

# Fruit of the Spirit

Having demonstrated to the Galatians that true freedom comes through faith in Christ, Paul begins to exhort them to exercise properly the spiritual freedom that was theirs. No longer slaves to sin or bound to the constraints of the Jewish law, they are encouraged to "stand firm" in the freedom, which Christ has provided for them ([Gal. 5:1](#)). This, however, does not mean a life of selfishness or spiritual license; rather, they should "serve one another. For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, namely, 'You must love your neighbor as yourself'" ([Gal 5:13-14](#)). This can be gained by a life lived through the power and direction of the indwelling Holy Spirit ([Gal 5:16](#)). Under His guidance the believer need no longer be controlled by carnality or false religion (vv. 17-21), but rather produce the fruit of the Spirit-led life (vv. 22-25). In [Galatians 5:22-23](#), "Paul draws an intended contrast between the naturally growing fruit of God's Spirit and the sin that is the outcome of humanity's actions independent of God."<sup>1</sup>

Paul's teaching concerning a fruit-filled spiritual life centers on a set of 9 virtues. To be sure, the imagery of fruit to portray the outcome a person's activities is a familiar metaphor to those who are acquainted with the Old Testament (e.g., [Ps. 1:3](#); [Prov. 1:31](#); [12:14](#); [13:2](#); [18:20](#); [31:21](#)) and was often used by Jesus himself ([Matt. 7:15-20](#); cf. [John 15:1-8,16](#)). As Morris observes, "The man who so abides in Christ and has Christ abide in him keeps on bearing fruit in quantities.... These are strong words which emphasize the necessity of remaining in vital contact with Christ if fruitfulness is to continue."<sup>2</sup>

The metaphor of the fruitful life thus takes on fresh spiritual vigor in the New Testament.<sup>3</sup>

## The Soul's Well Being

### Love

Several words or word pairs are used in the New Testament to express love. One familiar word pair is *philia/philein*. These two words are always employed with a special sense of warmth and deep affection. Although they commonly deal with matters of the heart-the emotional aspect of man-these words are not restricted to purely human love. They are used at times in respect to God's love for his dear Son ([John 5:20](#)) and for God's love for those who also love Jesus ([John 16:27](#)). They describe Christ's love for Lazarus ([John 11:3, 36](#)), for John his disciple ([John 20:2](#)), and for the reprovved believer ([John 3:19](#)).

A word pair formed from the same root occurs in two compound nouns: *philadelphos* ([1 Pet. 3:8](#)) and *philadelphia* ([2 Pet. 1:7](#)), both of which speak of brotherly love. The latter is the more frequent term and speaks of, "the love of Christians one to another growing out of a common spiritual life."<sup>4</sup> Still another noun from this root is the word *philostorgos*, which also occurs in [Romans 12:10](#) (NET, "mutual love"). Building upon the preceding *philadelphia*, this word carries the implication that in a real sense believers constitute a family. Therefore, Christians are to treat one another with all the love and closeness of members of their family.<sup>5</sup>

The other word pair that occurs with great frequency in the New Testament to express love is *agapē/agapein*. As noted in a previous study, the noun *agapē*, is used of God's love and also of genuine Christian love, which reflects and acts in accordance with God's love (e.g., [1 John 4:7-8](#)). Indeed, "A Christian's whole soul attitude toward others is to love others and seek their highest good-no matter who or what-just as God does ([Matt. 5:43-48](#))."<sup>6</sup> As Rapa remarks, "'Love' is listed first because Paul undoubtedly believed it to be the most important of the virtues (cf., [1 Co 13:13](#))" and because all of the others may be understood to be included in it and to flow out from it. Indeed, love is to be the operative dynamic of the Christian life."<sup>7</sup>

## Joy

Joy is an oft-attested theme in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. True joy comes with the believer's salvation. The joy of celebrating such a life is frequently recorded in the Psalms (e.g., [Pss. 21:1, 6; 33:21; 40:16](#)) as that which God supplies ([Ps. 36:7-9](#)). Well does the David exclaim, "You lead me

in the path of life; I experience absolute joy in your presence; you always give me sheer delight" (Ps. 16:11).

<sup>8</sup> Yet, " Joy is not found by seeking it as an end in itself. It must be given by God (Job 8:21; Pss. 4:7; 36:8)." <sup>9</sup>

The New Testament adds further that the joy of salvation is found in Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 1:8-9) and continues as the gracious gift of the Holy Spirit. Paul reminds the Thessalonian believers that they became imitators of Paul and the Lord, "When you received with joy the message that comes from the Holy Spirit" (! Thess. 1:6; cf. Rev. 14:17; 15:13). That joy is further advanced with time spent in God's presence in prayer (Phil. 1:4; cf. Col.1:11-14) aided by the power of the Holy Spirit in as much as we often "do not know how we should pray" (Rom. 8:26).

