

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

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INTRODUCTION TO THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

A doctor, an engineer, and an attorney were debating whose profession was the oldest. The doctor said, "it's obvious the medical profession was the first. The Bible refers to God creating Eve from Adam's rib, and that is surgical procedure." But the engineer said, "No! before that, God created the world out of chaos, and one must be an engineer to create a world." "But wait," said the lawyer, "where do you think that chaos came from?"

Lawyer's do create a lot of chaos, because the very nature of their profession involves the chaos of broken laws, and the resulting broken lives. Chaos is their bread and butter. One lawyer had a bumper sticker that read, "PLEASE HIT ME-I'M A LAWYER." The complexity of the law is so vast because, as judge Harry Shafer writes, "we have fifty million laws trying to enforce ten commandments." There has to be a law against so many human actions because they are offensive and harmful to other persons and their property. Paul lists fifteen acts of the sinful nature of man in verses 19-21 of Galatians 5. But then in verses 22-23 he lists nine things which he calls the fruit of the Spirit, and he ends verse 23 with this statement, "against such things there is no law." Laws are to restrain people from certain behavior, but there is no need to restrain from these nine things.

In all the huge volumes of laws around the world you will search in vain to find a law against love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. So it is not true that everything good is either illegal or fatening. None of these nine fruits will add a pound to your body or any guilt to your conscience, for there is nothing illegal or fatening. There is no need

for laws to control the growth of this fruit, for in contrast to the acts of the flesh, these acts and attitudes do not hurt people in any way. They help and heal, and they add beauty and pleasure to all relationships. These fruits are a foretaste of heaven, and the goal in this life is to become a garden where they grow in abundance.

The Greek word for fruit is KARPOS, and it is a very popular word in the New Testament. It is used 66 times, and Jesus uses it more than all the rest combined. It was one of His favorite words. I looked up a number of the texts where Jesus used the word fruit and discovered that sometimes he said fruits, in the plural. At other times he used the singular to convey the plural. The singular and the plural are used interchangeably. My conclusion is that there is no basis for the debate over which is most correct to say, the fruit of the Spirit, or the fruits of the Spirit. It makes no difference if you call them the fruit of the fruits of the Spirit. Either way you are dealing with nine distinct values.

Fruit is a very positive word, for it brings to mind the images of delicious and tasty food we enjoy. God started the world with a very healthy environment, for the basic food was fruit in the garden of Eden. Fruit is basic to the good health of the body. The Bible ends with fruit as the key food also, for in the book of Rev. we see the Tree of Life, and it bears twelve kinds of fruit-one for each month of the year. If the Bible begins and ends with fruit, that ought to be a good clue as to what a healthy diet is in the eyes of God. There is no image of paradise anywhere that does not include fruit as a major factor in its beauty and pleasure

The word fruit comes from the Latin word FRUCTUS, which means enjoyment. Fruit got this name because it is the source of such quick and easy pleasure. You just grab an apple off the tree and sink your teeth into it and enjoy it right now without any preparation or cooking. So it is also with many other fruits. In contrast, grains, vegetables, and meats call for delayed pleasure until they are prepared for eating. It is the instant nature of their enjoyment that is a distinguishing characteristic of fruit.

This is the case with the nine fruits of the Spirit also. They give instant pleasure to the soul. Like physical fruit, they may take time to develop, but when they are ripe they give immediate enjoyment to both producer and consumer. People who eat only fruit are called fruitarians. In this series on the Fruits of the Spirit we are going to be Biblical fruitarians, and strive to consume all God has revealed about spiritual fruit.

The Fruits of the Spirit are actually superior to the Gifts of the Spirit. The Gifts can be abused and need laws to regulate them, lest they do more harm than good. And if you have gifts but not the fruits, they are worthless, as Paul says in ICor. 13. You can have the gift of tongues, and speak like an angel, but without love you are just a noisy gong and clanging cymbal. You can have the gift of prophecy and knowledge and understand all mysteries, but without the fruit of love, you are nothing. Even if you have the gift of faith and can do miracles like moving mountains, but lack love, you are no asset to the kingdom of God. The point Paul is making is that the Gifts of the Spirit need to be under the direction of the Fruits of the Spirit, or they lose their value Gifts have to do with what you do, but Fruits have to do with who you are. Being comes before doing. Doing the right thing can be done even by the most evil of people, but being the right kind of person is what God is after. Being Christ like has to do with character and not just conduct. The Fruits focus on character and the inner being and not just on conduct.

The really good news about the Fruits of the Spirit is that they are available to all Christians. So

many of God's people feel they have no gifts, or certainly none that are spectacular. But Paul makes it clear that nobody is second class when it comes to the Fruits. The gifts are like body parts. The eye has the gift of seeing, the ear the gift of hearing, the feet the gift of walking, and so on. Each has a specialized function that the other members of the body may not have. But the Fruits of the Spirit are for all members of the body, equally.

No Christian can say that they do not have the capacity to love, feel joy, have peace, etc., like other Christians. They may not have the gifts of others in the body, but all have equal access to these fruits. These are not exclusive to any part of the body. They are for all parts of the body, and every member of the body is expected to grow these fruits. You and I can be just as loving, and just as joyful, and just as peaceful as Billy Graham, or Mother Teresa, or any other well-known Christian you can think of. There are people in every church who have just as many Fruits of the Spirit as the best known leaders around the world. Many people can walk into their back yard and pick an apple off a tree that is just as good as any of the name brand apples you can get in your supermarket. So there are masses of marvelous fruits in obscure places that almost nobody knows about, but they bring pleasure and beauty to those who do know of them. Every Christian is a potential fruit producer.

You know an apple tree by its fruit. If there are no apples on a tree, but pears instead, you know it is a pear tree. All fruit trees are identified by their fruit. So the Christian is to be identified by the fruit they bear. How do you know if a Christian is growing in Christlikeness? You cannot tell by the position they hold in the church, or by the gifts they display, or by the awards they may win. You can only tell by the fruit that they bear. If they are not adding to the pleasure and beauty of the kingdom, but are adding strife, and negatives of all kinds, they may be gifted leaders even, but they are not fruit bearing believers. This is to be our primary goal. Nothing else matters if we do not produce the Fruits of the Spirit. These are the nine marks of the growing Christian. These are the nine signs of spiritual maturity. These are the nine evidences of Christlikeness.

The importance and significance of these fruits is all the more magnified when we read the words of Donald Gee, the Pentecostal theologian who writes from a charismatic perspective. He makes it clear that Pentecostals make a major mistake in thinking that the gifts are all that matter. He writes,

When the great Forth Bridge in Scotland was nearing completion we are told that one dull, cold day the builders tried unsuccessfully all day long to bring certain important girders together. Every available device of mechanical power was used, without success, and at the end of the day they retired completely baffled. But next morning the sun shone in summer warmth upon the great masses of steel, and the expansion thus produced soon enabled them to make the connection. So it is with much of the work of the Spirit: His power sometimes works more irresistibly in the silent influences of love, joy, and peace, than in the mightier manifestations of miracles or prophesying.

That is a powerful testimony coming from a Pentecostal charismatic, for he recognizes that the power of the fruit available to all Christians may be greater than the power of the gifts available to the few. There is no doubt about it, the study of the Fruits of the Spirit can be the most important study of our lives if we allow the knowledge we gain to be transformed into actual fruit. The study of love is only of value if we become more loving, and so it is with each of the fruits. Our prayer need to be like that of the poet who wrote,

Love through me, Love of God,
There is no love in me,
Oh Fire of Love, light thou the love,
That burns perpetually.

Flow through me, Peace of God,
Calm river, flow until
No wind can blow, no current stir
A ripple of self-will.

Shine through me. Joy of God,
Make me like Thy clear air
Which Thou dost pour Thy colors thro'
As though it were not there.

Oh blessed Love of God,
That all may taste and see
How good Thou art, once more I pray:
Love through me, even me.

All of these fruits hang together like a cluster of grapes on the vine. You can't pick and chose which ones you will have and leave the rest alone. They come together, and you have them all, or you don't have them at all. You cannot say I'll be loving and joyful, but I'm not going to be kind and good. This is a package deal, and although your personality may favor some of these over others, they all have to be a part of your personality for you to be Christ like. The lack of any one of them can spoil all the rest. They are one, and that is why some prefer the singular of fruit rather than fruits of the Spirit. They are like nine segments of an orange. They are parts, but together they make one orange. There is one fruit of the Spirit in nine segments.

Even the man of the world might have some of these fruits, but they will be offset by the works of his flesh, and so he will not be Christ like. The Christian is to be in glaring contrast to the man of the world by having the whole package. If one or more is missing we know we are quenching the Spirit. We are keeping some part of our soil in our own soil bank to raise what we want to raise rather than the fruits of the Spirit. To have the full crop we need to surrender our whole being to the Holy Spirit and allow Him freedom to produce in us all that He desires.

This means all of life can be seen as an opportunity to grow one or more of these fruits. If life is going great and all is smooth sailing, let your life grow abundantly in love, joy, and peace. But if life gets hard and there are trials and battles galore, let the Holy Spirit produce in you patience, faithfulness, and self-control. The point is, rain or shine, the Christian needs to learn to use all

weather for growing these fruits.

Ian Barclay tells of the girl who read an article in a gardening magazine about a fruitless apple tree. She showed it to her father who was frustrated about his tree, which was just like that. The article said to drive a few nails into the trunk of the tree. He decided to try it, and the next year the tree bore fruit like never before. Sometimes pain and suffering can be productive. It is like pruning a tree. Do not waste hard times. Ask the Holy Spirit to use them as fertilizer to encourage the growth of some fruit. The fertilizer may be awful, but the effects can be wonderful, if the end result is growth of the fruits of the Spirit.

Remember, these are not our fruits, as if we could produce them by our own efforts. They come to us by the working of the Holy Spirit in us. Our task is to open up our lives and let Him work. It is a matter of submission and surrender so that He can change us from within. Can we resist the Spirit, and quench the Spirit, and hold our life down to the level of scrawny crab apples rather than big red delicious apples? Of course we can! That is why we need to study these fruits. Billy Graham preached on these fruits many years ago, and he said in that message, "now these things, these nine things, nine clusters of fruit, are to characterize the life of every Christ-born child of God....But what do we find? We find in the average so-called Christian today, the very opposite." The very opposite being the works of the flesh. Graham is saying Christians can be so worldly there is no way to distinguish between them and the world.

In order to make a difference in this world, Christians have to be different, and the key to that is the production of the fruits of the Spirit. Christians are to be in the fruit business. Why was Israel replaced by the Church to fulfill God's plan? It was a fruit issue. In Matt.21:43 Jesus said to the leaders of Israel, "Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit." One of the key reasons Christianity has been superior to Judaism is because it has been more fruitful. The Jews chose to be exclusive, and keep God for themselves. The Christians said, God loves the whole world, and we must heed the command of Christ to go to all people with the good news of His love.

God chose the Gentile world because they would prove to be more fruitful. God is a wise investor, and He wants to get a good return on His investment. He wants fruit, and when He gets it He gives more resources. As we let the Holy Spirit work in our lives to produce fruit, we will be blest by more and more of the grace of God. Fruit produces more fruit until there is a bountiful harvest.

The motive for developing the fruit of the Spirit is both for pleasing God and for self-advancement. The most selfish thing you can do is yield yourself to the Spirit of Christ, for He will do with your life what you could never do. He will produce in you that which could never come from doing your own thing. The Christian wants life to be full of the joy, pleasure, and happiness just like the non-Christian. The non-Christian seeks it primarily by means of the works of the flesh. The Christian is to find it primarily by the Fruits of the Spirit. That is the goal of the following nine chapters.

I. THE FRUIT OF LOVE

Howard Thurman in *Disciplines Of The Spirit*, tells of one of the most unusual jobs. A large General Hospital hired a high school girl to be there mice petter. Her sole occupation was to take white mice out of their cages several times a day and pet them. They had learned that when mice are made to feel loved and secure they give much more authentic results in experiments. When they are relaxed and given a sense of well-being, they better cope without panic.

Science is confirming all the time that God is love. It is finding that all God made needs love to be at it's best. People who love their garden and their plants produce better crops and more beauty. Love is the universal need of all life. Dogs and cats can admit their need for love. They thrust their heads into your hands and face, and demand to be loved. But man likes to be independent and not admit to needing others, even though it is the number one need of man for happiness. There are endless numbers of movies and novels where people delay love and even lose it because they will not admit their need. This is the ultimate in pride, for God Himself is willing to admit He needs love. The first commandment is that we love God with our whole being. Paul in Romans 8:28 says that God works in all things for good for those who love Him. In I Cor.2:9 he writes that no mind can conceive of what God has prepared for those who love Him. In time and in eternity the best is reserved for those who love God.

Jesus did not hesitate to declare His need for love.. He needed the love of His heavenly Father, but He also needed the love of man. In John14 He repeated His need often. In verse 15 He said, "If you love me you will obey what I command." In verse 21 He said, "Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love and show myself to him." In verses 23-24 Jesus sums it all up with these words, "If anyone loves me he will obey me, if anyone does not love me he will not obey me."

If God the Father and God the Son long to be loved, it is the height of folly for any man to deny his need for love. Ashley Montague writes from the point of view of a scientist-

"The study of love is something from which scientists long shied away. But with the increased interest in the origins of mental illness, more and more attention is being paid to the infancy and childhood of human beings. What investigation has revealed is that love is, beyond all cavil or question, the most important experience in the life of a human being.

Show me a hardened criminal, a juvenile delinquent, a psychopath or a "cold fish," and in almost every case I will show you a person resorting to desperate means in order to attract the emotional warmth and attention he failed to get but which he so much desires and needs. "Aggressive" behavior when fully understood is, in fact, nothing but love frustrated, a technique for compelling love-as well as a means of taking revenge on the society which has let that person down, disillusioned, deserted and dehumanized him. Hence, the best way to approach aggressive behavior in children is not by aggressive behavior toward them, but with love. And this is true not only for children but for human beings at all ages."

The Scripture and science agree, the greatest of these is love. Love is the highest virtue man is capable of giving or receiving. You cannot give God or man any higher gift than the gift of love. The highest goal of life is to be like Christ. The only way to approach this goal is to be a person filled with love. This is the same as saying one needs to be filled with the Spirit for He is the source of love. The fruit of the Spirit is love. The more we are filled with the Spirit of Christ the more we will have the fruit of love.

Many say that the sign you are filled with the Holy Spirit is that you will speak in tongues, but that is an experience that occurred only in Corinth and was not an issue in any other church of the New Testament. The real sign of being filled with the Holy Spirit is the fruit of the Spirit, and the first fruit and main fruit is love. The most loving Christian is the most Spirit-filled Christian. Paul links the Holy Spirit and love in Romans 15:30 where he writes, "I urge you brothers by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit...." In Col. 1:8 he writes to them and refers to "Your love in the Spirit." The Holy Spirit is the channel by which the love of God fills the heart of man. Paul makes this clear in Rom. 5:5 where he writes, "God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom He has given us."

The love of God that enables us to love our neighbor as our self, and to love one another, and to love our enemies all comes into our heart by means of the Holy Spirit. He produces the fruit. We cannot make it grow by works. All we can do is to let the Spirit have control, and He makes this Christ like fruit grow. We can plant and we can water, but God gives the increase. We cannot make fruit grow, but we can provide the cooperation that makes it possible for the Holy Spirit to use our hearts as fertile soil that will be fruit producing. We can't make anything grow, but we can provide the environment for things to grow.

We are responsible for preparing the soil of our hearts. We do this by clearing it of the rocks, trash, and brush that makes growing anything unlikely. Our soil gets hard and the seed cannot penetrate and take root. We get stubborn and set in our ways, and do not yield to the Holy Spirit. Christians need to be flexible and ever open to the winds of the Spirit, and to the new fires He may wish to kindle in our hearts. Lawrence Kushner gives us an illustration on the human level.

"When my wife and I were first married, for example, we believed that our "true love" enabled us to read one another's minds. Based on this youthful fantasy, we spent great amounts of time and energy choosing the wrong birthday presents for one another, each pretending we loved gifts we didn't.

