THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Christ Manifested in You

A Bible Study with **Kimberly Dodson**

I think there is a particularly important distinction worth establishing before we go very far: Scripture says **“the fruit of the Spirit”**, singular, not “fruits.” That gives us a strong starting point.

The Fruit of the Spirit

The central passage is Galatians 5:22–23:

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”

Notice what Paul is contrasting it with:

“Now the works of the flesh are manifest…” — Galatians 5:19

Then:

“But the fruit of the Spirit is…” — Galatians 5:22

That contrast is significant.

The flesh produces works. The Spirit produces fruit.

Fruit is the outward evidence of an inward life.

Jesus had already established this principle:

“For every tree is known by his own fruit.” — Luke 6:44

And:

“Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.” — Matthew 7:20

So when we speak about the fruit of the Spirit, we aren't primarily talking about nine qualities that someone tries very hard to manufacture. We are talking about the **visible character produced in a person whose life is governed by the Spirit of God.**

One Fruit, Many Expressions

Galatians doesn't say:

“The fruits of the Spirit are…”

It says:

“the fruit of the Spirit is…”

Then it describes that fruit:

Love
Joy
Peace
Longsuffering
Gentleness
Goodness
Faith
Meekness
Temperance

That suggests something more integrated than a checklist.

We could think of these as different manifestations of the **same spiritual life**.

And that fits beautifully with something Jesus said:

"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." — John 15:4

The branch doesn't create the fruit.

The branch bears the fruit because it possesses the life of the vine.

Then Jesus says:

"He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit…" — John 15:5

That connects remarkably well with Galatians.

The Fruit Reveals the Source

This also takes us back to something we have encountered repeatedly in our studies:

the inward life eventually becomes visible.

Jesus said:

"A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." — Matthew 7:18

So fruit is **evidence**.

That means the fruit of the Spirit isn't merely about being pleasant, agreeable, or naturally easygoing. Someone can have a naturally gentle personality without walking in the Spirit.

The question is not simply:

“Is this person nice?”

The deeper question is:

“What kind of life is producing what we see?”

Paul gives us the contrast immediately before the fruit of the Spirit:

“For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other…” — Galatians 5:17

Then he shows us what each produces.

Works of the flesh reveal one source.
Fruit of the Spirit reveals another.

And I think that gives us an excellent direction for this study.

Rather than immediately defining nine separate words, I would begin one step earlier:

What does Scripture mean by “fruit” itself?

If we trace **fruit → tree → root → vine → abiding → bearing → pruning → good fruit/bad fruit**, we can establish the biblical framework first. Then when we come back to **love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance**, we'll understand what Paul means by calling all of them **fruit of the Spirit**.

The Evidence of the Life Within

Let's begin with **fruit itself**, because Scripture uses this picture consistently. Once we understand what fruit signifies, Galatians 5 becomes much clearer.

Fruit Reveals What Kind of Tree It Is

Jesus gives us the basic principle:

"For a good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. For every tree is known by his own fruit." — Luke 6:43–44

The fruit does not make the tree what it is.

The fruit reveals what the tree already is.

Jesus immediately applies this to the inward condition of man:

"A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh." — Luke 6:45

Notice the movement:

Heart → life within → fruit without.

This is why merely changing outward behavior cannot be the whole answer. Scripture continually brings us back to the source.

The Root Comes Before the Fruit

John the Baptist used exactly this imagery:

"And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." — Luke 3:9

Notice that the axe is laid **to the root**.

That is important.

If the problem were merely individual bad actions, we might expect attention to be placed only upon the branches or fruit. But Scripture goes deeper.

The nature of the fruit is determined by the life from which it grows.

Jesus says the same thing another way:

“Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit.” — Matthew 12:33

Again, the fruit reveals the tree.

Christ Identifies Himself as the Vine

Now John 15 takes us deeper still.

Jesus does not merely tell His disciples to produce better fruit. He tells them **where the life producing the fruit comes from.**

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.” — John 15:1

Then:

“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.” — John 15:4

This is crucial:

The branch cannot bear fruit of itself.

The branch does bear fruit, but the life producing it comes through its union with the vine.

Then Jesus makes it unmistakable:

“I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.” — John 15:5

That gives us a very different understanding of spiritual fruit from merely trying to become a better person.

The pattern is not:

try harder → behave better → become spiritual.

It is:

abide in Christ → His life operates within → fruit appears.

The Father Is the Husbandman

There is another part of John 15 that we should not overlook.

“Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.” — John 15:2

Fruitfulness involves God's work upon the branch.

There is therefore progression:

fruit → more fruit → much fruit.

Jesus first speaks of **fruit** in verse 2, **more fruit** in the same verse, and then **much fruit** in verses 5 and 8.

"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." — John 15:8

So fruit is not static.

There can be growth in fruitfulness.

The Word Is Involved in This Fruitfulness

Right in the middle of Jesus' teaching about the vine, He says:

"Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." — John 15:3

And later:

"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you…" — John 15:7

That connects beautifully with our previous study concerning **the Word and the Spirit**.

The Spirit does not produce a life contrary to the Word, and the Word does not produce spiritual life apart from the Spirit.

Jesus said:

"It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." — John 6:63

So once again we find these things working together rather than independently.

Fruit Is Not the Same Thing as Gifts

This is an important distinction.

Paul speaks of **gifts of the Spirit**, but Galatians speaks of **fruit of the Spirit**.

A gift concerns what the Spirit enables someone to do.

Fruit concerns what the Spirit produces in the life.

This means spiritual ability by itself is not the same thing as spiritual character.

Paul makes that painfully clear in 1 Corinthians 13. A person might speak extraordinarily, understand mysteries, possess knowledge, exercise remarkable faith, and even make tremendous sacrifices, yet Paul says:

"…and have not charity, I am nothing." — 1 Corinthians 13:2

That is striking because **love is the first thing named in Galatians 5:22.**

So manifestations of ability cannot substitute for fruit.

Fruit Is Connected With Righteousness

Paul uses similar language elsewhere:

"Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." — Philippians 1:11

Notice again the source:

"which are by Jesus Christ."

Hebrews speaks of:

"the peaceable fruit of righteousness" — Hebrews 12:11

James says:

"And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace." — James 3:18

Paul writes:

"For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;" — Ephesians 5:9

That last passage is particularly interesting because two of those ideas appear directly in Galatians: **goodness** and the life produced by the Spirit.

Fruit Ultimately Glorifies the Father

Jesus tells us the purpose:

"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit…" — John 15:8

That means the fruit is not primarily displayed so that people admire the branch.

The fruit glorifies the Husbandman.

The branch has nothing of which to boast because:

“without me ye can do nothing.”

So we can already put together a biblical definition:

Fruit is the outward manifestation of the inward life from which a person is living. The fruit of the Spirit is therefore the visible expression of the life of Christ produced in those who abide in Him and walk in the Spirit.

And now we are ready for something very important in Galatians 5.

Paul does not introduce the fruit of the Spirit in isolation. Immediately before it he describes **the works of the flesh**.

So our next step should be to put the two passages directly beside one another and ask:

What is the difference between a “work of the flesh” and “fruit of the Spirit,” and why did Paul use those two different words?

That contrast opens up the passage considerably.

Works of the Flesh and Fruit of the Spirit

This contrast is important because Paul deliberately places the two beside one another.

The Conflict Comes First

Before Paul names either the works or the fruit, he explains that two contrary sources are operating:

"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." — Galatians 5:16

Then:

"For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other…" — Galatians 5:17

So Paul is not merely contrasting **bad behaviors with good behaviors**.

He is contrasting:

flesh and Spirit

and then showing us what each one produces.

That fits perfectly with what we just established concerning the tree and its fruit. The outward manifestation tells us something about the inward source.

The Works of the Flesh

Paul says:

"Now the works of the flesh are manifest…" — Galatians 5:19

"Manifest" means they become evident. The inward operation of the flesh eventually expresses itself outwardly.

Paul then names them:

"Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,
Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,
Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like…" — Galatians 5:19–21

That last phrase is important:

"and such like."

Paul isn't presenting an exhaustive catalog. He is describing the kinds of things the flesh produces.

The list gives us recognizable evidence.

But Then Paul Changes His Language

Verse 22 does not say:

“But the **works** of the Spirit are…”

It says:

*“But the **fruit** of the Spirit is…”*

That distinction deserves attention.

A **work** emphasizes what is being done or produced through the flesh.

Fruit carries the picture of something growing from life within.

This does not mean that those walking in the Spirit do nothing. Scripture repeatedly calls the saints to obedience, diligence, good works, endurance, and action.

Rather, those works are **the consequence of a changed source of life**, not an attempt to manufacture spiritual life from the flesh.

Paul says elsewhere:

“For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” — Philippians 2:13

And yet the preceding verse says:

“work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” — Philippians 2:12

There is no contradiction.

God works in; we work out.

What appears outwardly proceeds from what God is doing inwardly.

This Explains Why Self-Reformation Is Insufficient

A person could recognize wrath, for example, and attempt to suppress it.

He could recognize envy and discipline himself not to speak enviously.

He could recognize strife and learn better social behavior.

Those changes may certainly affect conduct. But suppression of a work of the flesh is not automatically the same thing as **fruit of the Spirit**.

Jesus went directly to the source:

"Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" — Matthew 7:16

You cannot train a thorn bush sufficiently and eventually obtain grapes.

Something must happen to the source.

That is why the New Covenant goes so much deeper than outward regulation.

The New Creature

Paul writes:

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." — 2 Corinthians 5:17

And:

"That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;
And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;
And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."
— Ephesians 4:22–24

That gives us the deeper explanation of Galatians 5.

The answer to the flesh is not simply polishing the old man.

There is a **new man**.

There is a **new life**.

There is a **new source**.

And therefore there can be **new fruit**.

Walking in the Spirit

This also helps us understand Paul's wording:

"Walk in the Spirit…" — Galatians 5:16

And later:

“If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” — Galatians 5:25

Notice the distinction:

live in the Spirit → walk in the Spirit.

Life precedes walk.

Again, inward reality precedes outward manifestation.

This agrees beautifully with Jesus:

Abide in the vine → bear fruit.

And Paul:

Live in the Spirit → walk in the Spirit.

These are describing the same fundamental order.

Now Look at the Fruit Again

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance…” — Galatians 5:22–23

These are not disconnected virtues randomly assembled.

They describe what the life governed by the Spirit begins to look like.

And something becomes especially interesting when we compare them with **Jesus Himself**.

Love?

“As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you…” — John 15:9

Joy?

“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you…” — John 15:11

Peace?

“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you…” — John 14:27

Gentleness and meekness?

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart…” — Matthew 11:29

Suddenly “fruit of the Spirit” begins looking very much like **the character of Christ being manifested in His people**.

And Paul gives us language remarkably close to that:

“My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you,” — Galatians 4:19

That is only one chapter before the fruit of the Spirit.

So there is a beautiful progression developing:

Christ the Vine → His life in the branches → walking in the Spirit → Christ formed within → His character manifested outwardly → fruit.

And this brings us naturally to the first thing Paul names:

Love

I don't think it is accidental that **love comes first**. In fact, when we follow love through the New Testament, we may discover that the other qualities of the fruit are deeply bound up with it.

That is where we should go next.

Love: The First Expression of the Fruit of the Spirit

The more we follow this through Scripture, the more significant it becomes that Paul begins with **love**.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love…" — Galatians 5:22

We should first notice that Paul has already been talking about love earlier in this very chapter.

Faith Works by Love

"For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love." — Galatians 5:6

Then:

"For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." — Galatians 5:14

And immediately after that Paul says:

"But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another." — Galatians 5:15

Then comes:

"Walk in the Spirit…" — verse 16.

So love did not suddenly appear in verse 22. Paul has been building toward it.

There is almost a progression:

Faith works by love → love fulfills the law toward our neighbor → the flesh destroys relationships → walk in the Spirit → the Spirit produces love.

That is quite remarkable.

Love Comes From God

John takes us directly to its source:

"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God…" — 1 John 4:7

And then:

"He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." — 1 John 4:8

This immediately tells us why love belongs to the **fruit of the Spirit**.

It proceeds from God's own nature.

John continues:

"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." — 1 John 4:9

Again we encounter **life**.

We live through Christ, and that life manifests the character of the One from whom it comes.

We Love Because He First Loved Us

John makes the order explicit:

"We love him, because he first loved us." — 1 John 4:19

That agrees perfectly with everything we have established concerning fruit.

The branch does not originate the life.

God loved first.

His love comes to us.

His life is in us.

Then love proceeds from us.

So biblical love is not fundamentally something we manufacture through human determination.

*"And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts **by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us**."* — Romans 5:5

There it is directly connected to the Spirit.

