

May 12, 2024 (Lesson 11)

THE SPIRIT PRODUCES FAITH, MEEKNESS, TEMPERANCE

1. **Faithfulness by the Spirit** (Galatians 5:22-23; Matthew 21:18-22; Hebrews 11:1-2, 6)
2. **Meekness by the Spirit** (Psalm 25:8-11; Matthew 5:5; 11:28-30)
3. **Temperance by the Spirit** (1 Corinthians 9:24-27; 2 Peter 1:3-8)

Central Truth: The Holy Spirit produces faith, meekness, and temperance in the believer.

Focus: Explore the impact of—and seek to have in our lives—faith, meekness, and temperance by the Holy Spirit.

Evangelism Emphasis: Through salvation, a sinner will find strength to live by faith and experience true meekness and self-control.

Golden Text: “According as his divine power [God] hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue” (2 Peter 1:3).

Lillie Mae Sanders, my step-grandmother, had what we call “a green thumb,” which means she could make anything grow and flourish. Her house was filled with beautiful plants and flowers. She made gardening seem effortless; but, in reality, she invested many hours of labor in cultivating her plants, watering them, fertilizing them, and keeping an eye on the weather.

Sadly, Lillie Mae’s abilities were not passed on to me. My gardening efforts remind me of the fruitless fig tree we will study in today’s lesson. Jesus, on His way into Jerusalem one morning, grew hungry and approached a fig tree to obtain fruit for His breakfast. “He came to it and found nothing on it but leaves, and said to it, ‘Let no fruit grow on you ever again.’ Immediately the fig tree withered away. And when the disciples saw it, they marveled” (Matt. 21:19-20 NKJV). Jesus caused the fig tree to die because it did not fulfill its most important reason for existence, which was to bear fruit.

Like the fig tree, we must ask ourselves if we are fulfilling our most important reason for living, which is to bear fruit that glorifies God as we conform to the image and nature of Jesus Christ (John 15:8). In this lesson, we will examine the fruits of faith, meekness, and temperance, and explore how

we can cultivate them in our daily lives.

1. FAITHFULNESS BY THE SPIRIT

A. Startling Lesson (Galatians 5:22-23; Matthew 21:18-22)

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

Matthew 21:18 Now in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered. 19 And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away. 20 And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away! 21 Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done. 22 And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

The seventh fruit produced by the Holy Spirit is *faith*. The Greek term is *pistis*, which means “constancy in awareness of obligation to others,’ faithfulness, fidelity” (Danker, *Greek NT Lexicon*). This word means both faith *in* God and faithfulness *to* God. For example, the Apostle Paul asked, “What if some were unfaithful? Will their unfaithfulness nullify God’s faithfulness?” (Rom. 3:3 NIV). Moreover, Jesus is our example of faith, the giver of faith, and the perfecter of our faith—“the author and finisher of our faith” (Heb. 12:2).

The fruit Paul calls “faith,” or “faithfulness,” includes the elements of trustworthiness, honesty, trustfulness, and reliability in our dealings with others. Faithfulness is dependability in our relationships with God and with other people. Like the other fruit, faithfulness is a quality of God himself which He imparts to His children. The author of Psalm 119 wrote, “Thy faithfulness is unto

all generations” (v. 90). The Apostle Paul stated, “God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor. 1:9 NKJV). Just as God is faithful to us, we should be faithful to Him and to one another (Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:2). Jesus promised, “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life” (Rev. 2:10).

In the lesson introduction, we mentioned the fig tree that Jesus caused to wither and die. His displeasure at the fig tree was based on His earlier comments about trees and their fruit:

“For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. For every tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil” (Luke 6:43-45 NKJV).

The fig tree’s lack of fruit evidenced it was a “bad” tree; therefore, it fell under Jesus’ judgment. The story of this fruitless fig tree has at least two lessons for us today. First, the depth of our discipleship and the quality of our Christian character are seen clearly in the fruit we bear. Therefore, the fruit of the Spirit is a key measure of our spirituality. The second lesson relates specifically to the fruit of *faith*. The disciples were amazed the fig tree had dried up. They had never witnessed an event like this. Jesus explained His faith had caused the fig tree to wither; and He declared they, too, could exercise faith to perform miracles. He said, “You can pray for anything, and if you have faith, you will receive it” (Matt. 21:22 NLT). Jesus, therefore, taught us to pray with faith.

§ *What “mountain” are you praying for God to remove?*

B. Unseen Evidence (Hebrews 11:1-2, 6)

1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. 2 For by it the elders obtained a good report.

6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe

that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

The twofold emphasis of the word *faith* (faith *in* God and faithfulness *to* God) can be seen clearly in the list of Old Testament characters found in Hebrews 11. Faith is the principle of trust in God that forms the basis for all of the Christian life. The most fundamental principle of faith is how it *sees the unseen*. It looks beyond the natural (beyond what the eyes can see) and into the spiritual realm. Humans are bound to the material world, but we need to develop eyes of faith that can see into the supernatural world. Therefore, faith is “the evidence of things not seen” (v. 1); and by faith, we understand the world was created by God out of things unseen (v. 3).