As we grew older and our love matured, we gradually realized that even great love only rarely penetrates another's soul. Indeed, I suspect, real loving stands reverent precisely in the mystery of another's unknowable, unfathomable self. And so, as an act of love, we reached a mutual, unspoken decision: We began to drop not-so-subtle hints about what we really wanted. This not only made shopping easier ("This is exactly what she wants!") But receiving presents became much more fun ("Why this is exactly what I wanted!") If you really love someone, don't make them guess what to give you."

Love grows by communication. God did not just let His people guess how to love Him. He gave them clear instructions. The Tabernacle and Temple where they were to show their love in worship, sacrifice, and praise were revealed in most minute detail-nothing was left to guess. God gave His Word and Jesus gave His teaching so we could know exactly how to love Him by obedience. For the Holy Spirit to produce the fruit of love in us, we need to be listening to the Word and applying its truth to our daily lives. Listening, learning, worshiping, praising, living a life pleasing to God, these are all part of the atmosphere we provide for the Holy Spirit to work in to produce love. When love is produced in us, like other fruit it has seeds, and will reproduce itself in others.

Chuck Swindoll gives us an illustration in his book, *Simple Faith*. "Among the many plays and musical performances I have attended, none has ever gripped me like *Les Miserables*. When these playwrights and composers decided to put Victor Hugo's classic novel on the stage in the form of a dramatic musical, a masterpiece was created for the public to enjoy. When my family and I saw the performance, we were moved to tears...literally. To this day, its scenes and songs often return to mind, bringing fresh delight." He goes on to tell the gist of the play. Jean Valjean is released after 19 years in the chain gang, and is treated kindly by a saintly Bishop. But his prison experience has scarred him and hardened him, and he repays the Bishop by stealing some of his silver. Caught and brought back by the police, Valjean is shocked when the Bishop tells them he gave him the silver. This act of love that kept him a free man had an impact on him like nothing before, and he vowed to never be the man he was.

The policeman, Javert, however, hated him and was determined to put him back in prison. Javert treats him with contempt, but Valjean will not retaliate. He turns the other cheek, and he loves his neighbor, and he lives a life of love. In the end he overpowers his enemy, and overcomes evil with good. The last line in the theatre production captures the essences of it all-"To love another person is to see the face of God."

I think it says even more clearly-"To love another person is to let them see the face of God." The love of the Bishop helped Valjean see the face of God, and he was changed forever, and his love then helped others see the face of God. God is love, and so wherever love is seen you are getting some glimpse of God. That is the beauty of this first fruit of the Spirit. It makes us attract others to see God and desire to taste of the fruits He can produce in lives. Love is the best witness there is, for nothing is more attractive and enticing than love.

All the works of the flesh that Paul lists in Gal.5:19-21 are the efforts of man to get love without God. All sexual immorality is a hunger for love. All the hate, jealousy, and envy of others is a hunger for love. We get angry and create problems because we want love. Studies show that almost all, if not all, anti-social behavior is a cry for love. Man in his flesh seeks the food of life-love, but what he gets is garbage instead. Only love can meet his deepest needs. The Christian is to reveal to the world an example of true love in contrast to the devil's fakes.

What is true love? It is feeling and doing what Jesus would feel and do in the same situation. Jesus was Spirit filled and thus always loving. If you can honestly say I am feeling and doing what Jesus would feel and do, you are being as loving as you can be. When you love you are as near to God as you can get, for God is love. It is the number one characteristic of God's nature, and to be a channel of that nature in the world is to fulfill the ultimate purpose of being a person made in the image of God. This is also the ultimate pleasure. Remember, fruit means enjoyment. It is from the

Latin fructus, which means enjoyment. Where love is joy is right behind. The greatest pleasure in life is love. You cannot find a greater pleasure, for it is a taste of God's greatest pleasure.

We are forced, however, to look at the paradox of love. If it is the ultimate in enjoyment and pleasure, why did it become so costly to God to love man? It cost infinite pain and thus we are stuck with the paradox of love being both pleasurable and painful. In a perfect world love is only pleasure, but in a fallen world love hurts, for love desires the best for its objects no matter what the cost, and this means pain. God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, and Jesus so loved lost men that He gave His life on the cross for them to be restored to the favor of God. It was painful, but also the highest pleasure. Jesus endured the cross with joy, for He looked to the eternal result for Himself and the redeemed. Love's goal is always the highest peak of pleasure, but to get there it often has to go through painful valleys of suffering. This is true, not only for God's love, but for the love of parents and mates.

Love often hurts in a fallen world, but love is willing to hurt, for that is the price for ultimate pleasure. One who will not suffer for another does not love the other in any meaningful way. All God-like love is willing to bear pain for the sake of another's well being. The Good Samaritan was good, and was used by Jesus to illustrate love, because he was willing to pay the price of interrupting his own plans for the sake of another who needed help. The Priest and the Levite may have had better theology than the Samaritan, but they were not willing to suffer any pain for the sake of the injured man. They may have had gifts, but they were of no value to the kingdom of God without the fruit of love.

The Good Samaritan was despised and rejected by the leaders of God's people, but Jesus made him a hero. Why? Because he had what really matters to God. He had the first fruit of the Spirit, which is love. He had the kind of love that is willing to suffer for the pleasure of God and the pleasure of man, and this is the fulfillment of the whole law. Loving God with your whole being and your neighbor as yourself means to be willing to suffer pain for their pleasure. The goal is always pleasure, but the means to it may be painful. Love will pay the price of pain to gain this pleasure.

What this means is, love is a chosen self-limitation for the sake of another. God and Jesus both made choices that limited their sovereign freedom to do as they pleased by creating man, and then redeeming him. If God was unloving and self-centered He would have ended the plan with Adam and Eve, or at least by the time of the flood. He would have taken Noah and his family also, and called it quits. To pursue the plan of salvation all the way to the cross was love beyond our comprehension. We cannot match the love of God, but we can grow this same fruit, and be willing to limit self for the sake of others.

This is what parenthood is, and what marriage is, and what ministry is. All forms of love are choices to limit yourself for the sake of others. It sounds like sacrifice, and it is, but it is also the way to the greatest pleasure for the self. Those who want only self-pleasure, and will not limit their pleasure for the sake of others, will end up with very little pleasure. Those who limit their pleasure for the sake of others will end up with the greatest pleasure. This is the way of love and love always ends up with the greatest pleasure.

Ibsen in his poetic drama Peer Gynt, has a hero who is a reckless and irresponsible dreamer whose motto is, "To thyself be enough." He visits a lunatic asylum where he believes people are not

themselves, but the director says it is here that people are most themselves, themselves and nothing but themselves. They are all totally self-centered with no tears for others woes, or cares for any others needs. He realizes he has been a failure by being self-centered. He finds healing in the love of the heroine, solveig. It is a message, on the human level, that without love life is barren of all fruit that will last.

Even the secular world knows the truth about love that is why most secular songs, plays, and movies are about love. The problem is, the highest love man knows without God is sexual love, and when this becomes ones highest value, it becomes an idol, and leads to all sorts of perversions. It is not that human love is bad, for it is God-given and one of life's greatest gifts, but when it is seen as the ultimate it becomes an idol, and leads to depravity.

Some wise men have seen that all human love is to be a means to a greater love. Plato said, "All loves should be simply stepping stones to the love of God." If men would just realize this, and keep on stepping up the stairs of love to the love of God they would find that love that never fails. We sing that Jesus never fails, and Paul in I Cor.13:8 says that love never fails. Love that reaches the God-like, and Christ like level, because it is the fruit of the Holy Spirit is the love that never fails, and is always the right thing to do.

It does not succeed in the sense that it always wins its object. Jesus failed to win many that He loved, and He wept because they would not accept Him. The point is, Jesus never made the wrong choice. His love never failed to keep Him in the center of God's will. He could love His enemies, and though He could not always win His enemies, He never failed by being unloving to them. Because Jesus never failed to love, He never failed to be a true representative of God the Father. This is to be the goal of everyone who wants to live a life pleasing to God, for this is a life filled with pleasure for the self as well.

Love never fails, does not mean the loving Christian succeeds in all he or she attempts to accomplish. It means they always please God without fail. God never says, "I am not pleased with your loving spirit toward your brother or your enemy." God is always pleased with love, and, therefore, love never fails to achieve life's highest goal, which is to please God. That is why Oswald Chambers said, "Love is the beginning, love is the middle, love is the end." God made us in His image, and thus, we are made to love, and when we do we fulfill our very purpose for being. It is life's highest success.

What is the purpose of life? It is to become what God made us to be-images of Him. This is achieved by bearing the fruit of the Spirit, for these nine fruits are love displayed in all of its aspects. Someone has described them like this-

Joy is love's cheerfulness.
Peace is love's confidence
Patience is love's composure
Kindness is love's consideration
Goodness is love's character
Faithfulness is love's constancy
Gentleness is love's comliness
Self-control is love's conquest.

The point is, the more these nine fruits characterize your life, the more you fulfill your purpose for being, for you are a reflection of His love, which is to say, you are Christ like. Some years ago New York city had a murder mystery that was finally solved by the arrest of several notorious criminals. One was Jack Rose, who after he was convicted and imprisoned said, "I always believed that there must be a God somewhere. But when I gave Him thought, I felt He was so far away, and so occupied with great things, that He knew nothing about me. I am sure I never would have become a criminal if the thought had ever entered my mind that God cared anything about me." The world is filled with people who do not know that God loves them because there is no Christian who is communicating that love to them. The poet says-

Do you know the world is dying
For a little bit of love?
Everywhere we hear them sighing,
For a little bit of love.

When we make choices to communicate the love of God to the lost, then we know we have gone beyond natural love to bearing the fruit of the Spirit. Every Christian needs to be praying the prayer of Dr. Will Houghton, former president of Moody Bible Institute.

Love this world through me, Lord
This world of broken men,
Thou didst love through death, Lord
Oh, love in me again!
Souls are in despair, Lord.
Oh, make me know and care;
When my life they see,
May they behold Thee,
Oh, love the world through me.

Even the desire to pray this prayer is a sign that you are growing in the garden of your life the fruit of love.

II. THE FRUIT OF JOY

Martin Clark said every church should have a humor committee because there are more funny things that happen in church than in a zoo, for people are funnier than the animals. God made man to be the only creature on earth who can laugh because of his sense of humor. Christians need a sense of humor to deal with the reality that they are so fallible. If all the mistakes pastors make were compiled in a book, it would make the unabridged dictionary look like a postage stamp in comparison.

One of the funniest mistakes I have ever read about was of the young pastor who just moved into the parsonage next to the church. On his first Sunday they were having communion. So he and his wife poured the grape juice into the little cups, and they thought they were ready. But when it came

time to serve, the pastor saw that they had not poured enough cups for the size of the congregation. He leaned over the front pew and whispered to his wife, "Run next door and get that bottle of grape juice out of the refrigerator. If you run fast enough you can be back before the deacons serve the cups." She batted out the side door and flew to the parsonage. She did not bother to even switch on the lights. She just grabbed what she thought was the bottle of grape juice, and tore back to the church. What she had was a bottle of green persimmon juice.

The young pastor, with complete faith in his wife, did not bother to read the label. He just uncapped it and poured its contents into the cups for himself and the deacons. It was perfect timing, for just as he finished, the deacons were marching down the aisle with their empty trays. The pastor then served the deacons and led the congregation in drinking the juice. Suddenly his lips began to pucker and he knew he had a problem. He leaned over and wheezed, "deacon Jones will you please lead in closing prayer." Deacon Jones was having his own problems, and was barely able to smack his lips and get out, "Please excuse me!" The pastor surveyed the situation and could see none of the deacons were able to pray. The congregation had no idea what was going on, for they had perfectly normal grape juice. Finally the pastor motioned all to stand and said, "Well, friends, let's whistle the doxology and go home."

Murphey's law has not been repealed for the church. Even in the most solemn and sacred moments Christians leaders provoke laughter by their slips of the tongue. Billy Graham in a message in Atlanta roared out, "David slew Goliath and then he turned around and killed him." Another pastor prayed, "Oh Lord, make us more offensive--I mean Lord, put on the offensive." Another introduced the new music director with these words, "We are delighted he is coming to lead us in our sinning." At a testimony meeting on the campus of a Christian college a tearful freshman concluded his personal testimony with what he thought was a sincere request. He said, "Please pray I'll not be found sleeping with the five foolish virgins when Jesus comes." At every homecoming since, this is remembered as a choice moment of laughter.

There is no end to the laughter producing goofs of Christians, but my point in sharing these is to make it clear that this sort of laughter is not what we are dealing with, as we consider the fruit of the Spirit, which is joy. You do not need the Holy Spirit to see the humor in life. This is a gift God has made available to all men. The non Christian can have as good a sense of humor as the Christian. Jews have always been the major contributors to the world of comedy. So Christians do not have a monopoly on laughter. Laughter is a universal gift.

But joy is something else. Joy is much deeper, for joy is based on love and not laughter. Joy is the feeling that even if I blew it, and made a blunder that everyone laughed at, I am loved and not rejected for my mistake. That is a good feeling that lasts after the laughter quickly passes away. Laughter is momentary, but joy is a state of mind that is permanent. Joy makes you happy even when there is nothing funny to laugh at. We see this all through the New Testament. This was the joy of Jesus. He is about to go to the cross and suffer on a level we can never comprehend, yet He says to His disciples in John 15:11, "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that you joy may be full." Again in His great prayer in John 17:13 He says, "I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them."

Jesus was loaded with the fruit of the Spirit, and He had all the joy one is capable of possessing.

But you will notice, it was not because life was funny, and He was having a ball. He was facing the worst life could throw at Him with evil, suffering, pain, hate, injustice, cruelty, and betrayal. Yet, Jesus had fullness of joy. We see it also in Paul and Silas in Acts 16. They were attacked and beaten, and we read in verse 23, "After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison; and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully." So he put their feet in stocks so they could not move. It was not what you would call a fun day at the park. It was a terrible day, and these men had to be in pain. Nevertheless, we read in verse 25, "About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God and the other prisoners were listening to them." This is when God sent an earthquake, and the jailer was converted with his whole family.

Joy is not a positive feeling that life is going great. Joy is a feeling that no matter how hard life is, I have the best that life can offer in Christ. Anyone can feel good and be happy when all is going well and life is free of negatives. But with the fruit of joy you can rejoice in the Lord always, even when life is full of negatives. This is not man generated joy, but the joy of the Lord which is our strength.

Madam Guyon was thrown into prison in France, and she wrote-

"I passed my time there in great peace, content to pass the rest of my life there, if such were the will of God. I sang songs of joy, while the maid who served me learned by heart as fast as I made them, and we together sang Thy praises, o my God. The stones of my prison looked in my eyes like rubies. I esteemed them more than all the gaudy brilliance of the world. My heart was full of that joy Thou givest to them that love Thee in the midst of their greatest crosses."

Her poetry, which she sang in prison, is still read and sung today, thou she died in 1717. She wrote forty volumes. Here are just a few lines-

Tho my foes have combined
and my body confined
yet my soul is with liberty blest.
I am humbly content
With whatever is sent
For I know that Thy pleasure is best.

Thy wondrous defense
Makes a cell seem immence.
It sheds so peculiar a grace.
Such a pleasure abounds,
Such a glory surrounds,
And the joys of Thy kingdom embrace.

This is not natural joy but the fruit of the Spirit joy. The joy that can only grow in the life of one who knows, that no matter what, they are loved by God. Joy grows out of love, the first fruit of the

Spirit. Joy is not the laughter of the sense of humor, but the laughter of love which says, nothing can separate me from the love of God. This joy does lead to laughter, and what we call happiness, for it fills one with a sense of optimism. It is a denial of Christ's joy to make Christianity a solemn and somber faith.

John Wesley said, "Sour godliness is the devil's religion." Jesus said in the Sermon On The Mount, that even when Christians are persecuted and slandered, they are to rejoice and be glad for their reward is great in heaven. Joy in hard times is a Christian obligation. That is why we need the filling of the Spirit, for we cannot produce this fruit on our own. Paul says in I Thess. 5:16, "Be joyful always." He does not say ninety per cent of the time, or ninety eight per cent of the time, but always. That is not natural, but is of the Holy Spirit. Augustine said over 1500 years ago, "There is a joy which is not given to the ungodly, but to those who love Thee for Thine own sake, whose joy Thou Thyself art."