The love of God → shed abroad in the heart → by the Holy Ghost → manifested through the life.

That is fruit.

What Does This Love Look Like?

Here 1 Corinthians 13 becomes extraordinarily important.

“Charity suffereth long, and is kind…” — 1 Corinthians 13:4

Stop there for a moment.

Compare that with Galatians:

*“love, joy, peace, **longsuffering, gentleness**…”*

Love **suffers long**.

Love **is kind**.

Paul continues:

“charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up,”

“Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked…”

Now compare that with **meekness** and **temperance**.

Then:

“Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;” — 1 Corinthians 13:6

There is **joy**, but notice what love rejoices in:

truth.

Then:

“Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.” — verse 7

This begins to show us something fascinating.

The nine things in Galatians 5 may be far more interconnected than they initially appear.

Love May Help Us Understand the Whole Fruit

Consider them together:

Love seeks the good of another.

Joy delights in what is good and true.

Peace does not produce strife.

Longsuffering bears patiently.

Gentleness treats others with kindness.

Goodness acts according to what is good.

Faith remains faithful and trusting.

Meekness does not exalt self.

Temperance governs one's own desires rather than being governed by them.

These aren't nine unrelated personality traits.

They belong together.

And Scripture actually gives us reason to see love as having a special relationship to all the others.

Paul says:

"And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness." — Colossians 3:14

Peter says:

"And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves…" — 1 Peter 4:8

And Jesus placed love at the center of His commandments:

"This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." — John 15:12

Notice where that appears.

John 15.

The very chapter about the **vine, branches, abiding, and fruit**.

That cannot be overlooked.

Abiding, Fruit, and Love Are All Together

Follow Jesus' thought:

"Abide in me…" — John 15:4

"…the same bringeth forth much fruit…" — verse 5

"As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love." — verse 9

"If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love…" — verse 10

"This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." — verse 12

The picture becomes wonderfully coherent:

Abide in Christ.
His life remains in us.
His words remain in us.
We abide in His love.
We love one another as He loved us.
Fruit is borne.
The Father is glorified.

And Here Is the Test

John gives us something very practical:

"My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth." — 1 John 3:18

Love therefore becomes visible.

That is exactly what fruit does.

You cannot see the life flowing through the vine internally, but eventually **you can see its fruit**.

Likewise, someone can say, "I love."

But Scripture directs us toward the manifestation of that love.

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." — John 13:35

There is the visible evidence again.

And this brings us to something I think is very important before moving on to **joy**.

We should examine **what biblical love actually is**, because our present culture uses the word *love* for many things Scripture would not call love at all.

Biblical love does not mean approving everything, avoiding correction, never judging between good and evil, or simply feeling affection. Scripture says love *"rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth."*

So I think our next question should be:

If love is fruit of the Spirit, what does love look like according to Scripture itself, particularly when love must correct, rebuke, tell the truth, sacrifice, forgive, or refuse evil?

That would keep us from defining the first fruit according to the world's understanding rather than God's.

What Does Biblical Love Actually Look Like?

This is important because if **love is fruit of the Spirit**, then the Spirit Himself must define what love looks like. We cannot begin with our culture's definition and read it back into Scripture.

One sentence gives us a powerful foundation:

"Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth." — 1 Corinthians 13:6

Biblical love and truth can never truly be opposed to one another.

Love Does Not Rejoice in Evil

Sometimes love is understood as acceptance or approval regardless of conduct. But Paul specifically excludes that idea.

Love:

"Rejoiceth not in iniquity…"

Love cannot delight in, encourage, excuse, or celebrate something contrary to God and still call that response love.

Why?

Because love seeks the genuine good of another.

Paul says:

"Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." — Romans 13:10

That gives us an important definition.

Love does not seek another person's harm.

And sometimes allowing someone to continue undisturbed in something destructive would not be loving at all.

Love Tells the Truth

Paul joins these two things together:

"But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:" — Ephesians 4:15

Notice that Scripture does not ask us to choose between **truth** and **love**.

Truth without love can become harshness.

What people call love without truth can become indulgence.

But in Christ:

truth is spoken in love.

And the purpose is growth:

"may grow up into him in all things…"

So biblical love isn't merely concerned with keeping someone comfortable. It seeks their spiritual good.

Love Can Correct

This becomes very clear:

"Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful." — Proverbs 27:6

That is striking.

Something may **hurt** and still proceed from love.

Something may **feel pleasant** and yet be deceitful.

So pleasantness cannot be our measure of love.

God Himself demonstrates this:

"For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth…" — Hebrews 12:6

His correction does not contradict His love.

It proceeds from His love.

And therefore loving correction among the saints is also found in Scripture:

"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness…" — Galatians 6:1

Notice the balance.

There is recognition of the fault.

There is restoration.

There is meekness.

There is self-examination.

That is a beautiful example of several aspects of the fruit operating together.

Love Can Rebuke

Jesus says:

“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.” — Revelation 3:19

That passage alone destroys the idea that rebuke is inherently unloving.

But Scripture also guards against fleshly rebuke.

Paul tells Timothy:

“And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves…” — 2 Timothy 2:24–25

There again we see the fruit of the Spirit surrounding correction:

gentleness, patience, meekness.

The presence of correction does not prove an absence of love.

The **spirit in which correction is given** matters tremendously.

Love Does Not Seek Its Own

This may take us even closer to the heart of biblical love:

“Charity… seeketh not her own…” — 1 Corinthians 13:5

Jesus gives us the supreme example:

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” — John 15:13

Love gives.

Love sacrifices.

Love places another's true good ahead of selfish interest.

And again, notice where Jesus says this:

John 15, the chapter about bearing fruit.

The Vine Himself demonstrates the character that the branches are to bear.

Love Serves

Paul says:

“For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.” — Galatians 5:13

This is immediately before the fruit-of-the-Spirit passage.

So love moves outward into service.

Jesus demonstrated this when He washed His disciples' feet:

“For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.” — John 13:15

Biblical love is therefore not primarily sentimental.

It does something.

Love Forgives

Paul writes:

“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.” — Ephesians 4:32

Again we see several things intertwined:

kindness → tenderness → forgiveness.

And the standard is God's own action toward us:

“even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.”

This pattern keeps appearing.

We receive something from God, and then what we have received becomes manifested toward others.

He loves us → we love.
He forgives us → we forgive.
He is merciful → we show mercy.

The life of the Vine appears in the branches.

Love Is Not Mere Affection

Jesus gives us perhaps one of the strongest tests:

“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you…” — Matthew 5:44

Now we know biblical love cannot simply mean affection.

A person may feel no natural affection whatsoever toward an enemy.

Yet Jesus commands love.

And then He describes what it does:

bless.
do good.
pray.

Love is therefore expressed through the disposition and actions we choose toward another person's true good.

That does not mean calling evil good. It does not mean trusting someone who has demonstrated himself untrustworthy. It does not mean removing necessary boundaries.

It means **we do not allow another person's evil to determine what kind of person we become.**

That is particularly significant when discussing fruit.

Love Is Governed by Holiness and Truth

Here is where the modern idea of love can become almost the opposite of biblical love.

Scripture never separates God's love from God's holiness.

Jesus could show extraordinary compassion and still say:

“go, and sin no more.” — John 8:11

Paul could write:

“speaking the truth in love…”

And love itself:

“rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.”

So genuine love cannot require us to compromise truth in order to demonstrate it.

Love does not oppose truth.
Love rejoices in truth.

Now Something Beautiful Happens

Return to Galatians:

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance…"

We can already see why these cannot easily be separated.

Suppose I need to correct someone.

Love seeks their good.

Longsuffering keeps me patient with them.

Gentleness affects how I approach them.

Goodness seeks what is right.

Faith keeps me faithful to God.

Meekness prevents self-exaltation.

Temperance keeps my own anger, tongue, and impulses under control.

And **peace** prevents correction from becoming needless strife.

This is beginning to look less like nine pieces of fruit hanging separately from a tree and much more like **one whole character produced by one Spirit**.

And perhaps this is exactly why Scripture says:

"the fruit".

There is another profound connection before we move into joy. Paul says:

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love…"

And John says:

"God is love."

So the Spirit is not merely teaching us how to behave lovingly. **God is communicating His own character to His people.**

That takes us right back to:

“until Christ be formed in you.” — Galatians 4:19

The fruit of the Spirit is increasingly looking like **Christ formed within becoming Christ manifested without.**

And from there, **joy** becomes especially interesting, because Jesus does not merely speak about our having joy. He says:

*“that **my joy** might remain in you.”* — John 15:11

Just as the love originates in Him, we are going to find that the joy does too.

Joy: His Joy Remaining in Us

Joy follows beautifully from what we have already established because Scripture again points us away from something manufactured within ourselves and toward something received from Christ.

Jesus says:

*"These things have I spoken unto you, that **my joy might remain in you**, and that your joy might be full."* — John 15:11

Notice the language carefully.

He does not merely say, "I want you to be joyful."

He says:

"my joy."

And again, this is John 15, right in the middle of the teaching concerning the **Vine, the branches, abiding, love, and fruit**.

Joy Comes From the Same Life

We have already seen:

"As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love." — John 15:9

Then:

"that my joy might remain in you…" — John 15:11

So both **love** and **joy** originate in Christ.

That fits our pattern:

His life → His love → His joy → manifested in His people.

This is why joy belongs to the **fruit of the Spirit**.

Joy Is Not Simply Happiness

This distinction becomes clear when we observe when the saints experienced joy.

Happiness, as we commonly use the word, is often associated with pleasant circumstances. Biblical joy can exist when circumstances are anything but pleasant.

Jesus said:

“Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

Rejoice, and be exceeding glad…” — Matthew 5:11–12

That is remarkable.

The circumstances themselves are painful.

Yet joy remains possible.

So joy cannot depend entirely upon circumstances.

Jesus Himself Demonstrates This

Hebrews says concerning Christ:

“Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame…” — Hebrews 12:2

Joy and suffering appear in the same sentence.

The suffering was real. The shame was real. The cross was real.

Yet something beyond the immediate suffering was before Him.

“the joy that was set before him.”

Biblical joy therefore does not require pretending pain isn't painful.

It sees beyond the immediate circumstance.

The Disciples Experienced This

After the apostles were beaten for speaking in the name of Jesus:

“And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.” — Acts 5:41

They did not rejoice because beating was pleasant.

They rejoiced because they understood their suffering in relation to **Christ**.

That distinction is important.

Biblical joy does not call evil good or pain pleasant.

Rather, the source of joy is deeper than the circumstance.

Joy Is Connected With the Holy Ghost

Paul makes the connection explicit:

*"For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and **joy in the Holy Ghost**."* — Romans 14:17

And concerning the Thessalonian saints:

*"And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, **with joy of the Holy Ghost**:"* — 1 Thessalonians 1:6

Look at those words together:

much affliction

and

joy of the Holy Ghost.

That is fruit.

Something is being produced that the circumstances themselves cannot explain.

Joy Is Connected With Faith

Peter writes:

"Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:" — 1 Peter 1:8

Notice again how interconnected the fruit becomes:

love → faith → joy.

These aren't isolated qualities.

They operate together.

Paul similarly writes:

"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing…" — Romans 15:13

There we find three more things together:

faith, joy, peace.

Already we can see why treating Galatians 5 as nine completely independent virtues would miss something.

Joy Is Connected With the Word

Jeremiah said:

"Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart…" — Jeremiah 15:16

Jesus also connects His words with His joy:

"These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you…" — John 15:11

So again we encounter the relationship we have previously studied:

Word and Spirit.

Truth received into the heart produces something.

Joy is not simply an unexplained emotional sensation.

There is substance beneath it.

Joy Rejoices in Truth

This brings us directly back to love:

"Charity… rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;" — 1 Corinthians 13:6

That means spiritual joy has an object.

There are things in which the Spirit rejoices and things in which He does not.

Biblical joy therefore cannot simply mean feeling pleased about whatever we happen to desire.

The Spirit's joy agrees with truth.

That is important because every human emotion called "joy" is not necessarily the fruit of the Spirit.

Someone can rejoice in wrongdoing.

Someone can rejoice in another person's downfall.

Someone can rejoice because selfish desires have been satisfied.

But love:

"rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth."

So, once again, the **source** matters.

Joy Can Coexist With Sorrow

This may be one of the clearest demonstrations that spiritual joy is deeper than an emotion.

Paul describes himself:

"As sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing…" — 2 Corinthians 6:10

At first that sounds contradictory.

How can someone be sorrowful and rejoicing?

Because sorrow and joy are not necessarily opposites in the biblical sense.

We can grieve something genuinely grievous while possessing a deeper joy rooted in God.

