

The Fruit of the Spirit

By Shelley Tvedt

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”

(Galatians 5:22, 23)

While salvation comes by Jesus alone, Christian character does not depend only on having received Christ as our Saviour and being declared righteous before God because of Christ but also possessing and living out the fruit of the Spirit. When both are evident in our lives, others get a picture of Christ, who is the perfect example that we should follow. Then we can say with the apostle in Galatians 2:20, “Not I, but Christ,” having it evidenced as “fruit” as spoken of in John 15:1-8. The source of our ability to bear “fruit” is our union with Christ. The fruit that is displayed from this union is the “fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance.”

“Fruit” (singular), in contrast with “works,” suggests that a believer’s life in the Spirit is unified in purpose and direction to God in contrast with the life in the flesh with its frustrations and problems. “Fruit” (singular) also shows unity in the making of a well-rounded and complete Christian life.

Love

Love is to “regard [something or someone] with affection on account of some qualities which excite pleasing sensations or desire of gratification,” according to Webster. This form of love is governed by self and is not the love that Scripture talks about. When we become God’s children, He pours His love on us through His Spirit (Romans 5:1-5). When we are filled with the Spirit, we will be self-giving for the benefit of the ones we love (John 3:16). Love seeks the welfare of all (Romans 5:2) and works no ill to any (Romans 13:8-10). Love seeks an opportunity to do good to “all men, and especially towards them that are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:10). Love is without dissimulation...false pretension (Romans 12:9). Love in Scripture is the love of the Spirit and fulfills the law (Romans 13:10). Love edifieth, suffers long, is kind, envieth not, is not proud, does not fail, serves others, forbears others, speaks truth, abounds in love, loves others, has no fear, and walks according to the commandments of God (1 Corinthians 8:1; 13:4,8; Galatians 5:13; Ephesians 4:2, 4:15; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; 1 John. 3:7, 18; 2 John 6; 1 John 5:3).

God’s love does not come naturally, whether it is toward a brother in Christ or toward men generally. What is called “love” by the world comes naturally to us and is displayed around us or even by us, but this is not God’s love; rather, it is “natural affection.” Natural affection exists only if someone has done something good to us. We give them the benefits of this human love, until we feel that we have “paid in full.” It is a love governed by self. In a clear contrast, True Love (“fruit of the Spirit” love) can only be produced in the heart of a yielded Christian (1 John 4:16; Romans 5:5; Galatians 5:22).

Joy

The dictionary defines joy as a glorious, triumphant state. It is “to enjoy, have, or possess with pleasure.” This human joy is transient and lasts only as long as the experience. For

example, we joy in a beautiful day as long as it lasts or find joy in a refreshing glass of lemonade on a hot summer day until the beverage is gone. This is not Scriptural joy.

Scriptural joy is sometimes expressed by words like “delight” or “gladness of heart” (John 16:21; Acts 2:28, 14:17). It is not superficial – it is from the depths of the soul. “Joy is a delight of the mind, from the consideration of the present or assured approaching possession of a good” (Locke). The root of True Joy is God and the salvation He has provided through Christ. “Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The LORD God is my strength, and He will make my feet like hinds' feet, and He will make me to walk upon mine high places” (Habakkuk 3:18, 19). True Joy is a delight in other believers and those we have been privileged to lead to Christ (1 Thessalonians 2:19, 20).

We are commanded by God to dwell in joy...to rejoice even in distressing circumstances. As 2 Corinthians 6:10 says, “As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing....” Paul tells us to rejoice in the LORD, rejoice in suffering with Christ, rejoice in suffering for the cause of the gospel, rejoice in trials and afflictions, and rejoice in meeting with fellow believers, “for doing God’s law brings delight” (Psalm 119:6, 24, 35, 47, 70, 174).

True Joy is a natural result of True Love, which is a natural result of being filled with the Holy Spirit. Therefore, joy from a Scriptural perspective is “joy of the Holy Ghost” (1 Thessalonians 1:6). The result of Joy in our lives is that we become “ensamples to all that believe ...” (1 Thessalonians 1:7). It is a “joy unspeakable, and full of glory” (1 Peter 1:18).

