

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

love,
joy,
peace,
patience,
kindness,
goodness,
faithfulness,
gentleness,
and self-control



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Galatians 5:22-23

For us who strive to please the Lord, the “fruit of the Spirit” addressed by Paul in Galatians 5:22-23, is a compendium of attitudes and actions that are good, righteous and godly. These nine characteristics outline specific qualities in which every child of God is to grow to maturity. Said another way, they are attributes that describe the mature Christian. These spiritual characteristics define who we are, as well as who we should be.

To glean the full benefit from a “fruit of the Spirit” study, we would do well to carefully examine the broader context into which these are introduced. Paul’s epistle to the Galatian churches was in some ways a letter to Christians in his own back yard. “Saul of Tarsus” was born and grew up in Asia Minor; his first missionary journey was to this region, and on his second and third missionary journeys he revisited churches there again. It is clear that Paul was deeply concerned about these saints because they were being so easily influenced and led astray. In the opening

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verses he jumped right to the point, *“I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting him who called you by the grace of Christ for a different gospel.”* 1:6 Again in 3:1 he wrote, *“You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you?”* Apparently the “other gospel” that these babes in Christ Jesus were hearing was influencing them to follow parts of the Law of Moses. Paul’s argumentation revolved around the superiority of faith in Christ and the good, but clearly preparatory and temporary, role of the Law. Perhaps we can envision Jewish Christians being tempted to practice certain provisions of the Law (such as circumcision), but Gentile Christians (who were formally idolatrous pagans) were also being led astray by an appeal to physical, tangible, carnal things; and a “ME” perspective.

Paul gently and repeatedly reminds these new brethren of their special relationship with Christ Jesus and the benefits they had in Him. Paul’s teaching was from the revelation of Christ (1:12). They could only be justified through faith in Christ Jesus, not by works of the Law (2:16). They received the Spirit and worked miracles through faith in Christ. (3:2-5) Christ redeemed them from the curse of the Law. (3:13) *“You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.”* 3:26-27 *“If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring and heirs according to the promise.”* 3:29 *“Because you are sons, (no longer slaves) God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba Father!”* 4:6 *“It is for freedom that Christ set us free.”* 5:1

This brief outline of Galatians brings us to the conclusion of Paul’s argument. *“For you were called to freedom, brethren, only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.”* 5:13 It turns out that its not about “ME” at all. To the contrary, he continues in 5:15 to say, *“but if you bite and devour one another take care lest you be consumed by one another.”* Being free in

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Christ Jesus is a remarkable blessing, but our freedom must never be used as a license to satisfy our own desires, have our own way, do our own will, etc. We must always be fully aware that everyone, most especially our brethren, shares this ship of life with us. Being free in Christ Jesus imbues us with inalienable rights, but calls us to a higher standard. Like citizenship in our great nation, freedom in Christ Jesus comes with responsibilities as well.

Paul continues with, *“walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh, for the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another.”* 5:16-17a He describes “walking by the Spirit” as practicing and increasing in the “fruit of the Spirit.” It is interesting that the Spirit leads him to delay listing the positive attributes of the Spirit’s fruit until he has first given examples of several carnal attitudes and actions. That is, he first gives examples of negative attributes. These “deeds of the flesh” are totally inconsistent with the attitudes and actions expected of brethren who have found freedom in Christ Jesus and draw a stark contrast to the “fruit of the Spirit.” These “deeds” are polar opposites of *“loving our neighbor as ourselves.”* 5:14b Regrettably these only hollow out and eventually destroy the Lord’s church from within. These “deeds” may be typical of the world, but must never be found in the church.

Paul’s listing probably isn’t meant to be an exhaustive enumeration of every kind of destructive behavior, only to illustrate intolerable worldliness in the church. *“Those (remember Paul is writing to brethren) who*

practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” 5:21c Deeds such as these will cause us to spend eternity with, the cowardly, and unbelieving, and abominable and murders and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. (Rev 21:8)

Most of us know the negative characteristics that follow, what the Apostle called the “deeds of the flesh.” (Gal 5:19-21) But an occasional reminder is profitable:

Immorality—Greek *“porneia,”* Sexual immorality. Includes all kinds or illicit sexual relationships: adultery, fornication, homosexuality, incest, pornography, etc.

Impurity—Greek *“akatharsia,”* Uncleanliness in a moral sense, impurity of lustful, profligate living.

Sensuality – Greek *“aselgeia,”* Lasciviousness, unbridled lust, excess, wantonness, outrageousness, shamelessness, insolence.

Idolatry—Greek *“eidoololatria,”* Worship of false gods. Includes the vices springing from idolatry and peculiar to it.

Sorcery – Greek *“pharmakeia,”* medication, figuratively magic and magic arts; of the deceptions and seductions of idolatry.

Enmities – Greek *“echthra,”* hatred, the exact opposite of agape.

Strife—Greek *“eris,”* Variance, contention, wrangling, disputing, debating.

Jealousy—Greek *“zeelos,”* to burn, moved with envy or desire, indignation.

Anger— Greek *“thumoi,”* wrath, fierce indignation, passion.

Disputes—Greek *“eritheiai,”* intrigue, disagreement over trivial things, contentions.

Dissensions-Greek “*dichostasiai*,” deviseness, standing apart, contrary, always questioning to undermine trust and unity.