Jesus Himself was:

"a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" — Isaiah 53:3

Yet He also spoke of:

"my joy."

Therefore spiritual maturity does not require suppressing grief in order to appear joyful.

One can weep and still possess joy.

Joy Can Actually Grow Through Trials

James writes:

"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;

Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience." — James 1:2–3

Again, notice what is happening.

trial → faith tested → patience produced → joy

This is not superficial cheerfulness.

James says **"knowing this."**

There is understanding beneath the joy.

The saint knows God is accomplishing something beyond what can presently be seen.

And Now Joy Leads Naturally Into Peace

Look again at Romans:

*"Now the God of hope fill you with all **joy and peace in believing**…"* — Romans 15:13

And:

*"For the kingdom of God is… righteousness, and **peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost**."* — Romans 14:17

Joy and peace repeatedly appear together.

And just as Jesus said:

"my joy"

He also says:

*"Peace I leave with you, **my peace I give unto you**…"* — John 14:27

There is our pattern again.

My love.
My joy.
My peace.

This is becoming very beautiful.

The fruit of the Spirit is not God handing us a list of virtues and saying, "Develop these."

We are seeing something much deeper:

The life and character that are in Christ are being communicated through the Spirit to those who abide in Him.

His love becomes visible in us.

His joy remains in us.

And next we come to **His peace**, which is especially interesting because Jesus immediately distinguishes it from the kind of peace the world gives:

"not as the world giveth, give I unto you." — John 14:27

That distinction should tell us there is quite a bit to uncover about **peace**.

Peace: “My Peace I Give Unto You”

Peace brings us into another beautiful part of this pattern because, just as Jesus spoke of **“my joy,”** He speaks of **“my peace.”**

*“Peace I leave with you, **my peace I give unto you**: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”* — John 14:27

Jesus immediately makes a distinction:

His peace is not the world's peace.

So before we can understand peace as fruit of the Spirit, we need to understand what kind of peace Christ is describing.

Peace Is More Than the Absence of Trouble

If peace simply meant having peaceful circumstances, Jesus' words would make very little sense.

He tells His disciples:

*“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. **In the world ye shall have tribulation:** but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”* — John 16:33

Look at the contrast:

“in me… peace”

“in the world… tribulation.”

The tribulation does not eliminate the peace.

That tells us immediately that spiritual peace is not dependent upon the removal of everything disturbing around us.

Just as **joy can remain in sorrow**, **peace can remain in tribulation**.

Peace Begins With God

Before we look at peace within ourselves or peace between people, Scripture establishes something deeper:

*“Therefore being justified by faith, **we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:**”* — Romans 5:1

This is foundational.

Man's deepest peace is not psychological calm.

It is **reconciliation with God**.

Paul explains:

"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son…" — Romans 5:10

So there was alienation.

Christ reconciles.

And therefore:

peace with God.

This is why the gospel itself is called:

"the gospel of peace" — Romans 10:15

And Christ Himself:

"is our peace" — Ephesians 2:14

That is even stronger than saying Christ **gives** peace.

He is our peace.

Once again, the fruit leads us directly back to Christ Himself.

Peace With God Produces the Peace of God

There is an important distinction in the wording of two passages.

Romans says:

*"we have **peace with God**…"* — Romans 5:1

Philippians says:

*"And the **peace of God**, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."* — Philippians 4:7

Peace with God describes reconciliation.

The peace of God describes something of God's own peace operating within us.

And notice where it operates:

“your hearts and minds.”

That is inward.

Again:

root before fruit.

Peace Guards the Heart and Mind

The context of Philippians 4 is especially helpful:

“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” — Philippians 4:6–7

The circumstance may not immediately change.

But something happens **within the person**.

The peace of God keeps the heart and mind.

That word “keep” carries the sense of guarding.

So peace is not merely a pleasant feeling. It becomes a stabilizing influence upon the inner man.

Peace Is Connected With the Mind

Isaiah gives us a beautiful passage:

“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.” — Isaiah 26:3

Notice the relationship:

mind stayed upon God → trust → peace.

That agrees wonderfully with what Paul says:

“For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.” — Romans 8:6

There again:

Spirit → mind → life → peace.

This connects directly with our earlier studies concerning the renewing of the mind.

Peace Is Not Compromise

Here we need the same clarification we made concerning love.

Biblical peace does **not** mean maintaining outward harmony at the expense of truth.

Jeremiah warned of those who said:

"Peace, peace; when there is no peace." — Jeremiah 6:14

So Scripture recognizes **false peace**.

Something may appear calm while something deeply wrong remains underneath.

God does not call us to pretend conflict has been resolved when it has not.

Nor does peace mean agreeing with everyone.

Jesus Himself said:

"Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword." — Matthew 10:34

That does not contradict His being the Prince of Peace.

The truth He brought would necessarily produce division between those who received it and those who rejected it.

Therefore **unity at the expense of truth is not biblical peace**.

True peace agrees with righteousness and truth.

Righteousness and Peace Belong Together

Isaiah says:

"And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever." — Isaiah 32:17

James says:

"And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace." — James 3:18

And the psalmist beautifully joins them:

“Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.” — Psalm 85:10

Biblical peace is therefore not passive avoidance of difficulty.

It is peace that stands together with **truth and righteousness**.

Peace Also Governs Relationships

The fruit that exists inwardly begins appearing outwardly.

Paul writes:

“If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.” — Romans 12:18

Notice how carefully that is worded:

“If it be possible…”

and

“as much as lieth in you…”

We are responsible for our own disposition and conduct. We cannot force another person to live peaceably.

That distinction is important.

The saint is not commanded to control everyone else's response.

We are commanded to ensure that **strife is not originating from us**.

Peacemaking Is Active

Jesus says:

“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.” — Matthew 5:9

Notice He does not merely say **peacekeepers**.

Peacemakers.

There is activity involved.

Sometimes making peace requires forgiveness.

Sometimes confession.

Sometimes correction.

Sometimes reconciliation.

Sometimes refusing retaliation.

Sometimes speaking truth that initially creates discomfort so that genuine reconciliation can eventually occur.

True peace is not merely keeping everything quiet.

Look at the Opposite in Galatians

This becomes especially clear when we return to the works of the flesh:

"hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions…" — Galatians 5:20

Then:

*"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, **peace**…"*

The contrast is striking.

The flesh fractures.

The Spirit reconciles.

The flesh strives.

The Spirit produces peace.

The flesh insists upon self.

The Spirit produces a disposition capable of yielding where truth is not compromised.

And this brings us back to something central to so many of our studies:

*"Endeavouring to keep the **unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace**."* — Ephesians 4:3

Notice that Paul does not tell them to **create** the unity of the Spirit.

They are to **keep** it.

And what is its bond?

Peace.

The Fruit Is Beginning to Build Upon Itself

Now look at what we have so far:

Love seeks another's true good.

Joy rests in God and rejoices in truth even when circumstances are difficult.

Peace rests in reconciliation with God and refuses the fleshly spirit of strife.

And already we can see why the next word is necessary:

longsuffering.

Because love and peace will inevitably be tested by difficult people, offenses, delays, disappointments, persecution, misunderstanding, and repeated provocation.

Peace that lasts only until someone irritates us isn't very deep peace.

Love that continues only while another person behaves properly hasn't yet been tested very far.

And so the Spirit produces something remarkable:

*"love, joy, peace, **longsuffering**…"*

Longsuffering is where we begin to see **what Spirit-produced love and peace look like when they must endure something over time**.

And perhaps most importantly, we will find that longsuffering is first revealed as part of **God's own character**.

*"The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, **longsuffering**, and abundant in goodness and truth."* — Exodus 34:6

There again is our pattern.

The Spirit is producing in the saints something that already exists perfectly **in God Himself**.

Longsuffering: Love That Endures

Longsuffering takes us deeper because now the fruit is being **tested over time**.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering…" — Galatians 5:22

The word itself gives us a helpful picture: **suffering long**. It is patience that does not quickly give way under provocation, difficulty, weakness, or delay.

And, as we noticed, Scripture first shows this characteristic in **God Himself**.

God Is Longsuffering

When God proclaimed His character to Moses, He said:

"The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth," — Exodus 34:6

This is important to our entire study.

Love belongs to God.

Joy belongs to Christ.

Peace belongs to Christ.

And now **longsuffering belongs to the character of God**.

So again, the Spirit is not manufacturing an artificial set of behaviors in us. He is producing something consistent with **God's own nature**.

David repeats this:

"But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth." — Psalm 86:15

And Paul says:

"Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" — Romans 2:4

That tells us something very important about the purpose of longsuffering.

God's longsuffering gives space for repentance.

Longsuffering Is Not Indifference Toward Wrong

This needs to be established clearly.

God's longsuffering does not mean He considers sin unimportant.

If it did, there would be no need for repentance.

Peter explains:

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." — 2 Peter 3:9

Longsuffering therefore does not say:

"It doesn't matter."

It says, in effect:

"I will patiently allow opportunity for what is wrong to be made right."

That is quite different.

Longsuffering Restrains Retaliation

This becomes particularly important in relationships.

The flesh is easily provoked.

Someone wrongs us, and the flesh immediately wants to answer.

Someone speaks harshly, and the flesh wants to speak harshly back.

Someone misunderstands us, and the flesh demands immediate vindication.

But love:

"is not easily provoked…" — 1 Corinthians 13:5

And:

"Charity suffereth long, and is kind…" — 1 Corinthians 13:4

There is our direct connection.

Love suffers long.

So longsuffering is not really separate from love. It is one of the ways love behaves when love encounters difficulty.

Jesus Demonstrated This Perfectly

Peter writes concerning Christ:

"Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not…" — 1 Peter 2:23

Notice what Jesus did **not** do.

He did not return the same spirit He received.

That is extraordinarily important.

Someone else's flesh did not cause Him to respond in the flesh.

And that gives us a very practical understanding of walking in the Spirit:

Another person's behavior does not determine the spirit in which I respond.

That is fruit.

Longsuffering Does Not Mean Never Speaking

Again, we need balance.

Jesus was longsuffering, but He also rebuked.

God is longsuffering, yet He corrects.

Paul was longsuffering, yet he confronted wrongdoing.

Therefore longsuffering cannot mean passive silence in the face of everything.

Paul tells Timothy:

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." — 2 Timothy 4:2

That is an extremely helpful passage.

Notice what can coexist:

reprove

rebuke

exhort

and

longsuffering.

Therefore the issue is not simply **whether correction occurs**.

The question is also **what spirit governs the correction**.

A person can say something true while saying it from wrath, pride, impatience, or self-righteousness.

Truth alone does not prove that our manner of delivering it came from the Spirit.

Longsuffering Gives People Room to Grow

Paul tells the saints:

"With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;" — Ephesians 4:2

Look at those words together:

lowliness
meekness
longsuffering
forbearing
love

And what follows?

"Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." — Ephesians 4:3

There is our fruit appearing together again.

Love.
Peace.
Longsuffering.
Meekness.

They are working together to preserve the unity of the Spirit.

That tells us something very practical about life among the saints.

If we expect everyone around us to be instantly mature, never misunderstand us, never inconvenience us, never need correction, and never require forgiveness, there will be very little fellowship.

Longsuffering allows people **room to grow**.

Forbearing Is Not the Same as Approving

Paul uses that word again:

"Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any…" — Colossians 3:13

To forbear is not to declare every behavior acceptable.

It is to bear with another person's weaknesses and offenses without immediately abandoning love.

And what is the standard?

"…even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye."

Again:

Christ toward us → us toward others.

The Vine produces His character in the branches.

Longsuffering Requires Humility

There is another reason Paul joins longsuffering with meekness and lowliness.

Impatience often has an element of self at its center:

They should know better.
They shouldn't inconvenience me.
They should understand this as quickly as I do.
They should have changed by now.

But then we remember God's patience toward **us**.

Paul describes himself as an example:

"Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering…" — 1 Timothy 1:16

Recognition of God's longsuffering toward us makes it considerably harder to become self-righteous about the patience others require from us.

Longsuffering Is Strength, Not Weakness

This is another important distinction.

The flesh often interprets immediate retaliation as strength.

Scripture says:

"He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." — Proverbs 16:32

That is remarkable.

The person who can govern his own spirit demonstrates a greater kind of strength than the person who conquers a city.

And now we can already glimpse **temperance**, which appears later in the fruit.

Longsuffering requires the ability not to be governed by immediate impulse.

So once again, these qualities overlap and strengthen one another.

There Is a Limit to God's Longsuffering

We should not turn longsuffering into endless tolerance without consequence.

Peter tells us:

"the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah…" — 1 Peter 3:20

God waited.

But judgment eventually came.