Peace

*“Lord, thou madest us for thyself, and we can find no rest
till we find rest in thee.”*

(St. Augustine)

Scriptural Peace is not based on external circumstances being without difficulties or stress, but rather a quiet tranquility based on the knowledge that I have been brought into a right relationship to God. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1).

Peace means to be bound together. Christ Jesus through His blood on the cross bound together those things which were separated by human sin. “But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace” (Ephesians 2:13-15).

We are commanded to “seek peace” (1 Peter. 3:11) and “preach the peace of the gospel” (Romans 10:15; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 10:34-43). We are to be at peace with each other (Mark 9:50; 2 Corinthians 13:11). But how? Romans 14:19: “Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.”

So, if we, by faith, receive the peace of God, we will have rest and will be content. We will have a love for other believers and an active love for those who do not yet know our LORD. We will carry His message of peace to them, that they, too, may know the peace of Christ.

The Peace of Christ

“The peace of Christ is the peace of trust in the cause we serve,

*when service seems to fail of its end.
It is the peace of confidence in God
when all the forces of the universe seem working for ends that are undivine.
It is the peace which can accept unexplained mysteries,
which can bear heartbreaking sorrows,
which can see natural instincts thwarted,
holy aspirations unrealized,
Christ like purposes broken off,
and yet be unperturbed.
It is the peace of a Paul rejected by his countrymen.
It is the peace of all those who have given their lives for causes too high
and sacred for immediate success
and who yet have been able to believe
that even their failures were being overruled by God for good.”
(William Adams Brown)*

Longsuffering

Longsuffering is defined as “bearing of injuries or provocation for a long time” and “long endurance; patient of offence.” It is humanly impossible to attain; yet, it is accessible when we are filled with the Spirit. Longsuffering is that quality of self-restraint when faced with provocation. It is not quick to retaliate or punish; it is the opposite of anger and is associated with mercy. It is an attribute of our God (Exodus 34; Romans 2:4; 1 Peter 3:20).

Longsuffering is a “fruit” that grows through the trials of life. “Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing” (James 1:3,4). Patience perfects Christian character.

Longsuffering is the opposite of despondency and is associated with hope (1 Thessalonians 1:3). It is a steadfastness of soul. It is forbearance and endurance not only in our personal lives but also in the ministry God gives us in our walk with Him. It is the fortitude to wait for one to repent...to refuse to quit praying for and witnessing to the lost (Romans 2:4). It is being a worthy minister of Christ for the long haul...staying in the battle until victory is complete no matter how long it takes, trusting our Commander, Christ Jesus our LORD (Ephesians 4:2; 2 Corinthians 6:6). By walking worthy of Him and exhorting others with all longsuffering, we are living examples of Christ’s longsuffering (Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 1:11, 3:12; 1 Timothy 1:16; 2 Timothy 4:2).

Gentleness

Gentleness is expressed by looking at events, facts, and people with godly compassion. It does not jump in and fling accusations without first considering the facts in an orderly way. It deals with any situation without trying to prove someone wrong or guilty (James 3:17; 1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 3:2).

Gentleness is softness of manner, mildness of temper, sweetness of disposition or meekness. It is like a doctor who is enduring with a tiresome patient and shows kindness to the patient as he tries to help. God desires His people “to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men” (Titus 3:2).

Often people think of gentleness as an effeminate quality, but Paul's instruction is given to all, regardless of gender or disposition. This "fruit" should characterize all God's people, according to James 3:13-18: "Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? Let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace."

Gentleness should pervade and penetrate our whole nature, mellowing all its harshness.

Goodness

According to the dictionary, goodness is the quality in a man who is ruled by and aims at what is "good." It is to be generous of heart and action. It is to be virtuous.

God desires us to allow goodness to permeate our lives in His commands to "cleave to that which is good" (Romans 12:9), "...let us do good unto all men" (Galatians 6:10), "...ever follow that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:15), "...prove what is that good" (Romans 12:2), to be "...zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14), and to "...overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:21). It is incredible how many times God directs us to do and be good in so many different ways and arenas in life. Galatians 4:8 seems comprehensive: "But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing." Only by God's Spirit can we attain such a lofty calling to bear this "fruit." Jesus said, "None *is* good, save one, *that is*, God" (Luke 18:19). Seeking goodness is our attempt to be more like our Heavenly Father.

