

The Fruit of the Spirit

Sermon Series

January - March 2022
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Introducing The Fruit of the Spirit

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But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. - Galatians 5:22-23

Over the next 10 weeks, for the remainder of January through March, we are going to study “The Fruit of the Spirit”. In the original Greek manuscripts, the word used for “fruit” is singular, meaning there is only 1 fruit. This singular fruit consists of 9 attributes, or nutrients if you will. We will begin our series with an introductory message this morning, and then highlight each of these nine nutrients or characteristics in the weeks that follow. They are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Each message, other than this first one, will be presented in a similar format. We will define and describe a particular nutrient of the fruit, see how it is exemplified in Christ, and look at other scripture references that pertain to it. I will be using a booklet produced by Rose Publishing titled “The Fruit of the Spirit: How the Spirit Works In and Through Believers” as a primary resource in the preparation of these messages.

The Fruit of the Spirit is the evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit within the life of a Christian. Whenever a person comes to faith in Jesus Christ, they are immediately filled with the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 1:13-14). The Holy Spirit plays several different roles in the life of a believer, beyond the scope of this series. However, one of the Spirit’s main purposes is to conform them into the image of Christ by cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit within their lives.

I. BEARING FRUIT

The concept of fruitfulness is presented in the Bible in a few different ways. When God instructed mankind to be fruitful and multiply, He was referring to human reproduction and populating (or, in Noah’s case, repopulating) the earth. This meaning has led some to narrowly view fruitfulness in terms of numeric growth and to understand “bearing fruit” as a metaphor for making disciples and expanding the kingdom of God.

While this is certainly a valid use of the phrase, more broadly speaking it means to yield or produce positive or favorable results or change. In most cases in Scripture, it refers to activity that occurs within the individual believer’s life. Such fruit is not produced by human effort, but rather is the result of God’s supernatural handiwork. When we trust in the LORD, we bear fruit (Jeremiah 17:7-8). When we delight in His Law, we bear fruit

(Psalm 1:3). When we walk in His light, we bear fruit (Ephesians 5:8-11). When we remain in the Vine, we bear fruit (John 15:5). The bottom line is this... apart from Christ, we cannot bear fruit as He alone is responsible for its growth.

Therefore, as God works within the life of an individual Christian, and they begin to bear fruit likening them to the image of Jesus, they will live more righteously and do good works. Their speech and behavior will display a positive witness for Christ. This will make them much more effective at evangelism and outreach. In other words, internal fruitfulness is a prerequisite for and contributes to external fruitfulness. Stated another way, character effects conduct and conduct produces converts.

II. GOOD FRUIT

A tree is known by the fruit that it bears (Luke 6:43-45). People do not pick pears from apple trees, or oranges from fig trees. In the same way, people who are filled with the Spirit of God are recognizable by the good fruit that they produce while those who are filled with evil and sinfulness are recognizable by their bad fruit. The key determinant is the quality and condition of the tree, which is to say the nature of the individual person. If they have been made good through the blood of Christ, then they will bear good fruit (Matthew 7:16-20, 12:33).

There are many godly character traits listed in the Bible. In this series we will focus on and break down the 9 characteristics contained in the Fruit of the Spirit, but there are many others. Some examples include wisdom, righteousness, humility, courage, integrity, perseverance, generosity, and purity. When a person is characterized by such things, they correspondingly act in godly ways.

It is God's desire for His Children to be fruitful (John 15:16). He wants us to bear good fruit in our lives that will have a lasting impact on the world. Such fruitfulness begins in the heart. As such, we must be careful to guard our hearts, because everything we do flows from there (Proverbs 4:23).

III. BAD FRUIT

Just as a person can bear good fruit, so also they can bear bad fruit. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul contrasted the Fruit of the Spirit with "the desires of the flesh" (Galatians 5:19-21). These include "sexual immorality, impurity, indecent behavior, idolatry, witchcraft, hostilities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these." Those who habitually practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

In his correspondence to the Colossians, Paul gave a similar list. He warned Christians to rid themselves of sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, greed, idolatry, anger, wrath, malice, slander, obscene speech, and dishonesty (Colossians 3:5-9). Such traits and behaviors are indicative of the old self, and are exhibited by those upon whom the wrath of God is coming. They are “bad fruit”.

Due to his corrupt and fallen nature, sinful man will naturally produce bad fruit. The evidence of this fact is abundant in our world today. Our homes and communities are plagued with examples of bad fruit. Our media, government, and other institutions are rotten to the core. The only cure for this rampant sinfulness is Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, here are a few key points from today’s message:

It is God’s desire for His Children to be fruitful.

True fruitfulness begins in the heart.

All people bear fruit - either good or bad.

People are recognized by the type of fruit that they bear.

Only God, through the Holy Spirit, can produce good fruit.

As we progress through this sermon series during the coming weeks, may we be careful to focus squarely upon ourselves. May we ask... How can I submit myself more fully to the Holy Spirit, so that He might produce His fruit more bountifully within my life? It is my prayer that God will work supernaturally within each of us, so that in the weeks to come the Fruit of the Spirit will become even more evident in our lives.

Love

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The Bible compares people to fruit-producing trees. Jesus taught that all people bear fruit in their lives - either good or bad - and this fruit reveals the true condition of their souls. Those who remain lost in sin and iniquity apart from Christ will consistently bear bad fruit, while those who have been born again by the saving grace of God will consistently bear good fruit.

The good fruit that comes forth in the life of God's children is known as "The Fruit of the Spirit". It is supernaturally produced by the power of the Holy Spirit working in the life of the believer. As Christians submit themselves to the leading of the Spirit, this fruit is developed, blossoms, and becomes manifest in their lives. Those who bear the fruit of the Spirit display Christ-like character.

The Fruit of the Spirit is made up of 9 different attributes, or "nutrients". Though each of these attributes are distinct, all of them function together as a whole to make up the single fruit. Thus, though we will discuss them separately in this series, they should be thought of collectively. The first and most prominent of these nutrients is love.

I. LOVE DEFINED

The word "love" carries a very broad meaning in English, but in the ancient Greek language it had 4 specific variations. "Eros" was used to describe sensual or romantic love, as expressed in a passionate physical relationship between lovers. "Storge" referred to familial love, such as that expressed between a parent and child. "Phileo" was used to describe the brotherly love that unites a group of people together (usually Christians). "Agape" referred to God's sacrificial love for mankind.

