

Fruit of the Spirit

With this lesson, we are going to continue our look at Galatians chapter 5. In the last lesson, we began studying this passage by looking at Paul's list of actions that he identified as "works of the flesh." He plainly declared that those who continue in the identified practices "will not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:21). Paul began the next section of his instruction with a contrast:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law (Galatians 5:22–23).

By starting with the conjunction "but" Paul was drawing a contrast to the previous list. Just as the works of the flesh should be "evident" (Galatians 5:19), so is this list of contrasting attitudes. Notice that Paul had listed specific actions in the previous list. Those were things that you do. They were identified as "works of the flesh." However, in this second list, Paul identifies attitudes, and characteristics. In other words, this second list describes who we are, and not so much what we do. Of course, what we see in this list is that by adopting these characteristics, they will form what we do. Having the characteristics under consideration will most assuredly impact the way we act! This is also not to dismiss that the actions that were previously discussed were the result of particular attitudes and characteristics as well. They were, in fact, the result of giving in to the "lust of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16).

Next, notice that Paul identifies all of these characteristics as singularly, "the fruit of the Spirit." While there is much discussion about why the Holy Spirit chose to use the singular here, it seems reasonable to think that He intended all of these characteristics to be included in one "package." In the previous list, a person would only have to be involved in one of the condemned practices to be a part of the consequence. With the second list, Paul intends to convey that the Christian will have all of the characteristics in the list. This is not a section that you can simply pick and choose those characteristics that appeal to you, and then claim that you are "led by the Spirit" (Galatians 5:18). Those who are truly Christians, those who are truly walking in the Spirit, will possess all of these characteristics.

Led By the Spirit

As we begin to discuss the concept of the fruit of the Spirit, it is important to understand what it means to be "led by the Spirit." One cannot truly bear the fruit of the Spirit unless he understands how to get to that point! Being "led by the Spirit" is not some miraculous moving of the Spirit on the heart of one who claims to believe. While this claim is often made in the religious realm, such would cause great chaos. After all, look at how many difference there are among the actions of people claiming that they are being "led by the Spirit" to do various things. They teach different things, and encourage different practices. This stands contrary to what God tells us about Himself:

For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints (1 Corinthians 14:33).

So, then how can the Spirit lead people today, and for all time, without creating this chaos or disorder? He does it through the word that He revealed. Remember, Jesus told His disciples that the Holy Spirit would reveal to them "all truth" (John 16:13). Paul wrote about the process through

which this occurred in Ephesians chapter 3:

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles—if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power. (Ephesians 3:1–7)

Just as Jesus said, the Holy Spirit came to the apostles of the first century, and revealed the mind of God to them so that they could write it down. Once written down, it was preserved for all mankind from that day forward. Through that written word, and only through that written word, can we understand what God wants us to do! We have a blueprint, so that we can all know just what God's expectations of us are. Through the word that was revealed, the Holy Spirit leads us to understanding. Understanding leads us to the proper attitudes. The proper attitudes lead us to submissive obedience to the Lord.

Nowhere in the New Testament do we find that people were “led by the Spirit” through some feeling in their hearts. In fact, the scriptures teach that following a good feeling in your heart is deceptive and destructive!

“The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? (Jeremiah 17:9)

He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, But whoever walks wisely will be delivered. (Proverbs 28:26)

Far too often, people think because they feel good about what they are doing, and the way their life happens to be going at the moment that they are being “led by the Spirit.” However, the only way to be led by the Spirit is to follow the instructions He has left us. He has given instructions through the inspired Word, which was revealed through the apostles and prophets of the first century, according the apostle Paul!

When we understand this concept, we can see how God has made it possible to have understanding of His will, and therefore unity. There is an expectation of unity by God for His people. When thousands of different people have thousands of different messages, all claiming that God is “leading them through the Spirit”, it is clear that they are being dishonest. They are preaching a “different gospel” than what had been presented by God's apostles in the first century (Galatians 1:6-10).

