

The Blessed Person and Work of God the Holy Spirit



Lesson 8--The Fruit of the Spirit and God's Purpose for the Believer

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23).

In these two verses we have a nine-word description. The important questions we want to ask are these: Who fits this description? Do we fit this description? Are we loving, joyful, at peace (untroubled, free from worry and fear), etc?

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| <p>Love</p> | <p>Love is carefully defined by God in 1 Corinthians chapter 13 (see Lesson 9 where this will be studied in more detail). True love is not a feeling, but a choice. It is a decision to love another person and to be willing to sacrifice SELF for the sake of that other person. It is to seek God's highest and best for the person we love, regardless of the cost. The perfect illustration of love is what Christ did for us on Calvary's cross: "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). Love</p> |
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| | <p>involves GIVING: "God so loved the world that He gave...." (John 3:16). "Who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). Giving of oneself involves personal sacrifice. Such love is produced by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5) in the believer who has been born of the Spirit (John 3:5), and shows itself by its self-denying and compassionate devotion to God and His Word.</p> |
| <p>Joy</p> | <p>Joy is delight and gladness, even during difficult times. The Lord Jesus made it possible to share His JOY (John 15:11). The Holy Spirit produces this JOY (1 Thess. 1:6), even in troubles and testings (James 1:2--"count it all joy"). We are to rejoice with _____ unspeakable (1 Peter 1:8), until we see our Lord and Saviour face to face (1 Peter 1:7, 9). Happiness depends on one's outward circumstances; joy depends only on the Lord who never changes. For this reason the believer can always be rejoicing (1 Thess. 5:16; Phil. 4:4).</p> |
| <p>Peace</p> | <p>The believer has peace with God (Rom. 5:1). He no longer is at war with God. He no longer is an enemy of God because he has been reconciled to God through Christ. Because of this the believer is able to enjoy the "peace of God" (Phil. 4:7) as long as he is controlled by the Spirit and in fellowship with God. The Holy Spirit produces this peace, this untroubled, undisturbed well-being (John 14:27). "Two artists set out to make a picture representing perfect peace. The first painted a canvas depicting a carefree lad sitting in a boat on a little placid lake without a ripple to disturb the surface. The other painted a raging waterfall with winds whipping the spray about. On a limb, overhanging the swirling water, a bird had built its nest, and sat peacefully brooding her eggs. Here she was safe from her predatory enemies, shielded and protected by the roaring falls. Real peace is the result of remaining calm and cool in the midst of trial" (<i>Our Daily Bread</i>, 10/25/65). In the midst of great tribulation, we can have peace in a great Saviour (John 16:33).</p> |
| <p>Longsuffering</p> | <p>This word means "long temper, slow to anger, long before getting angry." It is that quality of self-restraint in the face of provocation which does not hastily retaliate or</p> |

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| | <p>promptly punish; it is the opposite of anger. It describes the believer who, without being angry and without the thought of revenge, shows patience and forbearance to those who annoy, oppose, molest or treat him or her badly. God has been so longsuffering towards us. Even though we deserve God's wrath, God holds back His anger and patiently waits for sinners to turn to Him (2 Peter 3:9).</p> |
| <p>Gentleness (Kindness)</p> | <p>This word is probably better translated "kindness." It involves being kind to a person who may not deserve kindness at all. God was kind to us, in His grace, even though we did not deserve one drop of His kindness (Tit. 3:7; Eph. 2:7; Rom. 2:4). It is a virtue that the natural man (unsaved man) cannot produce: "There is none that doeth <u>good</u> (kindness), no, not one" (Rom. 3:12). The saved man is to put on "kindness" as a piece of clothing appropriate for one who is a new man in Christ (Col. 3:12). Because we have tasted that the Lord is <u>gracious</u> (kind), we are able to be kind and forgiving to others (Eph. 4:32). I can forgive others, knowing that God, in His kindness and grace, has forgiven me.</p> |
| <p>Goodness</p> | <p>God is good (Psalm 100:5; 34:8), and God's children are to imitate Him in this virtue, reflecting to others the goodness of our God. Twice we are told that "goodness" is the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22 and Eph. 5:9). This goodness expresses itself in the believer's willingness to give of himself unselfishly. It also involves repaying evil with good (Romans 12:17-21; Matthew 5:44; 1 Pet. 3:9-11).</p> |
| <p>Faith</p> | <p>This word can mean "faith" or "faithfulness." Faith (trusting in the Lord) is the root; love (and all the fruit included with it) is the fruit: "Faith (the root) which worketh by love (the fruit)"--Galatians 5:6. Since Galatians 5:22 is speaking of fruit (the fruit of the Spirit), then Paul is probably here referring to that which faith produces, which is faithfulness.</p> <p>The faithful person is dependable. He can be trusted. You can count on him and he will not let you down.</p> |

When he gives you his word, you know that he will do what he said he would do. He is reliable.