Factions-Greek “*haireseis*,” literally a heresy, divisions, sects.

Envyings-Greek “*pthonos*,” evil feeling of displeasure at seeing the advantage, prosperity or influence of others.

Drunkness-Greek “*methusko*,” to make drunk with alcohol, drugs, power, etc., intoxicated.

Carousings-Greek “*koomoi*,” revelry, uproar, riot, sedition, unease, unrest

Paul says that these “deeds of the flesh” are evident. If we engage in any of these deeds, godly brethren eventually see us for what we are. Hopefully they’ll lovingly tap us on the shoulder and encourage us to repent before we stand before the Lord and answer for the deeds we’ve done in the flesh (2 Cor 5:10).

“Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires, if we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.” 5:24-25 This publication issue is all about reminding us, encouraging us and perhaps even prodding us to walk by the Spirit and by that process to grow to maturity. Hebrews 6:1a reads, *“Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity.”* Peter concludes his second epistle with these challenging words, *“but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”* 2 Pet 3:18 Growing and developing the various fruit of the Spirit will bear fruit not only in this life, but also in the life that is to come. May the Lord richly bless your efforts.

Love

Keri Ward

When you are first introduced to a group of people whether it’s a job, a church, or some new friends it’s easy to notice love by either its presence or its absence. In a church setting, the presence of love is the difference between a hallowed place or a hollow place. As Christians we are called to love. *“Love your neighbor as yourself.”* Mk 12:31 *“If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.”* 1 Cor 13:1 *“Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart.”* 1 Pet 1:22 Countless other passages contain the same message: love. Just love. In the fruit of the spirit love is the first to be named in the list of qualities we should have as a Christian. Why? The answer to that is in the definition. The Bible itself defines love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 which states: *“Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.”*

Love comes first in the fruit of the spirit because love encompasses the entire list. Joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, & self-control. None of these attributes can really be experienced or reflected in our lives unless they are done

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through love. For example, kindness and gentleness without love are often seen as just empty or shallow gestures. J.R.R. Tolkien penned “One ring to rule them all. One ring to find them. One ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them.” If you take out all the doom and gloom and evil surrounding it, you could say that love is the One Ring of the fruit of the spirit. It binds them and brings everything together. Love is the foundation for all the other qualities in the fruit of the spirit.

When we speak of love it is often through the eyes of men and not through the eyes of God. It can be and is often seen as purely superficial. I have an aunt who is constantly saying “Oh I love it.” So if I take her at her word she loves everything showing no preference which indeed is not the case. I love cheese. My boyfriend loves his dog. Country music artists really seem to love their trucks, freedom, and booze. We want love to be what we as humans see it as and what we want to experience it as rather than what it truly is and that is a reflection of God.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son.” Jn 3:16 *“Father forgive them for they know not what they do.”* Lu 23:34 Superficial love for cheese, animals, or music pales in comparison to the greatest love mankind has ever been shown and has ever known.

My mom was fond of saying, “If you want to be loved then be lovable,” and it was usually after I went through a particularly bratty moment. A loveable person is patient and kind and just all kinds of wonderful, and no one would hesitate for a moment to go

the extra mile for an individual like that. But we’re not always like that. It’s when people in our lives are at their most unloveable moments that we as Christians are called to overlook their flaws, the hypothetical dirty rags they’re offering us, and respond with actions driven by love. The point of Galatians 5 is to fill yourself with qualities, not to make yourself loveable to others, but to be able to transcend the petty human knee jerk responses to people and problems and deal with them as God would.

Joy

Thelma Arnold

Are you aware that the word Joy in some form (i.e. joyful, joyfully, rejoicing, rejoice, etc.) appears more than 200 times in the Bible? ([Nine Fruits of the Spirit](#), by Robert Strand, p. 39) This does not surprise me. In addition, joy is therapeutic! *“A merry heart does good like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones.”* Prov 17:22

In our Bible, joy is the second fruit of the Spirit (of nine) listed as a necessary part of a Christian’s path to maturity. (Galatians 5:22-23) We do not begin life as a mature person. It becomes a life long journey! Some may reach maturity sooner than others, but one never reaches the ultimate, so that he/she one day announces, “I am mature!” That is a sure indication that maturity has a way to go! There are

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those who are of age, but lack maturity. We observe them daily. God's children should not be numbered among them.

That little three letter word, joy, is common in our language. Often a newborn baby girl is given that beautiful name. What a fitting tribute for a pure, perfect little being!

Webster defines joy, "as the emotion excited by the acquisition or expectation of good, gladness, delight – state of happiness, bliss."

I cannot help thinking of a personal gladness and delight of becoming a great-grandparent – twice! Great joy should always accompany a new birth! How wonderful is God's plan for continuing the human family!

We sing, "Joy to the World!" Why? "Because the Lord is come!" Two thousand years ago a precious, perfect baby boy was born. Our Savior Jesus Christ entirely perfect and forever so! He is our teacher through the instructions He left for us in the Bible.

Our hearts should be filled with joy at the very thought of all that Jesus did for us and that we have that guide if we accept Him and His word.

Christians like to sing and are commanded to do so with the spirit and understanding. (1 Cor 14:15) *"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."* Col 3:16

"I have the joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart." Our children often sing this song during VBS. They declare that joy is down in

their hearts to stay!