So, in our context, being led by the Spirit results in the attitudes and characteristics that Paul expressed as the “fruit of the Spirit.” Those who are willing to follow the instructions of the Spirit revealed in the word of God will develop these characteristics. In fact, one cannot even come to understand or know what these characteristics mean without turning to the pages of God's word! As with many of the concepts we have studied through this material, the concepts that are being expressed are not defined by worldly, or secular standards. The fruit of the spirit is not defined by what the world thinks “love” is, but rather by what God defines as “love”! These are two completely different (and often contradictory) ideas. Paul addressed that very idea in this context:

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish (Galatians 5:16–17).

Walking according to what we feel in our hearts is actually walking in the flesh! Only by walking in the Spirit, that is the instructions delivered by the Spirit, can we win the battle between the flesh

and the Spirit! Developing or growing the “fruit of the Spirit” can only be accomplished by choosing to lay aside our own selfish desires, and submitting to the revealed word of God. That one message produces the one fruit!

It is interesting that the word of God is often referred to as the “seed” in Jesus’ parables. Seed is planted, and then produces some kind of fruit. An apple seed produces an apple tree, and eventually more apples. Corn seed is planted, and it produces stalks of corn, and eventually bears ears of corn. One kind of seed cannot produce a different kind of fruit. You cannot plant an apple seed and believe that it will produce an orange tree! The same is true here. Only through planting the correct seed, the word of God, can the right fruit be produced, the fruit of the Spirit!

Fruit of the Spirit

Paul provides for a list of the fruit that is produced when we submit to the word of God. These are characteristics that should become a part of who the Christian is, rather than mere actions. Actions will follow because of the characteristics that are developed in the Christian!

Love

Paul started his list with the word *love*. While we have, typically, one word in the English language that encompasses any type of love, this was not true in the Greek. For example, we use the same word to speak about our mates as we use to talk about a favorite hobby or pastime! “I love my wife” uses the same term as “I love watching football.” We certainly do not mean the exact same thing, even though we use the same term! The term that was used by Paul here is:

ἀγάπη [agape /ag-ah-pay/] n f. From 25; TDNT 1:21; TDNTA 5; GK 27; 116 occurrences; AV translates as “love” 86 times, “charity” 27 times, “dear” once, “charitably + 2596” once, and “feast of charity” once. 1 brotherly love, affection, good will, love, benevolence. 2 love feasts.¹

This is the word that is addressed the kind of love that was to be present between brethren. It is the type of love that puts others first, and looks out for their best interests in all things. We see in this word the attitude that makes the one who possesses it think about what is truly best for others before themselves. Of course, this is a principle that we have seen frequently in our study thus far.

This love requires a person to do what is truly best for another person, not what is easy! For example, this is the type of love that one develops for his fellow man that forces him to share the gospel message with others. Because we fear rejection, the easy thing to do is keep our faith to ourselves. It is easy to think that the gospel message is one that no one wants to hear. It is easy to change that gospel to one that is more palatable to more people. But, none of these practices reflect the love that Paul is writing about! In fact, following those practices shows that we are void of the love that Paul relates. This love is also what makes us do hard things, like address sin that we see in the lives of others. There is no pleasure in talking to others about sinful practices, but it is a part of showing this type of love for their souls. James said it this way:

Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins. (James 5:19–20)

When we are struggling with sin, we should be grateful for someone who loves us enough to come and talk to us about it! Those who simply allow us to continue in sinful practices are not showing this type of biblical love, no matter how nice they may be to us. This type of love is less concerned

¹ Strong, James. *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon 1995* : n. pag. Print.

with making people feel good about themselves, and much more concerned with helping them have and maintain a relationship with the Lord. Their souls are proven to be more important and valuable than personal relationship!