Meekness

Some of the dictionary definitions fall far short of the true meaning of this word. One definition given in my dictionary is "deficient in spirit and courage, lacking in courage." This definition is saying that a meek person is not courageous. Another definition is: "not violent or strong." Lacking strength? This would mean that meekness is equivalent to weakness. Nothing could be further from the truth. We need to allow the Lord Jesus, not the dictionary, to define this word, because we are told that Jesus was "meek and lowly in heart" (Matt. 11:29). Therefore, if we understand what the King was like, we will understand what meekness really is.

Was the King weak? Ask anyone who was present at the time when Jesus drove out the money changers from the temple. One Man was driving out a whole group of men. He turned over their tables. He turned over their chairs. No one dared to resist Him. No one dared to get in his way. They quickly cleared out. Certainly this was not a display of weakness. Also Moses, in Numbers 12:3, was described as the meekest man in all the earth. When we think of Moses, do we think of weakness? Would we have wanted to be near him when he got angry at the sin of the people and started smashing tablets of stone?

Meekness is not weakness; it is strength under control, power under control. Think of a wild stallion, a very strong horse that needs to be broken. The skilled cowboy lassoes him and brings him into the corral. He then jumps on his back and tries to ride him, but the horse is so strong that he kicks and jumps and bucks and throws his rider off. The cowboy is persistent and doesn't give up. He gets thrown off the powerful beast about five more times. But finally he's able to hang on for dear life, even though the horse jumps and kicks and bucks. Finally the horse calms down and stops fighting. His will has been broken. He submits to the bit and bridle. He's willing to do whatever his rider says. He's just as strong as he ever was, but his strength is under control.

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| | <p>The King wants to control our passions. Happy is the person who lets Him do so. Happy is the person who lets the Lord hold the reins. Happy is the person who stops going his own stubborn ways, who stops fighting against God and stops kicking against the pricks, stops insisting that his way is best! Happy is the person who says, "Lord, my life is yours to control. Lead me. Teach me. Show me Thy way." "Blessed are the meek" (Matt. 5:5). "The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way" (Psalm 25:9). The meek person is gentle and mild in his own cause, though he may be a lion in God's cause or in defending others. He's not strong in defending himself; but he gives his all to defend God and His truth.</p> |
| <p>Temperance</p> | <p>This word means "self control." An Olympic athlete exercises rigorous self control. This involves getting enough sleep, waking up on schedule, eating a proper diet, avoiding harmful substances (drugs, alcohol, etc.), devoting hours to training and developing his or her skills, etc. All of this is done with the eyes on the goal of winning the gold. The believer's eyes are on the goal of winning Christ's approval (Phil. 3:8), and by the power and control of the Holy Spirit, he must do away with anything that will hinder the accomplishment of that goal. The believer's fleshly nature and its works (Gal. 5:19-21) are rendered inoperative as the believer is filled and controlled by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18). As the believer walks in the Spirit, he will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh (Gal. 5:16).</p> |
| <p>Against such there is no law</p> | <p>This is only a representative list of the fruit of the Spirit (not an exhaustive list). There is no law against being loving, joyful and enjoying God's peace! Love (along with all the fruits of the Spirit) is the fulfilling of the law (Rom. 13:8,10).</p> |

How well do these words describe us? If we are honest, we will have to say, "I wish this were a description of me, but often I'm unloving, selfish, grumpy, worried, quick to anger, explosive, unfaithful, proud and have little self control."

How many of us would dare to offer this challenge: "If you really want to understand the nine words found in these two verses, then I invite you to observe my life carefully this coming week, and I will show you fruit that will perfectly match the fruit described

for us in these verses." [In a classroom situation you could ask if there are any volunteers who would be willing to allow others to closely observe their lives this coming week!]

Who really fits this nine-word description? There is only one Person whose life and character perfectly matches these descriptions. These two verses perfectly describe the character of Jesus Christ.

The fruit of the Spirit is the wonderful character of Jesus Christ being formed in the child of God by the Spirit of God.

It is interesting that God has not allowed any pictures of Christ to be preserved for us today. God could have done this. The images of other men who lived in the days of Christ have been preserved for us. For example, we have the images of certain Roman rulers preserved on ancient coins. We also have sculptures of famous men that have survived through the centuries. However, we have no painting or picture or portrait of Jesus Christ.