Jesus was the most joy-filled person ever to live on this planet. We are told this in Hebrews 1:9, where it says of Christ, "...your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy." In other words, there has never been another above Jesus in joy. He had the highest level of joy possible, and none has ever matched it. An apple is an apple, and a pear is a pear, but not all apples and pears are equal. Some are better than others. They are bigger, juicier, and sweeter than others. So it is with joy, and all the fruits of the Spirit. They grow like fruit, and so there are all different stages of growth. Jesus had the perfect fruit of joy. This is what all believers will have in heaven. This was the hope of even the Old Testament saints. David says in Psalm 16:11, "You will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasure at your right hand." Until then, the goal of the Christian is to be filled with the Spirit, and get as near to having the joy of Jesus as possible.

The New Testament has 11 words for different aspects of joy, and they are used 326 times. It is a major theme of God's Word, and a major obligation of the Christian life. There is a wealth of English synonyms for joy-bliss, buoyancy, cheerfulness, delight, ecstasy, elation, exuberance, felicity, gaiety, gladness, glee, hilarity, jubilation, rapture, and rejoicing. All of these can be summed up in the word happy, which the New Testament calls blessed. Vernon Grounds, the well known evangelical theologian, commenting on Paul's declaration in I Tim.6:15, that God "is the blessed and only Potentate or Ruler", says, "Since blessed means happy, Paul is here affirming that God is happy. The Happy God! God in Himself is a shoreless sea of vibrant glory, a fathomless ocean of sheerest ecstasy...God Himself is the Rejoicer who before the hosts of heaven reacts with a thrilling happiness that baffles the language and logic of earth. Infinitely joyful, He is the Source of all genuine joy."

Does this mean the Christian has to be a pollyanna, and be blind to the reality of a fallen world? Not at all, God knows the evil of man like no other, but He is by nature happy and joyful, in spite of His knowledge. Joy is not a denial of evil and a pretense that all is well. It is a conviction that life is a comedy and not a tragedy, and that in Christ good will triumph over evil. History is His-story, and it will have a happy ending.

Listen to Cyprian, the Christian leader of the church at Carthage in A.D. 200. He wrote,

"This is a cheerful world as I see it from my fair garden...But if

I could ascend some high mountain and look out over the wide lands, you know very well what I would see. Brigands on the highways. Pirates on the seas. Armies fighting. Cities burning. In the amphitheatres men murdered to please applauding crowds. Selfishness and cruelty, and misery and despair, under all roofs. It is a bad world, Donatus, an incredibly bad world. But I have discovered in the midst of it, a quiet and holy people who have learned a great secret. They have found a joy which is a thousand times better than any of the pleasures of our sinful life. They are despised and persecuted, but they care not. They are masters of their souls. They have overcome the world. These people, Donatus, are Christians, and I am one of them."

There is no blindness here to evil, but eyes wide open to the good news in Christ which produces the joy that overcomes the world. The Christian deals with his fallen nature in a different way than the world does. Leslie Flynn and his book, *Gift of Joy*, says the way the world deals with sin is to-

1. Minimize it. It is no big deal, everybody does it.
2. Rationalize it. They blame their genes, parents, or their mates, or the world situation.
3. Anesthetize it. By a constant round of activity, or by drugs.
4. Neutralize it. By doing good to counteract their bad.

Christians are not immune to any of these. David, after his great sin, tried all of these routes, but they were dead ends, and he lost the joy of his salvation. He learned the hard way, that the only way to deal with sin is to recognize it for what it is, and seek the grace of God. We need to confess our guilt and receive the forgiveness made possible by the atoning sacrifice of Jesus. This is the only way to deal with sin that leads to joy. David did get there, and he sang songs of joy again, but he took the long hard route of the world before he took the short cut of grace, and he suffered a great loss of joy because of it. His folly is recorded that believers might learn to avoid his mistakes, and come to Christ for cleansing and renewal right away. David prayed in Psalm 51:7-8, "Cleanse me with hyssop and I will be clean; wash me and I will be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice." Then in verse 12 we read, "Restore to me the joy of your salvation..."

When a Christian falls and fails the Lord, he or she is to immediately get right with the Lord and be restored, so the fruit of joy does not wither on the vine, as it was doing with David. The Christian who delays confession and forgiveness will see the fruit of joy wither and they will be a poor witness to the grace of God. Lack of joy is a sin that is seldom recognized. R.W. Dale, the great English preacher, said, "We ask God to forgive us for our evil thoughts and evil tempers, but rarely, if ever, ask Him to forgive us for our sadness." Sadness is not just the expression on our faces, but the negative views of life that rob us of joy in the midst of so much fallenness. The face is not the key factor. Jesus often had a sad face as he wept over the lostness of the world, and the weakness of His disciples. Sadness of face and sorrow over sin and death did not rob Him of His joy.

Joy is deeper than sadness, and can be real even when the face is not expressing it. It is superficial to suggest that Christians should always have a smile to show their joy. Optimism of the mind and soul goes far deeper than the face. This does not mean it is okay to go about looking like a sad sack.

Spurgeon said to his students training for ministry, "When you talk about heaven let your face light up with a heavenly glory. When you talk about hell, your everyday face will do." This was a rebuke of their everyday face, for it usually reflected pessimism and not the optimism of Christian joy, and was thus, a quenching of the Spirit.

If you have people who know you who think you are a pessimist, you are probably quenching the Spirit, and have ceased to produce the fruit of joy. Joy is deeper than mere laughter and smiling, but these are still ways by which we can express that joy to the world. The external ways of letting people know of the inner joy is important in our witness. You may not always feel like giving an external witness, but it should be a common part of your witness. Joy that is never seen is not the kind of fruit that makes others hungry to taste it.

One of the major purposes of worship is to help us develop our expression of joy. Praise is the twin of joy, says John Drescher. Praise is the joy we express to God, but in so doing we water the joy in our own lives and help it to grow. The goal of all worship is to grow the fruits of the Spirit. This pleases God and man, and the self. Pulsford said, "There is no heaven, either in this world, or in the world to come, for people who do not praise God." Praise is the fruit of joy turning toward the Son of heaven to receive that light that makes it even more luscious and appealing to the world. The goal in going to church is that you might become more optimistic about life and how God can use you to make a difference in this fallen world.

Just as natural love is not enough, so it is not enough to have just natural joy. The fruit of the Spirit love enables you to love those who are not loving, but who are even enemies. Fruit of the Spirit joy enables you to be optimistic even in the trials of life, and, thus, be a witness to the world of a joy that is beyond what man can produce. Henry VanDyke said it profoundly, "There is something finer than to do right against inclination; and that is to have an inclination to do right. There is something nobler than reluctant obedience; that is joyful obedience. The rank of virtue is not measured by its disagreeableness, but by its sweetness to the heart that loves it. The real test of character is joy. For what you rejoice in, that you love. And what you love, that you are like."

If worship is a bore and service is a chore, it is because you have lost your first love, like the Christians in Ephesus that Jesus rebuked in Rev. 2. Worship and service are pure joy to those who do not quench the Spirit. Frank Lauback, who has helped millions learn to read so they could read the Bible, said, "I have had more fun than any other man in the world." It was such joy to serve Jesus because he loved Jesus and he loved the world. He carried a globe of the world in his arms as he spoke, for he loved the whole world. His love was the source of his joy. You cannot skip over the first fruit of the Spirit and expect to get to the others. They all grow out of the main vine, which is love. When you are loving, which is to say, when you are Christ like, then you will also be growing the fruit of joy. The most loving Christians are the most joyful Christians.

III. THE FRUIT OF PEACE

I have a good number of books by Norman Vincent Peale, and almost every one of them has a

chapter on peace. The reason is, Peale appeals to the masses and peace is a topic that has universal interest. Dante, centuries ago said, "I am seeking for that which every man seeks-Peace." Peace of mind drugs are the most popular, for that is one way man can generate his own peace. For many, their only hope to cope is dope.

Much, if not most, of the social turmoil of our culture is due to a hunger for peace, which is sought for in all the wrong places. According to Ronald Hutchcraft, the Director of Youth for Christ in New York and New Jersey, in the next thirty minutes-

57 kids will run away from home.
29 children will attempt suicide.
22 girls under 19 years of age will receive an abortion.
14 teenage girls will give birth to an illegitimate baby.
685 teens will use some form of narcotic.

These tragic statistics reveal that we are a nation in perpetual war. The spiritual battle between light and darkness is everywhere and one of Satan's greatest weapons is to get people to think they can find peace in tranquilizers. The problem is he has a point. False and fake peace does have an element of reality. Tranquilizers work because they reduce or eliminate the inner reaction to stressful stimuli. They do not change the environment in which you have to live. They change your response to it and this makes a world of difference. If you do not respond to what is negative and disturbing with panic, fear, or anxiety you can have some measure of peace in spite of these negatives. This is an imitation of what the Holy Spirit does in our lives when we let him produce the fruit of peace in us. He does not change the environment and rid it of stress and conflict. The Christian has to live in the same fallen world with everyone else.

Ronald Hutchcraft in his book on peace, *Peaceful Living in a Stressfull World*, tells of the testing of his peace as he wrote that book. He wrote,

"No sooner had I made a commitment to insist on peace than stress brought out the heavy artillery.
My wife has had three dangerous illnesses in the last nine months
The staff for whom I am responsible went through a major upheaval.
Our daughter started high school.
Our son started junior high school with a badly broken arm.
We faced a decisive deadline in the legal tangle due to an accident.
Paychecks for our staff were delayed.
The kitchen floor and the back stairs fell apart.

"All these surprises came in right on top of my already relentless schedule full of speaking, counseling, managing, radio, nonstop meetings, and daddying. The peace has stood the test. To be sure, my old high-pressure, high-pitched responses still surface, but I retreat quickly to the new peace I have chased and found. This tranquility is anything but theoretical or passive. It is the product of a daily insistence that we choose the peace alternative."

His testimony is typical of many. The Christian does not escape the external turmoil of life in a fallen world. But he can escape the internal reaction that robs him of peace. The world's imitations do work for awhile, and they are a temptation. That is why we are told, "Be not drunk with wine but be filled with the Spirit." Wine can help you relax and not feel as full of anxiety, but you have to deal with the after effects which can be worse than the problem you sought to escape. Peace purchased in this way is not worth the cost for in the end peace will be lost. The peace of God does not come with the risks of negative after effects.

What the Bible makes clear is that we can cooperate with the Holy Spirit is the growing of this fruit. David says in Psalm 34:14 "seek peace and pursue it." You do not sit on your couch and hope it will fall into your lap. Peace is a matter of activity. You go in search of it. It is like game. You have to go hunt to find it and possess it for your own. When David wrote this he was being pursued by Saul, and was the no.1 most wanted man in the nation. He was a fugitive running for his life under great stress. Yet he says seek peace and pursue it. The Apostle Peter writing to Christians going through tough times remembers these words of David. He quotes them for Christians under stress in IPet.3:10-11, "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. He must turn from evil and do good, he must seek peace and pursue it."

Seeking peace and actively pursuing it is one of the major obligations of the Christian life. It is a sin to let the world be in control of your emotional system. The Christian is to make the pursuit of inner peace one of the major goals of life. Without this fruit of peace the Christian cannot be truly Christlike and obey the laws of love. In IPet.3:8-9 we read, "Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing..." This passage comes just before his urging them to seek peace and pursue it. Without inner peace the Christian cannot do these things so essential to the true Christian life. The Christian will respond just like the natural man without the fruit of the Spirit. His peace will keep them in control so they do not react to evil and insult with the same. Internal peace is the key to external peace. Where men are filled with war within there will be war without. Only the fruit of peace can produce peace in a world of war.

Blessed are the peacemakers said Jesus, for they will be called the sons of God. Why? Because they are obviously of a different blood line than mere men who are ever war-like. Only God's kids can achieve peace in a war zone like this fallen world. If you want people to know you are a child of God, one of the most conspicuous ways of doing so is to be a peacemaker.

It is not natural not to want to live in peace with all men. It is unnatural to want to forgive offenses and not seek revenge. You seem like some sort of a freak if you don't hate your enemies, but pray for them instead. A peacemaker is not a conformist to what is natural and normal. They are as conspicuous as a pro basketball player at a midget festival. They stand out as unique, for they are like the man found beaten by the Good Samaritan, going to the priest and Levite who left him to die, and contributing to their ministry. That is the kind of thing the peacemaker can do, because he has the fruit of the Spirit-peace. Peace is the ability to respond to evil with good. This is the peace of God which passes understanding.

Let's face reality, there is not a lot of this going around, and the reason is very few Christians are surrendered to the Holy Spirit. Most all Christians are quenching the Spirit to some degree. That is

why we need to back up the fruit of the Spirit with natural techniques. It is a matter of damage control. When we fell to be Spirit filled we need to have a net of safety to fall into. Christian leaders who fall and bring disgrace to the Christian faith do so because they depend too much on their Spiritual life alone. They do not develop natural methods for backup. Then when they quench the Spirit and have to depend on their own resources they fall.

The whole idea of pursuing peace is to get Christians to realize they have to play an active role in their own success. They have to learn to balance themselves like a child on a bike, so when dad lets go they can continue to move forward and not fall. God sometimes lets go because we grieve the Holy Spirit, and if we have not learned to go on our own we will fall. This means it is possible to be too spiritual. That is, we can so depend on spirituality that we do not develop any natural gifts, and then when we fell spiritually we are in deep trouble.

Paul is the one who tells us of the fruit of the Spirit, but he is also the one who urges us to labor like mad and put forth all the natural effort possible. In Rom.14:19 he writes, "Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification." Won't the Holy Spirit just do this for us? No more so than He will grow fruit in your garden if you never plow it, cultivate it, or water it. Fruit is a joint adventure of God and man. If man does not cooperate the fruit is not grown at all, or is very inferior. In Eph.4:3 Paul writes, "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace." Does Paul mean that if Christians do not make every effort the unity of the body can fall apart, and peace be lost? That is what precisely what Paul is saying, for he has seen it often, and it has been recorded all through history. Christians who do not put forth efforts to be peacemakers do not contribute to the peace of the world, or the body of Christ.

Paul writes in Col.3:15, "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace." Every Christian has a calling from God. It is a call to be channels of His peace. We need this fruit of the Spirit to fulfill our calling. But peace is not very high on the list of priorities most Christians aim for. The Church has conformed to the culture which is T. V. driven, and one of perpetual stimulus and response. Dr. Maxwell Maltz in his book *Psycho-Cybernetics*, says we are so conditioned to respond that we feel we have no choice to not respond. He recommends that people de-condition themselves by letting their telephone ring and not answering it. This is hard, but when you can learn to do it, you have regained some control of your life. You realize you have a choice, and do not have to respond to all the stimuli that life hurls at you. You can just sit still and not respond. In order to have peace, the Christian needs to learn how to not respond to all the stimuli that comes at him for our culture.

Escapism is usually thought of as a bad thing, because it is a running away from reality. But we need to see there is much reality that we need to escape from. The stress and tension all around us is real, but we have no obligation to be in a state of constant reaction to it. If we can escape and be at peace in the midst of it, let us praise God for this kind of escapism. Sleep is escapism God has built into our life, and it saves our life everyday. Building a house to retreat from the weather is escapism. Taking a vacation is escapism. Carrying an umbrella is escapism. Life is full of perfectly valid escapism. And so is the escapism of the Christian who learns to retreat into the presence of God and bathed in His peace. Music, reading, relaxation tapes, there are all kinds of resources for the Christian to use to obey the Biblical command to seek peace and pursue it. The Christian who uses these means is going to be prepared soil for the fruit of the Spirit-peace.

Pursuing peace has to be seen in the same sense as pursuing a deer. I had to learn the hard way that the best way to get a deer is to be still. You have to go into the woods to pursue it, but then you have to learn to be still. I once waited for an hour in the woods and did not see a deer, so I got up to look around. Just then five deer were startled and ran. They were just about to come into the opening, but I never got a shot, because I scared them. Had I stayed still they would have come right to me. Passive pursuit is a hard lesson to learn.

We live in a culture where speed is king. I find myself in a hurry even if there is no reason. People get uptight today if they miss a revolution in a revolving door. We are an uptight generation of compulsive activists. There are ten times more things to do in a day than anyone can do, and so we feel we are always behind and failing to do all that we could. All we do is respond, respond, respond to stimuli. We want peace but it just does not fit into our agenda. Peace calls for doing nothing sometimes, and we can't handle that. Pascal the great Christian philosopher and scientist said, "Most of man's troubles come from his inability to be still."

