

THE FRUIT
OF
THE SPIRIT

Copyright 1985,1993,2001,2007
Crossroads Full Gospel
International Ministries

All Rights Reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, mechanical, photocopied, recorded or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher. Short extracts may be used for review purposes.

Except otherwise stated, Bible quotes come from the King James Version. 1611 Elizabethan English is updated in some cases to reflect present terminology, without changing the true meaning of the word.

Extracts from "The Expositor's Study Bible" are identified as E.S.B. Copyright © 2005 Published by, and the sole property of, Jimmy Swaggart Ministries, Baton Rouge, LA, and extracts from the Swaggart Bible Commentary series are identified as S.B.C. Copyright © World Evangelism Press®

Extracts from the Amplified Bible are identified as Amp. Old Testament Copyright © 1962, 1964 by Zondervan Corporation. New Testament Copyright © 1954, 1958, 1987 by The Lockman Foundation.

Extracts from the New International Version are identified as N.I.V. Copyright 1973,1978,1984 by The International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House.

Also used: The New Testament: An Expanded Translation (Wuest) translated by Kenneth S. Wuest. Copyright © 1961 by Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Bracketed comments following some scriptures assist the reader in understanding the intended meaning of these verses

We acknowledge the additional works of the various Scholars and Bible Commentaries used in conjunction with the College material. This is not to say that we agree with all their theology, but we certainly value their contribution to the Body of Christ.

Published by:

*Crossroads Publications
10681 Princes Highway
Warrnambool
Victoria 3280
Australia*

CONTENTS

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT.....	1
THE PRODUCTION OF FRUIT.....	3
THE NINE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT.....	8
WALKING AFTER THE SPIRIT.....	15
THE PRINCIPLE OF PRUNING.....	21
THE ROAD TO DISCIPLESHIP.....	29

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Jesus said:

JOHN 15:1 *"I am the true vine (the only Source of life), and My Father is the husbandman (vinedresser and owner).*

JOHN 15:2 *Every branch in Me (Believer) that bears not fruit He takes away: and every branch that bears fruit, He purges (prunes) it, that it may bring forth more fruit.*

JOHN 15:3 *Now you are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you (it is the Word which purifies: John 17:17; Ephesians 5:26).*

JOHN 15:4 *Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide (remain) in the vine; no more can you (the Believer), except you abide (live, remain, continue) in Me.*

JOHN 15:5 *I am the vine (Jesus alone, not a particular denomination or minister), you are the branches: He who abides in Me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit: for without Me you can do nothing (you cannot produce fruit).*

JOHN 15:6 *If a man abide not (does not continue) in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered (dies spiritually); and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned (a reference to the fires of hell).*

JOHN 15:7 *If you abide in Me, and My Words abide in you (you remain in vital union with Me), you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.*

JOHN 15:8 *Herein is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit (through the grace of the Divine Nature); so shall you be My Disciples (and show yourselves to be such: Matthew 7:20; John 8:31)."*

It can be seen throughout scripture that bearing fruit is a significant part of the Christian walk. We should bear fruit as a matter of course, just as fruit on the tree appears naturally, drawing its life-giving power from the branches and the soil. Christ is our life-giving force, the vine of which we are the branches. So the fruit in our lives should reflect His character and should also appear naturally, not being something that can be manufactured or forced to grow through self-effort. Such fruit can only develop as we allow God's grace to flow in our lives.

Note: Fruit is produced within us to reflect the nature and character of God. Fruit then will lead to works, works undertaken by faith and motivated by love.

“. . .It can be seen throughout scripture that bearing fruit is a significant part of the Christian walk. . ."

This section of teaching will give a brief description of the fruit of the Spirit as outlined in Galatians 5:22, and will show how these nine graces of the Spirit are to be developed in the Christian life.

Note: Paul speaks of these nine attributes of character as constituting the fruit of the Spirit, the word "fruit" being singular. This suggests that it takes all of these elements to form the one "*fruit of the Spirit,*" and that as a unit, they make for a well rounded Christian life. It also suggests the unity of the Lord's character which is being reproduced by the graces of the Holy Spirit as He works in God's children.

