

Unit Theme: The Fruit of the Spirit

May 5, 2024 (Lesson 10)

THE SPIRIT PRODUCES LONGSUFFERING, GENTLENESS, GOODNESS

1. **Longsuffering Through the Spirit** (Galatians 5:22; Ephesians 4:1-4; James 5:7-11)
2. **Gentleness Through the Spirit** (Proverbs 15:1; 2 Timothy 2:23-26; Titus 3:1-5)
3. **Goodness Through the Spirit** (Luke 10:30-37; Ephesians 4:29-32; 5:8-10)

Central Truth: The Holy Spirit produces longsuffering, gentleness, and goodness in the believer.

Focus: Affirm the value of—and seek to have in our lives—longsuffering, gentleness, and goodness by the Spirit.

Evangelism Emphasis: When sinners turn to Christ, the Holy Spirit begins to transform them into Christ's likeness.

Golden Text: “Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you” (Ephesians 4:32).

The God of the Bible is unique in many ways when compared to the mythical gods of other ancient peoples. The Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Greek, and Roman gods were believed to be very powerful, but they were characterized as unreliable, selfish, petty, and generally unconcerned about human beings. The God of the Bible is also powerful; in fact, He is all-powerful. However, our God is strikingly different from the pagan gods, because our God cares. Our God is reliable, faithful, loving, kind, and forgiving. Therefore, our God is unique because He is both powerful and good.

The Bible states more than twenty times that the Lord is “good,” and it declares more than ninety times that He is “merciful.” When Moses pleaded with God, “Please, show me Your glory” (Ex. 33:18 NKJV), God's response was not a display of power and majesty. Instead, the Lord answered by saying, “I will make all My goodness pass before you, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before you. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion” (33:19 NKJV). The glory of God is displayed not only through His power but also through His goodness.

This discussion of God's character relates to the fruit of the Spirit because the Spirit *is God*, the third person of the Trinity. Therefore, the attributes of God are the attributes of the Spirit. If God the Father is good, then the Holy Spirit is good. The fruit of the Spirit shows the holy character of God is flowing into the lives of believers. Through the Spirit, the attributes of God's goodness are communicated to the human heart. As children of God, we are given God's holy nature.

Furthermore, the nature of God as both powerful and good has implications for the Spirit's work in His gifts and His fruit. On the one hand, Pentecostals have recognized the importance of the spiritual gifts as manifestations of God's power. The gifts empower the believer to speak, teach, witness, heal, deliver, prophesy, pray, and minister in many ways. On the other hand, non-Pentecostals have emphasized the fruit of the Spirit rather than the gifts. However, the teaching of Scripture and the nature of God himself demonstrate both power and character are important. The Spirit wants to give us both the gifts and the fruit. This week's lesson will deal with the fruits of longsuffering, gentleness, and goodness.

1. LONGSUFFERING THROUGH THE SPIRIT

A. Walk Worthy of Your Calling (Galatians 5:22; Ephesians 4:1-4)

Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith.

Ephesians 4:1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called 2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; 3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling.

Last week, we studied love, joy, and peace—three qualities that sound very spiritual and which relate to inner attitudes of the heart. Today's topics, though certainly spiritual, are more directly

related to our interactions with other people. The definition of *longsuffering* is “patiently enduring lasting offense or hardship” (*Webster’s Dictionary*). The Holy Spirit enables us to endure troubles and remain calm when we are persecuted or mistreated. Thus, longsuffering is essentially the quality of being patient when we are injured or provoked by others.

God himself is our model for longsuffering. As stated in the lesson introduction, *longsuffering* is an attribute of God. When the Lord revealed His nature to Moses on Mount Sinai, He “passed before him and proclaimed, ‘The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth’” (Ex. 34:6 NKJV). Therefore, the longsuffering God enables us to be a longsuffering people (Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:12; 2 Tim. 4:2).

The Apostle Paul urged believers to “walk worthy” (Eph. 4:1) of their calling. Paul was qualified to give such instruction because he was an apostle of Jesus, and also because he exemplified Christian behavior. In fact, Paul was imprisoned for the Gospel when he wrote the Book of Ephesians, and his sufferings give him the moral authority to exhort believers.

