciples was also a reason to glorify the Father. After Peter reported the conversion of Cornelius and his household to the church in Jerusalem, especially to the circumcised believers because they contended with him, they all felt silence and “glorified God, saying, ‘Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life’” (11:18).

Paul having been made a “light for the Gentiles, to bring salvation to the ends of the earth” (Acts 13:47) visited Antioch in Pisidia with Barnabas. The gentiles there rejoiced and glorified the word of the Lord because the disciples were preaching the Gospel to them (v. 48) and many of them believed and became Christ’s followers. When Paul went to Jerusalem, he visited James and all the elders and related one by one the things God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. “And when they heard it, they glorified God” (21:20).

Just as the life of Jesus and the disciples served to glorify God, so lives and good deeds should lead people to glorify God. Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount said, “You are the light of the world. . . . In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that

they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Matt 5:14-16). Peter encourages the believers to “keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation” (1 Pet 2:12). “Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name” (4:16). Not only in good times but also in difficult times, such as when injustice is done, that lives should reflect God’s holy character and lead people to glorify God.

Paul writes to the believers in Corinth that they should abstain from sexual immorality because their body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, whom they received from God. Then he goes on and says that “you are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body” (1 Cor 6:20). To glorify God with the body is not only to abstain from sexual immorality but to do everything whether it is eating or drinking or whatever one does, all must be done to the glory of God (10:31).

The purpose and ultimate goal of one’s life and existence is to live a life “in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ” (1 Pet 4:11). If the life does not serve to glorify God, then one not only misses the opportunity to be a witness of Jesus and to glorify the Father but it also has devastating consequences. Although Paul writes about the ungodly and unrighteous men, he admonishes about the consequences of knowing God and not giving Him the glory and honor that are due Him. The outcomes are futile thoughts and a darkened foolish heart (Rom 1:21).

In brief, in the disciple's lives and ministry, the character of God must be reflected and "he is glorified as people catch glimpses of what he is truly like."³³ On the other hand, it is essential to recognize that to be fruitful "is not an end in itself but is meant to bring glory to the Father."³⁴ The two purposes given here by Jesus are going hand in hand because it is not possible to glorify the Father if one does not live a disciple's life. The fruit has to be visible so that people may glorify the Father.

Preparing for the Second Coming of Christ

In the Parable of the Seed Growing in Mark 4, Jesus introduces another purpose of being fruitful. "But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come" (Mark 4:29). Jesus, by explaining the normal process from seed growth unto harvest, highlights the importance that the seed must reach maturity before it can be harvested. In a vision about the harvest and the second coming of Jesus, John wrote,

Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and seated on the cloud one like a son of man, with a golden crown on his head, and a sharp sickle in his hand. And another angel came out of the temple, calling with a loud voice to him who sat on the cloud, 'Put in your sickle, and reap, for the hour to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is fully ripe.' So he who sat on the cloud swung his sickle across the earth, and the earth was reaped (Rev 14:14-16).

³³ Colin G. Kruse, *John: An Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC 4 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), Accordance electronic ed., 315.

³⁴ Donald Guthrie, *John*, New Bible Commentary (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), Accordance electronic ed., 1055.

These two passages accentuate the beginning of the harvest when the grains are ripe. So, when the fruit has fully matured the harvest which is the end of the ages (Matt 13:39) will take place by the glorious event of the second coming of Christ.

These examples show that to bear much fruit or mature fruit is not an end in itself³⁵ but has the purpose to reveal true nature; lead people to glorify the Father when they observe one's fruit; bear witness of one's discipleship with Jesus; and finally, when the fruit is mature the harvest, describing the second coming of Jesus, can be put into effect.

To Point Out One's Essential Nature

In the Sermon on the Mount which deals with ethical issues as seen before, Jesus affirms that false prophets can be recognized by their fruits (Matt 7:16, 20), that is, by their characters. This is true not only of false prophets but of every human being, as Jesus said, "Each tree is known by its own fruit. . . . The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks" (Luke 6:44-45). This shows that the purpose of fruit is to denote the essential nature of the being, if it is worldly or heavenly and fleshly or spiritually-oriented. Outwardly, one can pretend something different of what is inwardly but the fruit ultimately reveals a "man's very heart and nature."³⁶

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Lenski, *Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel*, 226.

Conclusion

The concept of fruit in the spiritual field has to do mainly with character traits and its sanctification. There are two kinds of fruits, good and evil ones, that interact oppositely to each other. But not only the works of the flesh are antagonistic to God but also the absence of good fruits. To be successful in the battle between flesh and Spirit, it is essential to experience a new birth and to live a new life in the Spirit. The concept of fruit implies the properties of growing and maturing which are crucial in order to achieve the main objectives of being fruitful: namely, to glorify the Father; to prove to be Jesus's disciples; to prepare the harvest for the second coming of Christ; and to determine one's true, essential nature.

As seen in this chapter, the concept of fruit essentially has to do with the character and its sanctification. However, "what is the yardstick for a noble character?" In the next chapter, the "fruit of the Spirit" is examined in details, where Paul describes several qualities of God's character and how a Spirit-filled life can be attained so that God's holy character can be restored in the life of the person.

CHAPTER 4

CONCEPT OF FRUIT IN PAULINE WRITINGS

Introduction

The last chapter is devoted to the concept of fruit in Pauline writings where the focus is on Gal 5 and the fruit of the Spirit with its qualities. The nine qualities of the fruit are developed in more details showing that all of them are character traits of God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. The nine properties of the fruit of the Spirit are not restricted to these alone but there are several other qualities of God's holy character which are mentioned in parallel texts with Gal 5. "Why does Paul use the term 'fruit' and especially in singular?" It is analyzed why the fruits and not the gifts are the indicators of a Spirit-filled life and why there is no law against the fruit of the Spirit. Finally, it can be developed as in the previous chapter, but this time in the writings of Paul, what makes the fruit grow and mature, and what are the purposes of bearing fruit.