This is an easy command to keep since most of us grew up singing in classes and worship services. I have heard it said, "You must have cut your teeth on the song books!" This was meant to be humorous, and it is, but I suspect it's partially true! Our beginning class is for nine month babies. They are learning to sing about Jesus.

"Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee, God of Glory, Lord of Love," etc. And another, "Rejoice and Sing That God Is Great!" Do these not inspire us to sing out? Sing almost anywhere, anytime!

Mothers, sing as you prepare the family meal, or maybe while washing off muck or dirt from your little one's feet or hands. Try to be joyful even though you might have the urge to swat him! Remember Jesus once was a little boy. I expect Mary had some similar experiences.

And men, what would our song services be like without the beautiful tenors and rich bases!

Sing out for the pure joy of worshipping God through singing together! Sing when it is just you, when you think nobody is listening – except God!

Have you ever heard Phillip Macedonia sing? Phillip has had some hard knocks and is a shy man. A good while back I walked behind him toward the exit door and he probably wasn't aware of anyone close by. He was singing with joy and obviously felt he was praising his Maker. Another time I hurriedly took a nearby seat just before singing began. And as we sang together, I heard a man's voice – it was Phillip.

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“Rejoice in the Lord always and again I will say rejoice!” Phil 4:4 The Bible is a book of joy! But joy does not mean an easy, problem free life. Accept the hard times that will come, but remember our blessings – jobs, ample food, clothing, a place to live, family and good friends.

From Studies in Galatians, by Garland Elkins – Denton Lectures, 1936, p202, “Joy is the beaming countenance, the elastic step, the singing voice of Christian goodness.” This reminds me of an important man from Ethiopia (Acts 8:26-39). He is referred to as a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace, the queen. He was in charge of all of her treasury. We meet him riding in his chariot, going home from Jerusalem where he had been to worship. He was reading Isaiah, but not understanding all of it. Meanwhile, the angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, instructing him to overtake the chariot. He knew the eunuch was reading the prophet Isaiah 53:7-8.

Our friend wanted to know more and asked specific questions. Philip began at that scripture and taught him about Jesus. He believed in Jesus and understood that he needed to be baptized. It was clear that Philip discussed sin, repentance, confession and immersion. So when they came to a body of water, the eunuch indicated that he wanted to be baptized – now! Philip and the eunuch went into the water and Philip baptized him. God directed Philip away and the eunuch saw him no more. However, the eunuch went on his way rejoicing! I visualize him in his chariot bouncing along with a smile on his face and singing the Ethiopian equivalent of: “I’m happy today, Oh yes I’m

happy today, In Jesus Christ I’m happy today. Because He’s taken all my sins away! That’s why I’m happy today!”

Jesus was a pleasant, happy person – our great example in spite of the cruel treatment He endured. He found His joy in doing His Father’s will (John 4:34). In Hebrews 10:9, *“Jesus said, ‘behold I have come to do your will, O God.’”* When he came in contact with the lost, He found joy in bringing them back.

The parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son show that with diligent searching for each one, they were found! And for all, there was great joy and celebration. Luke 15:3-7 – the Lost Sheep – joy for one sinner who repents. Luke 15:8-10 – the Lost Coin – rejoicing when found and joy for the lost sinner who repented. Luke 15:11-32 – the Lost Son. When the lost son was found there was a merry feast.

In 2015, we can learn from the parables of Jesus and His experiences on earth. Kind and loving, He was always concerned for others. We should learn to be like Him as much as is humanly possible.

There is a simple, joyful acrostic for joy that I like.

Jesus
Others
You

Teach it to the children. They won’t likely forget. If we live these in order, we should be happy.

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Rom 15:13

Peace

Craig Sweet

If you turn on the news at any point, world peace will probably not be the leading story. Historically we have heard about one country or group fighting with another group for all sorts of reasons. Total peace in this world seems to be impossible. If a person could be granted any wish, a common request might be “world peace.” However, we continue to see and hear constant conflict. We read in our passage (Gal 5:22) that one of the fruit of the Spirit is *peace*. So, what is this peace that God promises faithful followers through Jesus Christ (Gal 5:1)?

The Greek word Paul uses in Gal 5:22 is “*eirene*” which means peace between individuals; harmony; tranquility. The Greeks even gave this name to the Goddess of Peace. Even in ancient times, people longed for peace; for a world where conflict did not exist. Looking at modern history, many “peace treaties” have been signed and broken soon after they are signed. Could it be that mankind is just looking in the wrong place to achieve peace?

Where do we look for this peace? Paul wrote in Philippians 4:4-7, *“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your*

hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” Prayer can lead us to inner peace. The Lord wants us to give him our problems so that we can have peace. He continues in Phil 4:8-9, stating that practicing what is right in the sight of God will bring us that peace that only God can provide. This is the only peace we can truly have on this earth. The world may be fighting and falling apart, but God will provide us peace as long as we give Him our heart, mind and soul and put our trust and faith in Him. *“For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace.”* Rom 8:6

Why does the Lord want us to practice peace? In Romans 12:18, Paul says, *“If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.”* Peace must start with us. We have to want it and strive for it. Peter said, *“For the one who desires life, to love and see good days, must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit. He must turn away from evil and do good; He must seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, and His ears attend to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”* 1 Pet 3:10-12 Our Christian responsibility is to let our light shine and to show everyone that we are at peace no matter what happens in this world. If you want true peace, then listen to what Paul told the Christians in Rome, *“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”* Rom 15:13 It is through our seeking God that we will abound in joy, and peace and hope through the power that only His Spirit can provide.