The character trait included in the fruit of the Spirit is "agape" love. It can be thought of as a love that "seeks the highest good of others." It is not based on feelings or emotions, but rather is a conscious decision to be committed to the well-being of others regardless of costs or circumstances. It is an unconditional and constant love, given without demand, that isn't earned or merited.

Simply put, God loves humanity because He chooses to. Though we certainly do things that disappoint, frustrate, hurt, and anger Him, still His love for us remains unwavering and steadfast. His greatest desire is that we live abundant and prosperous lives, walking in close fellowship with Him, and becoming all that He has created us to be. To

this end, He has sacrificed greatly on our behalf though we have done nothing to deserve it.

II. LOVE EXEMPLIFIED IN CHRIST

God's love for humanity is demonstrated in countless ways. He created us, sustains us, provides for us, leads us, and protects us. But the greatest expression of God's love for mankind is found in His Son, Jesus Christ. Though humanity disobeyed God, rebelled against Him, acted unfaithfully toward Him, and were separated from Him by their own sinfulness and corruption, the LORD lovingly determined to redeem, restore, and reconcile them to Himself (Romans 5:6-8).

So, in keeping with His divine plan to rescue fallen humanity, God sent His only Son Jesus Christ into the world to offer His life as a substitute for sinners. Though He was completely perfect and without sin, Jesus voluntarily took upon Himself the judgment and consequences that we as sinners are due. He bore the full weight of humanity's sin while hanging on the cross of Calvary and died the death we deserved, once for all. Jesus' sacrificial death paid the full price for man's sin, satisfied God's just legal requirements, and forever appeased His divine wrath.

Now, through the finished work of Jesus Christ, anyone who places their faith in Him as Lord and Savior will be saved (John 3:16). Their sins will be forgiven, washed away by the shed blood of Christ, and they will be made righteous in God's sight. They will be freed from death and given the promise of eternal life. This amazing gift of salvation is totally undeserved and can not be bought or earned, yet is freely given by God through Christ to all who repent of their sin and turn to Him.

Jesus taught that the greatest act of love is to give one's life for another (John 15:12-14). This is exactly what He did for us, even as we despised Him and railed against Him. He set the highest and most perfect standard. Jesus is the supreme expression of God's agape love for humanity, and serves as the premiere example of what true love really is.

III. LOVE COMMANDED

Following the model set by Jesus, we as believers are commanded to show this same level of agape love to both God and our fellow man. The first and greatest commandment is that we love the LORD with all of our hearts, souls, minds, and strength. The second commandment is like it - that we love our neighbors as ourselves.

These 2 commandments encompass all the teachings of the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 22:37-40).

Love comes from God - for God is love. Therefore, those who have been born of God exhibit His love. On the contrary, those who have not been born of God do not exhibit His love. Because God first loved us, and sent His Son to die in our place, we also ought to love another. Though people are unable to see God physically with their own eyes, they can see evidence of His existence as they see His love on display within the lives of His children (1 John 4:7-12).

Jesus commanded His followers to love one another even as He loved them. In other words, we are to love people as God loves them, unconditionally and without expectation of recompense. This abiding love extends to our friends, neighbors, acquaintances, enemies, and even total strangers. The love we show others serves as the greatest proof that we are His disciples (John 13:34-35).

CONCLUSION

God's love is always rooted in truth. Though He loves sinners, He despises sin. God loves and accepts as we are, but He doesn't leave us that way. He makes us into new creations and increasingly conforms us into the image of Jesus. If we are to exhibit God's love, then we will keep His commandments and live in obedience to His will and word (John 14:15, 21). We will graciously encourage others to do likewise. God's unconditional love is not a license to sin, but rather a motivation to live righteously.

In summation, love is the greatest virtue. It is the first and foremost attribute of the Fruit of the Spirit. If we are to model Christlikeness, and to put His image on display in and through our lives, it must begin with love. Apart from love, we are nothing and all of our talents, gifts, and abilities become meaningless (1 Corinthians 13:1-3). Love is the foundational nutrient in the Fruit of the Spirit, as it undergirds all of the others.

May we all learn to love as God loves, and to practice this caliber of love in all of our relationships. I hope that you will join us next week, as we discuss the second component of the Fruit of the Spirit - joy. Until then, may God richly bless you.

Joy

Originally Preached on 1/30/2022

This morning we will continue our discussion about “The Fruit of the Spirit”. The upcoming message is the 3rd in this series. We opened this study with an introductory message on the general topic of Biblical fruitfulness. In short, we learned that God desires that His children bear fruit, and that this process begins internally. As the Holy Spirit cultivates the fruit of the Spirit within the life of a believer, their character and conduct will increasingly mirror that of Christ Jesus.

Last week we talked about love, which is the first attribute or nutrient of the fruit of the Spirit. Love comes from the Greek word agape and means to “seek the highest good of others” regardless of cost or circumstance. Love is not based on fleeting feelings or emotions, but rather grounded in a conscious commitment. God’s greatest demonstration of love for mankind is seen in the substitutionary death of His Son Jesus Christ. We as Christians are commanded to express this same type of agape-love to both God and one another.

In today’s sermon, we will explore the second nutrient contained in the fruit of the Spirit - joy. Following the same basic format as last Sunday, we will begin by defining and describing what joy means. Then we will talk about how joy was clearly evident in the life of Christ. Finally, we will explore a few other scriptures to discover various causes for joy. Are you ready? Let’s get started...

I. JOY DEFINED

Joy can be defined as “gladness not based on circumstances”. It is more than temporary happiness. Joy is not based on good health, financial success, prosperity, or any other such accomplishment or achievement. Rather, joy results from believing in God, obeying His will, receiving His forgiveness, participating in fellowship with other believers, ministering to others, and sharing the gospel. Those who know and follow the LORD will experience true and lasting joy.

The Greek word for joy found in the New Testament is chara. It is very similar to the Greek word for grace or gifts, which is charis. These words are related in that we as Christians have joy because of God’s grace. The word charismatic is typically used to refer to certain churches or individuals that emphasize the sensational spiritual gifts (or “sign” gifts), such as speaking in tongues or instantaneous healing, in their worship. In a broad sense, however, all Christians are charismatic because all are recipients of God’s gifts and grace.