Concept of Fruit in Pauline Writings

In Gal 5, where Paul describes the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit, he emphasizes in the preceding and succeeding verses with four different verbs how the fruit of the Spirit can be obtained. He starts the section "to walk by the Spirit" (Gal 5:16) with

the verb περιπατέω (to walk, walk around, behave, and leading a life)¹ which can also be translated as “walk in the Spirit” (NKJV, DRBY, DOUAY) or “live by the Spirit” (NRSV). Paul accentuates that one should not live a static life in the Spirit in the sense of withdrawing oneself into a monastery or isolating oneself from the environment but to live with and among fellow human beings. Nor to be satisfied with spiritual life or knowledge but thirst and hunger for more of God. In short, one should walk or be in movement in the Spirit for in this way, one’s spiritual life will be trained, strengthened, and get more resistant. Through practice, the fruit of the Spirit will grow and ripen, and other people will recognize it and give glory to God (Matt 5:16). Then he continues in the preamble (Gal 5:16-18) with “led by the Spirit” (v. 18) using ἄγω (to lead, go, bring)² to show that one should not just walk around by or in the Spirit as strays but let oneself be led by the Spirit so He can guide the steps and lead to the right way. The Holy Spirit works in a person’s life like the GPS in the car. He leads one on the right path to the right destination and for this, He gives instructions on which road or way one should go in order not to stray from the path of life. Interestingly, it is reported that after Jesus being baptized and being full of the Holy Spirit, He returned from Jordan and was led (ἄγω) by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days (Luke 4:1). Jesus did not spend the forty days in the desert in a single bare and desolate place but was led by the Holy Spirit from one

¹ Robert L. Thomas, “περιπατεω,” *Greek Dictionary of the New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance* para. 4210.

² Robert L. Thomas, “αγω,” *Greek Dictionary of the New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance* para. 181.

place to another according to God’s guidance and will.³ Paul confirms, “For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God” (Rom 8:14). The children of God do not just walk or wander around, but they hear, understand, and obey the instructions given by the Holy Spirit.

In the epilogue of this section (Gal 5:24-26), Paul uses the verbs ζάω (to live, alive) “live in the Spirit” (Gal 5:25)⁴ and στοιχέω (to walk by rule, walk orderly) “walk in the Spirit” (Gal 5:25).⁵ To be able to live in the Spirit, Paul lists the prerequisite to crucify one’s life (flesh) with all its passions and desires (Gal 5:24). It is not possible to live two lives simultaneously. Either people live their own life and gratify the desires of the flesh or crucify their life to give place for the Holy Spirit to live in and to allow the Spirit to produce, comparatively uninterrupted by it, “the fruit of the Spirit” in them.⁶ The indwelling Spirit not only imparts new life but also wants to guide people appropriately and on the right path. Paul makes in the epilogue a similar affirmation as in the preamble. “If we live by the Spirit, let us also behave in accordance with the Spirit” (Gal 5:25, NET). Or as other translations highlight the verb στοιχέω: “let us also be guided by the Spirit” (NRSV) or “let us follow the Spirit’s leading in every part of our lives” (NLT).

³ A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman, 1933), Luke 4:1: “Was led by the Spirit (ἠγετο ἐν τοῖ πνευματι [*ēgeto en toi pneumati*]). Imperfect passive, continuously led. . . . At any rate Luke affirms that Jesus was now continuously under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.”

⁴ Robert L. Thomas, “ζάω,” *Greek Dictionary of the New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance* para. 2393.

⁵ Robert L. Thomas, “στοιχέω,” *Greek Dictionary of the New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance* para. 4935.

⁶ Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown, *Commentary, Critical and Explanatory*, 2:338.

One should live a lively life in the Spirit and let Him guide the steps so that not the person's will may be accomplished but His will may be carried out to be a light in this world and to glorify the Father.

In order to bring forth the fruit of the Spirit and not to fulfill the lust of the flesh, it is essential to live a Spirit-filled life, by walking in faith and being led by the Spirit following His instructions. By living an active Spirit-oriented life, the fruit of the Spirit will grow and mature, the character sanctified, and the image of God restored in the life of any believer.

The Fruit of the Spirit

Paul uses fruit of the Spirit in singular. The reason why Paul mentions the fruit of the Spirit as singular and what implications this has are worked out in details later. In this place, the qualities of the fruit of the Spirit are elaborated more.

Love

The first characteristic of the fruit of the Spirit is love. In Paul's time, three Greek words were used to define different aspects of love. *Ερωσ* which refers to an erotic or sexual love is not used neither in the NT nor in the Septuagint.⁷ The tender affectionate love toward a friend or a family member is *φιλέω*. This kind of love is used to express God's love for an individual believer (John 16:27) and of Jesus's love for a disciple (John 20:2) but never to express a person's love toward God.⁸ The third, *ἀγάπη* is used to denote the special unconditional, faithful, and inseparable love of God. This love finds its

⁷ David Lanier, "Love," *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* 1054.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 1054.

ultimate expression in giving His beloved Son as a propitiation for sin so that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life (John 3:15; 4:10).

John in his first letter affirms that “God is love” (1 John 4:8). God’s nature⁹ is love and because of this, He is the source of true love. In other words, love is and comes from God (v. 7). In the same verse, John mentions two important conditions to be able to love. The first is to know God and the second is to be born of God. If a person loves one another, God abides in that person and His love is perfected (v. 12). In order for God to live in a person, it is necessary to be born again of water and the Spirit (John 3:5) because the assurance of the indwelling God is the Spirit, which has been given to all (1 John 3:24). Only when the Holy Spirit lives in a person as a result of new birth, one is able to love God with all strength and have human fellowship.

The most detailed description of love one can find in the Bible is in 1 Cor 13 which also could be considered as “a portrayal of Christ.”¹⁰ Christ really lived and exemplified this love while He was living on earth, especially during His three and a half years of ministry and His sacrificial death at the cross of Calvary. Another definition of love is found in Rom 13:10 where it is defined as the “fulfillment of the law.”

A scribe asked Jesus which is the most important commandment. Jesus answered, “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you

⁹ Gary M. Burge, *The Letters of John*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), Accordance electronic ed., 186-187: “When verse 8 says ‘God is love’ (cf. v. 16), it is important to note what John is not saying. He is not saying that ‘God is loving’ (though this is true). Nor is he saying that one of God’s activities is ‘to love’ us (though this is true as well). John is saying that God *is* love, that ‘all of his activity is loving.’ Love is the essence of his being.”