Joy

This second characteristic is one that seems to elude many Christians. Joy should become a part of the character, the nature of the child of God. After all, how much do we have to be joyous about? Understanding joy is contingent on seeing the big picture before us, not the immediate circumstances in front of us. This word means:

χαράα, ἄς f: a state of joy and gladness—'joy, gladness, great happiness.' ἀπελθοῦσαι ταχύ ἀπό τοῦ μνημείου μετὰ φόβου καὶ χαρᾶς μεγάλης 'and quickly leaving the tomb, fearful and (at the same time) very joyful' Mt 28:8. In a number of languages 'joy' is expressed idiomatically, for example, 'my heart is dancing' or 'my heart shouts because I am happy.'²

This joy is a learned characteristic or attitude. It is chosen. Often, we look at being joyful as something that merely happens, it is an end result to pleasant circumstances. However, it is evident that the Christian can and should make joy a part of their nature, regardless of circumstances. Paul, for example, wrote the book of Philippians from prison, and yet much of that epistle is centered on his joy! How could he have joy, and show joy, even while in the confines of prison? Because he was able to look beyond his current circumstance and focus on that which was of greater importance!

Too often Christians become distraught by their current circumstances. They are facing something that is difficult to overcome, and they become so focused on it that they are incapable of experiencing the joy that God expects of them. Jesus Himself was able to overcome His challenges through looking ahead of the immediate persecution:

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:1–2).

Some have decided that Christians are supposed to be glum and dreary all the time. They think it is a way to show piety. This stands contrary to all that we see in scripture concerning the demeanor of the Christian! The Christian is to show joyfulness, gladness at what he is, and what has been afforded him. Even in difficult times, those foundations do not change. Persecution may come, and with it even the threat of death. However, the Christian knows that there is a great reward on the other side of that death. That is why Paul, even when he was confident his death was coming, did not become gloomy and distraught. Instead, he was able to convey a message of great hope and encouragement for others.

Consider how much more impact we can have on the world around us if we are able to develop this characteristic. When we are joyful about spreading the gospel message, how much more likely is it that others will listen? When we show joy in serving the Lord, how much more impact will it have on those we approach? Certainly, if they see this characteristic in our lives, they will be more curious about the teachings of the gospel than if we act downtrodden all the time!

Developing this characteristic demands that we lay aside our selfishness. When we are focused only on ourselves, it will be impossible to have this type of joy. We must be focused on God and His

² Louw, Johannes P., and Eugene Albert Nida. *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains* 1996 : 301. Print.

instructions in order to see the big picture. When difficult times come (and they will), being able to focus on what is really important will make joy possible.

Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe (Philippians 3:1).

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! (Philippians 4:4)

Peace

This is yet another far reaching word, encompassing an idea that is quite broad. The meaning of this word impacts many aspects of the life of a Christian.

εἰρήνη [eirene /i-ray-nay/] n f. Probably from a primary verb eiro (to join); TDNT 2:400; TDNTA 207; GK 1645; 92 occurrences; AV translates as "peace" 89 times, "one" once, "rest" once, and "quietness" once. 1 a state of national tranquillity. 1A exemption from the rage and havoc of war. 2 peace between individuals, i.e. harmony, concord. 3 security, safety, prosperity, felicity, (because peace and harmony make and keep things safe and prosperous). 4 of the Messiah's peace. 4A the way that leads to peace (salvation). 5 of Christianity, the tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and so fearing nothing from God and content with its earthly lot, of whatsoever sort that is. 6 the blessed state of devout and upright men after death.³

This word covers every aspect of relationships that we might encounter. This is a part of the fruit of the Spirit that we all want to attain to!

Peace with God. Peace with God is established by removing that which would cause enmity with Him. To have peace between us and God, we must abide by His terms of peace! Satan can be quite deceitful, giving us a false feeling of peace, when peace is not truly present. This has been a problem for a long time:

They have also healed the hurt of My people slightly, Saying, 'Peace, peace!' When there is no peace (Jeremiah 6:14).