Those who possess the characteristic of joy express it by rejoicing. We are called to rejoice as an open and visible display of the joy within us. Furthermore, Christians are strengthened by joy (Nehemiah 8:10). There is nothing so exhausting as continual gloom and despair. When we as Christians choose to focus on the hardships and disappointments of life, our joy is stolen from us. But when we dwell on God's goodness, favor, and grace, we find the necessary energy and strength to face every obstacle with perseverance and joy.

II. JOY EXEMPLIFIED IN CHRIST

Jesus exemplified joy in many ways throughout His earthly ministry. For example, at one point He appointed 70 (or 72) of His disciples as missionaries and sent them out in pairs to the various towns and villages of the region. After some time, they returned having had amazing success. As they shared their experiences with Christ, Jesus rejoiced - that is, expressed His great joy - because the Father had revealed the truth of the gospel to ordinary people (Luke 10:21).

Despite being doubted, rejected, and persecuted, Jesus had constant and abiding joy because of His close fellowship with God the Father. On the night of His arrest, after the Last Supper had concluded, Jesus offered a lengthy prayer to the LORD. Among other things, He prayed that the disciples would have the full measure of His joy within them (John 17:13). Christ's words indicate that He was personally filled with joy and desired that His followers be also.

Not only did Jesus demonstrate sincere joy from day-to-day, but He also looked forward to the joy that would come from completing His mission. Jesus came to give His life as a substitute for sinners, thereby making forgiveness and salvation possible. With this purpose in mind, He willingly endured the pain and shame of the cross. After defeating sin and death, Jesus ascended to Heaven and was seated at the right hand of God, having attained the joy set before Him (Hebrews 12:2).

III. CAUSES OF JOY

There are numerous reasons that we as Christians should be joyful. Let's list and briefly discuss a few of them. First, we can rejoice whenever God delivers us and/or our brethren from harm's way. For example, the servant girl rejoiced upon hearing Peter's voice after he'd been freed from prison (Acts 12:14). Second, we can rejoice in suffering because we know that it develops perseverance and spiritual maturity (James 1:2-4).

Third, we can rejoice simply because of the LORD's presence and nearness to us (Psalm 16:11).

The greatest cause of joy is salvation. In fact, all of Heaven rejoices whenever a sinner is born again (Luke 15:7). We as Christians should be joyful whenever we think about our own salvation (1 Peter 1:8-9) or see it come to others (Acts 15:3). We should pray, as King David did, that the LORD would constantly renew the joy of our salvation so that we might walk in it and be sustained by it (Psalm 51:12).

CONCLUSION

In the end, joy is a choice. We must choose to value God's presence, promises, and work in our lives. Apart from these things, there is nothing this world has to offer that will provide us true and enduring joy. Scripture implores us to embrace a joyful attitude that is intent on rejoicing every single day (Psalm 118:24). We are to be glad at all times, always thankful for and acutely aware of God's goodness and undeserved blessings.

Though I am a Christian, there are times when I am sad, discouraged, angry, and upset. Life isn't always easy, as you well know. Jesus never said that it would be. But even in the seasons of unhappiness and hardship, I still find joy in knowing Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. And I pray that this joy is evident in my life, displayed as a critical nutrient of the fruit of the Spirit.

In next week's message we will talk about peace. Until then, rejoice and share God's love with others...

Peace

Originally Preached on 2/6/2022

When a person accepts Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, they are born-again. At the moment of their salvation, they are filled with the Holy Spirit who comes and takes up residence in their lives. The presence of the Holy Spirit within the life of a redeemed Christian is the assurance of their eternal security. In addition, the Holy Spirit will supernaturally begin to cultivate fruit within the life of the believer so as to conform them to the image and character of Christ. This fruit is referred to in scripture as “The Fruit of the Spirit”.

The fruit of the Spirit contains 9 essential nutrients or attributes. Thus far, we have discussed the first 2 of these. Love “seeks the highest good of others”. It is given unconditionally and sacrificially. Love is not based on emotions, but rather a conscious commitment to put others' interests before your own. Joy is “gladness not based on circumstances”. It is more than mere and temporary happiness. True joy comes from knowing God and walking in His grace. We must choose to be joyful.

This morning we will consider peace, the 3rd nutrient found within the fruit of the Spirit. Following the same outline as in the previous messages, we will begin by defining what peace is. Then we will see how it is demonstrated in the life of Jesus Christ. Lastly, we will examine the Christian's call to peace.

I. PEACE DEFINED

For the purposes of this series, we will define peace as “contentment, and/or unity between people”. As you can see by this definition, peace has 2 distinct meanings. There is both inner peace, or personal peace, and outer peace, or relational peace. The Greek word for peace used in the Bible is eirene. It carries the idea of tranquility, harmony, and security.

Inner or personal peace is the steady contentment that we as Christians should feel within our lives. It involves a state of assurance and a lack of fear. Such peace includes freedom from worry, disturbance, and oppressive thoughts. Those who experience Biblical peace are not anxious, stressed, or overly concerned by the burdens of this world, but rather abide in the calm serenity of knowing Christ.

Outer or relational peace refers to the fellowship, harmony, and unity between individuals. It may be thought of as a lack of conflict, or a state in which people live in agreement or accord with one another. Such peace can be applied on a small scale,

such as a single person living at peace with their neighbors, or on a large scale, such as entire nations of the world being at peace with one another. Those who have inner peace are more likely to exhibit outer peace.

II. PEACE EXEMPLIFIED IN CHRIST

Jesus did not worry or fret over earthly things. Perhaps the greatest example of this is the manner by which He faced the cross. Though He knew the sufferings that awaited Him there, Jesus fearlessly “set His face” toward Jerusalem and determined to go there (Luke 9:51, KJV). In the Garden of Gethsemane just hours before His crucifixion, Jesus’ faith remained strong as He prayed “not my will but Yours be done” (Mark 14:36). Because of His unwavering confidence in God, Jesus modeled inner peace that was free of doubt and anxiety.

Jesus also lived at peace with others. Though the religious elites of His day conspired violence against Him (Mark 3:6), Jesus did not retaliate. On the contrary, He endured the slander and persecution, even the horrors of the cross, without reprisal. Scripture describes Jesus as a “lamb led to the slaughter” (Isaiah 53:7). Even during His outburst at the temple, Jesus did not physically attack or assault the merchants but rather drove them out and turned over their money tables (Matthew 21:12, John 2:15). Jesus fought against sin and heresy, but not against people.