¹⁰ Laurie J. Braaten, “Love,” *EDB* 826.

shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:29-31). “How should this love toward God and neighbor be understood?” Jesus mentioned that the evidence of love towards Himself is by keeping His commandments (John 14:15, 21). The love toward one’s neighbor should be understood in the light of the new commandment Jesus gave to His disciples in which one should love each other as He has loved humans (John 13:34; 15:12). James calls this new commandment the “royal law” (Jas 2:8) and Paul emphasizes that the whole law is fulfilled in this one word, to love one’s neighbor (Gal 5:14; Rom 13:8). Within the Ten Commandments, the first four are being fulfilled when one loves God because no one should have other gods beside Him nor worship them nor misuse His name but observe the seventh-day Sabbath because it is a sign between God and His people (Ezek 20:12, 20). The other six are fulfilled when one loves fellowmen by honoring parents, not killing anyone, not committing adultery, not stealing from anyone, not spreading lies about anyone, and not coveting anything from anyone. In short, love towards God and neighbor should be exemplified in the life and death of Jesus as delineated in 1 Cor 13.

Joy

The Greek word *χαρά* expresses not only a feeling of joy, gladness, delight, and happiness, but should be considered more as a property or a quality¹¹ of a Christian.

¹¹ S. S. Smalley, “Joy,” *NBD* 615.

Often, one has a distorted image of God and sees Him as a strict and severe God. However, one rarely reflects on the fact that God is a God of joy. The Bible shows that God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit—as well as the whole heaven—rejoice and live joyfully. In the Parable of the Talents, Jesus mentions that the master, God the Father or Jesus Christ Himself, will speak to the good and faithful servant “enter into the joy of your master” (Matt 25:21, 23). The faithful servant will experience the same joy as his master when he walks through the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem when Jesus comes back for the second time. When Jesus preached the parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin in Luke 15, He reinforces the idea that there is joy in heaven and before the angels of God over one sinner who repents (vv. 7, 10). Paul not only affirms that “the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom 14:17) but also that God is the Source and Giver of joy, as well the one who can fill the believers with all joy (15:13). God’s nature not only consists of unconditional love but also of great joy and He loves to share His joy with all the heavenly and human beings.

Jesus’s birth is told that it is “of great joy that will be for all the people” (Luke 2:10). Jesus’s birth, life, death, and resurrection are of great joy for those who believe in Him because He is the Messiah who has brought salvation and forgiveness of sin. This assurance of forgiveness and salvation is an inexpressible joy for those who are saved by faith. Jesus mentioned His desire for His disciples twice (John 15:11; 16:4) on the last night which He spent with them: “that your joy may be full.” Jesus not only wants to give

some joy, He desires to give His joy (14:27; 15:11) and this in full measure¹² because “human joy in a fallen world will at best be ephemeral, shallow, incomplete, until human existence is overtaken by an experience of the love of God in Christ Jesus.”¹³ The first time Jesus mentions His desire, He was speaking about His love towards His disciples and the importance of abiding in His love by keeping the commandments. Then He continued saying that He has spoken all these things to them, so “that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full” (15:11). The second time, Jesus spoke to His disciples about prayer and that if they would ask something of the Father in His name, they would receive it, so “that your joy may be full” (16:24). In the previous verses of this text, Jesus affirms that they would have some sorrows but when they will see Him again after His resurrection, their hearts would experience a great joy which no one can take away from them (v. 22). The same inexpressible joy that the disciples experienced when they saw Jesus again after His resurrection will be experienced at His second coming (1 Pet 1:7-9). Jesus has great joy and He desires to share His godly joy with humans by a personal relationship, by responding to their prayer requests, and by coming again to take them to where He is now.

Joy is not only limited to the Father and Jesus Christ but is also present in the Third Person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit. This is because one can read that when the Holy Spirit descended during the Pentecost, the “disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 13:52). The full joy which Jesus desired to give to His disciples

¹² Gerhard Delling, “πλήρης,” *TDNT* 6:297.

¹³ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 521.

found its fulfillment through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit because He is the one who was promised to be with humans as Jesus's Advocate (John 14:15), to teach all things (v. 26), to guide to all truth (16:13), and to help and intercede for human weaknesses because they do not know how nor what to pray for (Rom 8:26). Paul when writing to the believers of Thessalonica mentioned that they became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia by having received the word of God in much affliction, with the "joy of the Holy Spirit" (1 Thess 1:6-7). "The Holy Spirit gives the joy in the midst of the tribulations as Paul learned (Rom. 5:3)."¹⁴ Even though a disciple of Jesus has to go through afflictions and trials, he can experience a "Spirit-inspired joy"¹⁵ which is given to him through and by the Holy Spirit. The result of a Spirit-filled person is to experience "inexpressible joy" (1 Pet 1:8) because the kingdom of God consists of "joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom 14:17).

Peace

In the Second Letter to the Corinthians, Paul states that God is not only a God of love but also of peace (13:11). Paul develops this affirmation that God is also a "God of peace" in different letters to the Christian believers. He affirms that God is not a God of confusion but of peace (1 Cor 14:33). Interestingly, Paul does not highlight that God is a God of *order* which would be the more appropriate term to resolve the challenge of confusion, although He is a God of order, as He has created everything neatly,

¹⁴ Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 1 Thess 1:6.

¹⁵ D. Michael Martin, *1, 2 Thessalonians*, NAC 33 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 62.

harmoniously, and orderly to the last detail. Nevertheless, Paul emphasizes that God is a God of peace where the Hebrew word שלום comes to its expression.¹⁶ Something very neat (orderly) does not have to express necessarily that peace reigns. And yet, even in a certain disorder, peace can prevail. Paul's wish and desire for the believers is that the "God of peace" may be with all of them (Rom 15:33; Phil 4:9). This God of peace should not only be present in their lives but also equip them with everything good that they may do God's will (Heb 13:20-21), and sanctify them completely, so that their whole spirit, soul, and body may be kept blameless at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thess 5:23). The God of peace not only equips believers with everything that is good, and sanctifies them completely but will also soon "crush Satan under your [believers] feet" (Rom 16:20) during the second coming of the Lord.¹⁷

Paul addresses many churches and persons with the salutation, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2;

¹⁶ Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 541: "We should bear in mind that our English idea of peace, like the Greek from which it is borrowed, is a negative idea, the absence of war. But we must not read our idea of peace back into the Bible. The New Testament writers tended to take their idea of peace from the Old Testament, and for the Hebrews peace (*shalom*) was a positive idea, the idea of wholeness, of well-roundedness. It was the prosperity of the whole life, a positive and not a negative idea."