Joy is thus a distinctive feature of every aspect of the believer's life. "Joy is experienced through God's means of grace in the midst of life. . . . Worship evokes it (Ps 42:4; 43:4; 46:4; 71:23; 100:1; Lk 24:52; Jas 5:13), obedience discovers it (Ps 32:11; 64:10; 68:3; 69:32; 87:15; 119:1; Prov 10:28; 13:9; 29:6) and work fosters it ( Deut 12:18; Ezra 6:22; Eccles 2:24, 25)." <sup>10</sup> Because of the fullness of life, which Christians enjoy in Christ and with the Holy Spirit's guidance, they may rejoice even in difficult times (Phil. 1:12-21; James 1:2-3; 1 Pet 1:8-9; cf. Ps. 51:12; Hab. 3:17-19). Even in such times joy should occasion songs of praise (Ps. 51:14). Thus the Psalmist declares, " As for me, I will sing about your strength; I will praise your loyal love in the morning; for you are my refuge and my place of shelter when I face trouble" (Ps. 59:16). Indeed, rejoicing in the Lord should be a regular feature of the Christian life (Phil. 3:1; 4; 4; 1 Thess. 5:16; cf. Ps 33:1).

Moreover, Christians have at their disposal God's guidebook for a rewarding life, which gives instruction in how to live a consistent life before the Lord (Pss. 19:8; 119:16, 111, 162, 165). Joyful Christians should therefore live and serve the Lord together in harmony (Phil. 2:1-2). As do those in heaven, believers can experience special joy in seeing others come to Christ so that they may also experience the joy of a Christ filled life (Luke 15:7; 1Thess. 1:6). Christian joy is also lived out in full anticipation of that greater joy, which believers shall experience when Christ returns for the church, his spiritual bride (Rev. 19:6-8). It is small wonder, then, that Paul encouraged his believers to love and honor one another but to, "Rejoice in hope,

endure in suffering, persist in prayer" ([Rom. 12:11-12](#)) In light of all the above Scriptural teaching many Christian hymns take on an even greater meaning. The words of Charles Wesley have served as a classic example: "Rejoice the Lord is King; Your Lord and King adore! Rejoice, give thanks and sing, and triumph ever more."<sup>11</sup>

## Peace

Probably most everyone is aware of the Hebrew word for peace-shalom (Heb. *šālôm*). This word is routinely used as a word of greeting or farewell (e.g., [2 Kings 10:13](#)). Its usual translation, however, is the English word peace. By peace is meant more than the absence of war or strife (e.g., [1 Kings 4:24](#)).

Therefore, our English translations must sometimes use several other words to render the Hebrew such as: prosperity, safety, health, or completeness. Interestingly, this last rendering comes the closest to the meaning of the Hebrew root (*šālôm*, "whole/perfect") behind the word commonly translated peace. Thus to know true peace is both to attain personal fulfillment and to enjoy full and healthy relationships with others. Ultimately, the true peace is found in God ([Num. 6:26](#); [Judg. 6:24](#); [Pss. 29:11](#); [35:27](#); [Jer. 33:6](#)).

Because Israel was in covenant relationship with God, it could know true peace ([Deut. 29:9-29](#)). Its spiritual leadership was to be composed of men who knew God's peace ([Num. 25:10-13](#); [Mal. 2:1-9](#)). Israel's citizens could enjoy fellowship with God in a special way through that sacrifice known as the peace offering ([Lev. 3:1-17](#); [7:11-38](#); cf. [22:17-30](#)), which express the joy and full communion the believer enjoyed with God. By this and by living out God's revealed word in absolute trust they could experience peace, true well being, in their daily lives ([Ps. 119:165](#); [Prov. 3:1-4](#); [Isa. 26:3-4](#)).

Sadly, a willful Israel failed time and again to enter into the intended peace that was theirs to claim because of the peoples' sinfulness ([Isa. 48:16-19](#)). Therefore, Israel was exiled from its land (cf. [Deut. 29:19-20](#)). Nevertheless, a patient, faithful, and loving Heavenly Father assured faithful believers that he would one day send the Prince of Peace ([Isa. 9:6, 7](#)) who would redeem them, restore them to their land ([Jer. 33:6-9](#)), and enact with them a great new covenant of peace ([Isa. 54:10](#); [Ezek. 34:24-31](#); [37:26-28](#)).

The New Testament makes it clear that the promised Prince of Peace has indeed come ([Luke 1:68-79](#)) and through his atoning work has effected peace for all believers ([Rom. 5:1](#); [Eph. 2:14-17](#); [Col. 1:20](#)). By living in daily communion with the Lord through prayer and study of his word believers may learn to think his thoughts after him and so experience peace in all its fullness ([Phil. 4:4-9](#)). Thus, as Jesus promised, full peace comes to all who follow the Lord ([John 14:27](#); [16:33](#)). As believers await the second coming of the Prince of Peace, the message of God's peace through saving faith in Christ is to be carried to all the world ([Acts 10:34-36](#); [Rom. 10:9-15](#); [Eph. 6:15](#)), while themselves enjoying this peace, "which guards one's mind ([Php 4:7](#)) and one's relationships ([Col 3:15](#)) and is to be the chief relational dynamic in the home ([1 Co 7:15](#)) and in the church ([1 Co 14:33](#))."<sup>12</sup>