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We can make a difference! We do this by letting the world see that through Jesus, God's son, we can all have true and real peace in this life. We must demonstrate peace like Jesus; the *"Prince of Peace"* (Isa 9:6). Jesus said, *"Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God."* Mt 5:9 Paul tells the Galatians that *"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me."* Gal 2:20 If Christ is living in us, then we need to do and act as Jesus would do and act. When He was confronted with conflict, He never lost control. He never argued with anyone who wanted to "pick a fight." Several people wanted to trap Jesus, but He always had a response (often a question) that caused the person to think. He demonstrated how two people can discuss but still maintain peace. When two Christians are at peace with God, they are at peace with each other. Jesus told his disciples that, *"Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house.' If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you."* Lu 10:5-6 We keep peace by creating a peaceful environment. We need to not be selfish but pursue things for our brethren that work toward peace. *"So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another."* Rom 14:19

We have so many ways we can have peace, if we just have the desire. Prayer can bring peace. Brotherly love can bring peace. If we want peace, it starts with our heart. Paul said, *"Let the peace of Christ rule in*

your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful." Col 3:15 It is in our heart where peace begins and by following God through Jesus Christ (through God's Spirit) that we will obtain this precious fruit. *"Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance. The Lord be with you all!"* 2 Ths 3:16

Patience

Ephriam Davis

To approach a discussion on the topic of patience as a fruit of the Spirit, most anyone who is a diligent student of the word of God, would naturally first seek a definition. That student who desires to teach would also recognize the importance of finding and presenting the scriptural definition in an appeal to what the bible truly is, "the source of absolute authority." (2 Tim 3:16-17, 1 Ths 2:13) The KJV, NKJV and ASV translations all actually use the word longsuffering in the Gal 5:22 passage quotation, while the NASV, ESV, and NIV use the word patience instead. The interlinear Greek NT word cited in Gal 5:22 is *"makrothumia,"* and according Vine's Expository NT Dictionary, it is usually rendered "longsuffering." A search in Strong's concordance yielded a total of 33 book/chapter/verse citations of the word patience and 17 citations of the word longsuffering in the KJV.

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So, without necessarily becoming a Greek scholar, at least for the sake of this discussion, it is sufficiently safe to conclude that the words longsuffering and patience are synonyms. Perhaps one of the clearest commentaries to understand patience, its importance, and how it is developed in the life of a Christian is found James 1:1-12. Patience will **only** come and increase through trials (James 1:3). So, the wise Christian knows to be careful of what he/she asks God for, because if it is patience, God will surely provide the appropriate “means to an end.”

Athletes in all kinds of sports activities share a common motto as they train and prepare for competition, “no-pain, no-gain”. The person who decides to become a weight lifter does not and should not expect to grab and suddenly lift a 500 lb barbell the first time they walk into a gym. Similarly we would not be able run a 26.2 mile marathon in under just 3 hours without having spent all of the time and effort necessary to train for that. The writer of this article has accumulated numerous handwritten notes in the page margins and other available “white space” of a personal printed study bible as a result of hearing thousands of sermons and bible class lessons over the past 30 years. Among these memory jogging margin notes, the following handwritten definition was placed alongside the book of James: “Patience is the ability to **endure** without complaining and the mastery of one’s spirit to do so.”

The Hebrew writer reminds us of the fact that we as sons are chastened by the LORD in much the same way as we are chastened by our earthly fathers (Heb 12:5-9). And these

relatively brief events, compared to eternity, of course yield important everlasting benefits. *“Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”* Heb 12:11 This commentary is consistent with James 1:2-4. *“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, **knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.** But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.”* James chapter 1 helps us understand two significant things in regards to the **testing of our faith**: First, God does not ever tempt us because we know that is only the work of Satan, (Jas 1:12-13, Mt 4:1). Second, since the Father provides every good and perfect gift, we can therefore conclude again in most cases that Satan is the perpetrator of the trials that God allows to come our way (Jas 1:17, Job 1:8-22). Our God, who is always in control of every situation in our lives, uses these temptations and trials to test or prove our obedient faith, and He promised that it will not be more than we are able to endure (Jas 1:3; Heb 11:17; 1 Cor 10:13).

The apostle Peter gave two reasons for which we might suffer grief as a matter of chastisement. We can suffer for either the sake of righteousness or un-righteousness. *“Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of*

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Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. Yet **if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.**" 1 Pet 4:12-16 Consider the example of Christ, the Son of God learned obedience by the things he suffered. (Heb 5:8). Consider also the example of the persecutions endured by Paul; his stunning declaration, "...**all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.**" 2 Tim 3:12

These inspired, sobering remarks should cause one to do some very serious soul searching. Consider the knowledge we have of the lives of Peter, Paul, and the rest of the disciples of Christ to spread the gospel, encourage saints, and endurance in the persecutions they suffered. These remarks suggest a few things:

If we never suffer persecution can we truly say we are living godly? _____

Our desire to live godly with corresponding actions will bring persecution.

More desire to live godly with corresponding actions will bring more persecution.