This "*fruit of the Spirit*" is the outworking and manifestation of the grace of the Divine Nature within us. We by ourselves can never produce anything that would truly please the Father. Sometimes we may do the will of the Father (e.g. we may tithe) without God's grace operating. So we can, at times, perform the will of God as an action without His help. But if we are to do the will of God in terms of

attitude at a heavenly altitude, we need the grace of God at work in us.

“. . . This “fruit of the Spirit” is the outworking and manifestation of the grace of the Divine Nature within us. . . ”

While it is possible for people to go through the motions and obey God in some areas on an external level, in order to please the Father on an internal level, they need to develop heavenly attitudes of faith and love. This of course must take place at a level beyond just human emotion - that stands alone, there being no God factor (grace) in it, no matter how honourable or sincere it may seem. And it is only when our human nature is energized by God's Divine Nature that this, the *“fruit of the Spirit,”* can be produced in our lives.

THE PRODUCTION OF FRUIT

Background Reading: Colossians 1:1-14

Let's begin by turning to Galatians 5:22.

GALATIANS 5:22 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering (patience), gentleness (kindness), goodness, faith (faithfulness),*

GALATIANS 5:23 *Meekness, temperance (self-control): against such there is no law.*

EPHESIANS 5:9 *(For the fruit of the Spirit [what the Spirit produces] is in (consists of) all goodness and righteousness and truth;)*

The fruit of the Spirit as listed above is what one may expect to develop through living a life which is led and empowered by the Spirit, that is, living a life where the Spirit of God is allowed to

reign. The fruits of those who live according to the flesh are, however, in direct contrast.

GALATIANS 5:19 *Now the works of the flesh (acts of the sinful nature) are manifest (obvious, clearly seen), which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness (impurity), lasciviousness (lustfulness, indecency),*

GALATIANS 5:20 *Idolatry, witchcraft (sorcery), hatred, variance (discord), emulations (jealousy), wrath (outbursts of anger), strife (selfish ambition), seditions (dissensions), heresies (factions),*

GALATIANS 5:21 *Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings (carousing), and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they who do (practise) such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.*

Note: Galatians 5:19 speaks of “adultery” and “fornication.” Adultery in the Greek means unlawful sexual relations between men and women, single or married (but not married to each other). Fornication in the Greek means repeated adultery of married or single people. It can also refer to sexual relations not between men and women, including perversion such as pedophilia, homosexuality and bestiality.

As the works or fruit of the flesh are the visible expression of hidden lusts, so too the fruit of the Spirit is the outworking of the invisible power of the Holy Spirit. Such fruit is produced in those who are brought into full living union with Christ at an experiential level.

So whatever “fruit” we produce will be the visible expression of the power which is working inwardly. The character of the fruit will then show whose power we are allowing to operate in our lives, whether it be God’s or Satan’s, the power of Light or the power of darkness.

“ . . . As the works or fruit of the flesh are the visible expression of hidden lusts, so too the fruit of the Spirit is the outworking of the invisible power of the Holy Spirit. . . ”

GALATIANS 5:24 *And they who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts (this can only be done through identification with Christ - His death, burial and Resurrection: Romans 6:3-6).*

GALATIANS 5:25 *If we live in the Spirit (are saved), let us also walk in the Spirit (“walk” refers to our lifestyle; this Passage declares both life and Holiness to be the Work of the Holy Spirit; He operates Salvation; both are realized on the Principle of Faith . . . : E.S.B.).*

