

## The Fruit of the Holy Spirit - Chapter 1

### Christian Characteristics

We are going to think about "The Fruit of the Spirit" as it is described by Paul in his letter to the Galatians chapter five, verses twenty-two and twenty-three.

Let us think first of the message Paul is trying to communicate. If you look at the beginning of the letter you will find that he starts much more abruptly than in his other letters. At verse six he says, "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who has called you by the grace of Christ, and are turning to a different gospel". You see, something had gone wrong. They had turned away from the real truth of the gospel, and were believing in a different gospel. What was this false gospel to which they had turned, which Paul says was really "no gospel at all"?

False teachers had come among them who were telling them that faith in Christ alone was not sufficient. They must keep all the forms and ceremonies of the Jewish religion if they were to be real Christians. Forms and ceremonies, and religious ritual cannot save us, says Paul. None of them can bring us forgiveness of sin and peace with God, nor can any of them set us free from the sinfulness of our lives.

Just before the verses where he describes the fruit of the Spirit, Paul gives a list of what he calls the works of the flesh, and an awful list it is! Forms, ceremonies and ritual cannot set us free from these. Only Jesus Christ can do this, and only as we submit to Him and by faith become one with Him. As we do this we share His life, love and holiness.

Notice how Paul puts it. He says that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. He calls all these "the fruit of the Spirit".

This reminds me of the parable that Jesus told, which you will find in the Gospel of John chapter fifteen. Jesus is speaking of the vine, and He says that He is the true vine, and that His Father is the gardener. Those who belong to Christ are the branches of the vine, He says. The gardener takes care of the vine, and does everything that is necessary for it to bear fruit. This fruit bearing is the whole point of the vine. It is no good if it does not bear fruit. How does the fruit come? It is the result of the life flowing up from the root through the vine and out into the branches. As a result the fruit is produced quite naturally, and all that is needed is for the vine to be kept pruned and healthy. Nothing has to be added from the outside because the fruit comes from the life on the inside.

So it is with the Christian life. When we believe on Jesus Christ we are reconciled to God and united by faith with the Lord Jesus, so that the life of God flows into us. In this way we can bear in our own lives this fruit of the Spirit of God which Paul is speaking about.

This fruit should be there right from the start of our Christian lives, and should grow as we walk in the Spirit with God. At the end of chapter two of Galatians Paul says that the secret of his Christian life is that Christ now lives in Him (Galatians 2 v. 20). In the same chapter, where this fruit of the Spirit is spoken of, he tells us to live by the Spirit, and to keep in step with the Spirit. It is as Christ lives in us, as we yield ourselves to obey the promptings of His Spirit, that the fruit will grow naturally in our lives.

This life, though, is not always simple and straight-forward. In the natural realm of growing crops and fruit, a lot of work has to be done to keep the plants and trees and vegetables healthy. We have to keep away the thorns and weeds, and the diseases that

spoil the fruit. Paul says something about this in relation to spiritual things. He speaks of the "flesh", or as some versions of the Bible translate it, "the sinful nature". He says in chapter two verse twenty of Galatians that he has "been crucified with Christ" and that it is no longer Paul that is living, but it is Christ living in him. Paul is speaking figuratively here. He is saying that when the Lord Jesus was put to death it was in Paul's place, as his substitute. So, in the sight of God, Paul, and all who come to faith in Christ, died with Him.

Paul is saying in Galatians chapter 2 that those who belong to Christ have by their faith in Him crucified their sinful natures with all its evil passions and desires. So we are not to live according to our sinful natures, but we are to live under the control of the Spirit. What does all this mean? Let me explain a little further.

When Christ died for us on the cross, He not only bore our sins but took to the cross our old sinful nature. This is what we read in Romans chapter 6 verse 6 - "For we know that our old self was crucified with him (Christ) so that the body of sin might be rendered powerless". This is why Paul declares, as we have just seen, that they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh. Our being united with Christ by faith, when we first trusted Him as our Saviour, means that we recognise and agree that we can have no more to do with the old sinful, selfish way of living.

However, Paul makes it clear in verses 16 to 18 of this chapter that there is a conflict that still goes on after we have become Christians. There is so often a desire within us that does not want to go Christ's way, and that shows itself in an opposite way to the fruit of god's Spirit. So, if the fruit of the Spirit is going to grow and mature in our lives, something has to be done about this conflict. Paul tells us to be sure on our side that the old sinful nature is really crucified - put to death - and that we are walking according to the Spirit, in other words that He is really controlling our lives.

We can put this another way - we are to see that every part of our being is yielded to the Lord and that He is really Lord in every part. As we yield to Christ as Lord, we allow His Spirit to fill us and take control of all our thoughts and actions and attitudes. Then the Lord can make His fruit grow and ripen in us. In this way He shows through us His own love and character. It is in the growth of this fruit that the Lord Jesus Christ is glorified in the way we live.

## The Fruit of the Holy Spirit - Chapter 2

### Love

The first fruit of the Spirit of which Paul speaks in Galatians chapter five is the fruit of 'Love'. The English language is rather poor when it comes to talking about love. Greek, the language in which the New Testament was first written has several different words to express the various kinds of love there are. In English we speak of loving all sorts of things and really it is only another way of saying that we like them. We say we love fruit and flowers, and the fresh air and animals, but really we only like these things, even though we may like them very much. Then we use the word love for the sexual desire between men and women. This may include love but it may not, because it can often be only lust - without love at all.

There is a love, though, which is a true love whether it is between man and wife, brother and sister, parent and child, or friend and friend. This love means devotion, willingness to sacrifice, to give ourselves to the one we love, and to work for the very best and highest in their lives. When we think of this love at its very highest level it is God's love. Sadly, merely human love is often spoilt and ruined by wrong motives and by sin. Sinfulness has been a part of mankind's character from the earliest days of man's history, and it is because of this that human love has been spoilt. It has become tarnished, and is often nothing more than selfishness, rather than true devotion and the desire for the good of others.

God's love is pure and unspoilt. It is a holy Love. It wants and desires only the very best for mankind. God so loves us that He gave His only Son to die for us. He did this so that He could reconcile us to Himself, deal with our sin, and restore us to His likeness.

In The First Letter of John, in the New Testament of the Bible, in chapter 4 verses 8 and 16, we read that "God is love". The Christian faith believes in one God, one essential Being and this Being is holy love. Within this one Being there are three distinctions, The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit. These three are coequal and co-eternal. They are equal in majesty and power. No one of them is greater than the others or differs in desire from the others. What one desires, all desire, and what one wills, all will. Love works perfectly within the Godhead. It is the perfect bond which unites them in the one Godhead. There is perfect harmony, and it is this love which is the very essence of God.

There are two marks of true love. It wants to give its own blessedness and nature to others. But it also desires those who are loved to return love in devotion, gratitude and service. God's love to us is revealed in the giving of the Lord Jesus Christ for us, and in Christ's willingness to die for us. God so loved the world that He gave His only Son. And so He asks of us our love, devotion and obedience in return. Humanly and naturally this would be impossible because of our sin, but God makes it possible for us to become possessors of His love so that we can love Him back. "We love", says John, "because He first loved us" (1 John 4 v. 19).