The words *called* and *calling* occur three times in Ephesians 4:1-4 (NKJV). This triple repetition means our “walk” (our conduct) should measure up to the standard required to fulfill our calling in God. What is our calling? Our calling is to “unity” and “peace” in the body of Christ, because there is only “one body and one Spirit.” Furthermore, our calling is “in hope” of the return of Jesus and of everlasting life which is to come. In short, our calling is to be the visible body of Christ in the world and, therefore, to be a witness as we glorify God (Eph. 3:21).

If we expect to be Christ’s body and to glorify God, we must embody the attributes of God and the character of Jesus Christ. Our calling demands we practice “lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love” (4:2). *Lowliness* is the “quality of voluntary submission and unselfishness, humility, self-effacement,” the opposite of arrogance or pride (Friberg, *Analytical*

Greek Lexicon). It is “humility, as opposed to attitude or projection of self-importance” (Danker, *Greek NT Lexicon*).

Meekness is the “quality of gentle friendliness, gentleness, meekness (as strength that accommodates to another’s weakness), consideration” (Friberg). *Lowliness* and *meekness* are elements of “longsuffering,” which shows restraint toward others and does not seek to retaliate against offenses. *Longsuffering* is essentially repeated in the phrase “forbearing one another in love” (v. 2). To *forbear* is to put up with something that is “disagreeable, annoying, or difficult” (Danker). This generous and unselfish behavior is motivated by love (see 1 Cor. 13:4) and by the desire for unity in the body of Christ.

Our patient attitude toward one another in the church is possible if we remember the Lord is also patient with us. He is patient with our failures and with our weaknesses.

Longsuffering is one of the most important fruits of the Spirit because it relates to the daily life of the church. A church should be a place of welcome, healing, growth, and deep and lasting relationships. However, when the fruit of the Spirit is absent, a church can be experienced as harsh, unaccepting, critical, envious, condemning, and cold. A long-standing church member and Sunday school teacher once said people in the neighborhood bar were friendlier than those in the church. The church should be the next best thing to Heaven; but without longsuffering, the church can become an inhospitable, judgmental society. Jesus Christ is longsuffering with us, so we must be longsuffering toward others.

Walking in Patience

I am normally a very kind and patient person, but I am tempted to be more impatient toward other people when my mind is occupied with my own schedule and my own plans. I have come to realize resting in the Holy Spirit and allowing the Spirit to guide my thoughts, words, and actions

make me a better person. The Bible calls this approach to life “walking in the Spirit” (Gal. 5:16).—
Lee Roy Martin

B. Wait on the Lord (James 5:7-11)

7 Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. 8 Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. 9 Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door. 10 Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. 11 Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.

The fruit of longsuffering also has reference to our attitude regarding the return of Jesus. We should expect Jesus to come at any moment, but we must not become impatient. James offered the example of the farmer who plants crops, waters them, and cultivates them, waiting patiently for the nourishing rains to come. Only after months of waiting does the farmer harvest a crop of fruit or grain. Similarly, we must be patient; and while we wait, we should “establish [our] hearts” (v. 8 NKJV). Therefore, the proper attitude toward the Lord’s return is steadfastness (see 1 Cor. 15:58). We can wait in confidence that the coming of the Lord draws near.

While we await our Lord’s return, we must not “grudge” (James 5:9) against one another, which means we must not complain and grumble against each other. If we disobey this command, we will be subject to divine judgment; and “the Judge [God] is standing at the door!” (NKJV).

James lifted up the Old Testament prophets, as examples of “suffering affliction, and of patience” (v. 10). The prophets spoke God’s Word, calling God’s people to account, while

sometimes predicting disasters to come. Until their prophecies were fulfilled, they suffered opposition and persecution. Elijah, for example, had to flee for his life. Micaiah and Jeremiah were thrown into prison (1 Kings 22:27; Jer. 32:2). James pointed also to Job as an example of longsuffering. Job's experience, in particular, showed God rewards those who wait in patience. In the end, the Lord showed compassion and mercy to Job, returning to him double for all that he had lost as a result of Satan's attacks.

§ *How does the first statement in James 5:11 echo Jesus' words in Matthew 5:10-11?*

2. GENTLENESS THROUGH THE SPIRIT

A. Be Gentle Toward Others (Proverbs 15:1; 2 Timothy 2:23-26)

Proverbs 15:1 A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.

