



**LESSON 3:** "The Fruit of Longsuffering, Gentleness, and Goodness"

**TEXT:** Galatians 5:22-23

**DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

### INTRODUCTION

These past few weeks we have been discussing fruit. Not the fruit of a tree, nor the fruit of the vine, and certainly not the fruit of the loom, but the fruit of the Spirit. We have learned that the key to spiritual victory within and spiritual fruit without is through "walking in the Spirit" (Gal. 5:16). To cultivate this fruit we must allow the Spirit of God to take the Word of God to make us more like the Son of God. There are the activities of filling our minds with Scripture and walking in obedience to God's truth, but there is also allowing the Spirit of God to guide and direct us by His Word. You recall that Paul lists for us 9 characteristics of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). We are dissecting and examining this singular fruit segment by segment. Last week we looked at the first set of three in the list of nine (love, joy, and peace). This triad deals with our upward relationship to God. Today we will continue by focusing on the second set of three (long-suffering, gentleness, and goodness). These have to do with our outward relationships with others.

### BACKGROUND

The fruit of the Spirit is the outward expression of Christ's inward dwelling. This fruit grows and is expressed in any person that willingly dies to what Christ died to so that the Spirit may bring him or her to new life in Christ. Powerfully and surely the Spirit works sometimes dramatically, sometimes slowly, almost imperceptibly in our lives to conform us to the image of Christ.

In his commentary on Galatians, Timothy Keller identifies four descriptors about how the Spirit works in producing this fruit. "First, Christian growth is gradual – as gradual as a turnip or potato growing. With botanical growth, you never see it happening – you can only

measure it after a time. With the growth of the fruit of the Spirit, it might be growing in a Christian's life, but they never realize until a trouble or difficulty shows up and they think: *A couple of years ago I would never have been so patient or self-controlled in this situation.* That shows that the fruit of the Spirit has been growing, gradually and unnoticed. Secondly, the growth of the Spirit's fruit is inevitable. There will be growth. If someone has the Spirit in them – if they are a Christian – the fruit will grow. Whatever a Christian's life is like, the fruit of the Spirit will burst through. It's inevitable. A person saved by faith will be a person in whom the fruit of the Spirit grows. Third, the fruit of the Spirit is internal (internal roots). It is not about traits or characteristics. It is about change much deeper than that. Think about an apple tree. Do the apples on the tree make it alive? No – if you tied apples onto a dead tree's branches, that wouldn't make it alive! The apples don't give life; they are a sign that the tree is alive. But the life produces the fruit; not the other way around. Fourth, Christian growth is symmetrical. Paul deliberately uses the singular word 'fruit' to describe a whole list of things that grow in a Spirit-filled person. From this we learn a very important point for understanding and discerning the fruit of the Spirit. The real fruit of the Spirit always grow up together. They are one. Jonathan Edwards put it like this: 'There is a concatenation of the graces of Christianity.' That is, you do not get one part of the fruit of the Spirit growing without all the parts growing."

### THE FRUIT OF LONGSUFFERING (v.22)

The next quality of a person who is being controlled by the Spirit of God is longsuffering. Another word for *longsuffering* is "patience." Are you a patient person? Maybe I should ask your spouse, kids, or coworkers for an honest answer. You want to find out if you are truly patient? I have a pop quiz that we can all take to reveal how we are doing in the area of longsuffering. Question 1 – How do you deal with interruptions? When you are in the middle of something and someone interrupts you, how do you respond? Maybe you are working on project or playing video game or watching movie and someone or something interrupts, how do you react? Question 2 – How do you handle irritations? That person in the home, at school, or workplace that seems to know how to annoy, how do you respond? Question 3 – How do you deal with inconveniences? We live in a society that wants everything right now. We have fast food, the fast lane, the express check out, microwave

ovens, instant coffee. We do not like to wait. Did you know that during a normal lifetime, we will spend approximately six entire months waiting on red lights! Have you ever noticed that if you're waiting at one of those red lights, and the light turns green, and you don't move in three seconds, the man behind you turns red? Do you have to have everything right away? Are you like the man who knew he needed patience, so he prayed, "Lord, I want patience, and I want it right now!"? Do you get agitated and frustrated when your best laid plans don't work out? If you failed the quiz you are in need of long-suffering or patience! Remember the way to this fruit is not through self-effort, but through the Spirit's enablement as we "walk in the Spirit."