“Christians crucified the evil nature with its affections and lusts, in the sense that when they put their faith in the Lord Jesus as Saviour, they received the actual benefits of their identification with Christ in His death on the Cross, which benefits were only potential at the time He was crucified. The Christian's identification with Christ in His death, resulted in the breaking of the power of the sinful nature over the life. This victory over sin which the Lord Jesus procured for us at the Cross, is made actual and operative in our lives as we yield to the Holy Spirit and trust Him for that victory. It is the Holy Spirit's ministry that applies the salvation from the power of the sinful nature which God the Son procured at the Cross for us. Thus the Holy Spirit has a two-fold ministry in the saint, that of making actually operative in the life of the Christian, the victory over sin which the Lord Jesus procured for us at the Cross, and that of producing in the Christian's experience, His fruit. But this He is only able to do in a full and rich measure as the saint puts himself definitely under subjection to the Spirit. This initial act of faith in the Lord Jesus which resulted in the crucifixion (putting to death) of the affections and lusts of the totally depraved nature, is followed during the life of that Christian, by the free action of his liberated will in counting himself as having died to (having been separated from the

power of) the evil nature with the result that he says NO to sin and stops yielding himself and his members to sin . . .

The Galatians were living with reference to the Spirit in the sense that the new divine life resident in their beings, was supplied by the Spirit. Now, Paul says, “in view of the fact that you Galatians have a new life principle operating in your beings, then walk by the Spirit.” The word walk is from stoicheō (στοιχεῶ) which means “to walk in a straight line, to conduct one’s self (rightly).”

Thus, the exhortation is to the Galatians who have divine life resident in their beings, to conduct themselves under the guidance, impulses, and energy of that life. Here we have the free will of the Christian and his responsibility to live the highest type of Christian life, and the grace of God which will make that possible. The responsibility of the saint is to desire to live a Christlike life, to depend upon the Holy Spirit for the power to live that life, and to step out on faith and live that life. This fulfilled, will bring all the infinite resources of grace to the aid of the saint, and put in operation all the activities of the Spirit in his behalf. ¹

(underlines added)

“ . . . Thus the Holy Spirit has a two-fold ministry in the saint, that of making actually operative in the life of the Christian, the victory over sin which the Lord Jesus procured for us at the Cross, and that of producing in the Christian’s experience, His fruit. . . ”

In order to describe how to enter the Spirit-led life, Jesus gave an illustration using a grain of wheat sown in the ground (John 12:24). Just as the grain of wheat had to die, we too have to die to self and the desires of the old nature in order to live in the new resurrection life. If we do this, we will be empowered to produce much fruit. Jesus stated in Matthew 7:20, “. . . by their fruits you shall know them” - and these fruits will be displayed in our manner, our attitudes and our conduct, etc. In order to bring forth Godly fruit, we need to live a life of discipleship, allowing the Spirit of God to

lead us and empower us, through the graces of His Divine Nature, in all that we do. It is also possible for people to bring forth ungodly fruit - that reveals their hearts and what kind of “faith” they have.

Let’s turn to 1 Corinthians 13:13 where three of the greatest virtues of the Christian life are described:

1 CORINTHIANS 13:13 And so faith, hope, love abide; [faith, conviction and belief respecting man’s relation to God and divine things; hope, joyful and confident expectation of eternal salvation; love, true affection for God and man, growing out of God’s love for and in us], these three, but the greatest of these is love. (Amp.)

Love is the noblest of all the Christian virtues. Love is the greatest virtue because love causes us to become like God (1 John 4:7). It is this virtue which God demonstrated to the world when He gave His only begotten Son in the greatest act of self-giving ever witnessed:

ROMANS 5:8 But God commends (demonstrates) His love toward us (Christ dying for the ungodly is a proof of Love immeasurable: E.S.B.), in that, while we were yet sinners (haters of God), Christ died for us.

JOHN 3:16 For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son (to suffer and die on a cross which was the price of mankind’s redemption), that whosoever believes in Him (Jesus) should not perish, but have (with God) everlasting life.

Love is the foundation of the message of the Cross. Love gives without demanding return or having agendas. Love is stronger than hate and conquers darkness. Love desires to do good. It is a motivating force that moves one to act and always produces an active expression of itself. Love will, within the guidelines of wisdom, use all its resources to meet another’s need, not considering the cost or whether the person is deserving. The first of the nine fruits as listed in Galatians Ch.5 is love, and it is love which encompasses all the other fruit and of which all the other fruit are an expression.

We will now go on to describe the nine fruits of the Spirit.