Even in Jeremiah's day, there were many who were declaring that all was well, and they didn't have to worry about their relationship with God. They declared peace, but in fact there was not peace! True peace with God comes from us heeding His instructions, thus following His will. The existence of peace is not determined by how we feel, but by heeding God's terms for peace! Do we want to be at peace with Him, or in a constant battle with Him?

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God (Romans 8:5–8)

Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God (James 4:4).

The only way to truly be at peace with God is to submit ourselves to His instructions. When we wash away our sins in baptism, He restores our relationship with Him, and we can then live in peace with Him!

It is interesting that Paul calls the gospel of Christ a gospel of peace:

And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!" (Romans 10:15)

3 Strong, James. *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon 1995* : n. pag. Print.

How is this true? It is a message that, when followed as God intends, produces peace in each of the ways that we are addressing. It provides a peace that, when viewed by the worldly, makes no sense!

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6–7).

So, while the true peace of God is not determined by feeling, there will certainly be a good, peaceful feeling that accompanies it! We must reflect on God's revealed terms for peace, and abide by them, if we want to truly enjoy peace with God almighty!

Peace with fellow men. Christians have an obligation to be at peace with all men. This can be a challenge! But, the gospel of peace teaches us that it is our responsibility to do all that is in our power to live at peace with others. This applies to those who are our brethren, as well as those in the world around us. We cannot be responsible for the disruption of peace!

In our previous lesson, we saw how Paul addressed various sins that would be directly related to this idea of peace with brethren. Being self-centered, full of wrath, filled with hatred, contentious and jealous will not lead to peace with our brethren. It is imperative that we heed the instruction of scripture to develop the kind of peace that is being described for us in our context!

And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves (1 Thessalonians 5:12–13).

Sometimes Christians allow themselves to be distracted from the pursuit of peace with their brethren. It is easy to be drawn into the selfishness that leads to the kinds of squabbles that destroy peace in the local congregation. However, it should be a top priority to establish and maintain peace with our brethren. It is a part of the fruit of the Spirit, and if it is not present, then we are not harvesting what God intends!

Peace is a characteristic that should be present in the Christian life toward all mankind as well. God wants His people to be diligent about establishing and maintaining peace with all of the people they interact with! Consider Paul's instruction:

Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men (Romans 12:17–18).

Paul here acknowledges that there may be some who will not allow peace to be present. However, his instruction to the Christian is that you have the responsibility to make sure that any severing of peace is not your fault! He said, "as much as depends on you..." This indicates that God expects Christians to go to great lengths to establish and maintain peace with all people.

Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another (Romans 14:19).

Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord... (Hebrews 12:14)

Peace with ones' self. We live in a time when there is much focus on having peace within ones' self. However, the method of achieving this goal is often foreign to what we read in the scriptures. There is no doubt that the New Testament scriptures teach that God wants us to have an inner peace. Return to Philippians 4:6-7 cited above. There is a peace that God offers that goes beyond all human understanding! But, Paul was very specific about how that inner peace could be attained! That inner peace is a result of having a true relationship with God. When we have a relationship with Him, then we are able to talk to Him in prayer, making our requests known to Him. Knowing that God hears,

and responds to our prayers is a source of Great comfort! This inner peace can also be deceitful. It is not true peace if it is built on some type of false assurance. Just feeling “at peace” does not ensure that we are truly in a relationship with God!

Many people put the feeling of “inner peace” as their top priority. They believe God wants them to be happy, and so He will allow them to do whatever makes them feel good. This brings a kind of peace to them, but it is not the peace that God wants His people to have.

