

## SANCTIFICATION: THE BIBLICALLY IDENTIFIABLE FRUIT

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*As in past centuries, Christians still speak frequently about the need for sanctification, yet no mutually agreed upon description of sanctification has emerged. The present discussion has chosen to describe the term in relation to what the Bible says about “fruit.” “Fruit” is used widely in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, referring to edible products from the ground as well as human offspring. In both the OT and the NT the word is used metaphorically to depict human actions. Other terms related to fruit also take on metaphorical meanings to speak of human behavior. Romans 6:22 and 7:4 link such terminology with the sanctification of believers. The contexts of these verses confirm a close tie between fruit and both past sanctification and the present lives of Christians in their progress toward Christ-likeness. Galatians 5:22-23 relate the Holy Spirit’s role in producing the present sanctification of believers.*

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### Introduction

The apostle Peter exhorted his Christian audience, “As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts *which were yours* in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all *your* behavior; because it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy’” (1 Pet 1:14-16).<sup>1</sup> Just as OT believers were called to reflect the holy God in their character and behavior (Lev 11:44; 19:2; 20:7), NT believers are called to the same standard.<sup>2</sup> This holy life-style

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<sup>1</sup>All English citations of Scripture are from the NASU.

<sup>2</sup>R. C. Sproul (*The Holiness of God* [Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House, 1985] 202) writes, “We were created to shine forth the holiness of God.” To do so, the believer needs to understand the holiness of the God he was created to reflect. Thus, Sproul allots 188 pages (9-197) to explaining the holiness of God and its implications for (fallen, believing) man before describing what holiness is supposed to look like

that is to characterize the Christian is defined by theologians as an aspect of “present or progressive sanctification.”<sup>3</sup> The need for the believer to grow in progressive sanctification is underscored by the exhortation in Heb 12:15, “Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.”<sup>4</sup>

The seriousness with which Christians in the past responded to this appeal for progressive sanctification (i.e., holiness) is articulated by J. I. Packer:

There was a time when all Christians laid great emphasis on the reality of God’s call to holiness and spoke deep insights about His enabling of us for it. Evangelical Protestants, in particular, offered endless variations on the themes of what God’s holiness requires of us, what our holiness involves for us, by what means and through what disciplines the Holy Spirit sanctifies us, and the ways in which holiness increases our assurance and joy and usefulness to God.<sup>5</sup>

Packer adds,

Formerly, then, holiness was highlighted throughout the Christian church. But how different it is today! To listen to our sermons and to read the books we write for each other and then to watch the zany, worldly, quarrelsome way we behave as Christian people, you would never imagine that once the highway of holiness was clearly marked out for Bible believers, so that ministers and people knew what it was and could speak

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in the saint (199-220).

<sup>3</sup>Robert Duncan Culver, *Systematic Theology: Biblical and Historical* (Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus, 2005) 755-62. For Culver’s complete study of Sanctification (past, present, and future aspects), see 747-64. A bibliographic listing of sections on the subject of Sanctification in thirty-one systematic theologies is presented in Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994) 759-60. Grudem’s own discussion of the doctrine appears in 746-59.

<sup>4</sup>David Peterson (*Possessed by God: A New Testament Theology of Sanctification and Holiness*, NSBT, ed. D. A. Carson [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995] 74) reminds the Christian, “The present imperative, ‘pursue’ (12:14, Gr. *diōkete*), stresses the need for earnest, ongoing effort in response to the promises of God. It is not a call for the readers to achieve peace and sanctification by their own endeavours [*sic*] but to realize the practical benefit of what has been available to them in Christ.” Later, he adds, “No Christian should doubt the need to give practical, everyday expression to the holiness that is our status and calling in Christ. Only those who trust in the sanctifying work on the cross, and take seriously the warning to ‘pursue holiness’, will ‘see the Lord.’ . . . On the other hand, it is possible to be so zealous for ‘progress’ that one’s attention shifts from God’s grace to human effort. Moral growth and development will be God’s gift to us at different stages of our lives, but spirituality must not be measured in terms of the rate of change. We are to go on exhibiting what we know of God’s character and will, motivated by the certainty of his acceptance, cleansing and enabling in Christ, together with the promise of entire sanctification when we meet him, face to face. Progress may be seen as we exercise ourselves in that godly devotion which issues from a true knowledge of God in Jesus Christ” (*ibid.*, 91).

<sup>5</sup>Packer, *Rediscovering Holiness: Know the Fullness of Life with God* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal, 2009) 12. Culver (*Systematic Theology* 755-57) offers historical support for Protestantism’s concern with the believer’s progressive sanctification even though he admits the doctrine has not always been well stated.

of it with authority and confidence.<sup>6</sup>

However, even in past centuries, from the sixteenth century Reformers to the nineteenth century evangelical expositors when “the highway of holiness was clearly marked out for Bible believers,” there was no agreement concerning exactly what the visible evidences of progressive sanctification were. The late-nineteenth-century evangelical Anglican, J. C. Ryle, wrote,

I now proceed to take up . . . the *visible evidence of sanctification*. In a word, what are the visible marks of a sanctified man? What may we expect to see in him? This is a wide and difficult department of our subject. It is wide, because it necessitates the mention of many details which cannot be handled fully in the limits of a paper like this. It is difficult, because it cannot possibly be treated without giving offence. But at any risk, truth ought to be spoken; and there is some kind of truth which especially requires to be spoken in the present day.<sup>7</sup>

This discussion of what sanctification looks like (i.e., the visible evidence) in the Christian believer continues to be a part of the interchange on the doctrine of sanctification in contemporary evangelicalism.<sup>8</sup> Thus, the need for a further review

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<sup>6</sup>Packer, *Rediscovering Holiness* 13. In an earlier work (J. I. Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit* [Old Tappan, N.J.: Revell, 1984] 99-101) he had advanced four reasons why he thought personal holiness had become a secondary matter for contemporary evangelicals: 1) Evangelicals today are preoccupied with controversy; 2) Evangelicals today are disillusioned with what has long been put to them as “holiness teaching”; 3) Evangelical talent today is preempted so that when holiness is discussed, it is often not dealt with as weightily as it deserves; 4) And most disturbing of all, Evangelicals today are evidently insensitive to the holiness of God Himself.

<sup>7</sup>John Charles Ryle, *Holiness: Its Nature, Hindrances, Difficulties, & Roots* (1879; reprint, Moscow, Idaho: Charles Nolan, 2002) 29. Ryle continues by stating ten visible evidence of sanctification [the first five are negative and the last five positive]: Sanctification is not 1) talk about religion; 2) religious feelings; 3) outward formalism and external devoutness; 4) retirement from our place in life; 5) occasional performance of right actions; but sanctification is 6) habitual respect to God’s law, and habitual effort to live in obedience to it as a rule of life; 7) an habitual endeavour [*sic*] to do Christ’s will; 8) an habitual desire to live up the standard which St. Paul sets before the churches in his writings; 9) habitual attention to the active graces which our Lord so beautifully exemplified; and 10) habitual attention to the passive graces of Christianity (*ibid.*, 29-36).