Not quite every time, but most times, when the New Testament wants to speak about this kind of love it uses a special word to express it. It is a different word from those used to mean sexual love, or love between relatives and friends. It is not merely a word of emotion, though it can include emotion; it means "supreme choice". God set His love upon us to do the best for us, to save us from sin and to make us like Himself. This is what we have just considered. This was God's supreme choice. We have to love Him in the same way. We have to set Him above all else and choose Him before all else. I will say more about this later.

Paul has a whole chapter on this fruit of love. You will find it in his First Letter to the Corinthians - it is chapter 13. The letter was written to one of his difficult churches. Its members were given to boasting, and loved to be praised as wonderful Christians. Paul wrote to correct this and to advise them on many other matters. Their worship was often spoilt by each trying to do better than the others. Paul told them not to be eager to get all sorts of spiritual gifts, but to make sure that they had the best gift of all - the gift of love. He describes this gift of love very fully in this chapter 13. His heart burns and he is borne away into the thought of love and pictures it in glowing terms.

He says it is the most important gift of all. We can speak with the tongues of angels, but unless we have love it is nothing more than a clanging gong. We can give away all we have in gifts to the poor, and we can suffer and die as martyrs, but without love it does no good. All we do is useless unless love is the source and motive. All our activity if we do not have love is like the body without life, the engine without power. All is useless unless love drives and enthuses. Love is the fulfilling of God's law. Love like this matters more than anything.

Paul continues in 1 Corinthians 13 to speak of some of the marks of love. Some of them occur again in the list of the fruit in Galatians chapter 5 of which we are thinking, so we will not say much about them here. It makes us see, though, that Paul thought of love as the source of all the rest of the "Fruit of the Spirit". Let us look at some of the marks of love mentioned in 1 Corinthians 13 which are not mentioned in the list in Galatians 5.

Paul tells them first of all that love does not envy. Envy and jealousy are evil, bitter feelings which spoil the christian life. There is nothing wrong in desiring the best spiritual gifts - Paul urges us to do so. It is wrong, though, when, because others have what we see as better gifts, we have ill feelings towards them and feel resentful. When we allow the love of God to fill our hearts, these evil feelings are driven out.

## The Fruit of the Holy Spirit - Chapter 3

### More Characteristics of Love

Continuing his description of true love in 1 Corinthians chapter 13, Paul says that love is not proud - or puffed-up. Love is humble. It is not always boasting about the things it has done. People who have this kind of love want God to have the praise and the glory. They are not always looking for others to praise them and pat them on the back. They are not always talking about how wonderful they are. This was a special failing of the Corinthians. They were very proud of themselves. Read this letter to the Corinthians through and you will see what I mean.

Then Paul says that love is courteous; it does not behave rudely. It does not deliberately say and do things to make others feel awkward. It is straight in its speaking, but always sympathetic and understanding. It does not unnecessarily offend others.

Love is also unselfish. It does not seek its own interests. It gives up its own rights for the sake of others and for the sake of Jesus Christ. Rights are so often connected with material possessions. Love does not seek possessions merely for itself. It wants to give.

Then, love is not easily angered; it is not quick tempered, touchy and irritable. Someone has called quick temper the vice of the virtuous. So many Christians who are good and kind in many ways, utterly spoil their witness by bursts of temper. Love means as well that we do not yield to provocation. We are not embittered by injuries, whether real or supposed. Love makes it easy to get on with others, and hard to take offence.

This love also thinks no evil. It does not keep a record of wrongs done. Some people are always turning over in their minds the wrongs people do, and especially those done to themselves. When we do this, bitter and unkind feelings begin to arise. True love does not work that way. It is able to forget the wrong and evil things, and remember the good things. The word used for "thinks no evil" or "keeps no record of evil" is a word for keeping money accounts. Love does not reckon up the wrongs people have done against it. So often we hear people say, "I'll pay him back!" They have kept an account of it all so they can pay back later. Love does not do that.

Another thing Paul says is that love does not rejoice in evil, but it DOES rejoice with the truth. This means that love cannot share the pleasure of those who carry out evil; it cannot rejoice when people get away with evil and are not found out. It does rejoice, though, with all who do good, and when God and good triumph.

There is one last collection of positive marks of this love. Paul says it "bears, believes, hopes, endures and never fails". It is not blind to reality but it is thoroughly optimistic. It knows God and knows He is able for every person and every situation. It continually credits people with the best intentions. Love hopes against all hope when people seem hopeless. It courageously waits and expects through every difficult situation. It never fails, never lets you down.

Now let us think about some more important points concerning love. First, it is the atmosphere, the heavenly atmosphere, in which a Christian should be living. In Ephesians chapter 5 verse 2 we are told to "walk in love". In Jude verse 21 we are told to "keep ourselves in the love of God". We are to live in love and breathe love as we live in and breathe the air around us. Only as we live in the love of God can our relationship with god and others be kept right. We live in it too, in the sense that we keep it on like a coat. Paul tells us this in Colossians chapter 3 verse 14: "Over all these virtues put on

love, which binds them all together in perfect unity". The garment of love holds our lives together and is there for everyone to see.

The New Testament also tells us that our love can be made perfect. John in his first letter chapter 4 verse 12 that "If we love each other, God lives in us, and His love is made perfect in us". Another version says, "is made complete in us". So, God's love in us can be made complete. This does not mean there is no growth or that we can never have more of God's love. It does mean that God can set us free from the opposites of His love. Just before the verses we are considering in Galatians chapter 5, Paul gives a list of the opposites of love, which he calls "the works of the flesh" (the old sinful nature). A very nasty, hateful lot they are! They spring from an evil heart and spoil love:

"The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: 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".

God can cleanse us from these and so our love can be complete.

Now I have been thinking very positively, and you may be imagining that it will all just automatically happen this way. This is partly true. It IS God's love which is shed in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, and God CAN deal with the evil within us, when we allow Him to. All this, though, has to be worked out in our daily lives and it is not always easy. People treat us badly; often they are cruel and hurtful; often they do not understand our motives, and sometimes neither do we theirs. In times like this, misunderstandings and disagreements arise. All this often brings unpleasant feelings. Now this is where we have to walk in love and keep ourselves in the love of God. The love of God is sunshine as well as atmosphere; so keep in the sunshine!

Paul in his letter to the Philippians gives some advice as to how we can do this. He says in chapter 4 verse 7, "Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is to be admired - if there is anything excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things". That's it! Think the lovely, and the best about people even when it seems just the opposite.

## The Fruit of the Holy Spirit - Chapter 4

### Joy

Joy, like love, is another of those English words which can have so many different and what are really contradictory meanings. People can have joy over wrong things as well as right, evil as well as good, the nasty as well as the nice. It is the kind of motives and character we have that governs the things and persons over which we rejoice. So, we can divide joy into three types, as we shall see now.

There is a joy which can be really called nothing but devilish. There is no getting away from the fact that there are some people so evil and brutal that they delight in wrong doing, and in the suffering of others. They rejoice in planning evil, and in carrying out their plans.