**Illustration:** We all need to be more like the little boy that was standing at the bottom of the mall escalator watching the hand railing go round and round. A salesman saw the boy standing there for a while, and finally said, "Son, are you lost?" The boy said, "No, I'm just waiting on my chewing gum to come back around."

#### A. The Definition of Longsuffering

Longsuffering is a combination of two Greek words: the word *macro* which means "long or slow" and the word *thumia* which means "anger". It literally means to be long-tempered as opposed to being short-tempered. In other words, patience is the ability to be slow to anger, rather than being quick-tempered. It is the opposite of resentment toward God and others, but is the grace to face trouble without blowing up or hitting out. A patient person has a slow fuse. Some people are like a shotgun with a hair trigger. If they are jostled, they go off.

*Longsuffering* (patience) has to do with tolerance and the ability to endure injuries inflicted by others. It is the calm willingness to accept situations that are irritating or painful. This includes ridicule, scorn, insults, and underserved rebukes, as well as outright persecution. Longsuffering is the work of the Holy Spirit within a believer so that he/she is not given to outburst of anger.

Someone has said, "Patience is the ability to idle your motor when you feel like stripping your gears."

**Illustration:** At time pets are more longsuffering than people. We've all seen a large dog calmly lying on the ground while a

toddler pulls its tail, twists its ears, and beats on its head. That animal has the ability to do great damage to the little one aggravating it, but it suffers long by tolerating and enduring the injuries being inflicted. That family pet was willing to accept a situation that was irritating and even painful. That is longsuffering.

**Application:** Are you like that? Are you quick tempered, or could it be said that you are long-suffering? Are you sweet and serene under provocation? Or are you easily provoked? Is your temper destroying your testimony? If you have a short fuse – stay away from the matches! Allow the Holy Spirit to bring about the fruit of longsuffering. When you have a right relationship with God (love, joy, and peace), it positively affects your relationship with others (longsuffering).

#### B. The Demonstration of Longsuffering

God tells us that we are to be longsuffering, but He never requires something of us that He himself does not perfectly demonstrate. God is longsuffering! He is patient with us even with all our faults and failures. He suffers long, bears with us in all our sinning and rebellion, all our apathy and unconcern. He does not draw back when we spurn His love. Cf. Num. 14:18; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; II Pet. 3:9

No one has ever exhibited long-suffering like our Savior. Peter says of Jesus, "Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not" (I Pet. 2:23). The Holy Spirit seeks to develop the image of Christ in us. "We are to be imitators of Christ in refusing to be irritated by the wrongs people do to us" (Morris). Believers are commanded to emulate their Lord's patience. That may sound extremely difficult to do; and, in fact, it is impossible apart from the Holy Spirit. But when we "walk in the Spirit" the fruit of longsuffering will be evidenced in our lives.

#### C. The Development of Longsuffering

We must be constantly reminded that this is the fruit of the Spirit not the works of the flesh. You cannot humanly produce this, God must develop this fruit in you. How does God cultivate and develop long-suffering in us? He does so by placing us in situations that require patience. Often when we ask God for patience, He gives us opportunities to practice patience.