2 Timothy 2:23 But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. 24 And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, 25 In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; 26 And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

Gentleness is a translation of the Greek word *chrestotes*, which the *New King James Version* translates as "kindness." The Holy Spirit produces the fruit of *gentleness*, which may be defined as an attitude of graciousness and mercy rather than severity. Gentleness, or kindness, is a quality of God himself (Rom. 2:4) which He gives to us generously. The gentleness and kindness of God is revealed through the life of Jesus Christ, who treated people with acceptance (John 8:11), compassion (Matt. 9:36; Mark 6:34), and forgiveness (Matt. 9:2; Luke 5:20). As the children of God, we must "put on . . . mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering" (Col. 3:12). Paul said the

genuineness of our Christian character can be evidenced by our “purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love” (2 Cor. 6:6 NKJV; see also 2 Peter 1:5-8).

“You can catch more flies with honey than vinegar” is an old saying that brings to mind Proverbs 15:1. We can respond to other people with gentleness or with harshness. The wisdom of King Solomon led him to the conclusion that a “gentle answer” (NIV) is the best choice.

The Apostle Paul agreed with Solomon’s wisdom. Paul advised the young minister Timothy to avoid disputes that cause conflict (2 Tim. 2:23). God’s servants should minister with gentleness, patience, and humility (vv. 24-25). Disagreements are best handled in kindness, not in harshness. When dealing with different opinions, we must remember some people have been entrapped by the devil (v. 26); and the best way for us to help those captives is to treat them with kindness while we pray for their deliverance.

§ *List “foolish and ignorant disputes” Christians sometimes “quarrel” about (2 Tim. 2:23-24 NKJV), and how we can overcome such arguments.*

B. Learn From Jesus’ Example (Titus 3:1-5)

1 Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, 2 To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men. 3 For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. 4 But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, 5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.

In his letter to Titus, Paul repeated the substance of his advice to Timothy, but with added

motivation. Paul insisted Christians should “speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility” toward everyone (Titus 3:2 NKJV). This includes “rulers and government leaders” (v. 1 NCV). He reminded his readers “we ourselves” (v. 3) were not always good people. We were sinners, walking in darkness and living in disobedience and enmity against God. However, God did not respond to our sinfulness with harshness, judgment, and condemnation. Rather, God responded to us with mercy (v. 5), kindness, and love (v. 4). Because of our sins, we deserved death; but God did not give us what we deserved; instead, He gave us freedom, life, joy, peace, and salvation. Similarly, we must demonstrate God’s grace by treating other people with the same love and kindness God has given us.

Divine Kindness

Most men can be kind to those who are kind and gentle themselves—or even to those who are needy and helpless—but it requires spiritual virtue to be kind to the evildoer, the mean and disagreeable, the spiteful and hateful man. This, however, is exactly what God does: “He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil” (Luke 6:35). This is the very nature of God.—Charles W. Conn

3. GOODNESS THROUGH THE SPIRIT

A. Compassionate Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37)

33 But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, 34 And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

Goodness is the quality of moral excellence, a willingness to share with others, and a concern for the well-being of others. Goodness is one of God’s most important moral attributes. The Psalms state repeatedly, “O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good!” (107:1; 34:8; 100:5, etc.). Through the Holy Spirit, God shares His goodness with us, thereby transforming us and making us good.

Goodness is the opposite of selfishness and apathy.

The story of the Good Samaritan illustrates the fruit of goodness. When a man was attacked, robbed, and beaten by thieves, “a certain priest” and “a Levite” would not help him (Luke 10:31-32). These two men represented the most religious segments of Judaism. They were devoted and faithful followers of the Scriptures; however, according to Jesus, they had “neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith” (Matt. 23:23 NKJV). Their rigid rules and correct theology did not give them “goodness.”

When “a certain Samaritan” saw the victim, he “had compassion on him” (Luke 10:33). Although Samaritans were not accepted by the Jews, this “good” man was willing to rescue the injured Jew and pay for his medical treatment.

God does not evaluate our Christian life according to the world’s standards. Instead, we are judged according to God’s standard. God does not require that we accumulate wealth, achieve fame, accomplish great feats, or reach the pinnacle of leadership. However, He does require us to be *good* as He is good! God’s greatest word of approval is this: “Well done, good and faithful servant” (Matt. 25:23). Is the fruit of goodness evident in your life?