Jesus is called “the Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6-7). He is the Mediator through which we as sinful people can have peace with God right now (Romans 5:1). Furthermore, when He sets up His eternal kingdom there will be unending peace. All will live harmoniously with both God and one another. Ironically, although He exemplified peace and stressed it in His teachings, Jesus has been the cause of great division and strife among men for centuries (Matthew 10:34).

III. PEACE COMMANDED

Jesus often told His disciples to “Fear not.” In fact, this is His most frequently issued command. There are over 300 instances in the Bible in which believers are told not to worry. One of the most well-known passages about this is found in Philippians 4:6-7. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul urges his readers not to be anxious about anything, but rather to present all of their worries and concerns to the Lord in prayer. By doing so, the peace of Christ Jesus (which is beyond understanding) will guard their hearts and minds. In short, peace is found through prayer.

Jesus also directed His followers to live at peace with one another. He taught that Christians should not fight with one another, but rather turn the other cheek (Matthew 5:38-40). Furthermore, the Bible tells believers to live in peace with everyone to the extent that it depends on them (Romans 12:18). Like any relationship, there are 2 parties involved. So, if there is strife or dissension there, it shouldn't be coming from us.

CONCLUSION

On the night before His crucifixion, while gathered in the upper room, Jesus comforted His disciples. He told them that He was leaving, but that He'd give them His peace (John 14:27). This peace would be greater than what the world could give, and would calm their fears and troubles. This is the type of peace that we as Christians should have today - the peace of God. It is the unflappable confidence that God is in control, there is nothing to fear, and everything will work together for good (Romans 8:28).

My prayer for us this week is that we walk in peace - within our own hearts, between us and God, and with one another. In this world of uncertainty and unrest, where disagreements and hostilities abound, we desperately need His peace...

Patience

Originally Preached on 2/13/2022

Jesus once told a parable about the importance of bearing fruit. He said, “A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. So he said to the gardener, ‘See here! For 3 years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?’ He replied, ‘Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.’ ” (Luke 13:6-9)

In this parable God is generally thought of as the owner of the vineyard and Jesus is the gardener. The parable teaches that God deeply desires for His children to bear fruit and be productive. Though He is patient, at some point He becomes frustrated when they continually fail to do so. That said, Jesus contends for fruitless believers and works optimistically in their lives that they might eventually bear fruit.

The fruit that we are to bear is called the fruit of the Spirit and is made up of various virtues or nutrients. Thus far we have discussed 3 of these - love, joy, and peace. This morning, as we continue our study together, we will focus on patience. I can't wait to get started... Maybe I should work on that.

I. PATIENCE DEFINED

Patience can be defined as “slow to speak and slow to anger”. This phrase was written by Jesus’ half-brother James, who became a prominent leader in the early church after Christ’s death (James 1:19). Another word used in some translations of the Bible as a synonym for patience is longsuffering. The word patience or longsuffering comes from the Greek makrothumia and carries the ideas of endurance, constancy, steadfastness, and perseverance.

Patience is a slowness in avenging wrongs. It is the quality of restraint that prevents believers from speaking or acting hastily in the face of disagreement, opposition, or persecution. It leaves room for God to exact vindication (Romans 12:19). Patience is bearing pain or problems without complaining or acting out. A patient person is able to hold their tongue and control their temper, even as they are being mistreated or wronged.

The virtue of patience is closely related to that of peace, which we discussed in last week’s message. Patience deals with a person’s ability to tolerate offenses without reacting defensively. Peace deals with a person’s inner contentment and freedom from

worry, as well as the outward nature of their relationships. Peaceful people are typically more patient, and those who are patient tend to experience more peace. These 2 virtues go together.

II. PATIENCE EXEMPLIFIED IN CHRIST

In His flesh, Jesus was the most patient person who ever lived. This can be seen by the way He related with others, especially His apostle Peter. By all accounts, Peter tended to be quite impulsive and often stuck his foot in his mouth. At times, Peter openly denied and disputed with Christ. Even still, Jesus dealt with Peter patiently, allowing him time to grow and mature, knowing that someday Peter would become a great man of God. Such is His approach with all Christians.

In a letter to his younger friend Timothy, Paul described himself as the worst of sinners because he had ruthlessly and cruelly persecuted Christians before trusting in Christ. Paul marveled that Jesus, who came into the world to save sinners, had shown mercy on him and granted Him forgiveness. Paul's remarkable salvation clearly demonstrated Jesus' incredible patience and became an example for other sinners who might also believe in Him (1 Timothy 1:15-17). Jesus is patient with sinners.

Jesus also showed patience as it related to the timing of God's plan. He was careful not to rush the public onset of His ministry. When His mother asked Him to perform a miracle during the wedding at Cana, Jesus said that His time had not yet come (John 2:4). Jesus was never in a hurry to accelerate His work or popularity, and often told people to keep quiet about the things they'd seen Him do. Even now, Jesus sits at the right hand of God and patiently waits for the completion of God's plan (Hebrews 10:12-13).

III. OTHER SCRIPTURES ABOUT PATIENCE

We as Christians are commanded to be patient. Paul urges us, as brothers and sisters in the family of God, to be patient with everyone (1 Thessalonians 5:14). In his epistle, James advises believers to be patient and stand firm, knowing that Jesus is coming again soon (James 5:8-9). The apostle Peter tells us that when we patiently endure suffering for doing right, God is pleased (1 Peter 2:20).

Patience is a sign of wisdom and strength. Scripture states that a patient person has great understanding, while the quick-tempered are foolish (Proverbs 14:29). A patient man calms nerves and resolves quarrels while a hot-tempered one stirs up dissension

and strife (Proverbs 15:8). Any idiot can lash out verbally or throw a punch, but it takes real discipline and self-control to be patient.

Patience is also a sign of hope and trust. Christians can be patient because they know that God will keep His promises and that Jesus will come again to establish His kingdom. Patience believes in the best for others, sees their potential, and allows them time to become all that they can and should be. Patience trusts that God will make all things right and just in His perfect time.

CONCLUSION

God patiently waits upon sinners because He lovingly desires for everyone to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). He withholds His judgment and anger, though it is long overdue. God does not want anyone to perish, though sadly He knows that many will. In other words, God's patience with men springs forth from His love of men. In the same way, when we love others we will naturally be patient with them.

I have heard it said jokingly that we as Christians should never pray for patience. To do so invites all sorts of difficulties and abuses upon our lives, as these are the means by which God develops this virtue. Nevertheless, I say let the troubles come. May they test and strengthen our patience, that we might display this nutrient of the fruit of the Spirit to the fullest. May we know and have the patience of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Next week... kindness. I'm certain it will be a very nice message. See you then!