By faith, Noah obeyed God and built an ark, even though he had never seen rain (v. 7). Faith enabled Abraham to leave his homeland to travel to a place he had not seen (v. 8). By faith, Moses was unafraid of the Egyptian pharaoh, because he could see “him [God] who is invisible” (v. 27). All of these Old Testament heroes “died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them” (v. 13).

The crucial role of faith is expressed in verse 6, following the amazing story of Enoch, who walked with God and was subsequently translated into Heaven because “he pleased God” (v. 5). Then, the writer added this remarkable pronouncement: “But without faith it is impossible to please [God]” (v. 6). Consequently, we understand God is looking for people who will have faith *in* Him and will be faithful *to* Him at all times. When we feel our faith is weak, we must remember faith and feeling are not the same thing. Therefore, we should actively confess our faith in God; and we should continue to act faithfully, even when we do not feel like doing so. Thankfully, faith is a fruit the Holy Spirit makes to grow in us; therefore, as we rest in the Spirit our faith will increase.

Spiritual Eyes

The true believer is convinced there is an unseen world more real than the temporal world.

Christians believe in things the physical eye cannot see.—Ron Phillips

2. MEEKNESS BY THE SPIRIT

A. The Blessing of Humility (Psalm 25:8-11; Matthew 5:5)

Psalm 25:8 Good and upright is the Lord: therefore will he teach sinners in the way. 9

The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way. 10 All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies. 11 For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great.

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

Of the nine fruits of the Spirit, meekness may be the least appreciated. *Meekness* can be defined as “not being overly impressed by a sense of one’s self-importance” (Bauer, *Greek-English Lexicon*). In today’s world, however, trumpeting one’s accomplishments and boasting in one’s importance are common, while meekness is rarely practiced.

Meekness is strength under control. Therefore, it has been said “meekness is not weakness.” Meekness believes good is more powerful than evil. Meekness does not retaliate against perceived offenses. Meekness is a radical submission to God and a complete confidence in God that enables the believer to bear injustice calmly and patiently. The meek know their God; therefore, they do not need to prove themselves to others.

The psalmist said God “shows those who are humble how to do right, and he teaches them his ways” (25:9 NCV)—“the paths of . . . mercy and truth” (v. 10). God is able to guide and teach the meek because they are teachable. A meek person realizes they need God’s direction and forgiveness (v. 11), and they are willing to receive it.

In the Old Testament, Moses practiced meekness. When he was criticized by his sister Miriam, God inflicted her with leprosy; but Moses immediately prayed for her healing (Num. 12:10-13). His

gentle manner of response to frequent opposition caused the Lord to declare, “Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth” (v. 3). The meekness of Moses made him receptive to hear from God. Therefore, God told Moses how to rescue rebellious Israel from a plague (21:4-8), and He enabled Moses to lead His people to the brink of the Promised Land before his death (27:12-13).

In the New Testament, we are admonished to practice meekness at all times. When the need arises to defend our beliefs, we are instructed, “Always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15 NKJV). When doing good works, the meek will “show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom” (James 3:13 NKJV). Meekness is required when hearing the Word of God: “Receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls” (1:21 NKJV).

In Matthew 5:5, Jesus said an incredible inheritance awaits those who are meek. Meekness makes us caring and helpful when dealing with people. It is the opposite of harshness. Meekness is necessary in our relationships with fellow believers: “With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:2-3; see also 2 Tim. 2:24-25). Meekness is especially called for when dealing with believers who have stumbled or fallen. Paul wrote, “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” (Gal. 6:1).

Unmovable Meekness

John Climacus, who lived about 1,400 years ago on Mount Sinai, wrote: “Meekness is the rock overlooking the sea of irritability which breaks all the waves that dash against it, remaining itself unmoved. ‘But to whom shall I look?’ says the Lord. ‘To him who is meek and quiet and trembles at

my word' (see Isa. 66:2).”—*The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step 24

B. The Gentleness of Jesus (Matthew 11:28-30)

28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Jesus Christ is our greatest example of meekness, and He invites us to learn from Him by taking up His yoke. A *yoke* is a wooden bar that fits over the neck of an ox so it can pull a cart or plow. Jesus invites us to submit to Him by receiving the yoke He will give to us. In essence, everyone wears a yoke of servitude—some people serve God, while others serve sin (Rom. 6:6). Jesus declared if we will reject the yoke of sin and take His yoke, we will find “rest” (Matt. 11:28-29). The yoke of sin leads to misery, but the yoke of Jesus is “easy” and His “burden is light” (v. 30).

The meekness of Jesus was manifested also in how He used His authority. As King of Israel, He could have destroyed all of His adversaries. On one occasion, two of His disciples wanted to call down fire from Heaven and consume the Samaritans, but Jesus rebuked their bad spirit (Luke 9:54-55). Significantly, Jesus displayed His strength and meekness by entering Jerusalem with meekness, riding on a donkey (Matt. 21:5; Zech. 9:9).