<sup>8</sup>See the interchanges by Protestant Evangelicals on the subject of sanctification in Melvin Dieter, ed., *Five Views on Sanctification* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987) and Donald L. Alexander, ed., *Christian Spirituality: Five Views of Sanctification* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1988). Peterson (*Possessed by God* 12) affirms that these two volumes provide an excellent introduction to the subject of sanctification. However, he feels that more work needs to be done at the level of biblical interpretation. He writes, “Indeed, a major failing of many expositions of the subject has been the lack of a thorough and systematic investigation of the relevant terms and their use in Scripture.” His work seeks to address this weakness. Gregory A. Boyd and Paul R. Eddy (*Across the Spectrum: Understanding Issues in Evangelical Theology* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002] 146-64) survey the teaching, biblical, and supporting arguments, and defenses of the Lutheran, Reformed, Keswick, and Wesleyan Views. James M. Howard (*Paul, the Community, and Progressive Sanctification: An Exploration into Community-based*

of the biblically identifiable fruit of progressive sanctification is beneficial and to that subject this discussion now proceeds.

### **The Biblical Understanding of “Fruit” and Related Terms**

There are many NT terms that could be studied as an introduction to the attitudes and actions that should be visible in the life of the Christian believer. For example, the term “to walk” (περιπατέω, *peripateō*) is used to describe and define the conduct expected of a saint (see Rom 13:13; Gal 5:16; Eph 2:10; 4:1, 17; 5:2, 8, 15; Col 1:10; 2:6; 4:5; 1 Thes 2:12; 4:1, 12; 1 John 1:7; 2:6; 3 John 3, 4). Or the concept of “put off/put on” can be traced as it gives insight into the pre- and post-Christian behavior of a believer (see Eph 4:22-32; Col 3:8-17). Further, the commands given to the saint to obey could be listed (see John 13:35-35; 1 John 2:3-11; 3:23-24; 4:21; 5:2-3; 2 John 4-6). However, in an article like this a choice is necessary; the determination, therefore, is to see what the Bible teaches about the term “fruit” and related terms as the avenue taken to describe what the NT teaches about progressive sanctification in relation to its visible outcomes in the life of the Christian.

#### **The Term “Fruit”**

The term “fruit” appears numerous times in the Bible. The noun forms (Heb. פֶּרִי, *pēri*; Gr. καρπός, *karpos*) are found about 122 times in the OT and 65 times in the NT. The verbal forms associated with these nouns (i.e., “to bear, or bring forth fruit”) appear 29 times in the OT and 8 times in the NT.<sup>9</sup> As can be observed, it is the noun form that is used predominantly, although the verbal and adjectively usage is found as well. “Fruit,” the noun, is the result of “to bear or bring forth fruit,” the verb, and this can be described as “fruitful,” the adjective. In both the OT and NT, the opposite concept/term “unfruitful” is also found (2 Kgs 2:19; Eph 5:11; Tit 3:14; 2 Pet 1:8).

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*Transformation within Pauline Theology*, Studies in Biblical Literature, ed. Hemchand Gossai [New York: Peter Lang, 2007] 11-40) surveys and critiques approaches to progressive sanctification represented by the Wesleyan, Reformed, Pentecostal, and Keswick views, along with the more recent proposals of Larry Crabb, Stanley Gretz, and David Peterson.

<sup>9</sup> For the Hebrew see Victor P. Hamilton, “פֶּרִי,” in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 2 vols., eds. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., & Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody, 1980) 2:733-34; Edwin C. Hosetter, “פֶּרִי,” in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, 5 vols., ed. Willem A. VanGemeren (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997) 3:676-80; and B. Kedar-Kopfstein, “פֶּרִי,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 15 vols., eds., G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgen, & Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. Douglas W. Scott (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003) 12:81-91. For the Greek see R. Hensel, “καρπός,” in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 4 vols., ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975) 1:721-23; Friedrich Hauck, “καρπός,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 vols., ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. & ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965) 3:614-16.

The term “fruit” is widespread in Scripture. It is introduced in Genesis 1 and its final use is found in Revelation 22. In both its first and final biblical usages it refers to the edible produce of trees: “Then God said, ‘Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees on the earth bearing fruit after their kind with seed in them’; and it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit with seed in them, after their kind; and God saw that it was good” (Gen 1:11-12), and “Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding it fruit every month; and the leaves were for the healing of the nations” (Rev 22:1-2). According to Gen 1:29, “Then God said, ‘Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you,’” God created the plants and trees for the purpose of giving humans and animals what they could eat so that their lives might be sustained. Here is the most basic meaning of “fruit,” the edible product of a tree.<sup>10</sup> In Revelation 22, in the eternal state, the tree of life will bring forth its “fruit” on a monthly cycle. It is not stated explicitly that it was for mankind to eat, but that probably is implicit because that is why God gave fruit from trees in the first creation. This tree will sustain the life of the nations as it is eaten.<sup>11</sup> This basic meaning of “fruit,” the edible product of a tree, is found throughout the OT and NT (Lev 23:40; 26:4, 20; 27:30; Neh 10:35, 37; Ps 1:3; 148:9; Eccl 2:5; Ezek 36:20; Matt 7:17-19; 21:19; Rev 22:2).

The basic meaning of “fruit” can also be extended to include all of the edible produce from the ground/land, including plants, vegetables, and grains as well as trees (Gen 4:3; Deut 7:13; 26:2, 10; 30:9; Ps 107:34, 37; Jer 7:20; Jas 5:7). In a few cases in the OT, “fruit” refers to the product of a tree which is not edible, i.e., the cedar (Ezek 17:9, 23) and the cypress (Hos 14:8). In two passages, the fruit from the ground (i.e., the edible produce from the ground) is distinguished from the trees (Jer 7:20; Mal 3:11).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>In its most basic sense, “fruit” is found on a woody growth in OT usage. “Fruit” was especially associated with: 1) an olive tree (Jer 11:16); 2) a vine (Is 37:30; 65:21; Ezek 17:8-9; 19:10; Zech 8:12); or 3) a fig tree (Prov 27:18; Joel 2:22). From these came three staples of the Israelite diet, olive oil, grapes, and figs.

