

Living in the Spirit

Relating to Others

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Text: Galatians 5:22-23, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23** gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Introduction

Living in the Spirit is made possible by the “fruit of the Spirit” or by the result of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. In the Greek, the term “fruit of the Spirit” could also be translated the “harvest of the Spirit.” It is an expression of what is produced by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as we allow Him to work and produce spiritual growth within us.

As you may remember, the fruit of the Spirit, or the manifested virtues of the Spirit in a Christian’s life are contrasted against the acts or works of the flesh. (*Note Galatians 5:13-26*)

Once again, let’s go back and read Paul’s comparison and contrasting of life lived “in the flesh” and life lived “in the Spirit” in Galatians 5:13-18 NIV

13 You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. **14** For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” **15** If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

16 So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. **17** For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. **18** But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

There are some clear comparisons between how those following God interact with people as opposed to those who follow their natural desires. No doubt, if we ever need the Holy Spirit’s help, we need His help in dealing with people.

Note the ***benefits*** of having the help of the Holy Spirit in our relationships with others.

I. The Holy Spirit Inspires Patience to Help Us Through Our Struggles With Others.

A. Patience is not a natural human quality.

The purposes of God often develop slowly because His grand designs are never hurried. The great New England preacher Phillips Brooks was noted for his poise and quiet manner. At times, however, even he suffered moments of frustration and irritability. One day a friend saw him feverishly pacing the floor like a caged lion. "What's the trouble, Mr. Brooks?" he asked.

"The trouble is that I'm in a hurry, but God isn't!" Haven't we felt the same way many times?

B. Patience gives us the ability to hold fast to our faith as we move forward.

Hebrews 12:1, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with ***perseverance*** [patience] the race marked out for us..." NIV (Bold italic and brackets added)

C. Patience gives us the ability to endure.

William Barclay says, "Hupomone is one of the noblest of NT words. Normally it is translated 'patience' or 'endurance,' but, as we shall see, there is no single English word which transmits all the fullness of its meaning. . . . It has one very interesting use - it is used of the ability of a plant to live under hard and unfavorable circumstances. . . . It is not the patience which can sit down and bow its head and let things descend upon it and passively endure until the storm is past. . . . It is the spirit which can bear things, not simply with resignation, but with blazing hope; it is . . . the spirit which bears things because it knows that these things are leading to a goal of glory; it is not the patience which grimly waits for the end, but the patience which radiantly hopes for the dawn" (William Barclay, *New Testament Words*, pp. 143-144).

James 5:7-8, "Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. **8** You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near." NIV

II. The Holy Spirit Inspires True Kindness in Our Hearts.

A. This kindness inspired by the Holy Spirit is a kindness that originates with God.

Romans 2:3-4, “So when you, a mere human being, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God’s judgment? **4** Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God’s kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?”

B. Kindness or gentleness is an outward expression of inward character.

British statesman and financier Cecil Rhodes, whose fortune was used to endow the world-famous Rhodes Scholarships, was a stickler for correct dress--but apparently not at the expense of someone else's feelings. A young man invited to dine with Rhodes arrived by train and had to go directly to Rhodes's home in his travel-stained clothes. Once there he was appalled to find the other guests already assembled, wearing full evening dress. After what seemed a long time Rhodes appeared, in a shabby old blue suit. Later the young man learned that his host had been dressed in evening clothes, but put on the old suit when he heard of his young guest's dilemma.

-Today in the Word, February, 1991, p. 10.

C. This kindness carries the idea of the affection shared by a family.

Romans 12:9-12 “Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. **10** Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. **11** Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. **12** Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.”

Mamie Adams always went to a branch post office in her town because the postal employees there were friendly. She went there to buy stamps just before Christmas one year and the lines were particularly long. Someone pointed out that there was no need to wait on line because there was a stamp machine in the lobby. “I know,” said Mamie, “but the machine won’t ask me about my arthritis.” - Bits and Pieces, December, 1989, p. 2

III. The Holy Spirit Inspires Goodness in Action.

A. God's goodness is seen in His gracious interaction with humanity.

Deep in our hearts we believe in a good God. Yet how shallow is our understanding of His goodness, especially since we see many things that seem to deny it.

