

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT --- TOWARD OTHERS

Galatians 5:22

The Holy Spirit is the Producer of fruit. Whenever He dwells in a life, He begins to remake the life from the inside. He begins to produce in that life the character that God desires in every life. Paul describes the qualities of this Christlike character with nine beautiful words.

Already we have considered together how the first three of these qualities or fruits relate us to God. It is a love for God, a joy in the Lord, and the peace of the Lord that the Holy Spirit produces in a life. Your walk with the Lord will be what God wants it to be only as the indwelling Spirit is allowed to produce this fruit in your life. Why would we not yield to Him?

The next three words bring before us the manward aspect of the fruit. The Holy Spirit is interested in effecting your relationship with others, too. While the relationship with God comes first, we are still in a world of mankind. The Holy Spirit wants to demonstrate through you the beauty of the Lord in those relationships that make up your life. These are "longsuffering, gentleness, and goodness." Or maybe better, "patience, kindness, and goodness." These three words deserve some very careful attention from us. What kind of character does the Lord have in mind for us? How does he want us to relate to others? Others here would include the members of your family, your neighbors, your fellow-workers, brothers and sisters in the church, others wherever you might encounter them. God wants you to be patient, kind, and good.

I. THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS PATIENCE --- WITH OTHERS.

This word which is translated both as "longsuffering" and "patience" in our New Testament is used rather frequently. It is used of God's relationship to us. God is longsuffering with us in our sins and shortcomings. It is used of the Lord Jesus. He too manifested this quality in his life as he related to others. But it is more often used to describe what God wants us to be. The basic idea in the word is to be patient and steadfast in the face of provocation and wrong.

This patience is the kind that is not provoked by opposition. Enemies will fail to provoke enmity. It may have the strength to retaliate for wrong, but it also has the strength not to do it. One notable example of a Spirit-filled life in the New Testament is the deacon, Stephen. Never did a man face a worse storm of opposition more victoriously. When they rose up in anger against him, Stephen faced them with confidence and without resentment. Even as their stones crushed life from his body he was able to pray, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." This is the kind of fruit that the Holy Spirit produces in the life.. It is just like the Lord Jesus who prayed, "Forgive them for they know not what they do." What do

you do when people cross you, when they question your decisions, when they oppose your programs? The Holy Spirit wants to make you patient.

This patience is the kind that is not "soured by injustice", If you live long enough you will be faced with some injustice along the way. You will be the victim of wrong. The patient man does not become sour, bitter, or resentful when he is wronged. James uses this very word when he points us back to the Old Testament prophets for an example of patience. These good men of the Lord were constantly being persecuted unjustly. They were unjustly being treated as the enemies of the nation of Israel although they were all true patriots in heart. They were treated as traitors, but they kept on. They did not resign from the calling in bitterness. They did not become bitter cynics. They were faithful to their calling. They were patient.

This patience will not be crushed by contempt. Have you ever been the object of scorn and contempt? Jesus was. Yet he never turned on his critics with vengeance. He patiently endured all things.. This quality of character is that which truly "beareth all things".

Let us keep in locus the truth that this quality must be supernaturally produced in our lives, or it will never be there. We have a human inclination toward impatience. We are inclined to become angry when opposed, soured when wronged, crushed when held in contempt. We are humanly inclined to attack when we are attacked, but the Holy Spirit can produce in us that quality of life that will react so differently when the burdens and confrontations come --- we can be patient through Him.

II. THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS KINDNESS --- WITH OTHERS

Kindness is the better translation of the word here. It is very closely related to the patience we have just studied. It is a description of the inner disposition and the outward response of the person toward others. The Holy Spirit produces in the Christian kindness.

Josephus used the word to describe Isaac in the Old Testament. Isaac dug wells and gave them to others because he refused to fight over them. He was always a man of peace in relationship with others. This word was used to describe wine which was mellow with age and whose harshness had vanished. It is an active, busy, virtue.

