

Galatians 5:22 "Fruit in a Crowd"

Series: "Fruit of the Spirit"—part 4

[On 10/17/07 we finished the material from last week, then began the following...]

Series Overview: "Fruit Inspection 101"

#1 Introduction--An Overview of Galatians 5

#2 The Works of the Flesh (5:16-21)

#3 The Fruit of the Spirit in our Relationship with God: Love, Joy, Peace (5:22)

#4 The Fruit of the Spirit in our Relationship with Others: Longsuffering, Gentleness, Goodness (5:22)

#5 The Fruit of the Spirit in Ourselves: Faith, Meekness, Self-Control (5:23)

#6 Walking in the Spirit (5:24-26)

Review:

What is the key to successful Christian living? We find a significant command in Gal 5:16 "Walk in the Spirit." Cooperate with the Holy Spirit. What does that mean? I must yield to the Spirit. He indwells me. His aim is to transform my life into the image of Jesus Christ.

Is that process easy? No. I have a problem, an enemy. What is it? Gal 5:16b-17 "...the flesh..."

What happens if I yield to the flesh's control? Gal 5:19-21 says the following results, the "works of the flesh."

Paul highlighted 4 ugly categories of sins (17 total in our English Bible) that are evidence of the flesh's control:

I. Repulsive Sins (19)

II. Religious Sins (20)

III. Relationship Sins (20-21)

IV. Reckless Sins (21)

Here's the point. If I'm going to walk in the Spirit, these have to go! Before we can experience the fruit of the Spirit, the works of the flesh must go. They don't mix.

What is the fruit of the Spirit?

Definition: The fruit of the Spirit is the life of Christ lived out in the Christian.

The Fruit of the Spirit (22-23)

Let's keep in mind a couple of critical truths about the Fruit of the Spirit.

1. Fruit is Singular. The 9 virtues listed are a package deal.

2. Fruit grows supernaturally. We can't manufacture fruit on our own. We can produce "works" but not "fruit." That's why John 15 is so important to remember. Jesus said, "Abide in Me, for without Me you can do nothing...He that abides in Me, and I in him, the same brings forth much FRUIT." Never forget that the fruit of a person's life indicates the condition of a person's heart.

Now, think back to our last study. Where does fruit start? The first area the Spirit transforms is our Relationship with God. He replaces the works of the flesh with: *Love, Joy, and Peace*. Now obviously these qualities affect all areas of our lives, but they have to do primarily with our Relationship with God. A Spirit-filled, fruitful Christian exhibits:

1. Love--A Supreme Love for God

2. Joy--The Joy of the Lord

3. Peace--The Peace of God that passes all understanding

[At this point finish the material from where we left off last week]

Fruit starts here, in our relationship with God... But the Fruit of the Spirit doesn't end there. Notice the next 3 virtues: "Long-suffering, gentleness, goodness."

Don't miss the transition. Fruit is seen first in our Relationship with God. Fruit is seen next in our relationships with others. If I'm walking in the Spirit, if I'm controlled by the Spirit, you'll see it in the way I relate not only to God, but also to other people. That's why I've entitled tonight's study, "*Fruit in a Crowd*."

Main Idea: Paul lists 3 social virtues which the Spirit generates in the lives of Fruitful Christians.

I. Our Attitude towards Others: Patience/Long-suffering

Definition: "Longsuffering is the Capacity to put up with people and events."

II. Our Attention towards Others: Kindness/Gentleness

Definition: "Gentleness is treating others the way God has treated us."

III. Our Actions towards Others: Goodness

Definition: "Goodness is generosity which springs from a heart which is kind."

I. Our Attitude towards Others: Patience/Long-suffering

V 22 "But the fruit of the Spirit is...patience [KJV long-suffering]." What does it mean to be "long-suffering"?

The Greek word is "makrothumia." It's an interesting word. We don't have an English word that captures its meaning. We have a phrase which is its opposite.