Kindness

Originally Preached on 2/20/2022

Good morning. We are halfway through our current sermon series on “The Fruit of the Spirit”. We have learned that, as believers, we are called to display this fruit in our lives. It is produced supernaturally by the Holy Spirit who abides within us and who works to conform us into the image of Christ.

The fruit of the Spirit contains 9 nutrients, or virtues. Thus far, we have discussed the first 4 of them. Before we begin today’s sermon let’s play a simple game to review. I am going to give you one of the 4 attributes we’ve already covered in Greek and see if you can tell me which it is in English. Your choices are love, joy, peace, and patience.

Chara, Makrothumia, Agape, Eirene
Peace)

(Answer: Joy, Patience, Love,

Excellent! Many of you remembered. Way to go! This morning we will proceed with a message about the 5th nutrient in the fruit of the Spirit. Our topic will be kindness.

I. KINDNESS DEFINED

Kindness means to be “merciful, sweet, and tender”. It is an eagerness to put others at ease. Kindness is a sweet and attractive temperament that shows friendly regard. One of the definitions I read this week is: “Disposed to do good to others, and to make them happy by granting their requests, supplying their wants or assisting them in distress; having tenderness or goodness of nature; benevolent; benignant.” The original Greek word used in the New Testament for kindness is chrestotes.

Kindness and niceness are sometimes thought of as the same thing, but kindness is a stronger virtue than niceness. When we are nice to others, it is generally expressed superficially through words or gestures, such as compliments or well-wishes. Niceness can be compared to politeness. Kindness, however, involves a greater act of mercy or benevolence. Kindness requires doing something, getting involved, and/or trying to help in some way. For example, a nice person might say they’re sorry that you’re sick, while a kind person makes you soup and brings you medicine. A member of my congregation shared with me that her mother used to say, “Niceness comes from good manners, while kindness comes from a good heart.”

Kindness is an expression of love. In fact, these 2 characteristics are so similar that they are often combined to form the compound word “lovingkindness”. The commitment to

love others motivates and serves as the basis for performing acts of kindness on their behalf. I have heard it said that faith is belief in action. In the same way, I would argue that kindness is love in action.

II. KINDNESS EXEMPLIFIED IN CHRIST

Jesus showed kindness towards others throughout His earthly ministry. On multiple occasions He stopped what He was doing in order to help people in need. He acted with kindness and compassion when He fed the 5,000 with just a few loaves and fish (Matthew 14:14). He showed kindness by miraculously healing many who were sick and/or demon-possessed, such as blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46-52). He modeled kindness by forgiving those who abused and wronged Him (Luke 23:24). Jesus was kind to everyone, in both word and deed, including those who were ungrateful and evil (Luke 6:35).

Jesus also exemplified His kindness toward sinners by making salvation possible. He gave His life sacrificially to pay the debt of sin, so that all who receive Him would be saved. His kindness was not based upon our righteousness, but rather upon God's mercy. Those who repent a turn to Jesus in faith are reborn through the cleansing power of His blood and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:4-5).

Not only has God shown us kindness to humanity through the saving work of Jesus Christ, but He intends to continue showing it throughout all eternity. God has already raised Christians up spiritually (at the point of their salvation) and will someday raise them up physically (at the point of their glorification). These resurrected Christians will be seated in heavenly places with Jesus (and reign with Him) and will be the recipients of God's incomparable riches of grace through Christ (Ephesians 2:6-7).

III. OTHER EXAMPLES OF KINDNESS

Besides Jesus, there are numerous other people in the Bible who demonstrated kindness. Rather than return to her own country, family, and friends, Ruth chose to go to Israel with her aging mother-in-law Naomi and to take care of her (Ruth 1:8). She is a great example of both loyalty and kindness, and an inspiration for those who have elderly parents.

Tabitha, also called Dorcas, was a kind and charitable seamstress who made clothing for the widows of Joppa (Acts 9:36). When she died, many of them came to weep and mourn her passing. Peter, who was ministering nearby, received word of her death and came to the city. God performed a miracle through him and brought Tabitha back to life.

She was held in high regard by the people of Joppa because of her incredible kindness (Proverbs 11:16-17, NIV).

After Saul and his sons were killed by the Philistines, King David showed kindness to his only remaining grandson Mephibosheth. Mephibosheth was the son of Jonathan, who had been David's dearest friend. Mephibosheth had crippled feet from an injury he sustained as a boy. Nevertheless, David took him in and provided for him for the remainder of his life (2 Samuel 9:7).

CONCLUSION

Scripture teaches us to be kind to one another, forgiving, and tenderhearted, just as God is kind to us (Ephesians 4:32). We are to extend God's grace and mercy to others by displaying His kindness in our lives. Those who exhibit such kindness will find life, righteousness, and honor (Proverbs 21:21).

There is a close relationship between certain attributes of the fruit of the Spirit. I see some overlap in the meanings of peace, patience, and self-control. So also, I see a degree of overlap in the meanings of love, kindness, goodness, and gentleness. These virtues contain some common elements, and work together like a collection of vitamins to strengthen and edify the believer.

Next week we will discuss goodness. Make plans to join us, either in person or online, as we continue our study on the fruit of the Spirit. God bless you.

Goodness

Originally Preached on 2/27/2022

Good morning. For the past 6 weeks we have been discussing “The Fruit of the Spirit”. Scripture teaches us that, as believers, we are to exhibit the fruit of the Spirit in and through our lives. This fruit consists of several nutrients or attributes, all of which are produced supernaturally by the Holy Spirit who abides within us.

Last Sunday, we began our sermon with a review game. You did so well, I thought we might play again this morning. However, this week I will give you the simple definition of each nutrient we’ve covered thus far, and you will try to tell me which it is. Because we added another virtue last week, today we have 5 possible answers - love, joy, peace, patience, or kindness. Here we go...

“Gladness not based on circumstances” (Joy)

“Slow to speak and slow to anger” (Patience)

“Seeks the highest good of others” (Love)

“Merciful, sweet, tender” (Kindness)

“Contentment and unity between people” (Peace)

Excellent. You’ve done well again. I’m impressed. Okay, well let’s dig into the 6th nutrient of the fruit of the Spirit. Today’s message is on goodness.