God gave the Sabbath law to force His people to relax and be still one day a week. Modern man has made it one of the most active days of the week. Man wants peace in a pill he can swallow, so he does not have to stop his perpetual motion. "Be still and know I am God", goes against the grain of our culture. The result is, Christians often have no more peace than do non-Christians. Yet, the promise of God in Isaiah 26:3 is, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee." If we could have a mind focused on God, and not on all the stimuli about us, we could have perfect peace. We should pray often as May Rowland does in her poem-

Come! Peace of God, and dwell again on earth,
Come, with the calm that hailed Thy Prince's birth,
Come, with the healing of Thy gentle touch,
Come, Peace of God, that this world needs so much.

Break every weapon forged in fires of hate,
Turn back the foes that would assail Thy gate;
Where fields of strife lie desolate and bare
Take Thy sweet flowers of peace and plant them there.

The Holy Spirit will not give us peace if we do not retreat and escape from the constant bombardment of stimuli. Just as money in the bank draws interest and grows into more money, so peace in a peaceful environment draws interest, and becomes a deeper peace. People with the greatest evidence of peace are people who know how to escape. Former President Harry Truman is often used as an illustration. He had no end of stress with a war on his hands, and one crisis after another. When he was asked how he could stand it, he responded, "When I can't take it anymore, I go into a fox hole in my mind." That is where a soldier escapes from the bullets of the enemy. He would retreat into his mind and do what Paul tells us to do in Phil.4:8, "...Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable-if anything is excellent or praiseworthy-think about such things." He would live in the memory of all the peaceful scenes and beautiful experiences of his life, and be renewed in spirit. He could get away from it all without going anywhere, because he could slip into a state of peace.

This is what devotional time and prayer time is to be for the Christian. It is an escape from the

perpetual stimuli of the flesh to the peaceful stimuli of the spirit. It is not an escape from reality, but an escape to a higher reality so that one can better cope with the lower reality. Peace is aware of conflict, just as love is aware of hate, and joy is aware of sorrow, but each fruit counteracts the impact of its opposite.

Peace, like all of the fruits, has its source in Jesus Christ. Paul says in Eph.2:14, "For He Himself is our Peace." There is no way the Holy Spirit can grow any of the fruits in us if Jesus is not our Savior and Lord. Michel Quoist defines peace like this-

"We mean the calm, the interior serenity, and the profound peace which permeate and emanate from a man who, notwithstanding a torn heart and body, and despite the suffering of mankind and the world, believes with all his strength in the victory of the Savior. And he believes this without for an instant forgetting or denying the existence of suffering and sin, and without giving up the fight against them."

What we are seeing in our study of the first three fruits of the Spirit is that they all depend on an optimistic conviction about Jesus and His ultimate victory over all evil. If you waver in this conviction, all of the fruits wither and lose their power. On the other hand, each of them flourishes to the degree that one is absolutely committed to the Lordship of Christ. When His Lordship is real in your life, you have a hiding place where you can escape from the storms of the world.

In the heart of the cyclone, tearing the sky,
And flinging the clouds and the towers by,
Is a place of central calm.
So here in the rush of earthly things,
There is a place where the spirit sings,
In the hollow of God's palm.

Author unknown

You do not need to become a monk or a mystic escaping to a desert or monastery, for you can escape right where you are by withdrawing to the inner life where Jesus is king. He is our peace, and as we look to Him, He will grant us His peace. Our problem is, we usually worry and fret and do all we can to control life's circumstances, and only after we fail and are full of anxiety do we come to Christ for escape. We need to learn to escape to His presence first, and get peace before we fight the battles of life. We need peace in the midst of the storm, and not just peace after the storm. Both are good, but before is better. Corrie Ten Boom said, "Look around and be distressed. Look inside and be depressed. Look at Jesus and be at rest." If we put Jesus first we do not have to work our way through the lower levels, but can start at the top and experience peace from the beginning.

When Jesus appeared to His depressed disciples after His resurrection, we read in John 20:19-20, "Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!' After He said this, He showed them His hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord." Why did He say peace and then show them His scars? Because those scars represented the worst life could throw at Jesus-crucifixion and violent death. Now He had conquered the worst and has a right to say peace be with you. Evil has done all it can, and it has lost. In Him there is victory over every evil foe. The

worse can never rob them of His best, and so there is a solid foundation for peace in the midst of the battle with evil.

The cross and what Jesus did there for us is a symbol of ultimate peace. Jesus, by His shed blood, fixes all that sin had broken, and gives us a foundation for absolute optimism. Paul states it clearly in Col.1:19-20, "For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through His blood, shed on the cross."

The goal of God is peace. He is the God of peace, and He sent the Prince of Peace to achieve that goal on the cross. Jesus did achieve it, and now in Him we are to be a people of peace. Eighty eight times peace is used in the New Testament. It is used in every book of the New Testament. It is a major challenge of the Christian life to seek peace and pursue it. It is only by doing so that we can be prepared soil for the Holy Spirit to produce in us the fruit of peace.

IV. THE FRUIT OF PATIENCE

A young boy, who had reached the age where having a watch made life worth living, was bugging his parents to get him one. He was told he would have to wait until he was older. But he continued to beg for one until his whole family was sick of it. His father finally laid down the law and told him he would get one later, but for now he was not to even mention the subject again. The next Sunday, as was the custom, each child in the family read a Bible verse at the dinner table. When it came to Edward's turn, this was the verse he chose to read-"What I say unto you, I say unto all: Watch!" For every rule there is some way to get around it, and here was a lad who found a way to even use the Bible to disobey his parents.

Most of us can identify with him, for we have had an obsession with getting something, and we could not rest until we got it. This puts our patience to the test, and we realize it is no easy virtue to achieve-this ability to wait for what we want with a calm and undisturbed spirit in the face of obstacles and delays. In our age of instant gratification, nobody enjoys waiting for satisfaction, but God demands that His children learn to discipline their desires, and to persevere and not give up because they do not reach their goals as soon as they hoped. Shakespeare said, "How poor are they who have not patience. What wound did ever heal but by degrees?" Waiting and persevering are a part of God's plan for His people, and those who can't endure this part of it miss out on God's best.

The Bible is constantly urging Christians to look at life long range. Job is the greatest example of patience because he was able to endure and persevere. He did not give up even though all the evidence seemed to support that he should. He had the fruit of patience, and held on to see a happy ending to a very difficult story. All's well that ends well is the message, and all is guaranteed to end well for those who wait on the Lord, and never give up, but let patience be their guide.

Dr. Wilhelm DeNejs heads the Services for the Blind in Santa Anna, California. He helps blind people learn that by patient perseverance they can do what they never dreamed possible. He even

helped an electrician who became blind continue his vocation of wiring new houses. He had to learn how to tell the difference between black and white wires by touch. It was a slow process but he finally gained enough confidence so he could do the job as fast as a sighted person.

Dr. DeNejs had good reason to believe in the possibility of achieving the seemingly impossible by patient plodding. He lived in Indonesia when Sukarno came to power, and was determined to kill all of the royal blood line, and he was in that line. He and his wife had to flee in a canoe at night to Singapore. They had to get to the Netherlands where their five children were in school. He spoke at a local Rotary Club, and told of his plan to drive his Tempo to Holland, and then get to the U. S. where he could aid those who lost their rights. He was not blind but he had lost much of his vision. An executive in the audience from Shell Oil Company was moved, and gave him the use of his credit card for his journey.

Fifty miles out of Singapore the road ended, and they had to drive over open fields. They got stuck and needed to get farmers to pull them out. They came to rivers with no bridges, and he would have to take the engine out, put it on the roof of the car, and he and his wife would push the car across the river. Sometimes friendly natives would build a raft for them to float the car across. They often had to clean the road of debris and underbrush, but they made it to Pakistan, and then across India. It got so cold in the Khyber Pass going into Afghanistan they had to drain the water out of the radiator at night, and wait until the water thawed again the next morning to put it back in.

They got through Iran and Iraq, but at the Syrian border they were denied entrance. What a blow! But as they sat there praying for an answer, a stranger came to the window of the car and said, "just wait here, tomorrow or the next day, or soon, a sandstorm will come. No one will be able to see you and you can drive across the border. No one will risk coming after you, for these sandstorms can kill a camel.

So they waited, and waited, and waited, and finally it came. The sand began to blow and the guards retreated into their guard house. DeNejs could not see, but he had the car pointed in the right direction, and so he started the car and drove straight ahead. He drove quite a way across the border, and then stopped to wait out the storm. When they could see again, the road was covered by sand. They just followed signs, like dead camels caught in the storm, and kept going across the desert. They had to drink water out of the car radiator to survive. In Yugoslavia they tipped over into a ditch, and it took seven days to repair the car. The doors were tied on with wire, and the motor was coughing and missing as they crossed the Austrian Alps, but they made it into the beautiful green hills and valleys of Germany.

They made it to the factory where their Tempo had been made, and their story so impressed the manager, he repaired their car without charge. From then it was smooth riding to the Netherlands, and to the waiting arms of their happy children. Six months and 20,000 miles of hardships were behind them. When asked what kept them going DeNejs said, "We believed deeply that if we had the patience and faith, nothing was impossible. We had faith in our Lord." It is the fruit of patience that keeps people from giving up when it seems hopeless.

Joseph had to endure the pit and the prison before he got to the palace. Without patience he would have given up and stopped pursuing his dream. This can happen to God's people when they go through tough times and that is why we read in Heb. 6:11-12, "We want each of you to show this

same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised." Only those with the fruit of patience will be able to hang in there until the story has a happy ending.

Charles Jefferson in his book, *The Character of Jesus*; points out that Jesus had to the superlative degree both aspects of patience. Patience is one word, but it is like many stars that look like one star, but which are really two. Double stars are very common, and so are words that have double meanings. Patience is an example. It means, says Jefferson, both-a calm waiting for something hoped for, and the unruffled endurance of pain and trouble. The two are different. In the first case patience is waiting for what is hoped for with nothing to endure but the time it takes for the goal to be achieved. In the second case there is the need for endurance and perseverance for there are many obstacles to be overcome.

Love is the key fruit out of which all the others grow. But love does not always get a positive response. If love only lasts until people who are loved become unlovely, then love is a very flimsy foundation. Love needs patience to last. When only one of ten lepers came back to thank Jesus for the healing, He had every reason to be tempted to give up on healing the sick. Many of us may have said I have had it with these ungrateful wretches. They deserve to be the outcasts of society. I am not going to be giving out miracles so freely from now on. But Jesus did not give this response, but just patiently went about doing good even if people were not responding with gratitude. He continued to love because His love was linked with patience, which makes love last and not give up. Anybody can be loving for awhile, but no virtue is of great value, even love, if it does not last, but is only temporary. Virtues only become Christ like when they last, and become persistent in the face of obstacles. This is only possible when they are linked with patience.

The fruit of patience is what makes every virtue a Christian virtue. Christian virtues are those that last, and do not disappear when there are obstacles and opposition. You cannot eliminate any one of the fruits, for they hang together like grapes on the vine and the removal of any one of them spoils the whole cluster. None of the fruits can be truly Christian without this fruit of patience, for if they do not last they are virtues that any pagan can have for a time. It is impossible for us to have these fruits all the time, and that is why we need the Holy Spirit, for they are not produced by human resources but by the resource that only God can provide. They are fruits of the Spirit.

Jesus could only respond as He did to life's trials because He was filled with the Spirit. Chuck Swindoll in his book, *Laugh Again*, writes,

"How could any man be as patient as He was? How could He keep His cool under constant fire? How could He demonstrate so much grace, so much compassion, and at the same time so much determination? And when faced with the Pharisees' continued badgering and baiting, how could he restrain Himself from punching their lights out? As a man, He had all the emotions we have as human beings. What was it that gave Him the edge we so often lack? It was His attitude. To return to Webster's words, He acted and felt as He did because of His "disposition," His "mental set." You only get this mental set by having the long range perspective of the mind of God.

The essence of Christian theology is this-if God is love, then in the final analysis all that is right and good will win, and, therefore, we must not fight evil with evil, but overcome evil with good. This means the Christian does not have to win every battle to confident he will win the war. If evil is strong and they have to suffer at the hands of evil people, they do not sink to their level, but respond with love-the kind of love that Paul says in his great love chapter of I Cor.13, has as it's first characteristic that it is patient. That is, it looks at the long run, and recognizes that the only wise response to evil is love, for it will always have the last word.

Three of the greatest personalities of the New Testament-Jesus, Stephen, and Paul illustrate the patience of love in the most trying of circumstances. Jesus on the cross said, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." Stephen is being stoned by an angry mob and he prays, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." Paul's patience was tried by believers who failed him. He writes in II Tim.4:16, "At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them." How could they all be so forgiving? Because they had the fruit of patience. They had the ability to endure and put with the weakness and folly of human nature, because they knew, in the long run, all such weakness will not prevent the victory of God's love.

You can put up with a lot when you are assured the negative stuff will not win in the end. Patience is what makes you able to live in this fallen world, and still have love, joy, and peace, and all the other fruits of the Spirit.

Able to suffer without complaining,
To be misunderstood without explaining;
Able to give without receiving,
To be ignored without any grieving;
Able to ask without commanding,
To love despite misunderstanding;
Able to turn to the Lord for guarding,
Able to wait for his own rewarding.

Author unknown

Dr. A. B. Simpson may sound too Pollyanna in his little poem, but this is what Christian patience is all about.

Wait, and every wrong will righten;
Wait, and every cloud will brighten,
If you will only wait.

This does not mean the Christian never takes action to fight evil. It means he never uses evil means, but waits for the power of God to overcome evil. It is an optimism that says, I will always chose the way of love, for in the end love will always win.

Paul makes it clear in Rom.12 there are many commands impossible to obey without the fruit of patience.

In verse12, "Be joyful in hope patient in affliction."

In verse 14, "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse."

In verse 17, "Do not repay anyone evil for evil."

In verse 19, "Do not take revenge."

In verse 20, "If your enemy is hungry, feed him, if he is thirsty, give him something to drink."

In verse 21, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

Paul takes the Sermon on the Mount very seriously, and he expects the average Christian to live it. But how is it possible to not be overcome by evil? Evil men crucified Jesus and stoned Stephen to death. The point of Paul is not that you will never be defeated by evil people. The point is you must never let their philosophy and methods become yours. If you fight evil with the same spirit of hate and injustice, you have been overcome by evil. You are now in their camp using the weapons of hell rather than those of heaven.

The weapons of good often seem weak and inadequate compared to the violence of evil, but the Christian with patience will wait, and not give in to violence, for he is convinced the way of love will win in the end. It may seem impossible, and to the flesh it is, but to the Spirit who produces the fruit of patience it is the key to victory.

O God of the impossible!
Since all things are to Thee
But soil in which Omnipotence
Can work almightily,

Each trial may to us become
The means that will display
How o'er what seems impossible
Our God hath perfect sway!

The very storms that beat upon
Our little barque so frail,
But manifest thy power to quell
All forces that assail.

The things that are to us too hard,
The foes that are too strong,
Are just the very ones that may
Awake a triumph song.

O God of the impossible,
When we no hope can see,
Grant us the faith that still believes
ALL possible to Thee!
Author unknown

In the simplest language I can come up with, I define patience as the deep conviction that it can never be wrong to be Christ like, and it can never be right to be un-Christlike. If I chose to be Christ like and I suffer for it, I will still be the winner, for I please God. It is a no lose choice to be like Jesus, and never cease making that choice when all the natural emotions are screaming, get back, get

even, and get violent.

George Horne says, "Patience strengthens the spirit, sweetens the temper, stifles anger, extinguishes envy, subdues pride, bridles the tongue, restrains the hand, and tramples on temptation." In other words, it is the key to being like Jesus. Christians almost always fall and fail because of a lack of patience. Adam and Eve could not wait to learn why it was in their best interest not to eat of the forbidden fruit. Their impatience was the beginning of sin. Sarah could not wait for God to keep His promise, and so she gave Hagar to her husband to produce a child. The result of this impatience has been a history of violence between the Arabs and Jews. Moses could have obeyed God and spoken to the rock to get water, but he impatiently struck it, and lost his chance to go into the promised land. David was filled with sexual lust, which by its very nature is impatient for satisfaction, and made the biggest mistake of his life for himself and his family.