It is that in a man which prompts him to always say the right word at the right time. He has such sensitivity to-people that he knows when a kind word will be helpful. He can turn the light on in their darkness by the kind word.

It is that quality which is manifest in the doing of that benevolent deed at just the right time. With a kind word it will reach out to do the most helpful thing.

It is a quality so rarely found in the human family. Is it not amazing how much unkindness, bitterness, and hate there is in the human family. We seem to be characterized by suspicion and ill will toward our fellow man. A rather revealing antidote has come down concerning the famous literary giant Thomas Carlyle. He was hosting two famous American authors in his home on this occasion. They had come just to hear him speak out of his great fund of wisdom. For at least an hour he talked on uninterrupted by the guests. Finally out of sheer exhaustion he stopped long enough to catch his breath. In the silence the heavy breathing of his wife became very noticeable. She had quit her work and had devoted her whole life to Carlyle. She had served him like a slave, but had received very little in return. He turned to her and said, "Jane, for heaven's sake, don't breathe so loudly." It was only a short while later that she died. After her death her husband read in her diary of the deep love that she had for him, and of her deep disappointment that he never seemed to return her love. It became quite obvious to him that she had died of malnutrition of affection or a broken heart.

From that day forward he began a daily pilgrimage to her grave where he would sit and say, "Oh, Jane, if I had only known, if I had only known." How much unkindness we encounter in all of the circles of life, but when the Holy Spirit fills a life --- he begins to fill that life with kindness. The life will be seen spilling over on others in kind words and deeds. Kindness --- it is a fruit of the Spirit that touches others.

III. THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS GOODNESS --- WITH OTHERS.

"Goodness" is a stronger, more masculine quality than kindness. It has been called "the open hand of charity". It is the gracious, free bestowal of a blessing on those who need it. We often say in worship, "God is so good." And He is. It is this quality in God which prompts him to respond to the need in our lives freely and graciously. He meets our need so often even when we do not deserve it. One great Greek Scholar has suggested that it could be translated here, "generosity".

Again, this is something that characterized the Lord Jesus. The Scriptures tell us that He went about doing good. What does that mean? It means that He spent his day helping others. He spent his days giving-- not getting. This might give us a good measurement to test our goodness. How many people have we helped today, or yesterday? Did we do anything that made it easier for another person, did we lift any burdens, did we meet any needs? We must not see the word "goodness" simply in terms of the absence of vices. Too often we have encouraged our children to be good, and what we meant was that we did not want them to fight, break the furniture, or say any bad words. When God says that He wants his children to be good, he Means that he wants them to be generous and helpful

toward their fellowman. He means that he wants them to be like the good Samaritan who spent his time, energy, and money in giving aid to a person who had no rightful claim upon him for anything. The Holy Spirit will make good Samaritans out of us all.

The primary thrust of the parable of the Good Samaritan however is not just the good deed itself, but the object of the good deed. The Samaritan did a good thing for a man who had never done him a good deed, and could not be expected to ever do him a good deed. Out of the goodness of his own heart, he reached out to the man in his need. Jesus emphasized in the Sermon on the Mount, and other places, that we must never reserve our good deeds for those who are good to us. Those who do us evil are to be the objects of our good deeds. This is the kind of goodness that the Holy Spirit will produce in you. This is the kind of person the Holy Spirit will make you.

In one of his letters John tells us that those who go about doing good are of God. This indicates that we are not "good" naturally. There is a selfish part in all of us. It is only as God's Holy Spirit works in us that we will have this goodness. It is not a natural quality of life.

CONCLUSION:

How fruitful are you as a Christian? Unless these fruits are being produced in you, the Lord is not receiving the pleasure He so justly deserves from your life. The key to being fruitful is being filled with the Holy Spirit., By this I mean nothing less than yielding to the control of the Holy Spirit under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. When Christ is enthroned, and the Holy Spirit is in control, your relationships with others will begin to be transformed. May God grant to you a growing experiential knowledge of this!