I. GOODNESS DEFINED

Goodness is demonstrated through various moral qualities and characteristics, most notably kindness. In fact, these 2 words are oftentimes used interchangeably.

Goodness, like kindness, is an expression of God’s gracious love which is shown through a selfless desire to be openhearted and generous to others above what they deserve. This is the most common use of the word goodness in the Bible. That said, goodness has a broader meaning that extends beyond kindness.

Goodness can be defined as “moral excellence”. According to 1 of the Bible dictionaries I looked at this week, “goodness in man is not a mere passive quality, but the deliberate preference of right to wrong, the firm and persistent resistance of all moral evil, and the choosing and following of all moral good.” When we do good, we are doing that which is right and that which honors God. In this sense, goodness is speaking and acting with integrity and uprightness.

Goodness begins with being good. It is a moral condition. Good is the opposite of evil. Good is the opposite of bad. God is perfectly good. He is completely holy, pure, and righteous. We should aspire to mimic these traits - to mirror His goodness. Thus, goodness is perhaps best understood as godliness. When we display goodness in whatever context it may occur, we are demonstrating a degree of godliness. The Greek word for goodness is *agathosune*.

II. GOODNESS EXEMPLIFIED IN CHRIST

Jesus is described as One who was anointed by the Holy Spirit and power, who went about doing good and healing those who were oppressed by the Devil (Acts 10:38). The gospels contain numerous examples of His goodness. Despite the controversy it caused, Jesus taught that doing good deeds was even permissible even on the Sabbath day. One one occasion, He healed a man's withered hand while teaching in a synagogue on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:12). This kind act of healing was an expression of Jesus' goodness.

Jesus referred to Himself as "The Good Shepherd" (John 10:11). He explained that a good shepherd - one who truly loved his sheep - would lay down his life to save them from danger. This is, of course, exactly what Jesus did on behalf of fallen mankind. He laid down His life so that we might be forgiven of our sin and receive salvation. Jesus' death and resurrection were the ultimate display of His goodness.

Jesus is the Son of God, the second Person of the Trinity. He plainly stated, without ambiguity, that He and the Father were one (John 10:30). Jesus is of the same nature, essence, and being as the Father. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are 1 God in 3 Persons. Therefore, when the Bible states that God is good it applies to all 3 (Psalm 100:5, 1 Chronicles 16:34, etc). Jesus is inherently good because He is God.

III. THE ELUSIVENESS OF GOODNESS

Jesus was approached by a rich young ruler who addressed Him as "Good Teacher" (Mark 10:17-18). Jesus responded by asking, "Why do you call me good? Only God is good." With this statement, Jesus highlighted His dual nature. Jesus is fully God and fully man simultaneously. With respect to His deity, Jesus was and is wholly good. However, with respect to His humanity, Jesus refused to refer to Himself as good due to the weaknesses and limitations of His flesh.

People are, by both nature and choice, woefully sinful, corrupt and unholy. The Bible teaches that "no one does good, not even one" (Psalm 14:3, Romans 3:12). People are,

in and of themselves, not good. The heart is deceitful and desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9). People are intrinsically evil and cannot practice genuine goodness, as it is contrary to their nature. No amount of good deeds can change this reality. In other words, we cannot become good by doing good. This is the elusiveness of goodness.

The only way to become good in the sight of God is through faith in Jesus Christ. When we trust in Him for salvation, He makes us righteous and good by the power of His grace. This change enables us to do the good works that God has set before us (Ephesians 2:8-10). We do these good works as a testimony of His goodness (Matthew 5:16). God urges Christians to do good and not grow weary (Galatians 6:9-10).

CONCLUSION

God also demonstrates His goodness to us through blessings and answered prayers. Like a loving father who gives good gifts to his children, so also God showers His goodness on those who ask for it (Matthew 7:11). In fact, the Bible teaches that every good and perfect gift we receive comes from God (James 1:17). He is the source of all goodness.

David was confident that God's goodness would follow him all the days of his life (Psalm 23:6). As Christians, we can share in this same confidence. We serve a good God, who makes us good through Jesus Christ, and calls us to do good things. We should seek to emulate His goodness in everything we do.

Next Sunday we will talk about faithfulness. I hope you will join us then. Have a wonderful week.

Faithfulness

Originally Preached on 3/6/2022

Hello everyone. It is good to see you again this morning. We are nearing the end of our current sermon series on “The Fruit of the Spirit”. Counting today’s message, we have just 3 more weeks to go...

This week has been much warmer than last week. The sun has been shining, the skies have been clear, and spring is drawing near. The grass will soon be turning green again, flowers will start to bloom, trees will begin to blossom, and the earth will come alive once more. I am so excited! Each year God’s creation gives us a spectacular display of what it means to bear fruit.

This week we will highlight the 7th nutrient found in the fruit of the Spirit. It is the characteristic of faithfulness. May God speak to us clearly as we spend a few moments together in His word.

I. FAITHFULNESS DEFINED

The simple definition of faithfulness that we will use in this series is “dependable, loyal, and full of trust.” Faithfulness is a firm devotion to God, loyalty to friends, and dependability to carry out responsibilities. It is synonymous with steadfastness, constancy, or allegiance. Faithfulness involves carefulness in keeping what we are entrusted with. The Greek word for faithfulness is *pistis*.

Biblical faithfulness must begin with faith. Faith is the conviction that even now God is working and acting one’s behalf. It is the belief that God’s word is true and that everything it says about Him - His existence, His work, and His character - is accurate. Scripture defines faith as “the certainty of things hoped for, a proof of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). Though this message is not about faith per se, we must understand that faith in God is a prerequisite for true, authentic faithfulness.

Faithfulness can be described as a commitment to a particular person, people, or purpose. Faithfulness carries the idea of exclusiveness, meaning that a faithful person will not entertain other lovers, options, or gods. Instead, they will demonstrate fidelity in their relationships and devotion to their responsibilities. Sadly, in our world today, the majority of people seem to be faithful only to themselves and their own self-interests.

II. FAITHFULNESS EXEMPLIFIED IN CHRIST

Jesus perfectly displayed all of the nutrients of the fruit of the Spirit, including faithfulness. In fact, more than 7 centuries before His miraculous birth the prophet Isaiah spoke of Jesus' faithfulness. He wrote that righteousness would be Jesus' belt and faithfulness the sash around His waist (Isaiah 11:5). Jesus would be faithfully determined to do the Father's will and fulfill His Messianic purpose.