But by no means are all people like this. There is a natural, human joy which is good. The joy of a mother over her baby; the joy gained by success in a noble cause; the joy of friendship and human love, and many others. This is one of God's delightful gifts to humanity. This gift is spoilt so often by sin and selfishness, but it is very real and one of life's treasures.

There is another kind of joy and it is this of which we are thinking in this study. It is divine joy. It is God's gift in a special way. Actually, it is more than a gift, it is a fruit of God's Spirit. It is one of the workings of God which comes with His provision of salvation and eternal life. It is far superior to natural joy. It is planted deep within our beings. It is something real within us, and the emotional side of it which often comes, is but the overflow of this deep inward reality. People around, who know nothing of it, sometimes fail to understand it!

Let us think now of a few things that are connected with this joy. First of all it has to do with salvation from sin, both in the sense of pardon, and the deliverance from the power of sin. The message of the angels when Christ was born was one of joy, as we read in Luke's Gospel chapter 2. They said to the shepherds: "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David, a Saviour has been born to you. He is Christ the Lord". That was at the birth of Jesus, and after His resurrection the same atmosphere is there. The women were filled with joy at the empty tomb and when they heard the message of the angels: "He is not here. He is risen!" The disciples could hardly believe as with joy and amazement they saw Jesus alive again, and saw the marks of the crucifixion in His hands and feet. Later on, in writing his letter to the Romans, Paul tells us that the main factors in the kingdom of God are "righteousness, JOY and peace in the Holy Spirit".

Because this joy is connected with salvation, it is evidently DIVINE JOY, the joy of Jesus Himself. Jesus spoke often about His joy. In John's Gospel chapter 15 He says that He has taught His disciples so that "My joy might be in you, and your joy might be complete". This joy transforms our human joy and makes it supernatural and divine. As we said just now, this joy is part of our Christian faith. It goes deeper than merely the emotions, although there IS emotion, there must be. The amount of emotion on the surface for all to see varies considerably with different people, but this joy is a deep inner reality which helps to hold us steady in all the circumstances of life.

The third point about this joy is that it is somehow independent of our circumstances. It is not just happiness. Happiness is dependent on our circumstances and our feelings. We are happy when everything happens to please us. Joy goes deeper than this. It is there when the storm clouds of life are overhead. It is our source of strength in the midst of all

of life's difficulties and hardships. Nehemiah told the Jews struggling with him to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem against strong opposition, "The joy of the Lord is your strength!" (Nehemiah chapter 8 v. 10)

It is remarkable how closely related joy is to trouble and suffering in the New Testament. For instance, Jesus is speaking about His joy and giving it to His disciples right on the eve of His crucifixion, and when, naturally speaking, He would have felt no joy. Then again in Acts chapter 13 verse 52 we read that the disciples were filled with joy right in the midst of persecution. In 1 Peter chapter 1, Peter is speaking of heaviness through many trials and testings, and he says at the very same time that through all this the Christians were filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy. You see, this joy is IN THE LORD and NOT IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES. By faith we see that God can make all that is happening work for our good and His glory, and the well-being of others. It is not what is happening that we are rejoicing in, but in God's presence with us, and in what He is doing and has done.

The fourth point about this joy is that it requires to be exercised and cultivated. In Philippians chapter 4, Paul urges them to "Rejoice in the Lord, and again I say rejoice!" In 1 Thessalonians chapter 4 verse 14, he says, "Be joyful always". James, too, says in chapter 1 verse 2 of his letter, "Count it all joy when you fall into all kinds of testing". Another version puts it, "Consider it pure joy whenever you face trials of many kinds". He gives the reason for this as well: "Because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance". You see we need to work with God and trust Him daily to keep this joy within us by the power of His Holy Spirit, even when things are hard. The things which test us can strengthen our joy, and make our lives more like Christ's life, as we keep loving, trusting and obeying Him.

This joy is a wonderful fruit. It enriches our lives as we let it grow and develop to the glory of God.

## The Fruit of the Holy Spirit - Chapter 5

### Peace

The next "Fruit of the Spirit" in Paul's list is "peace". "Peace" is a thrilling and pleasure-giving word even in the English language, but the word used in the original languages of the Old and New Testaments is richer still in meaning.

We so often think of peace as just the ending of war and trouble. That is satisfying enough but the biblical meaning is much more so. The word for peace in the New Testament is the translation of the Old Testament Hebrew word "Shalom". The Arabic word "Salaam" comes from this, and you probably know this word.

The Old Testament word "Shalom" means peace in the positive sense of wholeness, health, and all that makes for a person's highest good. When you greet someone with the word "Shalom" you are really saying that you trust that he will enjoy all that is good from the hands of God. This is what the New Testament implies by the word - all that is for a person's highest good, for his wholeness in mind and body.

Of course, to make all this plain, the word has different phases of meaning. A simple illustration can show the various ways in which we can think of peace. Two artists were asked to paint a picture of peace. Strangely enough they both chose the same kind of scene. It was a lake surrounded by mountains and trees, but what was happening in the picture was very different in each case.

One painted a clear blue sky without a cloud in it, the sun shining brightly, and all gloriously calm and peaceful. Of course, he called his picture "Peace". The other painted just the opposite. The storm clouds were everywhere; the wind was tossing the branches of the trees, and even swaying the trunks. Lightning was seen flashing and the white foam of the waves was seen all over the lake. In this picture, though, on one of the wind swept branches, a little bird sat. It was singing its heart out, quite undisturbed by the noise, the storm and wind around him, thoroughly happy in the midst of it all. The title of this picture was also "Peace".

Both artists were right, weren't they? One showed peace of surroundings, the other was peace in the midst of surroundings which were anything but peaceful. It is just as true for the Christian believer. Sometimes there IS peace and sunshine all around. Sometimes, though, it is just the opposite, but we can still have the peace of God in our hearts and know that He is taking care of us.

In thinking about this peace, which is a fruit of the Spirit of God, we are going to think about the parts of our lives it covers, and the different way in which it comes, and how it affects us.

First of all, this peace means being at peace with God; it is the peace of reconciliation. Paul, in Ephesians chapter 2 describes those who are without Christ as "without hope and without God in the world". The message of the Bible is that without Christ men and women are rebels, opposed to God, self-centred and wanting their own way.

We are lost and cut off from God. We are just like the prodigal son, away in the far country, whom Luke tells us about in chapter 15 of his Gospel. Mankind needs to come back to God, to be reconciled to Him, and make peace with Him. We need to be friends with God again!

This is why Jesus Christ died on the cross, so that we might be reconciled to God. When we come in repentance and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, then we are forgiven, the past is blotted out; sins are blotted out, and we are at peace with God.

This brings to us a wonderful sense of knowing God, and it is the source of all the peace that follows. We have the favour of God Himself; He is smiling upon us, and we are living in the sunshine of His love for us.

The second point about this peace is that it means we have confidence in God's love for us. It is more than being forgiven. It is more than fellowship with our Maker, God. It is an inward certainty and assurance that God loves ME! We know deep within us that God is love. Look up 1 John 4 verse 16 in this connection.

Life is not always easy, and the way is often hard and tough. Sorrows and difficulties sometimes press in on us. The Bible tells us that because God is love, He is planning and working in love for us all the time, whatever circumstances look like. It is peace to know this within our hearts.