## The Believer's Relations With Others

### Patience

The second triad of Christian fruit bearing patience. Patience is one of the most difficult areas of the Christian life. Constantly changing circumstances test people's patience; yet patience is presented in the Scriptures as essential to proper Christian living. Of the several words dealing with patience in the New Testament one of the most frequent is *makrothumia*, (or "longsuffering"). It is, perhaps, the key to the several words regarding patience, for it rightly points to the character of God. Because God is patient, he bore with the world of total spiritual bankruptcy in the days of Noah ([1 Pet. 3:20](#)). He is presently delaying the great Day of Judgment in order to prolong the day of salvation ([2 Pet. 3:15](#)). God's patience, therefore, should bring men to repentance ([Rom. 2:4](#); [9:22-24](#)).

Because God is patient, believers ought also to be patient ([Matt. 18:21-35](#)). Several examples of patience can be noted in the Old Testament. Perhaps the finest of these is that of Jacob who worked for some 14 years in order to marry Rachel and he continued to serve his untrustworthy father-in-law for still another 6 years.<sup>13</sup> New Testament believers have a rich source of aid in being "longsuffering," for it is a fruit of the Spirit ([Gal. 5:22](#)). By knowing and obeying God's will believers are spiritually equipped "with all power according to his glorious might for the display of all patience and steadfastness, joyfully" (

[Col. 1:11](#)). Not only the Christian ministers ([2 Cor. 6:6](#)), who most assuredly must develop this character trait ([1 Tim. 1:16](#)), but every Christian should be marked by godly patience toward all ([1 Thess. 5:14](#)).

Patience enables the believer to walk worthy of his calling ([Eph. 4:2](#); [Col. 3:12](#)) and helps reproduce the same performance of faith in other believers ([Heb. 6:11-12](#)). Moreover, as believers await the sure return of Christ for his church, godly patience conditions them to face all of life's trials. Thus James reminds his readers,

So be patient, brother and sisters, until the Lord's return. Think of how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the ground and is patient for it until it receives the early and late rains. You also be patient and strengthen your hearts, for the Lord's return is near ([James 5:7-8](#)).

A second word group for patience (*hypomenē* and related forms) is customarily rendered by such words as "endurance" or "endure." These describe an aspect of God's patience ([Rom. 15:5](#)) as well as that of his Son, Jesus Christ ([Heb. 12:2](#)). "Endurance" (or patience) is not simply a passive resignation to the inevitable, however, it is, "an unruffled expectancy of God's salvation, to be fulfilled in the coming of our Lord ([1 Th 1:2f](#); [Rev 1:9](#)). The motives behind it are hope attaining perfection and salvation. For its exercise Christ is our model." <sup>14</sup>

Believers have a resident source of such endurance (or patience). Because of the Holy Spirit's empowering, believers can stand fast in afflictions and trials ([2 Cor. 6:4](#); [2 Thess. 1:4](#)), being assured that tribulation produces patience ([Rom. 5:3](#)). Although testing of the Christian's faith may come, this can produce endurance (or enduring patience, [James 1:3](#)). This kind of patience produces hope ([Rom. 5:3-4](#)) and joy ([Col. 1:11](#)), and receives God's commendation ([1 Pet. 2:19-20](#)). Such is necessary for Christian leaders ([1 Tim. 6:11](#)) and the whole church membership ([Heb. 10:32-39](#)). If Christians would reign with Christ, they must endure patiently ([2 Tim. 2:12](#)).

A third word that bears a related concept to the ideas of longsuffering and endurance to designate patience (*kartereō*) embodies several English meanings and emphases such as "be strong," "hold on to," and "endure," hence a sense of perseverance. Although it occurs but once in the New Testament, and

that in connection with Moses' forsaking of Egypt ([Heb. 11:27](#)), it does provide a rich source of information. In the wider context of Greek literature, the above mentioned English understandings can be found in contexts dealing with the patient endurance of suffering where the ordinary and ethical emphases could be blended together. A prime example is found in the intertestamental book of 4 Maccabees. This book recounts the story of the savage martyrdom of seven brothers. It is reported that the brothers encouraged one another with such words as, "Courage, brothers! Hold on nobly!" (4 Macc.13:11). One of the brothers cried out to his persecutors that they could endure such sufferings because of their "training in divine virtue" (4 Macc. 10:10-11). The example of these brothers demonstrates that this word could convey a spiritual strength that enabled one to endure great persecution.

Thus as distinct from the previous two New Testament words for the concept of patience, *kartereō* underscores the idea of a proper and courageous God-given strength that sees one through anything, which life presents. Such a steadfast perseverance comes not from a mere holding out to the end but from a holding on to that which is right and, above all, to him who is the source of strength for the believer's life.

