



LESSON 4: "The Fruit of Faith, Meekness, and Temperance"

TEXT: Galatians 5:22-23

DATE: _____

INTRODUCTION

We have been walking through the Garden of God examining the fruit of the Spirit these past several weeks. The nine-fold manifestations of this singular fruit have been presented in triads. The first trio (love, joy, peace) deals with our relationship upward to God. The second set (longsuffering, gentleness, goodness) speaks to our outward relationship with others. Today we will conclude our study with the final three (faith, meekness, temperance) which emphasize our internal self relationship. Before we identify and indulge in these last three segments of the Spirit's fruit, let's review what we have discovered to date.

REVIEW

Question: What is the key to spiritual victory and vitality? What is the sole command for the believer in this passage?

Answer: The key and command to bearing spiritual fruit is "walking in the Spirit" (Gal. 5:16).

Question: What does that mean and how do you "walk in the Spirit"?

Answer: Allowing the Spirit of God to take the Word of God to make me more like the Son of God. It is actively filling our minds with Scripture and walking in obedience to God's revealed truth, therefore allowing the Spirit of God to guide and direct us through His Word. When we "walk in the Spirit" the sinful flesh is subdued and the spiritual fruit is supplied.

Question: What is the fruit that God produces in us? Can you give a working definition for these?

Love – the sum and substance of what it means to be a Christian; the soil from which all other virtues grow. It is the determined act of the will that sacrificially gives of self for the sake of others.

Joy – is the spiritual response of pleasure knowing God loves me, and I, therefore, find greatest delight in my relationship and position in Christ.

Peace – like Hebrew *Shalom* meaning "well being, or wholeness." It is the tranquility of soul that I am rightly related to God and others.

Longsuffering – (patience) has to do with tolerance and the ability to endure injuries inflicted by others without getting angry and retaliating.

Gentleness – (kindness) is love in action, or love in shoe leather. It is not just seeing and sensing a need, but actively working at meeting the need.

Goodness – moral and spiritual excellence of life that afflicts the comfortably apathetic and comforts the afflicted around us.

We will be working to define and develop the fruit of faithfulness, meekness, and temperance in our lesson today. Remember that while each of these virtues is only produced by the Spirit, throughout Scripture we are commanded to practice these things. This again points to the joint effort of our sanctification as we work in both unity and harmony with Holy Spirit to be conformed to the image of Christ. We are to submissively obey the Word of God in the Spirit's power. James Dunn has rightly called this passage a "character-sketch of Christ." As Christ is formed in us (Gal. 4:19), we will see this spiritual fruit flourishing.

THE FRUIT OF FAITH (v.22)

The fruit of the Spirit is faith or in this sense faithfulness. This is not necessarily speaking of faith in Christ and His Gospel, but a trustworthiness, honesty, and faithfulness that result from Christ's work within us. It is not only what we believe as a part of our faith, but how we live and what we do as a result of what we believe, our faithfulness!

What is faithfulness? It can be defined as "integrity, honesty, loyalty, or trustworthiness." It is being someone in whom complete confidence can be placed. This word means to be utterly reliable and true to your word. If I am trusting Christ, others should be able to trust me. The faithful person is reliable for both menial and important tasks, he/she is

loyal to friends, and dependable in emergencies. Someone has said, "Faithfulness is simply taking every opportunity to use all our ability for the glory of God." And friends the greatest ability is dependability!

Are you a faithful person? Can you be counted on? Are you dependable? When you make a promise, do you keep it? The Marines have a slogan, *Semper Fidelus*, it is Latin meaning "always faithful or always loyal." That should be the motto of every Christian as well.