Jesus was and continues to be faithful to His people. Christ is the faithful overseer of God's house, and if we belong to Him this should give us courage and hope (Hebrews 3:6). He strengthens and protects His own, guarding them from the evil one, because He is faithful (2 Thessalonians 3:3). Even when we are faithless, Jesus remains faithful to us because He will not go back on His promises (2 Timothy 2:13). We can trust in the Lord's unwavering faithfulness.

Jesus has been faithful, is faithful, and will be faithful when He comes again. In his apocalyptic vision of the Last Days, John saw Christ returning on a white horse and called Him "Faithful and True" (Revelation 19:11a). We can trust that He will glorify believers - in body, soul, and spirit - at His second coming because He is faithful (1 Thessalonians 5:24). We find encouragement and rest in Jesus' faithfulness.

III. FAITHFULNESS COMMANDED

Scripture teaches us to be faithful. We are urged to bind love and faithfulness around our necks and write it on our hearts (Proverbs 3:3). There are numerous people in the Bible who practiced faithfulness and therefore serve as an example to others (Hebrews 11). In fact, Jesus declared that faithfulness was one of the more important components of the Law, and warned us not to neglect it (Matthew 23:23).

We should be faithful in our relationships, especially with our spouses (Hebrews 13:4). We should be faithful and honest in our dealings with others, at work and elsewhere (Ezekiel 18:9). We should be faithful in our walk with the LORD; steadfast in obedience. We should be faithful students of God's word, knowing and exhorting sound doctrine and refuting those who contradict it (Titus 1:9).

God sees our faithfulness and promises to reward us for it. Those who are faithful will be richly blessed (Proverbs 28:20). If we are faithful stewards of things in this life, Christ will entrust us with even more when He comes again (Matthew 24:45-47). He will give the crown of life to those who are faithful even unto death (Revelation 2:10b). We should not practice faithfulness solely to receive awards, but it is encouraging to know that God will honor those who have proven faithful.

CONCLUSION

One of the many ways that God shows His faithfulness to Christians is in His willingness to forgive our sins and cleanse us from unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). Another is His promise not to allow us to be tempted beyond our ability and to always provide a way of escape (1 Corinthians 10:13). God's faithfulness is demonstrated in a myriad of ways, and His faithfulness is everlasting (Psalm 136:26).

Just as God has shown Himself faithful to us time and time again, so also we as His children are called to be faithful - to both Him and to one another. In fact, when Jesus comes again this is what we long to hear Him say to us; "Well done my good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21). Can I ask you honestly this morning... Would Jesus be inclined to say this about your life today?

Next Sunday we will talk about gentleness. I trust that you will be faithful in your attendance and will join us as we continue our study of the fruit of the Spirit. Have a great week.

Gentleness

Originally Preached on 3/13/2022

Hello again. Thanks for joining us for worship this morning. We are in the 9th week of our study on “the Fruit of the Spirit”. For the past several Sundays we have been analyzing the various nutrients, or characteristics, contained within the fruit of the Spirit. Each of these attributes are essential to us as we seek to display Christlikeness in our lives. This morning’s topic is gentleness.

I. GENTLENESS DEFINED

Gentleness can be defined as “humble, calm, and non-threatening”. It is a humble and non-threatening demeanor which derives from a position of strength and authority. It involves both sensitivity and compassion toward others. Gentleness is the opposite of harshness and is helpful in calming another’s anger (Proverbs 15:1). A gentle person doesn’t argue, but rather will seek to correct others tenderly when necessary. The Greek term used in the New Testament for gentleness is *prautes*.

Gentleness is often compared to and translated as meekness. Both are characterized by a soft temper, mildness, and forbearance. A meek person is willing to accept and/or submit to the will of another without complaint or resistance. Sometimes, gentleness or meekness is mistaken to mean weakness. However, this is a misconception, as true gentleness requires tremendous strength. One of the popular definitions of meekness in the Bible is “strength under control”.

Gentleness shares many of its qualities with other attributes of the Fruit of the Spirit. It involves a degree of love, kindness, patience, and self-control. I differentiate gentleness in this way... While these other attributes emphasize types of behaviors, practices, or actions, gentleness focuses on the manner or tone with which they are carried out. In other words, gentleness is not so much about the specific things we do and say, but rather the way or approach with which we do and say them.

II. GENTLENESS EXEMPLIFIED IN CHRIST

The Old Testament prophet Zechariah foresaw the Messiah coming to his people as a gentle king, riding on a donkey (Zechariah 9:9). The apostle Matthew cited this prophecy when describing Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Matthew 21:5). Jesus once referred to Himself as “gentle and humble in heart” (Matthew 11:29). Later, Paul aspired to model the “meekness and gentleness” of Jesus as he contended with the

Corinthians (2 Corinthians 10:1). In each of these verses, Jesus is clearly described as being gentle and modeling gentleness.

Perhaps one of the most poignant displays of Jesus' gentleness is seen in His dealings with the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11). The scribes and Pharisees brought her to Him, leveled their accusations against her, and expressed their intent to stone her for her sin. Jesus calmly and quietly answered their charges by saying, "He who is without sin may throw the first stone." As He wrote on the ground with His finger, one by one her accusers dropped their stones and walked away. Finally, Jesus spoke gently to the woman and told her to go and "sin no more".

Jesus' gentleness was also evident in the manner with which He stood before the Jewish and Roman courts prior to His execution. Though falsely accused, insulted, and slandered He remained silent and non-combative. When He did speak, He did so gently and without malice. He spoke the truth, yet had no desire to provoke anger. Jesus was as gentle as a lamb before its shearer (Acts 8:32).

III. GENTLENESS COMMANDED

As Christians, we are called to display gentleness towards others. Paul noted this is virtually all of his epistles. In Philippians he wrote that we should let our gentle spirits be known, because the Lord is near (Philippians 4:5). In Ephesians, he urged believers to walk in a manner of humility and gentleness (Ephesians 4:2). In Colossians, he stated that those who have been chosen by God should put on a heart of gentleness (Colossians 3:12). There are many other similar verses found in Scripture.

Whenever we are rebuked or chastised, most of us prefer that the correction be given gently and constructively. In fact, many will not respond to criticism or punishment that is mean-spirited or harsh. The Bible teaches us a God's children to restore those caught in wrongdoing with gentleness (Galatians 6:1). To this end, Paul urged the Corinthians to readily receive and implement his written disciplinary instructions, so that he could return to them with a spirit of gentleness rather than of agitation (1 Corinthians 4:21).

Gentleness is absolutely critical for effective evangelism and apologetics. Peter advised Christians to always be prepared to defend the truths of Scripture and ready to give an account for the hope they have in Christ Jesus. That said, whenever we do so, our words must be tempered with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15). Otherwise, we might actually do more harm than good and push people away from Jesus. In other words, how we speak is just as important as what we say.

CONCLUSION

Jesus began His famous "Sermon on the Mount" with a list of statements that are known as the Beatitudes. They have taken on this name because they describe what our attitude as Christians should be. Among them Jesus said, "Blessed are the gentle, for they will inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5). God bestows His favor on those who are mild and humble, declaring that they will be the recipients of His eternal kingdom.

The Bible says that a gentle and quiet spirit is precious in the sight of God (1 Peter 3:4). Everything we do and say as believers should be seasoned with gentleness. As we boldly and courageously proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ and confront the darkness of sin, may we do so with a gentle and compassionate disposition that is pleasing to the LORD. As we minister to the lost, hurting, and needy, may we do so gently. As we encourage and support other Christians, may our words and deeds always be gentle and gracious.

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness... We have only one more nutrient left to cover. Next week will conclude our series on the fruit of the Spirit with a final message about self-control.

Self-Control

Originally Preached on 3/20/22

This morning we will finish our study on the fruit of the Spirit. Over the past several weeks we have been exploring each of the 9 attributes contained in this fruit. This final sermon is on self-control, the final nutrient listed. At the end of this message, we will briefly review the meaning of each one last time.

I. SELF-CONTROL DEFINED

Self-control can be defined simply as “Behaving well”. Those who display self-control restrain their emotions, actions, and desires to be in harmony with the will of God. They make positive, constructive, and healthy decisions. They are disciplined so as to overcome temptation when it arises. They chose to obey God and follow His will, rather than living for themselves. The Greek word for self-control is *egkrateia*.

Self-control is translated as “temperance” in the King James Version of the Bible. The 2 words are synonyms. It is, as stated previously, the ability to control oneself.

Self-control involves moderation, constraint, and the strength to say “no” to our fleshly desires and carnal lusts. Those who have self-control wield authority over their choices and circumstances, rather than being governed by them.

Self-control is demonstrated in a variety of ways, many of which we’ve already discussed. A patient person must have self-control to remain silent and still even when agitated or provoked. A gentle person must temper their strength in order to speak and behave in a mild and humble manner. A faithful person exercises self-control when choosing to submit to another’s will. Because we’ve already touched on these aspects of self-control, I will try to focus on those other applications in today’s message.

II. SELF-CONTROL EXEMPLIFIED IN CHRIST

After His baptism, Jesus was led into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:1-13). He remained there for 40 days, during which time He didn’t eat anything. By the time these days had passed Jesus was very hungry. In this moment of weakness, the Devil approached Him and tempted Him to turn a stone into bread and eat it. Jesus exhibited self-control by denying His own physical appetite and refusing to submit to the Devil, knowing that to do so would be an act of disobedience to God the Father.

The Devil then took Jesus up to a lofty vantage point and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world. The Devil offered to give Jesus all of dominion over all of the earth, as well

as the glory that would come with it, if Jesus would simply worship him. This was an opportunity to attain immediate and world-wide fame and fortune. Once again Jesus exemplified tremendous self-control by refusing Satan's temptation, which would have undone His mission to seek and save the lost.

Lastly, the Devil brought Jesus to Jerusalem and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple. The Devil dared Jesus to prove that He was the Son of God by jumping off the temple and allowing the angels to catch Him. Again Jesus exercised self-control by resisting the Devil's challenge. Jesus would reveal His identity to the world in God's time and way, not according to the dictates of Satan.

Jesus demonstrated self-control by not succumbing to temptation. He never allowed His fleshly desires or ambitions to cause Him to sin. Instead, he exercised power over them and remained obedient to God.

III. SELF-CONTROL COMMANDED

The Bible teaches Christians to practice self-control by denying ungodliness and worldly desires while living sensibly, righteously, and in a godly manner (Titus 2:11-12). Believers are to be clear-minded, use sound judgment, and demonstrate self-control for the purpose of prayer (1 Peter 4:7). We are urged to discipline ourselves for the sake of godliness, so that we will be able to overcome temptations (1 Timothy 1:7-8).

One area in which self-control is often tested is that of sexual desires. Paul advised those who were single or widowed to marry or remarry if they had a lack of self-control (1 Corinthians 7:9), rather than be promiscuous. He counseled married couples not to deny each other regular physical intimacy so that they'd not be tempted into adultery due to a lack of self control (1 Corinthians 7:5). These are issues that have destroyed countless marriages and damaged many lives.

A person who has no self-control is defenseless against temptation and sin, like an ancient city without walls (Proverbs 25:28). They will constantly struggle and stumble. However, those who display self-control are able to persevere and overcome the lusts of the flesh (2 Peter 1:6). Self-control enables Christians to live in freedom and liberty as God intended, no longer enslaved to sin (Romans 6:6).

CONCLUSION

Before we conclude our study on the fruit of the Spirit, I would like to take a moment to discuss the final phrase of Galatians 5:23. It reads, "...against such things there is no

law.” These words are meant to contrast the nutrients found in the fruit of the Spirit with the deeds of the flesh listed in verses 19-21. The deeds of the flesh clearly violate the Old Testament Law, but the attributes of the fruit of the Spirit do not. While we as born-again believers are no longer under the law, meaning that we will not be judged by it, we should still seek to honor the spirit of the law as Jesus perfectly did.

So... the Holy Spirit who indwells believers and conforms them into the image of Christ works supernaturally to produce His fruit within them. As the individual believer matures and grows, this fruit should become increasingly evident and abundant in their lives. The characteristics of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control will all be manifest to various degrees.

Love “seeks the highest good of others”. Joy is “gladness not based on circumstances”. Peace is “contentment, and unity between people”. Patience is “slow to speak and slow to anger”. Kindness is being “merciful, sweet, and tender”. Goodness shows “moral excellence”. Faithfulness means “dependable, loyal, and full of trust”. Gentleness is “humble, calm, and non-threatening”. Self-control means “behaving well”.

The presence and practice of these godly traits will make us better witnesses for Jesus. They will make us more attractive and effective Christians. After all, as the Lord Himself said, “A tree is known by its fruits.”