The record goes on and on, for Satan knows he can win a lot of battles if he can get God people to be impatient. When you want something very strongly right now, you can count on it, Satan has a foot in the door of your life, and you are open to suggestion to make foolish choices. There is a right time for everything under the sun, but if Satan can get you to jump the gun he knows he has the battle won. Once the power of patience is turned off, every other virtue becomes weakened.

In the movie Jurassic Park, the elaborate control system to keep the dangerous creatures safely confined was turned off. The result was the Tyrannosaurus Rex was able to break loose and turn the paradise into a devils island. The point of the movie was, without absolute assurance of control man cannot live in the same environment with dangerous creatures of violence, and, therefore, the whole idea had to be abandoned.

God did not abandon the project of saving the world, however, and making it into a part of the eternal paradise. Instead, He provided a Savior to atone for the sin of man. Then He gave the Holy Spirit to provide a control system whereby the beast in man could be restrained. That is what the fruits of the Spirit are all about. By their power every evil tendency in man's nature can be restrained. The last one of the nine is self-control, and that final link in this chain of Christlikeness is reached by means of the fourth fruit we are looking at, which is patience.

You do not build a control system overnight. Rome was not built in a day, nor were the Roman Christians. It took a lot of teaching, training, commitment, and trial and error, just as it does for any of us to become Christ like. If the Christian gives up and ceases to grow because they lack the patience to persevere, they will stay as babes in Christ, and be underdeveloped Christians the rest of their lives. The world is filled with Christians who stopped praying because their prayers were not answered. The world is filled with Christians who stopped giving because they did not get rich, as some preacher told them they would. The world is filled with Christians who do not go to church because they were bored, or did not understand, or were not treated the way they felt they should have been. What is the basic problem of all these discouraged Christians in the world? Impatience! It takes time to develop any skill or relationship. The Christian life is a process, and those who demand that it be a finished product handed to them like a Bible are setting themselves up for failure.

We can learn a lesson from the American soldiers who were taken prisoners in the Viet-Nam war, and kept in the infamous Hanoi Hilton. Most of them were flyers who had to endure this setting for

3 to 5 years, and some as long as 9 years. Those endless months of monotony and loneliness could have driven them crazy, but someone started the idea that they were in the university of North Viet-Nam, and they were there to improve their future. Some began to learn a foreign language. Others played on imaginary instruments using their memory of strings and key boards. One group put together a Bible from a composite of all the verses they could remember, and then memorized that Bible together. One officer played golf in his imagination, and returned to the U.S. and became a tournament-level competitor. The point is, they made a choice to either grieve about their mess and give up in despair, or have hope there would a bright future, and patiently began to plan for it by pursuing some goal that would prepare them for that future.

They could not control their circumstances or their environment, but they had the choice of being impatient and thus depressed, or of being patient and building something positive for the future. This is the spirit Christians need to keep growing when they find it easier just to give up and stay at the level where they are. One of the most beautiful things in the world is an old Christian who still loves to learn. That is patience on display. Robert Schuller, a fairly old Christian himself, speaks these words of wisdom that represents that which is experienced by many pastors-

Don't try to rush God.
Mountains don't move overnight.
Give God time to work miracles,
I have seen God dissolve resentments,
resolve frustrations,
fill lonely hearts with new love,
and wash away hurts like a new wave
washes away scars on sand
scratched by children's sticks.
God can get you out of a rut,
onto a new road,
and over the mountain that seemed impassable,
if you will be patient.
I have seen God turn juvenile delinquents into great men,
criminals into good citizens,
alcoholics into church elders.

His point is, the present is never the end of the story. No matter how discouraging it seems now, God will have the final word, and we can wait for that victorious word if we let the Holy Spirit produce in us the fruit of patience.

V. THE FRUIT OF KINDNESS

Allen Emery, one of Billy Graham's associates tells of his experience as a boy back in 1937. He was travelling on a train with his father. One of the porters had a limp and was obviously in pain.

When they inquired about it, they learned he had an infected ingrown toenail. After breakfast Allen came back to his car and noticed the porter coming out of his parents room. He was crying, so Allen followed him to the men's lounge and sat down beside him. "Are you crying because your toe hurts?", he asked. "No," he said, " it is because of your daddy. Your daddy could see my toe was in pain and suggested that I let him lance it and clean it out." The porter explained what his father did, and he began to cry again. "Did it hurt that much?" Allen asked. "It didn't hurt at all and it feels fine now," he responded. "Then why are you crying?" Allen asked. Let me finish the story in Allen's own words. The porter made this reply-

Well, while he was dressing my toe, your daddy asked me if I loved the Lord Jesus. I told him my mother did but that I did not believe as she did. Then he told me that Jesus loved me and had died for me. As I saw your daddy carefully bandaging my foot, I saw a love that was Jesus' love and I knew I could believe it. We got down on our knees and we prayed and, now, I know I am important to Jesus and that He loves me.

With that he started crying again, happy and unashamed. When his sobs subsided, he earnestly burst out, "you know, boy, kindness can make you cry." I understood. I also understood that a living illustration like this can never be forgotten and the privilege of seeing such events is a responsibility of life.

One father, by bearing the fruit of kindness, led a man into the kingdom of God, and gave his son a lesson in love that changed his life forever as well.

Kindness is no wimp among the virtues. The reason we tend to think so is because it is a virtue that even pagans can manifest in a strong way. Paul, who makes a great deal of the importance of kindness in the Christian life, recognizes just how kind pagans can be. In Acts 28 when the storm wrecked the ship, and all were forced to swim for their lives to the island of Malta, we read in verse 2, "The islanders showed us unusual kindness. They built a fire and welcomed us all because it was raining and cold." In verse 7 we read, "there was an estate nearby that belonged to Publius, the chief official of the island. He welcomed us to his home and for three days entertained us hospitably." In verse 10 the story ends with these words, "they honored us in many ways and when we were ready to sail, they furnished us with the supplies we needed."

These pagan people treated Paul and Dr. Luke as kindly as they were ever treated by their Christian friends, and far more kindly than what they received from some Christians. This kind of competition has, instead of challenging the Christian to a higher level of kindness, led them to minimize its importance. It is embarrassing when a non-Christian is more kind than a Christian, and so to save face the Christian says it is no big deal to be kind. Kindness is just a natural gift of some personalities, they say, and so, even though it is nice, it is of no credit to anyone, anymore than it is to have blue eyes. Kindness is just the luck of the draw, and a matter of genetics, and should not be given much value as a Christian virtue. If my pagan neighbor is kinder than me, it is due to his or her heritage, and does not make them better than me. With this kind of rationalizing, Christians have been able to send kindness back to the minor leagues. The only problem is that the New Testament

stresses that kindness is a major league player. It has a contract with God to play on the highest level, and we can't fire it or push it out of the big leagues.

Paul settled this once and for all when he said in his great love song of I Cor.13, in verse 4, "love is kind." God-like love is kind. There is no escape from this fact, kindness is a primary virtue and part of the image of God in man. The fact that this image can still be reflected in non-Christians is no excuse to minimize it, but rather a reason to recognize that God's people should display it in its purest form. The non-Christian may beat you on the level of natural kindness of personality, but there is no kindness superior to that of the fruit of the Spirit kindness. This is not merely man produced, but it is God produced fruit.

Like all the other fruits this one too grows out of love. Jesus went about doing good and showing kindness to everyone in need because He loved people. It is hard to be kind if you do not love. It is easy if you do love, for love is kind by its very nature. This is where the Christian can compete and win, for the Christian filled with the Spirit can love his enemies and those who do not deserve love. This is not natural, but is the fruit of the Spirit.

If a Christian is not unusually kind he or she will not make much of an impression on the world, where people experience kindness from others whom they know are worldly. We need to make a commitment to magnify rather than minimize this fruit of kindness. Henry Frederic Amiel said, "Life is short and we have never too much time for gladdening the hearts of those who are traveling the dark journey with us. Oh, be swift to love, make haste to be kind!"

The opportunities to be kind are very numerous we can show kindness almost every day, and often several times a day. Seneca, the Roman philosopher, whose brother Gallio set Paul free in Acts18, said, "Wherever there is a human being, there is a chance for kindness." Paul was shown great kindness by his brother, and Paul was fully aware just how kind pagans could be. That is why he stresses that Christians be kind, for if they are not, they are less than the pagans they are trying to reach. In Col.3:12 he urges Christians, "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience." When a Christian gets up in the morning to dress for the day they are to put on kindness along with all else they wear. Ask yourself before you head off to work or to school or to wherever, did I put on my kindness? To walk out of your home unprepared to be kind to people who cross your path is to be unprepared to be a Christian. We should be as embarrassed to leave our kindness at home as we would be to leave our shoes or shirt.

You have seen the signs on the doors of many stores that say, no shirt, no shoes, no service. If Paul ran a restaurant his sign would say, no love, no kindness, no service. He would be embarrassed to see Christians running around with no kindness on. He sees kindness as one of the undergarments, for in Col.3:14 he sees love as the outer garment that covers all. He writes, "And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity." Paul is saying if you take off into your day not clothed with love and kindness you are practically naked, and will probably be a spiritual embarrassment before the day is over. Paul is not worried about you leaving home without your credit card, but he is saying of kindness, don't leave home without it.

How does a Christian dress? With the fruits of the Spirit. We are to cover the flesh with these fruits, so that, just as the defects of the body are covered by clothing, so the defects of our fleshly

nature are covered by these beautiful garments of the Spirit. You are what you wear in the spiritual life. If you wear these fruits you are Christ like.

The Greek word for kindness even sounds like Christ. The noun is Chrestotes, and the adjective is Chrestos. We are to wear Chrestotes to be Christ like. If we wear this garment we will be conspicuous for our courtesy in a world where rudeness is often the norm. Courteous language and behavior should characterize the Christian in the daily walk. Jesus said, "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for my yoke is chrestos..." Jesus is saying my yoke is kind. He does not make a yoke that is rough so that it cuts into the neck of the oxen as it plows. He makes His yokes smooth so they do not irritate. They are easy to wear and make the job easy. This is being kind and considerate, and that is the way Christians are to treat other people. We are to make life easier and more pleasant for all who cross our path.

The parable of the Good Samaritan is in such radical language that we seldom see the relevance of it for our daily living. We seldom to never see anyone laying in the road beaten, and so the message is lost on us. The point of the parable is not to be on the lookout for victims of robbers, but to recognize that anyone who is in need is your neighbor, and you are to love your neighbor as yourself. In other words, anyone God puts in your path is to be treated with kindness. Everyone has burdens, and they need encouragement. Do not add to their load by being inconsiderate and thoughtless. They get plenty of that in a day. The Christian is to be different, and to, by being kind, make an impression on them that somebody does care.

Many people who have troubles have brought them on themselves. Their anti-Christian life style has made their lives a mess. It is hard to be kind to people like this. That is why we need the fruit of the Spirit kindness that goes beyond the natural kindness of the human spirit. This natural kindness is precious, but it will not enable you to be Christ like when you confront those who do not deserve kindness. Listen to Jesus commanding the impossible in Luke 6:35, "But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because He is kind to the ungrateful and wicked."

When someone cuts you off, or grabs your parking place which you are waiting for, that is your opportunity to be a Christian. Anybody can say thanks and be kind when people are being nice. But the Christian is to be kind when others are being jerks and treating you badly. This does not mean you do not fight injustice and discrimination, but you do it with kindness toward your foes, even when they will reject that kindness, and respond with more negative behavior. This is a step up from the previous fruit of patience. Patience is passive and puts up with a lot, but kindness is more active and goes out of its way to return good for evil. Many Christians will endure those who wrong them, but they will not go the next step and be kind to them.

Peter Ainslie III, in his book, *Cultivating The Fruit Of The Spirit*, tells this historical example of the power of kindness.

When Robert Southey, once poet laureate of England, was a small boy, there was a Negro boy in the same neighborhood by the name of Jim. The white boys took great pleasure in calling him "nigger" and other degrading epithets, which always grieved Jim. One winter morning when the white boys had planned to go skating,

Southey found one of his skates broken. Remembering that Jim had a new pair of skates, he hurried over to Jim's house and asked him to loan him his skates, to which Jim readily agreed, saying, "Oh, yes, Robert, you can have them and welcome." After several hours he returned them and found Jim seated by the fire in the kitchen reading his Bible. Southey thanked him kindly, and as Jim took the skates from his hands, with tears in his eyes he said, "Robert, don't call me 'nigger' anymore." Southey burst into tears. Years afterward in telling the story he said that after that he never dropped into the practice of calling people uncomplimentary nicknames. Kindness in the heart of the Negro boy had conquered one who became foremost in English literature.

An angry unkind response to prejudice could have led Southey to become a bigot for the rest of his life, and to have influenced many others to follow. Kindness is no wimp in the arsenal of Christian weapons to fight evil. It is one of the big guns. Beth Robertson, in poetry says,

When I think of the charming people I know,
It's surprising how often I find
The chief of the qualities that make them so
Is just that they are kind.

Being kind is a matter of being aware of other people's feelings and needs. We get so self-centered that we are unaware of others needs, and so we fail to be kind. We are often unkind to those closest to us. We need to see that kindness is not just for our enemies, but for our loved ones as well. Paul stresses this in Eph.4:32, "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." The implication is, Christian people will rub each other the wrong way at times, and they will be rude and offensive. This is when it is a great temptation to respond in like manner. We need the fruit of the Spirit to overcome such temptation, and instead, be kind. When Christians act natural they are quenching the Spirit.

A Christian mother was shocked, when after a day of irritability, she heard her child pray at bedtime, "Dear God, make mommy be kind to us like she is to people we visit." Parents often forget the importance of kindness in raising their children. John Drescher in his book, Spirit Fruit, which is the best book available on the fruits of the Spirit, quotes many authorities. One is Dr. William Bede McGrath, Fellow of the American Psychiatric Association who said, "Ninety percent of all mental illness that comes before me could have been prevented, or could yet be cured, by simple kindness." Then he quotes Amy R. Raabe-

Scattered seeds of kindness
Everywhere you go;
Scatter bit of courtesy-
Watch them grow and grow.
Gather buds of friendship;
Keep them till full-blown.
You will find more happiness
Than you have ever known.

Your own happiness, as well as that of others, is wrapped up in this fruit of kindness. Fruit is not only good for physical health, it is also essential for spiritual health.

Charlie Shedd, in his marriage enrichment material, has been telling couples for decades that one of the keys to a happy marriage is the kindness of complimenting your mate every day. John Drescher saw this strategy work even in the work place. He tells of the secretary who went to work for an executive who was notorious for his critical spirit. He kept a secretary for about two months at best. She needed this job bad, and though it was torture to endure him, she decided to move up the next step from patience to kindness. She decided she would pay the old goat a compliment every day. It was not easy, but every day she found some little thing to compliment him about. They were simple things like, "That is nice material in your suit sir." It took time, but his hard heart softened, and this secretary by kindness made him a lovable enough man to marry. He became her husband, not just her boss, by the power of kindness.

Frederick William Faber, author of many hymns like, Faith Of Our Fathers and There's A Wideness In God's Mercy, made this powerful statement-

Kind words are the music of this world. They have a power which seems to be beyond natural causes, as if they were some angel's song which had lost its way and come to earth. It seems as if they could almost do what in reality God alone can do-soften the hard and angry hearts of men. No one was ever directed by a sarcasm-crushed, perhaps, if the sarcasm was clever enough, but drawn nearer to God, never..... Kindness has converted more sinners than zeal, eloquence, or learning.

Not every one can be eloquent or learned, but everyone can be kind, and by kindness change lives. You will experience a lot of failure in life, but none will revolve around kindness. C. R. Gibben wrote-

I have wept in the night for the shortness
of sight
That to somebody's need made me blind;
But I never have yet felt a twinge of
regret
For being a little too kind.

Someone defined a Christian as one who makes it easy for others to believe in God. The most likely way to do this is by displaying the fruit of kindness.

Is anybody happier
Because you passed his way?
Does anyone remember
That you spoke to him today?
This day is almost over,
And its toiling time is through;
Is there anyone to utter now,

A friendly word for you?