Romans speaks of God's:

"longsuffering" — Romans 9:22

while also speaking of judgment.

Therefore longsuffering means **delayed wrath**, not the denial that judgment exists.

This matters in our relationships as well. Longsuffering does not mean remaining indefinitely in destructive circumstances, refusing appropriate boundaries, or pretending that continued evil has no consequences.

One may be longsuffering while still speaking truth, establishing boundaries, correcting wrong, or withdrawing from participation in evil.

The question remains:

What spirit governs us while doing it?

Now Look at What We Have

The fruit is becoming increasingly coherent.

Love seeks another's true good.

Joy remains rooted in God rather than circumstances.

Peace refuses fleshly strife and rests in God.

Longsuffering allows that love and peace to continue **under prolonged difficulty and provocation**.

And then Paul says:

"gentleness…"

That placement is beautiful.

Because longsuffering concerns how long we bear with another, while **gentleness begins to show us how we actually treat them while we are bearing with them.**

It is possible to tolerate someone while being cold, irritated, condescending, or harsh.

But the Spirit produces something more.

Paul writes:

"But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children:" — 1 Thessalonians 2:7

And this takes us into **gentleness**, where we will discover that spiritual strength and tenderness are not opposites at all.

Gentleness: Strength Governed by Love

Gentleness is particularly beautiful because Scripture shows us that it is not weakness, timidity, or an unwillingness to confront what is wrong. It is **the manner in which strength is exercised when governed by the Spirit**.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness…" — Galatians 5:22

And once again, we find this quality first in God.

The Gentleness of God

David said:

"Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy gentleness hath made me great." — 2 Samuel 22:36

The same thought appears in Psalm 18:35:

"…thy gentleness hath made me great."

That is remarkable language.

David did not say God's harshness made him great.

"thy gentleness hath made me great."

The God who possesses unlimited authority nevertheless deals with His people in a manner Scripture describes as gentle.

Again, the fruit reflects **the character of its source**.

Jesus Reveals This Character

Isaiah's prophecy concerning Christ gives us a beautiful picture:

"A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench…" — Isaiah 42:3

Matthew applies this directly to Jesus in Matthew 12:20.

Think about the imagery.

A bruised reed is already damaged.

Smoking flax is barely burning.

And Christ does not crush the damaged reed or extinguish the struggling flame.

There is tenderness toward weakness.

That does not mean Christ ignores sin. We have already seen that He rebukes and corrects.

But **weakness is not treated as though it were rebellion**, and a struggling person is not unnecessarily crushed.

That distinction is very important.

Jesus Was Approachable

Consider how Jesus dealt with people.

Children could come to Him.

"Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not…" — Mark 10:14

The broken could approach Him.

The ashamed could approach Him.

The sick could approach Him.

Those who knew they were sinners could approach Him.

And yet the same Jesus could confront hypocrisy with tremendous directness.

So gentleness clearly does not mean that a person never speaks strongly.

Rather, Jesus responded appropriately to the condition before Him.

The bruised reed was not crushed.

But hardened hypocrisy was confronted.

That teaches us something very important about spiritual discernment.

Gentleness is not treating every situation identically.

Gentleness Is Especially Important When Correcting

Paul writes:

*"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one **in the spirit of meekness**; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."* — Galatians 6:1

This comes immediately after the fruit of the Spirit passage.

The purpose is:

restore.

Not humiliate.

Not dominate.

Not demonstrate superior knowledge.

Not win an argument.

Restore.

And the one doing the restoring must also be:

“considering thyself.”

That keeps correction from becoming self-righteous.

Gentleness Does Not Remove Truth

Paul tells Timothy:

“And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,

In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves…” — 2 Timothy 2:24–25

Look carefully.

He is still **instructing**.

There is still error that needs correction.

But the servant of God is:

not striving
gentle
patient
meek

That is an excellent picture of truth governed by the Spirit.

The Flesh Can Use Truth Wrongly

This is an important point.

A person may be **factually correct** and still behave carnally.

Someone may quote the right Scripture.

Someone may identify genuine error.

Someone may possess greater understanding than the person being corrected.

Yet if the interaction produces:

wrath
strife
pride
contention
self-exaltation

we should remember that those things belong to the very contrast Paul makes with the fruit of the Spirit.

Truth does not sanctify fleshly behavior.

Paul says:

"And the servant of the Lord must not strive…"

So one evidence of spiritual maturity is not merely **what truth we know**, but what kind of spirit governs us while communicating it.

Gentleness Is Not Being Easily Manipulated

We should make another distinction.

Gentleness does not mean permitting people to control us.

Jesus was gentle, but He was certainly not manipulable.

When people attempted to force Him into their plans:

"he departed again into a mountain himself alone." — John 6:15

When people tried to trap Him with questions, He discerned what they were doing.

When necessary, He refused to answer.

When necessary, He withdrew.

When necessary, He confronted.

So gentleness does not eliminate:

discernment
boundaries
authority
correction
firmness

It governs **how those things are exercised**.

Gentleness Can Actually Reveal Great Strength

Consider Jesus before Pilate.

Pilate says:

"Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?" — John 19:10

Jesus answers:

"Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above…" — John 19:11

There is no panic.

No need to impress Pilate.

No desperate self-defense.

No loss of composure.

Jesus knows exactly where true authority lies.

That kind of gentleness comes from **security in God**, not weakness.

Gentleness Changes How We Treat the Weak

Paul gives another beautiful instruction:

"Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men." — 1 Thessalonians 5:14

Notice something important here.

Different conditions receive different responses.

The unruly are warned.

The feebleminded are comforted.

The weak are supported.

All receive patience.

That is extraordinarily balanced.

Spiritual gentleness does not mechanically treat everyone the same.

It asks, in effect:

What does this person actually need?

Someone rebellious may need warning.

Someone frightened may need comfort.

Someone weak may need support.

Wisdom distinguishes them.

Gentleness Is Particularly Beautiful in Teaching

Paul describes his own ministry:

"But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children:" — 1 Thessalonians 2:7

Then he says:

"So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls…" — verse 8

Teaching was not merely the transmission of information.

There was affection.

Care.

Investment.

Patience.

That tells us something important about teaching spiritual truth.

The goal is not merely:

"I explained it correctly."

The question also becomes:

“Did I handle the person carefully while giving them truth?”

Now Gentleness Leads Directly Into Goodness

Look again:

*“love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, **goodness**…”*

Gentleness concerns much about **the manner in which we deal with others**.

Goodness takes us further into **the actual moral quality of what proceeds from us**.

And there is an especially important distinction to make.

Our culture frequently uses **“good”** to mean pleasant, agreeable, socially acceptable, or personally desirable.

Scripture does not allow man to define goodness for himself.

Jesus said:

“there is none good but one, that is, God.” — Mark 10:18

That gives us our starting point.

Just as:

God is love,

and

Christ gives His peace,

we now discover:

God Himself is the measure and source of goodness.

So when the Spirit produces **goodness**, He is not merely making us “nice people.”

He is producing in us a disposition and life increasingly aligned with **what God Himself calls good**.

And that distinction between **gentleness** and **goodness** is going to be important, because sometimes genuine goodness requires us to do something that does not initially feel gentle or pleasant to the person receiving it.

Yet, if it truly comes from God, **goodness and gentleness will never actually contradict one another**.

Goodness: What Proceeds From God

Goodness takes us directly to the question of what "good" actually means. And Scripture does not leave goodness to human preference.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, ***goodness****…"* — Galatians 5:22

Jesus gives us our foundation:

"There is none good but one, that is, God." — Mark 10:18

So once again, the fruit leads us back to its source.

God is good. Therefore the Spirit produces goodness.

God Defines What Is Good

The psalmist says:

"Good and upright is the LORD: therefore will he teach sinners in the way." — Psalm 25:8

And:

"O taste and see that the LORD is good…" — Psalm 34:8

Goodness is not merely something God **does**. It belongs to who He is.

This means we cannot begin with what seems good to us and then attribute it to God.

We learn goodness **from Him**.

Micah asks:

"He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good…" — Micah 6:8

That wording is significant.

Man does not determine what is good.

God shows man what is good.

Goodness and Truth Belong Together

Remember God's declaration concerning Himself:

“The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,” — Exodus 34:6

Notice:

goodness and truth.

This resembles what we already discovered concerning love:

“rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.”

God's goodness can never require departure from God's truth.

That becomes extremely important because something may **feel good** while not actually **being good**.

Good Is Not the Same as Pleasant

Hebrews gives us an excellent example:

“Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous…” — Hebrews 12:11

It does not feel pleasant.

But continue:

“…nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.”

Something can therefore be:

grievous in the present

and yet

good in its purpose and fruit.

That prevents us from defining goodness according to immediate comfort.

Sometimes what feels good harms us.

Sometimes what feels painful helps us.

God sees the end from the beginning.

This Helps Distinguish Gentleness From Goodness

We just studied gentleness.

Gentleness concerns greatly **how** something is handled.

Goodness concerns whether the thing itself is **right and beneficial according to God**.

Suppose someone needs correction.

Goodness will not allow us to call wrong right merely to avoid discomfort.

But **gentleness** governs how we approach the person.

Love seeks their true good.

Longsuffering gives them opportunity to grow.

Meekness keeps us from exalting ourselves over them.

Temperance restrains our own fleshly reactions.

Again, we cannot pull these qualities apart very easily.

The **whole fruit** operates together.

Jesus Went About Doing Good

Peter summarized Jesus' earthly ministry this way:

"God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good…" — Acts 10:38

There is something very practical here.

Goodness does not remain merely an inward disposition.

It **does good**.

Paul says:

"As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." — Galatians 6:10

Again, notice where this occurs.

Galatians 6, immediately after the fruit of the Spirit passage.

So the **goodness** produced inwardly by the Spirit becomes **doing good** outwardly.

Fruit becomes visible.

Goodness Seeks Another's Benefit

Paul writes:

“Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.” — Romans 15:2

The purpose is:

“for his good.”

And specifically:

“to edification.”

That means building up.

This is important because biblical goodness is not simply giving someone whatever they want.

Sometimes what another person wants would not edify them.

Love seeks what is **actually good** for them.

That is precisely how God deals with us.

Goodness May Require Saying No

Here we need another important distinction.

If goodness were merely agreeableness, Jesus would have agreed with everyone.

He did not.

He refused requests.

He corrected misconceptions.

He confronted sin.

He exposed hypocrisy.

He sometimes withdrew.

He would not allow people to determine His course contrary to the Father's will.

Jesus said:

“I do always those things that please him.” — John 8:29

That establishes the governing principle.

Goodness is first aligned with God.

Therefore we cannot do something contrary to God merely because another person would prefer it.

We Can Even Be Sincerely Wrong About What Is Good

This takes us deeper.

Proverbs says:

"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." — Proverbs 14:12

Something can **seem right**.

That does not make it right.

Isaiah warned:

"Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil…" — Isaiah 5:20

So discernment is necessary.

This brings us back again to the importance of the **Word and Spirit together**.

The Spirit who produces goodness is never going to produce something contrary to the truth God has revealed.

Goodness Is Evidence of Light

Paul says something particularly relevant in Ephesians:

"For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:

(For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;)" — Ephesians 5:8–9

There are those three things together:

goodness
righteousness
truth

And notice again the order:

“ye are light” → “walk as children of light.”

Identity and life first.

Walk afterward.

That is the same pattern we have been seeing throughout this entire study:

life → walk → fruit.

Goodness Is Not Self-Righteousness

There is also a danger here.

Once a person begins recognizing good and evil, the flesh can turn even that knowledge into pride.

Jesus described men who:

“trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.” — Luke 18:9

That is not the fruit of the Spirit.

True goodness remains joined to:

love, longsuffering, gentleness, and meekness.

If my supposed “goodness” makes me proud, contemptuous, harsh, or eager to elevate myself above others, something has gone wrong.

God's goodness actually led Paul to say:

“Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God…” — Romans 11:22

That is interesting too.

Goodness and severity are not necessarily opposites.

God can be good while being severe.

He can be loving while correcting.

He can be longsuffering while eventually judging.

This keeps us from reducing God's character to human sentimentality.

Goodness Produces Good Works

Jesus said:

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." — Matthew 5:16

Notice where the glory goes.

Not to the branch.

To the Father.

That takes us directly back to John 15:

"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit…" — John 15:8

Now those passages fit together beautifully:

God is good.
The Spirit produces goodness.
Goodness produces good works.
Men see the good works.
The Father is glorified.

The fruit points back to the tree from which its life came.

And Now We Come to "Faith"

Paul continues:

*"love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, **faith**…"*

This one deserves particularly careful attention because the Greek word translated **"faith"** here can encompass both **faith and faithfulness**, depending upon context.

