

The Complete and Symmetrical Life, and How to Attain to It

by R.A. Torrey

The complete and symmetrical life is a life characterized by love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance, which can be attained by surrendering the entire control of our life to the Holy Spirit's dominion.

Scripture: Galatians 5:22

Topics: "Surrender to the Holy Spirit", "Fruit of the Spirit"

Description

R.A. Torrey emphasizes the necessity of a complete and symmetrical life, as depicted in Galatians 5:22-23, which includes love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. He argues that many Christians live partial lives, lacking balance and completeness, and that true fulfillment comes from being filled with the Holy Spirit. Torrey explains that each characteristic of the Spirit's fruit is essential for a well-rounded life, and he encourages believers to surrender fully to the Holy Spirit to attain this ideal. The sermon highlights that love is the foundation, followed by joy and peace, and culminates in self-control. Ultimately, Torrey calls for a life governed by the Spirit, which naturally produces these virtues.

Transcript

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness (kindness), goodness, faith (faithfulness), meekness, temperance." Gal. 5 : 22, 23.

THE average life is a very partial life. Even the life of the average Christian is a very partial life, a one-sided life, it is a life in which there is much lacking. There may be many admirable things about it, but there is a deplorable lack of other things the life is incomplete, it is devoid of balance and symmetry, strong in some directions, perhaps amazingly strong in those directions, but lacking, perhaps amazingly lacking, in other directions. It is like an imperfect rose, perfectly formed and beautifully tinted in one part, but blasted and withered in another part. What each one of us needs is a full life, a well-rounded life, a well-balanced life, a symmetrical life. There is a passage in the Word of God that wonderfully pictures such a life, complete in all its parts and symmetrical in its every detail. This passage not only pictures this life, but tells us how to attain to it. The passage is Gal. 5: 22, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Some years ago during attendance at a Bible Conference in St. Louis, I was entertained at a private home. When I awoke in the morning the

first thing that I saw as I opened my eyes was these words looped around the room in large and beautifully coloured letters, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." They brought a blessing to my heart that morning and set me to thinking deeply upon the words. From that day to this I have had a longing to preach on this text but have never done it until this hour. The text presents to us two main thoughts, the complete and symmetrical life described, and how to attain to this complete and symmetrical life.

I. THE COMPLETE AND SYMMETRICAL LIFE DESCRIBED.

1. The first characteristic in this life is "LOVE." "The fruit of the Spirit is love." Paul does not say whether he has in mind love to God or love to man, he just says "LOVE," without definition as to its objects, so love as here spoken of includes all objects. The complete life is characterized by love to both God and man, and love to all classes and conditions of men. It obeys the first and great commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy

heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and it also obeys the second command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Yes, it goes beyond

the second commandment and obeys the new commandment which the Lord gave to His disciples, that they love one another, even as He loved us (John 13:34). In moral attributes, "love" is the one preeminently Divine thing, God is love " (1 John 4:8). If love is lacking, all else counts for nothing, and the life is not only incomplete, it is worthless. "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am become sounding brass, or a clanging cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And if I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing (1 Cor. 13:1-3). "The old time religion," as the song goes, "makes me love everybody," and the complete life is the life of the one who "loves everybody." There is absolutely no man whom the Spirit-filled man does not love. No matter how grievously one may have wronged us, no matter how grossly they may have slandered us, no matter how gravely they have injured us, if we are filled with the Spirit we will love them.

2. But while "LOVE" is the first thing and the supreme thing in the complete life, it is not the only thing. Following "Love" comes "JOY." "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy." A life that is not a radiantly joyful life is an incomplete life and un-symmetrical life, it is lacking in one of the principal elements that go to make up the complete life, it is not a life after God's pattern. Even if our lives were given up wholly to serving God and our fellow men with utter devotion and utter forgetfulness of self, if they were not joyful lives, they would dishonour God. Jesus was called upon to be a propitiation for sins, to be a substitute Saviour, to take our sins and their penalty upon Himself, and He was, therefore, "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," nevertheless, He was a joy-full man. On the night before His crucifixion, only an hour or so before the agonies of Gethsemane, He said, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be filled full" (John 15:11). To have His joy then is to have fullness of joy, and, if our joy is to be "filled full" by having His joy, He must Himself have been a joy-full man. Constant joy is the commanded duty as well as the promised privilege of a child of God, a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. "Rejoice in the Lord always," the Holy Spirit commands us in Phil. 4 : 4, then adds, "again I say, Rejoice." When Paul wrote these words he was a prisoner under most distressing circumstances, and awaiting possible sentence of execution, yet the whole epistle that he wrote is jubilant from start to finish. The Spirit-filled life will always be joyful and jubilant, nothing can disturb its joy. No matter how adverse its

circumstances, its joy abideth ; for its joy is not in circumstances but in Him who is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. The Holy Spirit is called, in Heb. 1:9, "The oil of gladness," and when God pours out His Holy Spirit upon us, "He anoints us with the oil of gladness," and the oil of gladness flows down over us and suffuses the whole person.