Illustration: Yellowstone National Park spreads throughout the states of Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho. There are a myriad of things to see and do; however, one of the most popular attractions in that beautiful Park is a geyser named "Old Faithful." It is not the biggest geyser in the park, but the most visited. You know why? For years, approximately every 90 minutes it shoots upwards to 8,400 gallons of boiling water from the heart of the earth straight up to 185 feet into the air. The blast will last anywhere from 1.5 to 5 minutes. It has repeated that process hour after hour, day after day, month after month, year after year. You know why people come to see that particular geyser? Because it lives up to its name – "Old Faithful"!

A. The Mandate for Faithfulness

1. God desires faithfulness (Ps. 51:6).

Did you know that God desires us to be faithful? In one of David's psalms of repentance he acknowledges, "Behold, Thou desireth truth in the inward parts" (Ps. 51:6). The word "truth" means stability, trustworthiness, or faithfulness. We should desire faithfulness, because it is what God desires.

2. God admires faithfulness (Mt. 25:21).

Not only does God desire us to be faithful, but God admires faithfulness. To the diligent servant Jesus praises, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant" (Matt. 25:21). The servant's faithfulness was in direct correlation to his obedience to following the master's instructions. The "wicked and slothful" squandered the responsibility given him. May we experience the admiration and praise of God through our faithfulness to His Word and will.

3. God requires faithfulness (I Cor. 4:2)

God desires faithfulness, God admires faithfulness, but He also requires faithfulness. First Corinthians 4:2 says, "Moreover it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful!" We are all God's stewards. We don't own anything, we simply oversee what has been entrusted to us. Faithfulness is an indispensable mark of a Christian.

And our faithfulness should not be peripheral, or occasional, but steadfast. Our sense of faithfulness should not rest on another's faithfulness, and cease when he or she is found unfaithful. Our faithfulness must have a hidden reserve which continues long after visible supports of it are gone. It must be modeled after God's steadfast faithfulness.

B. The Model of Faithfulness

Why should I be faithful? The answer is because God is faithful. There are over 60 references in the Bible to God's faithfulness. Like Psalm 92:2 which states that God shows forth his lovingkindness in the morning, and his faithfulness every night.

Illustration: God's faithfulness can be seen in the reliability of the sun rising in the East and setting in the West at the beginning and end of each day. You don't have to wonder if it will rise or set, it is a constant. You can set your watch by it! God's faithfulness can be seen in the dependability of the tides coming in and going out, in the seasons that consistently follow one another.

We are all familiar with the Prophet Jeremiah's words, "It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness" (Lam. 3:22-23). The NT writers, Paul and John, would reiterate this truth throughout the NT (I Cor. 1:9; 10:13; I Jn. 1:9; Rev. 19:11).

Transition: God is faithful, and He requires us to be faithful. Now let's deal with how we can be faithful. What are the marks of faithfulness?

C. The Marks of Faithfulness

If you are a child of God, faithfulness should characterize your life. You must seek to be faithful wherever you are and in whatever you do. What should we be faithful in? We should be faithful in the small things, the secret things, and the sacred things.

1. **Faithful in the small things**

Jesus said in *Luke 16:10*, “He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.” If you cannot be trusted with the small things of life, you will be untrustworthy with the big things of life. Sometimes we dream about what we would do if we had more; however, the truth is that if you are “unjust in the least” you will be “unjust also in much.”

Illustration: I heard about a man who was talking to a big tall strapping giant of a fellow. He said, “If I was as big, tall, and strong as you, I would go out in the woods, find the biggest bear I could and wrestle him right down to the ground.” That large man just looked him and said, “There are plenty of little bears in the woods.”

a. **Your time**

How do you use the time God has given you?

Illustration: What if some benevolent banker decided to deposit to your account \$86,400 every day. The only catch was that you had to spend or invest every penny of it that day. What would you do with that money? Do you realize that every day you live God has given you 86,400 seconds to spend or invest. What will you do with the time that has been entrusted to you?

Ephesians 5:16 exhorts us to, “Redeem (buy back) the time for the days are evil.” Big things are made up of little things. Seconds make up minutes, minutes make up hours, hours make up days, days make up weeks, weeks make up years, etc. Are you faithful in the small things?

b. **Your treasure**

Learn to be faithful in the little now!