And Scripture shows us both dimensions.

There is **believing God**, but there is also the character of being **faithful** because God Himself is faithful.

That distinction may help us understand why **faith** appears here as fruit rather than merely as the initial act of believing.

And once again we are going to find the same pattern:

"God is faithful…" — 1 Corinthians 1:9

So just as God is **love**, God is **good**, and God is **longsuffering**, we now come to another characteristic of the source:

God is faithful.

And the Spirit produces that character in His people.

Faith: Trusting God and Becoming Faithful

This one deserves careful attention because **“faith”** in Galatians 5:22 is broader than we sometimes hear it explained.

*“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, **faith**, meekness, temperance…”*

The Greek word is **pistis**. It can speak of faith, belief, trust, fidelity, or faithfulness according to its context. The KJV translators chose **“faith”** here, and we should not replace their wording. But understanding the range of the word helps us see what kind of fruit Paul is describing.

Faith Begins With God as Its Object

Biblical faith is not simply the ability to believe strongly.

Jesus said:

“Have faith in God.” — Mark 11:22

Faith has an object.

We trust **God** because of who He is.

Abraham gives us an excellent example:

“He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;

And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.” — Romans 4:20–21

Notice what Abraham's faith rested upon:

what God had promised
and
God's ability to perform it.

Biblical faith is therefore not believing that whatever I desire will happen.

It is confidence in **God and His word**.

Faith Comes by the Word

Paul states this plainly:

“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” — Romans 10:17

This connects beautifully with our previous study concerning the Word and Spirit.

The Spirit does not produce a vague faith detached from truth.

Faith responds to what God has spoken.

This is why faith and presumption are not the same thing.

Faith believes God.

Presumption may believe something God never said.

Yet God Himself Is Faithful

Now we come to the other side of *pistis*.

Paul says:

“God is faithful…” — 1 Corinthians 1:9

Again:

“But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.” — 2 Thessalonians 3:3

And:

“Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.” — 1 Thessalonians 5:24

This means our faith rests upon **His faithfulness**.

That relationship is beautiful:

We can trust God because God is trustworthy.

His character gives faith its foundation.

What Does Faith Look Like as Fruit?

Here is where Galatians 5 becomes particularly interesting.

Paul is describing something the Spirit **produces in the life**.

So this cannot remain merely an inward statement:

“I believe in God.”

Faith eventually becomes visible.

James makes that point very strongly:

“Shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.” — James 2:18

Faith produces conduct consistent with what it believes.

If I truly trust God, that trust eventually affects:

what I choose,
how I respond,
what I obey,
what I endure,
what I refuse,
and where I place my confidence.

Again, the inward life produces outward fruit.

Faith and Obedience Belong Together

Hebrews 11 repeatedly demonstrates this.

“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark…” — Hebrews 11:7

Noah believed God.

How do we know?

He built the ark.

Then Abraham:

“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed…” — Hebrews 11:8

There it is plainly:

“By faith… obeyed.”

Faith is not merely agreeing that God's words are true.

Faith acts upon them.

This Connects With Our Previous Study of Perfected Faith

James says concerning Abraham:

“Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?” — James 2:22

Faith was operating with his works.

His obedience brought the reality of his faith into visible expression.

This is exactly the pattern of fruit.

The unseen becomes seen.

Root → life → fruit.

Faith within → obedience without.

Faithfulness Means Reliability

Now consider the relational side of this fruit.

Jesus says:

“He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much…” — Luke 16:10

Faithfulness means we can be trusted with what has been entrusted to us.

Paul says of stewards:

“Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.” — 1 Corinthians 4:2

That word **“found”** is significant.

Faithfulness becomes observable.

A faithful person does what he has committed himself to do.

He remains dependable when circumstances change.

He does not abandon truth when it becomes inconvenient.

His word means something.

His allegiance does not shift with every pressure.

Faithfulness Is Especially Revealed Over Time

Anyone can appear faithful briefly.

Faithfulness becomes particularly visible through **continuance**.

Jesus said:

“He that endureth to the end shall be saved.” — Matthew 10:22

Paul said:

“Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.”

And Jesus said:

“Well done, thou good and faithful servant…” — Matthew 25:21

There is perseverance in this.

That connects faith naturally with **longsuffering**.

The Spirit produces a person who does not abandon God simply because obedience becomes difficult.

Faith Is Not the Absence of Difficulty or Questions

Abraham's circumstances did not make God's promise look easier.

Hebrews says:

“Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed…” — Hebrews 11:11

Why?

“because she judged him faithful who had promised.”

That may be one of the clearest statements in this entire portion of our study.

“She judged him faithful who had promised.”

Her faith rested upon **His faithfulness**.

That is the relationship.

Faith Also Protects Us From Being Governed by Sight

Paul says:

“For we walk by faith, not by sight:” — 2 Corinthians 5:7

That does not mean ignoring reality.

It means visible circumstances are not the final authority concerning what God has said.

This connects beautifully with joy and peace.

Why can there be **joy during affliction**?

Faith.

Why can there be **peace during tribulation**?

Faith.

Why can there be **longsuffering when change seems slow**?

Faith.

Because the person trusts God beyond what is presently visible.

Suddenly the order of the fruit becomes even richer.

The Fruit Is Working Together

Look at what has developed:

Love seeks another's good.

Joy rejoices in God and truth.

Peace rests in God rather than being governed by turmoil.

Longsuffering remains patient through difficulty.

Gentleness governs how we handle others.

Goodness seeks and does what God calls good.

Faith trusts God and remains faithful to Him.

These aren't isolated virtues.

They strengthen one another.

And now Paul gives us:

Meekness

This is going to be especially important because **meekness is probably one of the most misunderstood biblical qualities**.

Meekness is often imagined as weakness, passivity, shyness, timidity, or being easily dominated.

But that picture becomes impossible when we remember who said:

"Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart…" — Matthew 11:29

Jesus was meek.

Yet He overturned tables.

He confronted hypocrisy.

He rebuked error.

He stood before rulers without intimidation.

He refused manipulation.

He exercised authority.

He obeyed His Father regardless of opposition.

So whatever **meekness** means, it cannot mean weakness.

And there is another remarkable statement:

"Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth."
— Numbers 12:3

Moses was leading an entire nation.

That gives us two extraordinary examples:

Moses was meek.
Christ was meek.

So our next question becomes: **What kind of strength can possess enormous authority and yet Scripture call it meekness?**

That should bring us very close to the heart of what meekness actually is.

Meekness: Strength Under God's Government

Meekness becomes much clearer when we allow **Christ Himself** to define it rather than beginning with our modern associations with the word.

Jesus said:

*"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am **meek and lowly in heart**…"* — Matthew 11:29

Whatever meekness means, **Jesus possessed it perfectly**.

Yet Jesus was certainly not weak, timid, indecisive, easily manipulated, or afraid of confrontation.

So meekness must describe something else.

Meekness Is Not Weakness

Consider Jesus.

He openly confronted hypocrisy:

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" — Matthew 23:13

He drove those who were buying and selling from the temple:

"And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple…" — Matthew 21:12

He stood calmly before earthly rulers.

He refused attempts to manipulate Him.

He spoke truth when it brought opposition.

And yet Scripture says:

He was meek.

Therefore meekness cannot mean the absence of strength.

It must describe **how strength is governed**.

Moses Gives Us Another Example

Scripture says:

“Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.” — Numbers 12:3

Yet Moses confronted Pharaoh.

He led Israel.

He delivered God's commandments.

He judged difficult matters.

He rebuked sin.

He exercised enormous responsibility.

Again:

authority and meekness coexist.

This is beginning to give us a much better picture.

Meekness Does Not Need to Defend Self Constantly

The context of Numbers 12 is especially revealing.

Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses.

“And they said, Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us?” — Numbers 12:2

Then immediately:

“And the LORD heard it.”

And then Scripture tells us Moses was very meek.

Moses did not need to establish his importance by fighting for recognition.

God defended what God had appointed.

That may tell us something fundamental about meekness:

Meekness does not require the exaltation of self.

Jesus Shows Us the Same Thing

Peter writes:

“Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not…” — 1 Peter 2:23

But notice what follows:

“…but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.”

There is the key.

Jesus did not refrain from retaliation because He was powerless.

He **entrusted Himself to the Father**.

That is very different from weakness.

Meekness can remain composed because it knows where judgment ultimately belongs.

Meekness Is Connected With Lowliness

Jesus said:

“I am meek and lowly in heart.”

Paul similarly writes:

“With all lowliness and meekness…” — Ephesians 4:2

And:

“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.” — Philippians 2:3

So meekness has a strong relationship with humility.

It does not need to be:

the most important,
the most admired,
the one who wins,
the one who receives recognition,
or the one who always has the last word.

That does not mean meekness denies truth.

It means **self is no longer the thing being defended at all costs.**

Meekness Changes How We Handle Truth

This brings us back to correction:

*"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one **in the spirit of meekness**; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."* — Galatians 6:1

Notice again that this comes immediately after Galatians 5.

Paul has just written:

"the fruit of the Spirit is… meekness…"

Then he effectively shows us what that fruit looks like.

Someone has fallen.

The spiritual person does not say:

"Look how much better I am than you."

Instead:

restore him,
do it meekly,
and consider yourself.

That last part destroys spiritual pride.

"considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

Meekness Is Teachable

James gives us another dimension:

"Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls." — James 1:21

This is very important.

Meekness does not merely affect how we **teach** others.

It affects how we **receive truth ourselves**.

A proud person approaches Scripture asking:

How can I make this agree with what I already believe?

Meekness asks:

What has God actually said?

That is enormously important for searching the Scriptures.

Meekness is willing to be corrected by the Word.

It does not come to Scripture merely to prove itself right.

It submits its own understanding to God.

Meekness Is Essential to Genuine Wisdom

James says:

"Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works ***with meekness of wisdom****."* — James 3:13

That phrase is beautiful:

"meekness of wisdom."

True wisdom does not need arrogance.

In fact, James immediately contrasts it with:

"bitter envying and strife" — James 3:14.

Then he says:

"This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish." — verse 15

So someone can believe himself wise while the **spirit accompanying his wisdom** reveals another source.

Again, fruit identifies the tree.

The Wisdom From Above Looks Like the Fruit of the Spirit

Now listen to James:

"But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits…" — James 3:17

That sounds remarkably familiar.

peaceable
gentle

merciful
good fruits

The same spiritual character keeps appearing throughout Scripture.

This isn't a collection of unrelated virtues.

It is the recognizable character of life **from above**.

Meekness Is Not Passivity Toward Evil

This distinction is essential.

Moses was meek and confronted Pharaoh.

Jesus was meek and confronted hypocrisy.

Paul instructed Timothy:

"In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves…" — 2 Timothy 2:25

The error is still corrected.

Meekness changes **the spirit of the person doing the correcting**.

This means meekness can say:

No.

Meekness can establish a boundary.

Meekness can rebuke.

Meekness can exercise authority.

Meekness can refuse manipulation.

Meekness can stand completely alone for truth.

What meekness does not need is **pride, wrath, domination, self-exaltation, or revenge** in order to do those things.

Meekness Is Remarkably Powerful

Jesus said:

"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." — Matthew 5:5

That turns the world's understanding of power upside down.

The world often associates power with:

dominating, demanding, controlling, overpowering.

Christ points to the meek.

Why?

Because meekness is not the absence of power.

It is power no longer governed by **self**.

And I think that brings us very close to a concise biblical understanding:

Meekness is the disposition of a person whose strength, rights, abilities, emotions, and authority have been brought under the government of God rather than the government of self.

That is why Jesus can be both **almighty and meek**.

And Now We Reach Temperance

This brings us beautifully to the final word:

*"Meekness, **temperance**: against such there is no law."* — Galatians 5:23

Temperance is the perfect place for Paul to finish because everything we have studied requires that we **not be ruled by uncontrolled desire and impulse**.

Love cannot flourish if selfish appetite governs us.

Joy becomes unstable if circumstances govern us.

Peace disappears if anxiety and anger govern us.

Longsuffering collapses if impatience governs us.

Gentleness disappears if irritation governs us.

Goodness is compromised if desire governs our definition of good.

Faithfulness collapses if convenience governs us.

Meekness disappears if pride governs us.

And so we arrive at:

temperance.

Self-control.

But even the expression **self-control** can be misunderstood, because this is not simply the human self becoming extraordinarily disciplined.

Paul calls it **fruit of the Spirit**.

So we have a fascinating question before us:

If temperance means governing ourselves, but it is produced by the Spirit, who is actually governing whom?

