Paul speaks in Galatians 5:22 about “the fruit of the Spirit.” He chooses the image of fruit to represent the work of the Spirit because producing fruit is what fruit trees do by nature. It belongs to their nature as fruit trees to produce fruit, and to produce fruit in keeping with their kind. Apple trees produce apples and so on. And the promise of the gospel of Pentecost is that this is what Christ will do for you by the gift of the Spirit.

So instead of taking the automatic position of self-interest in your marriage and in your business dealings and in your friendships, trying to get those around you to do what you want and to get what you want out of them, it’s going to become natural for you to ask, “How can I serve them?” Because the fruit of the Spirit is love.

Instead of having your emotions and your confidence determined by whether things are going your way, whether your life is turning out the way you wanted it to, joy will be your natural disposition. Because the Spirit draws your focus to God’s love for you in Christ and the fact that you are a child of God. The fruit of the Spirit is joy.

Instead of tensions, disappointments, and disagreements keeping you apart from this one and that one, your life will be a life of peace, because you want and you work to bridge the gaps and right the wrongs by asking for forgiveness and granting forgiveness. The fruit of the Spirit is peace.

Instead of automatically feeling frustrated because other people aren’t treating you the way they should, because for some reason God has decided not to give you some good gift, like financial success, or good health, or a marriage partner, or children, you’ll be patient, because you trust the love and wisdom of the Lord, and you wait for Him. The fruit of the Spirit is patience.

Instead of resenting it when other people ask you to set aside your plans and to help them, instead of looking down on those who are different from you, instead of criticizing others who don’t measure up to your standards, instead of ignoring the needs and the struggles of the people around you, it will be natural for you to recognize those needs and to sympathize with their struggles. Because the fruit of the Spirit is kindness.

Instead of setting your standards by what others do, you’ll begin to want to do what is right, and to strive to set things right, and to see the ugliness and the wrongness of the way things are. You’ll begin to grieve about all the evil in the world and all the destruction it does in people’s lives. Because the fruit of the Spirit is goodness.

Instead of doing what you’re supposed to do only because people are looking, or only in an outward way, it will become important that you keep your promises and fulfil your vows, from the heart, and out of love. You’ll want to be a person of your word, a person of integrity. Because the fruit of the Spirit is faithfulness.

Instead of having a sharp tongue, instead of constantly watching other people to judge and criticize and condemn them for their shortcomings, instead of joining in with gossip and slander, you’ll treat your brothers and sisters with consideration and you’ll correct their shortcomings lovingly, because
you know that you’re a sinner who needs forgiveness just like they do. Because the fruit of the Spirit is gentleness.

And instead of being a slave to your temper or your desires, instead of letting your emotions run wild, and instead of saying the first thing that comes to your mind, it will be natural for you to control yourself. When those thoughts and those feelings arise, you won’t give in to them. Because the fruit of the Spirit is self-control.

This is why the Spirit came. This is the gospel of Pentecost: the promise of a new nature, a new character. And not for keeping a list of rules. Paul is saying throughout this letter to the Galatians that we can’t save ourselves through the law. We need to be saved by grace. So Christ says to us, “This is the salvation you need. And this is the salvation I bring.”

This is gospel and the right way to respond to the gospel is to believe it, to grab hold of it by faith. And Jesus says that faith prays. So ask, and seek, and knock. Because your Father in heaven will give his good gifts to those who ask Him.

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