“. . .It is love which encompasses all the other fruit and of which all the other fruit are an expression. . .”

THE NINE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT

GALATIANS 5:22 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering (patience), gentleness (kindness), goodness, faith (faithfulness),*

GALATIANS 5:23 *Meekness, temperance (self-control): against such there is no law.*

The fruit of the Spirit can be described as follows:

Love - as a fruit of the Spirit, is an intense desire to serve and please God and to help one's fellow man. Jesus is the supreme example of this fruit. Love as described in this passage is not an emotion or a tingling sensation, but rather, an act of the individual's will to accept and respond to God's love through willing obedience (John 14:15, 1 John 5:3). Indeed Christian love expresses itself, first and foremost, in the implicit obedience of God's commandments. Love seeks the welfare of others, and does not confine its expression to those who are deserving or those with whom one has a natural affinity. Love seeks opportunity to do good to all men, and to lead unbelievers to the Lord Jesus Christ. The more we allow God to reign in every area of our lives, the more the love of God will be displayed in us and flow through us.

Note: The Greek word for love here is "agape." This is the God-type love, characterised supremely by self-sacrifice. All the other fruit listed in this passage in Galatians are the outworkings or "actings" of love, for each other element springs from "*the love of God (which) is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit*" (Romans 5:5). All this is an outworking of God's grace through yielded vessels.

“. . . Love seeks the welfare of others, and does not confine its expression to those who are deserving or those with whom one has a natural affinity. . .”

Joy - is not merely a fleeting emotion. It is spiritual joy, an inner joy which is not affected by or dependent upon circumstances, however pleasurable or painful these may be (Acts 5:41-42). Spiritual joy is an emotion of the heart, resulting from faith. When we, through or by the Divine Nature's energies, apply our faith to the hope contained in God's Word, we gain the assurance of obtaining God's promises. Then inner spiritual joy will rise up within us. This will produce confidence, peace and well-being, regardless of the outward circumstances which exist. Thus, as the scripture states, *"the joy of the Lord is your strength"* (Nehemiah 8:10), and it will sustain you through your Christian walk as you continue to live by faith. Primarily joy comes from the comfort of knowing that we are pleasing God in that which we are doing, i.e. His will in our lives, and with this we will know that His power is at work in our hearts.

Peace - this is not the legal position of peace (with God) which we gain through justification, but rather a peace which we can experience in our hearts and minds, a peace which is based on us being conscious that we have a right relationship with God. This peace is: *"the peace of God which passes (goes beyond) all (natural) understanding"* (Philippians 4:7).

The peace of God can be defined in terms of tranquility of mind, soundness, completeness, security, harmony, safety, assurance, etc. To live in this peace is to live in a state of wholeness and security which embraces both the spiritual and physical dimensions of our lives. This peace involves freedom from all distress which is experienced as a result of sin. It is also described in scripture as *"rest"* (Matthew 11:28-30), a spiritual rest which in itself conveys calmness, quietness and order, etc. This *"rest"* also involves an absence of any struggle to try to bring about peace through works or other means, even the accumulation of riches or enjoyment of good family relationships. Peace is only found in a yielded life which progresses in Christ, both in knowledge and at a relational level.

Peace will be experienced in the Believer's life when the soul (mind) is in harmony with God's will for our lives, bringing true renewal (Ephesians 4:23-24).

As with "joy," God's peace is only obtained as we, through the empowerment given, trust completely in Him and His Word. In Colossians 3:15 we are told to let the peace of God govern our hearts. As we trust in God and follow after the Spirit, the peace of God will flood our lives and guard our hearts and minds.

***“. . .Peace is only found in a yielded life
which progresses in Christ, both in
knowledge and at a relational level. . .”***

Longsuffering - translated in many versions as “**patience**,” is that quality of self-restraint which endures, even when one is faced with provocation, injustice or having to deal with abusive or irritating people. It does not retaliate with hostility. It is the opposite of anger and is associated with mercy.