And Galatians has already given us the answer:

"Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." — Galatians 5:16

Temperance is going to bring the entire passage back around to where we began: **which life is governing us, the flesh or the Spirit?**

Temperance: When Desire No Longer Rules

Temperance brings the whole passage together beautifully.

*"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, **temperance**: against such there is no law."* — Galatians 5:22–23

The Greek word translated **temperance** carries the idea of self-mastery or self-control. But because Paul calls it **fruit of the Spirit**, biblical temperance is not simply strong human willpower.

It is the life brought under the government of the Spirit so that **desire, appetite, emotion, and impulse no longer rule the person**.

The Question Is Government

Paul has actually been discussing government throughout Galatians 5:

"Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh." — Galatians 5:16

Then:

"For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh…" — Galatians 5:17

And:

"If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." — Galatians 5:25

So the question underneath temperance is:

What governs me?

The flesh says:

I desire it, therefore I must have it.
I feel it, therefore I must express it.
I am angry, therefore I must react.
I am offended, therefore I must retaliate.

Temperance says that desire itself is no longer lord.

Scripture Uses the Picture of an Ungoverned City

Proverbs gives us a remarkably vivid image:

"He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls." — Proverbs 25:28

A city without walls was exposed.

Anything could enter.

There was little defense against invasion.

Likewise, a person without rule over his own spirit is vulnerable to whatever impulse arrives.

Anger comes, and he follows it.

Fear comes, and he follows it.

Desire comes, and he follows it.

Offense comes, and he follows it.

Appetite comes, and he follows it.

But spiritual maturity introduces **government**.

Temperance Applies to Much More Than Physical Appetite

We sometimes associate temperance primarily with food, drink, or sexual desire.

It certainly includes bodily appetites, but Scripture takes self-government much further.

The tongue

"He that hath knowledge spareth his words…" — Proverbs 17:27

Anger

"He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." — Proverbs 16:32

Thoughts

"Bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;" — 2 Corinthians 10:5

Bodily appetites

Paul says:

"But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection…" — 1 Corinthians 9:27

There is the language again:

subjection.

The body exists.

Its desires exist.

But they do not possess final authority.

Paul Uses the Athlete

Immediately before saying that he brings his body into subjection, Paul writes:

"And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things." — 1 Corinthians 9:25

An athlete gives up legitimate things because something more important governs him.

That gives us an important distinction.

Temperance is not merely refusing **sinful things**.

Sometimes it means governing even **lawful things**.

Paul says:

"All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient…" — 1 Corinthians 6:12

Then comes this remarkable statement:

"…but I will not be brought under the power of any."

That may be one of the clearest practical descriptions of temperance.

"I will not be brought under the power of any."

Something does not have to be inherently sinful before it can begin exercising unhealthy mastery over us.

Liberty Does Not Mean Being Ruled by Desire

This connects directly with Galatians:

"For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh…" — Galatians 5:13

Biblical liberty is not:

"I am free, therefore I can do whatever I desire."

That could simply exchange one form of bondage for another.

Paul says:

"by love serve one another."

True liberty leaves us free **to obey God** rather than being enslaved to appetite.

This Is Why Temperance Is Spiritual

Someone might develop considerable natural discipline.

An athlete can discipline his body.

A businessman can discipline his schedule.

A soldier can discipline his habits.

None of those things automatically constitute fruit of the Spirit.

Spiritual temperance has a different governing center:

obedience to God.

The question is not merely:

“Can I control myself?”

It is:

“Is my whole person brought into obedience to Christ?”

That is much deeper.

Even Strong Emotion Can Be Governed

Temperance does not mean becoming emotionless.

Jesus wept.

Jesus experienced sorrow.

Jesus showed compassion.

Jesus expressed righteous anger.

The issue is not whether emotion exists.

The issue is whether emotion **rules**.

Paul says:

“Be ye angry, and sin not…” — Ephesians 4:26

That is very instructive.

Anger may occur without anger being permitted to govern conduct.

Likewise:

fear need not govern obedience.
sorrow need not destroy joy.
offense need not produce retaliation.
desire need not become indulgence.

This is Spirit-produced government of the inner man.

Now Look at the Whole Fruit

We have finally reached the end of Paul's list, and now we can step back.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance…"

What began as nine words now looks remarkably like **one integrated spiritual character**.

Love directs us toward the true good of others.

Joy gives inward rejoicing rooted in God and truth.

Peace settles us in reconciliation with God and frees us from fleshly strife.

Longsuffering allows love and peace to endure provocation and difficulty.

Gentleness governs how strength deals with weakness and others.

Goodness aligns our actions with what God calls good.

Faith trusts God and produces faithfulness toward Him.

Meekness brings strength, rights, and self-interest under God's government.

Temperance prevents appetite, emotion, and impulse from taking control.

And something becomes striking when we compare this with the works of the flesh.

The Flesh Is Fundamentally Disordered

Look again:

"Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness…"

Desire without proper government.

"Idolatry, witchcraft…"

Allegiance wrongly directed.

"Hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife…"

Relationships disordered.

"Envyings…"

Desire corrupted by comparison.

"Drunkenness, revellings…"

Appetite ruling the person.

Then:

“and such like.”

The flesh produces **disorder** because self and desire are governing.

But the Spirit restores proper order.

God governs the person.
The person governs his appetites.
Love governs his relationships.
Truth governs his understanding.

That is an extraordinarily coherent picture.

“Against Such There Is No Law”

And now Paul's final statement makes wonderful sense:

“against such there is no law.” — Galatians 5:23

Why would there be?

The law does not condemn:

love,
joy,
peace,
longsuffering,
gentleness,
goodness,
faith,
meekness,
or temperance.

These things fulfill the righteous direction toward which God's commandments pointed.

Remember what Paul said earlier:

“For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” — Galatians 5:14

And elsewhere:

“Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.” — Romans 13:10

The Spirit is producing inwardly the kind of life that the law could command outwardly but could never manufacture within a person.

That is very significant.

And Then Paul Tells Us What Happened to the Flesh

Immediately after naming the fruit, Paul says:

“And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.” — Galatians 5:24

That verse should not be separated from the fruit passage.

Here is the contrast:

fruit of the Spirit

versus

affections and lusts of the flesh.

Then:

“If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” — Galatians 5:25

We have returned exactly to where we started.

Life first.
Walk second.
Fruit follows.

And then Paul gives one immediate practical application:

“Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.” — Galatians 5:26

That is fascinating.

After this magnificent description of spiritual life, Paul brings it straight into **relationships among the saints**.

Don't seek glory for yourself.

Don't provoke one another.

Don't envy one another.

And then Galatians 6:1 begins:

“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one…”

So the fruit of the Spirit is not merely something for private inward examination. **It becomes visible in how the saints actually treat one another.**

I think that is where our study should go next, rather than simply ending after the nine qualities.

We have examined **what the fruit is**. Now we can examine **how Scripture tells us to recognize fruit, how fruit grows and matures, what hinders fruitfulness, what pruning accomplishes, and whether a person's fruit can reveal which spirit is actually governing the life.**

That would bring us back to Jesus' statement with much greater understanding:

“Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.” — Matthew 7:20.

By Their Fruits Ye Shall Know Them

Now that we have examined the fruit itself, Jesus' statement becomes much richer:

“Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.” — Matthew 7:20

Jesus does not say we know the tree by its claims, appearance, reputation, position, knowledge, or gifts.

He points us to **fruit**.

Fruit Reveals Something We Cannot See Directly

We cannot look directly into another person's heart.

God can.

“For man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.” — 1 Samuel 16:7

Yet Jesus still tells us that there is something we **can** observe:

fruit.

“For every tree is known by his own fruit.” — Luke 6:44

Fruit does not give us God's omniscience concerning another person's heart, but it does provide legitimate evidence concerning what is operating in a life.

This is why Jesus repeatedly moves from the invisible to the visible:

tree → fruit

heart → words

life within → conduct without

The Context Is False Prophets

This makes Matthew 7 especially important:

“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.” — Matthew 7:15

Notice the problem.

Outward appearance and inward reality do not agree.

They appear to be sheep.

But they are not.

How, then, are the saints to discern them?

Jesus answers:

“Ye shall know them by their fruits.” — Matthew 7:16

This means fruit is given to us as a legitimate means of **discernment**.

Not suspicion.

Not speculation.

Not reading someone's mind.

Observation of fruit.

Gifts Are Not the Same as Fruit

The remainder of Matthew 7 makes this especially sobering.

Jesus says:

“Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?” — Matthew 7:22

Those are impressive claims.

Prophecy.

Casting out devils.

Wonderful works.

Yet Jesus had just told His hearers:

look at the fruit.

This reinforces something we established earlier:

Spiritual-looking activity is not automatically spiritual fruit.

A person's apparent ability, influence, knowledge, eloquence, or remarkable works cannot substitute for the character produced by the Spirit.

Neither Can Words Alone Prove the Tree

Jesus continues elsewhere:

“Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” — Matthew 12:34

And:

“A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things…” — Matthew 12:35

Words themselves eventually become part of the fruit.

James makes the same point:

“Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?” — James 3:11

Then:

“Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs?” — verse 12

There is our imagery again.

Source determines production.

But We Must Be Careful About Inspecting a Single Moment

Here I think Scripture gives us an important balance.

Peter denied Jesus.

That was terrible fruit in that moment.

Yet Peter repented.

David sinned grievously.

Yet when confronted, he acknowledged his sin.

So “by their fruits” should not be reduced to:

One failure tells me everything about this person forever.

Fruit is better understood as what the life **characteristically produces**.

And repentance itself produces fruit.

John the Baptist said:

“Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:” — Matthew 3:8

True repentance changes what follows.

Therefore when failure occurs, another question becomes important:

What happens when the person is confronted with truth?

Do they humble themselves?

Do they repent?

Do they seek restoration?

Or do they justify, conceal, blame, harden themselves, and continue?

Those responses themselves become revealing fruit.

Fruit Takes Time to Become Evident

This is built into the very metaphor Jesus chose.

Fruit does not appear instantly.

A seed germinates.

A tree grows.

Branches develop.

Fruit forms.

Fruit matures.

This helps explain why Scripture places such importance on **continuance**.

Jesus said:

"If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;" — John 8:31

Paul speaks of:

"patient continuance in well doing" — Romans 2:7.

There is a difference between a temporary display and an established manner of life.

Time reveals things.

Trials Often Reveal Fruit

This is where our study becomes particularly practical.

We often discover what governs us when something **presses against us**.

It is relatively easy to appear peaceful when nothing disturbs us.

Longsuffering becomes visible when someone tries our patience.

Meekness becomes visible when our pride is challenged.

Temperance becomes visible when desire becomes strong.

Faith becomes visible when circumstances contradict what we hoped to see.

Love becomes visible when loving costs us something.

Jesus described this principle in the parable of the sower.

Some seed:

"when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended." — Matthew 13:21

Pressure revealed the lack of root.

That is significant.

Trials do not merely cause reactions. They can expose what is already rooted within us.

Pruning Is Different From Destruction

Now we return to John 15:

"Every branch in me that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." — John 15:2

Notice carefully:

The branch being pruned is already **bearing fruit**.

The pruning is not necessarily evidence that something has gone terribly wrong.

The Husbandman sees something fruitful and works upon it so that it becomes **more fruitful**.

That changes how we might understand some uncomfortable dealings of God.

Removal is not always punishment.

Sometimes removal is cultivation.

What Might Need Pruning?

Scripture gives us principles rather than a list attached directly to John 15.

Hebrews says:

"Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us…" — Hebrews 12:1

Notice the distinction:

"every weight"

and

"the sin."

Something can hinder us without necessarily being sinful in itself.

That fits beautifully with what we learned about temperance.

Paul said:

"All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient…" — 1 Corinthians 6:12

So fruitfulness may require God to deal not only with obvious sin but with **weights, distractions, attachments, habits, priorities, or dependencies that hinder spiritual growth**.

The Word Has a Cleansing Role

Right after speaking of pruning, Jesus says:

"Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." — John 15:3

The Word exposes things.

It corrects our understanding.

It reveals motives.

It separates truth from error.

Hebrews says:

"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword…" — Hebrews 4:12

And it is:

"a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

So the Word does not merely tell us what external actions need changing.

It reaches into **thoughts and intentions**.

That is deep pruning.

Fruit Can Increase

Jesus gives us an encouraging progression in John 15:

fruit — verse 2

more fruit — verse 2

much fruit — verses 5 and 8

That means we should not think about the fruit of the Spirit as though a person either possesses every quality at complete maturity or possesses none at all.

There is growth.

Peter describes something similar:

"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." — 2 Peter 3:18

Growth means there may be immaturity without there being absence of life.

A young tree and a mature tree are genuinely the same kind of tree, but their fruitfulness may differ greatly.