The suffering will be relatively brief compared to eternity, yield the peaceable fruit of patience and God will ultimately deliver us so that we should glorify Him.

Kindness

Mark Gray

Kindness is among the "fruit of the Spirit." The Greek word is "chrestotes" (khray-stot'-ace) which according to Thayer's Greek Lexicon means kindness or benignity (being kind and gentle). Strong's defines the word as gentleness, goodness, or kindness. Paul uses this word in the same fashion 5 times in his letters (Rom 2:4; 2 Cor 6:6; Gal 5:22; Col 3:12; Tit 3:4).

Unfortunately the world around us often views kindness as weakness and something to be taken advantage of. Our culture of selfishness has pushed this product of the Spirit into near extinction it seems. In fact, I find myself struggling mightily in being kind in the harshness of the world. Kindness is manifested in a number of ways in scripture. As I attempt to be better in this regard, I hope you will find some benefit as well.

Kindness is shown to strangers. God knows that mankind tends to form small groups and isolate those that are not in that group. Several times in the Law He gives similar instruction: "You shall not wrong a sojourner or oppress him, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt." (Ex 22:21 cf Ex 23:9; Deut 10:19). God values kindness so much that He made it law to show it to strangers in Israel. Often we think of idolatry as the reason that God allowed the Israelites to be taken captive. That is certainly a valid

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reason, but Ezekiel reveals through his prophecy that along with idolatry and violence, it was a lack of kindness that led to their defeat and exile. *"The people of the land have practiced extortion and committed robbery. They have oppressed the poor and needy, and have extorted from the sojourner without justice."* (Eze 22:29, cf Eze 22:7).

Christians are commanded to be kind as well. The writer of Hebrews tells us *"Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."* Heb 13:2 Jesus gives a parable on kindness that we call the Parable of the Good Samaritan. A man heads to Jericho from Jerusalem and is beaten and robbed. He lays there "half dead" (Lu 10:30) while a priest passes him and a Levite a little later on. They ignore him. He's not their problem. They didn't want to get involved. These two no doubt know the Law that covers kindness. Perhaps they feared for their own safety or perhaps it was pure apathy, but they receive no commendation from Jesus in His parable. Rather a Samaritan comes along and has compassion on the beaten man. This heathen binds the man's wounds, puts him on his *"own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him."* Lu 10:34 He pays the bills and comes back later to check on the man. Jesus was not teaching a group of children here; He is telling this parable to a lawyer so that he may understand mercy and kindness. We cannot



sit back and let this just be a lesson for kids. We are commanded to show hospitality and mercy, in short, to be kind!

Oddly enough it seems (at least to me) that it is much easier to show kindness to strangers than those we are close to. To those we see often, like our own family and our Christian brethren, we tend to be more terse and demanding of and as a result less kind to these. Perhaps we hold them to an unattainable standard and expect too much from them. The old adage "familiarity breeds contempt" holds true most times. A familial example of kindness is found in the biography of Ruth. Ruth marries Naomi's son, and he dies. The widowed Ruth is encouraged to leave by her Mother-in-Law in order to find a new husband and continue on with her life in Moab. Ruth refuses her saying, *"Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the LORD do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you."* (Ruth 1:16-17). Rather than abandon Naomi, Ruth returns with her to Bethlehem and gleanes in the field in order to provide for them both. She was not bound by the Law, but shows kindness of her own accord. Obed sees Ruth as "a worthy woman" (Ruth 3:11) and marries her. Solomon writes of a worthy woman in Proverbs 31 and in verse 26 writes of her: *"She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue."* Again the value of kindness is demonstrated and lauded in the Word of God.

We are required to show kindness to our

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Christian brethren as well. Throughout the first letter to the Corinthians Paul tries to convey unity to the divided church there. The brothers were so deeply parted and contentious that they were suing each other in the courts. Paul rebukes them for not settling differences between themselves, but rather would *“wrong and defraud-even your own brothers!”* 1 Cor 6:8 These brethren came together and would not show kindness to those who were poorer by sharing their feast. Paul again rebukes them as they *“humiliate those who have nothing”* 1 Cor 11:22 What kindness is there in defrauding our brothers and sisters or watching them go hungry as some gorge themselves? Paul is clearly correct in his rebuke of this awful behavior.

Finally we should show kindness because God has shown and continues to show everlasting kindness to us. *“But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us.”* Tit 3:4-5 Kindness in this verse is the same word as in Galatians 5:22. Because God is kind, he wants to redeem us from our own selfishness and arrogance *“so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”* Eph 2:7 *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”* John 3:16). Sometimes we shy away from this verse since it has been hijacked by those who want a mild faith-only doctrine, but let the power of the verse sink in. God loved the world that continually rejected Him and sent His Son to be killed for it. The world was filthy with sin,

“but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Rom 5:8 The goodness and kindness of Christ allowed Himself to be humiliated, beaten, and crucified for a race deserving of all that and worse. Truly if God demonstrates such overwhelming kindness we can show kindness to our fellow man during our time on this earth as well.

Goodness

Russ Ward

The Fruit of the Spirit reflects the character of God and are contrary to the works of the flesh. It seems at first glance that there may be redundancy in the fruit listed, but if more than a cursory glance or thought is given there is indeed a difference reflected.