*"Do all the good you can
By all the mean you can
In all the ways you can
In all the places you can
At all the times you can
To all the people you can
As long as ever you can!"
(John Wesley)*

Faith

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). Faith is a firm persuasion, conviction, and belief based on hearing. Its main elements are a firm conviction, a personal surrender, and conduct inspired by surrender. This does not refer to the faith exercised by the believer but to the faithfulness and fidelity that is produced in the life of a Christian who is yielded to the LORD through the Holy Spirit.

Faith... a firm conviction in God and the truth of His Word that brings us to the point that we surrender our lives to Him. In that surrender we realize more and more that "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Galatians

2:20).

Our faith steps out in new conduct inspired by surrender. We cannot help but declare the message of salvation. This was what God called Paul (and us as believers) to preach so the hearers may "...open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me [Christ]" (Acts 26:18).

We learn to walk by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7). We learn that we have been given "the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" (Ephesians 6:16). We learn that the walk of faith means we must "fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses" (1 Timothy 6:12). We discover "that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:7). We hear the exhortation from 1 Corinthians 16:13: "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." We strive to be like Paul to say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7).

Meekness

Webster defines meekness as "submission to the divine will, without murmuring or peevishness." In other words, meekness is humility. Romans 12:3 illustrates the meaning of meekness this way: "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." Meekness is the manner in which we receive from the hand of God the discipline He bestows "for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness." It is not pleasant; "nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Hebrews 12:10, 11).

Meekness is "count[ing] it all joy when ye fall into diverse temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing" (James 1:2-4). As meek believers, we are rejoicing that we are "partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, [we] may be glad also with exceeding joy" (1 Peter 4:13).

Meekness is humility towards one another as believers and toward all men (Ephesians 4:2; Titus 3:2). It deals with the faults in others through the spirit of meekness, recognizing that we could not be where we are but for the grace of God (Galatians 6:1; Titus 3:3-7). The rewards of meekness are summed up in this quote by Edith H. Shank:

*"No tranquilizer can be found
Through any magic art
As fine as that which must abound
Within a peaceful heart.*

*No drug or dope can take the place
Of peace within the mind,
Of those who have the friendly grace
To be gentle, just, and kind."*

Temperance

Temperance is “habitual moderation; not excessive in the indulgence of the appetites and passions. It is cool, calm; not marked with passion; not violent,” as defined by Webster. Temperance then is restraint. It gives the picture of an athlete who exerts mastery over his own body and his desires during a certain period of training. “And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (1 Corinthians 9:25-27).

A believer under the control of the Spirit possesses the “fruit” of temperance “to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:4-5). Temperance is a building block in the life of the believer, so that we “shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:8). Rather, we are given “exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity” (1 Peter 4-7).

Easy Albert!

A young father was pushing a baby buggy down the street. He seemed to be unruffled by the bawling of the baby and softly said, “Easy, Albert! Control yourself! Keep Calm!” The baby bawled more loudly. “Now, now, Albert, keep your temper!” the father went on.

A mother, passing by, said, “I must congratulate you on your self-control. You surely know how to speak to a baby – calmly and gently!” She patted the crying baby on the head and asked soothingly, “What’s wrong, Albert?”

“No, no!” exclaimed the father. “The baby’s name is Johnny. I’m Albert!”

(W.B.K.)

In summary, to enjoy the fruit of the Spirit, we need a Saviour. We need to receive the righteousness of Christ and allow the Holy Spirit to have complete control. We need to “reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:11) and “... be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18). As we walk in this way, He has promised that we will bear fruit – the Fruit of the Spirit that is “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.” God is looking for people who are filled with the Spirit so that He can use them to the fullest...to bear much fruit for Him. “Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; establish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh” (James 5:7, 8).

*“God is not looking primarily for better methods,
but for better men – exemplary, courageous men
who are empowered by the Holy Spirit, and*

*who know no fear other than
the fear of incurring God's frown:
'There was a man (not a method) sent from God,
whose name was John' (John 1:6)."*
(W.B.K.)