But peace also means confidence in God's power. It is not good enough to know that God loves us, we need to know as well that He has the power to do what we need.

My father or my dearest friend may love me dearly, and may long to help in some real time of need, but he may not have the money or ability to do what is needed. So, though he loves me, he cannot help me. God is not like that. There is so much said in the Bible about God's power and ability that we cannot possibly mention it all now, but here are just three places where it is mentioned:

In Ephesians chapter 3 verse 20, Paul says that God "is able to do immeasurably more than all we can ask or imagine". That surely is enough for your every need!

Then in the closing verses of his letter Jude says that God "is able to keep us from falling". This means He can keep us when we are fiercely tempted to fall into sin. What wonderful peace this can give as we realise that we need never fall, that there is victory available! Jude also says that God can keep us to the end, until He presents us without fault before His glorious presence.

Then, thirdly, Paul again says, in 2 Corinthians chapter 9 verse 8: "God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound to every good work". This is peace, to know not only that God loves us, but that He is able to keep us, enable us and strengthen us in every time of need.

The next point about this peace is that it comes when we are at one with the will of God. This will mean that all we want to do is to please Him. The prophet Amos, in the Old Testament, said, "How can two walk together except they be agreed?" We cannot really walk with God and have His peace unless we are one with Him in His desires and purposes and plans for our lives.

There is one more thing that this peace means. It means freedom from the evil passions which make us unlike our Lord Jesus, and from unbelief which makes us unable to trust Him and have confidence in His love for us.

I will have some more to say about this peace in the next study.

## The Fruit of the Holy Spirit - Chapter 6

### A Prayer for Peace

There is a very helpful and encouraging verse at the end of Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians. It is chapter 3, verse 16. This is what it says: "Now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace at all times and in every way".

These words form one of Paul's prayers for the Thessalonian believers. We are going to think about this prayer and see how it helps us to understand still more about this peace which is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. I trust that this will make us want to allow this wonderful "fruit" to grow in our lives.

Paul says that peace comes from the Lord of peace. There is an exciting verse in Paul's letter to the Colossians chapter 1 - verse 17. Paul says there that by Christ all things hold together. Through Christ the whole universe is maintained and exists. In Acts chapter 10 verse 36, Peter calls Jesus Christ, "Lord of all".

It is interesting that Paul says "LORD of peace" in that verse from 2 Thessalonians, and not "GOD of peace", as he does in other places. Because He rules and is in control of the world, and if He has control of our lives, we have peace within us.

Then, Paul also says that this peace is a gift: "The Lord Himself GIVE you peace". Jesus Himself said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you". This peace cannot be worked-up; we cannot strive until we get it. We have to surrender and take it as a gift if we are truly going to experience it.

This is true when we trust the Lord for forgiveness and reconciliation. It is when we realise that He alone can forgive us through His death on the cross, and when we cast ourselves upon Him in faith, that the peace of forgiveness and reconciliation comes.

When we are conscious of our own failure and weakness, and when we surrender utterly and trust Christ for His cleansing and the filling of His Spirit, then we receive the peace that comes through being really one with the Lord.

Then in the storms of life, the trials, testings and problems, peace can really only come as a gift. The more we try to pull ourselves together and make ourselves calm and peaceful, the worse we get. It is the same in our walk with the Lord. We have to stop striving and leave ourselves in God's hands. We have to commit our troubles and circumstances to Him, and ask Him for His peace. Only so does peace come; not always immediately, it is true, but it DOES come.

Our verse also says that peace can be "at all times". God wants His peace to flow continually through our lives, so that there is an atmosphere of peace around us for others to see. Isaiah chapter 48 verse 14 speaks about "peace like a river" steadily flowing on, and that is what God promises the Christian.

But this verse promises something more. It promises peace in every way, or under all circumstances. This is not so easy to understand or to think as being possible. Can we really have peace no matter what is happening?

Paul speaks in Philippians chapter 4 verse 7 about the "peace which passes all understanding". He says that this peace can guard or protect our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Is such peace really possible, however fierce the storm, however hopeless

the circumstances facing us, and however difficult the people are with whom we live or work? I believe it is if we keep our lives yielded to the Lord, and we keep trusting Him.

This does not mean that we will not be hurt; it does not mean that we shan't be perplexed, confused and despondent sometimes. We have our human feelings and emotions, and life is by no means always easy. But deep down within our hearts we can be at rest and at peace with God.

Psalm 119 verse 165 says, "Great peace have they that love your law, and nothing can make them stumble". Also in the same chapter of Philipians which I quoted before, Paul says, "I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances". (Philipians 4 v. 11)

Though the winds lash the surface of the ocean, and fierce and mighty waves roll across it, deep down, underneath there is calm. So it can be with the Christian whose trust is in His Lord.

Paul finishes this prayer for peace with the words, "The Lord be with all of you". Do you see the real meaning of this? Peace of all kinds, peace in all circumstances, centres in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the one and only source of all true peace. He promises to give it, and we may enjoy it.

We must realise, though, that this peace cannot be our automatically. It does not just happen. We need to constantly trust and obey, to walk closely with the Lord, and listen to the Holy Spirit's quietest whisper.

There is a verse in Colossians chapter 3, it is verse 15, and it says, "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts". The word "rule" means to act like an umpire or referee. The umpire stops you when you are not keeping the rules. Sometimes we are in danger of breaking the rules in our Christian life, and we lose our peace.

Then, we have to wait on the Lord, seek Him as to the reason why, and whether we are on the right path. He will surely show us. It is so important to have the peace of God in our hearts because life is so different, even in the midst of trouble, when His peace is within!

## The Fruit of the Holy Spirit - Chapter 7

### Patience

We hear a great deal about the first three "Fruits of the Spirit" - love, joy and peace - but not so much about the remaining six. We must remember, however, that these are just as important.

Long-suffering, or patience, means just what it appears to mean - to suffer long. We speak about people being short-tempered or quick-tempered, but we do not speak of their being long-tempered. That is what long-suffering means, though. We are not, as Christians, to be short, quick or hot-tempered, but we are to be slow, long and cool tempered!

Patience is another word which means much the same, and in many more recent translations of the Bible you will find "patience" used instead of long-suffering.

If we take love as the source from which the rest of the fruit springs, then this is certainly true of long-suffering or patience. There can be no long-suffering without love, and no real love without long-suffering of the right kind.

We have to be careful to get the right idea about the meaning of this word. It can so easily be thought of in just a passive way, that is that we just put up with things. It can be thought of as a sleepy sort of indifference. It is more than this, though. It is the active waiting for good to come. It is expecting God to produce something positive in the midst of all that is causing suffering or difficulty.

When we think of patience, we think mainly of our own attitude to our neighbours and friends, but God is also long-suffering and patient and HIS patience is the source of ours. This side of the matter is important, and so we will think of the long-suffering and patience of God first of all.

We read about the patience of God in 2. Peter chapter 3 verses 9 & 15. Peter is writing about the second coming of the Lord Jesus. He is saying that just because He has not come as quickly as his readers expected, it does not mean that God is slow in keeping His promises. He is patient and willing to wait because He does not want anyone to be lost. And so he says that this patience means salvation.