In his translation of Hebrews 11:27 Luther (*Die Heilige Schrift*) may have said it just right: "By faith . . . he held on to him whom he did not see as though he saw him." Indeed, the author of Hebrews focuses his attention on the unassailable fact that when Moses forsook Egypt and all the material gain it had to offer (cf. [Acts 7:22](#)), he did not leave through fear of the Pharaoh. His eyes of faith beheld the invisible One. No earthly king caused him fear because Moses had committed himself to the ultimate Ruler of the Universe.

It is no less the case for today's believers than it was for Moses. Neither human ruler nor earthly trial nor the uncertain future need hold any fear for Christians. For by faith they hold on to the One whom having not seen they love; "You do not see him now but you believe in him, and so you rejoice with indescribable and glorious joy, because you are attaining the goal of your faith-the salvation of your souls" ([1 Pet. 1:8-9](#)). Nor should mere material gain allure believers. Rather, they must courageously and steadfastly run with patience the race of life that is set before them, "Keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith" ([Heb. 12:2](#)).

To be sure, it is only first term for patience that appears in [Galatians 5:22](#).. Nevertheless, all three Greek words that we have examined occur in New Testament and have much to tell us with regard to patience. They teach us that although at times believers are called on to suffer long through the challenges, which life presents, they can steadfastly endure and with strong faith run the race they are called on to run. For ultimately genuine patience comes as the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

## Kindness

The Greek noun used here has an interesting and noble history. In secular Greek the adjective from the same root conveys such meanings as "upright" or "decent," while the noun could bear such meanings as; "honesty, " " respectability, " "worthiness, " and "friendliness' as well as "kindness." In the Greek translation of the Old Testament (LXX) this noun regularly appears as the rendering of a Hebrew word for "good/goodness " and with few exceptions was reserved for the character and actions of God. Note, for example, [Psalm 85:12](#): "The LORD will bestow his good blessings." The adjectival form likewise could be used of God; for example, "Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good and his loyal love endures"! ([Ps. 106:1](#)).<sup>15</sup>

It is in the New Testament, however, that we find some especially significant emphases for Christian faith in practice. Here the meanings "kind" and "kindness" can be richly discerned. Thus [Romans 2:4](#) serves as a reminder that it is the rich kindness of God that leads people to repentance.<sup>16</sup> In this passage we learn that God's kindness is accompanied by his forbearance and patience, while serving as further illustrations of the depth and breadth of God's kindness.<sup>17</sup>

Kindness thus provides for that first necessary step-repentance, which then leads to a person's salvation. As believers grow in their Christian life, which in turn is experienced via God's kindness, they should deeply desire to grow in the knowledge of God's Word ([1 Pet. 2:3](#)). Indeed, those who have experienced God's gracious kindness in being saved through Christ Jesus have the rich heritage of eternal life ([Tit. 3:4-7](#)). As saved by grace and beneficiaries of God's kindness Christians are not only greatly blessed ([Eph. 2:4-8](#)), but must be aware that they are "his workmanship, having been created in Christ Jesus for good works prepared beforehand so we may do them" ([Eph. 2:10](#)). This entails a continuing process of reflecting God's kindness in their Christian life ([Rom. 11:22](#)). Indeed, "This is clearly thought of as a dynamic process: In addition to the salvation already effected in Christ himself (and received by human beings in faith), it also includes the enduring attestation of this redemption in a person's life by that person's `continuing in kindness.'"<sup>18</sup>



Thus believers are to allow the fruit of the Spirit ([Gal. 5:22](#)) to be active in their lives. They should "be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you" ([Eph. 4:32](#)).

With tender hearts of kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience they should support one another and allow God's lovingkindness through Christ to work itself out in them. Herein our word pair

"kind/kindness" is reminiscent of our earlier remarks concerning the necessity of Christians to love one another as though they were family members. It is interesting to note in passing that the translation

"kindly affectioned" ([Rom. 12:10](#), KJV; NET, "mutual love" ) is particularly appropriate. For the English

adjective "kind" and the adverb "kindly" are related to a root that has also produced the noun "kin." <sup>19</sup>

Thus in treating a fellow believer kindly a Christian treats another Christian as he would a member of his own family, with all that full family membership entails. Rather than "biting" or "devouring" one another

(cf. [Gal. 5:15](#)), those who claim Jesus' name would do well to remember Paul's injunction concerning

family love ([Rom. 12:10](#)).<sup>20</sup>

## Goodness

Building upon the influence of the LXX, the concept the concept of goodness takes on a special emphasis in the New Testament as an active virtue.<sup>21</sup> As a noun, goodness, it occurs only four times in

the New Testament—all four in the Pauline Epistles ([Rom. 15:14](#); [Gal 5:22](#); [Eph. 5:9](#); [2 Thess. 1:4](#)). It is less

than surprising that the virtue goodness has its origin in the character of God. Indeed, "It is of the nature of God to be good. This characteristic is not changeable or diminishing, nor does it have a beginning or an end."<sup>22</sup>