For many, our financial means seems small and limited. Too many people think, “I can’t afford to give.” Often we think, “If I had more I would give more...”

Illustration: I heard of a man who had suffered a heart attack, and was recovering in the hospital. The family got word while he was in the hospital that he had somehow inherited millions of dollars. They didn’t want to tell him for fear that it would so surprise and excite him that he might have another heart attack. So they asked the pastor to break the news to him gently. The pastor was visiting the man, and casually asked, “What would you do if you had a million dollars?” The man replied, “I would give half of it to the church.” And the pastor had a heart attack.

What are you doing with the resources you have now? Jesus continued in *Luke 16*, “If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon (money), who will commit to your trust the true riches?” Be faithful with the small things that God has entrusted you with.

2. **Faithful in the secret things**

Character is what we are like when we are all alone. What you are in the dark, that is the test of character. Someone has said, “If you knew me the way I know me, would you still respect me?” It may be better said, “If you knew me the way God knows me, would you still respect me?” A faithful individual is the same in public and private, at home and church. Their character and conduct are well pleasing to God.

Illustration: I read it took Michelangelo a total of 4 years to paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. All those hours, days, weeks, and months he would lie on his back high on that scaffolding carefully painting every detail. One day he was meticulously painting a niche where the human eye could not see from the floor below. Someone said, “Michelangelo, why are you spending so much time on that spot? No one will ever notice or see it.” Michelangelo said, “I see it and God sees it.”

3. **Faithful in the sacred things**

For a Christian, all things are sacred because everything we do is to be for the glory of God. Paul reminds us, “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31). Wise King Solomon would say, “Whatever your

hand findeth to do, do it with all your might” (Ecc. 9:10). If you are married, you ought be faithful to your spouse. If you are an employee, you should to be faithful to your employer. If you are a church member/attendee, you need to be faithful to your church.

a. Faithful to your family

In Ephesians 5, Paul speaks of “being filled with the Spirit” (5:18) which parallels “walking in the Spirit” (Gal. 5:16). One of the results of this “Spirit-filled” life is submitting ourselves to one another; specifically, wives to their husbands (5:22), and children to their parents (6:1). The husband is to love his wife like Christ loved the church and sacrificed for it (5:25). Fathers are not to provoke their children to wrath but “bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (6:1). Be faithful in the sacred calling of family life.

b. Faithful to your friends

Solomon describes a true friend as one who “loves at all times” and is faithful in adversity (Prov. 17:17). He further speaks of the “faithful wounds of a friend” (Prov. 27:6). This is one who is willing to speak the truth in love. Do you have a friend that you can count on like that, somebody like that, a friend that loves at all times? Are you that kind of friend? Or are you a “fair weather” friend.

Illustration: There was an English publication that had a contest. And this Contest was to give the best definition of a friend. Here are some that won honorable mention. Somebody said, “A friend is somebody who multiplies your joy and divides your grief.” Another one said that, “A friend is someone who understands your silence.” But the one that won was this, “A friend is somebody who comes in when all the world has gone out.”

c. Faithful to your faith

Church Attendance: Hebrews 10:25 – “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more as ye see the day approaching.”

Bible Reading: Psalm 1:1-2 – “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.”

Prayer: Eph 6:18 – “Praying always with all prayer and supplication”; 1Th 5:17 – “Pray without ceasing.”

THE FRUIT OF MEEKNESS (v.23)

What comes to mind when you hear the word “meek or meekness”? Most people immediately equate meekness with weakness. But I can assure you that meekness is not weakness. In fact, the only thing meekness and weakness have in common is that they rhyme. Someone said, “If you think that meekness is weakness, try being meek for a week!” Meekness actually requires great strength. Some think of meekness and gentleness as the opposite of courage; however, it takes courage to be meek and gentle in this evil world.