In 1 Peter chapter 3 verse 20 also, we read again that God waited patiently in the days of Noah so that some could be saved from the flood. Again, in Romans chapter 2 verse 4, Paul begs his readers not to treat lightly God's patience and kindness because this is designed to lead men to repentance. That verse reads like this:

"Do you show contempt for the riches of God's kindness, tolerance and patience, not realising that God's kindness leads you towards repentance?"

God in His patience and kindness wants to give us every opportunity to turn from our sins and seek His forgiveness and salvation in Christ. So you see that God is patient and long-suffering with us all because He does not want to give us up, but wants us to love Him and know Him, and share His own life.

Now let us see how God wants this fruit of patience to grow and show itself in our own lives as Christians. There are at least four ways in which it ought to show itself:

First, it ought to show itself in the way we react to our circumstances. In the first six verses of James chapter 5, James describes the terrible injustices and evil conditions of his day. Then in verse seven he tells his readers to be patient until the coming of the Lord.

The Lord did not seem to be caring about the way they were being treated, or about the evil and injustice there was. But, says James, remember the farmer. He has to wait many months before the land yields its crop. The coming of the Lord is near; trust Him; be patient, just as the farmer is patient.

The Lord knows what He is doing. He has a purpose in it all. Do not grumble, but wait for Him to act. Remember how the prophets in the Old Testament waited in the face of suffering for God to answer their prayers. Remember Job, and what he had to endure, and how long he had to wait, until finally he saw the deliverance of God.

We must actively and patiently wait for the Lord to come, and for Him to fulfil His purpose in our lives.

Secondly, patience should show itself in our prayer-lives. In Hebrews chapter 6 verse 12 the writer says, "We do not want you to become lazy but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised". And further on, in verse 15, we read, "So after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised".

Do you see what the writer is saying? God makes many promises to us in the Bible. For example there is the one in Romans chapter 8 verse 28 that tells us "that all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose". Then another, in 2 Corinthians chapter 12 verse 9 which says that God's grace is sufficient for us.

Now God tells us to believe these promises and expect them to be honoured as we trust Him for them. Do not give up until you have "inherited the promise", that is until you have really experienced them!

Thirdly, our patience is to be shown in our dealings with the ungodly, and with those who wrong us. You will remember that Jesus said we are to forgive freely, without limit. Then, in the parable of the unforgiving servant in Matthew chapter 18, with his fellow-servant, and though he owed him a very little sum he would not forgive him. We are to be like the master who forgave that servant an enormous sum.

We are to be patient with those who wrong us, ready to forgive, and always longing that they may come to know the Saviour as we do. We must always remember God's patience with us, and the fact that He has forgiven us all of our sins against Him.

Then lastly, patience, or long-suffering, must be shown in our relationships with each other as believers. Paul says in Ephesians chapter 4 verse 2 that we are to be "patient, bearing with one another in love". He says the same in Colossians chapter 3 verse 12: "Bear with one another and forgive whatever grievance you may have against each other".

We all have faults and failings, and we need to be patient and understanding with each other.

We will look a little more at this important fruit in our next study.

## The Fruit of the Holy Spirit - Chapter 8

### Patience and Kindness

We finished the last study by pointing out that patience was necessary in our relationships with each other. We have to bear with one another's faults and failings.

It is also very needful in our teaching of each other about our faith, and in our trying to help each other on the Christian way. We do not all learn as quickly as each other, and with some of us it takes a long time for the truth to sink in, and for us to see just what we ought to do.

We need to be patient with each other, and try to help each other, especially the slower ones who find life harder. Paul tells us in 2 Timothy chapter 2 and verse 2, to correct, rebuke and encourage with great patience and careful instruction. And that reminds us of another thing about patience; it never gives in or gives up; it is always hopeful and persistent.

There is one other thing about this patience. It is patience with joyfulness. Many people are long-suffering, but very obviously so! They are patient, it is true, and they do not actually grumble, but there is no joy in it.

The New Testament speaks about joy in everything, as we saw in a previous study. Paul, in Colossians chapter 1 verse 11, writes about having endurance and patience with joy. Some versions put the joy with the thanksgiving that follows. It could as well be either, but whichever way it is, the joy is there. In the midst of all our patience there should be this joy.

So may this fruit of patience truly grow and ripen in our lives.

Now we must turn to the next on our list which is gentleness. Gentleness is the word used in the older translations of the Bible, but the same word is translated "kindness" in other places. The modern translations use the word "kindness" here in Galatians chapter 5, and this is probably the best way to think of this fruit.

The word is used in both the Old and New Testaments when speaking of the nature of God. It is not always exactly the same word, but the idea is expressed in our English Old Testament by words like "loving-kindness", "tender mercy", and "steadfast love".

In the New Testament, though, we find the very same word as is used here in Galatians, used twice when Paul is talking about God's saving grace. In Ephesians chapter 2 verse 7, he speaks of God's saving grace being expressed in His kindness in Christ Jesus. Then again in writing to Titus, in chapter 3 verse 4, he says that "the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared".

So, you see, God is kind to us in spite of our sin. He longs for our salvation from sin and for us to be His people. Also He has done all He can for us in the coming in the Person of Jesus Christ to die for us. It is this kind of attitude which is the fruit of the Spirit.

It is this kind of attitude that He wants us to have to one another. It is good, too, to remember that compared with what God has had to put up with of sinfulness, rebellion and unbelief in us, what we have to put up with in others is very little.

We have to be careful in our thinking of this fruit. Kindness is another word, like love, which often loses its true meaning. In the minds of many, kindness is a soft, sentimental sort of thing. To them there is no sense of right or justice in it.

God's kindness is not like this. The very fact that He sent His Son Jesus to die for our sin shows this. Sin is awful to God, and He does not just overlook it. He does, though, do His utmost to get us to come to the cross of Christ, the only place where there is forgiveness and deliverance.

Someone has described kindness as "warm goodwill towards all others". This is how we are to be. We will want the very highest for them, and will do all we can to help them see and gain it. We will want the very best for them continually.

This is real kindness. But we will do it in the right way. We will try to understand their circumstances, their problems and their heartaches. We will be mindful of these things at all times when seeking the best for them. In all our seeking to be kind, we will be considerate and thoughtful. We will not be unnecessarily blunt, and we will not be unfeeling.

This kind of attitude is to be shown also in the way in which leaders are to reprove, rebuke and teach others. Here it is very much like the patience we were thinking of earlier. It must work, too, in both directions, not only in the giving of reproof but also in receiving it.

Reproof, when given, must be tempered with love; it must not be harsh and hard. We must be like a mother caring for a sick child, or a surgeon operating so carefully on his patient.

I wonder what someone from another world, who knew nothing of this world, would think if he went into a room where a surgeon was operating. How cruel he would think we were! But it is not so. The surgeon operates in a very careful, kindly way, and his purpose in the end, is not to give pain but to take it away.

This is the way in which God reproves and rebukes His children, and so we, too, must act in the same kindly way if we have to reprove or rebuke someone.