<sup>11</sup>Robert L. Thomas (*Revelation 8-22: An Exegetical Commentary* [Chicago: Moody, 1995] 484) concurs with this understanding. He writes, “Though eating the fruit of the Tree of Life is unmentioned here, the implication is that this is what brings immortality, the same as was true for Adam and Eve originally (Gen. 3:22). Conditions of future bliss will mean a return to the original glories and privileges of God’s presence with man, before sin raised a barrier that prevented direct contact.”

<sup>12</sup>Kedar-Kopfstein, (“הָרֵי” 86-87) conjectures, “The noun *pēri* referred originally to ‘that which comes forth, is brought forth, produced,’ and in the OT refers concretely to the product of every ‘fruit of the ground’ containing the seed of further growth (Gen. 1:29; 4:3). . . . The term *pēri* refers especially to edible fruit. . . . As a comprehensive term in its own right, *pēri* can refer to the overall produce of a land, especially Israel. . . . The semantic scope narrows where *pēri*, as is frequently the case, is used in the sense

Three derived meanings of “fruit” occur from its basic, essential meaning of the produce from a tree and/or the ground. First, “fruit” is used often in the OT in the phrase “fruit of the womb,” i.e., children (Gen 30:2; Deut 7:13; 28:4, 11; 30:9; Ps 127:3; Isa 13:18). The noun “fruit” can also be used alone of both human (Ps 21:10; Hos 9:16) and animal (Deut 28:4; 30:9) offspring. One usage of the verb “bear fruit,” especially when it appears with the verb “to multiply,” is to bear offspring, either human (Gen 1:28; 9:1, 7; 17:20; 28:3; 35:11; 47:27; 48:4; Exod 1:7; Lev 26:9; Jer 23:3) or animal (Gen 1:22; 8:17). This usage of “fruit” as offspring is found only once in the NT (Luke 1:42). Thus, from its basic meaning of produce from the tree or the ground, “fruit” came to be used in the Bible of the produce from the womb, either human or animal.

Second, beginning in the OT and becoming its predominant usage in the NT, particularly in the NT letters, “fruit” is used metaphorically to refer to the actions produced by a person, the fruit of one’s life, i.e., behavior, conduct. This concept, introduced in the OT (Prov 1:31; 11:30; Isa 10:12; Jer 21:14; 32:19), is picked up and developed by NT authors (Matt 3:8; 7:16-20; Rom 6:21-22; 7:4; Gal 5:22; Eph 5:9; Phil 1:11; Heb 12:11). Closely related is the idea of “fruit” as the product or result of one’s thoughts (“the fruit of plans,” Jer 6:19), speech (“the fruit of the mouth,” (Prov 12:14; 13:2; 18:20), or actions (Isa 3:10; Jer 17:10; Hos 10:13; Mic 7:13). Third, in the NT, “fruit” can also refer to the outcome or result of one’s actions (Rom 1:13; Phil 1:22) or the wages earned (i.e., produced) by those actions (1 Cor 9:7; Phil 4:17; 2 Tim 2:6).

In Matt 7:15-20 the words of Jesus, in the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount, speak of the natural fruitfulness of trees and are applied to the produce of individual lives. He says, “Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn *bushes* nor figs from thistles, are they? So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So then, you will know them by their fruits” (Matt 7:15-20). “The vivid imagery of this section is drawn from both animal (Matt 7:15) and plant (7:16-20) life and is meant to portray the false prophets who endanger the journey of the disciples.”<sup>13</sup> Jesus begins by likening the false

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of ‘fruit of the tree’ as opposed to the plant produce of the fields (Ex. 10:15) . . . and this specialized meaning eventually became the most common, the notion being that the tree yields fruit, the field the harvest (Lev. 27:30; Ezk. 34:27; 36:40; Zech. 8:12).” Whether or not Kedar-Kopfsteink’s conjecture of the development of the term “fruit” in the OT is correct, his conclusions concerning its essential meanings seem in accord with OT usage.

<sup>13</sup>David L. Turner, *Matthew*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008) 216. Turner also presents a chiasmic structure of Matt 7:16-20 with a literal, word for word translation:

*A* From their fruit you will recognize them. (v.16)

*B* They don’t gather from thorn bushes grapes or from thistles grapes, do they?

prophets to animals; even though they outwardly appear as sheep, “a common OT metaphor for the people of God (cf. Pss 78:52; 100:3),”<sup>14</sup> they are in reality vicious wolves, ferocious natural enemies of the sheep.<sup>15</sup> Jesus then continues by using the extended plant or tree analogy. Because the false prophets will profess to be servants of God, the believers will only discern their true nature as they evaluate their speech and actions. Verses 16a and 20 repeat verbatim the same truth, *inclusio*. Here “fruit” is used in a metaphorical sense referring to the produce of the false teachers. Their practice will not match their profession; their actions will reveal their true character. However, in verses 16b-19, “fruit” is used with its literal meaning. From a distance, berries on a thorn bush might appear as grapes and flowers on a thistle might be mistaken for figs, but upon nearer and closer inspection, the reality of the vine and the fig tree is clear by the nature of their fruit. Thus a judgment can be made from their fruit concerning which trees need to be retained and which need to be cut down and burned. The essential principle taught in Matt 7:16-20 is: just as natural fruit, the product of a tree, gives visible evidence of the tree’s life and character, so does the metaphorical fruit, the words and actions of humans, give evidence of their life and character. This is a principle that applies not only to false prophets, but to professing Christians too (cf. Jas 3:12).

### Related Terms

A number of other terms are used with “fruit” in the OT. Fruit is found on the “branch” (דָּלִיָּוֶת, *dālīyôt*, Jer 11:16; Ezek 17:6, 7, 23; 31:7, 9, 12; אֲנָפ, *ānāp*, Lev 23:40; Ps 80:11; Ezek 17:8, 23; Mal 4:1) of a “tree.” The tree gains nourishment through its “roots” (שֹׁרֶשׁ, *shōresh*, 2 Kgs 19:30; Job 18:16; 30:4; Isa 37:31; Jer 12:12; Ezek 17:7, 9; 31:7; Am 2:9; Mal 4:1). As Kedar-Kopfstein observes:

Fruit together with leaves (Ps. 1:3) and branches (Ezk. 36:8) are part of the image of the healthy tree whose roots have spread far out (2 K. 19:30; Jer 17:8). The destruction of such a tree begins with the withering of its root and ends with the drying of the foliage and its failure to produce fruit (Ps 1:3; Hos 9:16; Am 2:9). The merism in these and similar passages evokes the entire tree by mentioning merely its roots on the one hand and

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C Similarly, every good tree good fruit bears, (v. 17)

D and the bad tree evil fruit bears.

C' It is not able a good tree evil fruit to bear (v. 18)

D' neither a bad tree good fruit to bear.