Goodness as translated from the Greek *“agathosune”* which is very similar to *“chrestotes”* which is translated as kindness. If we define *“agathosune”* from a Greek perspective we secure a collective thought that uprightness of heart or uprightness of life purposed is the act of producing good. This closer look actually indicates a more zealous activity towards doing good whereas kindness and gentleness are more passive and though similar in nature they are not always similar in expression. Another way we might say it, goodness is not excellence of character, but rather one’s character energized

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into an active expression producing good. By taking the stance of the narrower Greek view rather than the broader English view, goodness can be seen in the sharpness of one's actions or words. (Even in a rebuke, which when given and received in the proper manner would produce goodness in others). Consider Christ in cleansing the temple, an act of righteousness and goodness desired to achieve an effect, whereas Christ showed kindness and mercy to the woman caught in the act of adultery. In this example the sharp contrast can be seen between the two actions and yet each was designed to achieve a similar result.

Goodness is seen in actions of kindness, empathy, and service while at the same time as we have discussed it can be revealed through a rebuke, correction, exhortation or instruction. The outcome and the manner define the goodness of the action. Expressions of goodness therefore are as creative as the Spirit allows them to be when tempered with the other fruit of righteousness. This creativeness is reflected in the examples found within the scriptures. Consider on one hand the actions of Paul as he withstood Peter to his face regarding the treatment of Gentiles (Gal 2:11-14) and Dorcas on the other who was defined by the lives she touched with her goodness, expressing love through the simple things in life she did (Acts 9:36-43). Both Cornelius and Philemon are introduced and defined by their goodness when they are presented to us in the scriptures. (Acts 10:1-4, Philemon vs. 4-7, 14, 21-22)

Goodness is something that man in and of himself cannot manufacture on his own. *"Every good thing given and every perfect*

gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights." Jas 1:17 It is part of man as our nature is from God but it has to be taught, to be formed and molded, and it has to be seen in action. The one who possesses goodness will be selfless in action for other people. Unfortunately both selflessness and selfishness struggle for control with our minds and bodies while we are children, and it is only through teaching and direction that one will overcome the other. Once selflessness is positioned then goodness can be demonstrated in a variety of ways from confronting someone in sin to providing for someone in need. It is simply knowing people the way God knows people and learning to share with them both joy and peace, the opening of the heart when one is suffering, weeping in times of sorrow, and plowing forward with gentle perseverance when the road is rugged and steep.

As I pen this article I am reminded of a mature woman I have the privilege of worshipping with and seeing Christ reflected in her life. She is well versed in the scripture, both knowledgeable and wise as would be expected of someone that has been of service in the Lord's army for some time. She speaks to one and all with a purity of heart and spirit, yet has a backbone of iron that allows her to stand ramrod straight in the face of error and sin, and she is not afraid to commend those who stand with her or for her. She is a genuine as the day is long in her concern for people and the lives of those close to them. When she speaks it is not superficial but it is laced with words

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expressing her knowledge of the one to whom she is conversing. When there is a call to action she is among the first to respond. If I were to say her name there would be an instant recognition to those who know her, and with that recognition the definition of goodness would be personified ten times over. The truth is that her time and name will pass as it will for all of us and there will arise from somewhere else another individual who possesses all of these same qualities. The beauty of the scriptures is not just seen in the words themselves but in the lives of those who have taken to heart those things which have been written. Goodness can be expressed in words and phrases, but the power and beauty are better seen as they are revealed in the lives of faithful Christians.

Faithfulness

Steven D. Baxley

The seventh characteristic which marks the fruit of the Spirit as found in Galatians 5:22-23 is faithfulness. This characteristic is deserving of more than a cursory glance or mention, although it is probably often passed over quickly in the list.

The word “faithfulness” in this text translates the Greek word *pistis*. This word has more than one meaning. In Hebrews 11:1, “*Now faith {pistis} is the assurance of*

things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen,” it has the meaning of a conviction about something as being true. The Christian, because of faith, has assurance concerning things that are as of yet only matters of hope, and conviction concerning things that are not seen, either because they are not physically visible, or because they still lie in the future. God does not expect people to believe “blindly” or without evidence, but gives evidence so that faith can be a rational response to that evidence. The word *pistis*, however, has another meaning as well: “fidelity, trustworthiness, loyalty.” This is the sense that it has here in Galatians 5:22-23. Christians are to be people who are trustworthy and loyal, towards God and also other people.

In fact, God himself teaches the Christian about faithfulness through his own actions and character. Deuteronomy 7:9 gives us insight into God’s character: “*Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations.*” As an example of this, God demonstrates His faithfulness by not allowing His people to be tempted beyond what they can endure: “*No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.*” 1 Cor 10:13 This faithful character is also found in Jesus Christ. In Revelation 1:5, Christ is referred to as “*the faithful witness.*” In Revelation 19:11, Christ’s faithfulness to his Church is empha-

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sized in the titles he is given: *“Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war.”* In looking at God’s (and Jesus’) actions and attitude, the Christian comes to understand God’s standards of “fidelity, trustworthiness, loyalty.”