¹⁷ Grant R. Osborne, *Romans*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 415: "The crushing of Satan has already begun but will not be consummated and finalized until the eschaton, when Satan will be first bound (Rev 20:3) and then thrown into the lake of fire (Rev 20:10). The Jewish understanding of Genesis 3:15 was that the serpent, Satan, would be defeated by God and his angelic forces (*Testament of Simeon* 6:6; *Testament of Levi* 18:12; cf. *1 Enoch* 54:6; *Jubilees* 10:8–9), a view found in Revelation 12:7–9, where Michael casts Satan and his armies out of heaven. Paul states that Satan would be defeated now in the Roman church and finally at the end of history."

Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2; Phil 1:2; 2 Thess 1:2; Titus 1:4, and Phlm 3), as well as “Grace to you and peace from God our Father” (Col 1:2), and “Grace to you and peace” (1 Thess 1:1). Grace and peace are used in the distinctive Christian salutation and are a combination of the Hebrew and Aramaic peace desire שָׁלוֹם (shalom) and the common Greek epistolary salutation χάρις (grace).¹⁸ While “‘grace’ speaks of God’s attitude toward believers, ‘peace’ speaks both of their standing with God and their experience of divine peace.”¹⁹ Also, the apostle John, writing in the prologue of the book of Revelation, articulates the salutation and wish of “grace and peace” from the triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Rev 1:3-5)—to the seven churches of Asia.

The Bible insists that the three Persons of the Trinity are the givers of peace. On one hand, one experiences peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ when one is justified by faith (Rom 5:1). The sacrificial death of Jesus restores the relationship with God, so that one does not need to experience fear nor anxiety but can enjoy a restored relationship and inner peace with God. On the other hand, the author of all joy and peace is God Himself (15:13). Paul expresses his desire for believers in a “mood of wish, formally used in benedictions”²⁰ using πληρόω in the aorist active optative form, which expresses an “obtainable wish” or a “prayer.”²¹ “May the God of hope fill [πληρόω] you with all joy and peace” (Rom 15:13). The accent lies on bringing to a full measure all the

¹⁸ David E. Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, WBC 52A (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 29.

¹⁹ John F. Walvoord, *Revelation*, The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Wheaton: Victor, 1985), 2:928.

²⁰ Gerald L. Stevens, *New Testament Greek* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1997), Accordance electronic ed., 349.

²¹ Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, 481.

joy and peace in the believer. This peace which God gives “surpasses all understanding” (Phil 4:7).

Patience

God is widely recognized in the OT as a God of patience. Moses declared as the Lord passed before him on the top of Mount Sinai: “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger [patience], and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin” (Exod 34:6). Other translations translate the words אֶרֶב אַפַּיִם (slow to anger) as “longsuffering” (NKJV) or “patient” (Douay). Apart from this text, God is declared as a merciful, gracious, and patient God in Neh 9:17; Pss 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; and Joel 2:13. Also the Greek word μακροθυμία (patience, long-suffering)²² is a compound word from μακρός and θυμός where the first has the meaning of “long” and the second of “passion.”²³ Peter affirms that God’s patience waited in the days of Noah (1 Pet 3:20). In other words, God has a long breath with fallen humans. Paul when writing to Timothy states that by having received God’s mercy Jesus’s *perfect patience* was displayed in His life as an example to those who were to believe in Him for eternal life (1 Tim 1:16). Peter affirms that “the Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance” (2 Pet 3:9). A few verses later, he says to “count the patience of our Lord as

²² Robert L. Thomas, “μακροθυμία,” *Greek Dictionary of the New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance* para. 3354.

²³ Robert L. Thomas, “θυμός,” *Greek Dictionary of the New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance* para. 2574.

salvation” (v. 15). “What would happen to humans if God and Jesus would not be so patient?” Everyone would all be lost. Nonetheless, thanks to the Lord that He is merciful, gracious, and patient.

As God is patient with humans, Paul encourages believers as God’s chosen ones to clothe themselves with patience (Col 3:12). Patience is a very important quality and the key to bear fruit according to the Parable of the Sower (Luke 8:15) and together with faith, inherit the promises given by God (Heb 6:12).

Kindness

χρηστότης which is commonly translated as “kindness” expresses also goodness and benignity.²⁴ “Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?” (Rom 2:4). In this verse, Paul highlights two things about God’s kindness. One is that God’s kindness is *rich* in the sense that it is abundant.²⁵ The abundant kindness is also expressed in the words: “Note then the kindness and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God’s kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise you too will be cut off” (Rom 11:22). The second emphasis on God’s abundant kindness is that it leads to repentance so not to be cut off but being raised up with Christ to sit with Him in the heavenly places “so that in the coming ages he [God] might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:6-7). God

²⁴ Joseph H. Thayer, “χρηστότης,” *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Being Grimm’s Wilke’s Clavis Novi Testamenti* 672.

²⁵ Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, and William F. Arndt, “χρηστότης,” *BDAG* 1090.

expresses His abundant kindness towards humans in Christ because no one deserves His kindness.

Goodness

In the OT, several Psalm songs have been written about the goodness of God (Pss 25:7; 27:13; 31:19; 68:10; 145:7). The prophet Zechariah describes the saving act of the Lord with the following exclamation: “How great is his goodness, and how great his beauty!” (Zech 9:17). God’s goodness is great as is His kindness. In Solomon’s prayer of dedication, he pleads to God to let the “saints rejoice in your goodness” (2 Chr 6:41). Israel, after having celebrated a feast during seven days in the presence of king Solomon, returned “to their homes joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness that the LORD had shown to David his servant and to Israel his people” (1 Kgs 8:66). In another occasion, the people of Israel confessed their sin and recognized God’s goodness He had shown to the Israelites during the Exodus and the conquest of the promised land (Neh 9). They point out that God had led them to possess the promised land and had cast out before them all the pagan nations, so they “captured fortified cities and a rich land, and took possession of houses full of all good things, cisterns already hewn, vineyards, olive orchards and fruit trees in abundance. So they ate and were filled and became fat and delighted themselves in your ‘great goodness’” (9:24-25). When God turns mourning into joy, the Israelites “shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion, and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the LORD” (Jer 31:12). These experiences show that when God’s goodness is witnessed, it is impossible to keep it for oneself. When people get in touch with the goodness of God, they will rejoice and delight and express radiant faces.