3. But even "LOVE" and "JOY" together, wonderful as they are, do not constitute all that there is of the complete and symmetrical life. Following "LOVE" and "JOY" comes "PEACE." "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace." Paul does not say whether he means peace in our own hearts or peace with others. The reason that he does not say which he means is because he means both. The Holy Spirit brings peace into the heart in which He rules, and He brings peace with others to the one in whose heart He rules.

In the verse almost immediately following the command to "rejoice always," the Spirit of God goes on to say, "In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:6, 7). Oh, how wonderful is the deep, serene, unruffled peace with which the Holy Spirit fills the heart. Some years ago a minister at a Bible Conference at Grove City came to me and said, "Two young men, college students, from my church were at the Northfield Conference this summer, and when they returned from the Conference they called on me and said, Pastor, we think we have heard of something that you do not know!"

This was a rather presumptuous thing for two young college students to say to a pastor over sixty years of age who was well known for his knowledge of the Word of God and the faithfulness of his ministry, but the minister showed the real depth of his earnestness and spirituality by his reply. He said, "Well, young men, if you have something good that I haven't I want to know about it." The pastor continued, "They told me of an address they had heard on the baptism with the Holy Spirit, and how the baptism with the Holy Spirit was to be obtained.

When they left my study," the pastor continued, "I took my hat and went out into the woods and sat down upon a log that had fallen and thought over what they had said, and then I looked up to God and I said, Oh, God, if these young men have something that I have not, I want it. Now, oh, God, the best I know how, I absolutely surrender my will to Thee, to be whatever thou wishest me to be, to go wherever thou wishest me to go, to do whatever thou wishest me to do. Immediately after I had done this," he continued, "there came into my heart such a wonderful peace and rest as I had never known."

What was the explanation? The pastor had fulfilled the conditions of receiving the Holy Spirit and He had come to do His work, and part of His fruit is "PEACE." But the Holy Spirit brings us into peace with others as well as bringing peace into us. He saves us from contentiousness. I knew a man who was naturally a man of war, he was a born fighter; he delighted in a scrap from early boyhood as in almost nothing else, but the Spirit of God got control of his life, and in so far as the Holy Spirit did gain control of his life he became a man of peace.

Many and many a time he was able to keep peace under most aggravating circumstances without even a struggle. Yes, the Holy Spirit brings peace between men, especially peace between brethren. This is the immediate thought of the context in which we find our text. Going back in the chapter to the 14th and 15th verses, we read, "For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But if ye love one another, ye shall love one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another."

Then going down to the 19th verse we read, "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, parties, envyings, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of which I forewarn you, even as I did forewarn you, that they who practise such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Then comes our text, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, etc."

Two lives are placed in vivid contrast to one another, the life of the flesh, full of contention and strife and quarrelling, and the life in the Spirit, full of peace, long-suffering, etc. The perfect man keeps out of war, even under great provocation. As the Holy Spirit puts it through the Apostle James in Jas. 3:14-18, "But if ye have bitter jealousy and faction in your heart, glory not and lie not against the truth. This wisdom is not a wisdom that cometh down from above, but is earthly sensual, devilish.

For where jealousy and faction are, there is confusion and every vile deed. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without variance, without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for them that make peace." Oh, that the Holy Spirit ruled among nations as well as in individuals to-day, the war would end in five minutes, and when the Holy Spirit rules in a church, church quarrels cease instantly.

4. But "LOVE," "JOY," "PEACE," as beautiful as they are, do not constitute the whole of the complete and symmetrical life. Following "LOVE," "Joy," and "PEACE" come "LONG-SUFFERING." "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering." This fourth characteristic of the complete and symmetrical life, the Spirit-filled life, is closely connected with the third. The truly strong man does not quickly resent injuries done by others. He is never suspicious nor sensitive. No matter how great and strong a man may be in other respects, if he is quick to imagine that others are wronging him, or quick to resent the insult or injury which is not imaginary but very real, he is not a truly strong man, and he surely is not a Spirit-governed man, he is governed by the flesh and not by the Spirit. Oh, how beautiful is the attitude of long-suffering in an individual or a nation, what a mark it is of real strength. The nation that is not quick to take umbrage nor "defend its honour" is not dishonoured, but great and strong.

5. The fifth characteristic of the complete and symmetrical life is "GENTLENESS." "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness." The primary meaning of the adjective from which the noun translated "gentleness" is derived is "fit for use," or "useful," then it comes to mean "mild," "pleasant," as opposed to "harsh," "hard," "sharp," "bitter." Then it comes to mean gentle, "pleasant," "kind," "benevolent," "benign." How

beautiful it is when a great man is also a gentle man, a gentleman in the true sense, a kindly man. The great example of gentleness or kindness is Jesus Himself. So many leading men in the church in our day, gifted men, go pushing through the common crowd regardless of the slow and dull, regardless of whose toes they step on; they are brusque and pushing. Not so was Jesus, "The bruised reed" He would "not break" and "the smoking flax" He would "not quench," and not so is the Spirit-filled man, he is "kindly." The Revised Version translated the word here "kindness" but I like "kindliness" better than either "gentleness" or "kindness." Are you a kindly man? Jesus was. Are you a kindly woman? If not, you have not entered into the complete and symmetrical life, not yet.