It works the other way round as well. We have to be kind when we have to receive rebuke, when someone feels it is necessary to tell us of something wrong, or not for the best in our lives. We must not be touchy or impatient; we must not feel bitter. We must take it in the love with which it is given. We must think about it, and if the rebuke is right, do something about and change our lives or course of action.

## The Fruit of the Holy Spirit - Chapter 9

### Goodness

Goodness is another one of those words which needs some further explanation to make clear exactly what is meant.

The word is used of so many things and the meaning really depends on the object of which we are speaking. A good dog is not the same as a good horse, and a good tree is not the same as a good farm.

A thing is good if it fulfils the purpose for which it is made. So goodness here means being the kind of people God wants us to be. That means loving God, being like Him, and showing His love to others.

Goodness includes all that was said about kindness, but goes still further. Kindness refers to our actions, what we do for or to others. Goodness goes deeper. It is the inner quality of our lives. It is the power within, which makes us kind.

God's character is described in Exodus chapter 34 verse 6, like this, "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger and abounding in love and faithfulness". That is real goodness, and it shows us what God wants us to be.

There are two sides to goodness, love and truth. True goodness is walking in both. A writer of some years ago, writing about them, says "These has God joined together and they should never be put asunder. Certainly we should walk in truth, but not in truth only, for that would be hard; and certainly we should walk in love, but not in love only, for that would be soft; but we should walk in both".

That is true goodness, and that is the fruit of the Spirit of which Paul is writing.

We said just now that goodness is fulfilling the purpose for which we are made. A good fruit is one without badness, that is ripe, and that tastes how it ought to taste. A good Christian is one whose heart is clean and pure, whose motives are right, whose personality is a whole one.

This inner goodness works out in good acts. The good man will never do a mean, selfish act. His words, too, are good. They are not hard and bitter, and he watches carefully lest he be thoughtless in his speaking.

This goodness shows also in his attitudes. He takes care always to think the best of others, and to put the best construction on what they do.

You remember the advice Paul gives us in his letter to the Philippians chapter 4 verse 8 - "Finally, brothers, 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".

We have mentioned these words before and will probably do so again, because they are so important. What we think, we usually say or do. What we are in our thoughts, we become in our lives.

Another way of explaining goodness is to say that it is a Christ-centred life.

So often even the good things we do really spring from a measure of selfishness. Even those we call good people so often have wrong motives. I once read about a man who came up to his friend and asked how his son was. But without giving his friend time to answer, he said "Let me tell you about MY son". He went on for a good half-an-hour talking about HIS son, and there was no time left to hear about his friend's son. You see, his real concern was not for the others man's son at all.

If we are truly going to bear this fruit of the Spirit, we must live a Christ-centred life. We must be able to testify as Paul did, "I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me". (Galatians 2 v. 20)

George Muller who lived in Bristol, in England, during the last century, was a true man of God. He was called by God to look after children who had lost their parents and had no one to care for them. He trusted the Lord to send him all that he needed to feed and clothe these needy children, and God did it in a wonderful way.

He was asked one day what the secret was of his godly life and his trust in God. His reply was something like this, "There came a day when I died utterly. I died to George Muller, his opinions, tastes and will; died to the world and its approval or blame; died to the approval or blame even of my brothers and friends. Since then I have sought only to show myself approved to God".

This is true goodness, the true fruit of the Spirit, not to seek our own desires and ambitions, but to allow Christ to live in us fully - a Christ-centred life.

This kindness also makes life so much more simple. When we want things for ourselves, and want life to go our own way, there is often so much scheming and planning. But when Christ is the centre of our lives, all we want is His will. He is doing the planning and not we, and we can leave it all in His hands.

May this fruit of goodness, then, grow fully in our lives as Christ lives in us and makes us like Him.

## The Fruit of the Holy Spirit - Chapter 10

### Faith

Last time we were thinking about goodness, for this study we turn to the next "Fruit of the Spirit" which is "Faith".

The word faith is in the older English translations of the Bible. In the more modern translations the word is translated as "faithfulness". The word used by Paul is translated both ways in the New Testament. Sometimes it is clearly faith that is meant, and sometimes it is just as clear that it is faithfulness, or loyalty, that is meant.

In this list of the fruit of the Spirit it could just as well mean either. After all, the two meanings are very close together. Faith, that is the atmosphere of trust and confidence, soon produces faithfulness and loyalty. On the other hand, there can really be no faithfulness or loyalty except there be trust and confidence first. So we will think of the word in both ways.

First of all, faith as trust or confidence which are ideas well known to us. We know that even in everyday, ordinary life, we could hardly get along without it.

We have to have faith in those who work for us, who take us anywhere in a car or wagon, and in our own friends and relatives, if we are to live peacefully together. It is because we have a certain amount of faith of this kind that we go about our work and play without worrying too much.

But Paul is thinking about faith which is far more important. It is faith that means confidence in God Himself, and in Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Faith in Jesus is the very basis of Christian living. Paul says in Romans chapter 1 verse 17, "The righteous (or justified) shall live by faith". Continually we learn more and more of what it means to live trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Faith is needed in every detail of our lives. Faith enables us to live for the Lord in surroundings that seem impossible. Faith enables us to sing in prison, and to fight the good fight of faith even in chains.

The Letter to the Hebrews chapter 11 verse 1 says, "Faith is being sure of what we hope for, and certain of what we do not see". So let us see how this works out in practice.

First of all, it is the secret of being able to praise God in all kinds of circumstances. We may be able to praise God without sight and even without many other good things that we have, but we certainly cannot have joy and praise God without faith and confidence that He is with us, and is in charge of all that is happening.

This is why Paul and Silas could sing in prison after they had been beaten. They had faith in God; they believed He was true and faithful and would not fail them.

Life is full of opposites. Sometimes we find ourselves getting restless, never happy unless we are doing something. We have lost the deep inner peace of resting in the Lord. But we can go the other way and in our desire to avoid being restless, we become too easy going and lose our vision. It is faith that keeps us balanced.

Faith in God enables us to leave things with Him. It enables us to trust Him to work things out all right, and not to think we are the only ones who can get things done.

On the other hand, if we have real faith in the Lord, we will never be lazy or lose the vision of His purpose for our lives. We can be very active to fulfil the Lord's purpose, but in the activity there is the knowledge that only He can enable us, and so we are restful in Him.

There is the same kind of balance required as to when we should speak and when we should keep quiet. We so often want to have the last word. We want to be sure we win the argument and make others see our point of view.

If our faith in God is real, we know that He can get the last word quite easily without our help. We realise that He can look after His own truth, and that it is far more important to show a Christ-like spirit than to win the argument.

But there is another kind of situation when a word from us may help someone in time of trouble or temptation. A word from us can help them trust in the Lord themselves. We are often inclined to keep quiet, and to think that our words will not be of much use. But if we are trusting in God ourselves, and experiencing His help in our own lives, we will want to speak, and say what Christ means to us.

The Psalmist said, "I believe and therefore have I spoken", and Paul echoes these words in 2 Corinthians chapter 4 verses 13-18. Read these verses and see that as we believe God and speak, He will make our words powerful.

So you see, faith is important in every part of life. It is as we believe God that we have fellowship and communion with Him. As we do this His grace and strength flows into our lives, and He enables us to triumph in temptations and trials.