In the NT, there are only three other texts apart from Gal 5 which deal with goodness using the Greek word ἀγαθωσύνη (goodness, generosity, beneficence).²⁶ The first is found in Eph 5:9, which is a parallel text to Gal 5 where Paul calls believers to walk as children of light for the fruit of light is found in all that is good, right, and true. While Paul prays to God asking Him to fulfill every desire of goodness in the life of the believers in Thessalonica (2 Thess 1:11), he is gratified to see that his prayer request is answered in the life of the disciples in Rome as they are full of goodness (Rom 15:14).

Faithfulness

In the Book of Hebrews, one finds a definition of faith: “Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Heb 11:1). This faith should work “through love” (Gal 5:6) so that faith should not be a blind faith but one that grows through love for God and Jesus Christ. Even though faith is also mentioned as a gift of the Spirit (1 Cor 12:9), most texts dealing with faith are associated to the fruit of the Spirit. One reason is that faith comes from hearing the word of Christ (10:17) and implies the characteristic of growth (Rom 4:20; 2 Thess 1:3). Faith is not something static nor somehow limited or restricted but if nurtured can grow unto an unlimited strength.

God is defined as a “faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments” (Deut 7:9). The psalmist has the confidence to entrust his spirit into God’s hand because He is a “faithful God” who

²⁶ William D. Mounce and Rick D. Bennett Jr., “ἀγαθωσύνη,” *Mounce Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament* (Altamonte Springs: Oak Tree Software, 2011), para. 142.

redeems (Ps 31:5). The Lord is also depicted as a “faithful Lord” in all His words (Ps 145:13) who establishes and guards one against the evil one (2 Thess 3:3).

Faith also plays an important role when it comes to salvation. In Heb 11 where the definition of faith is given, Noah is mentioned to have become an “heir of the righteousness that comes by faith” (v. 7). Not only to Noah but also to Abraham, the father of faith, righteousness was counted to him according to his faith in God (Rom 4:3, 9, 13, 22; Gal 3:6). There is no distinction between the OT and the NT in regard to being righteous before God. Righteousness comes always by faith, that is the reason why “the righteous shall live by faith” (Hab 2:4; Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11; Heb 10:38). The righteousness of God is through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe (Rom 3:22). Not only righteousness comes through faith but also, justification (Rom 5:1; Gal 2:16; 3:11, 24). Paul maintains “that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law” (Rom 3:28). So both, righteousness and justification come through faith in Jesus Christ.

After the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the Pentecost, Stephen is mentioned as being full (πληρώω) of faith and the Holy Spirit (Acts 6:5) and Barnabas, to be full (πληρώω) of the Holy Spirit and of faith (11:24). When a person is full of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit’s fruit of faithfulness is found in fullness in the life of a disciple.

Gentleness

The Greek word *πραΰτης* has “the quality of not being overly impressed by a sense of one’s self-importance”²⁷ and can be translated as gentleness, humility, and

²⁷ Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, and William F. Arndt, “*πραΰτης*,” BDAG 861.

meekness.²⁸ Sometime *πραΰτης* is translated in the NT as gentleness and other times as meekness. But there is also another Greek word that has the meaning of gentleness, that is, *ἐπιείκεια* (gentleness, fairness)²⁹ which is used in 2 Cor 10:1 together with *πραΰτης* to describe Christ's meekness and gentleness. Paul, being an imitator of Christ's character, could urge believers in Corinth in the "meekness and gentleness of Christ" (2 Cor 10:1). Writing to the Colossians, Paul commands the disciples to put on the character of Christ by dressing themselves with meekness (Col 3:12) and becoming imitators of Christ as He is from Him (1 Cor 11:1). To put on the character of Christ can be understood as to walk in a worthy manner with "all humility and gentleness" according to the call one has been called (Eph 4:1-2).

Paul also writes to the disciples of different churches in what spirit they should exhort, correct, and restore one another. He emphasizes that this should be done in a "spirit of gentleness" (Gal 6:1; 1 Cor 4:21). Nonetheless, they should not only show this spirit of gentleness to their fellow believers but also to their opponents and correct them with gentleness (2 Tim 2:25). A believer should be ready anytime for every good work and "to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people" (Tit 3:2).

²⁸ Robert L. Thomas, "πραΰτης," *Greek Dictionary of the New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance* para. 4409.

²⁹ Robert L. Thomas, "ἐπιείκεια," *Greek Dictionary of the New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance* para. 2116.

Self-Control

The Greek word for self-control or temperance is ἐγκράτεια (Acts 24:25; Gal 5:23; 2 Pet 1:6), which is “the virtue of one who masters his desires and passions, especially his sensual appetites”³⁰ and comes from the word ἐγκρατής (Tit 1:8) which is a composed word of ἐν (in, with, by, to) and κράτος (power, strength, *great* vigor, dominion)³¹ and has the meaning of being “strong in” something or oneself, to have self-dominion or self-control.³²

Paul encourages the believers to “be strong in the Lord and in the strength [κράτος] of his might” (Eph 6:10) as they have been “strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might [κράτος], for all endurance and patience with joy” (Col 1:11). Jesus is depicted in these verses to possess mighty strength and glorious might and because of the salvific work Jesus performed, dominion (κράτος) should be to Him forever and ever (1 Tim 6:16; 1 Pet 4:11; 5:11; Jude 25; Rev 1:6). Jesus not only had a good, kind, and gentle spirit but also showed in His life strength, dominion, and self-control. Some glimpses of Jesus’s self-control are seen in His temptations in the desert; when He was tested by the spiritual leaders, Pharisees and Sadducees, to find something against Him; when He was denied by Peter, a beloved disciple, and betrayed by Judas; when He was brought before Annas, Caiaphas, and the Council where false accusations were made against Him and an officer of Annas struck Him with the hand; when Jesus

³⁰ Joseph H. Thayer, “ἐγκράτεια,” *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Being Grimm’s Wilke’s Clavis Novi Testamenti* 167.

³¹ James Strong, “κράτος,” *Strong’s Greek Dictionary of the New Testament* para. 2919.