Can you say tonight in passing,
With the day the slipped so fast,
That you helped a single person
Of the many that you passed?
Is a single heart rejoicing,
Of what you did or said?
Does one whose hopes were fading
Now with courage look ahead?

Did you waste the day or lose it?
Was it well or poorly spent?
Did you leave a trail of kindness,
Or a scar of discontent?
Author unknown

Mr. and Mrs. Grayson are missionaries in Nigeria, Africa. One day he lost control of his car and went into the ditch. It was up to the hub caps in mud. He knew he would have walk eight miles to the nearest town to get help, and Mrs. Grayson would have to wait in the car. She said it would be okay, but she was fearful. Darkness was coming, and she was soon hearing all kinds of strange noises. Then she heard voices. She flicked on the headlights and saw two men coming toward the car. They asked her who she was. She told them and they left. But shortly she heard voices again. The two men had come back with two women caring blankets and bundles of wood. They spread the blankets out, and started a fire. They invited her to join them. They were so friendly she got out and sat with them. They talked of all kinds of things, and then she asked them why they came to keep her company.

One of the men smiled and said, "we have been waiting three years to do something for you. Three years ago your husband drove through our village, and when he saw that my little daughter was ill he took her to the mission hospital. She was there a long time, but they saved her life. We have waited three years to thank him. We would be happy to sit with that good man's wife, and keep her company all night if necessary." They were showing kindness because they had been deeply touched by an act of kindness.

People who do not grasp the theology of Christianity can easily grasp its love when they see it displayed in acts of kindness. Instead of thinking of kindness as a minor virtue, we need to exalt it to the level where the Bible puts it-a vital ingredient to being Christ like. William Penn, the Christian founder of Pennsylvania, has been quoted often for these words of wisdom, "I expect to pass through life but once. If therefore, there be any kindness I can show, or any good thing I can do to any fellow being, let me do it now, and not defer or neglect it, as I shall not pass this way again." Let this be your daily prayer as you dress each morning, Lord, help me put on this day, and for your glory display the fruit of kindness.

VI. THE FRUIT OF GOODNESS

A young boy had been sent to his room for bad behavior. After awhile he emerged and told his mother he had thought it over and prayed about it. "That's wonderful", said the mother. "If you ask God He will help you be good." The boy responded, "But I didn't ask God to help me be good, I asked Him to help you put up with me." This little guy discovered the path of least resistance. He realized life would be easier if others would just change in relation to him. Let's face it, life would be easier for all of us if people would just tolerate our weaknesses, and put up with our shortcomings. In other words, if everybody else had the fruit of the Spirit we would not have to bother being good. Somebody would have to remain as a pain to give others an opportunity to exercise their fruits.

But since this fantasy is never going to be a reality, the Christian needs to face the fact that goodness is not an option, but an absolute necessity. It is impossible to be Christ like without goodness, the sixth fruit of the Spirit. The subject of goodness is so vast in the Bible it would take hours just to read all of the texts. I counted in my concordance 77 different words and word combinations dealing with the theme of goodness. It is overwhelming to try and convey the significance of this material in one message, but let's begin by seeing that goodness begins in the very nature of God. His goodness is linked to His love, as are all of the fruits.

The only reason there is a relationship between God and man is because God is good. In Psalm 25:7-8 we read, "Remember not the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways; according to your love remember me, for you are good, O Lord. Good and upright is the Lord; therefore, He instructs sinners in His ways." We see the goodness of God is what makes Him care about sinners and their forgiveness, and their guidance into the truth. Why do we have a Savior? Because God is good. Why do we have a Bible? Because God is good. Why do we have the church for fellowship and encouragement? Because God is good. All the gifts and blessings we have, we have because God is good. If He was only Holy He would have destroyed the world long ago and started over. But God is good, and goodness is love reaching out to give a helping hand to those who cannot make it on their own. The Good Samaritan was good because he helped a man survive who would not have without his help.

Psalm 34:8 says, "Taste and see that the Lord is good." Over and over the Bible says the Lord is good, and He expects His people to reflect that goodness in the world. Hannah Whitall Smith, famous for her book *The Christian's Secret Of A Happy Life*, tells of her discovery of the goodness of God in her other book, *The God Of All Comfort*. She writes, "I shall never forget the hour when I first discovered that God was really good. I had, of course, always known that the Bible said He was good, but I had thought it only meant He was religiously good; and it had never dawned on me that it meant He was actually and practically good, with the same kind of goodness He has commanded us to

have. The expression, "The goodness of God," had seemed to me nothing more than a sort of heavenly statement, which I could not be expected to understand. And then one day I came in my reading of the Bible across the words, "O taste and see that the Lord is good," and suddenly they meant something. The Lord is good, I repeated to myself. What does it mean to be good? What but this, the living up to the best and highest that one knows. To be good is exactly the opposite of being bad. To be bad is to know the right and not to do it, but to be good is to do the best we know. And I saw that, since God is omniscient, He must know what is the best and highest good of all, and that therefore His goodness must necessarily be beyond question. I can never express what this meant to me. I had such a view of the real actual goodness of God that I saw nothing could possibly go wrong under His care, and it seemed to me that no one could ever be anxious again. And over and over, when appearances have been against Him, and when I have been tempted to question whether He had not been unkind, or neglectful, or indifferent, I have been brought up short by the words, "The Lord is good"; and I have seen that it was simply unthinkable that a God who was good could have done the bad things I had imagined."

Bad things happen to good people all the time in this fallen world, but not because God wills it. He, in fact, forbids it, and no one is guiltless who does a bad thing against his neighbor. Jesus went about doing good, and never did a bad thing to anyone. He did have severe words of judgement for the Pharisees, who had perverted the truth of God. They were such religious people, but they were not good. No amount of religion, learning, ritual, or legalistic law keeping is worth a hill of beans if it does not make you good. Jesus blasted all religion that failed the test of goodness. If people are not made good by their faith, their faith is no good. God is good, and what is not good is not of God. That is Biblical theology in a nutshell, and this is to be our guide for evaluating all movements and ideas-are they good?

Before Paul's conversion he was a very religious man. He was learned in the Old Testament law. He was scrupulous in his obedience to the legalistic system of the Pharisees. He was zealous in his promotion of the Jewish faith. Paul had all you could ask for in a religious person, it would seem. He had it all except for one thing, he was not good. He was cruel and hard hearted, and he hurt and killed people who would not conform to his convictions. When he surrendered to Christ as Lord of his life, he had all the virtues he had before, but now he was also a good man. He never again hurt another person for not conforming to his convictions. He did not persecute the Jews as he did Christians. He did good to them as he sought to persuade them that Jesus was their Messiah. He devoted a good part of his ministry to doing good to the Jews in Jerusalem. Paul was converted from being a radically religious man to being a good man in Christ.

The Greek word for goodness is AGATHOSUNE, and Paul is the only one who uses this word in

the New Testament. His vocabulary was converted along with his heart, and he had a special love for the fruit of goodness. Paul was converted to Christ and to goodness all at the same time, but not all Christians have this conversion. All are saved by faith in Christ, but they are not good. Many still have prejudices that make them mean spirited toward certain people. The letters of Paul, that comprise almost half of the New Testament, are basically his efforts to get Christians to be good-to be good to one another; to be good to the lost; to be good citizens, and to, like Jesus, go about doing good.

The greatest weakness in Christian history is Christians who are not good. Their love for the Bible and for Jesus are not questioned, but they fail to manifest the fruit of the Spirit in relationship to others, and therefore, they are not good Christians, because they are not good. You can be saved by grace yet still live in the flesh, and therefore, not be a good person. A lot of New Testament Christians were not good people. They were prejudiced against either Jews or Gentiles. They were envious and jealous. They developed a party spirit that divided the church. They were power hungry and fought against Paul to get fame and control. Just about every sin you can imagine was a part of the life of New Testament Christians. They were saved but not yet good. Goodness must be a goal for all believer's if they intend to be true disciples of Jesus.

God's goodness saves us. Our goodness does not. Our goodness is a fruit which the Holy Spirit grows in us, when we surrender to Him. If a Christian is not good, it does not mean he or she is not saved. It means they are choosing to live in the flesh, and not surrendering to the Spirit. Carnal Christians are saved, but not yet good, because they quench the Spirit and live in the flesh. A Spirit led Christian will go about doing good, as Jesus did. Goodness is love in action. It is that which makes Christianity practical, so all can see its value. It makes people good so they are beneficial to society. These are the people who seek to counteract the evils of society. They are the foundation for what used to be called the Social Gospel-the efforts to fight off the social evils that damage and destroy the happiness of people.

Being good does not save anyone, only Christ can do that as they trust Him as their Savior. This led many Christians to oppose the Social Gospel for decades, and some still do, forgetting that the good that Jesus did, also, did not save anyone. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, and did many good things for people that did not save them. But it did lead some to get saved because they could tell He really cared about their needs. Love like this convinced them He was one they could trust. But many took His good deeds and rejected Him. So being good, or doing good, does not guarantee people will be changed in any long range way. If you refuse to do good because of this, you are living in the flesh and not the Spirit, for the Spirit is Christ like, and does good because good is the thing to do, whether it leads people to respond properly or not. Goodness does not say, "I'll be good only if I can see the payoff." That is not true goodness, but hypocrisy.

I read of a small town pharmacist who always closed up his drugstore on Sunday, because he believed in keeping Sunday as a Christian Sabbath. But as we all know, sickness does not take weekends off, and so people get sick and need medicine on Sunday. He did not hesitate to open up and fill prescriptions on Sunday. Once a father needed a prescription filled on Sunday for his sick daughter, and after he got it he said to the Pharmacist, "Thank you, now you can go home and get back to keeping the Sabbath." "Oh no!" said the Pharmacist, as he handed the man his medicine. "This is keeping the Sabbath!" That is the spirit of Jesus, who healed on the Sabbath. This made the legalists mad at Him, but Jesus taught by his actions that what matters to God is that we be channels

of His goodness in this world.

The reason behind the Sabbath was the goodness of God. He was giving man a break from the toils of life for his health and happiness. It was a day meant for the good of man, and if you could add to their health and happiness by some act of goodness, it was pleasing to Him. God was concerned about goodness, not legalistic conformity. The Pharisees were very religious and they obeyed a lot of rules, but they were not pleasing to God because they lacked goodness.

Barnabas received one of the greatest compliments that can be given to a Christian in Acts 11:24, where it says, "He was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and faith." Barnabas was the man who befriended Paul when all others were afraid of him. He sought him out and gave him a chance to preach in Antioch. He helped Paul get into the ministry of building the church. One good man showing that goodness to a former enemy helped change the course of history for the glory of God. Shakespeare said, "How far that little candle throws his beam! So shines a good deed in a naughty world."

In the day of judgement the words all of us are going to want to hear are, "Well done, good and faithful servant.!" We will not long to hear famous servant, popular servant, rich servant, but good and faithful servant. What matters to God is that we are good and faithful. No matter what else you are, if you are not good and faithful, you are living in the flesh and not producing the fruits of the Spirit.

In Matt. 25, Jesus tells the parable of the Sheep and the Goats, which defines what he had in mind by goodness. Those rewarded are those who fed the hungry and gave the thirsty to drink. They showed hospitality to strangers and clothed the needy. They cared for the sick and visited the lonely in prison. In other words, like Jesus, they went about doing good. A good person is simply one who recognizes the world is full of hurting people, and goes about seeking to relieve that hurt where they can. Christians are to be involved in all effort to relieve the suffering of this world. That is the essence of goodness.

How our lives would please the Savior
If we only understood,
What He seeks in our behavior
Is a love for doing good.

On a tombstone in Shrewsbury, England, these words are engraved-

For the Lord Jesus Christ's sake
Do all the good you can
To all the people you can
In all the ways you can
As long as ever you can.

That is to display the fruit of goodness. Like all the other fruits of the Spirit, this one too, is based on the conviction that good will win the war with evil, and in the end all goodness will survive forever, and all that is bad will perish forever.

Goodness is to be a part of our very being. It is not like a bulb we hang on the Christmas tree, but it is to be like one of its branches—a very part of the tree itself. People can do good deeds and not be good people. A Mafia boss can write out a check to help someone out of a jam, but they may have gotten that money by acts that hurt other people. That good act does not make him a good person. Goodness, in order to be truly Christ like, has to grow out of agape love, which is a love that cares about all people and not just those that please you. It is other-centered and not self-centered. It is doing good for the other not just because it makes you feel good to be doing good. The Pharisees wanted to be seen of men and get credit for their good acts. Jesus never did a good act for self glory. Dr. Martineau gives us the gist of the different levels of good. He writes—"To get good is animal; to do good is human; to be good is divine." It is this third level that is the fruit of the Spirit. It incorporates doing good and getting good, but it has its origin in being good, which can only come from God.

This is what Jesus was conveying to the Rich Young Ruler. All three of the Synoptic Gospels record these words of Jesus, which he said to him when he called Jesus good teacher. Jesus responded, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone." Was Jesus denying that He was good? No!, He was saying that if you see good in me recognize from whence it comes. It is no mere human virtue. Goodness is a part of God's nature, and if you see it in me, acknowledge that it is of God. The goodness of Jesus was due to His being filled with the Holy Spirit, and allowing his human nature to be controlled by His divine nature. He could have chosen to yield to the temptation of Satan, but he chose, instead, to be loyal to God. The point is nobody is good, not even Jesus, without the Spirit of God. God is the source of all true goodness, and His Spirit alone can produce it in us.

You and I cannot live the Christian life in the flesh. The Son of God Himself could not do it. Jesus could only be good by being filled with the Spirit. He was the perfect man, not by the power of His flesh, but by the power of the Spirit. We need to see this and recognize that we too need to be filled with the Spirit if we expect to produce the fruit of the Spirit, and especially the fruit of goodness.

VII. THE FRUIT OF FAITHFULNESS

Andrew Carnegie was the richest man in the world at the beginning of the 20th century. His life illustrated both the positive and negative sides of the fruit of faithfulness. You would think that faithfulness would always be positive, but the fact is, every virtue can be a vice if it is linked to the wrong value system. Even love can be a vice, for as Paul says, the love of money is the root of all evil. Carnegie had a love for money that made him faithful to his goal of becoming rich. He ruthlessly underpaid his steel workers, and made them work 12 hours a day 7 days a week. His labor practices led to one of the bloodiest strikes in labor history. In the town of Homestead, Pa. 14 people were killed and 163 were seriously injured in that strike.

Carnegie made 40 million dollars in profit in the year 1900, because he was faithful to his commitment to become rich. But once he became the richest man in the world, he changed his whole perspective and decided it would be a disgrace to die rich. He decided to give his fortune back to society. He found he could not give it away fast enough, for it was growing so rapidly, so he formed the Carnegie Corporation Foundation. 90% of his fortune was given away, and 3,000 libraries were endowed. 350 million dollars were given away, and when he died in 1919 he had just 30 million left, and 20 million of that went to the Carnegie Foundation for educational purposes. The other 10 million went to family and relatives.

Here was a man faithful in making a fortune, and faithful in giving it away. His faithfulness was a burden to some and a blessing to others. Thus, we see the dual nature of this virtue which can also be a vice. The Pharisees were faithful to the law, and refused to forsake their legalism, even in the face of the miracles of Jesus. People can be faithful to cults, cruel leaders, and every form of evil you can imagine. I read of how even animal faithfulness can be a problem. Jonathan Daniels was a newspaper man who covered the races. The one that stands out in his mind is a race between 5 camels. It was at a Carolina carnival. It was an unusual race and people all over the state were betting on the outcome. But bookies noticed that Arabs were putting all their money on the camel named Ben Ali. They watched the race with eagle eyes for any sign of dirty work.

The race seemed to be fairly run, and all jockies pressed their mounts with equal fervor and determination. Yet Ben Ali was the easy winner. Daniels interviewed some Arabs and asked why they put all their money on Ben Ali, and one of them explained with a grin. "Ben Ali is what is known in our country as a bell camel. From the day of their birth all other camels are taught to follow the bell camel." These Arabs were not gambling at all. It was a sure thing, for they knew the other camels would be faithful to their training, and never pass up the bell camel.