## 1. ***God uses problems to develop patience.***

God allows us to face trials, difficulties, and problems so that patience is developed in our lives. As a Christian we can actually, “glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience” (Rom. 5:3). Trials and problems are not meant to defeat you, depress you, or discourage you. They are meant to develop you. Trials are not tools to tear you down, they are test to build you up. We can “count it all joy” when entering into trials because we know that “the trying of your faith worketh patience” (Jms. 1:3). We must allow “patience to have her perfect work that we may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing” (Jms. 1:4). The word *perfect* indicates spiritual maturity. God’s goal for you is spiritual growth and maturity. Trials may be a bitter plant, but it always bears sweet fruit of patience.

## 2. ***God uses people to develop patience.***

Longsuffering is a virtue that is sorely lacking in today’s society. A recent study from the USA Today found 60 percent of Americans report feeling angry or irritable. That is up from 50 percent when a similar poll was taken in 2011. Our society blames anyone or anything it can for the cause of anger (economy, traffic, weather, parents). The simple truth is that the primary reason “hatred, wrath, and strife” are being manifested is because the flesh is at work. You cannot be longsuffering until the Spirit of God comes to reside within through faith in Christ, and even then we must allow the Spirit have control in order to evidence longsuffering. Paul exhorts us to be “longsuffering, forbearing one another in love” (Eph. 4:2). We are to be “patient toward all men” (I Thess. 5:14). Yet it seems that often the people we love the most also try our patience the worst.

**Illustration:** A first grade teacher and her class of 32 six year olds had watched it rain all day long. The last bell had rung, it was time to go home, and this teacher began putting galoshes on all 32 of those kids. She came to the last little girl and was so excited that she was about finished with this dirty chore. As she began to put the galoshes on this little girl, they were unusually tight. The teacher struggled, strained, pulled, tugged, grunted, groaned, and finally got the galoshes on that last little girl. Just as she finished snapping them into place, the little girl said, “You know what teacher? These aren’t my galoshes.” The teacher couldn’t believe it. She struggled, strained, pulled, tugged, grunted, and groaned until glistening with sweat, she finally removed those galoshes from that little girl’s feet. Just at that moment, the young lady looked up at her and said, “They are my sister’s and she lets me wear them.”

**Application:** **The way we learn to be patient with other people is to remember how patient God has been with us, and allow the love of God to shine through us.** “When Christ is formed in us, longsuffering will enable us to pray for those who injure us and to wait patiently until God has vindicated Himself. Some of us are too easily offended and need to learn how to suffer long” (Strauss). For “love suffereth long...and is kind.”

**Transition:** That leads us right into the next quality of our study of the Fruit of the Spirit...

### THE FRUIT OF GENTLENESS (v.22)

The word *gentleness* means “moral excellence, usefulness, or kindness.” So another word for gentleness is *kindness*. The Fruit of the Spirit is kindness.

**Illustration:** After General Robert E. Lee retired from the military, he was named the President of Washington University in Lexington, VA. The name of the school was later changed to Lee University to honor General Lee. While Lee was President of the school a new student came into his office and asked for a copy of the school’s rules and regulations. Lee looked at him and said, “Son, we don’t have any rules and

regulations in print.” The young man said, “You mean this school has no rules?” Lee replied, “Yes, we have only one.” The student asked, “What is it?” General Lee replied, “Our only rule is kindness.”

That is a good rule for all of us to live by, try a little kindness. We have become a society in which the milk of human kindness has curdled. A little girl innocently prayed, “Dear God, make all the bad people good, and make all the good people nice.”

#### **A. The Explanation of Kindness**

This is often a difficult term to define, but it is not hard to identify. You know it when someone is kind to you. Mark Twain once said, “Kindness is the language which the deaf can hear and the blind can read.” What is kindness? The word itself literally means that which is “good, helpful, or suitable.” It means to be gracious to others. Kindness is having tender concern for others. It is the sincere desire for the happiness of others. Gentleness is the inward work of the Holy Spirit that produces sweetened outward attitudes and actions.

Kindness is love in action, or love in shoe leather (I Cor. 13:4 – “Love is kind”). It is not just seeing and sensing a need, but actively working at meeting the need.