Jesus further demonstrated His meekness even more powerfully through the cross. He declared, “I lay it [My life] down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again” (John 10:18 NKJV). His power was proven when the soldiers came to arrest Him in the Garden of Gethsemane. When they told Him they were seeking Jesus of Nazareth, He replied, “I am He” (18:5 NKJV). “Now when He said to them, ‘I am He,’ they drew back and fell to the ground” (v. 6 NKJV). Hours later, Jesus endured the pain of the cross while praying for those who hurled insults at Him. All the while, He could have called on the angels to come and rescue Him from the cross (Matt. 26:53).

§ Compare Jesus' statement in Matthew 11:30 with John's statement in 1 John 5:3.

3. TEMPERANCE BY THE SPIRIT

A. Running to Win (1 Corinthians 9:24-27)

24 Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. 25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. 26 I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: 27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

The Greek word for “temperate” (v. 25) is *egkrateia*, or “self-control.” It is the ability to remain calm and act wisely in the face of severe difficulties and challenges. We gain self-control when we surrender to the Holy Spirit: “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Tim. 1:7 NKJV).

In his first letter to the Corinthian believers, Paul explained the role of self-control in his life. Comparing the Christian life to a race, Paul said every athlete who enters a race is running to win. We are also running to win our race, but our reward is much more valuable than the reward given to a winning athlete. In ancient Corinth, the winner of the race received only a “perishable crown” made of pine needles (9:25 NKJV). The crown Christians will receive is an imperishable “crown of glory that fadeth not away” (1 Peter 5:4).

In order to win the race, the athlete must do three things. First, the athlete must compete according to the rules of the race (1 Cor. 9:27; see also 2 Tim. 2:5). Remaining within the rules requires self-discipline; and if the athlete breaks the rules, they are disqualified. Therefore, Paul said, “I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be

disqualified” (1 Cor. 9:27 ESV).

Second, in order to win, the athlete must compete skillfully. A runner must stay on course, which is why Paul declared, “I do not run aimlessly” (v. 26 ESV). A boxer must focus on defeating the opponent, which is why Paul stated, “I do not box as one beating the air” (v. 26 ESV). We must run our race with a clear goal (2 Tim. 4:7), keeping our gaze on Jesus as we run (Heb. 12:1-2).

Third, if an athlete hopes to be a winner, they must prepare for the race through extensive exercise and training, which requires discipline. Thus, Paul said, “I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should” (1 Cor. 9:27 NLT). Spiritual discipline requires self-control (temperance) because “the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matt. 26:41). Thankfully, the Holy Spirit gives us the power of self-control; and when we surrender to the Spirit and to Christ, we can “do all things” (Phil. 4:13). Let us remember our goal, and let us run our race with joy (Ps. 19:5).

Choosing Self-Control

I am a spiritual being. . . . After this body is dead, my spirit will soar. I refuse to let what will rot rule the eternal. I choose self-control. I will be drunk only by joy. I will be impassioned only by my faith. I will be influenced only by God. I will be taught only by Christ.—Max Lucado

B. Remaining Strong Through Trials (2 Peter 1:3-8)

3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: 4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. 5 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; 6 And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; 7

And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. 8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Self-control is the ability to say “no” to our own desires and say “yes” to the Holy Spirit. However, self-control is also vitally important when we find ourselves in the midst of trials, tests, and temptations. The Apostle Peter explains God has delivered us from “the corruption that is in the world” (2 Peter 1:4). Furthermore, God has given to us everything needed for “life and godliness” (v. 3). However, if we are to live in victory over tests and trials, we must cooperate with the Holy Spirit by continuing to grow in the faith. Peter lists a number of virtues that should be present in the Christian life, and among those is “self-control” (v. 6 NKJV). Our pursuit of these virtues guarantees we will bear fruit as we increase in the “knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (v. 8). By cultivation of the Christian virtues of faith, purity, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, kindness, and love, we will bear fruit and we will “never fall” (v. 10).

In essence, Peter explains a victorious lifestyle does not come by accident. Our success in the Christian life is a result of our diligent (v. 5) pursuit of moral excellence and our daily surrender to the working of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.

§ *According to 2 Peter 1:3-4, what has God “given to us,” and why?*

CULTIVATE GOOD FRUIT

Good fruit does not grow accidentally; it requires cultivation. Similarly, the fruit of the Spirit is not produced without our sincere desire to grow and develop. We must yield our lives to the Holy Spirit and follow Jesus faithfully if we expect the fruit to grow. We bear the fruit of the Spirit and manifest the character of Christ when we are spiritually joined to Christ (John 15:4-5) and when we

have the seed of the Word planted in our heart (John 15:3; 1 Peter 1:22-23). The cultivation of the fruit of the Spirit includes our faithful practice of the spiritual disciplines of prayer, fasting, worship, service, Bible study, self-examination, and fellowship with other believers.

Daily Devotions

- M. Faith Tested (Genesis 22:6-14)
- T. Justified by Faith (Romans 4:1-5, 18-25)
- W. Learn in Meekness (Psalm 25:8-15)
- T. Witness With Meekness (1 Peter 3:13-18)
- F. Integrity and Self-Control (Genesis 39:5-12)
- S. Self-Controlled and Holy (1 Peter 1:13-16)