What you don't know can hurt you. That is why it is important to recognize the paradox that virtues can be vices if they are focused on the wrong values. Faithfulness is not a fruit of the Spirit if it is not directed toward the revealed will of God. There are people who are faithful to their commitment to get drunk every weekend, or faithful to their commitment to play poker every Saturday night. You and I can be faithful to buy our gas at the same station every week, or where only brand of shoes for life, or a thousand and one other things. This is not necessarily either good or bad, but it is not the fruit of the Spirit.

The fruit of the Spirit, which is faithfulness, is an absolute loyalty to Jesus Christ regardless of the cost. Jesus put it plainly to the Christians in Smyrna in Rev.2:10, "Do not be afraid of what you about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for 10 days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life." Faithfulness means a lot to Jesus, and He will greatly reward it. This is the fruit that took Him all the way to the cross. He could have been the world's greatest teacher, healer, and miracle worker, and still have failed to be our Savior had He not been faithful even to the point of death.

When John saw into the future, this was one of his visions in Rev.19:11, "I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider was called Faithful and True." This is a name Jesus will wear forever. He never forsook the plan of God even though the cost was beyond calculation. You can count on Jesus when He says I will never leave you or forsake you, for He is absolutely faithful. And this is what He expects from His disciples. Christians are to be people you

can count on because they are faithful to their commitments.

I John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive our sins...." What does this mean? It means you can count on Christ to be consistent. He will not be moody, one day forgiving you, and the next day saying tough luck. The book of Hebrews calls Jesus a faithful high priest. He would not let you down by inconsistencies. He is dependable. And He is greatly pleased when His disciples are also dependable. In the great and final war against evil, we read this description of those on the winning side in Rev.17:14, "They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because He is Lord of lords and King of kings-and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers."

The highest compliment the New Testament can give to a Christian is that they are faithful. It will be the greatest reward to hear Jesus say in the day of judgement, "well done thou good and faithful servant." Paul could give no higher recommendation than to say one was faithful. He writes in I Cor.4:17, "I am sending to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord." In Eph.6:21 he writes, "Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord will tell you everything...." Paul could not have accomplished what he did without the help of faithful servants. Many forsook Paul and did not have the fruit of faithfulness, but the few who were faithful help him change all of history. One of the things that Paul was most grateful for was that Jesus considered him to be faithful. He writes in I Tim.1:12, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful appointing me to His service."

This brings us back to the paradox of faithfulness and to another aspect of it-the good side of bad faithfulness. Paul had bad faithfulness before he was converted. He was a faithful fanatical Pharisee who would persecute fellow Jews who became Christians. He was not about to forsake his faithful commitment to salvation by works of the law. His faithfulness to Judaism made him a very cruel and dangerous man, thus, illustrating again, just how bad a thing faithfulness can be. It is a force behind all hatred, bigotry, and prejudice. But here is the good side of bad faithfulness. If a person is faithful to their values, even if they are wrong and perverted values, they have the potential, as Paul did, of becoming faithful to right and true values. The point is, if Paul had been a rotten Pharisee, who was breaking his own laws and being unfaithful to his commitments as a legalist, he would not have been a good candidate for an Apostle of Christ. It was his faithfulness to his wrong convictions that made him a good candidate for one who would be faithful to right convictions.

We need to see with the eyes of Christ as we look at the lost. We tend to say a certain person is so committed to his materialism that he would never be interested in the things of the Spirit. She is so loyal to her social organization she would never be interested in church things. We forget the good side of bad faithfulness, which is, it can become good faithfulness if it is converted and directed toward the service of Christ. The best servants of the Lord are often those who were the best servants of the devil. People who are faithful to folly can become people who are faithful to wisdom. That is why we need to see the faithfulness of sinners to their value system as potential values for the kingdom of God. Jesus saw this potential in Paul, and that is why a man so faithful to the law became the Apostle so faithful to love.

Unfortunately not all faithfulness gets a lot of attention or reward in this life. Some of the people Paul commends as faithful are obscure persons. The world is full of Christians who are faithful, and

by their attendance, giving, and service keep the church alive and well. They are often taken for granted because they are faithful. You don't have to worry or wonder about them. They just faithfully do their thing as members of the body, and like the glands of the physical body they are crucial for health, but they are seldom given a lot of thought. But the very nature of faithfulness is that it does the job needed regardless of the recognition. If you only serve the Lord to be seen of men, Jesus says you are like the Pharisees. You may get your reward, which is recognition from men, but you will receive none from God.

The true test of faithfulness is, will you do what you are gifted to do for the body of Christ even if you are seldom to never thanked for it. It is not much of a virtue to keep doing what you are rewarded for doing. Even animals learn a lot of tricks because they are rewarded for their acts. This natural faithfulness is not bad at all. It gives us a lot of pleasure, and it is a part of good education. Rewarding is a good thing, but faithfulness is that virtue that says reward or not, recognition or not, I am going to do what pleases my Lord. I will be faithful.

This is a virtue that rises above the natural response of faithfulness to what gives you pleasure and reward. It is when you suffer calamity and great loss that this kind of faithfulness shows. Habakkuk reveals his faithfulness in Hab.3:17-18, "Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior." That is not natural-that is fruit of the Spirit faithfulness. A Christian who is only faithful when it pays off in some sort of reward is operating in the flesh. A non-Christian or even an animal can live on this level. But cut off the reward and seals will stop bouncing balls on their nose, whales will stop leaping over nets, lions will stop leaping through hoops, and the natural faithfulness of men will lead them to forsake the cause, whatever it is. Even the cause of Christ will be abandoned by Christians who operate in the flesh. Only those with the fruit of the Spirit faithfulness will continue to serve the Lord when the benefits cease, and there are only burdens to be carried.

The whole idea of taking up the cross and following Jesus is based on faithfulness. Cross-bearing is not for the unfaithful. They will abandon Christ at the point at which the burden is greater than the benefit. "Demas has forsaken me having loved this present world," said Paul of one of his unfaithful Christian servants. When the burdens of serving with Paul became greater than the benefits, he took off and went his own way. He was faithful only when it paid to be. This kind of natural faithfulness is not enough in any relationship of life. All relationships are tested, and the test is that they sometimes cost more than they pay. There is more pain than pleasure, and more burden than benefit.

The reason why Christians are into more divorces than ever before is because they are operating on the level of natural faithfulness. "As long as it pays off and there is more pleasure than pain, I will stick with the relationship. But when it costs emotional burdens to stick with it, I will be gone." It is natural to have these feelings, but the Christian is to operate on a higher level than the natural and overcome these feelings. When they do not do so by the fruit of the Spirit, they do the same things the non-Christian does. No relationship will escape the testing, and if Christians are not examples of faithfulness in all relationships, they will not be a very attractive witness to the power of the Gospel to change life. Faithfulness has no valid existence until it has to stick to a commitment when there is no pleasure in doing so. When there is only pleasure it is just self-satisfaction to be faithful. But when there is a burden to bear, and you are still faithful, that is fruit of the Spirit faithfulness. This is

what we see in Jesus as He went to the cross for us, and what we see in all relationships that survive the valleys of life. Our salvation and our security depend upon the faithfulness of Christ. Nothing could be secure if He was not faithful. And nothing in the Christians life can be secure if they are not faithful. All security is based on faithfulness.

Dr. Charles E. Fuller had one of the most fruitful radio ministries in history. It was called, The Old-Fashioned Revival Hour, and it covered 90% of the inhabited world. Without faithfulness it never would have gotten to this level. He and his wife lost their first child. Then her health failed and they were separated. Then a serious financial crunch involved them in a hard five year battle to recover. 12 years after their first child died they had another child that almost died. Added to all this trial, they were deserted by some of their closest friends in the church. How do you get through all that, and touch the world for God? The only way is by the fruit of faithfulness. He could have let any one of his trials stop him, but he didn't. He was faithful when there was only pain, and God rewarded him beyond what he could have ever dreamed.

Jesus will be ever faithful to us, but the question always is, will we be faithful to Him. Peter Ainslie writes,

"I shall never forget the time I saw Poynter's great picture "Faithful Unto Death." in the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool. There stood the Roman guard on duty while the palace was falling into ruins during the destruction of Herculaneum. The dead were lying in the background; others were falling to the pavement amid the red-hot eruptions of Vesuvius; everyone who could was fleeing for his life. The Roman guard might have made his escape, but there he stood like a marble statue, preferring to remain at his post faithful unto death. The picture clung to me like an individual--not simply the man standing at his post of duty but the expression of faithfulness that showed in his countenance. I have thought of it a hundred times since, and have felt its influence as I have felt that of a living person."

Even natural faithfulness can reach great heights, and be a powerful example, but to be faithful to our Lord in day to day living we need more than natural faithfulness. That too is a valuable asset, but to be all that God wants us to be we need the fruit of the Spirit faithfulness.

VIII. THE FRUIT OF GENTLENESS

Bill Hybels, the popular pastor of the Willow Creek Community Church, one of the fastest growing churches in America, admits that he is not a tender hearted person. By nature he is often cold, hardhearted, and indifferent to the hurting world around him. In his book *Who Are You When No One's Looking*, he tells of how he and his wife went to see the movie *Sophie's Choice*. It

was a heavy drama where Sophie had to decide which of her two children she would hand over to the Nazi officer, for sure incineration. He was thinking he would like another box of popcorn, but he noticed his wife was sobbing. She cried through the rest of the movie. As they walked to the car he knew it was no time to crack jokes. It was a day and a half later when she said to him, "I want to tell you why I was so upset at the movie. I was picturing having Todd in one arm and Shawn in the other, and having 30 seconds to choose which one was going to live and which one was going to die. How in the world could I ever make that choice?" Pastor Hybels did not understand that, for he did not get into the skin of the actor and feel the emotion. His wife did, and she identified with the emotional turmoil.

His wife is tenderhearted and she can empathize with others, and feel what they feel when they hurt. He, on the other hand, is hardhearted and does not let the pain and tears of others bother him. All people tend to fall into one or the other of these categories. He sees it in his own children. His 6 year old son will burst into tears when he sees a house plant die. His 9 year old daughter thinks he is silly, and she could whack one to pieces with no sense of remorse. His good friend had to put his dog to sleep, and it was torture. After they took the dog to the vet, he sat in the car for a long time to regain composure, before he returned to work. His brother said, "Why didn't you bring him to me. I could have knocked it over the head and taken care of it-no problem." Here were two brothers raised in the same family and environment, yet one is tenderhearted and the other hardhearted.

The whole point of Pastor Hybels sharing this is, that he, as a hardhearted Christian, knows he must be all the more surrendered to the Holy Spirit to produce the fruit of gentleness, for it just does not grow in him by nature. Tenderhearted people by nature are more gentle, but Christians like himself need to constantly rely on the Spirit to have a kind and gentle spirit toward hurting people. This is his honest confession-

"If we harder-hearted Christians are honest, we have to admit that our tough approach can do damage. We kid people that we shouldn't kid, and when they get hurt we say, 'Can't you take a joke?' We don't listen to other people very well. Usually while they are talking to us we are either making unrelated plans or mentally responding to what they are saying. We wonder why many people are so weak and timid. We use people and dispose of them unceremoniously when they have served our purposes. Although we may not realize it, others tell us we act superior. We love to be right, to compete and especially to win. If the truth were known, we secretly view tenderhearted people as emotional weaklings or psycho-logical misfits. We don't understand them."

He knows a lot of Christians who are like that, but he recognizes that this is not Christ like, and such Christians, like himself, must not relate to other people according to their fleshly nature, but according to the nature of the Spirit. He is not like the comedian who says, "I am very health conscious. I'm lazy and out of shape, but I'm very conscious of it." He is not just conscious of his lack of a gentle spirit, he works hard at letting the Spirit produce this fruit in him.

This fruit of gentleness has a host of English words that translators have used to convey its meaning. Some of them are, moderation, humility, forbearance, courtesy, considerateness, meekness, kindness, and sweet reasonableness. We see the spirit of gentleness in the way Jesus dealt with the despised sinners of His day. Zaccheaus was hated as a tax collector, but Jesus treated him with consideration, and gave him a chance to express himself.

The Pharisees were ready to stone the woman taken in adultery, but Jesus was gentle and did not blast her even with verbal stones, but forgave her and commanded her to go and sin no more. The gentle person is one who takes all the of the facts into consideration. The hardhearted are quick to make absolute judgements regardless of the circumstances. They are legalists, and are seldom open to grace. A non-gentle Jesus would have had the woman stoned, and only later reflected on the strange circumstances that the man was not also brought to be judged. Jesus was gentle for he could see this woman was being used by the Pharisees. They cared not for her fate, but only for how she could be used to trap him.

A gentle spirit takes in a whole picture. It does not operate on half truths. It does not jump to conclusions that hurt people. If you hear something bad about another person and you are instantly ready to condemn them, you do not have a gentle spirit. A gentle spirit is patient, and will want to get all the facts. And even when the facts do support a negative conclusion, they will weigh all the circumstances, and give the person every possible consideration. If God did not have a gentle spirit, there would be no plan of salvation.

Paul was constantly referring to the fruit of gentleness in dealing with the tensions in the early church. There was enormous conflict and arguments of all kinds, even over his authority. Some in Corinth were asking, who does Paul think he is telling us what to do? Paul writes in II Cor.10:1, "By the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I appeal to you." In I Cor.4:21 he wrote, "Shall I come to you with a whip or in love and with a gentle spirit?" Love and gentleness go together. Lack of love and roughness go together. If you are quick to throw stones you reveal, not so much how bad your victim is, but how spiritually rough and unpolished you are.

Paul in Gal.6:1 uses this fruit again in telling Christians how to deal with fallen Christians. He writes, "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently." People who are truly spiritual are gentle people, whose goal is restoration and not judgement. The Christian operating in the flesh says, "They blew it, let them pay the penalty. Let's boot them out of the fellowship so they do not contaminate the rest of us." The spirit led Christian says, "There but for the grace of God go I. Let's help this fallen brother get back on the road, and continue the journey with us."

Pride makes us rough, for it says, "I am superior, and those inferior to me deserve to be stomped on." Humility, however, is gentle, for it says, "I need the gentle love of God to survive, and others need it from me. I will do unto others what I would have them to do unto me." Paul writes in Eph.4:2, "Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing one another in love."

You will notice how everyone of the fruits of the Spirit is linked to the other fruits. None of them operate in isolation. They are a cluster of fruit, like grapes, and they function together. These fruits working together in harmony are the most powerful force in the world. Gentleness does not sound like a great power, but united with the other fruits it is powerful beyond what we would ever dream. Alexander Maclaren, the famous English preacher, goes to great lengths to praise the power of gentleness. He writes,

"Gentleness is the strongest force in the world, and the soldiers of Christ are to be priests, and to fight the battle of the kingdom, robed, not in jingling shining armor or with sharp swords, nor

with fierce and eager bitterness of controversy, but in the meekness which overcomes. You make take all the steam hammers that were ever forged and battle at an iceberg, and except for the comparatively little heat that is developed by the blows and melts some small portion, it will be ice still, though pulverized instead of whole. But let it move gently down to the southward, there the sunbeams smite the coldness to death, and it is dissipated in the warm ocean. Meekness is conquering."

We have to be honest and admit, gentleness is not a popular virtue in our culture. The power of brute force is what produces the heroes in our culture. I have to admit, I get the same kick out of seeing Clint Eastwood shove problems instantly with a gun or a fist, as do a host of Americans. But the fact is, it is a world of fantasy, just like the cartoons, and does not fit the real world. In the real world most of our heroes from Hollywood would be locked up for life after a week of their violent lifestyle. It may be good entertainment, but it is worthless as a guide to good living.

Paul wrote to Titus about how Christians should live in there culture. He used the fruit of gentleness as one of the key ingredients of the good Christian citizen. In Titus 3:1-2 we read, "Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men." Considerate is the English word used here for the fruit of gentleness. The ideal citizen that Paul describes here does not live rough, talk rough, and act rough toward others, but is peace-loving, and gentle in relation to all men.

My personal observation is, Christians are not a whole lot different from the world when it comes to citizenship. They are just as critical of authorities as anyone else, and just as likely to slander them as anyone else. It could very well be that Christians do not have the impact on our culture they should have, considering their great numbers, because they operate on the level of cultural values rather than Biblical values. They use the same weapons of the flesh the world uses, and thus they have only the power of the flesh, and not the power of the Spirit.

