

Non-Negotiable: The Fruit of the Spirit

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Reading Time: 3 minutes

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law (Gal. 5:22-23)

No government in the history of the world will ever make a law declaring it illegal to practice self-control. It would be nonsensical and ludicrous. There has never been a *Declaration of Impatience*—that all men are created impatient—recognizing impatience as an inalienable right. A longsuffering spirit will always be seen as a virtue—even in a post-Christian, secular age.

Yet when it comes to the Fruit of the Spirit as described in Galatians 5:22-23, many self-identifying Christians seem to think these virtues are mere *suggestions*. Even more are under the illusion that because salvation is a gift from God, there are no requirements expected of their conduct in order to receive it.

However, the Bible teaches that Christians are in fact under a spiritual law today (Rom. 8:1-2) and thus obligated to meet God's requirements for salvation. We have been made free from the law of sin and death, and are now living under a law written upon our hearts (Heb. 8:9-10). The *only* way to demonstrate adherence to this spiritual law is by bearing the fruit of the Spirit. It is non-negotiable.

An obedient child of God must demonstrate **self-control**. If there is ever a time when we lose our self-control, we should repent and confess our sin. Just as Jesus was **meeek** (Matt. 11:28-30), every disciple striving to conform to His manner of life should be meek as well. Pride and arrogance are the opposite of meekness; God hates a proud look (Pro. 6:17). There should be no such thing as a proud Christian.

Faith comes through the diligent study of God's word (Rom. 10:17; 2 Tim. 2:15). Failure to trust God in moments of critical decisions is evidence of spiritual unfruitfulness. The most basic of all spiritual qualities is pure **goodness**. Intentionally choosing to be bad with a single word, thought, or deed is a violation of God's spiritual law. **Kindness** is an expression of the Spirit's presence in our hearts with which too many Christians struggle. Excuses don't make it right. How can it be hard for some Christians to be kind? If cruelty, unkindness, or meanness ever describe you, learn to choose a different reaction in those moments! Our Lord was the most **patient** individual ever to live. He endured the cross knowing he was innocent. Patience in the face of temptation is part of the law of Christ (Jam. 1:12).

The **peace** of God may exceed our understanding (Phi. 4:7), but that peace is also the result of a particular understanding. Peace is the result of understanding and trusting God's perfect control. If we cannot find peace in our souls, we are not bearing the fruit of the Spirit. I define **joy** as happiness with contentment. Being happy is great. But being joyful is even better. Joy exceeds happiness because joy knows there is nothing better than what I already possess in my soul — the joy of God's salvation (Psa. 51:12). A malcontent is breaking the spiritual law by which Christians live. **Love** is essential (1 Cor. 13). A selfless search for the best in and for other people will result in the greatest joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, and self-control that a person can experience. To view anyone—whether in the workplace, in politics, in sports, or in our homes—with even an ounce of hatred means the law of Christ has been broken in your heart.

God be thanked that the blood of Jesus Christ His son cleanses us from our sins (1 John 1:7-9). None of us can be perfect in demonstrating the fruit of the Spirit. But the law of Christ **requires** that we pursue perfect adherence with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength. Total commitment to exhibiting these virtues is not up for negotiation in the Christian's life. To be "on the fence" —to be lukewarm (Rev. 3:16)—to be double-minded is

detestable (Jam. 1:8).

Paul says there is no law *against* the fruit of the Spirit, but he never explicitly states that bearing fruit is part of the spiritual law either. We understand it is the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus that *compels* us to bear fruit. Jesus said if we do not bear fruit we will be cast forth and burned like an empty branch. He also said that to bear fruit we must abide in Him (John 15:1-8). Producing the fruit of the Spirit in our lives is a non-negotiable matter. What kind of fruit are you producing?