You're driving your car. You pull out of an intersection when you think the way is clear. Too late you notice a car coming over the hill. It's not close, but the fellow has to slow down. Later you look in your rearview mirror, and see the guy in your backseat. His face is red. His gyrations with his hands are wild. Your wife notices something's up, turns around, sees the other irate driver, and says, "What's wrong with him?" You say, "I guess he's got a SHORT TEMPER."

In English, we don't say that somebody has a "Long Temper." But that's what the word "Makrothumia" means literally (Makro = Long; Thumia = Temper). To be Long-suffering means to be "long-tempered."

Challenge: There's no excuse for a short-fused Christian. Once we become a Christian, God provides us with the potential for a LONG FUSE!

Pastor Jim Turner offered this definition... (I added "and events")

Definition: "Patience/Longsuffering is the capacity to put up with people and events."

A person who is longsuffering is a person who is patient, persistent, steadfast. He forbears with people who rub him wrong (Eph 4:2). He doesn't throw in the towel on them. A woman who is longsuffering doesn't retaliate when provoked.

Longsuffering expresses a certain kind of attitude. It's rare today. It's an attitude that never loses patience with people, no matter how unreasonable they may be. Neither does it lose hope for people, no matter how stubborn and difficult to love they may be.

I appreciate the way our Awana workers go out on a limb with certain children in Awana. Come from broken homes. "Problem" kids. Perhaps rowdy and disruptive. But they patiently love them, never losing hope for them.

Two questions... Why? How?

Why be longsuffering? Isn't it possible that people will take advantage? The answer...God is longsuffering.

Did you ever notice how many times in the Bible, when God could have let people "have it," He patiently worked with them?!

E.g.—the Israelites grumbling about the food in the Wilderness (Ex 34:6 "...the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering...")

God was longsuffering with the Israelites. And still today with us... (2 Pet 3:9 "The Lord is not slack...but is longsuffering toward us...")

Because God is longsuffering, we Christians are to be longsuffering. 1 Cor 13:4 states, "Love suffers long..." And 1 Thes 5:14 exhorts, "Now we exhort you brethren...be patient toward all men."

Discuss: Why are we so prone to excuse a *lack* of patience/longsuffering?

But how? How can we, like God, be longsuffering? It's not easy. In fact, it's impossible...humanly speaking! Remember the context, longsuffering is a fruit of the Spirit. It's not natural. Only God can produce it in us.

How?

1. Stop tolerating wrong attitudes towards people.
2. Call them what they are--works of the flesh.
3. Ask God to produce the Fruit of Christlikeness in you.
4. Cooperate with the Holy Spirit, and allow Him to produce it.

Discuss: What specifically can and should we do to cooperate with the Spirit?

So *Fruit in a Crowd* affects our Attitude towards others: Longsuffering. Also...

II. Our Attention towards Others: Kindness/Gentleness

V 22 "...kindness [KJV gentleness]..." Kindness is related to Longsuffering.

Discuss: Who is the most gentle and kind person in the Bible? God is!

Titus 3:3-4 "At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the *kindness* and *love* of God our Savior appeared..."

Eph 2:7 "That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His KINDNESS towards us through Christ Jesus."

The word refers to the sheer kindness of God. The only reason you and I are here tonight, forgiven of our sins, accepted into God's family, is because of the undeserved, unsolicited, unmerited favor of our gracious God. He is kind. He is gentle.

Towards whom is God gentle and kind? Matt 5:45 "...He makes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust."

Definition: "Kindness/Gentleness is treating others the way God has treated us."

The Greek word is "chrestotes." Which sounds like "Christos." Christ's people are to be gentle people. Not boisterous, not abrasive, not offensive, not caustic, not harsh, not brash. We are to be channels through whom God can radiate His loving care.

Col 3:12 "Put on therefore, as the elect of God...tender-mercies, kindness..." Here's how the world operates. I'll be kind to you, if you'll be kind to me. But it's not to be so for God's people.