6. The sixth characteristic of the complete and symmetrical life is "GOODNESS." "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness." The word so translated is a word of wide meaning and is difficult of exact definition, but the thought here, as determined by the setting, is that attribute that

leads men to be always looking for and improving opportunities for doing any kind of good to anybody and everybody, in every possible place, and at every possible time. The tenth verse of the following chapter gives the thought, "So then, as we have opportunity, let us work that which is good toward all men."

7. The seventh characteristic of the complete and symmetrical life is "FAITH." "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith." The Revised Version reads "faithfulness," but without any warrant whatever either in usage or context. The word is the same word which is translated "faith" 238 times out of the 242 times that it is used in the New Testament, and in the four remaining instances it is translated "belief" or "believe," and never once is it translated "faithfulness." True faith will inevitably lead to faithfulness, and thus implies faithfulness, but "faith" is what Paul wrote, or rather the Holy Ghost wrote through Paul, and the Holy Ghost meant just what He wrote. A life without "FAITH," faith in God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, is a sadly incomplete and altogether unsymmetrical life. The Holy Spirit begets simple, childlike, imperturbable faith in the heart He rules, faith in God, faith in Jesus Christ, faith in the Word of God. Jesus says in John 7:17, "If any man willeth to do His (God's) will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God, or whether I speak from myself." He here makes obedience the condition of faith in the Word of God, but in Acts 5:32 we are told that God gives the Holy Spirit to them that obey Him. Oh, when a man submits his life to the absolute control of the Holy Spirit, his whole thought and feeling and will are irradiated with faith, and because he has faith in God and faith in God's Word he has great expectations, he is never discouraged, he is never pessimistic, never despondent, he marches forth confidently every day to victory. He is sure he will win, and win he will.

8. The eighth characteristic of the complete and symmetrical life is "MEEKNESS." "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness." The exact meaning of the word rendered "meekness" in this passage is that attitude of mind that is opposed to harshness and contentiousness, and that shows itself in gentleness and tenderness in dealing with others. The man who has attained to the complete life is never harsh. Stern and severe he may sometimes have to be out of regard to the best interests of the offender himself, but his sternness and severity are aflame with gentleness. Read the first verse of the next chapter and you will get the exact thought, "Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass (the thought is of a man caught in the act of wrong-doing, wrong-doing even of the grossest kind), ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of meekness; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

9. The ninth and last characteristic of the complete and symmetrical life is "TEMPERANCE." "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." The Revised Version says "SELF-CONTROL," and that gives the thought, though it is not really self-control, but Holy Spirit control, but it is self that is controlled. It does not mean temperance in the narrow sense we have given it in modern parlance, as applying to only one kind of excess, excess in alcoholic drinks, it means mastery of self along all lines. The highest form of mastery in the world is self-mastery. "He that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh a city" (Prov. 16:32). This then is the complete life, a life manifesting love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-mastery. You will note that our text says that these things are "the fruit of the Spirit," not the fruits of the Spirit. They are the many delicious flavours of the one fruit. Wherever the Holy Spirit is given control, not some, but all of these will be seen.

II. HOW TO OBTAIN THE COMPLETE AND SYMMETRICAL LIFE.

We come now to the very practical question how to obtain this life, or how to attain to it. We have but a few minutes to answer the question, and we need but a few minutes. The verse makes the way of attainment as clear as day. We are told that these things are "the fruit of the Spirit." They are set over against "the works of the flesh" described in the verses that immediately precede. In other words, the things described under "the works of the flesh" are the things that are natural to us; these things are what the Holy Spirit works supernaturally in us. They are the fruit the Holy Spirit bears in us, and all that we need to do is to come to the end of ourselves and realize our own utter inability to attain to the complete and symmetrical life here pictured, and having first received the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour, and through receiving Him as our Saviour, having received the Holy Spirit to dwell in us (for He does dwell in every believer) just surrender the entire control of our lives to His dominion for Him to work in us what He will, and when the Holy Spirit is thus given complete control, the result will be that His fruit will appear on the tree of our own lives. There will be love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control. Wonderful indeed is the privilege of the Spirit-filled life. Will you to-day give up your fruitless struggles after holiness, your self efforts to lead a "life well pleasing to God," come to the end of yourself and realizing that in you, that is in your flesh, dwelleth no good thing, surrender your whole life to the control of the Holy Spirit, then on your life will hang this "sun-kist" fruit, "love, joy, peace, long suffering, kindness, faith, meekness, self-mastery.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/ra-torrey/the-complete-and-symmetrical-life-and-how-to-attain-to-it/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net