A. The Meaning of Meekness

If meekness is not weakness, then what does it mean to be meek? The dictionary defines it as “gentle, submissive, tame, or yielding.” Meekness is not weakness, but rather it is power under control. John MacArthur has identified three primary attitudes that are linked to meekness (*prautēs*) in the NT. They are (1) a submissiveness to the will of God (Col. 3:12); (2) teachableness (Jms. 1:21), and (3) a consideration of others (Eph. 4:2). From that we learn that meekness is the attitude of heart that accepts the Lord's dealings with us as good, perfect, and acceptable and are not open for dispute or resistance. Meekness stands in opposition to a self-seeking attitude.

Illustration: The word “meek” is used to refer to a wild horse that has been broken by the trainer so that it was useful for work. They

would say that horse has been “meeked.” They were able to bring that wild, powerful animal under control.

This fruit of the Spirit is much discounted by most people, but it is a trait eminently to be cultivated. The Lord Jesus promised, “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth” (Matt. 5:5). No quality could be regarded as less desirable, according to this world's standards, in those who would conquer the world than meekness. Would Alexander, Caesar, Genghis Khan, Napoleon, Hitler, or Stalin ever imagine meekness to be the key to world conquest? Doubtful, but Jesus did! The meek shall inherit the earth.

B. The Motivation for Meekness

Why should I be meek? What motivation do I have? Two primary motivations for meekness are the Savior’s example and the Scripture’s exhortation.

1. The Savior’s example (Mt. 11:28-29)

Jesus is the perfect example of meekness. He said in *Matthew 11:28-29* – “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for *I am meek* and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” When appealing to the Corinthian church Paul would say, “Now I Paul myself beseech you by the *meekness* and gentleness of Christ” (II Cor. 10:1). We see this meekness evidenced in his willingness to submit to the will of the Father in going to the cross.

2. The Scripture’s exhortation (Col. 3:12)

We are instructed to clothe ourselves in meekness. This is something we should actively pursue (I Tim. 6:11), and wear as a godly garment. Paul told the Colossian church to “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, *meekness*, longsuffering” (Col. 3:12).

C. The Method of Meekness (James 1:21-22)

How can we put meekness into practice even this week? The Bible tells us that one of the ways we demonstrate meekness is by submitting ourselves to the Word of God by the Spirit of God.

James 1:21-22 – “Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with *meekness* the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.” We learn that...

1. Meekness is having a repentant heart (Jms. 1:21).

James says to “lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness.” We don’t use those words every day. What does that mean? *Filthiness* – means dirtiness; idea of getting the wax out of your ears. *Superfluity* – means over abundance, surplus. *Naughtiness* – evil, wickedness, sinfulness. When you put it all together, God is saying you need to have a repentant spirit. We are to be willing to cast off the dirtiness and over abundance of sinfulness like shedding dirty, stinky clothes.

Illustration: Ever spent the day doing yard work. Maybe mowing the lawn, pulling the weeds, and spreading some fresh mulch. By the time you finish your clothes are filthy, sweaty, and smelly. Nothing feels better than getting out of those dirty clothes, taking a shower, and putting on a clean outfit.

2. Meekness is having a receptive heart (Jms. 1:21).

He goes on to say, “And receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.” There are at least two different words in Greek for “receive.” One is *lambano*, it means “to take something for yourself, or get it yourself.” That is not the word used here. The second is *dekomi*, this means “to receive a gift; or to welcome a guest into your home.” This is the divinely inspired word choice in James 1:21. We are to receive the Word of God as a gift from God. We are to welcome it into our lives, like a guest into our home! Do you welcome the Word of God into your life? As the Bible has been taught and preached to you weekly, have you had a receptive spirit? “Receive the word with meekness”...why? Because, “it is able to save your soul”!

