



March 23, 2025

“Fruit of the Spirit”

Sunday school at 9:30, Service at 10:30.

News:

No Wednesday classes this week

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

Like the deeds of the flesh this is designed to give an overall description of a Christian’s character and lifestyle.

Exhibiting the Fruit is about believing God more and that has to do with the “renewing of our mind” (Romans 12:2).

The entire purpose of the Fruit is to function as a proof of Almighty God’s involvement in this physical reality within human beings.

The degree to which a Christian physically exhibits Christ, they prove that Christ is real.

The actual love of God manifested in a human being is the proof that God indwells His people on earth. That’s purpose.

Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate, or the prayer/suggestion box in the entryway, or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.

God Bless You!

Love, specifically ἀγάπη (ä-gä-pā), is the basis for your life in Christ and it is the proof that you are a Christian.

Biblical, Christian Joy, is χαρά (xä-rä). It is a deep sense of well-being that most of us would label as inner peace.

Peace is εἰρήνη (ā-rā-nā), as in the actual end of hostilities.

Patience is μακροθυμία (mäk-rö-thü-mē-ä), meaning to hold your anger for a long time. It is typically translated as long-suffering.

Kindness is χρηστότης (xřā-stö-tās), the Godly Character called kind-heartedness. It is the attitude preparing the way for the activity of Goodness.

Goodness, ἀγαθωσύνη (ä-gä-thō-sü-nā), is actual good towards and for others. This Goodness sacrifices self for the betterment of another.

Faithfulness, πίστις (pē-stēs), is goodness that can be counted on regardless of the cost.

Gentleness is πραΰτης (přä-ü-tās), meaning composure. It is the quality of strength that accommodates another's weakness.

Self-control is ἐγκράτεια (ěn-křä-tā-ä), and it means to seize control over yourself implying the power to do so.

Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

Name _____ Address _____
 Phone _____ Email _____

Last week we closed with the Fruit of the Holy Spirit found in Galatians chapter 5, verses 22&23. Here it is again, Galatians 5:22&23, 22But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

We said that, like the deeds of the flesh, this set of descriptors is designed to evoke an impression. That rather than a list of dos to counter the earlier list of don'ts, both sets of traits reflect a general lifestyle associated with a person's character.

Here, it is the character expected of a Spirit filled Christian and previously it was the character of a person enslaved to a love of self above everything else.

We also said that unlike the deeds of the flesh, this is not the fruits of the Spirit, plural, as though we could have some of the traits and not others. It is the fruit, singular. You either have the Fruit of the Holy Spirit, or you don't, and if you do, then you have at least a bit of every element described.

Additionally, we recognized that this is the Fruit of the Holy Spirit and not the fruit of the flesh.

Meaning, that it is God's work, not our work, even though it is His work in us as we actively and intentionally yield to, and participate in, His work.

No one exhibits the Fruit of the Holy Spirit more by working harder. It's about believing God more and that has to do with the "renewing of our mind" (Romans 12:2) as we choose to be renewed.

Finally, we saw last week that the arrangement of the elements of the Fruit of the Spirit is very well thought out and meticulously structured. Each element feeds into, fosters, and promotes, the next.

I want to delve into that structure today, but before we get to that, let's talk about the purpose of the Fruit... The entire purpose of the Fruit of the Spirit is to function as a reflection and proof of Almighty God's involvement in this physical reality within human beings.

To the degree that a person exhibits the Fruit of the Spirit, which is to say, to the degree that a person exhibits the traits and lifestyle of Jesus, right? It's

the same thing. So, to the degree that a Christian exhibits Christ, in their observable behavior, they prove to all who see that they have been supernaturally conformed by the Holy Spirit to the image of Jesus, to that precise degree.

The world knows Jesus through Christians obeying His humanly impossible command. When the church loves the church, the church proclaims the reality of Christ to the world. When we all actually love one another, it proves that we are controlled by the Holy Spirit, that Christ has Saved us, and that God makes His abode with mankind.