Longsuffering means maintaining, steadfastly, one's own soul under all circumstances, and includes the notions of forbearance and patient endurance, without anger or thought of revenge. The last section of Colossians 3:12 gives us a good idea of what this word means:

COLOSSIANS 3:12 *Clothe yourselves therefore, as (God's own picked representatives,) His own chosen ones, [who are] purified and holy and well-beloved [by God Himself, by putting on behavior marked by tenderhearted pity and mercy, kind feeling, a lowly opinion of yourselves, gentle ways, [and] patience - which is tireless, longsuffering and has the power to endure whatever comes, with good temper. (Amp.)*

Gentleness- also translated as “**Kindness**,” contains qualities of graciousness and consideration. This fruit should penetrate and permeate every aspect of our nature, mellowing in us everything that is harsh or abrasive. It is, however, a spiritual fruit, characterized by concern and compassion for others at a God (Divine) level, being

manifested through the grace of His Divine Nature, not being just an emotional response to something. It is a gentleness of spirit which is being referred to, not the more obvious quality of natural gentleness. Nevertheless, this quality in people will lessen the friction that develops as a matter of course as we interact with our fellow man. Thus we find in scripture:

1 PETER 3:4 But let it (the adornment of the Christian wife) be the hidden man (person) of the heart (in contrast to the outward appearance), in that which is not corruptible (as gold and clothing are), even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit (free from anxiety, worry and fear; having a solid confidence in God), which is in the sight of God of great price (great value to God).

Note: Although Peter is speaking here of the “spirit” of the Christian wife, such a description related to Jesus (Matthew 11:29) and should reference to all Believers.

Note: The Greek words translated variously as “gentleness,” “goodness” and “kindness” flow into one another and are, at times, very hard to distinguish. “Humility”, “meekness” and “longsuffering” also go hand in hand, with the differences between them being slight.

Goodness - refers to the quality of moral worth. Those who possess goodness are ruled by, and consistently aim for, that which is good. Goodness is a quality which produces action, and expresses itself in deeds for the benefit of others.

In 2 Thessalonians 1:11 we find Paul praying that God would fulfill in these Christians’ lives “*the good pleasure of His goodness,*” and we can take this prayer for ourselves. This verse can mean every desire characterised by goodness, or every desire to do that which is good. Goodness implies Godliness, and as the fruit of goodness develops in our lives, we will be partaking of yet another attribute of our Lord’s Divine Nature through becoming energized by His grace.

ROMANS 15:14 And I myself also am persuaded of you, my Brethren (has faith in these Believers), that you also are full of goodness (means that they had such

because of Christ), filled with all knowledge (knowledge of the Word), able also to admonish one another (they could correct each other if need be, because of their knowledge of the Word). (E.S.B.)

EPHESAINS 5:9 (For the Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) is in all goodness and Righteousness and Truth;) (This proclaims the end results of the “Fruit of the Spirit.”) (E.S.B.)

Note: Some writers distinguish between gentleness (“chrestotes”) and goodness (“agathosume”) by saying that the former Greek word describes the kinder acts of goodness whereas the latter includes the sterner qualities by which goodness is pursued or expressed, e.g. Jesus clearing the temple in Matthew 21:12-13.

Faith or Faithfulness - in the context of this scripture means faithfulness to God and His Word, which means faithfulness to His will. This kind of fidelity is produced as we purpose to diligently obey all of God’s commandments and follow the leading of the Spirit. This is really to be faithful to the written Word of God (logos) and the revealed Word of God (rhema). Faithfulness as a fruit of the Spirit will produce integrity and solidarity of character within a person so that they become someone upon whom God can depend, e.g. Joshua 1:8, 11:15. See also Romans 3:3, Titus 2:10. Again, only in the power of the Divine Nature can we truly manifest this fruit.