3. **Meekness is having a responsive heart (Jms. 1:22)**

In verse 22 James says, “But be ye doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.” He tells us to go a step beyond just having a repentant spirit (casting off the dirty clothes), and a receptive heart (receiving the Word into our lives), now he says go do something with it! Here is where many believers stop short. It is one thing to know the Word of God intellectually, and another thing to live God’s Word experientially! In fact, James says if you have a repentant spirit, a receptive heart, but not a responsive attitude you are deceiving yourself (gypping yourself, selling yourself short, missing out).

Someone has said, “Impression without expression leads to depression!” The Word of God will leave an impression on your life, but if you don’t live it out (expression), it will lead to spiritual depression. Don’t just be a hearer of God’s Word be a doer. The fruit of the Spirit is meekness. We demonstrate that meekness by submitting to the Word of God with a repentant spirit, a receptive spirit, and a responsive spirit.

Transition: Meekness is cultivated by allowing the Word of God and the Spirit of God to control our lives. Without meekness you will never have the final quality of the fruit of the Spirit – temperance!

THE FRUIT OF TEMPERANCE (v.23)

The word “temperance” means “self-control.” This is a governing of one’s desires. The word temperance (*enkrateia*) means self-control in all things, and it was used to describe the person who had powerful passions but kept them under control. Temperance is the ability to pursue the important over the urgent, rather than to be always impulsive or uncontrolled. There was a teenager who wrecked the family car and had to fill out the insurance report. The teen wrote, “I was backing out of the driveway when I went across the lawn and through the hedge, I ran over the garbage can, knocked down the mailbox, went down over the curve, across the street, and hit my neighbor’s parked car, *then* (they wrote) I lost control.”

A. **The Problem of Temperance**

We live in a society today that is out of control financially, physically, emotionally, and morally. *Financially* out of control. It is estimated that the average American spends \$1.25 for every \$1 they earn, leading to an average of over \$7,000 in credit card debt per household. The USA has a national debt of over \$17 trillion. We are *physically* out of control. Did you know that every day the American population eats 75 acres of pizza, 53 million hot dogs, 3 million gallons of ice cream, and 3,000 tons of candy? While we spend over \$2 million a day in exercise equipment, we spend over \$10 million a day buying potato chips! People are *emotionally* out of control. When you are sitting at a stop light, if the light turns green, and you don’t go in three seconds, the man behind you will turn red. People almost think it is normal to become violent when you get upset. We are *morally* out of control. Kill a bald eagle and you will spend up to 7 years in prison, but murder an unborn baby and it’s called pro-choice. When someone gets caught cheating on a test or cheating on their spouse, their excuse is “everybody’s doing it.”

Too many people live their life out of control and don’t even know it. The Bible describes being out of control as “the works of the flesh.” You see, as a Christian, you are either controlled by the flesh or the Spirit. The question is, “Who is in control of your life?” The fruit of the Spirit is temperance or self-control.

B. **The Priority of Temperance**

You will never obtain self-control, until you yield control of yourself to the Spirit of God. Temperance is not a result of the mind, emotions, and senses being brought under the control of the human will; it is a result of the human will being brought under the control of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit thereby energizes the human will to produce this fruit of the Spirit, self-control.

The purpose of self-control is that we may be fit for God, fit for ourselves, and fit to be servants of others. No wonder Paul listed it as a fruit of the Spirit. It has to do with the mastery of the self. This is the Christian’s overcoming of the “flesh-works” Paul has already listed. It is used both to refer to an athlete’s discipline of his body and to the Christian’s refusal to give free reign to impulse and desire.

First Corinthians 9:25 – “And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things.” As a Christian we should strive to have self-control in all things. Paul said in I Corinthians 6:12, “All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.” Temperance is total abstinence from all things forbidden and moderation in things permissible.