In Galatians 5:22-23 we have a nine-word portrait of Christ. Read Galatians 4:19 carefully. "...until _____ be _____ in you" (Gal. 4:19). Do you see what God is after? God wants the character of Jesus Christ to be formed in the believer, and the Spirit of God is the One who does that wonderful forming and transforming. Paul uses an interesting analogy in this verse. The idea is that of an embryo being formed, a baby being formed in the womb of a mother. How marvelous is the formation of a baby in the womb! How wonderful is the formation of Christlike character in the person who is a sinner saved by grace.

Paul said, "I travail in birth!" Paul was suffering birth pangs for them. A mother goes through a lot of pain and suffering for her physical children. Paul went through a lot for his spiritual children, for the Galatians. He labored and toiled and travailed. He would gladly spend and be spent for their sakes. He would have done anything if it would have contributed to what God was really after: **forming the character of His Son in the believer.**

In the nine-word portrait of Christ found in Galatians 5:22-23, the first word is "love." To help understand the meaning of this term "love," turn to the "love chapter" which is 1 Corinthians 13. We are going to start in verse 4 and we are going to substitute three terms for the word "love."

First substitution: As you read verses 4-7, substitute your own name every time you find the word "love." For example: "(your own name) is longsuffering, (your own name) is kind, (your own name) does not envy," etc. How does this fit? If you are honest with yourself you will recognize that you fall far short of being a loving person.

Second substitution: This time, go to the same verses (4-7) and substitute the word "Christ." Christ is longsuffering; Christ is kind, etc. How does this fit? It fits perfectly. Jesus Christ is the perfect embodiment of what love is all about.

Third substitution: Now go to the same verses (4-7) and substitute the phrase "Christ in me." Christ in me is longsuffering; Christ in me is kind; etc. This fits perfectly, and this helps us to understand what love and the fruit of the Spirit is all about. It is Christ living out His life in the believer. See Galatians 2:20.

In Romans 13:14 the words "put on" are words that are used of putting on clothes or getting dressed. Of course, here it speaks of putting on the characteristics of Someone, putting on the very character of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Clothes, like fruit, are visible and outward. When you look at a person you see his clothes. As people look at us, what do we want them to see? We are to put on the Lord Jesus Christ. He is to be seen! He is our garment. We need to be clothed with Him. We must not display the filthy, fleshly garments of our old life, but instead we must put on the Lord Jesus Christ. Compare Colossians 3:10,12,14.

Clothes tell us something about the person who wears them. If I see a police uniform on someone, I am going to assume that the person wearing the uniform is a policeman. The same is true of a fireman, a doctor, a nurse, etc. How are people going to know that you are a Christian? They need to see you wearing Jesus Christ and manifesting the fruit of the Spirit. We need to make sure we are putting on the right garments and allowing the Lord to work in and through us (Hebrews 13:21).

Consider Romans 8:28. What is God's purpose for you? What is God's plan and design for your life? What is God after? The verse is describing those who love God, those who have a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. What is God's purpose for you? We learn of this purpose in Romans 8:29--"to be _____ to the _____ of His Son."

The word "predestinate" is a puzzling word for some, but it simply means that God has marked out a wonderful and glorious future for every child of God. God is going to make us like His Son. That is His purpose. We shall be like Him. It is guaranteed. God is going to do it; in fact, God has already started doing it. It is not something that God is going to do later when we die or when Christ returns for us. That is when the

process will be finished. God started this process of changing us from the first day of our salvation.

Right now God is in the process of changing us. Right now God is in the process of forming Christ in us. Right now God is in the process of clothing us with His Son. Right now God is in the process of producing the fruit of the Spirit and forming the character of Christ in every child of God. Right now God is in the process of conforming us to the image of His Son, and God has promised to complete that good work which He has begun in us (Phil. 1:6).

There is good news for every believer. God is changing us. We can be sure of that. It may be painful at times and uncomfortable. It may involve many trials and troubles, but it will yield a wonderful result (Heb. 12:11). We are constantly being changed. The Master Sculptor is chipping away and chiseling away, and that process may hurt, but we are becoming more and more like the finished product that He has in mind. He has predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son.

Read Romans 12:1. Christ has given Himself for us, the supreme sacrifice and act of love. This love of Christ constrains us to give ourselves to Him. How can we do anything less for the One who died for us? That is where it all begins. How can God transform us if we have not presented ourselves to Him? How can the potter shape a piece of clay if the clay runs away and hides itself and refuses to be molded? The believer needs to say, "Lord, You have bought me with a price. I belong to You totally. I'm Yours! Do Your work in me!"