B' Every tree not bearing good fruit is cut down and into the fire it is thrown, (v.19)

A' So, then, from their fruit you will recognize them (v.20).

<sup>14</sup>Donald L. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1993) 183. These false prophets are professing believers in Israel’s God.

<sup>15</sup>“Despite their outward appearance and profession, these persons are in fact the mortal enemies of those who belong to the flock” (ibid.).

its fruit on the other.<sup>16</sup>

An important OT term is the verb *נמץ* (*sāmah*), meaning “to sprout, to grow” when used in reference to trees, plants, and grass (Gen 2:5, 9; 41:6, 23; Ex 10:5; Ps 104:14; 147:8).<sup>17</sup> A healthy tree is one that sprouts from the seed in the ground and then grows, putting forth more and more branches filled with fruit. This same image of seed sprouting, crops growing, with a final harvest is pictured in the parable recorded in Mark 4:26-29.

Psalm 1 describes the blessing of a righteous man, a godly man who lives in accordance with God’s requirements. He is a man who does not conduct his life according to the counsel or direction of the wicked, the enemies of God and His standards (v. 1). Rather, he gains his directives for life from the law of Yahweh, a law in which he delights and meditates continually (v. 2). This man is pictured as a sturdy, well-nourished, fruitful tree (v. 3). He prospers and will not perish when the wicked man is judged (vv. 3b-6). Thus, the Bible itself uses here the image of a fruitful tree to describe a godly man.

This imagery of a tree rooted in rich soil bearing abundant fruit is used by many writers to picture the Christian’s progressive sanctification. The following description from Kenneth Prior, incorporating the language of John Owen from his work *On the Holy Spirit*, illustrates this usage.

In other words, a Christian grows from within as a living organism. John Owen observes the way in which Scripture so frequently likens the Christian’s growth in grace and holiness to the growth of trees and plants. Here is one of the comparisons he makes: “These trees and plants have the principle of their growth in themselves. They do not grow immediately from external adventitious aid, but from their own seminal virtue and radical moisture. It is not otherwise in the progress of holiness; it has a root, a seed, a principle of growth in the soul. All grace is immortal seed, and contains in it a living grace principle, John 4:14. That which has not in itself a life and power of growth is not grace. And therefore whatever duties men perform, as directed by natural light, or urged by convictions of the word, if they proceed not from a principle of spiritual life in the heart, they are not the fruit of holiness.” It is important to notice the depth at which a Christian grows. It is not just a matter of forming fresh habits in life, although this may well have to take place. Rather, Christian growth is internal and springs from the innermost being of the Christian where the Holy Spirit of God is at work. Growth which is nothing more than the forming of fresh habits could be like tying fruit to the branches

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<sup>16</sup>Kedar-Kopfstein, “הרץ” 87.

<sup>17</sup>Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., “נמץ,” in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 2 vols., eds. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., & Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody, 1980) 2:769-70. Kaiser notes the usage of this term in the human, rather than the ground/tree, context, “Especially significant are the passages related to the coming up of a shoot from the root or seed of David, i.e. the future messianic person (II Sam 23:5; Jer 33:15; Ezk 29:21; Ps 132:17; Zech 6:12).” To these passages, he adds Isa 4:2 and Jer 23:5-6 in his discussion of Messiah.

of a tree—utterly superficial.

This leads naturally to another comparison which John Owen makes: “The growth of trees and plants is secret and imperceptible, and discerned only in the effects and consequences of it; the most watchful eye can discern little of its motion; and so it is in the progress of holiness. It is not immediately discernible either by those in whom it is, or by others who observe it, except by its fruits and effects.”<sup>18</sup>

Is there NT warrant to link the imagery of “fruit” to sanctification in this way? One passage leads to an affirmative answer.

### **An Association of “Fruit” with Sanctification (Romans 6:22; 7:4)**

“Although the terminology of sanctification is found only in 6:19 and 22, these chapters [Romans 6–8] have often been characterized as a classic statement of the doctrine.”<sup>19</sup> Four times in these three chapters, Paul uses the term “fruit” (the noun is found in 6:21 and 22 and the verb in 7:4 and 5). Significantly, in Rom 6:22, the terms “fruit” and “sanctification” are used in the same clause, literally, “[Y]ou have your fruit leading to sanctification.”<sup>20</sup> Thus, the verses, Rom 6:22 and 7:4, demonstrate an association of “fruit” with sanctification in the NT.

### **The Context: Romans 6:1–7:6**<sup>21</sup>

In Romans 5, Paul declares the benefits that accrue from God to the justified ones. Believers enjoy reconciliation with God (5:1-11) and the imputation of Christ’s righteousness (5:12-19). For the saints, grace abounded and now should reign “through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (5:20-21). However, Paul then deals (6:1b) with the question, “Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase?” His answer (6:2a) is an emphatic, “May it never be!” In the following verses, Paul explains why Christians can no longer have a life-style of sin (6:2b-10), and follows the explanation with his first imperative in the letter (6:11).

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<sup>18</sup>Kenneth F. W. Prior, *The Way of Holiness: The Christian Doctrine of Sanctification* (Chicago: InterVarsity, 1967) 80-81.

<sup>19</sup>Peterson, *Possessed by God* 95. A helpful, succinct overview of Rom 6:1–8:39 and Sanctification is found in Everett F. Harrison & Donald A. Hagner, “Romans,” in EBC, rev. ed., 13 vols (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008) 11:102-3. See also John F. MacArthur (*Faith Works: The Gospel according to the Apostles* [Dallas: Word, 1993] 105-11) for a basic introduction to Sanctification and Romans 6.

<sup>20</sup>Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1996) 396, 407-8.

<sup>21</sup>See the discussion of these verses in Harrison & Hagner, “Romans” 11:103-17; MacArthur, *Faith Works* 111-21; and Peterson, *Possessed by God* 95-105.

In these verses, Paul writes of the definitive,<sup>22</sup> progressive, and (possibly) future<sup>23</sup> sanctification of believers.

<i>Verse</i>	<i>Definitive Sanctification</i>	<i>Progressive Sanctification</i>	<i>Future Sanctification</i>
6:2b	We who died to sin	Shall we still live in it?	
6:3	All of us who have been baptized into Jesus Christ have been baptized into His death		
6:4	We have been buried with Him through baptism into death	So we too might walk in newness of life	
6:5	We have become united with Him in the likeness of His death	We shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection (Murray)	We shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection (Moo)
6:6	Our old self [man] was crucified with Him that our body of sin might be done away with so that we would no longer be slaves to sin (Murray)	so that we would no longer be slaves to sin (Moo)	
6:7	He who died is freed from sin (Murray)	He who died is freed from sin (Moo)	
6:8	We have died with Christ	We shall also live with Him (Murray)	We shall also live with Him (Moo)
6:11	Dead to sin Alive to God in Christ Jesus		

Two observations are significant. First, Paul's emphasis in 6:2b-11 is on definitive sanctification. At conversion, signified here by baptism, believers were united with Jesus Christ in His death. Just as Christ died to sin, i.e., He was

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<sup>22</sup>This terminology and the interpretations in the chart (except as noted) are adapted from John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959, 1965) 1:211-26.

<sup>23</sup>Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* 353-81. The present writer agrees with Moo's interpretations when they differ from Murray's in the chart below.

separated from the rule of sin<sup>24</sup> (10), so with Him the Christian has also been separated from the rule of sin (6, 11). And just as Christ now has been raised from the dead and lives to God, i.e., He lives to glorify God (10), so Christians are enabled through union with Him in His resurrection to live life-styles that glorify God (11).<sup>25</sup> Second, believers are called to consider (imperative) these truths (indicative) as reality (11).<sup>26</sup> Christians can and do live as “slaves of righteousness” and no longer as “slaves of sin” as they respond obediently to these known truths (6:16-23).

Paul follows his first, essential imperative (6:11) with three others (6:12-13). Along with regarding themselves in the same way as God does as dead to sin and alive to God (11), the believers must not allow sin to reign in their bodies (12), nor go on presenting the parts of their bodies to sin as instruments of unrighteousness, but present themselves as alive from the dead and their body parts as instruments of righteousness (13; cf. Rom 6:19; 12:1). Christians are not responsible to die to sin and be alive to righteousness, but they are commanded to act on the basis of their union with Jesus Christ to make sure that they no longer behave under the authority of sin. Their new position under grace, i.e., the new era in which freedom from the power of sin is available, means that sin shall no longer reign over them (14).

Once again (6:15), Paul deals with a question, “Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?” and again answers with the emphatic “May it never be!” His basic point is, “Whatever is the power you willingly yield yourselves to . . . you are *slaves* of the power you obey, and you only have two powers from which to choose”(6:16).<sup>27</sup> In analyzing 6:16-23, Paul associates the two powers with the believer’s former and present conditions:

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<sup>24</sup>Moo explains, “While, however, it is true that Christ did not need to be freed from sin’s power in the same way that we need to be, a close parallel between the situation of Christ and the Christian can be maintained if we remember that Paul is continuing to speak of sin as a ‘ruling power.’ Just as death once had ‘authority’ over Christ because of his full identification with sinful people in the ‘old age,’ so that other power of the old age, sin, could be said to have had ‘authority’ over Christ. As ‘a man of the old age,’ he was subject to the power of sin—with the critical difference that he never succumbed to its power and actually sinned” (ibid., 379).

<sup>25</sup>“The point of the argument in 6:6-10 is that *the hope of physical resurrection* is as much an empowerment for godly living as the certainty that, *on the cross, sin’s penalty was paid*. Those who belong to the crucified and resurrected Lord Jesus need no longer live as helpless slaves of sin” (Peterson, *Possessed by God* 99-100).

<sup>26</sup>“What is commanded needs to be carefully noted. We are not commanded to become dead to sin and alive to God; these are presupposed. And it is not by reckoning these to be facts that they become facts. The force of the imperative is that we are to reckon with and appreciate the facts which already obtain by virtue of union with Christ” (Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* 1:225-26).

<sup>27</sup>Peterson, *Possessed by God* 101.

<i>Verse</i>	<i>Formerly</i>	<i>Presently</i>
6:16	Slaves of sin resulting in death	Slaves of obedience resulting in righteousness
6:17-18	You were slaves of sin	You became slaves of righteousness
6:19	You presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness resulting in further lawlessness	Now present your members as slaves to righteousness resulting in sanctification
6:20-22	When you were slaves of sin, what benefit were you deriving from things . . .  The outcome of those things is death	But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God you derive your benefit [of which you are now ashamed] resulting in sanctification the outcome is eternal life
6:23	The wages of sin is death	The free gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord

Again, two observations are significant. First, in verses 18 and 22, Paul affirms that the Roman believers had evidenced progressive sanctification since their conversion. He commends their obedience (17-18; cf. 16:19). The Roman Christians were known for their faith (1:8) and their maturity (15:14). In fact, the presentation of Paul in this letter was only a reminder to these saints (15:15). However, second, Paul makes it clear that their sanctification was not yet complete. Something was still lacking in their faithful obedience to God (19a; cf. 1:11b).<sup>28</sup> As they had obeyed by presenting themselves as slaves to God for righteousness in the past (16, 17-18), they needed to persevere in obedience by continually presenting themselves as slaves of righteousness that would result in their further sanctification (19).<sup>29</sup> Their ultimate sanctification awaited their glorification to eternal life in the future (22, 23).

In chapter 7, Paul explains the relationship of the NT believers to the Mosaic Law. In the same way that union with the death of Christ resulted in a

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<sup>28</sup>What needed to be strengthened among the believers at Rome (1:11) and what “their weakness of the flesh” (6:19) was have perplexed commentators. See Schreiner (*Romans*, BECNT [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998] 52-55) for a discussion of 1:11 and Moo (*Romans* 403-4) for 6:19.

<sup>29</sup>“The noun ἁγιασμός occurs in the NT nine other times (v.22; 1 Cor 1.30; 1 Th 4.3, 4, 7; 2 Th 2.13; 1 Tim 2.15; Heb 12.14; 1 Pet 1:2). It denotes God’s work in the believer, his ethical renewal. In spite of some opinions to the contrary, the word, as used by Paul, indicates a process rather than a state, and is better represented by ‘sanctification’ than ‘holiness’ or ‘consecration’” (C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, ICC, 2 vols. [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975, 1979] 1:327).

‘dethroning’ of sin for the believers (6:2-10), it has also resulted in the Christians’ death to the Law and joining to Jesus Christ (7:1-4).<sup>30</sup> Thus, the former sinful passions aroused by the Law were producing death, but now the brethren serve in newness of the Holy Spirit (7:1-6). Paul develops further the Holy Spirit’s role in the life of believers in Rom 8:1-30.

**Romans 6:22**

Romans 6:22 is the only verse in the NT where the terms “fruit” and “sanctification” are mentioned together. Paul introduces the term “sanctification” in 6:19 in contrast to the term “lawlessness.” The parallel structure shows the contrast:

Just as you	presented your members as slaves to impurity	
		and to lawlessness
		resulting in further lawlessness,
so now (you)	present your members as slaves to righteousness	
		resulting in sanctification.

In their pre-Christian experience, the Romans actively gave their bodies over the practice of impurity, probably sexual immorality (cf. 1:24), and lawlessness, the disobedience of God’s standards (cf. 1:28-32). This activity led only to (*eis* indicating result) further lawlessness. However, if believers would obey the Lord by giving over their bodies and allow God’s standards to rule over them, this would lead to their progressive sanctification, their growing set-apartness to God and from the ways of the world. “Committing ourselves as slaves to doing what is right before God (‘righteousness’) results in living that is increasingly God-centered and world-renouncing.”<sup>31</sup>

Verses 20-22 are closely connected to verse 19 by “for” (*gar*). Paul is explaining the urgency of his command in the previous verse. Believers should present their bodies as slaves to righteousness because of their new status. A similar contrast as in verse 19 between their pre-Christian experience and post-conversion reality is presented in verses 20-22.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Thomas R. Schreiner states, “Romans 6 stressed that the power of sin was broken when believers died with Christ, and now in Rom. 7 the power of the law is also shattered through his death. . . . The law no longer has authority over them, because they have died with Christ to the law’s rule” (*Romans* 352).

<sup>31</sup>Moo, *Romans* 405.

<sup>32</sup>This chart is based on Moo, *Romans* 407. There is debate as to how verse 21 should be punctuated. The NAU (along with Murray and Schreiner) places a question mark after “ashamed.” However, the parallelism cited above supports Moo (and Cranfield) in the placing of the question mark after “then,” and translates, “Therefore, what fruit did you have then? That of which you are now ashamed whose outcome is death.” No matter how one interprets the punctuation, a strong contrast between the shameful past and the “sanctification” in the present is affirmed.

<i>Verse</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Result</i>	<i>Outcome</i>
20-21	“then”—slaves of sin, free from righteousness	“fruit” bringing shame	death
22	“now”—free from sin, slaves of God	“fruit” bringing sanctification	eternal life

Just as their pre-Christian “fruit” (behavior, conduct) now brings them shame as they recall it,<sup>33</sup> in the same way their Christian “fruit” results (*eis*) in their progressive sanctification as in verse 19. The end of the shameful actions is eternal death, but their progressive sanctification will culminate in eternal life. “Fruit,” here, is implied to be the visible evidence showing that progressive sanctification is taking place in believers’ lives.

**Romans 7:4**

In the OT, the law given to Israel at Mount Sinai provided them with God’s guidance and regulations. Israel was loved, called, and delivered by the Lord (Deut 7:7-8) and separated from the nations and to the Lord before the giving of the Law at Sinai (Ex 19:4).<sup>34</sup> However, Israel could fulfill her calling as a “holy nation” by obeying the stipulations of the law given by the Lord through Moses at Sinai (Exod 20:1–Num 10:10). The visible fruit of sanctification for national Israel was to be obedience to the Mosaic Law.

However, Paul to this point in Romans has not only declared that the Law cannot justify, a truth confirmed in the OT (3:19-20, 28; 4:1-8), but has also implied that it is impotent to sanctify as well (5:20-21; 6:14). He will call the law “holy” and the commandment “holy and righteous and good” (7:9), but the law was “weak as it was through the flesh” (8:4). Though given as a sanctifying agent by the Lord, the law was unable to curb the sinful tendency of Israel (7:7-25). Instead of sanctifying the nation, the law rather testified to the utter sinfulness of Israel. Thus the Law became an agent of “sin” (7:8-11). The NT believers are united to Christ to “bear

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<sup>33</sup>“To be ashamed of one’s past evil ways is a vital element in sanctification” (Cranfield, *Romans* 1:328).

<sup>34</sup>“That Israel’s faithfulness to the covenant [at Sinai] is required should in no way be understood to mean that Israel worked for her salvation in the Old Testament. The entire scene at the mountain and the subsequent laws are predicated on verse 4 [Ex 19], what *God has done*. The Israelites are not to keep the law in order for God to save them. They have already been saved; God has brought them out of Egypt. The law he now gives is the subsequent stage in Israel’s developing relationship with God. It is what is expected of a people *already* redeemed. It is law, but it is based on the prior establishment of the relationship between them by God’s good pleasure. The people do not earn their salvation; but once saved, they are obligated to act in a manner worthy of their high calling. This is true in the New Testament as well (Eph. 4:1; 2 Thess. 1:11)” (Peter Enns, *Exodus* NIVAC [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000] 387).

fruit” to God, but not by obeying the Mosaic law.<sup>35</sup> In fact, Paul echoes his teaching concerning sin in chapter six with the Law in chapter seven as the following chart shows.

Romans 6:1-23 “Sin”	Romans 7:1-6 “Law”
6:2 “we who <i>died</i> to sin”	7:4 “you were made to <i>die</i> to the law”
6:4 “we might walk in <i>newness</i> of life”	7:6 “we serve in the <i>newness</i> of the Spirit”
6:7 “he who has died is freed from sin” 6:18, 22 “you have been freed from sin”	7:6 “we have been released from the law”
6:14 “sin shall not be <i>master</i> over you”	7:1 “the law has <i>jurisdiction</i> over a person”
6:18, 19 “ <i>slaves</i> of righteousness” 6:22 “ <i>enslaved</i> to God”	7:6 “we <i>serve</i> in newness of the Spirit”
6:22 “you derive your benefit” [lit. “you have your <i>fruit</i> ”]	7:4 “we might <i>bear fruit</i> for God”

The structure of 7:1-6 also echoes that in 6:1-23. Paul begins the paragraph (1-3; cf. 6:1-14) by reasserting the principle that human death frees one from the “lordship” of the law. In the same way, believers were made by God to die to the “lordship” of the law through their union with Christ in his death. This death also allowed them to be joined (as in a marriage) to the resurrected Jesus. This union with Jesus Christ is to result in “fruit,” conduct that glorifies God (v.4).<sup>36</sup> He then (5-6; cf. 6:15-23) identifies the law with their former life and their release from the law with their present life. Whereas previously the law was used by the flesh to arouse the sinful passions that resulted in spiritual death, now the release from the bondage of the law means the Christians can as slaves to God enabled by the Holy Spirit live godly lives.

### Specific Visible Fruit (Romans 12:3–15:13)

Paul did not leave the Romans to guess what being slaves of righteousness

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<sup>35</sup> Peterson writes, “The view that we are not under the law as a means of salvation but remain under it as a rule of life is not a distinction that Paul makes” (*Possessed by God* 104). For a discussion of the viewpoints of the role that the OT Law should have in the NT believer’s spiritual life, see Wayne G. Strickland, ed., *Five Views on Law and Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993).

<sup>36</sup> Although some commentators view the “fruit” as spiritual seed, i.e., “offspring” resulting from the Christians’ “marriage” to Jesus Christ, this seems to be pressing the analogy of 7:2-3 too far. As Cranfield points out, this is not “seed” to Christ, but to God (v. 4) and Paul continues by writing of “to bear fruit for death,” and the idea of a marriage producing death would be foreign to this context (v. 5) (*Romans* 1:336-37).

enabled by the Holy Spirit would look like in their visible conduct. After renewing the imperative of 6:19 to present their bodies to God (12:1) and further commands to not be conformed to this age, but to be transformed as examples of the righteous living associated with the coming age (12:2), Paul proceeds to spell out the obligations of the Roman Christians with imperatives and imperatival participles (12:3–15:13). The believers were commanded to think and act with humility (12:3–8), abhor evil and cling to what is good (12:9–21), obey the governing authorities (13:1–7), act in love toward one another (13:8–10), put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh (13:11–14), and accept one another to the glory of God (14:1–15:13). Paul makes it clear that sanctification should have visible fruit in the lives of the Roman saints.

Thus, Rom 6:22 and 7:4, in particular, provide NT warrant to link the concept of “fruit” with “sanctification.”<sup>37</sup> Progressive sanctification will be evident in the “fruit” of a Christian’s life. A description of this “fruit” is presented in Gal 5:22–23 to which the present discussion now turns.

### **The “Fruit” Resulting from the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23)**

“The expression ‘the fruit of the Spirit’ is a metaphor used by Paul to describe virtues that manifest the realities of life in Christ. Paul does not speak about the fruit of faith, but he does speak explicitly of the ‘fruit of the Spirit.’”<sup>38</sup> Galatians 5:22–23 is the only text in the NT that explicitly mentions the “fruit of the Spirit.” However, in these verses Paul presents a list of virtues associated with Christian believers that contrast with the “fleshly” life-style (5:19–22). This close contrast of non-Christian vices and Christian virtues is common in Paul’s letters (Eph 4:25–32; Col 3:5–17; 2 Tim 2:22–25; Tit 3:1–3).<sup>39</sup> Therefore, Gal 5:22–23 lists a sample of virtues or graces that were especially needed by the believers in Galatia when Paul wrote.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>John 15:1–16 is another NT passage that closely links a disciple’s “fruit” to his union with Jesus Christ. For a thorough discussion of these verses, see D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991) 510–24; Andreas J. Kostenberger, *John*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004) 448–60; and Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, rev. ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) 592–600. For the interpretation of John 15:1–6 and its application to the Christian life, see James E. Rosscup, *Abiding in Christ: Studies in John 15* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973).

<sup>38</sup>David S. Dockery, “Fruit of the Spirit,” in *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, eds. Gerald F. Hawthorne & Ralph P. Martin (Downers Grove, Ill., InterVarsity, 1993) 316. Dockery’s article is a helpful, concise introduction to Gal 5:22–23 (ibid. 316–19).

<sup>39</sup>See Colin G. Kruse, “Virtues and Vices,” in *ibid.* 962–63.

<sup>40</sup>When compared with other “virtue lists,” certain characteristics are missing in Gal 5:22–23, such as truth, honor, right, purity (Phil 4:8), compassion, and humility (Col 3:12). No list in the NT gives a complete accounting of every attitude and action that should be identified with the Christian.

### **The Identifiable “Fruit”**

In the context of Galatians 5, Paul exhorts the believers to “walk by the Spirit” (16, 25; cf. Rom 8:4). As they allow themselves to be led by the Holy Spirit (18; cf. Rom 8:14), Christians are not subject to the Mosaic Law (cf. Rom 7:4-6). The result of this Spirit-leading would be the Spirit-produced “fruit” (22-23), rather than the “deeds” of the flesh (19-21). Here, the “fruit” is viewed as entirely the outcome of the Holy Spirit’s activity; however, other NT passages exhort saints to put these practices into their life-style. This is an obvious outworking of the principle of Phil 2:12-13 and 2 Pet 1:3-11; God has given believers everything they need for the Christian life of godliness, but they must to be diligent to put these God-given gifts into practice in their own lives.<sup>41</sup>

The following chart defines the “fruit of the Spirit” in Gal 5:22-23 and also displays where these traits are commanded of believers in the NT.

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<sup>41</sup> Jerry Bridges (*The Practice of Godliness* [Colorado Springs, CO.; NavPress, 1983] 76) writes, “I once read a statement to the effect that there is nothing a Christian can do to develop the fruit of the Spirit in his life; it is all the work of the Holy Spirit. Sensing at best, such a statement failed to present a balance of scriptural truth, I took out my concordance and looked up various passages that referred to one or more of the nine character traits listed as fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5. For every one of those traits I found one or more passages in which we are commanded to exhibit them” (*The Practice of Godliness* [Colorado Springs, CO.; NavPress, 1983] 76). This book not only explains the “fruit of the Spirit,” but also gives many excellent insights into the application of these truths to the life of the contemporary Christian.

<i>The “Fruit”</i>	<i>The Definition</i> <sup>42</sup>	<i>Exhortations to Christians</i>
Love	The decision to and resulting action of putting God and others before oneself	Matt 22:34-40 John 13:34 1 Cor 16:14 Eph 5:2 Col 3:14 1 John 4:7
Joy	An inner sense of well-being resulting from hope in God / Christ that leads to exultation	Rom 12:12,15 Phil 3:1; 4:4 James 1:2 1 Pet 4:13
Peace	A state of wholeness and serenity resulting from harmony with God and man	2 Cor 13:11 Eph 4:3 Phil 4:7-8 Col. 3:15 2 Tim 2:22
Paitence	Endurance of wrong without anger; Long-suffering	Eph 4:2 Col 3:12 2 Tim 4:2
Kindness	A gracious attitude and actions	Col 3:12 2 Tim 2:24
Goodness	A magnanimous attitude resulting in generosity	Rom 12:9, 21 Gal 6:10 Eph 4:28
Faithfulness	Loyalty, reliability	Rev 2:10
Gentleness	A humble submission to God’s will resulting in forbearance	Gal 6:1 Eph 4:2 Col 3:12 1 Tim 6:11
Self-control	Restraining of one’s passions	2 Pet 1:5-6

**The Character of the “Fruit”**

It is significant that these characteristics are developed in Christians by the Holy Spirit, the third member of the Godhead. He produces in the believer the very attributes which characterize Jesus Christ, the Son, and God the Father. This is not a surprise given that the believer is exhorted to be like Christ (1 Cor 11:1; 1 John 2:6) and to be godly (1 Tim 2:2; 4:7-8; 6:11; 2 Pet 1:3). As the saint grows in

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<sup>42</sup>These definitions result from the scanning of Dockery, “Fruit of the Spirit” 318; F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on Galatians*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) 251-56; Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1990) 260-63; and the pertinent articles in TDNT and NIDNTT.

sanctification, he more clearly reflects the triune God in his character and conduct.