1. *Physically: our body (I Cor. 6:19-20)*

As a believer, our physical bodies are the temple of God. We should take care of God’s temple to the best of our ability. We are to glorify God in our body for they are God’s (I Cor. 6:19-20). That means what we eat and drink should glorify God (I Cor. 10:31). Proverbs 13:25 – “The righteous eateth to the satisfying of his soul: but the belly of the wicked shall want.” Most people eat to live, some people live to eat (gluttony). Sadly, many are more concerned about what grade fuel they put into their automobile than what kind of fuel they put into their own body.

The Bible clearly warns against alcohol. Proverbs 20:1 – “Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.” Ephesians 5:18 – “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.” You cannot have self-control drinking something that can take control! If you never have the first drink you will never have to be worry about getting drunk.

We should be temperate in our sleeping habits. The beauty sleep that we all need can easily turn into laziness if not carefully guarded (Prov. 6:9-11; Prov. 26:14). We want to avoid slothfulness and achieve fervency in serving the Lord (Rom. 12:11).

The Bible even speaks of exercise. To some that is an 8 letter dirty word! But First Timothy 4:8 says, “For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things.” We ought to have self-control over our physical bodies.

2. *Mentally: our thoughts (Phil. 4:8)*

Not only should we be self-control in what we do outwardly but also what we think inwardly. It has been well-said that “self-control of our thoughts means entertaining in our minds only those thoughts that are acceptable to God.” It is both refusing to admit sinful thinking, and focusing our minds on that which is good and pleasing to God. This is an exercise in discipline! The wrong thinking must be rejected (II Corinthians 10:5). The right thinking must be both received and ruminated (Phil. 4:8).

3. *Emotionally: our attitude (Prov. 25:28)*

You can learn to exercise control over your emotions, or they will exercise control over you. We need to learn self-control over our actions and reactions. This means getting a grip on your attitude. Proverbs 25:28 – “He that hath no rule over his own spirit (attitude or emotions) is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.”

C. *The Plan for Temperance*

The answer and key to temperance/self-control is to be under the control of the Holy Spirit. Remember once again this is the fruit of the Spirit. The way to self-control is to surrender to the Spirit’s control! Someone has said, “The beginning of self-mastery is to be mastered by Christ, yield to Him.” S.D. Gordon wrote, “In every man’s life there is a throne, and when self is on that throne, Christ is on the cross. But when Christ is on that throne, self is one the cross.” Who is ruling on the throne of your life? Is it the selfish flesh or the Spirit of God?

CONCLUSION

This study of spiritual fruit is very convicting! Keller writes, “When we look closely at the fruit of the Spirit, and see that one aspect of it cannot be seen in isolation from any of the others, we see that we are far more in need of growth in the fruit of the Spirit than we think. When we stop looking at our gifts as a sign that we are Christlike, but challenge ourselves to look at the nature, unity and definitions of the Spirit, we have a much deeper sense of how we lack these things.”

May I conclude with a word of hope and help for each one of us who desires to see spiritual fruit growing in your live. John Stott has phrased it well, "Victory is within reach of every Christian, for every Christian has 'crucified the flesh' (v.24) and every Christian 'lives by the Spirit' (v. 25). Our task is to take time each day to remember these truths about ourselves, and to live accordingly. If we have crucified the flesh (which we have), then we must leave it securely nailed to the cross, where it deserves to be; we must not finger the nails. And if we live in the Spirit (which we do), then we must walk by the Spirit. So when the tempter comes with evil insinuations, we must round on him savagely, and say to him: 'I belong to Christ. I have crucified the flesh. It is altogether out of the question that I should even dream of taking it down from the cross.' Again, 'I belong to Christ. The Spirit dwells within me. So I shall set my mind on the things of the Spirit and walk by the Spirit, according to His rule and line, from day to day.'" When we live with this mindset and daily yield ourselves to the Spirit's control, even the humblest child of God can cultivate the fruit of the Spirit. May God produce a bountiful harvest of fruit in us for His honor and glory!