Now we must turn to the other meaning of the word, that is, faithfulness or loyalty. It is faith in the sense in which we have been speaking that enables us to be faithful and loyal.

Before we think about the faithfulness of the believer, it is good to remind ourselves that this word is used of God several times in the New Testament. We read in 1 Corinthians chapter 10 verse 13 that God is faithful in not allowing us to be tried beyond what we can bear.

In 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 verse 24, Paul says that God is faithful to His promise to make us and keep us holy and blameless until the return of the Lord Jesus. John says in his First Letter chapter 1 verse 9 that God is faithful to forgive us and cleanse us from all uncleanness.

God is faithful, He can be depended upon, He will not fail. So we can trust Him always, whatever is happening.

We will continue to look at the fruit of faithfulness in our next study.

## The Fruit of the Holy Spirit - Chapter 11

### Faithfulness

In the previous study we were thinking about faith or faithfulness. We said that the word could mean either faith or faithfulness, which is the same as loyalty.

We thought of the fruit of true faith in God as the source of faithfulness. We finished by seeing how the word was used of God as the faithful, utterly reliable One.

Before we move on to think about faithfulness in ourselves as believers, I want us to look at one part of the New Testament where the word "faithful" is used of God's word and God's promises. You will find it in Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus. Five times the word is used of what God says or promises.

In 1 Timothy 1 verse 15 he says it is a true saying that Christ came into the world to save sinners. In 1 Timothy 3 verse 1 he says that to desire the office of a bishop or elder is to desire something good. In the same letter and chapter 4 verse 9 he says that serving God will surely bring suffering.

In Titus chapter 3 verse 8 he says that true believers must do good works. And in Titus chapter 1 verse 9, that all these words of God are words on which we can rely, and to which we must hold fast.

Read these letters through for yourself, and see just what Paul is saying. All are faithful sayings of God, and we can utterly depend on them. He introduces each with the phrase: "This is a TRUSTWORTHY saying".

Now we must turn to the thought of faithfulness or loyalty in us as believers.

The idea behind this is that we must remain faithful and loyal to our Heavenly Father, however hard and painful the circumstances may be through which we are passing.

Let us think of just two kinds of circumstances through which we may be called to pass.

First, there is suffering. Few of us get through life without suffering of some sort. Suffering can be very painful, and it can often be made worse by seeming to be so useless. We cry out from the depths of our heart, "Why, Oh why?"

How can believers, those who love God, manage to endure suffering without becoming sour and bitter, and without denying their Lord and Saviour? They do it by believing the word of Scripture which says that "All things work together for good to them that love God, and are the called according to His purpose" (Romans chapter 8 v. 28).

You see, nothing comes to us as believers without God allowing it, and nothing God allows is altogether without purpose and without good however little we understand it. Job thought like this. You remember he said, in the midst of his suffering, "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord".

We can think, too, of the Lord Himself when He said, "The cup which the Father has given me, shall I not drink it?" He took the cup of suffering from His Father, and what a fearful cup it was! How useless and pointless it must have seemed to those looking on.

We know, of course, that none of his suffering on the cross was useless and pointless. He died for us all to bring us back to God. But at the time men thought that it was a waste; that He had failed; that evil had triumphed.

All this teaches us that the only way to be faithful and to keep trusting in God, is to realise that God is in our suffering; that He has a purpose in it all. He is doing something, not only for us, but for others through us. He has a great purpose, and in the end His way is best for He can see the end from the beginning.

I once read of a dear saint of God who, when life was hard and she did not understand what was happening, would just keep on saying to the Lord, "Have it your own way Father". That is the secret. Just let your heavenly Father have it His own way. It is always the best way in the end.

Another kind of circumstance through which we sometimes have to pass is when we are blamed for things we have not said or done, or when our motives or actions are completely misunderstood.

Sometimes it is that people say unkind and evil things about us. Again, perhaps it is that all we have worked for and planned goes wrong and collapses, and all our hopes are dashed to the ground. Circumstances like this are not easy to bear, and again it is our faith in our Heavenly Father which alone can keep us loving, kind and without bitterness in the midst of it all.

Joseph went through times like this. You can read his story in the last chapters of the book of Genesis. He felt that God had spoken to him, and told him how He was going to prosper him. Then everything went wrong and his brothers envied him and sold him as a slave into Egypt.

He did prosper there and was given a responsible position in his master's household. Then everything went wrong again! His master's wife wrongly accused him of trying to make love to her, and he was thrown into prison.

Again, things began to go well for him, and he was given a position of leadership in the prison. He helped one of his fellow-prisoners by telling him that his dream meant that he was going to be set free. He asked this man to speak up for him when he was free, but he forgot him.

At last freedom did come to him when Pharaoh of Egypt had a dream he did not understand. It was then that Joseph's prison companion did remember him, and he was brought before Pharaoh. With god's help Joseph was able to tell the king what his dream meant. There was going to be a great famine in the land, but before it came there would be a time of plenty.

Because of this, Joseph was put in charge of the affairs of Egypt, and was responsible for all the arrangements as to how the corn would be stored in the years of plenty, and how it would be distributed in the years of famine.

So at last, after many years, what God had promised Joseph came to pass. It was a very long and hard test for Joseph, but through it all he did not become bitter, but he kept his faith in the Lord who had promised. Through all this time his faith in God became stronger and stronger and at the end he was able to say to his brothers, "God meant it all for good".

So you see that the secret of keeping faithful to God is in this wonderful fruit of faith. We need continually to live with simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He has everything under His control. He died for us and so surely we can always trust Him!

## The Fruit of the Holy Spirit - Chapter 12

### Gentleness

We come now to the last two fruits of the Spirit. They are gentleness, or meekness, and self-control.

There is a sense in which they both spring from faith. If we really believe God, we will be meek in our relationship with Him because we will believe that He always knows best. Also, if we have faith in the Lord Jesus we will want him to control our lives, and we will be glad for Him to direct them in the right way.

We will think about meekness first. This is the word used in the older English translations of the Bible. The later translations use the word "gentleness".

The word that is used by the writers of the New Testament is not an easy one to translate. No one word in English really gives the full meaning. To use the words of someone else, the meaning has been stated like this: "To be passionately angry is wrong, and to be slavishly submissive is equally wrong. Since, therefore, both these states of character are wrong, it is clear that the state midway between them is right. This state is neither too hasty tempered, nor too slow tempered; nor does it get angry with people with whom it ought not; nor fail to get angry with those with whom it ought".

So, the meek and gentle man is midway between the slavish man and the harsh man.

Meekness and gentleness in the days when the New Testament was written were thought of as weakness. They often are in our day. But the biblical idea of meekness and gentleness is certainly not to be thought of as weakness in any way.

Moses was said to be the meekest man on earth, yet there was nothing weak about him! If he had been weak, he could never have led Israel out of Egypt and through the wilderness.

Perhaps the best way for us to consider this particular fruit is to see just how the word is used in the New Testament, and to see how it shows us how should live as Christians.

The first reference is in Galatians chapter 6 verse 1, where it says: "Brother, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him GENTLY (or in the spirit of meekness). But watch yourselves or you also may be tempted".