**Illustration:** Good Samaritan (Luke 10); while others showed concern, he showed compassion and kindness; he acted while others avoided.

#### **B. The Expectation of Kindness (Eph. 4:32a)**

We are commanded to “be ye kind”; it is expected of a believer. Ephesians 4:32 was probably one of the first verses you learned as a child, or had your children learn in their youth. And there’s good reason, for at the heart of biblical, practical Christianity is kindness and forgiveness. It is easy to be kind to those who are kind to us, but we are called to be kind even to our enemies. Luke 6:35, “Love your enemies, and do good...for He is kind to the unthankful and evil.” Kindness costs but cannot be bought. **If you are truly saved, you cannot help but be kind, because the God of kindness lives in your heart.** Thus believers are to allow the fruit of the Spirit to be active in their lives. They should be kind to one another, compassionate, and forgiving. With tender hearts of kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience they should support one another and allow God’s

loving-kindness through Christ to work itself out in them. We are told to “put on...kindness” (Col. 3:12). We are to diligently add to our faith “brotherly kindness” (II Pet. 1:7).

#### **C. The Exemplification of Kindness (Eph. 4:32b)**

We can certainly rejoice in the kindness of God toward us. Once again, what God expects of us, He exemplifies for us. Our Savior was kind to us who did not “deserve” kindness. He is the Good Samaritan; He is love in shoe leather. **And because we have experienced the kindness and forgiveness of God through Christ, we are expected to show kindness to others.** Kindness is simply treating others the way God has treated you. Paul bases the exhortation to “be kind, tender-hearted, and forgiving” on the fact that God, for Christ’s sake, has done the same and more for us (Eph. 4:32). We serve a gentle and kind God and Savior (Joel 2:13; Titus 3:4). He has been kind even when we were unthankful and evil (Lk. 6:35). Through Christ we have been shown the “exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness toward us” (Eph. 2:7). One of the greatest marks of leadership is kindness. It is nice to be important, but it is more important to be nice! Tenderness can motivate people to do things that toughness never can.

**Illustration:** There is an Aesop’s fable in which the wind and the sun were arguing over who was stronger. The wind said, “Do you see that old man down there? I can make him take his coat off quicker than you can.” The sun agreed to go behind the cloud while the wind blew up a storm. However, the harder the wind blew, the firmer that old man wrapped his coat around him. Eventually the wind gave up and the sun came out. He began to smile kindly upon that old man. Before long the man mopped his brow, pulled off his coat, and strolled on his way. The sun knew the secret: warmth, friendliness, and the gentle touch are always stronger than force and fury.

**Application:** When people think of you, does the word “kind” come to their mind? When God is in control of our lives, and we are yielding to the Spirit the natural outgrowth will be gentleness. Remember Colossians 3:12 says, “Put on kindness.” When you get up in the morning you “put on” your clothes for the day. God says, “Put on kindness.” How can you do that? Every day ask God to help

you remember the kindness He has shown you and bear the Fruit of the Spirit which is kindness (gentleness). Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "You cannot do a kindness too soon, for you never know how soon it will be too late."

## THE FRUIT OF GOODNESS (v.22)

Many today are in search the "good life," and they think it can be found in the material and physical world. If you have a mansion, a Mercedes, and money you are living the good life. Our society thinks it doesn't get any better than a hot tub, a back rub, and a drink from the pub. But contrary to popular opinion, goodness is not feeling good, looking good, or owning good; it is being good and doing good. Real goodness is not a material or physical, but a spiritual matter. And since goodness is part of the fruit of the Spirit we know it is not something man can manufacture but something that God manifests in and through us.