God has always been concerned that people be faithful in their behavior. Moses is careful to warn Israel concerning the importance of fulfilling vows/promises to God: *“If a man vows a vow to the Lord, or swears an oath to bind himself by a pledge, he shall not break his word. He shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.”* Num 30:2 In fact, Solomon makes it clear just how seriously God takes faithfulness in this regard: *“When you vow a vow to God, do not delay paying it, for he has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you vow. It is better that you should not vow than that you should vow and not pay. Let not your mouth lead you into sin, and do not say before the messenger that it was a mistake. Why should God be angry at your voice and destroy the work of your hands?”* Eccl 5:4-6

There are some very concrete and practical areas where Christians should demonstrate faithfulness. In regards to God, do we remain faithful to the promise we made to Him when we were baptized? God forgave our sins, and we pledged to live faithfully in His service. Do we demonstrate our faithfulness through holy and righteous living? Do we faithfully render service to Him in the Kingdom? This is not a promise that is made only once, nor is it one that we should take lightly. Soldiers in the King’s Army will not

desert nor abandon their fellow soldiers (*“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”* – Heb 10:23-25). Can our fellow Christians trust in us to be there for them to help them in their spiritual struggles, to encourage them as they grow, and pick them up when they fall?

Do we as Christian mates demonstrate faithfulness to our spouses? Christians must remain not only physically faithful, but also emotionally faithful as well. Do we demonstrate faithfulness to our wives/husbands in regards to what we do with our eyes and minds (Matthew 5:27-28)? Are our spouses able to trust us 100% in all matters because we have never given them any reason not to? This goes for both husbands and wives (*“The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain.”* – Prov 31:11).

Do we as Christian parents demonstrate faithfulness in regards to our children? Are promises to them easily broken or forgotten? Important also is the example that we set for them as parents. Do they see the ideas of trustworthiness and loyalty demonstrated in our lives?

Finally, do we as Christians show faithfulness in the world around us? We are citizens of the Kingdom, but we still live in this world. Do our friends, neighbors, co-workers, employers, and schoolmates trust us to keep our word? Do they trust us to keep matters

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confidential that were shared confidentially? Do they trust us not to be involved in the sins of gossip and slander? Do those around us believe us to be trustworthy in financial matters? Do we demonstrate the same kind of trustworthiness that Joseph (Genesis 39:1-10) and Daniel (Daniel 6:1-5) both did?

As we seek to grow as Christians, this part of the fruit of the Spirit cannot be neglected. Along with the other fruits, it demonstrates that we are children of God, and that we are conforming ourselves to his image.

Gentleness

Ron Gray

Gentleness is defined as “the quality of being gentle; mildness of manners or disposition; mild in temperament or behavior; kind or tender.”

Perhaps it would be good to look at misconceptions that one may have of a gentle nature in human beings. Society may expect gentleness in women, but may see such a quality in men as weakness or even cowardice, therefore, of little use to modern man. We as Christians try to be careful not to use society’s standards to define our morality. Those worldly “standards” would seek to lower the bar that God sets for us to an extreme low. In the same way, we cannot use the standards of society to guide our ideals of manhood or womanhood. Only in the

Word of God can we find those answers.

The apostle Paul, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote this letter, which contains the Fruit of the Spirit to “*the churches of Galatia.*” Gal. 1:2 He is addressing both men and women in the letter. Christian men can be – and should be – gentle without losing any of their masculinity.

Anyone who studies the New Testament will quickly realize that the apostle Paul was not afraid – or ashamed – to preach the Gospel, no matter the consequences. He was a strong man who never seemed to fear the earthly consequences of his service to the Lord. The Gospel itself is “*the power of God for salvation,*” not Paul himself. Rom.1:16 He sought no glory from the people who heard him, even though he could have made demands as an apostle of Christ. In addressing these thoughts to the church at Thessalonica, Paul actually paints a beautiful picture of the gentle nature that we as Christians should have, one for another.

“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 so dear to us.” 1 Thes. 2:7-8 This scripture shows us a real man, up close and personal, Paul, a man of God! He pours out his feelings for the brethren at Thessalonica. He did not hold back.

We, at North Beach, are so blessed to have little ones among us at every worship service. As we who are older march on toward our Heavenly home, we have confidence that these little ones will step up in

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due season to become Christians and to carefully conduct the work of the Lord not only within the walls of the church building, but in their everyday lives, shining as God's lights in a dark world. We are able to see in the parents and grandparents of these children, the essence of that "gentleness" of which Paul spoke. In the scriptures mentioned, he beautifully compares his affection to that of a mother and her gentle loving care.

Just a few verses away, Paul uses the example of a father's love and gentle nature towards his child. *"You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our conduct toward you believers. For you know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to walk in a manner worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory."* 1 Thes. 2:10-12

We can see here that the gentleness, of which Paul spoke, is far from being just an outward show of soft answers and kind gestures. The gentleness that is of the Spirit encompasses a deep love for our brothers and sisters in Christ, as well as for our fellowman. That love causes us to be "affectionately desirous" of one another to the point of not only sharing our joint love of God's Word, but actually sharing ourselves with each other just as a family does. This gentle love is not like a First Aid Kit that is brought out only in times of need and crisis, although it can be a good help there. It is a love that causes us to long to be together in good times and in bad, because we *are* a family. First, with a love like that of a mother for her baby, see-

ing to the needs of a "child" of God, helping him to grow; and then with the gentle love like that of a father who exhorts, encourages, and charges a growing Christian to walk in a manner worthy of God. This gentleness allows us to help our brothers and sisters through times that are difficult, without harshness, judging, or remembering their sins – the sins that God is ready and willing to forgive and forget.

We are all human beings and even though we have chosen the "strait and narrow" path, we are not immune to hardship and temptation. We can and should remember the difficulties of the sinful lives that we have left behind, not because we miss those days, nor long to relive them, but so that we can develop the gentle and sympathetic hearts that can be of great comfort and help to our brethren who are struggling with similar problems.

When we look at the list of the fruit of the Spirit, each of us has one or two that may come more naturally, and conversely, one or two that seem like an impossible dream. If gentleness is one of the hard ones for you, remember the golden rule: *"So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them..."* Mt 7:12 When it seems that you are being crushed by the problems of life and you are fighting to keep yourself in a faithful relationship with God, would you want a brother in Christ to tell you to "get over it and quit whining!" No, I think that you would prefer a brother who can offer a word of gentle advice, a heartfelt prayer for you, and a shoulder to lean on anytime that you feel the need.

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God does not require anything from you that He is not willing to do as well. King David says of God, *“Your gentleness has made me great.”* Psa 18:35 Jesus tells us in Matthew 11:28-30: *“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you shall find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”*

The “gentleness” that the Lord requires of you is both a benefit to calming your own spirit and a great help to all who know you. For those who see you, each and every day, that gentleness is a reflection of the God we serve and of His Son who gave His life for everyone who will hear His voice and come unto Him for salvation.

Self-Control

Ashley Browning

When I hear the word “self-control,” I automatically think of being in control of one’s self. It seems like a simple concept to be in control of one’s own thoughts, words, and actions. It’s actually one of the hardest things for us as humans to do. Everything we do in our lives requires self-control to one degree or another.

There are 18 verses in the Bible that mention self-control. All, except one verse,

are found in the New Testament. The majority of these verses deal with having self-control in regard to sexual immorality. This is a very difficult area for all people to exercise self-control. This is especially true in today’s society where we are constantly bombarded with images, speech, and music that promote all varieties of sexual immorality. Self-control is mentioned four times in Titus chapter 2. In this chapter, Paul is giving instructions to groups of people on what characteristics they should have and how to teach sound doctrine. He addresses older/younger men, older/younger women, and bondservants. He issues a special charge to older women to instruct the younger women to be self-controlled and pure, loving their husbands and children. Paul gives these instructions on how to act so that no one may find cause to doubt these people teaching the doctrine of Christ. All these traits and behaviors are what we, as Christians, should have. By having these traits and demonstrating these behaviors in Titus chapter 2, those who know us should never doubt that we are a child of God. In 1 Timothy chapter 3 and Titus chapter 1, self-control is listed among the qualifications for those who are overseers of the church. In 1 Timothy 2:9, women are instructed to dress with self-control and to exercise modesty. Apparel can become a stumbling block to others. Women should be adorned with what professes godliness. In 1 Corinthians 7, self-control is mentioned in the marriage relationship. Paul instructs married couples to engage in intimacy and not deprive one another so that Satan cannot tempt them due to lack of self-control. We see this too often in today’s soci-

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ety. Spouses drift apart physically and emotionally and seek comfort from another. That is a lack of self-control. Having self-control over one's own desires is very difficult. If we lack self-control, we become selfish. We are seeking to satisfy our desires no matter the outcome. To avoid sexual immorality, Paul instructs those who cannot exercise self-control to marry so they do not *"burn with passion"* in 1 Corinthians 7:9.

There are other areas on our lives where we must exercise self-control. We must exercise self-control with our temper. This is difficult for many people. When we let others affect the way we respond to certain actions, we lose our self-control. We often say things in the heat of the moment that cannot be taken back. Words hurt and they are permanent. You cannot un-hear something that is said to you. Self-control in this instance takes on the meaning of restraint. When we are angered by something or someone, we must keep our anger in check. Matthew 5:39 says *"...but if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also."* It takes self-control to not respond in a way that will harm someone else. Human nature wants to take immediate revenge on the one who hurt us. We must rise above that temptation and remain in control of our thoughts and actions. Ephesians 4:26 tells us *"Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger."* Anger is a natural human emotion, but the response to the anger is what can be sinful. The tongue is the most dangerous part of the body. It can do a lot of damage. The first 12 verses of James 3 talk about the dangers the tongue can cause. Verse 8 says *"but no human can*

tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison." If it cannot be tamed, it must be controlled.

If you are an athlete, you must have self-control to train your body to endure the sport and/or event you are training for. You must eat healthy and engage in rigorous physical activity. An athlete also must have control over their mind. They have to discipline their selves to commit to the diet and exercise routine that helps prepare them for their event. This self-control helps the athlete train to win a reward. 1 Corinthians 9:25 states, *"every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable."* The things we do to exercise self-control in this world to obtain something physical does not compare to what we will win if we exercise the self-control over our behaviors that will get us into heaven.

Proverbs 25:28 says *"A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls."* When we lack self-control, we leave ourselves open to Satan's influences. We will do or say anything to get that instant satisfaction that we are seeking. It could be something as small as saying "yes" to that extra piece of cake. Or, it could be the sin of sexual immorality in whatever form is attractive. When we are unable to control ourselves, we lose our defense against Satan's temptations. Self-control is a gift from God. 2 Timothy 1:7 says, *"for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control."* God gave us free will, but he also gave us the ability to exercise self-control with that free will.