³² Johan Lust, Erik Eynikel, and Katrin Hauspie, “ἐγκρατής,” *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint* para. 9307.

was interrogated by Pilate and Herod; and finally, during His flagellation, mockery, and crucifixion. Jesus never returned nor repaid anything bad to one of His enemies nor wished them anything bad but treated them with love and respect, even though they mistreated Him.

Paul preached about righteousness and self-control and the coming judgment to the governor Felix and his wife Drusilla (Acts 24:24-25). Peter, on the other hand, urged Jesus's disciples to

become partakers of the divine nature . . . 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 qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Pet 1:4-8).

Within these qualities which Peter associates with the divine nature, self-control (ἐγκρατής) is one of them. Another highlight of this text is that all these qualities of the divine nature have the ability to grow and must increase and become mature in the life of a believer.

Parallel Texts of the New Testament to Galatians 5

As mentioned before, the nine character traits delineated in the fruit of the Spirit of Gal 5 are not exclusive but inclusive. The divine nature includes more than only these nine character traits.³³ On one hand, there are different expressions or terms of fruit and

³³ R. Alan Cole, *Galatians: An Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC 9 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 220: The use of fruit “suggests that all these spiritual qualities, and many more, are the spontaneous product of the presence of the Spirit of Christ within the heart of the Christian.”

on the other hand, different texts from Paul and other NT writers in which character properties of God are addressed, apart from Gal 5.

Different Terms for Fruit of the Spirit

Alternative terms for the fruit of the Spirit which Paul uses are “fruit of light” (Eph 5:8-10), “fruit of righteousness” (Phil 1:11; Jas 3:18), and “fruit of lips” (Heb 13:15). Describing the fruit of light, Paul mentions two new qualities of God’s holy character, righteousness and truthfulness. The fruit of righteousness is more developed in Jas 3:17-18 alluding to other qualities like wisdom, mercifulness, impartiality, and sincerity. Paul states that a sacrifice of praise to God is the fruit of lips (Heb 13:15). Here the sacrificial attitude or characteristic quality of God is emphasized which found its climax in Christ who “gave himself up for us, as fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (Eph 5:2). As Christ offered Himself as a sacrifice, one should present his or her body as a “living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship” (Rom 12:1). By using other terms for fruit of the Spirit, other qualities of God’s character are accentuated.

Other Character Properties of God

In Rom 5:2-5, Paul develops the sanctification process of the character. He affirms that a believer should rejoice of two things. One, of the precious hope of the glory of God and second, of knowing that sufferings bring forth a proven character. In the sanctification process of the character where it is ennobled to its perfection by facing sufferings, other qualities like perseverance or endurance, as well as hope are developed. The last (hope) does not disappoint anyone because God’s love is poured out into the hearts of the believers through the Holy Spirit who is given to them (Rom 5:5).

Paul affirms that God's love, agape, is given through His Spirit and this love does not disappoint anyone because it is the foundation on which all the other character traits are built. Endurance and hope are both traits of the divine nature. Not only is God mentioned as "God of endurance and encouragement" in Rom 15:5 but endurance is also related to Jesus in 2 Thess 3:5. God is also labeled as a "God of hope" who fills people with all joy and peace in believing so that by the power of the Holy Spirit, they may abound in hope (Rom 15:13). Hope is a gift given by God through His Spirit to encourage everyone in difficult times not to give up but to fight the battle of faith.

The *new self* created after the *likeness of God* which has been renewed in the Spirit (Eph 4:23-24) expands the character properties to holiness (v. 24), tender-hearted, and forgiving because God forgave us in Christ (v. 32).

Other parallel texts are Col 3:12-17 where Paul commands the believers to *put on* diverse character properties of God as His chosen ones. In 1 Thess 1:2-7, the disciples became imitators of the Lord by possessing the same qualities in their lives and having become an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. Peter in his Second Letter (2 Pet 1:1-11) gives glory to God that through His exceedingly great promises, the disciples became "partakers of the divine nature" which means that they possessed the same character qualities as God has as they were "'participating' or 'sharing' in it."³⁴

In 1 Cor 13, where love is described in four properties (patience, kindness, joy, and faithfulness); from Gal 5 endurance and hope are as well mentioned. In fact, the chapter about love (1 Cor 13) describes God's nature and character in a broader and more detailed way.

³⁴ Peter H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 172-173.

So it can be concluded that God's holy character consists of more than just the nine properties of the fruit of the Spirit mentioned in Gal 5, which makes God's character even more multifaceted.

Fruit as Singular

Fruit Versus Works

While Paul uses the word "fruit" (Gal 5:22) in the singular, the word "works" (v. 19) is used in the plural form. He highlights that there is but one "fruit of the Spirit." While some interprets that "the fruit of the Spirit is singular, namely, love, and that what follows (vv. 22, 23) are varying facets of love"³⁵ it can be sustained that they represent a unity³⁶ "grouped into three well-balanced triplets: (1) love, joy, peace; (2) patience, kindness, goodness; (3) faithfulness, gentleness, self-control"³⁷ that cannot be separated nor divided. This one fruit represents Christ's character³⁸ and includes all of the enumerated qualities in vv. 22 and 23. It can be understood as the orange with its carpels

³⁵ Wesley L. Gerig, "Fruit of the Spirit," *BEB* 819.

³⁶ Ernest D. Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*, ICC (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1920), 313: "The use of the singular serves to present all the experiences and elements of character in the ensuing list as a unity, together constituting the result of living by the Spirit."

³⁷ Timothy George, *Galatians*, NAC 30 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 391.

³⁸ G. Walter Hansen, *Galatians*, IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), Gal 5:22: "*The fruit of the Spirit* is the moral character developed by the power of the Spirit. The nine character qualities are a unity, a perfectly formed Christlike character."

(segments) which form the fruit as a whole. Or using the illustration of Jesus about the true vine, the grape can be understood as the fruit and the individual berries as the nine character traits listed by Paul. Another argument why it is suggested that the fruit is a single one is because a tree cannot bring forth two different kinds of fruits. Even Jesus affirmed that “each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush” (Luke 6:44). In other words, all of these character traits are to be present in the life of a Christian as they build a unity, and it cannot be said that a person is bearing the fruit of the Spirit if anyone is missing.³⁹ But the fruit of the Spirit may not be fully matured yet, so that the different qualities can be present in a more mature or less mature state, or in other words, in a more or less sanctified state in the life of a Christian.