This Changes Self-Examination

Paul says:

"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves." — 2 Corinthians 13:5

The fruit of the Spirit gives us something very practical with which to examine ourselves.

Not merely:

Do I profess the right doctrine?

That matters.

But also:

What is my life producing?

When opposed, what comes out?

When offended?

When overlooked?

When corrected?

When tempted?

When someone else succeeds?

When I have authority?

When I don't get my way?

When nobody sees what I am doing?

Those situations often expose the source from which we are operating.

And importantly, the purpose of this examination is not endless self-occupation. It is to bring whatever we discover back under the government of Christ.

Fruit Also Protects Us From Being Impressed by Appearances

This may be one of the most useful applications of Jesus' teaching.

A person can be:

eloquent, knowledgeable, charismatic, influential, confident, gifted, or outwardly impressive.

None of those things appears in Galatians 5 as fruit of the Spirit.

That does not make them bad.

It simply means **they are not the test Jesus gave us**.

The questions become much simpler:

Is there love?

Is there peace or continual strife?

Longsuffering or habitual impatience?

Gentleness or unnecessary harshness?

Goodness or corruption?

Faithfulness or unreliability?

Meekness or self-exaltation?

Temperance or uncontrolled appetite and impulse?

And perhaps most importantly:

What happens consistently over time?

The Fruit Points Back to Christ

We have now traveled almost full circle.

Jesus said:

"Abide in me…"

Then:

"the same bringeth forth much fruit…"

Then:

"Herein is my Father glorified…"

The fruit is not intended to make us fascinated with the branch.

It directs attention back to the source of its life.

And I think there is one more major part of this study that we should examine.

Jesus speaks not only of branches bearing fruit but of **fruit remaining**:

"I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain…" — John 15:16

That introduces something beyond simply producing fruit.

Remaining fruit.

So next I would like to follow the Scriptures concerning **maturity, endurance, abiding, and fruit that remains**, because that will help us distinguish temporary enthusiasm or outward reform from the lasting work of the Spirit in a life.

Fruit That Remains

Jesus' wording takes us beyond merely producing something that looks fruitful for a season:

*"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and **bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain**…"* — John 15:16

That word **remain** fits the entire teaching of John 15. Jesus repeatedly speaks of **abiding**, continuing, and remaining. The picture is not momentary spiritual activity. It is enduring life.

Abiding Comes Before Remaining Fruit

Jesus says:

*"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it **abide in the vine**; no more can ye, except ye abide in me."* — John 15:4

The branch's continuing fruitfulness depends upon continuing in the source of its life.

Then:

"He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit…" — John 15:5

So there is a progression:

abiding → fruit → more fruit → much fruit → fruit that remains.

The emphasis is not merely upon beginning well.

It is upon **continuing in Christ**.

Scripture Repeatedly Emphasizes Continuing

Jesus said:

"If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;" — John 8:31

Paul and Barnabas exhorted the disciples:

"to continue in the faith" — Acts 14:22.

Paul told Timothy:

"But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of…" — 2 Timothy 3:14

And Hebrews says:

“For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end;” — Hebrews 3:14

There is a consistent biblical emphasis:

beginning matters, but so does continuing.

The Parable of the Sower Shows Why

Jesus describes several responses to the Word.

Some seed immediately disappears.

Some springs up quickly but has no depth:

“Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while…” — Matthew 13:21

Then trouble comes:

“for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.”

That is temporary growth.

Something appeared.

But it did not endure.

Then another receives the Word, but:

“the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.” — Matthew 13:22

That gives us another danger.

Fruitfulness can be **choked**.

Notice What Chokes the Word

Mark's account is particularly revealing:

“The cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.” — Mark 4:19

Those are not all obviously wicked things.

Cares.
Riches.
Desires for other things.

Life can become so occupied with other things that the Word is crowded out.

That connects strongly with the **weights** we discussed earlier:

"let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us…" — Hebrews 12:1

Not everything that interferes with fruitfulness arrives looking evil.

Sometimes it simply arrives looking **important**.

The Good Ground Is Different

Jesus says:

*"But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, **keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience**."* — Luke 8:15

That is a wonderful description.

They:

hear the Word,
keep the Word,
and bring forth fruit with patience.

Not instantly.

Not superficially.

"with patience."

Fruit requires time.

Roots Matter

Jeremiah gives us another beautiful picture:

"Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is." — Jeremiah 17:7

Then:

"For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river…" — verse 8

Now notice what happens when difficulty comes:

*"and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, **neither shall cease from yielding fruit**."*

The drought does not determine the fruitfulness.

Why?

The roots have another source of supply.

That sounds very much like John 15.

The outward environment may become difficult, but the life of the tree is being supplied from somewhere deeper.

Psalm 1 Gives the Same Picture

"But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night." — Psalm 1:2

Then:

"And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit ***in his season****…"* — Psalm 1:3

That phrase matters:

"in his season."

Fruit has seasons of development.

Growth is not always immediately visible.

Roots may be developing before fruit appears.

God may be pruning.

Understanding may be deepening.

Character may be forming through trials.

Therefore we should not confuse **slow growth** with **no life**.

But over time, a living tree should produce according to its nature.

Maturity Requires Patience

James uses the agricultural picture:

"Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it…" — James 5:7

The husbandman does not plant today and condemn the field tomorrow because there is no harvest.

There is patience in cultivation.

That is important in how we deal both with ourselves and with other saints.

We should desire growth without demanding instant maturity.

That takes us back to **longsuffering**.

Interestingly, one of the fruits is necessary while waiting for the fruit to mature.

Trials Can Mature the Fruit

James says:

“Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.” — James 1:3–4

The trial is not automatically the enemy of fruitfulness.

Sometimes it is part of the process through which fruit matures.

This helps explain pruning.

“Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.” — John 15:2

The Husbandman is not merely interested in whether fruit exists.

He is cultivating **maturity and abundance**.

Remaining Fruit Is Tested by Time

This brings us back to discernment.

Temporary enthusiasm can look impressive.

Jesus' parable shows seed that:

“anon with joy receiveth it” — Matthew 13:20.

There was even **joy**.

But there was:

“no root in himself.”

So emotional intensity alone cannot prove maturity.

Neither can a powerful beginning.

Fruit that remains becomes visible through:

continuance, obedience, trials, correction, waiting, temptation, disappointment, and time.

This is why faithfulness is such an important part of the fruit.

Fruit Also Contains Seed

There is another aspect of the biblical picture worth noticing.

God established the principle in creation:

"the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself…" — Genesis 1:11

Fruit does not merely demonstrate life.

It also carries the capacity for **multiplication**.

And Jesus speaks of His disciples bearing fruit in a context where they have been chosen and sent:

"I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit…" — John 15:16

Spiritual life does not terminate upon ourselves.

What God produces in one life affects others.

Love produces love.

Faithfulness strengthens faith.

Teaching truth produces understanding.

Encouragement strengthens another saint.

A mature life becomes nourishment and encouragement to others.

Fruit multiplies.

Yet the Glory Still Belongs to the Husbandman

Jesus keeps the entire picture properly ordered:

"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit…" — John 15:8

The branch never becomes the source.

No matter how mature it becomes.

No matter how much fruit it bears.

No matter how useful it becomes.

The branch remains dependent upon the Vine.

That protects us from a subtle danger: spiritual maturity becoming spiritual self-sufficiency.

There is never a point at which the branch graduates from needing the Vine.

"Without me ye can do nothing." — John 15:5

The Whole Picture

We can now see the biblical pattern developing from beginning to end:

The seed of the Word is received.

Life comes from Christ.

The branch abides in the Vine.

The Father cultivates and prunes.

The Spirit produces fruit.

Trials reveal and mature it.

The Word cleanses and corrects.

Fruit increases.

Fruit remains.

Others are affected by it.

And the Father is glorified.

That brings us to one final area that I think would complete this study beautifully.

We have spent considerable time asking **what the fruit of the Spirit is**. But Scripture also tells us something about **walking after the flesh, grieving the Spirit, quenching the Spirit, sowing to the flesh or Spirit, and being filled with the Spirit**.

In other words, there is a very practical question remaining:

How do the saints cultivate a life in which the fruit of the Spirit flourishes?

Not by manufacturing love, joy, peace, and the rest through human effort, but by understanding what Scripture actually tells us to **do** in relation to the Spirit, the Word, the flesh, and abiding in Christ.

That would bring the entire study from **what the fruit is** to **how we actually walk fruitfully day by day**.

Walking in the Spirit: How the Fruit Flourishes

This brings the study into daily life. Paul does not tell us to manufacture the nine qualities individually. His instruction is much more fundamental:

*"This I say then, **Walk in the Spirit**, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh."* — Galatians 5:16

Notice the order.

He does not say:

Defeat every lust of the flesh, and eventually you will walk in the Spirit.

He says:

Walk in the Spirit → you will not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

The answer begins with the source from which we are living.

We First Live in the Spirit

Paul later says:

*"If we **live in the Spirit**, let us also **walk in the Spirit**."* — Galatians 5:25

Again:

life → walk.

The walk is the outward course of a life already received.

This agrees exactly with Jesus:

"Abide in me, and I in you." — John 15:4

We could put the two passages beside one another:

Jesus: Abide in me → bear fruit.

Paul: Walk in the Spirit → fruit of the Spirit.

These are not competing explanations. They describe the same spiritual reality from complementary perspectives.

Abiding Is Continuing Dependence

Jesus says:

"As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself…" — John 15:4

That little phrase **“of itself”** is crucial.

The branch's problem is not that it needs better techniques for producing grapes.

It cannot produce them **of itself**.

Therefore the foundation of fruitfulness is continuing dependence upon Christ.

That immediately guards us against turning the fruit of the Spirit into another law:

I must be more loving.
I must be more joyful.
I must become more patient.
I must control myself better.

Those may identify areas needing growth, but if our answer is merely increased fleshly effort, we have missed Paul's point.

The flesh cannot manufacture the fruit of the Spirit.

Yet This Does Not Mean Passivity

This balance is very important.

Dependence upon the Spirit does not mean sitting passively and waiting for God to make our choices for us.

Scripture repeatedly commands action.

Paul says:

“Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth…” — Colossians 3:5

And:

“Put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.” — Colossians 3:8

Then:

“Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;” — Colossians 3:12

Those words sound very familiar.

Kindness.
Meekness.
Longsuffering.

We are commanded to act.

But our obedience proceeds from the new life God has given.

As we saw earlier:

"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." — Philippians 2:13

God works in.
We work out.

We Must Sow to the Right Source

Galatians gives us another picture:

"For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." — Galatians 6:8

Now Paul moves from **fruit** to **sowing and reaping**.

What we continually feed matters.

What occupies our mind matters.

What we expose ourselves to matters.

What desires we repeatedly indulge matters.

What truth we receive matters.

Seeds eventually produce something.

This gives us a very practical question:

What am I sowing to?

The Mind Is Involved

Paul writes:

"For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit." — Romans 8:5

Then:

“For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.” — Romans 8:6

There is that word again:

peace.

The fruit does not appear disconnected from the mind.

What we continually set our minds upon affects the direction in which we walk.

That connects with:

“And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;” — Ephesians 4:23

And:

“be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind” — Romans 12:2.

The Word Must Abide in Us

Jesus says:

*“If ye abide in me, and **my words abide in you**…”* — John 15:7

This is essential.

Abiding in Christ is not some vague mystical experience disconnected from truth.

His **words abide in us**.

David expressed the principle:

“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.” — Psalm 119:11

And Paul says:

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom…” — Colossians 3:16

The Word is not merely visited occasionally.

It **dwells** there.

The Spirit and the Word Work Together

This returns beautifully to our earlier study.

Jesus said:

“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth…” — John 16:13

And:

“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” — John 17:17

Spirit of truth.
Word of truth.

The Spirit does not lead contrary to the Word He inspired.

And merely possessing Scripture intellectually is not the same thing as walking in the Spirit.

The Word must be **received, believed, obeyed, and lived**.

We Must Not Grieve the Spirit

Paul says:

“And grieve not the holy Spirit of God…” — Ephesians 4:30

The surrounding context is very practical.

He speaks of:

lying,
anger,
stealing,
corrupt communication,
bitterness,
wrath,
clamour,
evil speaking,
malice.

Then he says:

“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another…” — Ephesians 4:32

Again we see the same contrast as Galatians 5.

The flesh produces one kind of conduct.

The Spirit produces another.

Therefore walking in the Spirit necessarily involves refusing what grieves Him.

We Are Also Told Not to Quench the Spirit

Paul says:

“Quench not the Spirit.” — 1 Thessalonians 5:19

To quench carries the picture of extinguishing or suppressing.