Longsuffering

The term that is translated as *longsuffering* in the New King James Version is also translated as *patience* in the English Standard Version. This word is defined as:

μακροθυμία, ας f: a state of emotional calm in the face of provocation or misfortune and without complaint or irritation—‘patience.’ μιμηταὶ δὲ τῶν διὰ πίστεως καὶ μακροθυμίας κληρονομοῦντων τὰς ἐπαγγελίας ‘but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherited the promises’ He 6:12; ὑπόδειγμα λάβετε, ἀδελφοί, τῆς κακοπαθείας καὶ τῆς μακροθυμίας τοῦς προφήτας ‘fellow believers, take the prophets as an example of suffering and patience’ or ‘... patience in the face of suffering’ Jas 5:10. In a number of languages ‘patience’ is expressed idiomatically, for example, ‘to remain seated in one’s heart’ or ‘to keep one’s heart from jumping’ or ‘to have a waiting heart.’⁴

This characteristic has to do with suffering bad things, and yet remaining calm. The person who has this type of patience does not lash out when someone says or does something that harms them. We currently live in a culture where it is en vogue to be offended by everything that another person says or does. Most people seem to believe that their feelings are the most important thing in the world, and they become offended if they are not catered to. The idea presented by Paul here indicates that even when true offense comes upon the Christian, he does not respond and react in the way that worldly people might do! He is instead, patient and calm. He does not mistreat others when he himself is mistreated. This characteristic reflects the teaching of Jesus: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

The type of patience that Paul is addressing here (much like the other characteristics under discussion) is not natural. It will take work to develop this mindset, and to conform practices to reflect it. Like much of what we see in these characteristics, one has to consciously choose to implement them. Some say, “That isn’t in my nature!” Or, “That’s not the way I think!” Of course it is not. That is why there is a need for us to change our nature, and the way that we think. Paul was addressing the need to move from works of the flesh to fruit of the Spirit. These characteristics are not what we would naturally be. They are what we become when we strive to become more like Christ!

Kindness

The King James Version uses the word *gentleness* here. The words are quite similar in meaning, and depict a way of treating others.

88.67 χρηστεύομαι; χρηστότηςβ, ητος f: to provide something beneficial for someone as an act of kindness—‘to act kindly, to be kind, kindness.’

χρηστεύομαι: ἡ ἀγάπη μακροθυμεῖ, χρηστεύεται ‘love is patient and acts kindly’ 1 Cor 13:4.

χρηστότηςβ: ἐνδύσασθε οὖν ... χρηστότητα, ταπεινοφροσύνην, πραῦτητα ‘you must put on therefore ... kindness, humility, gentleness’ Col 3:12.⁵

4 Louw, Johannes P., and Eugene Albert Nida. *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains* 1996 : 306. Print.

5 *ibid*: 749. Print.

Paul here is indicating that the person who is bearing the fruit of the Spirit will treat others with kindness. This doesn't mean that he treats others in this way when they are nice to him, or when they are kind to him. This is not a characteristic that is to be only returned in kind, but one that is expressed all the time. It is, after all, easy to be kind to those who are kind to you. That is a natural response. But, to be kind when mistreated? That is completely different! Paul is talking about characteristics that we adopt to be like Christ. Perhaps the greatest example of this characteristic is seen in Jesus at the cross. While going through the worst circumstances imaginable, there are two things that Jesus did to show this type of kindness. First, He showed His concern for others, rather than being focused on His own plight:

Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!" Then He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home. (John 19:25–27)

Jesus was thinking about His mother and His disciple in this moment of great anguish. He showed His kindness to them both through His instructions. The second instance of Jesus' kindness is shown in how He thought of the very people who were responsible for putting Him to death:

And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left. Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." And they divided His garments and cast lots. (Luke 23:33–34)

In a moment when anger and resentment could reign, Jesus was concerned about His enemies. He prayed for them, rather than lashing out at them. Are we able to respond in a like manner? This type of kindness is only possible if we are willing to think of others ahead of ourselves. One cannot show kindness in the face of persecution if they are self-centered. If our reactions are based solely on how we feel in the moment, we will never be able to show the kindness illustrated by Christ.