Fruit Versus Gifts

“Why does Paul use the phrase fruit of the Spirit in the singular whereas gifts of the Spirit is used plural as with works?” As mentioned above, the nine qualities he mentions in Gal 5 are all one package and cannot be picked nor chosen individually as one desires. When a person experiences a new birth in the Spirit and the person is filled by and with the Spirit, the whole bundle of the fruit of the Spirit is given to the believer to develop a Christ-like character. By contrast, the different gifts of the Spirit mentioned in 1 Cor 12, Eph 4, and Rom 12 are apportioned and distributed to each believer individually according to God’s grace (Rom 12:6) and the Spirit’s will (1 Cor 12:11; Heb

³⁹ Nichol, *Acts to Ephesians*, 981.

2:4), for the common good of Christ's body (1 Cor 12:7) and to build up the church (14:5, 12).⁴⁰

Not only the gifts of the Spirit are distributed individually by the Spirit, so that not all believers receive the same spiritual gifts but as what the Parable of the Talents teaches that the gifts are assigned in different amounts according to the individual ability of each believer (Matt 25:15). In comparison to the fruit of the Spirit which is given as an indivisible bundle, the diverse "gifts of the Spirit" are distributed by the Spirit with a great variety of abilities and quantities.

An additional distinction between the fruit of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit is that fruit denotes the property of growing and maturing, while the supernatural gifts⁴¹ are given in full measure without progression. The person who has received the gift of healing has not received this gift with restrictions in the sense that the person can heal a sick person only partially so that the person only becomes half-healed. Or the person who received the gift of prophecy, whether he or she has the gift of prophetic speech or not. There is nothing in between nor halfway.

⁴⁰ M. G. Easton, "Gifts, Spiritual," *Easton's Bible Dictionary* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1893).

⁴¹ David Prior, *The Message of 1 Corinthians: Life in the Local Church*, *The Bible Speaks Today* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 198: "Classic Pentecostalism used to teach firmly that these nine gifts in verses 8–10 [1 Cor. 12] are the special, 'supernatural' (*sic*) gifts of God to his church." This distinction between natural gifts and supernatural gifts is sometimes made and debated.

Another important distinction is that the gifts of the Spirit can be distributed and given temporarily,⁴² so that they do not always have to be present, while the fruit of the Spirit is given to the Spirit-filled believer with no time limit nor time restriction. For example, one does not read in Christian history nor experience today the gift of speaking other languages nor the gift of healing, as it was manifested in the time of the apostles, where many unbelievers heard the disciples preach the Gospel in their own dialects and many people were healed by miracles. Another example is the gift of prophetic speech, which was absent among God's people during the intertestamental time for more than 400 years.

In 1 Cor 13, Paul not only prioritizes the fruit of the Spirit over the gifts of the Spirit by affirming that even if a person could speak in any tongue of men or angels or has the power of prophetic speech yet has no love, that person would gain nothing (1 Cor 13:1-3). He also emphasizes that the fruit will never end and will even exist in the New Heaven and New Earth, while the gifts shall vanish and no longer exist (1 Cor 13:8, 13). This temporary restriction should not only be understood as during a certain era of time or during a period of a believer's life but also in the sense that the gifts will disappear once and for all, while the fruit will remain forever. This is reasonable when one understands that the fruit of the Spirit has to do with character traits and that the character will be taken into eternal life and be perfected there, while the gifts that serve for the proclamation of the Gospel and for edification of the body of Christ will no longer be necessary in the New Earth, as everyone will live in God's presence, see Him face to

⁴² Easton, "Gifts, Spiritual," para. 3001: "These charismata were enjoyed only for a time. They could not continue always in the Church. They were suited to its infancy and to the necessities of those times."

face, and God Himself will teach humans. This was already predicted by God through the prophet Jeremiah and was again taken up by Paul in the Epistle to the Hebrews. “I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts. . . . And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest” (Heb 8:10-11).

Finally, there is another important point why the fruit is considered above the gifts is the simple fact that one is recognized by the fruit and not by the gifts (Luke 6:44). The character testifies about the true identity and relationship with Christ and not the gifts,⁴³ as they can be falsified, since false prophets can do great signs and miracles performing them in the name of the Lord, despite the fact that they do not come from God (Matt 24:24; 7:22-23).

While the fruit of the Spirit serves for sanctification and personal character building, the gifts of the Spirit serve to build up the community of believers represented as the body of Christ (Eph 4:12) and to preach the Gospel to the confines of the earth.

Against the “Fruit of the Spirit” Is Now Law

This topic has already been partly touched on but is examined in more detail here. Within the broader context of a Spirit-filled life and the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:16-25), Paul mentions the law four times. Firstly, he affirms that every man who accepts circumcision “is obligated to keep the whole law” (v. 3); secondly, that “the law is fulfilled in one word: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (v. 14); thirdly, that a

⁴³ Cole, *Galatians*, 221: “It is interesting that Paul does not use here the presence of spiritual gifts, equally coming from the Spirit, as a proof of spiritual life, although such gifts seem to have existed among the Galatians (‘works miracles among you’, 3:5). Perhaps it is because fruit of the Spirit cannot be simulated, while gifts of the Spirit can (Matt. 7:22).”

person who is led by the Spirit is “not under the law” (v. 18); and finally, “against such things there is no law” (v. 23) referring to the properties of the “fruit of the Spirit.”

God by sending Jesus in the likeness of sinful flesh condemned sin in the flesh, so that the “righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us” (Rom 8:3-4) who walk according to the Spirit. There are three acts of God on human’s behalf to fulfill the requirements of the law. The Father sent His son, Jesus offered Himself as an atoning sacrifice, and the Spirit helps people to walk in harmony with the law of God. In the NT, it is found that love is the fulfillment of the law (Rom 13:8, 10; Gal 5:14) as well the fulfillment of “the law of Christ” (Gal 6:2) and the “royal law” (Jas 2:8). Love is God’s essential nature (1 John 4:8) and this love has been poured into the hearts through the Holy Spirit (Rom 5:5). As God lives and acts according to the laws (physical, spiritual, and moral) and God’s nature consist of love which has been given through the Holy Spirit, there can be no law against it (Gal 5:23).