What Paul is saying here is - be gentle and understanding to those who fall into temptation. You are no better than they; you may be tempted in the same way; so treat them kindly; do not be hard and harsh. Then we get the word again in Ephesians chapter 4 verse 2. Paul says, "Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love".

Meekness is the very heart of long-suffering and patience. Meekness means that we realise our own weakness, and know that we are not always right. This gives us more understanding of others' points of view, and more patience with their arguments.

In writing to Timothy, Paul is writing to someone who is a pastor of a church, and who is charged with helping believers in their Christian lives. As always in that kind of work, he comes across those who oppose, and some who are difficult and obstinate.

Paul is instructing Timothy as to how he should behave in such circumstances. He says, "Those who oppose - gently instruct in the hope that God will grant them repentance, leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses, and escape the trap of the devil".

So you see, even with difficult people, we must be gentle and understanding. As Paul says in a previous verse, we must not quarrel or be resentful, but eager and ready to teach. It is amazing how we can help even the awkward ones, if we go about it in the right way!

In 1 Peter chapter 3 verses 3 and 4 we find the word used in quite a different way. Peter says: "your beauty should not come from outward adorning, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewellery and fine clothes. Instead it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight".

Peter is really talking to wives here, as you will see from the beginning of the chapter, but what he says applies in some way to us all. He is NOT saying that the way we dress is not important, but he IS saying that it is far more important to have a right spirit; one that is meek, quiet and gentle.

If we have this fruit of the Spirit we are not always wanting to show ourselves off, but we want to show how wonderful the Lord is.

Peter also uses the word to show the way we should witness for the Lord. He says in 1 Peter chapter 3 verse 15, "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do it with gentleness and respect.

We should always be ready to give our witness as to why we are believers, but we must not do it in an arrogant, boastful sought of way, or in a way that offends unnecessarily. We should do it with meekness.

In his letter to Titus, Paul is telling him how he should instruct the believers to live before the people around them. In chapter 3 verses 1 and 2 he says, "Remind the people to be subject to the rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peace-like and considerate, and to show true humility (or meekness) towards all men".

They are not to be people who are always stirring-up trouble and slandering others, but they are to live peaceable lives in meekness and humility.

The last use of the word which I want to mention is in James chapter 1 verse 21. It reads like this: "Therefore get rid of all moral filth and evil that is so prevalent, and humbly accept the word that is planted in you, which can save you".

This verse is speaking of our relationship with God. We are to live by listening to what He says to us, and with all meekness and humility receive from Him what He says and obey it.

And so we are to be humble and meek in our attitude to God, heeding His commands and obeying them. In our everyday life we are to hate and oppose sin, but also to act towards the sinner in a gentle and understanding way.

## The Fruit of the Holy Spirit - Chapter 13

### Self-control

We come now to the last fruit in Paul's list in Galatians chapter 5, it is the fruit of temperance or self-control.

The word "temperance" implies "mastery" or "power over" and so comes to mean power over ourselves, that is, self-control or self-mastery. Its meaning is shown clearly in 1 Corinthians chapter 9 verse 25, where Paul says that every athlete, or everyone who competes in the games, is temperate in all things or exercises self-control in every area of his life.

Paul describes this more fully in verse 27. Various translations say it in different ways. Here are two: '

'I keep under my body and bring it into subjection" or "I beat my body and make it my slave". Do please note here that Paul is not speaking literally but figuratively when he uses the expression "I beat my body". He is speaking about self-control which is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit in the believer.

Peter also says that self-control is important in spiritual growth. In 2 Peter chapter 1 verse 6 he says we must add self-control to knowledge. You find the same thought in Proverbs chapter 16 verse 32 where Solomon says, "He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city". Here again it is clear that self-control is very important.

Let us look, then, a little more closely at what self-control means, and how it works out in our Christian lives.

First of all it is interesting to notice that it is not only in Christian living that self-control is important. We need it in all walks of life. If we are going to do well in business or sport we have to exercise this discipline, and give our whole time and strength to it. We have to deny ourselves other things so that we may concentrate on the purpose we have in mind.

If it is in sport we have to practice hard and refuse to do what will make us less fit. If it is playing a musical instrument we have to keep at it for many hours. If it is in business we have to give our whole attention to it, finding ways to make it prosper. Now it is just the same in our life with God. We must have the right aim and motive in being the Lord's people. Sadly, there are many Christians who want to belong to the Lord but who put excitement and success first in their lives.

These are not the most important things. Of course, the Lord wants His people to have peace and joy in their lives, but the most important thing is to please Him, to do His will, and to allow Him to fulfil His purpose in us.

If we are going to do this, the whole of our being must be handed over to Him to be ruled by Him. In letting God rule we must work together with Him.

There is more than one part to human nature. There is the spiritual part of us which has fellowship and communion with God. Then there is the physical part of us with all its feelings and needs, and its physical energy and strength. But there is also that part of us which thinks and which has various emotions.

We can have joy and peace and love for others and the desire to help them. But we can also hate and worry and feel bitterness and resentment.

While we have to seek to keep our bodies in good health by the way we eat, sleep and take the exercise and relaxation we need, we must not forget that the emotional and spiritual parts of us are also very important.

We live in a world that has been ruined by man's sinfulness and the activities of Satan over thousands of years. All kinds of evil things are constantly invading our thoughts, feelings and desires. This is where we need the help of the Holy Spirit to exercise self-control.

We must check wrong and unkind thoughts that come into our minds. We must not allow emotions and desires to get hold of us too strongly, so that our minds and bodies become slaves instead of being in control.

The tongue is another part of us which needs strong control. James has a lot to say about this in his letter. In chapter 3 he says, among other things, that "The tongue is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we praise the lord and curse men, and out of it comes good and evil, and this ought not to be".

If we allow the Lord to cleanse our hearts, and then we use self-control, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we can check the wrong or thoughtless word before it is spoken.

Remember that once the wrong or bitter word has been said, nothing can bring it back. Once it leaves your mouth, you cannot stop it doing its evil work. This is why we must let the Holy Spirit control our tongues.

Then self-control is necessary in our life of fellowship with God. It is not always easy to find the time and place for daily prayer and Bible reading. It is essential to do it, though, and to make sure that we have our time of fellowship with the Lord.

It sometimes needs determination not to miss this time of fellowship but we cannot do without it, and the results make any sacrifice worthwhile. It is as necessary to our spiritual lives as food, drink and fresh air are to our bodies.

As we come to the end of this series of studies, let me sum up what we have learned.

We have been considering Galatians chapter 5 verses 22-23, and in them Paul has been speaking about those characteristics of true Christian living which he rightly describes as "The Fruit of the Spirit".

They are fruit because God planted them in us when we came to trust and know the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour and Lord. In some measure they started to grow when we trusted Christ and received eternal life.

But we have to care for them just as we do natural fruit. We care for them by aiming only to please the Lord. We care for them, too, by abiding in Christ, by obeying Him and letting Him do with us all that He wants to do. You can read about "fruit bearing" in John's Gospel chapter 15.

May this fruit of the Spirit grow and flourish in our lives so that we may bring joy and gladness to the Lord Himself.