Goodness

This is yet another far reaching word used by Paul to convey the ideas of a general characteristic rather than one simple action. Consider the definition given for this word from a couple of sources:

19 ἀγαθωσύνη [agathosune /ag-ath-o-soo-nay/] n f. From 18; TDNT 1:18; TDNTA 3; GK 20; Four occurrences; AV translates as "goodness" four times. 1 uprightness of heart and life, goodness, kindness.⁶

57.109 ἀγαθωσύνη, ης f: the act of generous giving, with the implication of its relationship to goodness—'to be generous, generosity.' ὁ δὲ καρπὸς τοῦ πνεύματός ἐστιν ἀγάπη, χαρά ... ἀγαθωσύνη 'but the Spirit produces love, joy ... and generosity' Ga 5:22.⁷

Notice that in these definitions, goodness and kindness are very closely related. In the second definition, the action of generosity is connected to the characteristic of goodness. One is good, that is the nature of their heart and life, and that is shown through the actions that are shown to other people.

C.S. Lewis, in his book, *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe* depicted Aslan (a figure for God in his books) in this manner:

"Aslan is a lion- the Lion, the great Lion." "Ooh" said Susan. "I'd thought he was a man. Is he- quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion"... "Safe?" said Mr Beaver ... "Who said anything

⁶ Strong, James. *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon 1995* : n. pag. Print.

⁷ Louw, Johannes P., and Eugene Albert Nida. *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains 1996* : 569. Print.

about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you."

This type of goodness impacts how we look at and think about other people. It will directly impact how we treat others around us. This idea of goodness seems to indicate the desire to do good for others, even when they do not deserve it. Paul would later emphasize this very point in the letter to the Galatians:

And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith (Galatians 6:9–10).

This instruction reflects that of Jesus Himself:

"But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back. And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise. "But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil (Luke 6:27–35).

What is seen in these examples is that “doing good” is not a response to how one is treated! God’s will for His child is to do good to all people! This will force us to consider others before ourselves. The needs of other people will be foremost in our minds! Treating others with this type of goodness will be a reflection of the love that Paul started this list of characteristics out with. When our first inclination is to lash out against someone who has mistreated us, considering how we can get even with them for their actions, we clearly do not possess this characteristic of goodness! This is not a natural reaction, but a learned response, an adoption of the characteristics of Christ in our own lives. In addition to His kindness, this characteristic of goodness allowed Jesus to ask for God’s forgiveness on the very people who were crucifying Him (Luke 23:33-34; previous page).

Faithfulness

The word that is used here is often translated merely as *faith* frequently throughout the New Testament. However, it is evident from the context that Paul intended something deeper than the idea of just having a belief in God. Here, in the midst of a list of characteristics, this word means faithfulness, or trustworthiness. Here is the definition as used in the context:

31.88 πίστις, εως f: the state of being someone in whom complete confidence can be placed—‘trustworthiness, dependability, faithfulness.’ μη ἡ ἀπιστία αὐτῶν τὴν πίστιν τοῦ θεοῦ καταργήσει ‘that doesn’t mean that their lack of faithfulness annuls the faithfulness of God’ Ro 3:3.⁸

This idea fits much better with the list that Paul was presenting to the Galatian brethren. It has more to do with their actions toward others than their own belief. The Christian is supposed to be trustworthy and dependable. That is, when the Christian says that he will do something, he follows through and does it! Again, this is a teaching and a characteristic that reflects that which came directly from Jesus:

⁸ Louw, Johannes P., and Eugene Albert Nida. *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains* 1996 : 376. Print.

“Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.’ But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one (Matthew 5:33–37).

This is a characteristic that should be shown in every aspect of the life of a Christian, and in every circumstance. The way that a Christian will respond to any given situation should be determined by the revelation of God. Not only that, but others should be able to rely upon him to respond in the correct manner. When one is “faithful” to the instructions of God, he will respond with obedience in every situation. He will also respond in the right manner with every challenge, difficulty or trial that comes. He can be trusted to do right!