In this regard, on Mount Sinai the Lord declared to Moses, "I will make all my goodness pass before your face and I will proclaim the LORD by name before you" ([Exod. 33:19](#)). Stuart points out that by saying this

the goodness of God was, "not so much a thing to be seen at a certain time by looking in a certain direction but an ongoing experience of the nature of God as he manifest his nature for the benefit of his people through his beneficent covenant."<sup>23</sup> The Psalmists repeatedly extol the fact that God is good

(e.g., [Pss. 25:8](#); [34:8](#); [73:1](#); [86:5](#); [100:5](#); [106:1](#); [107:1](#); [118:1](#); [135:3](#); [136:1](#)), a theme echoed also by Nahum who

points out that although God will surely equitably execute his judgment where it is needed ([Nahum 1:2-6](#)

), to those who put their trust in him, "The LORD is good—indeed, he is a fortress in time of distress, and

he protects those who seek refuge in him ([Nahum 1:7](#)).<sup>24</sup> It is not only for times of distress, however, but God's goodness (and not just his beneficence) is ever available to faithful believers, for he cares for them much as a shepherd for his sheep ([Ps.23](#)). It is no less true with God's Son the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Good Shepherd, who even laid down his life for the sheep ([John 10:10-11](#); cf. [Heb. 9:11-15](#)).

Thus it is also the case that, not only Old Testament believers, but all "people, made in God's image and restored to that image by redemption, are also capable of good"... and "is one of the celebrated fruits of the Spirit that characterize those who belong to Christ."<sup>25</sup> Indeed, because believers haven't been taken into union with Christ, the Good Shepherd (col. 1:27), they are to be vehicles for reproducing God's goodness in their lives. The Apostle Paul commends the Roman Christians for being, "full of goodness" ([Rom 15:14](#)). In like manner Paul prays for the believers in Thessalonica that, "God will make you worthy of his calling and fulfill by his power your every desire for goodness and every work of faith, that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ" ([2 Thess. 1:11-12](#)).

As in our text in [Galatians 5:22](#), so also in [Ephesians 5:9](#) goodness appears in a list of Christian virtues.

Employing a mixed metaphor, Paul places goodness before righteousness and truth, thereby indicating that the outworking of genuine goodness will be evidenced in the manner in which believer's lives reflect God's character. That is, as they live in conformity with God's revealed moral standards and apply them justly, with a genuine concern for avoiding any hint of falsehood, true goodness will be seen. In every way, then, believers are to conduct themselves so as to be witnesses to the power of God to produce a moral change in a person's character and life style (cf. [Eph. 2:8-10](#); [James 1:14-18](#)).

And as they do so, Christians should "hold fast to that which is good ([Gal 6:21](#)) and seek to do good things ([1Thess. 5:15](#)) for all people ([Gal 6:9-10](#)). They should not neglect opportunities to be of help ([Heb. 13:16](#)) nor tire of doing so ([2Thess. 3:13](#)). Indeed, they should be 'rich in good deeds' ([1Tim. 6:18](#)) and maintain a good walk before the Lord ([1Pet. 3:16](#))."<sup>26</sup> Surely such is in accord with the divine purpose for God's human family in giving his Son as the Redeemer of mankind (cf. [Tit. 2:11-15](#)). Indeed, the writer of Hebrews testifies to this truth in his closing benediction:

Now may the God of peace who by the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep, our Lord Jesus Christ, equip you with every good thing to do his will, working in us what is pleasing before him through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever ([Heb. 13:20-21](#))

## Principles for Godly Living

### Faithfulness

The various words and their associated forms associated with faith and faithfulness occur well over 300 times in the New Testament. As such they convey many associated meanings such as: believe, trust/trustworthiness, reliability, and confidence. Although the various emphases expressed in the several forms of the Greek root have been examined and discussed in such sources as detailed word studies, lexicons, dictionaries, and theological books and treatises, our goal here is to uncover the basic core idea underlying all these forms so as to understand faithfulness as a fruit of the Spirit and its implications for Christian living.

It should be observed at the outset that faithfulness must not be divorced from its relation to the believer's faith. By faith is meant neither unquestioning mental assent to creedal dogma, nor some vague impression, nor yet some emotional momentary feeling. Rather, faith involves a genuine belief and commitment to Christ, which results in an active and productive Christian life. Simply defined, faith is a whole-soul commitment to the person and work of Christ, resting in the sufficiency of the evidence. Genuine faith is life changing. Indeed, true faith produces faithfulness. Thus faith and faithfulness are inevitably bound together, faithfulness being the natural outflow of genuine faith and belief.