<i>The “Fruit”</i>	<i>Examples of Christ-likeness</i>	<i>Examples of God’s Nature</i> <sup>43</sup>
Love	John 10:11-18 John 13:1 John 15:9-10, 13 Eph 5:2	Deut 4:37; 7:13 LXX John 3:16 John 16:27 1 John 4:8-11
Joy	John 15:11 John 17:13 Heb 12:2	Ps 104:31
Peace	John 14:27 John 16:33 John 20:19, 21	Ps 29:11 (28:11 LXX) Ps 85:8 (84:8 LXX) 1 Cor 14:33 Phil 4:9
Patience	1 Tim 1:16 2 Pet 3:15	Jer 15:15 LXX 2 Pet 3:15
Kindness	Matt 11:30 Tit 3:4	Ps 25:7 (24:8 LXX) Ps 34:8 (33:8 LXX) 1 Pet 2:3
Goodness	Luke 18:18-19 John 7:12	Neh 9:25 LXX Jms 1:17
Faithfulness	Rev 1:5	Ps 33:4 (32:4 LXX)
Gentleness	Luke 22:39-53	Is 40:11
Self-control	Is 53:7 1 Pet 2:23	Ex 34:6 (i.e. “slow to anger”)

**An Example of the Instruction in Progressive Sanctification:  
The “Fruit” of the Christian Walk in Colossians**

Each of the 21 NT Epistles can be described as an author led by the Holy Spirit giving a lesson in progressive sanctification to his audience. Here is an example in a quick “walk” though Paul’s letter to the faithful brethren at Colossae.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>See Grudem, *Systematic Theology* 185-209. Grudem discusses God’s communicable attributes, including love, peace, patience, goodness, and faithfulness.

<sup>44</sup>For a more complete discussion, see Frans-Henri Alberts, “The Doctrine of Sanctification in the Letter to the Colossians” (forthcoming Th.M. thesis, The Master’s Seminary, 2011). A similar example of the tracing of the theme of sanctification in a NT epistle is given by Graham A. Cole (“Sanctification,” in *Dictionary for the Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhooser [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005] 721): “With regard to the notion of progressive sanctification, Paul’s Thessalonian

- Paul addressed the Christian believers as “saints” (1:2) acknowledging their positional sanctification.
- Paul gave thanks to God the Father because the word of truth, the gospel, which the Colossians had believed, was bearing fruit, particularly in their growing love for all the “saints” generated by the Holy Spirit (1:3-8).
- Paul unceasingly prayed that the Colossian believers would be filled with the knowledge of God’s will for the purpose that they would “walk in a manner worthy of the Lord,” “bearing fruit,” “increasing,” “strengthened,” and “giving thanks.” [Note that Paul was praying for their progressive sanctification.] Paul affirmed that God the Father qualified them for an inheritance in Christ’s kingdom through His Son’s redemption (1:9-14).
- Paul declared the creative and reconciling work of Christ and his own role in the proclamation of God’s truth to the Gentiles. Paul labored in his God-given ministry so that he might ultimately “present every man complete in Christ” [ultimate sanctification] (1:15–2:5).
- Paul commanded the Colossians to conduct their lives (“walk”) in accordance with the teaching they had received concerning Christ and not allow anyone to lead them astray with mere human teaching that depreciated the truth concerning Christ (2:6-15).
- Paul exhorted the believers to put into practice the truth concerning their position in Christ and not to submit to mere human self-effort approaches to living a God-honoring life (2:16–3:4).
- Paul commanded the believers to act in accordance with their identification with Christ’s death by putting off their previous ungodly lifestyle and putting on their new Christ-honoring behavior (including kindness, gentleness, patience, love, and peace [cf. Gal. 5:22-23]) (3:5-17).
- Paul commanded that these general godly attitudes and actions should be manifested in daily living, in marriage, parenting, working, praying, and speech (3:18–4:6).
- Paul sent his final greetings and final appeals to the Colossians (4:7-18).

### **Conclusion**

The positionally sanctified believer will evidence a growing godliness and

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correspondence is a rich source of instruction. In his brief ministry at Thessalonica he left his new converts with a gospel (1 Thess. 1:9-10) and an ethic (4:1-12). God’s will is their sanctification (4:3). At the personal level such sanctification involves the maintenance of sexual purity. After all, they have God’s Holy Spirit (4:8). In ever-widening circles, the sanctified life also involves love for other believers (1:9-10) and a proper behavior toward outsiders (4:11-12). Paul urges the Thessalonians to live like this more and more (4:1, 10). This suggests progression. Paul recognizes that God needs to sanctify his people, and he prays for the Thessalonians to that end (5:23).

Christ-likeness as he learns and obeys Holy Scripture<sup>45</sup> enabled by the Holy Spirit. This obedient life-style is the visible “fruit” of progressive sanctification. This progressive sanctification will culminate in his completed sanctification when Jesus Christ appears and he is transformed into His likeness (1 John 3:2); then, growing Christ-likeness will become total Christ-likeness in character. Peterson describes this process well:

The call of Scripture is to live out the practical implications of our sanctification by pursuing holiness as a lifestyle. We are to do this by looking back to the cross and forward to the resurrection, when by God’s grace we will share his character and life completely. We are to grow in our knowledge of God and his will, so that we might better reflect his holiness in every aspect of our lives. We are to ‘keep in step with the Spirit’ (Gal. 5:25 NIV), so that the fruit of the Spirit may be revealed in us. As God’s ‘holy and beloved’, we are to abandon the values, attitudes and practices that belong to the ‘old self’ and be clothed with ‘the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge, according to the image of its creator’ (Col. 3:10).<sup>46</sup>

The application of this truth to the Christian believer is well stated in these sobering words of Ryle:

Such are the visible marks of a sanctified man. I do not say that they are to be seen equally in all God’s people. I freely admit that in the best they are not fully and perfectly exhibited. But I do say confidently that the things of which I have been speaking are the spiritual marks of sanctification, and that those who know nothing of them may well doubt whether they have any grace at all. Whatever others may please to say, I will never shrink from saying that genuine sanctification is a thing that can be seen, and that the marks I have endeavoured [*sic*] to sketch out are more or less the marks of a sanctified man.<sup>47</sup>

The Christian believer is to “pursue . . . sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.” He is to seek to be holy, for his God is holy.

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<sup>45</sup>The NT believer is called to obey the commands given in the letters of the NT, including those in Revelation 2–3. He is also to evaluate the relevance of OT commands and those given by Jesus Christ as recorded in the Gospels to his life in light of these epistolary imperatives.

<sup>46</sup>Peterson, *Possessed by God* 136-37.

<sup>47</sup>Ryle, *Holiness* 36.