This is not a characteristic that is developed overnight. It is only developed by repeated correct actions. One cannot rely on another to respond faithfully unless he has seen him do so in the past. The more frequently one witnesses this faithful response and behavior, the more he will trust his brother in the next circumstance. When we are all in a spiritual war together, it is imperative to be able to trust one another! This is the very characteristic described here by Paul!

When we evaluate our own lives, we must ask the question: Do others see me as faithful? Can they trust me to respond in righteousness in every situation? Do they have to worry or wonder about what I will do when faced with difficulties and trials? Or can they count on me to do the right thing, and stand with them in the spiritual battle? This characteristic can make all the difference in relationships with brethren!

Gentleness

This word is sometimes translated as *meekness*. The idea is that one who possesses this characteristic will respond to problematic, difficult situations in a gentle, or meek manner. The term is defined as:

88.59 *πραΰτης, ητος f; πραΰπαθία, ας f: gentleness of attitude and behavior, in contrast with harshness in one’s dealings with others—gentleness, meekness, mildness.’*

πραΰτης: μετὰ πάσης ταπεινοφροσύνης καὶ πραΰτητος ‘be always humble and meek’ Eph 4:2.

πραΰπαθία: δῖωκε ... ὑπομονήν, πραΰπαθίαν ‘strive for ... endurance and gentleness’ 1 Tm 6:11.

In a number of languages ‘gentleness’ is often expressed as a negation of harshness, so that ‘gentleness’ may often be rendered as ‘not being harsh with people,’ but gentleness may also be expressed in some instances in an idiomatic manner, for example, ‘always speaking softly to’ or ‘not raising one’s voice.’⁹

This word is often used as a contrast with the idea of harshness. So, to be gentle, or to be meek, means that one is not responding in harshness. This is contrary to what we would often consider to be a natural response. However, when we consider the framework for our thoughts, it should make sense. After all, if we realize how imperfect we are, how can we respond harshly to others who are also imperfect? Unfortunately, this is a characteristic that is often overlooked. We tend to judge others much more harshly than we judge ourselves. We seem to have higher expectations for other people than we do for ourselves! But, if I respond harshly when someone sins against me, or offends me, then what might I expect if I sin against, or offend someone else? As with so many of these

⁹ Louw, Johannes P., and Eugene Albert Nida. *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains* 1996 : 748. Print.

characteristics, it is evident that one must be thinking of others ahead of himself in order to implement the actions that God expects.

It is important to see that there is a difference between gentleness and cowardice. Sometimes the two ideas are confused. Gentleness is not a characteristic that allows for sinful behavior to be ignored. Rather, it defines the manner in which one responds to such situations. Paul expressed this idea to the Corinthian brethren as he wrote reprimanding them. How did they want him to come to them?

What do you want? Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and a spirit of gentleness? (1 Corinthians 4:21)

When we are presented with sinful behavior in others, how do we treat them? How do we respond? If we respond in harshness, we can easily destroy the faith of another. If we respond in gentleness, we can restore the wayward person to the Lord! How would we want others to approach us? With anger and harshness? Or with a gentleness that conveys care and love, as well as understanding for the circumstances of our brother? The latter is what Paul here requires, and which shows our acceptance of the character and nature of God!

Self-Control

This word has to do with temperance, but should not be thought to be restricted to the idea of temperance in relationship to drugs and alcohol. It certainly stands in contrast to what we saw in the earlier part of Paul's list of works of the flesh:

Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:19–21)

We saw in the previous lesson of our study that Paul condemned such things as “drunkenness, revelries and the like...” This word does stand in contrast to those practices. However, it also goes much further. In fact, the idea of self-control stands in contrast with the entire list of sinful practices that Paul expressed in the earlier list!