Romans 12:2 gives this command: "Be ye T_____." It is in the present tense: "Keep on being transformed." The words means to be changed in a wonderful way. From this Greek word we get our English word "metamorphosis," a word used to describe some of nature's most amazing God-designed transformations, such as the changing of an earthbound caterpillar into a beautiful flying butterfly [or the changing of a slippery water-dwelling tadpole into a remarkable amphibious frog capable of breathing the air, capturing insects with its tongue and jumping great distances]. Evolution is not responsible for such remarkable changes; God does it! God wants the believer to undergo amazing changes as well.

Such a transformation comes from within. God is working in me changing me and transforming me. God can take a wretched sinner and transform him or her into the image of His Son.

Notice, however, that there is a negative side to this in Romans 12:2--"Be not _____ to this world." Do not let the world squeeze you into its mold. Remember, the world does not want you to be Christ-like. Do not let the world influence you. Be a non-conformist! Dare to be different. Dare to be a Daniel. Do not let the world conform you; let Christ transform you!

God's transforming work is wonderfully seen in 2 Corinthians 3:18. In this verse we find the same word that we looked at in Romans 12:2 ("transformed"; here translated "changed"). We are constantly being changed (present tense). We are continually, daily, consistently being changed into the image of Christ.

Notice that it says we are being changed (passive voice). It does not say that we are changing ourselves. No man can build Christian character. This is God's work. Only the Spirit of God can produce the fruit of the Spirit. Who does this transforming work? Second Corinthians 3:18 makes it clear: "even as by the Spirit of the Lord." The Spirit of God does it. This transformation or change is brought about by the Spirit of God. He is the One who clothes us with the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the first part of 2 Corinthians 3:18 we read about a "glass" (a looking glass or a mirror). As we look into this mirror, what do we see? We see "the glory of the Lord." We see the glorious Person of Jesus Christ. This is quite a unique mirror. Usually when we look into a mirror we see ourselves as we are. When we look into this mirror, we see ourselves as we shall be! We shall be like Him. We see the glory of the Lord

What is this mirror? What mirror can we look into and see the Lord Jesus Christ? The mirror is the Word of God. If we want to see Christ, we will find Him in the Bible. It is there that He is so perfectly pictured for us.

The Jewish people, even to this day, when they read the Bible do not see Christ. This happens because they are blind (2 Cor. 3:14) and there is a veil upon their heart (2 Cor. 3:15). The good news is that this blindness can be taken away whenever a Jewish person T_____ his heart to the Lord (see 2 Cor. 3:16). A true believer looks into God's Word with an open or unveiled face. The believer can look into the Word of God and he can see Christ! There is no veil. The Bible is the God-painted portrait of Jesus Christ. What a difference it would make if we would read our Bibles with the purpose of seeing Christ! The Lord Jesus Himself told us that the Scriptures speak of Him (see Luke 24:27,44-45).

In 2 Corinthians 3:18 we learn that as we behold the glory of the Lord we are constantly being changed into that same image. How does God change us? Does it happen all at once? Do we wake up one morning and find ourselves totally Christlike? No, it is a process, "from glory to _____," from one stage of glory to another. The growing believer finds that today he is more like Christ than he was yesterday, and more like Christ tomorrow than he was today.

Who is involved in this wonderful process of change and transformation? Is it the Pastor only? The deacons or elders? No, it says "we A_____." This is God's purpose for every believer. If you are saved, then it is God's purpose to conform you to the image of His Son. This is God's wonderful design for your life.

How does this change take place? It happens as we behold Him in the mirror of God's Word. It says, "beholding...we are changed." This transformation happens as we fix our eyes upon the picture of Jesus Christ as it is presented in God's Word.

"Beholding...we are changed." What we see, we soon shall be! We become like what we behold. We tend to become like what we look at. What gets our attention gets us! We are great imitators. We tend to imitate what we see. In some cases, those who have been married to each other for many years resemble each other in certain ways. This occurs because every day, for many years, they have been beholding each other and have imitated the other person in certain ways. We tend to become what we look at and what we focus upon.

Television and other visual forms of media are negative illustrations of this principle. We become like what we behold. If we are constantly beholding violence and bad language and wrong conduct and immorality, then this is going to have an influence on the kind of person we are. The same could be true with respect to focusing our minds for long periods of time on our computers or smart phones.

For a beautiful illustration of the principle of 2 Corinthians 3:18, it would help to visit the library and pick up the short story by Nathaniel Hawthorne entitled, *The Great Stone Face*. If you read this, you will not miss the point!

Consider 1 John 3:2. In the future the believer will be like Christ because he shall see Him as He is. We will perfectly behold the glory of the Lord at that time. This verse is speaking about when the process of transformation will be completed. How can I be more like Christ today? The more I see Him as He is, the more I will become like Him. As the hymn writer says, "Fill all my vision, Saviour divine, till with Thy glory my spirit shall shine. Fill all my vision that all may see, Thy holy image reflected in me."