A Spirit-led person is “not under the law” (Gal 5:18). “Which law does Paul address and how is the statement ‘not under the law’ to be understood?” The expression “under the law” appears a number of times in Paul’s writings (Rom 2:12; 3:19; 6:14; 1 Cor 9:20-21; Gal 3:23; 4:4, 21; 5:18; Phil 3:6; Heb 9:22). Paul emphasizes that “before faith came, we were held captive ‘under the law’” (Gal 3:23); that “all who have sinned ‘under the law’ will be judged by the law” (Rom 2:12); that God has sent His Son when the fullness of time had come, to be “born ‘under the law,’ to redeem those who were ‘under the law’” (Gal 4:4); that he (Paul) “became as one ‘under the law [though not

being myself ‘under the law’] that I might win those ‘under the law’” (1 Cor 9:21),⁴⁴ that “indeed, ‘under the law’ almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins” (Heb 9:22); and finally that the believers are “not under law but under grace” (Rom 6:14). All these texts make an allusion to the ceremonial law with its ordinances and not to the moral law, the Ten Commandments. Under the new covenant, the ceremonial law came to its fulfillment with the death of Christ so no one is under the law anymore, emphasizing that one does not have to fulfill the different requirements of the ceremonial law. This conclusion is confirmed within the context of Gal 5 where Paul states that every man who lets himself be circumcised “is obligated to keep the whole law” (Gal 5:3). As circumcision is part of the law of Moses (ceremonial law, John 7:23) and since the ceremonial law has come to its fulfillment and end with the sacrifice of Jesus, humans are no longer under the law but under grace. In this sense, Paul affirms that “if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law” (Gal 5:18).

Finally, “against such things there is no law” (v. 23) has to be understood in the light of the holy qualities of God which are in full harmony with the law.⁴⁵ The nine properties of the fruit of the Spirit were expanded by the parallel texts where the

⁴⁴ The sort of thing in mind is his circumcision of Timothy (Acts 16:1-3) and his joining in Jewish “purification rites” (Acts 21:23-26). Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians*, TNTC 7 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), Accordance electronic ed., 136. Referring to those “under the law,” Paul means those who still keep the law of Moses (ceremonial law) even Paul clearly states that “Christ is the end of the law” (Rom 10:4).

⁴⁵ Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest’s Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English Reader*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 161: “There is no law against such things, has the effect of an emphatic statement that these things fully meet the demands of the law.”

additional qualities are linked to the “divine nature” (2 Pet 1:4), the “likeness of God” (Eph 4:24), and the “kingdom of God” (Rom 14:17). Not only is there no law against God’s holy character and nature but there is even no law against a Spirit-filled person who bears the fruit of the Spirit because his deeds meet the demands of the law.

What Makes the Fruit Grow?

Within Paul’s writings, there are basically two things that promote growth of the fruit. On one hand, faith will increase by hearing the word of Christ (Rom 11) and on the other hand, the fruit of righteousness will grow through God’s discipline (Heb 12)

Paul’s writing about the unfaithfulness of Israel in Rom 10 affirms that faith which is mentioned in Gal 5:22 as part of the fruit of the Spirit comes from hearing the word of Christ (Rom 10:17), and that they have no excuse for their unbelief as the word was preached unto “the end of the world” (v. 18). Faith is something dynamic in the sense that it can grow or decrease. There are not just two options: to have faith or to not believe. It is not like with the common light switch where light is on or off. It is much more like with a dimmer switch where you can dim from very low light to bright light. In the same sense, faith increases and is strengthened by reading and or hearing the word of God.

Paul compares the short discipline of the earthly fathers with God’s discipline for eternal life (Heb 12:4-11). If people are being disciplined by God, it shows that they are His children because “the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives” (v. 5). The discipline that God applies on humans’ behalf has the aim to bring forth the “fruits of peace and righteousness” (v. 11) and to share His holiness (v. 10). The concept of discipline displays even more plainly the idea of growing the fruit of the Spirit as peace and righteousness will increase with each discipline.

Purpose of Fruit

Within Paul's writings, sanctification and salvation are the main purposes of bearing fruit.

In Rom 6:22, Paul lists one of the aims of the fruits and that is sanctification or holiness. The same aim is repeated as "share His holiness" in Heb 12:10. God's holy character should be reflected in one's own character by sanctification through the Holy Spirit (2 Thess 2:13).

However, Paul also affirms that salvation comes through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth (2 Thess 2:13). So that sanctification is like a mid-goal where the ultimate goal of the fruit of the Spirit is eternal life (Rom 6:22). The whole transforming act of the Holy Spirit is to prepare the hearts and characters to live eternally in the presence of God.

Conclusion

In Gal 5 where the fruit of the Spirit is mentioned, Paul uses four distinctive verbs to indicate how a fruitful Spirit-filled life can be obtained. Then he lists nine qualities of the fruit of the Spirit that have the ability to grow and mature and must increase until the "measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:13) in the life of a believer. In Paul's writings, fruit stands for character qualities which should be sanctified through the Holy Spirit and represent God's holy character. Paul emphasizes the importance of sanctification to obtain a Christlike character and that salvation comes through sanctification and belief in the truth. Finally, Paul accentuates the fruit of the Spirit over the gifts of the Spirit and that the indicator for a Spirit-filled person is the fruit of the Spirit.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Since each chapter has its own conclusions, I am not repeating them here but am summarizing the essence of the study.

The Bible highlights that God is the one who oversees and directs the production of fruit in the natural world. The apostle Paul and other NT writers use this process of nature to describe the work of the Spirit in the life of the believer. When the Spirit enters and begins to work with the person, he produces in him fruit just like how a plant produces fruits. This fruit is described by the nine characteristics of Gal 5:22-23 but is not limited to them. In essence, the fruit of the Spirit encapsulates everything that describes the character of God.

The implications are tremendous. Most Christians associate the work of the Spirit with supernatural exciting manifestations. They search for excitement and not holiness. Even within the Adventist Church, the coming of the latter rain is often associated with expectations of explosive church growth and miracles. However, in reality, the work of the Holy Spirit during the latter rain is to prepare the character of God's people for the kingdom of God. This is what should be sought for.

It is my conviction that the work of the Holy Spirit needs to be on the forefront of studies, preachings, and contemplations to counter balance wrong perceptions sweeping the Christian world. To this effect, I hope that others will pick up the mantle of research.

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