Then immediately:

“Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil.” — verses 20–22

Notice the balance again.

Being open to the Spirit does not mean abandoning discernment.

“Prove all things.”

Then:

hold fast what is good.

abstain from evil.

Spirit-led living is not mindless living.

We Are Told to Be Filled With the Spirit

Paul writes:

“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit;” — Ephesians 5:18

That contrast is fascinating.

One influence takes control of a person from without and produces excess.

Paul says instead:

be filled with the Spirit.

And what follows?

Speaking spiritual truth to one another.

Singing.

Thanksgiving.

Submission.

Again, inward filling produces outward expression.

Prayer Belongs Here Too

Paul says:

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit…" — Ephesians 6:18

Jude similarly says:

"But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost," — Jude 20

Dependence upon God naturally expresses itself through prayer.

The branch does not pretend independence from the Vine.

Obedience Matters

There is another passage we should not overlook:

"And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him." — Acts 5:32

Jesus likewise connects abiding with obedience:

"If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love…" — John 15:10

So walking in the Spirit cannot mean receiving impressions while disregarding what God has already commanded.

Spirit-led living produces obedience.

And Fellowship Matters

Fruit is repeatedly manifested in relationships.

Paul says:

"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body…" — 1 Corinthians 12:13

The Spirit does not merely form isolated spiritual individuals.

He forms **one body**.

That explains why so much of the fruit concerns how we relate to others:

Love needs someone to love.

Longsuffering requires someone with whom to be patient.

Gentleness appears in how we handle others.

Faithfulness becomes visible through relationships and stewardship.

Meekness governs how we exercise strength.

Peace operates among people.

The fruit is profoundly **relational**.

Isolation can conceal things that fellowship exposes.

Even Difficult Relationships Can Become Places of Cultivation

This is worth considering.

Sometimes we may think:

“I would be much more peaceful if these difficult people weren't around.”

Perhaps.

But then how would longsuffering mature?

How would forgiveness be exercised?

How would meekness be tested?

How would gentleness become visible?

How would temperance govern our responses?

This does not mean remaining in abusive or destructive situations. Scripture does not require us to submit ourselves endlessly to evil.

But ordinary friction among imperfect people can become part of the ground in which spiritual character matures.

“Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.” — Proverbs 27:17

So What Do We Actually Do?

After everything we have studied, the biblical answer is remarkably coherent.

We **abide in Christ**.

We allow **His Word to abide in us**.

We **walk in the Spirit**.

We **mind the things of the Spirit**.

We **sow to the Spirit** rather than feeding the flesh.

We **mortify the deeds of the body**.

We **obey the truth** God reveals.

We **pray in the Spirit**.

We refuse to **grieve or quench the Spirit**.

We remain in fellowship with the body.

We submit to the Father's pruning.

And through all of this, we remain dependent upon Christ:

"for without me ye can do nothing." — John 15:5

The Beautiful Simplicity of the Whole Study

We began with nine words:

"love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance…"

But Scripture has taken us somewhere much deeper.

The fruit of the Spirit is not primarily a **character-improvement program**.

It is the evidence of **a different life operating within**.

The flesh produces according to its nature.

The Spirit produces according to His.

The branch bears according to the Vine.

And therefore the ultimate goal is not merely:

"I want to become more loving."

It becomes:

"I want Christ so completely governing my life that His love becomes visible through me."

Not merely:

“I need more patience.”

But:

“Let the Spirit govern my response so that God's longsuffering becomes visible.”

Not merely:

“I need better self-control.”

But:

“My desires must come under the government of Christ.”

And this brings us back to the verse that may summarize the entire study:

*“My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until **Christ be formed in you**,”* — Galatians 4:19

Then one chapter later:

“But the fruit of the Spirit is…”

I don't think those thoughts should be separated.

Christ formed within.
Christ manifested without.

And the evidence is **fruit**.

There is one final direction that could take this even deeper: comparing the entire fruit of the Spirit directly with **the life of Jesus in the Gospels**, not merely one quality at a time, but watching all nine operate together in actual situations. That would give us a living biblical portrait of what **“Christ formed in you”** looks like.

The Fruit of the Spirit Seen in Jesus Christ

This may be the most important place the study has brought us.

We have been examining:

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance…” — Galatians 5:22–23

But Paul had already expressed his desire for the Galatians:

*“My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until **Christ be formed in you**,”* — Galatians 4:19

What does Christ formed within actually look like?

We need not imagine it.

We can look at Christ.

Jesus Was Filled With the Spirit

Before looking at individual events, this foundation matters.

At His baptism:

“And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him…” — Luke 3:22

Then:

*“And Jesus being **full of the Holy Ghost** returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness,”* — Luke 4:1

And afterward:

*“And Jesus returned **in the power of the Spirit** into Galilee…”* — Luke 4:14

Later Peter described Him:

“How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good…” — Acts 10:38

So when we look at Jesus, we see what a life wholly yielded to God and operating in the Spirit looks like.

And remarkably, it looks like Galatians 5.

Love

Jesus said:

“As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you…” — John 15:9

His love was not merely spoken.

John says:

“Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.” — John 13:1

Then Jesus washed their feet.

And ultimately:

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” — John 15:13

But His love also corrected.

He could say:

“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten…” — Revelation 3:19

Therefore Christ's love was neither indulgence nor mere affection.

It sought the genuine good of others according to truth.

Joy

Jesus possessed joy even though His life included sorrow, rejection, opposition, and suffering.

He told His disciples:

*“These things have I spoken unto you, that **my joy** might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.”* — John 15:11

Notice again:

“my joy.”

The fruit produced in us originates in Him.

Even concerning the cross:

“Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame…” — Hebrews 12:2

Joy and suffering existed together.

That destroys the idea that spiritual joy depends upon pleasant circumstances.

Peace

Jesus said:

*“Peace I leave with you, **my peace I give unto you**: not as the world giveth, give I unto you.”* — John 14:27

Again:

my peace.

Consider Jesus asleep in the ship while the storm raged.

“And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow…” — Mark 4:38

The disciples were terrified.

Jesus was not governed by the storm.

Then He arose:

“Peace, be still.” — Mark 4:39

The peace within Him was not dependent upon peace around Him.

Longsuffering

Consider how Jesus dealt with His disciples.

They misunderstood Him repeatedly.

They argued about who would be greatest.

Peter rebuked Him.

They failed to watch with Him.

They fled when He was arrested.

Peter denied Him.

Yet Jesus continued teaching, correcting, restoring, and loving them.

When James and John wanted fire called down from heaven upon the Samaritans, Jesus:

“turned, and rebuked them…” — Luke 9:55

Their spirit was wrong.

But He did not abandon them.

He corrected them and continued forming them.

That is longsuffering with purpose.

Gentleness

Perhaps one of the clearest pictures appears when the woman taken in adultery was brought before Him.

After her accusers departed, Jesus said:

“Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?” — John 8:10

She answered:

“No man, Lord.”

Jesus replied:

“Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.” — John 8:11

Look at the balance.

He did not humiliate her.

He did not excuse sin.

Mercy and truth remained together.

We see the same tenderness in the prophecy applied to Christ:

“A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench…” — Matthew 12:20

He did not unnecessarily crush the already bruised.

Goodness

Peter summarized Jesus' earthly ministry:

“Who went about doing good…” — Acts 10:38

Jesus healed.

He fed the hungry.

He taught truth.

He restored.

He forgave.

He delivered.

He served.

But His goodness was always governed by His Father's will.

Jesus said:

“I do always those things that please him.” — John 8:29

This is important.

Jesus did not define goodness merely as doing whatever another person wanted.

He did what pleased the Father.

Therefore biblical goodness remains anchored in **God's will**.

Faith

Jesus lived in complete confidence toward His Father.

Before raising Lazarus:

“Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.” — John 11:41

Then:

“And I knew that thou hearest me always…” — verse 42

Even approaching the cross, Jesus entrusted Himself to the Father.

“Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit…” — Luke 23:46

His faith was not theoretical.

It governed His actions all the way through suffering and death.

He trusted the Father completely.

Meekness

Jesus explicitly identified Himself this way:

“I am meek and lowly in heart…” — Matthew 11:29

And yet He possessed extraordinary authority.

When arrested, He told Peter:

“Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?” — Matthew 26:53

That is one of the clearest pictures of meekness we could possibly find.

Jesus was not powerless.

He possessed access to overwhelming power.

Yet He did not use power to escape the Father's will.

That is strength completely governed by obedience.

Meekness.

Temperance

Now consider Jesus in the wilderness.

After forty days of fasting:

"he was afterward an hungred." — Matthew 4:2

The hunger was real.

Satan said:

"If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." — verse 3

Jesus possessed the power to do it.

But appetite did not govern Him.

He answered:

"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." — verse 4

That may be one of Scripture's clearest pictures of temperance.

A legitimate bodily desire existed.

But desire did not become master.

The Word of God governed the response.

Now Watch the Fruit Operate Together

This is where it becomes especially beautiful.

The nine qualities are not compartments in Jesus.

They operate together.

Consider the cross.

Jesus is being mocked, falsely accused, tortured, and crucified.

Yet He says:

“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” — Luke 23:34

There is **love**.

He does not retaliate.

There is **longsuffering**.

He entrusts Himself to the Father.

There is **faith**.

He possesses power but refuses fleshly retaliation.

There is **meekness**.

Pain does not cause uncontrolled response.

There is **temperance**.

He continues doing the Father's will.

There is **goodness**.

And Hebrews tells us:

“who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross…” — Hebrews 12:2

There is **joy**.

All of this occurs while He possesses peace with His Father and fulfills His purpose.

The fruit is not nine disconnected behaviors.

It is one life.

Consider Jesus Before Pilate

Pilate says:

“Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?” — John 19:10

Jesus answers:

“Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above…” — John 19:11

Look at His composure.

No panic.

No flattering Pilate.

No begging.

No hatred.

No attempt to prove His importance.

No denial of truth.

No intimidation.

No loss of self-government.

Peace, faith, meekness, temperance, and truth are all operating together.

This is spiritual character.

Consider Jesus Washing Judas' Feet

This may be even more searching.

John tells us that Jesus knew Judas would betray Him.

“For he knew who should betray him…” — John 13:11

Yet during that same supper Jesus washed the disciples' feet.

Judas was there.

Jesus knew.

And Jesus served.

That is not ignorance.

It is not naivety.

It is not failure to discern evil.

Jesus knew exactly what Judas was doing.

Yet Judas' evil did not determine **Jesus' character**.

That takes us back to something we discovered while studying longsuffering:

Another person's behavior does not determine the spirit in which I respond.

That is enormous.

Consider Jesus With Peter

Jesus knew Peter would deny Him.

He warned him.

Peter failed exactly as Jesus had said.

Yet after the resurrection Jesus did not humiliate Peter.

He restored him.

"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" — John 21:16

Then:

"Feed my sheep."

Peter's failure was addressed, but restoration remained the goal.

There again we see:

truth, love, goodness, gentleness, longsuffering, and faithfulness working together.

This Helps Us Understand "Christ Formed in You"

Now Paul's words become much clearer:

"until Christ be formed in you" — Galatians 4:19.

This does not merely mean knowing more facts about Christ.

It means His life increasingly becomes visible in ours.

Paul says:

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son…" — Romans 8:29

And:

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image…" — 2 Corinthians 3:18

Then notice how:

“even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

There it is again.

The Spirit transforms us into the image of Christ.

And what does that image look like when manifested in character?

Galatians answers:

love
joy
peace
longsuffering
gentleness
goodness
faith
meekness
temperance.

Perhaps This Is the Heart of the Entire Study

We began by asking about **the fruit of the Spirit**.

But Scripture has gradually moved our attention away from the list itself and toward **Christ**.

That seems exactly right.

The goal is not to stare continually at the fruit.

The fruit tells us something about the **tree**.

And the branch tells us something about the **Vine**.

Jesus said:

“He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit…” — John 15:5

So perhaps the simplest way we can express everything we have found is:

The fruit of the Spirit is the character of Christ becoming visible in the life of one who abides in Him and walks in the Spirit.

And that explains why the Father is glorified by the fruit.

“Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit…” — John 15:8

The mature branch does not cause people to marvel at the branch.

It reveals the quality of the **Vine**.

And that brings one more passage into extraordinary clarity:

“He must increase, but I must decrease.” — John 3:30

As self ceases to govern and Christ increasingly governs, what becomes visible?

Not merely better behavior.

Christ.

“Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me…” — Galatians 2:20

That may be where the entire study has been leading us:

Christ within, by the Spirit.
Christ governing the life.
Christ's character becoming visible.
Fruit appearing naturally from that life.
And through that fruit, the Father glorified.