The idea of self-control was at the heart of Paul's sermon to Felix in Acts 24:

And after some days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, “Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you.” (Acts 24:24–25)

Paul's emphasis on self-control on this occasion was probably in reference to the unlawful marriage of Felix and Drusilla, and the need for them to cease the relationship. But, it is a concept that can be applied to any and every sinful behavior! Refraining from sin relies upon the ability to exercise self-control.

Self-control is vitally important in preaching the gospel. Not only must we teach others to have it, we must show it ourselves. How can we tell others to do something, and then not practice it ourselves? We often say, “Practice what you preach!” If we are not exercising self-control in our own lives, it will be impossible for us to tell others to do so, as they will see the hypocrisy and therefore never take the instructions of scripture seriously! Self-control is the characteristic that will push us to refrain from sinful practices!

Against such there is no law...

In the previous section, Paul ended with a phrase that would extend the applications beyond just the sinful practices that he had listed: and the like (vs. 21). At the end of this section he inserted a similar type of phrase, that accomplishes much the same end. He said that against these types of things, there is no law. In other words, there was no law against practicing these godly characteristics. Most likely, Paul was addressing this letter to those who were questioning the law aspect of the gospel. The false doctrine of gnosticism was gaining a foothold, and taught the people that there was no obligation to follow instructions of righteousness in the physical body. Paul was making it clear that the acceptance of sinful behavior would keep one out of the kingdom of God, thus there was indeed a law against such immorality. However, there was no law limiting the characteristics that were identified as the fruit of the Spirit!

As Paul concluded this section of the letter, he made it clear that God expects those who are following Him to make changes in their lives. They cannot simply continue in their sinful manner of life that they lived in before obeying the gospel!

And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. (Galatians 5:24–26)

Those who belong to Christ have put to death the man of sin (Romans 6), and raised up a new creature to love and serve Him. We cannot continue in the works of the flesh, and claim to be the child of God! We must adopt these characteristics of the Spirit, which stand in direct contrast with the works of the flesh! If we have been raised to walk with Christ, then we need to act like it. Let us “walk in the Spirit.” That is shown by displaying the fruit of the Spirit that Paul has expressed here. If we are not showing that fruit, then we are not walking in the Spirit.

None of this means that we will never stumble, that we will never sin. But, it will dictate how we deal with it when we do sin. If we are walking in the Spirit, then we will understand that our sin is terrible, and that it hurts our relationship with God. We will be compelled to fix the problem as quickly as possible. We will repent, and ask for God’s forgiveness. We will strive to stay away from those temptations that cause us to stumble.

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:1–2).

Paul’s final admonition is that we are not to “become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.” This is an important conclusion to this study. When we have the right attitude, we will never think of ourselves as being better than others. We will not be puffed up in our righteousness, but realize that what we have is the result of the grace of God. We will not be seeking to provoke others with our righteousness, but rather expose them to the righteousness of God so that they can have a part in its wonderful glory. Realizing where the majesty lies will keep people from envying others. After all, if the fruit of the Spirit is available to all who want to be obedient to God, then there is no reason for one person to be envious of another! Nothing is withheld from God’s people. We can all have, and enjoy the same great blessings, if we will listen and obey His divine instructions!

Questions

1. What does it mean to be led by the Spirit? How has this idea been corrupted in the religious world today?
2. Why do you think Paul used the singular *fruit of the Spirit*, instead of the plural *fruits of the Spirit* in this list of characteristics?
3. Why do you think Paul began his list of the fruit of the Spirit with *Love*?
4. Several of the words used by Paul in this context are quite similar in meaning. Why do you think he (by inspiration) chose these characteristics?
5. Which of these characteristics do you think were displayed by Jesus when he was being crucified?
6. How do these characteristics differ from what we would typically consider to be normal reactions or responses to difficult situations?
7. How does *self-control* stand as a contrast to the list of sinful practices identified as *works of the flesh* earlier in Paul's context?