§ *Describe a situation in which you need to “go and do likewise” (v. 37), as Jesus taught.*

B. Tenderhearted Believers (Ephesians 4:29-32)

29 Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. 30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: 32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

The Apostle Paul repeatedly mentions the fruit of goodness in his letter to the Ephesians (2:10; 4:28; 5:9; 6:8). Before mentioning goodness in 4:29, he insists “no corrupt word” (NKJV) should come out of a Christian’s mouth. The Greek word *sapros*, translated as “corrupt” (v. 29), is used literally to describe stinking, spoiled fish (Matt. 13:48) and rotten fruit (Luke 6:43). We must remember our words indicate the condition of our hearts, because “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” (Matt. 12:34).

Instead of corrupt speech, we are instructed to speak forth words that are “good to the use of edifying” (Eph. 4:29). The word *edifying* means “building up”; therefore, good words are constructive and helpful. Corrupt words tear down, but good words build up. Our words are powerful, giving “grace” to those who hear them. Good words convey a blessing. Good words meet the needs of those to whom we speak and the needs of the specific occasion. Speaking good words might also include the proper use of Scripture (see 2 Peter 3:16).

Speaking corrupt words offends the Holy Spirit, who is working in the midst of the church to build unity and community. The church needs the Spirit’s presence and ministry, but corrupt words will drive away the Spirit.

Furthermore, the fruit of goodness is opposite to “bitterness, anger, shouting, and slander” (Eph. 4:31 CSB). The fruit of goodness will cause us to be “kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another” (v. 32). Kindness is a gracious attitude toward other people. The word *tenderhearted* means “compassionate.” It is sharing in the feelings of others, especially when they are suffering. Forgiveness is based on Christ’s forgiveness of us. Jesus warned us sternly, “But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matt. 6:15 NKJV).

§ *Why would disobeying Ephesians 4:31 “grieve the Holy Spirit” (v. 30)?*

§ *Why does obeying verse 32 give honor to Christ?*

C. Children of Light (Ephesians 5:8-10)

8 For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: 9 (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) 10 Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.

As a fruit of the Spirit, goodness is a sign we are walking in the light. Before we came to Christ, we lived in spiritual and moral darkness; but now we are living in God’s light. In fact, we are “children of light” (v. 8), which means light is a part of our nature as believers. As we allow the light to control our attitudes and actions, the Spirit will produce in us “goodness and righteousness and truth” (v. 9). Furthermore, as we walk in the light and walk in the Spirit, we will be able to “discern what is pleasing to the Lord” (v. 10 ESV). We have the Ten Commandments and the ethical guidelines of the New Testament to direct us into correct moral choices; but we also have the Holy Spirit to guide us, especially when decisions are beyond the clear moral laws of Scripture.

God’s Transforming Light

To stand before the Holy One of eternity is to change. Resentments cannot be held with the same tenacity when we enter His gracious light.—Richard J. Foster

RELATIONAL GOOD FRUIT

We began this lesson talking about the attributes of God. The attributes listed in God’s self-revelation to Moses are not abstract philosophical qualities. They are relational attributes: “merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness . . . forgiving . . . [yet] by no means clearing the guilty” (Ex. 34:6-7 NKJV). By saying they are relational, we mean each of these attributes is aimed toward someone with whom God shares a relationship. The Lord is merciful, gracious, and

good to a certain person, at a certain time, and in a certain place. These attributes do not exist in a vacuum; they are responses to someone. The Lord is “longsuffering” in response to Israel’s sin, and He is “abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness” (ESV) toward His people, with whom He is joined in covenant.

The fruit of the Spirit corresponds to God’s relational characteristics. Our longsuffering, gentleness, and goodness are spiritual qualities that exist only as we relate to other people. We are longsuffering toward people who create unpleasant situations; we are gentle toward people who want to argue; and we are good to everyone, even those who are not good to us. These fruits exemplify how we should behave as we interact in the church and in the world. Finally, in the same way “the goodness of God” led us to repentance (Rom. 2:4), the goodness of God’s people will draw unbelievers to the Gospel.

Daily Devotions

- M. Patience Rewarded (Genesis 26:16-26)
- T. Our Longsuffering God (Nehemiah 9:26-31)
- W. Our Gentle Shepherd (Psalm 23:1-6)
- T. Lead Gently (2 Timothy 2:23-26)
- F. A Kind Neighbor (Acts 9:36-43)
- S. Choose Kindness (Ephesians 4:29—5:2)