Discuss: What does a lack of gentleness in our lives indicate?

Think about it: There may be times when we may have a right to do something, but choose not to in order to exhibit gentleness.

I read George Whitefield's biography a few years ago. What a man of God! Greatly used to impact England and America in the 1700's by his powerful preaching of the gospel. Early in his life, he and the Wesley brothers were close friends. But as they grew older, their theologies caused them to drift apart. Both were committed to evangelism. But Whitefield was a Calvinist, and clung dearly to the doctrines of grace, while the Wesleys were Arminians.

Can we hold our own doctrinal convictions and still allow for differences? Whitefield did. Even when he was attacked personally. (see his letter to the Wesleys, 1741...)

May God help us to exhibit Gentleness in our relationships. There's no room for smug pride. Convictions, yes! But a critical spirit, no! Remember, gentleness is treating others the way God has treated us.

How can I exhibit gentleness? I can't. Rom 3:12 "There is none that doeth good ("chrestotes"), no, not one."

How then? We must live in dependence upon the Spirit of God. He helps us treat people the way God has treated us.

Discuss: What would happen if we were *kinder* people? Think through the areas of your life (home, work, school, ball games, community events, etc).

So the fruit of the Spirit must be seen in our Attitude, our Attention, and...

III. Our Actions towards Others: Goodness

V 22 "...goodness..." In the original Anglo-Saxon, the word "good" carried the same connotation as "God." In fact, just as God is love, God is good.

As with long-suffering and gentleness, goodness is a characteristic of God which He desires to be seen in us (2 Thes 1:11).

What does it mean to be characterized by goodness? Goodness is a closely related term to Gentleness. It appears but 4 times in NT:

Romans 15:14 "I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another."

Eph 5:9 "For the fruit of the Spirit (lit. "light") is in all goodness and righteousness and truth."

Problem: God places a premium on goodness. The world does NOT.

Discuss: How does the world view "goodness"? The world mocks goodness. It's a slam to call someone a "do-gooder." Or if you really want to mock a person you call them a "goody-goody." In our society, goodness is not a virtue, but something despised. Sit-coms laugh at goodness. To be good is to be old-fashioned and irrelevant.

Part of the problem is that many Christians have not given the world an accurate picture of what "goodness" really is. Contrary to popular opinion, goodness is not some soft, spineless emotion. Goodness is a quality that leads to action, generous action.

Definition: "Goodness is generosity which springs from a heart which is kind."

To be good is to be generous. To be good is to be gracious. To be good is to reflect God in your life.

The opposite of goodness is being stingy, tightfisted, greedy, self-centered. Think of, "You're a mean one, Mr. Grinch..." Think of the parable of Rich Fool. He hoarded his possessions. He failed to see beyond himself. He failed to see beyond this life.

The times we've exhibited goodness in our lives were the times when we gave someone something they didn't deserve, and could never have earned.

Challenge:

Is the Fruit of the Spirit apparent in your relationships with people? See: Matt 18, the parable of the King and Servants

Warning: When we give up on people, do you know what our problem really is? We haven't grasped what God's grace is all about. That's dangerous. Don't water down Jesus' sobering words: Matt 18:35—"So likewise shall my heavenly Father do to you, if you, from your hearts, forgive not every one his brother his trespasses."

God uses relationships to help us grow and develop. Consider the following anonymous poem...

*Good timber does not grow in ease,
The stronger wind, the stronger trees;
The farther sky the greater length,
The more the storms the more the strength.
By sun and cold, by rain and snow,
In tree or man good timber grows.^[2]*

^[1] These are unedited teaching notes used for a Wednesday evening Bible study at Wheelersburg Baptist Church . They are provided for your edification as you personally study God's life-changing Word. Pastor Brad Brandt

^[2] from *Wings of Silver*, C.R. Gibson