Such a concept is already evident in the Old Testament. Thus Habakkuk declares that unlike the unrighteous, whose "desires are not upright," the "person of integrity will live because of his faithfulness" ([Hab. 2:4](#)). Here the word "faithfulness" can also be understood as "faith." Thus a person of genuine faith, a true believer, is one in whom God's righteous character is being reproduced in a life of faithfulness before God and in all circumstances with others. A prime example of faith and faithfulness may be seen in Abram: "Abram believed the LORD, and the LORD considered his response of faith as proof of genuine loyalty" ([Gen. 15:6](#)). As Ross observes, "Abram accepted the Word of the Lord as reliable and true and acted in accordance with it; consequently, the Lord declared Abram righteous and therefore acceptable."<sup>27</sup> Not only is Abram's belief and right standing with God seen in the Bible, but the outworking of his faith in his faithful walk before God (cf. [Heb. 11:8-12](#); [James 2:20-24](#)). In sum, the one who truly has faith will be faithful!

The blending of faith and faithfulness can be further demonstrated in the use of [Habakkuk 2:4](#) by the writers of the New Testament. Paul declares, "The righteous by faith will live" ([Rom. 1:17](#)). This stresses the fact that only the one who has believed God and has real faith in Christ's finished work is truly spiritually alive. The writer of Hebrews, however, places emphasis on the demonstration of faith in the life of the person of faith: "My righteous one will live by faith" ([Heb. 10:37](#)).<sup>28</sup>

Thus it may be said that faith, "in the vocabulary of Christians is not only belief and trust, but also faithfulness and loyalty. Put technically and linguistically, `faith' is both active and passive in sense. It is not only the inspiration of all religion but is also a moral excellence."<sup>29</sup> Indeed, persons of true faith, real believers, will reflect God's own faithfulness (cf. [Isa. 49:7](#); [Lam. 3:23](#); [1 Cor. 1:9](#); [2 Thess. 3:3](#)). Thus the fruit of the Spirit is attested in such areas of living as those which involve trustworthiness ([1 Cor. 4:2](#)), dependability or reliability ([1 Tim. 1:12](#)), and a consistency of life that so testifies to their genuine faith that it receives an eternal reward ([2 Tim. 4:7-8](#); [Rev. 2:10](#)). The hymn writer has expressed it well:

My life, my love, I give to Thee,

Thou Lamb of God, who died for me,

O may I ever faithful be,

My Saviour and my God!<sup>30</sup>

## Gentleness

A second virtue in connection with godly living is gentleness. Gentleness begins with an inner quality of heart attitude. Thus Peter points out that it is not one's external appearance that is paramount, "but the inner person of the heart, the lasting beauty of a gentle and tranquil spirit, which is precious in God's sight" ([1 Pet. 3:4](#)). This kind of heart comes through the believer's union with Christ who describes his own self as "gentle and humble in heart" ([Matt. 11:29](#)). This was demonstrated in his life. As prophesied Jesus came to earth and lived in humble circumstances. Even later his triumphal entry into Jerusalem

came not as a victorious warrior or riding on a charger or in a splendid chariot, but "unassuming and seated on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey" ([Matt. 21:5](#) cf. [Zech. 9:9](#)).<sup>31</sup>

Accordingly, as a fruit of the Spirit, gentleness begins with a heart attitude ([1 Pet. 3:4](#)) that flows out toward others. James remarks, "Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct he should show his works in the gentleness that wisdom brings ([James 3:13](#)). Paul exhorts the Colossian Christians to have a Christ-like heart, which extends itself in a gentleness toward others and, when necessary, reaches out in forgiveness ([Col. 3:12-13](#)). Paul similarly in [Ephesians 4:1-3](#) links gentleness of conduct with such virtues as humility, patience, and a love toward fellow believers which makes "every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Such a heart attitude should be especially prominent in church leaders ([1 Tim. 6:11](#)). In cases where needed spiritual correction is called for, the more spiritually mature should "restore such a person in a spirit of gentleness" ([Gal.6:1](#)). As well, where defending the faith is involved believers should "always be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks about the hope you possess. Yet do it with courtesy and respect, keeping a good conscience" ([1 Pet. 3:15-16](#)). In both cases, then, the early proverb proves itself true: "A gentle response turns away anger but a harsh word stirs up wrath" ([Prov. 15:1](#)). In all these instances gentleness is not to be equated with weakness but rather involves an inner God-given strength of character, which shields a person from arrogance. Accordingly, gentleness is a fit accompaniment an introduction to the next virtue-self-control.

## Self-Control

In secular Greek the noun translated here as "self-control" occurs quite frequently as do the verb "exercise self-control" and the adjective "self-controlled." All three are derived from a root meaning "strength." Their common thought involves that of a person's self-mastery that keeps him from being tempted or drawn away by any enticement, or anything that would divert him from his goal. This trilogy of words occurs but six times in the New Testament.

