

Grow Upward Bearing the Fruit of the Spirit Աճէ՛ Հոգիի՞ն Պտուղներով

Galatians 5:22-26

On a very hot day in August, I entered a shop (I don't want to advertise) to buy some groceries. Lo and behold, I see Christmas trees. I just laughed and passed by. Then I stopped and turned back to see what was new. It was the same “old” tree, made in China, with Christmas ornaments and lights. These trees are seasonal. We use them to decorate our homes, then we take them down; either we dispose of them, if they are real trees, or we fold them and put them in the garage waiting for the next season. And the “fruits” (which have not grown on them) we put in boxes.

Christians who live in the Spirit, **bear fruit**. **These fruits are not artificial**. They are grown on a tree. Real fruit must grow out of life, and in our case, it is the life of the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit will grow on the tree **that is rooted on Christ**. The ordinary tree does not look like a Christmas tree. Why? A Christmas tree is a **show**; it **is fake**; it is only **decorative**; it is **seasonal**; it is temporary. Ordinary trees do not look very “showy” and are in no need of decorative lights, but if they’re cared for they will go on bearing fruit year by year. They will be in the garden of trees next to each other, holding each other, and bearing fruit year after year until one day they die having accomplished their mission on this earth.

Paul wants us to **be built up, to grow, to bear fruit**. And **God is not done with us yet**. This is the right attitude to learn how to grow upward to build up the “temple” of God or to become the tree that bears His fruit.

Last Sunday I went over the works of the flesh that oppose the works of Spirit. The flesh and the Spirit are constantly in war with each other. I hope you did go over the list of the works of the flesh and examined your life.

As I said last Sunday, our spiritual bodies can grow in a community; in relationships. Christianity is not a solo life; our relationship with each other truly matters. I asked you to encourage someone. I prayed that you did!

From the beginning God did not want Adam to be alone. All creation was good, yet Adam was alone. So God said:

“It is not good that the man should be alone” (Gen 2:18).

So since the beginning, God created us **in His image**. **He created us so we can be in relationship with Him and each other.** Since the beginning, God wanted **us to be connected with Him and each other.** I will stress this idea over and over. As I said last time, we are freed through Christ **to love each other**. And love cannot be practiced alone. It does not matter if you are married or single. We are called to be connected and to be in a relationship with each other.

Speaking of relationships, out of the fifteen sins in the list of the works of flesh (Gal. 5: 19-21), **eight** have something to do with the **breakdown of relationships**. Today I will go over the fruit of the Spirit. In these verses Paul lists **nine characteristics** of the **fruit of the Spirit**. Do you see it is fruit of Spirit and not fruits. **Every characteristic in the list is an attribute of God.**

**Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness,
faithfulness, gentleness, self-control;**

-All these fruits are practiced in a community, in the church family and also outside the church in your daily life.

Paul emphasized this to the Christians of Rome saying:

“so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another” (12:5).

What does **“individually members of one another”** mean? We need to be connected with each other; and only in that situation the fruit of the Spirit is manifested.

We are a building, where God is building us every day by His Spirit. Paul says:

in whom (Christ) you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God. (Eph 2:22)

We are not alone. We are a community. **We are built up together spiritually.** I will urge you to take our phone book and read the names of the families. Examine and see how many of those you know? How many of those families you can connect with? It is a challenge, a good one. We need to be connected with each other. There is no other way for the fruit of the Spirit to show.

Last Sunday we said **the flesh will oppose our growth.** So what is the alternative?

The alternative is to allow the power of God's Spirit to direct our life. How? **Walk in the spirit.** Paul would say, **"live or walk in the Spirit."**

-In Romans 8:6 Paul writes,

"Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires."

You need to **intentionally focus on walking with the Lord,** allowing the Spirit to mold you and shape you. It needs focus and attention.

Now let us go to the list of these fruits. If you realize it has been said **Fruit of the Spirit.** It is as if this single fruit has multiple flavors (tutti frutti). The point is all these flavors remind us of the love of Christ to us.

The first of these is *love*.

It should not surprise us that **love tops the list.** Paul has already stated that it is for this reason that we have been set free. **"We are freed to LOVE."**

-When I look to my life, the first thing I experienced as a Christian is the Love of God through his Son Jesus Christ. **"God so loved the world that he gave his son..."**

-As we embrace our **acceptance as sons and daughters,** then we are set **free to truly love others the way God loves us.**

Our model for loving is Christ himself who died and rose again.

Our model for loving is the God the Father who sent his Son for our salvation.

Our teacher, reminder, comforter, and energizer for loving is the Holy Spirit.

-Notice that **love stands in direct contrast to the self-centeredness** of most of the characteristics on the list of the works of the flesh.

-Love means having the **compassionate heart** of the Father, initiating **forgiveness**, and **giving without expecting** anything in return, I'll call it unconditional love.¹

During the week some texted me or talked with me about last weeks's assignment. Why don't you call someone or meet someone and encourage that person:

Here is a text from our parishioners:

Hi Badveli,

Just wanted to let you know that I did what you challenged us to do in church. I spoke with a friend who I had not spoken to in almost twenty years. It was a great conversation we caught up on many things. It was as though a great burden has been lifted off of me. I really feel as though God has wanted me to do that for a long time, but I was either proud or afraid. I do feel a great bit of freedom...

God's love is so enormous and beautiful that transcends all of our barriers. Do you remember when we were studying 1 Thessalonians. Paul mentions about motherly love, self giving motherly love:

But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us. (1 Thessalonians 2:7-8 ESV)

We cared for you the way a mother cares for her children. We loved you dearly. Not content to just pass on the Message, we wanted to give you our hearts. And we did. (1 Thess 2:7-8 MSG)

Nursing Mother...

Today we will approach the table that Jesus prepared. It is table of LOVE. He gave himself for us, for our salvation.

Let us leave this place being aware that we should not be artificial trees which has the fruits for decoration and not genuine real ones.

Let us examine our life, and be ready to receive the Sprit of our Lord who is the source of the fruit.

Let us approach to the table that our Lord prepared

1 N.T. Wright