

"THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT"(PART III)

Galatians 5:22-23

The Holy Spirit is the Divine agent of change. At the moment of conversion He has given to the new believer as a gift from the Father. From that moment forward He begins to bring about a transformation of character in the believer. The Ideal toward which He is ever moving the believer is to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is seeking to produce in the believer a Christ-like character. This is how we must understand the "fruit of the Spirit". These are the qualities of the Christ-like character the Holy Spirit is producing in us.

Already we have noticed that the first three of these qualities are godward. It is a love for God, a joy in God, and the peace of God that the Holy Spirit produces in our lives. That comes first in importance even though it cannot be separated from the others., The word "fruit" is singular to remind us that each of these nine qualities come together to make up one cluster of fruit. The next three focus on our relationship with others. He makes us longsuffering--with others; gentle --- with others; and good --- with others. The Holy Spirit helps us to become the kind of person that can enjoy healthy relationships :n all areas of life.

Today our focus is on the last three which deal with self, the personal side of character. If you know anything about yourself, you already know how important this is. Most of our worst battles are fought and lost with self. The Holy Spirit is intent upon producing Christ-likeness in this portion of your life. Here He produces faith, meekness and temperance.

Just how important is the "fruit of the Spirit"? In my Judgment extremely important. We are becoming aware of the "gifts of the Spirit" in a new way in our day, but nothing is more dangerous that a spiritually gifted man who does not have the fruit of the Spirit in his life. Unfortunately, the two do not always go together. Some men who have the gift of prophecy, lack the character necessary to use this gift wisely. The result may be more harmful than helpful. Let us consider together exactly what the Lori has in mind in your personal life.

I. THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS FAITHFULNESS.

The common version translates the first of these selfward qualities "faith". While the man in whom the Spirit of God is at work will be a man of faith, that is, faith in God, the word in this setting is obviously an ethical word. It is used in the New Testament of an ethical quality that is quite prominent in the character of God. When it is used in connection with God it is translated "faithfulness, or trustworthiness," We idea in the word is that of loyalty, trustworthiness, faithfulness, and fidelity.

When this quality is found in God, it is that which prompts God to keep His promises and His VOWS. The very foundation stone of the Christian faith is that God keeps His word. We are staking our hope of eternal life upon the faithfulness of God. He keeps His word. He seeks to produce this quality in the life of the Christian. He will make the words of man like an oath. In the day of Jesus they had the same problems that we have in our day. The character of men was such that their word did not mean anything. In order to help they had worked out an elaborate system of oaths that men would take when they were making a promise. Jesus announced that in the character he had come to produce, such would not be necessary. All that would be needed was a simple "yea" or "nay". God puts a premium upon helping you to become a man of your word.

An idea that seems to be prominent in our day is that you are bound by your promises only as long as is necessary to your benefit. If you sign a contract, and later decide that you have entered a deal that is not to your advantage, then you are free to ignore the contract and break your word. This has especially been publicized by some of the outstanding sports figures. God produces the kind of character which causes a man to be faithful to his word when it is costly to him personally.

The other side of this quality in God is what prompts Him to always do what He is supposed to do. He never fails to perform his responsibility. He may not do it the way that man expected it to be done, but He will do it. You can depend on Him. God puts a high value upon this in the life of the Christian. God prizes "faithfulness". Jesus held it up as being a quality that God will take notice of in the day of judgment. Loyalty, trustworthiness, faithfulness! Without it your gifts and skills will be greatly diminished in value. This quality is so lacking in modern day Christendom. If the business world had the same degree of unfaithfulness to responsibility that the church suffers among those who accept places of responsibility, the bankruptcy rate would suffer a great increase.

However, it must be admitted, that it is a problem to the businessman of our day. It is especially true in the work of the Lord where the only reason to be faithful is because you are a faithful man or woman. The Holy Spirit is seeking to produce this in you. It will manifest itself in every area of your life.

II. THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS MEEKNESS.

No biblical word is more misunderstood than this beautiful word. Meekness is not timidity. Some men are just naturally timid, but this is not a natural quality. It is not a lack of spirit or drive. This has nothing to do with the aggressiveness, or the drive of a man. Some men are geared up to walk at a slower pace through life than others, but this is not meekness. It is not weakness, but is rather a quality of real strength. The strongest of men, the Lord Jesus Christ, spoke of His personal meekness. He declared, "I am meek and lowly in heart."

The realm of meekness is the spirit of man. The next quality has its realm in the body of man, but meekness is the spirit of man under control. Maybe we can understand it better if we can see its opposite in operation. When the spirit of man ' is not under control you may have an outburst of uncontrolled anger, of bitterness, or resentment. But a meek man will never allow such to come forth from His spirit. This does not mean that He will never express anger---Jesus did. The expression will always be deliberate and directed at the right objects. Most of the world's anger is full of sin because it is out of control, and is often directed in all directions. This will never be true of the meek man because his spirit is under control.

This character quality was especially prominent in the life of Moses. Any student of the Bible knows that Moses could never be called a weak man, but he was the meekest man in all of the earth in his day. It is of interest that this reference to his meekness is found in a context of personal provocation. His own brother and sister began to lead an insurrection against the leadership of Moses. They began to make accusations against Moses that just were not true. Yet Moses did not raise one finger in defense, but rather he just committed the whole situation into the hands of the God of Israel. Moses had strength. One word from Moses could have meant the expulsion of Aaron and Miriam from the camp of Israel, or could have meant their death. Moses was strong enough not to defend himself he had such control over his spirit that he could not respond in anger and bitterness, and that he could trust God for a disposition of the matter. This is meekness.

The quality received its expression supremely in the Lord Jesus. His meekness was revealed in his response to the opposition and injustice of his enemies. When they threatened him, chided him, cursed him, he never responded with threats, or rebukes. While they nailed him to the Cross, he submissively prayed for them. All of this took place while he had the power to call for the hosts of heaven to destroy his enemies. He could have received immediate vengeance upon them, but he submitted this into the hands of God. He refused to become the defender of his own rights.

Do you have control over your own spirit? Can you deliberately commit into the hands of God any violation of your personal rights and any injustice? The Holy Spirit desires to produce in you such a quality. He makes men meek. He brings their inner spirit under their control. The Spirit controlled life will have under control the inner spirit of man.

III. THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS SELF-CONTROL..

The last of the blessed character qualities is temperance, or self-control. If meekness focuses upon the spirit of man, this quality focuses upon the body of man with its members and desires. The Holy Spirit seeks to help you live a

disciplined, controlled life. He wants you to be the kind of person who has every part of life under control. Again, this quality was quite evident in the daily walk of the Lord Jesus. While the Lord Jesus was able to enjoy all things, he was never brought under the control of anything or anyone.

What about the members of the body? The Holy Spirit produces in us the kind of self-control that brings the member under control. According to James, the strongest member of the human body is the tongue. It does not have the size of your arm or leg, but it will be much more difficult to bring under control. Men who have been able to train their arms to lift hundreds of pounds, have not been able to train their tongues to speak only good and kind words. Their tongue will exercise itself without any self-control. It will constantly be babbling forth words of bitterness, uncleanness, cursings, and all kinds of harmful things. Only the Holy Spirit can produce in you the degree of self-control necessary to control the tongue, and the other members of the body.

What about the appetites of the body? Your body has some basic God-given desires that when they are kept in their proper place they become life-forces. When these appetites are out of control, they can become very destructive. Do the desires of the body control you, or do you control the desires of your body? In the life of the Spirit-controlled man, the man has them under control.

The desire for food is a very destructive one when it is out of control. Jesus our Lord so had this desire under control that even though he had not eaten for forty days he could still refuse to satisfy this desire for food outside of the will of God. Many of us are allowing this basic desire of the body to dominate us. The Holy Spirit wants to help you with this. Have you sought his aid in this area of your life?

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Every basic desire of the body--including sexual desires--can be brought under your control through the Holy Spirit.

A well-ordered and self-controlled life, a life of victory over the flesh in these areas is the fruit of the Spirit.

Nothing is more attractive for the cause of Christ in the world than a Spirit-filled Christian laden with the fruit of the Spirit.