In addition to [Galatians 5:23](#) the noun appears only in [Acts 25](#) as a subject of discussion along the lines of righteousness and the coming judgment between Paul and the Roman Procurator (NET, governor) of Judea, and as a part of a catalog of virtues, which Peter exhorts his readers to exercise ([2 Pet. 1:6](#)). The

adjective "self-controlled" appears as one of the qualifications of an elder in [Titus 1:8](#). In his first letter to the Corinthians Paul uses the verbal form two times. In the first ([1 Cor. 7:9](#)) he urges the need for self-control of sexual desire.<sup>32</sup> Paul second employment of the verb is perhaps the most familiar. Under the imagery of an athletic contest, Paul points out that in order to win, each athlete must exercise self-control ([1 Cor. 9:25](#)). As Hodge points out, each Christian can be a victor in the race of Christian living: "In the Christian race there are many victors; but the point of the exhortation is that all should run as the one victor ran in the Grecian games . . . If the heathen submitted to such severe discipline to gain a wreath of olive or garland of pine leaves, should not Christians do as much for a crown of righteousness which fadeth not away?"<sup>33</sup>

Much depends, therefore, on the believer's need for exercising discernment and discipline as much as did Paul in his service as an apostle and conveyor of the truth of the Gospel. Paul's use of the noun self-control as the last virtue in [Galatians 5:23](#), however, adds to it the teaching of [1 Corinthians 9:25](#) by emphasizing the fact that personal success comes through the Spirit led life. As Christians yield to the leading of the Holy Spirit they will increasingly gain the ability to lead a consistently disciplined life for the Lord (cf. [Gal. 5:25](#) with [Rom. 7:5-6](#); [2 Tim. 1:4, 14](#)) and live harmoniously together ([Gal. 5:26](#)).

### Concluding Observations

In the above discussion it was noted that the list of nine virtues relative to the fruit of the Spirit in believers falls into three sets of three each: those that deal with the soul's well-being, those that deal with the believer's relations with others, and those that provide principles for the believer's proper conduct. Our examination of these nine virtues began with love. As we noted, the particular word group for love used here indicates a total soul's all-consuming reflection of God's love, which in turn reaches out to others and seeks God's best for them. As such it not only properly heads the list of virtues relative to the fruit of the Spirit, but also conditions all the other listed virtues.

It can also be suggested, therefore, that each of three virtues that stands at the head of each set of virtues in a sense conditions the two that follow, while the third in each set looks to the first virtue of the following set. Thus genuine love produces both an abiding joy of life that enables the Christian to rejoice in any and all circumstances as well as a valid sense of peace—a realization of well-being both with God and with others.

Where such "peace" exists, the believer is more likely to enjoy good relations with others. This entails a patience, which can enable believers to face all of life's trials, endure patiently any and all circumstances

they experience, and do so with God-given strength. Those who are truly patient are most likely to reach out in acts of kindness toward others and be desirous of doing good to all.

Those who thus reflect God's own goodness will in turn be those who are people of a genuine faith, which is demonstrated in faithfulness to God and in all earthly relationships. A person of active faith and faithfulness can characteristically be seen to reproduce a gentleness of heart like unto Jesus' own heart. Moreover, rather than being willfully independent, they will wish to lead a disciplined life, surrendered to the Spirit's leading and control. Thus the love of God, resident in the believer's life and experienced as a fruit of the Spirit, finds its goal in a disciplined, orderly, and productive life, which reflects his great love for a needy mankind.

As the believer experiences each of the virtues labeled the "fruit of the Spirit", it becomes clear to him that the Spirit-led life is the means to living a Christ-centered life. Indeed, Jesus himself taught that upon his departure he would send the Holy Spirit and, "when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth" ([John 14:26](#); [16:13](#)). Because Christians stand spiritually united to Christ and are indwelt ([John 14:16](#); [1 Cor. 3:16](#)) and sealed ([Eph. 1:13](#)) by the Holy Spirit, his power ([Eph. 3:16](#)) is available to lead ([Rom. 8:13-14](#)) and guide them into a consistent, productive, and fulfilling life for Christ ([John 16:13-16](#); [Gal. 2:20](#); [5:24-25](#); [Phil. 1:21](#)). When the fruit of the Spirit becomes the believer's daily experience—a living reality—his life at last becomes a truly successful and rewarding one. May each believer reflect the hymn writer's thoughts:

Holy Spirit, faithful Guide,  
Ever near the Christian side;  
Gently lead us by the hand,  
Pilgrims in a desert land;  
Weary souls for-e'er rejoice  
While they hear that sweetest voice,  
Whisp'ring softly, "Wand'rer come!  
Follow me, I'll guide thee home."<sup>34</sup>