Corrie Ten Boom clarified the issue for us. She wrote:

“Often I have heard people say, ‘How good God is! We prayed that it would not rain for our church picnic, and look at the lovely weather!’ Yes, God is good when He sends good weather. But God was also good when He allowed my sister, Betsie, to starve to death before my eyes in a German concentration camp. I remember one occasion when I was very discouraged there. Everything around us was dark, and there was darkness in my heart. I remember telling Betsie that I thought God had forgotten us. ‘No, Corrie,’ said Betsie, ‘He has not forgotten us. Remember His Word: “For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His steadfast love toward those who fear Him.” ’” Corrie concludes, “There is an ocean of God’s love available—there is plenty for everyone. May God grant you never to doubt that victorious love—whatever the circumstances.” -- Source unknown

B. This is a goodness that prohibits apathy, unconcern, and insensitivity.

C. This is goodness that is “good for something.”

Conclusion

The movie *The Elephant Man* tells the true story of John Merrick. Merrick was born in the slums of England in 1862, and almost from birth experienced massive rejection due to his grotesque appearance. Merrick suffered abnormalities that resulted in a large and severely misshapen head, loose, rough skin, and twisted arms and legs.

His mother loved dearly, but died when he was ten. His new step-mother didn't take to him, and at twelve, he was expected to work to contribute to the family finances. After two years working in a cigar shop he was dismissed because his deformities meant he could not keep up the required pace. His

father found him a job, of all things, as a door-to-door salesman. This only accentuated Merrick's self-loathing. When people opened their doors and saw him people would literally scream and slam the door in his face. Those who knew who he was refused to answer their doors.

After this "failure" Merrick's father began beating him. Merrick wound up on the street and was rescued by a kindly uncle, the only person who would help him out. Not wishing to further burden his uncle Merrick left to live in a squalid workhouse for drunks, cripples and the mentally ill. His life there was so miserable that he offered himself to a carnival owner as a sideshow act.

Merrick was a hit. People would pay money to line up and observe him like some animal in a zoo. But the carnival finally provided him with security and a place he belonged. It was while the sideshow was in London that Merrick met Dr Frederick Treves. Disgusted by Merrick's treatment Treves wanted to help. He gave Merrick his card, but lost track of him. The police started clamping down on the sideshows, so Merrick was sent to Belgium to work in a sideshow there. But when Belgian police also clamped down Merrick was forced to make his way back to England. As he limped down Liverpool Street station, foul smelling and misshapen, a crowd gathered simply to watch him.

The police took him aside to sort things out, but Merrick's speech was so slurred by his deformities that they couldn't understand him. It was at this point Merrick showed them Dr Treves' card. The police sent someone to get him, and Treves rushed back. He took Merrick back to London hospital and began a newspaper appeal for funds to help Merrick. The response was very warm, and soon sufficient that Merrick was able to have his own house on the hospital grounds with permission to live there permanently.

Treves' care marked a real turning point for Merrick. At first Merrick would act like a frightened child and hide when anyone came into his room, but over time he began to engage some in conversation. Dr Treves discovered that Merrick was in fact highly intelligent and sought to nurture his growth. Yet Merrick's greatest hurdle was still to fall. All his life Merrick had known only fear and rejection from women. They had literally run from him. So Dr Treves asked an attractive widow he knew if she could come into Merrick's room, smile at him and shake his hand. When she did Merrick broke down into a ball of tears, later telling Treves that she was the first woman in his life apart from his mother to have showed him kindness.

That was a breakthrough moment for Merrick. In the coming years more and more people, women included, would meet him and show him kindness. He began meeting Countesses and Duchesses. He even had many visits and letters from the Princess of Wales, forming a friendship with her. Throughout this time Dr. Treves reports Merrick changed dramatically. He began to

develop some self-confidence, to spend time traveling in the country, to discuss poetry with another new friend, Sir Walter Steel.

Merrick died in April 1890. His deformities had never allowed him to sleep lying down as most people do. He had to sleep in a sitting position, his head resting on his knees. He apparently tried one night to sleep lying down, to be more “normal”, and sadly dislocated his neck and died.

Merrick’s story shows us the power of love and acceptance. Rejected all his life, treated as a “thing”, it was the loving welcome of others that liberated him to become all he could be. His life was made tragic not by his deformities but by the response people made to them. -Source: Reported at www.elephant-house.fsnet.co.uk

Study Notes:

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."² The metaphor of the fruitful life thus takes on fresh spiritual vigor in the New Testament.³ -- <https://bible.org/article/fruit-spirit>