Our display of this Spiritual Fruit proves that God is alive and well, active and involved, present and mentoring, within His people. You want to prove the existence of God to a nonbeliever? You don't do that by debating them to death with scientific facts and figures, or with clever arguments about logical fallacies – you do it by showing them God-born behavior.

You do it by actually loving. The actual love of God manifested in a human being is the proof that God indwells His people on earth. That's purpose. That's

the greatest purpose. That our life would prove God's claims made in His Holy Word – that our life would verify the claims of Christianity to all those who God puts in our path.

What such people take from that is their choice. It is between them and God. Our part is to simply be who God has made us be and trust Him with the results.

Beyond that great purpose there are many other purposes because in God's economy everyone wins when His Will is done. There is of course a tremendous benefit to the church. Imagine if all Christians had enough faith to behave like Christ.

Church would be a whole lot easier. There is also the undeniable benefit to the lost. Again, imagine if Christians behaved in accordance with the Fruit. As a minimum, the unchurched and the unbelievers of the world would need to come up with new excuses.

Finally, there is an enormous benefit to the individual Christian as well. We sometimes get the idea that the reason for our continued physical

existence after Salvation is for us to grow and learn and become better.

Of course, you can see that all of that is self-focused and therefore it is erroneous. God has not put us here so we can become all we can be. We continue to exist in our physical state because God uses His people to connect with and support each other as well as to connect with and minister to the lost.

You exist, as you are, in order to be a vessel through whom God builds His Kingdom on earth. You are to be conformed to Christ, and thus exhibit His Fruit, to prove that Christ is King. That He is Lord and Savior.

It isn't that God can do more with you as you grow more Christlike, it is that you become a more positive example. Let's take someone's personal testimony to illustrate the point. Let's say an immature Christian, exhibiting little of the Fruit, falls into a terrible sin.

It's scandalous and the person's selfishness creates havoc and causes great harm to others and to themselves. Let's say they repent and are restored.

God will use that for His purposes, but it was a negative example. Let's say the person refuses to repent, but the church reflects Christ in the way that it deals with the issue. Again, God will use it to build His Kingdom, but it was a negative example.

By being better conformed to Christ we Christians can be used by God in a positive way by overcoming adversity, by loving others, by doing the right thing, by being like Christ, instead of being used negatively for our failures.

I don't know which way you would like to be used by God, but I know which way I prefer. In his second letter to Timothy, Paul talked about those in the church who create problems and even destroy the faith of others. He then wrote, "In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for special purposes and some for common use" (II Timothy 2:14-21). Strive to be an article of gold and silver.

Remember verse 13 from this chapter... How we are to take our freedom from the Law and use it to enslave ourselves to love, or as the Apostle Peter put it in II Peter 2:16, "Act as free people, and do not

use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bond-servants (as slaves) of God.” Enslave yourself to God and His purposes as a vessel of honor by being conformed to Christ. By actively and intentionally allowing the Holy Spirit to renew your mind by increasing your faith resulting in the manifestation of the Fruit of the Spirit.

So, what have we learned? First and foremost, that the work of God within the willing Christian points to the reality of God and the Truth of the Gospel and therefore of Christianity. Second that the Fruit of the Holy Spirit in a person’s life indicates the quantity and quality of their believing in God – of their faith.

It therefore reveals the degree to which a Christian is conformed to Christ and so the level of their maturation in Christ. It unveils their character as it is the measure of their Holy Spirit enabled growth, maturity, individual edification, and personal sanctification.

I Thessalonians 4:3a, 4&7, 3alt is God’s will that you should be sanctified... 4that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable (self-control, the summation of

Christian maturity) ... 7For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. A sanctified life that manifests the Fruit of the Holy Spirit.

This is an important distinction. The Holy Spirit was essentially sent by the Father at the behest of Jesus to be our Paraclete in Jesus' physical absence. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ in us and so functions as our other Paraclete after Jesus, our first Paraclete.

Paraclete means advocate, comforter, encourager, teacher, exhorter, persuader, sponsor, counselor, advisor, and helper. The primary job of the Holy Spirit is to point to Jesus – to confirm the Gospel and then to confirm the person's status who accepts the Gospel.

The Holy Spirit is the instrumental means through Whom God makes His love for us known to us. It is the Holy Spirit within that cries out that we are sons and therefore heirs of God. He gives us the encouragement to cry out together embracing our status with God.

That love is incorporated into who we are to the degree that we believe the testimony of the Holy Spirit. Again, this is about the renewing of our mind. Your faith, belief, trust, is all in your mind. If it is purely theoretical it will be far more difficult to assimilate as real. That's why it takes both the constant work of the Holy Spirit and our relational experiences with God for it to grow.

As we need God and as He proves faithful in our need, our faith in Him increases. We hinder the process by being self-focused and we assist the process by being actively and intentionally Christ-focused.

Love is the basis for our faith and so, for our salvation and so, for our life in Christ. We allow God's love for us to be incorporated into us and we can then reflect His love back to Him. You can then, with all of your heart, with all of your soul, with all of your strength, and with all of your mind (Luke 10:27, etc.), love God, praise God, glorify God, worship God, and obey God.

There, the first a greatest commandment fulfilled. That takes us to the second great job of the Holy

Spirit which is what we've primarily been talking about this morning – the sanctification or maturation or development of the Christian person.

Once we accept who we are in Christ we are ready to be conformed to Christ. The Fruit of the Holy Spirit is all about us as individual Christians becoming what we were reborn to be. It is about our personal edification, not so much as the things that edify us, but as the result of being edified.

The person who exhibits the overall behavior that these traits describe is a mature Holy Spirit filled child of the Living God. The person without a lifestyle in keeping with these traits simply is not a mature Holy Spirit filled child of the Living God.

The latter person may not be a Christian at all, or they may be an immature, stunted, and still self-focused Christian who has not yet been transformed by the renewing of their mind to have enough faith to conform to their inner reality.

To reiterate, the Fruit of the Holy Spirit is for the individual Christian to be transformed externally into what Christ has made them to be internally,

spiritually, supernaturally. As I said, Christian maturation or growth from infant to adult.

Ministry is another realm of Holy Spirit work in the believer, but I'll save that for another day because I don't want to detract from our passage today.

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

Love, specifically ἀγάπη (ä-gä-pā), is the basis for your life in Christ and it is the proof, when physically manifested, that you are a Christian. Agapê as a verb, noun, and adjective, occurs well over 300 times in the New Testament.

The Greeks were a philosophy loving people and they both invented words and redefined other words to fit their philosophical theories. Agapê is one such word. Philosophically speaking its definition is very specific and while it could be used in everyday speech with a far greater range it is mostly the philosophical meaning that we see emphasized in the context of the Bible.

This is an instance contextually where Agapê carries its very specific meaning, which is a reasoned and a resolute choice to love another.

Philosophically and idealistically the Greeks used three primary words to convey the concept of love. They are, ἀγάπη, φιλία (fē-lē-ä), and ἔρως (ě-rōs). I'll explain their scheme with the example of a married couple.

Between them there is ἔρως. This is where each of them is selfishly attracted to the other. We could call it lust, or we could be nicer, and say that it is desire. Either way, the truth is that it is a love that seeks its own satisfaction, really its own gratification, which is its own benefit.

It is 100% self-serving and 0% selflessly giving. If you want a Biblical example, read Proverbs 7:6-27 (especially verse 18). The Greeks saw it as the lowest kind of love and attributed it to being shot through the heart by the mischievous god Eros.

Next is *φιλία*, which is a mutual friendship love where there is reciprocated benefit. Each person takes a bit from the other but also gives a bit to the other. In a perfect world this type of love is 50% self-serving and 50% selflessly giving. A Biblical example is where Jesus was said to love His friend Lazarus in John chapter 11.

Finally, we have *ἀγάπη*, which, in its most perfect and pristine philosophical ideal, is a choice to love another that has nothing to do with the other's lovability. There is zero benefit to the lover and 100% benefit to the loved. It is 0% self-serving and 100% selfless giving, precisely the opposite of *ἔρως*.

That means that it is unconditional love. Unconditional love literally means that there are no conditions that can change it. The object of such love is fully accepted and can do nothing either to be more accepted or to be rejected. It is altruism. based solely on the one doing the choosing.

Altruism is quite similar to Agapê as it is a completely selfless and self-sacrificing devotion to another. I do not believe that any human can be

entirely altruistic and so, no human can ever Agapê either. It is God-love. The Source is God.

The Greeks saw adoption as an example. A couple choosing to adopt a baby before anything at all was known about the baby and committing themselves to loving, accepting, and parenting that baby for the remainder of their lives, regardless of how the baby turned out.

Of course, at some point an adopted person can choose to disown their adoptive parents and while that would not change their adoptive parents Agapê, the child would no longer have the benefit of their Agapê. I hope you see the correlation with God's love for, and acceptance of, us.

God is Agapê and He Agapês all, but in order for anyone to benefit from His Agapê, a person must choose to accept it for what it is, and for what it entails. Just as an adopted child must live with and follow the rules of his or her adoptive parents, so too the Christian.

The Fruit of the Spirit starts with this selfless love – it should be obvious that the opposite of the Fruit of

the Spirit, the reverse of God's character, would start with the selfish, self-focused and self-serving love of self. All sin is the result of the fear created by such self-love.

Since I used the example of a married couple, I hope you can see that the only love necessary to success is Agapê, but if it were to be a healthy God-honoring marriage there would also be an abundance of the other two kinds as well.

When we act out of our self-love we are walking according to our dead flesh and when we act out of the Holy Spirit enabled selfless love, we are walking according to the Spirit.

Why is the foundation of the Fruit of the Spirit God's Love? It is only when we have enough faith to accept, embrace, dwell in, and operate from, God's Love that we begin to change into the Christian whom God has established us to be.

Only when we recognize and then are captivated by God's amazing love, can we accept that everything is going to be okay. We believe that we are accepted – that we are secure – that in Christ we

are loved without condition or qualification based upon God's character, not because of our performance.

I am accepted by Almighty God forever no matter what, so what else could possibly matter in comparison to that? We can now have an eternal perspective because "the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us" (Romans 5:5b).

We have the Spirit, and the Spirit has renewed our mind enough for us to trust that we are eternally accepted by Almighty God and so we experience Joy.

Biblical, Christian Joy, is *χαρά* (xä-rä). It, like the word happiness in our Declaration of Independence, no longer means what it once did.

χαρά is a deep sense of well-being that most of us would actually label as inner peace. It is the ability to be calm in the storm, not because you ignore the storm, but because you know that the storm is all part of the plan. It is keeping your head, when all around you are losing theirs.

χαρά comes from knowing that everything is going to turn out exactly how God plans and that His plan will result in the greatest possible good. It comes from trusting that at the end of day, eternity in His presence awaits.

God knows me, He loves me, He chose me, He is in me, and I am in Him. There is nothing I need to fear from anyone or anything. I know and agree with Romans 8:37b–39, “that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” That’s the basis of joy.

Look at what Joy enables, Hebrews 12:2, “Jesus, the originator and perfecter of the faith, who for the joy (χαρά) set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Jesus believed God to the point where His faith enabled Him to trust what He did not see more than what he did see. When we get a bit of what He had we can rest in Him no matter what is going on around us.

Our joy is based upon our acceptance of His eternal love, it is eschatological, which means that our joy is based upon our newfound eternal perspective, and it leads to peace.

Peace is εἰρήνη (ā-řā-nā), as in the actual end of hostilities, not the feeling associated with hippies and Hare Krishnas. The cause of peace is an actual peace treaty with God signed in the blood of Jesus. Our peace as an element of the Fruit of the Spirit is when we countersign the peace treaty with God because we have come to accept His terms of peace.

What are His terms? Simply that we enter in to right relationship with Him that He Himself enabled. It is to agree to be His beloved child in Christ. It is to accept that He's got you, and that you want to "be got" by Him. We have embraced His love for us enough that we trust His plans and purposes, which as we saw, is joy. Now, because of our joy we can actually rest in His plans and purposes.

We realize that we no longer need to get our way. We trust God enough to quit struggling against Him.

To stop kicking against the goads, constantly running around trying to orchestrate events, and manipulate people, for the outcomes that we want.

Our joy reaches the point where we don't just feel like it's going to be okay, we actually act like it's going to be okay and so we stop fighting God and when we do that, we can also stop fighting others. Eventually, we can even stop fighting ourselves. Only then will we have the maturity to truly exhibit the peace of God in our life.

Just because we're at peace with God. with our fellow Christians, with the world-at-large, and even, with ourselves, it does not follow that everyone is at peace with us.

In fact, the opposite is true, but peace that is reciprocated does not require much character, or Holy Spirit power, does it?

That leads us to patience μακροθυμία (māk-rō-thū-mē-ä). μακροθυμία literally means long anger with the implication that you hold your anger for a long time. If you think about it, holding your anger for a long time means that there is something going on

that has for a long time provided cause for you to be angry.

μακροθυμία is typically translated as long-suffering. In order to be long-suffering, one has to first be long bothered. Have you heard people say, “Don’t pray for patience.” The reason is that patience cannot be developed or tested unless there is a problem to be patient about.

Patience is the ability to die to self because the opposite, impatience, is being annoyed that things are not going your way. Impatience is the absolute embodiment of selfishness; it is the proof of war just as patience is the proof of peace.

That’s the point; if you have truly entered into peace you can afford to be patient. Patience is love for another in action as it accommodates their weakness or capability instead of demanding that they match your strength or expectation.

A patient person suffers for others by not demanding that they live up to their standards and that demonstrated love flows from and further fosters an underlying personal character that is kind.

Kindness is χρηστότης (xřā-stō-tās), is related to grace in the sense that it is kindness given which is both unearned and undeserved. χρηστότης is unmerited kindness derived from the character of a kind person. It is what the Bible calls Godly Character and what we might call kind-heartedness.

χρηστότης is the quality of heart that overlooks the broken garden gate and calls attention to the beautiful flowers beyond the gate. How often are we incapable of not pointing out the broken gate?

If patience is selfless waiting, kindness is selfless forgiveness and mercy. It is the attitude preparing the way for the activity of being good.

Goodness, ἀγαθωσύνη (ä-gä-thō-sü-nā), is actual good towards and for others. Where kindness is the character that is willing to do good – goodness is the activity of doing good.

Biblical Goodness is first of all not human goodness. Jesus said in Luke and Mark, “No one is good - except God alone.” The Bible confirms that sentiment in many places and in many ways.

This Goodness is so good it sacrifices self for the betterment of another. Betterment does not mean giving someone whatever they want or tolerating any behavior that someone wishes to exhibit.

This is getting up and disciplining a child when you're so tired you would rather just yell. This is telling a person the truth even though they will not want to hear it. Godly Goodness is full of mercy, and it is full of justice, and only God can help us with the details on a case-by-case basis.

When we actually allow the Holy Spirit to minister the goodness of God to others, we are being faithful with what He has entrusted to us.

Faithfulness, πίστις (pē-stēs), is goodness that can be counted on regardless of the cost. The Marine Corps' motto is Always Faithful. Marines pride themselves on being faithful to the Corps – to each other, to the point of death. A very common Marine tattoo that I narrowly missed getting says, Death before Dishonor. Dishonor, to a Marine, is literally a failure to be faithful in the face of extreme pressure to run the other way.

In John 15:13 Jesus said, “Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.” That is the ultimate in Faithfulness. In Revelation 2:10 Jesus said, “Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer... Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.”

When God’s character of kindness demonstrated through the activity of goodness becomes so much a part of us that our character mirrors His enough to be called faithfulness, we can then be gentle to others.

Gentleness is πραΰτης (p`r`ä-ü-tās), means composure and it is only possible for someone who has reached a level of true Christian maturity by definition of the word itself. To be composed is to be mature. It is the quality of strength that accommodates another’s weakness.

As long as suffering implies suffering, Composure implies a need to be composed, which likewise implies that there is reason to be un-composed. Composure is not composure if there is no need to compose yourself.

In other words, πραΰτης is controlled power. It is like a controlled burn. You control it because it has the capacity to be uncontrolled. You control it not for your benefit, but for the benefit of another who could be harmed by such power if unbridled.

God has all the power, and yet He actually brings Himself down to our level to make us feel comfortable and to feel as though He is approachable. God in His perfection stoops down without being condescending and allows us to interact with Him personally, safe and cozy without a care, like a small child resting in daddy's arms.

When a Christian reaches a level of maturity where God is ministering to others through them, they must, like Him, be gentle. They must recognize that the power they wield is not their own and that it is to be used to benefit others, never to elevate self.

As agents of Christ, we lower ourselves to the level of others without condescension to give them the very best opportunity to accept God's ministry to them. The only way we can do that is to make it about God and them and not about us. That

requires true maturity because it comes from allowing love to drive out fear.

When we no longer fear we can be humble, whether we humble ourselves or even when others humble us by elevating themselves it's okay because we are above that fray. Without fear it makes no difference what others think about us because ministry is never about us. We can allow others to feel equal with, or even superior to us if it helps them connect with the Lord. Gentleness is a quiet confidence born from a deep understanding of who God is, what God's done, what God's working on presently and what God has in store for the future.

1 Peter 3:15, "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect."

That ability to float above the nonsense focused on the mission of representing Christ is the sign of a mature Christian and can be summed up as self-control.

Self-control is ἐγκράτεια (ĕn-křä-tā-ä), and it means to seize control over yourself implying the power to do so. Where does such power come from?

Self-help humanists say that it comes from within and as usual they are wrong. While many people seem to be self-controlled it is an illusion. No one can truly control themselves by force of their will because all people absent the work of the Holy Spirit are slaves to their love of self.

That means a non-Christian exhibiting tremendous self-control is merely out of control in a far more subtle way. No, for a human being to be truly self-controlled they must first be completely controlled by the Holy Spirit.

This final element is used in the Bible to describe the entire Fruit and the underlying character producing it. ἐγκράτεια is the one-word description of a mature disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ and son of the Heavenly Father and vessel of the Holy Spirit.

A Christian can be self-controlled only through incredible faith. Every element in the Fruit is the

result of faith in God. Faith appropriated in the mind as the mind is renewed by God within. The perspective and perception and thought processes of the mind altered by the indwelling Breath of God as we allow Him to breathe new life, Spirit-led life into us.

If you are controlled by fear, fear birthed by worry that things won't go the way you desire, you are a slave and you have no self-control. If you are controlled by God, He empowers you to take control of yourself.

The person most controlled by God is actually the person who is the most free, and the most under their own control. It may seem counterintuitive, but most things in God's economy are. In all four Gospels Jesus declared that "whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it" (Mark 8:35).

It means that we want to keep control of our life in order to ensure that it works out for us, but doing so will only ensure our slavery to fear, sin and eternal death. On the flipside we are reluctant to hand control of our life over to God because we are afraid

of what He might require. Ironically, when we trust God with control, He works to give us control. Real control, real freedom to genuinely control ourselves.

The mature Christian who has gained some degree of true freedom and control trusts God so much that they choose to obey God. God is not interested in robots or slaves. He wants us to freely choose to love Him, follow Him, be like Him.