- <sup>1</sup> Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, and Temper Longman, III, eds., "Fruit, Fruitfulness," in *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998), 311.
- <sup>2</sup> Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, The New International Commentary on The New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 671. The Psalmist points out that committed believers will, like a palm tree, "bear fruit when they are old; they are filled with filled with vitality and have many leaves" [Ps. 92:14](#)). See further, Richard D. Patterson, " [Psalm 92:12-15](#): The Flourishing of the Righteous," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 166 (2009): 271-88.
- <sup>3</sup> See further J. B. Lightfoot, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1957), 212-13.
- <sup>4</sup> Hermann Cremer, *Biblico-Theological Lexicon of New Testament Greek*, trans. William Urwick. Fourth rev. ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1954), 610.
- <sup>5</sup> The root behind the second half of this compound word comes from the root *storgein* and was employed particularly for family love. The resultant compound word this emphasizes the strong need for Christians to show genuine affection for each other. See also below the discussion under kindness.
- <sup>6</sup> Richard D. Patterson, "God So Loved the World," Biblical Studies Press (2010): 2.
- <sup>7</sup> Robert Keith Rapa, "Galatians," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, eds, Tremper Longman III, and David E. Garland, Rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008) 11:630.
- <sup>8</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all English translations are taken from the NET.
- <sup>9</sup> Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman III, " Joy, " in *Dictionary*, 465.
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>11</sup> Charles Wesley, Rejoice the Lord is King.



**12** Rapa, "Galatians," 11: 631.

**13** Job's patience under difficult circumstances became legendary. A closer reading of the Job story, however, reveals that his patience did not always rise to the occasion. Thus although God commends Job for his blameless character ([Job 1:8; 2:3](#)) and Job maintains that such is the case ([Job 27:5-6; 29:14](#)), he often appears to be impatient with God's treatment of him (e.g., [Job 9:23; 10:14; 23:10-16; 27:2-6](#)), which Job himself comes to recognize ([Job 42: 5-6](#)). Nevertheless, James concedes the fact that Job displayed enduring trust in the Lord ([James 5:11](#); cf. [Job 13: 10,15; 14:14-17; 19: 24-27](#)). See further, J. B. Mayor, *The Epistle of James* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1954), 163-64.

**14** Nigel Turner, *Christian Words* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1980), 319.

**15** For the Lord's kindness towards his own in times of testing, see [Nahum 1:7](#). See further, Richard D. Patterson, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah* (Richardson, TX, Biblical Studies Press, 2003), 39-40, 42; \_\_\_\_\_ "Nahum, " in *Minor Prophets Hosea-Malach*, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2008) 10:366-67.

**16** Elsewhere Paul speaks of the riches of God's grace ([Eph. 1:7; 2:7](#)) and of the riches of his glory ([Eph. 3:16](#) ).

**17** C. E. B. Cranfield (*The Epistle to the Romans*, The International Critical Commentary [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1977] 1:144) observes that, "The piling up of synonymous or near-synonymous expressions is reminiscent of the language of prayer (cf., e.g., [1 Kgs 8:22ff](#); [Neh 9:17](#); [Dan 9:4ff](#); [Wisd 15:1](#); [Rev 4:11](#); [5:9, 12](#)) and also of solemn exhortation (e.g., [Deut 30](#)).

**18** J. Zmijewski, "Chrēstotēs," in *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* , 3:475.

**19** All three words are ultimately related to a primitive root meaning "to produce" and to the German word for child, *kind*.

- 20** See the earlier discussion on love concerning the word *philostorgos*.
- 21** For details see Turner, *Christian Words*, 189-90; R. C. Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament*, ninth edition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), 231-32.
- 22** Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman III, ed., *Dictionary*, 344.
- 23** Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, the New American Commentary, ed. E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 706-07. Stuart adds further that Moses would learn something of the active nature of the fullness God's goodness subsequently in connection with the initiation of God's covenant with Israel ([Exod. 34:4-7](#)).
- 24** See further, Patterson, *Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, 40.
- 25** Ryken Wilhoit and Longman II, *Dictionary*, 344-45.
- 26** Richard D. Patterson, [Psalm 145](#): A Psalm in 'G Major' (Biblical Studies Press, 2009), 6.
- 27** Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 310.
- 28** The NET translation of [Galatians 3:11](#) likewise places emphasis on the aspect of faithfulness in the life of the person of faith, but also recognizes the emphasis of [Romans 1:17](#) in the accompanying footnote. The order of the Greek text favors the emphasis of [Romans 1:17](#).
- 29** Turner, *Christian Words*, 158.
- 30** Ralph E. Hudson, "I'll Live for Him."
- 31** No need exists to see a contradiction here in Matthew's account of Jesus' triumphal entry and those of the other Gospel writers, who mention one donkey. Although the other Gospel writers focus on the

young donkey upon which Jesus was seated, Matthew's mentioning both the foal and the mother simply adds further details. Matthew does not picture Jesus riding into Jerusalem standing on both animals like a Roman charioteer. Rather, Matthew's mention of the mother donkey's being along is simply that she provided a steadying influence for the unbroken colt upon which Jesus sat. Interestingly enough, the tradition of royalty riding upon an unbroken or special colt is a very ancient Semitic custom. In any case, Jesus choice of animals displays his essential gentleness.

<sup>32</sup> In this regard Rapa, "Galatians," 11:631 points out that "'self-control' is the quality of mastery over one's impulses and faculties lending aid in one's struggle in resisting temptation."

<sup>33</sup> Charles Hodge, *An Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), 167-68.

<sup>34</sup> Marcus M. Wells, "Holy Spirit, Faithful Guide."

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