The power of gentleness is so seldom tried that we can't know what it might accomplish. Shakespeare recognized its power in *As You Like It*. He has the Duke say, "What would you have? Your gentleness shall force more than your force move us to gentleness." And then Orlando says, "Let gentleness my strong enforcement be."

Many Christians argue that there are so many stupid people in power that you have to be rough, and deal with them with violent language. We have to fight with weapons they understand. But Paul gives instructions to Timothy on how to deal with stupid, aggravating people who stir up all kinds of quarrels. He writes in II Tim.2:23-25, "Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth." Again, we see the fruit of gentleness is a key ingredient in dealing with problem situations.

The goal of the Christian in all relationships, even with the most painful of jerks, is to get them to accept the truth in Christ. The most effective way to do this is by the power of gentleness. G. W.

Langford wrote,

Speak gently! Tis a little thing
Dropped in the heart's deep well;
The good, the joy that it may bring
Eternity shall tell.

John Drescher, in his marvelous book *Spirit Fruit*, tells this story of the gentleness of the great evangelist D.L. Moody. Crowds came to hear him everywhere he went and on one occasion a young boy, dirty and ragged, came to the door of the large church where he was to preach. The usher at the door told him he should be home in bed, and he turned him away. The lad went to the side of the church where he was crying when Moody arrived in his carriage. He heard the boy's sobs and went over and asked him what his problem was. He explained he was not allowed in to hear Moody preach. Moody smiled and said, "Do you really want to get in? I know how you can get past that big fellow at the door. Are you willing?" The lad's response was a definite, "Yes, sir!"

Moody told him to hold on to his coat tails, and not let loose until he said so. Moody just walked into the church and up to the pulpit, and the little guy was right behind. He said, "Now my boy you sit here." Then he put him in his chair, where he listened to Moody preach. The pastor who told this true story said, "The reason I know it is true is because it happened in my church, and I was that little boy." Moody's gentle handling of a crisis in this boy's life led him to become a full time servant of God in that very church where the kindness was shown. It Christians do not add gentleness to this world, they are part of the problem and not part of the answer.

The bottom line is, God expects Christian men to be gentlemen, and Christian women to be gentlewomen. This is a major part of what love is all about in this rough world. T. Dekler wrote of Jesus-

The best of men,
That e'er wore earth about him was
a sufferer;
A soft, meek, patient, humble,
tranquil spirit.
The first true Gentleman that ever breathed.

Jesus had great power, and He could have zapped people into conformity to the will of God, but He did not. He used love and persuasion. He did not compel people to follow Him. He called, and some did, and many did not. He was a gentleman, who treated all people with dignity, and he respected their right to say no. He did not say to the rich young ruler who walked away, "You swine, get back here and take up the cross and follow me." Instead, He wept and let him walk away. Jesus did not force Himself on anyone. He might have had a greater following had He used some of the techniques others have used to browbeat and make people feel guilty. But Jesus was a gentleman. Samuel Butler wrote, "If we are asked what is the essential characteristic that underlies this word, the word itself will guide us to gentleness, absence of browbeating or overbearing manners, absence of fuss, and generally consideration for other people."

The fruits of the Spirit all grow so quietly and gently. The gifts are often loud and attention getters, but the fruits grow as quietly as the fruits of nature. We know when fireworks is going off at

the fair ground, because we hear the loud explosions in the sky. We know someone is hurt or ill, for we hear the screaming sirens, as the ambulance races to the scene. We know the weather is severe, because we hear the blaring sirens warning of a tornado. The presence of many things are known by the noises that are produced. But no one has ever awakened in the night and said, "Listen to all the racket the apple tree is making. The apples are growing again." No! They grow silently, quietly, and gently. So the fruit of the Spirit grows in us. The gifts might draw a crowd, because of the shouting, singing, and noise of rejoicing, and this is great. But the fruits do not come with a bang. They come as the Holy Spirit gently nudges us closer to Christ. He works quietly as we read the Word of God, and as we pray for guidance, and as we reflect on life and where we fit it the scheme of things.

The Holy Spirit came upon Jesus, you recall, not as a vulture or a screeching hawk, but in the form of a dove, the symbol of gentleness. Jesus will be forever praised in heaven as the Lamb of God, the creature of gentleness. God is gentle, and that is why there is a plan of salvation rather than just a plan of judgement. We owe all we can ever hope for in Jesus to the fact of God's gentleness. This is to have an impact on how we treat others. William Taylor wrote, "Forget not thou hast sinned, and sinful yet must be: Deal gently with the erring one, as thy God hath dealt with thee." May this prayer of an unknown poet express the desire of your heart.

Give me Thy gift of gentleness, most gracious Lord;
For whom the way was rough, and darkly black,
For clouds of sorrow hung about life's track,
Till tears and anguish seemed my double part--
It was Thy gentleness that healed my heart!
And there are others--walking weary years,
With bleeding feet, the stony track of tears.
Oh, make me gentle, Lord; through me express
The healing grace of Thine own gentleness.

May God motivate us to pray such a prayer often, for the fruit of gentleness.

IX. THE FRUIT OF SELF-CONTROL

One of the things that made Lincoln so great was his marvelous self-control. The nation was coming apart at the seams with a civil war that had everybody's emotions operating at extremes. To add to the tension, some army contractors were ripping off the government. This made Lincoln very angry. Seward, his Secretary of State wrote a scathing letter to a thieving contractor, and showed it to Lincoln. "Not half strong enough" said Lincoln. Seward was delighted. He wrote another letter that scorched the paper. "There" said the president, "that serves him right!" "Very well, Mr. President, I'll mail it at once", said Seward. "Oh no", said Lincoln, "don't mail it, throw it into the waste basket."

Lincoln knew he could not afford to alienate any more people if he was going to win the war. So

he controlled his desire to blast those taking advantage of the situation for personal gain. If Lincoln would have sent all the nasty letters he wrote, he probably would have lost the war. His self-control is, in great measure, the cause of why we are a free nation. It is not enough that Lincoln was a good man, for had he not been a self-controlled man, all his goodness could have been in vain.

This last fruit of the Spirit is not at the end, as a sign that it is the least important of the nine. It is, in fact, essential to keep all the others from being perverted. Every virtue can become a negative thing if it is not controlled. Even love needs the balance that comes with self-control. Christians are to love members of the opposite sex in Christ. This caring, loving spirit, however, can cross the line and lead to love, not just in the spirit, but in the flesh. The number of Christians who have crossed that line by lack of self-control are legion. It is the fruit of self-control that tells a believer when they are getting out of balance, and letting the flesh be their guide rather than the Spirit of God.

If love can go bad because of lack of self-control, then so can all the other fruits. Joy out of control can lead to extremes of wildness that are pagan. Peace and patience can be so extreme that it leads to lethargy and indifference to a hurting world. Kindness can lead one to be so sugary sweet that people gag on it, and avoid it as being superficial. You find this once in awhile in a waiter or waitress, who you know is going overboard in sweet talk, hoping for a greater tip.

The point is, everything good can become bad if it goes to excess. The Mississippi River is one of the best assets of our nation, but when it overflows we have the worst floods in the nation, and it is a curse. It is a good thing out of control, and a good thing out of control is a bad thing. That is why self-control is the key to keeping all of these fruits of the Spirit from going bad. They never rot and go bad as long as they are linked to self-control.

The movie Jurassic Park is based on this theme. It was an awesome world of great wonder until the control system was lost-then it became a nightmare. The Christian life can be a world of wondrous beauty, but then it can turn ugly if self-control is lost. History is filled with examples of the beautiful Bride of Christ becoming an ugly hag because she lost self-control. There have been periods of history when the fruit of the Spirit dried up, and the church looked more like the bride of Frankenstein.

Great have been the numbers who have fallen because of lack of control of their sex drive. But many more have become ugly by the loss of control of their tongue. James 3:6 says, "the tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell." All of us carry a portion of hell fire around in our mouth, and if we lose control of it we can be as destructive as a fire-breathing dragon spewing out flames of gossip and slander that turn reputations to ashes in seconds.

We need to realize there are enemies ever banging at the gates of our lives, but they have little power unless we throw them the key by loss of self-control. This last fruit is no mere caboose that can be taken off the train with no ill effects. This final fruit is vital to keeping the whole train on the tracks. It keeps all the other fruits fresh and appealing to both God and man.

Self-control is the inner strength that determines what external stimuli will be allowed to move you to action. The reason Christians are motivated by external stimuli to do things out of God's will is because they lack this fruit of the Spirit. We all know the story of David and Bathsheba. David

allowed the sight of her bathing to invade his inner life and take over the control of his actions. His plan that evening was not to disobey the will of God, but he lost control, and let his future be planned by other forces.

In this tragic story of lack of self-control is another man who illustrates perfect self-control. It was Uriah the Hittite, the husband of Bathsheba. David brought him home from the battle front to sleep with his wife, so he would think the child was his own. But Uriah was one in ten thousand, and he refused to sleep with his wife when other soldiers were out risking their lives. David even got him drunk, but he would not change. He was so self-disciplined David could not manipulate him by any external stimuli. David had him murdered to get him out of the way. Uriah was a man of such self-control he could not even be tempted by legitimate enticement to pleasure if he thought it was more noble to refrain. Here was a soldier who was superior to his king in self-discipline. The king let the enemy in, and he betrayed his God, his people and himself. Here was a soldier who would be faithful to his commitments even if it meant self-denial of legitimate pleasure. He, not David, is our example when it comes to self-control.

All Christians fight some battles in this area of self-control. John Timmerman in his book, *The Way Of Christian Living*, tells of his pathetic battle with smoking. It is a battle thousands fight, and they lose, because they lost self-control. Like many others, he quit over and over again, but soon he would lose control and be back at it. He writes,

"And believe me, I have tried every technique. I have a medical journal with full-color pictures of diseased organs! I have a drawer crammed with motivational literature, stop-smoking pills, nicotine chewing gum, and other things. It's laughable; it's sad. Is it beyond my control? I'll keep fighting until I find out. I would like to tell a happy story here of how I was able to give it all up and praise the Lord. But I can't tell that story. Yet. The sad fact of fallen nature is that self-control is a ceaseless battle, and we are not always victors. Perhaps we can't defeat the problem entirely, but we can fight to control it. This one thing is certain: if I had not started, I wouldn't have this trouble stopping."

That last sentence is the key. If he had not lost self-control in the beginning he would not be fighting so hard to regain control of his life and habits. The purpose of self-control is prevention. If we prevent the enemy from getting a foothold in our life, we are free and in control of our actions. It is easier to keep a bad habit from starting than to stop it once it gains control of your life. It is the job of self-control to keep enemies out of your life. Let this fruit get weak, and you are fair game for the enemy of your soul.

Self-control is what keeps the mind ever alert for the infiltration of enemy forces. A self-controlled person is one who does a lot of self-examination. They do not just drift and respond to whatever comes along. They listen to their body, and if they feel a strong attraction to another person, who is not their mate, they do not add fuel to the fire and quench the Spirit, but, rather, they add the fire of the Spirit and quench the flame of lust. They fight fire with fire. They are honest about their lust and are determined to control it within the bounds of God's will. Those who lose control and disobey God, often do so because they are not honest about their potential for sin and folly. The Christian who says I know I can fall is the one most likely to avoid a fall. The one who pretends temptation is no problem is the one at high risk. Self-control demands that we be honest about our weaknesses, and admit them before we face temptation.

Almost every failure to be Christ like can be traced to a lack of self-control, but, on the other hand, almost every success at being Christ like can be attributed to the power of self-control. When Jackie Robinson was signed up as the first black man to play in the major leagues, he was warned by Branch Rickey that he would be persecuted. What will you do, asked Rickey, when someone without provocation hauls off and hits you in the face? Jackie said, "I have another cheek-isn't that right Mr. Rickey?" That was how he won over all the opposition. Had he lost his temper he would have lost his place in history. By self-control he not only won for himself, but he won for all blacks who followed him. The only way he, or anyone else, can obey the Sermon On The Mount, is by the power of self-control.

Harold Kushner, America's most famous Rabbi, tells us why the Jews abstain from food, drink, and sex on Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. The primary reason he says is to demonstrate man's capacity to control his natural instincts. It is natural to eat, drink, and have sex, when you feel the hunger for these things. But those who want to obey God recognize that God's will often goes against the grain of those natural feelings. God said do not eat of the forbidden fruit, but when Eve saw how delightful it was, and good for eating, she let her appetite and desire rise above her loyalty to God, and that was the origin of sin. Sin is primarily a loss of self-control. It is letting the desires of the body take precedence over the will of God.

The Jews, therefore, practice abstaining to show man has been given the power of self-control. He can choose to obey God, and deny the body. The image of God is seen in man's ability to control his instincts. Animals do not have this ability to choose voluntarily not to respond to their instincts. Pagans practiced giving in to the natural instincts-just go with the flow-if it feels good do it. This has become popular again in our modern world.

The Bible teaches that man is no mere animal. He is made in the image of God, and he can control his instincts. Was it natural for David to have lust for Bathsheba? Yes it was, and it would be the response of the vast majority of men. But millions of men would resist that response and remain faithful to their mates. Why? Because they have the power to choose not to be controlled by their instincts, but to be in control of them. If there was no choice, there would be no sin. But what David did was a sin because he had a choice.

What Kushner is saying is valid for Christians as well as Jews. We need to discipline our bodies and not let them control our behavior. But this natural self-control often fails us in times of strong temptation. We need the fruit of the Spirit self-control to be victorious at such times. One of the greatest victories of life is to be in charge of your own life. That is true freedom. If we consistently do things that we do not like, we are slaves to our own habits and desires. Self-slavery is the opposite of self-control.

Gary Warnar, writing in the Christian Herald, tells of victory over himself as a fencer and racket ball player. He was so competitive that he wanted to knock the lights out of the opponent who would beat him. He could not accept defeat, but would always demand a rematch to get even. He was a slave to his compulsion to win. You would think this would be a virtue, but when it controls you, as it did him, it is a vice.

His testimony is not that he learned to love losing, but that he no longer had to win. He could accept defeat, and still enjoy the game. His self-esteem did not depend upon winning. He was free

because he was in control of his emotions, and not at their mercy. Self-control is the ability to deny yourself what it desires, if that desire is not consistent with what you know to be the will of God. Since the desires of the flesh can often cloud our thinking, we can't depend upon natural self-control. We need the fruit of the Spirit self-control to be assured of victory.

The founders of our nation knew that self-control was the key to freedom. They built checks and balances into the government, so no branch of the government could get full control and lead us back into a dictatorship. Slavery of one sort or another is always the consequence when self-control is lost. The battle may be with chocolate, ice cream, power, sex, or any number of desires that can run wild, and like an uncontrolled river, flood your life and destroy all the balances of the past. This happens to Christians who depend too much on their own natural self-control.

The natural parallels of the fruits of the Spirit, that are valued by all men, are also valued by Christians. But the natural man is fallen, and so even his virtues are corrupted and inadequate for the pressures of this fallen world. The Christian, to be superior to the natural man, must have the fruit of the Spirit. It is a case where the good is not good enough. You need the best to be a truly successful Christian.

This study of the fruits has made it clear why Christians fail so often to be Christ like. They are not open to be led by that same Spirit that led Him. Trying to live the Christian life without the fruits of the Spirit is like trying to make a cake while leaving the flour and sugar out. Some ingredients may not be missed, but others are essential. The fruits of the Spirit are essential to the effective Christian life.

In her book, *Divine Discipline*, Dr. Rhonda Kelly, who works with autistic children, uses the movie *Rainman*, to make her point. Dustin Hoffman plays a role of an autistic adult. He had an inflexible daily schedule, which included watching his favorite T.V. program at exactly 5:00 P.M. He had to do it. Traveling with his brother, he demanded they stop at the house of a stranger to watch his program. He was a slave to his schedule. Dr. Kelly says she sees this in all kinds of people who have inappropriate social behavior, and she sees it a lot in Christians people who are still slaves to old ways of thinking, and old habits. She knows what this slavery is all about, for she was a slave to food and to clothing. This made her a compulsive shopper. By the grace of God she gained self-control, and she wrote her nearly 200 page book to tell Christians this truth--the key to freedom is the fruit of the Spirit, self-control. Clearly, this last, but not least of the fruits, is vital to our success as Christians. May God motivate us to be willing soil in which the Holy Spirit can grow all nine of these precious fruits.