### A. The Identification of Goodness

What is goodness? The word means "wellness, benefit, integrity, or virtue." Goodness has to do with moral and spiritual excellence that is known by its active kindness. John Phillips comments, "The word goodness (*agathōsune*) is a synonym to the previous word gentleness (*chrēstotēs*). In other words, "gentleness" and "goodness" are in the same family of virtues. They are kinfolk, so to speak. The word for goodness, however, is said to be made of sterner stuff. Doing what is *good* might sometimes call for a tougher stand than would be implied simply by the word *gentleness*. The Lord's inherent and essential goodness, for instance, moved Him to use vigorous actions in cleansing the temple (Matt. 21:12). The same essential goodness of the Lord Jesus caused Him to take off the gloves, so to speak, when denouncing the scribes and the Pharisees for their hypocrisy, error, and rejection of Him (Matt. 23). Greek scholars tend to define gentleness (*chrēstotēs*) as the kinder and gentler element in the Lord's perfect character and goodness (*agathōsunē*) as the sterner element. To be both kind and good is the ideal. This combination causes a loving parent to say a firm "No!" to a child or minor and to back it up with discipline when necessary." We might call it "tough love."

### B. The Illustration of Goodness

Only God is truly good (Ps. 34:8). When Jesus was addressed as "Good Master," he replied, "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God" (Mk. 10:18). The God-man, Jesus Christ, went about "doing good" (Acts 10:38). It was good when he feed the 5,000, healed the sick, and raised the dead; but it was also good when he cast the money changers out of the temple and withstood the Pharisees to their face.

We know that Romans 3:12 says, "They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." This is our hopeless state outside of Christ. You are no good and can do no good without God. In fact, if you take "G-o-d" out of "g-o-o-d" you end up with a big zero ("0"). Naturally you and I are sinful and evil, but God wants to do something supernatural in and through you and me, He wants to make us good! We must keep our eyes on the goodness of Christ as we deal with others.

Most of us have been guilty of looking for goodness in the natural man, but each of us must learn with Paul: "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. 7:18). But upon conversion we become God's "workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works" (Eph. 2:10). Paul says of the Christians in Rome that they are "full of goodness" (Rom. 15:14) because the Holy Spirit had filled them with joy, hope, and peace. The Spirit of God longs to do good to others through you and me. It's more important to be good than it is to be great.

### C. The Implementation of Goodness

As with every grace the Spirit provides, believers are commanded to exercise them. This is true of goodness. Later in the letter to the Galatians Paul exhorts, "While we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith" (Gal. 6:10). "To this end also we pray for you always," he wrote to the Thessalonians, "that our God may count you worthy of your calling, and fulfill every desire for goodness and the word of faith with power" (2 Thess. 1:11).

Someone has said, "Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times

you can, to all the people you can, as long as you can!" If you take our inability, that "0" (zero), and add the power of God it equals goodness. When we allow the Spirit of God to control us, He produces goodness in us as the Fruit of the Spirit.

In Acts 11, we are told that Barnabas was "a good man and full of the Holy Ghost." The reason he was a "good man" was because he was "full of the Holy Ghost." Goodness is not primarily a matter of what you know, or what you do, but what you are. Goodness is not a deed you do, it is the fruit you bear through the Holy Spirit's power. Because the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness. Let's ask God to make us good men and women full of the Holy Ghost! "We need the kind of life that has such integrity in relation to Christ that those around us who are comfortable in their apathy, unconcern, and insensitivity will be afflicted by our very presence, and those who are afflicted by the pains and problems of life will be comforted by our same presence" (Dunnam).

## **CONCLUSION**

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, and goodness.... Does your life evidence that the Spirit of God is in control? Is the fruit of longsuffering growing in you? How do you respond to trying problems and people? Do you actively look for ways to be kind to others? Remember, kindness is treating others the way God has treated you. How about goodness? To evidence these qualities of the Spirit's fruit you must yield to His control. So often we try and try to work up these characteristics in our lives to no avail. The way to spiritual fruit bearing is not through trying (self-effort) it is through trusting (Spirit's power). Keep Galatians 5:16 foremost in your thinking, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh."