

“The Fruit of the Spirit”

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law” (Galatians 5:22, NIV).

Love

Aren't the above qualities lovely? Read them again slowly. Think a second about each one. Those are the qualities that the blessed Holy Spirit wants to produce in our lives.

Let's consider love. This is not the Hollywood version of love. The word for love in this verse in the original Greek is agape. That signifies an unselfish love that gives without expecting anything in return. It's a love that always seeks the best for its object. It is a supernatural love of which we're not capable apart from the Holy Spirit. It is part of the fruit of the Spirit.

Don't we long to be treated with that kind of love? Wouldn't we love to be able to love with that kind of love? We can when we “live by the Spirit,” keeping “in step with the Spirit.” (Galatians 5:25).

Joy

“You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit” (1 Thessalonians 1:6, NIV).

Much is said today of being happy, having fun, laughing. Of course, there is nothing wrong with those things. But often those things are temporary, dependent upon circumstances and feelings.

Joy, true joy, is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. It is deep and enduring. Dear fellow Christian, we can experience joy even in the midst of severe trials; many can attest to that, maybe you can too. Again, it is supernatural because it is produced by the Holy Spirit.

Peace

Dear friend, the first peace we all need is peace with God. Our sins are an offense to His holiness. Thankfully, Jesus paid our debt. Now He is our peace, and the Bible says that by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. (See Romans 5:1)

But what about peace in our lives? What about that every day peace we all need? Please allow the following verses from the Bible to comfort you on that issue:

Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” John 14:27

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, shall guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:6-7

“Great peace have they who love your law (word), and nothing can make them stumble.” Psalm 119:165

There are many other scriptures that speak of peace; peace with God, the peace of God, peace in our circumstances and peace in our relationships.

Patience

“Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love” (Ephesians 4:2, NIV).

Often we think of patience as waiting for something to happen and being in a good mood about it. The word “patience” in our verses above is rendered “longsuffering” in other translations. It seems to carry the thought of forbearing, or bearing with, as we see above. Occasionally we hear something like, “life would be a lot easier if it weren't for other people.” Most of us have someone in our life that is difficult to deal with. But God calls us, and enables us through the Holy Spirit, to patience and forbearance. And with what attitude? Love.

We can't truly pull it off by our own will. It's supernatural. It's fruit of the Spirit.

Kindness and Goodness

There is a lot of similarity between these two qualities that the Spirit wants to produce in our lives.

The original Greek words, however, do show a distinction.

Kindness is goodness in action. The Spirit produces kindness (gentleness) in our treatment of others. It more refers to what we do.

God, in His kindness, showed us the incomparable riches of His grace, expressed to us in the person of Christ Jesus. What an act of kindness, to send Jesus to be our Savior.

Goodness denotes a moral quality. It seems to have more to do with our character than with our behavior, although it surely will affect our behavior. The Spirit wants to transform us into people of good character.

Over and over we read in the Bible about the goodness of the Lord. Being good is part of God's character. We are unworthy beneficiaries of God's great goodness.

Faithfulness

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast" (Ephesians 2:8, 9, NIV).

Some translations of the New Testament used the word faith instead of faithfulness. Both faithfulness and faith are the same word in the original Greek. That word always speaks of faith in God or the faithfulness of God.

Aren't we thankful that God gave us the faith to believe His truth (see the verses from Ephesians above)? Aren't we thankful that God is faithful, trustworthy? Isn't it wonderful that the Holy Spirit wants to, and does, produce in our lives these beautiful attributes of God.

Let's ask ourselves how we can demonstrate more faith and faithfulness today.

Gentleness

Gentleness is such a lovely quality. In today's world it seems a rare commodity. We usually think of gentleness in the area of actions. For example, we might say "she treated her children with such gentleness."

The original Greek word, however, describes a condition of the heart or mind. It is a gentle spirit, we might say. Then, when the Holy Spirit produces gentleness in our heart, that gentleness will manifest itself in our actions.

Jesus was gentle and meek, but He was not weak. He blessed others out of a heart of love and compassion. When the Holy Spirit brings forth fruit in a person's life, there is no selfish, self-seeking motive. It is a supernatural, Christ like quality.

If you and I were gentler, how would that affect our family and friends?

Self-control

"For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:5-8, NIV).

Is self-control something you struggle with? It seems to be a tug-of-war for us at times, doesn't it? It boils down to our will being subject to the controlling power of the Holy Spirit.

God has given us free will, but that doesn't give us license to do whatever we feel like doing. He gave us free will so we would voluntarily love Him and obey Him. That is only possible through the work of the Holy Spirit. Self-control is the last of the fruit of the Spirit, but not the least. In fact, God desires that each part of the fruit of the Spirit be manifest in our lives in ever increasing measure.

It's Our Choice

"So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want" (Galatians 5:16-17, NIV).

As we conclude our look at the fruit of the Spirit, let's take to heart the above verses. The Bible clearly tells us that there is a struggle within us: do I obey the Spirit or do I obey my sinful nature?

It's a daily, sometimes an hourly struggle isn't it? Verses 19-21 enumerate the acts of the sinful nature: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies and the like.

Quite a contrast to the fruit of the Spirit, isn't it? Is there one of those that you particularly struggle with? Won't you join with me in seeking to keep in step with the Holy Spirit?

adapted from "LifeLines", Fred Pratt □