“ . . . Faith or Faithfulness - in the context of this scripture means faithfulness to God and His Word, which means faithfulness to His will. . . ”

Meekness - also translated “**Gentleness**” in some versions, relates to submissiveness to the Divine will (James 1:21). A meek man will accept God’s dealings with him as good, and therefore will not dispute or resist. The meek man does not fight against God - neither does he struggle or contend with Him. Meekness is also very closely linked to the word “humility,” and is often used as a

substitute for this word. And while it is commonly assumed that the word meekness is aligned with “weakness,” the opposite in fact is true. Our Lord Jesus was meek, yet He was certainly not a person of weakness - for the meekness manifested by the Lord and commended to the Believer is really power under restraint. It is also the very opposite of self interest. A meek person is one who views his role in relation to God as that of a servant, and who willingly subjects himself to God’s will. He is one who is completely dependent on God and serves Him wholeheartedly (Numbers 12:3).

“. . . A meek man will accept God’s dealings with him as good, and therefore will not dispute or resist. . . ”

Meekness as a fruit is also evidenced in our dealings with people, for this word is associated with the following fruit of temperance or self-control. Operating in meekness in this regard means having command of our feelings when wrong has been inflicted upon us in specific situations. It means that we will patiently suffer injury without developing resentment or having a desire for revenge. To respond in this way is not a natural characteristic of the human temperament. Therefore we are only able to operate in meekness as we are vitally linked to Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 2:24-25).

COLOSSIANS 3:12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God (refers to those who have been elected by God, because they elected to know God [Revelation 22:17]: E.S.B.), holy and beloved, bowels of mercies (a heart of compassion), kindness, humbleness of mind (humility), meekness (does not contend with God’s will), longsuffering (we are to be longsuffering with others as Christ has been longsuffering with us);

Temperance - is also translated as “**Self-control**” in some versions of the Bible. It is the ability to hold oneself in check through God’s grace at work in us. It can refer to having mastery over one’s fleshly desires and impulses, i.e. of having control over one’s sexual

desires, eating habits, conduct and emotions, etc. We are to be temperate in our attitudes, and not given to intense mood swings or emotional outbursts. First Thessalonians 5:6 instructs us to “*watch* (be alert) *and be sober* (self-controlled),” and Titus 2:11-12 reveals that it is God’s grace that teaches us to deny “*ungodliness and worldly lusts*” and to live “*soberly* (self-controlled), *righteously, and godly* (lives) *in this present world*”. Temperance involves exercising one’s will in accordance with the principles of God and maintaining the standards of Christian conduct which are outlined in God’s Word.

These are the nine fruits of the Spirit as outlined in Galatians. The more we walk in union with God and His Word, yielding fully to the leading of the Spirit, the more these fruits, as a whole, will become evident in our lives. Indeed the fruit of the Spirit, as the name indicates, characterise God’s nature. The fruit of the Spirit will blossom in the lives of Christians who walk not after the desires of the flesh, but after the Spirit’s desires, believing, as they yield to the Holy Spirit, that the grace of the Divine Nature is at work in them to accomplish this purpose. It is also evident, as we have said, that agape love encompasses and includes all the nine fruit outlined in Galatians 5:22-23. Therefore, if we operate by the Spirit’s empowerment in agape love, we will be displaying the fruit of the Spirit. To Him be the glory for the energies and graces of His Divine Nature that are at work in us, producing these fruits in the lives of yielded Believers.

1 CORINTHIANS 13:4 Love suffers long (is patient), and is kind; love envies not; love vaunts not itself (doesn’t boast), is not puffed up (prideful),

1 CORINTHIANS 13:5 Does not behave itself unseemly (is not rude), seeks not her own (is not selfish or self-centred), is not easily provoked (is not “touchy” or easily angered), thinks no evil (keeps no record of wrongs);

1 CORINTHIANS 13:6 Rejoices not in iniquity (doesn’t gossip about other’s wrongs), but rejoices in the truth (proclaims the truth of God’s Word);

1 CORINTHIANS 13:7 *Bears all things (doesn't complain), believes all things (believes the best of each person), hopes all things (always hopes), endures all things (always perseveres).*

WALKING AFTER THE SPIRIT

Background Reading: Galatians 5:16-26

If we profess to belong to Christ, and we desire the fruit of the Spirit to blossom in our lives, we need to make it our constant goal to walk after the Spirit.

GALATIANS 5:25 *If we live in the Spirit (are saved - positional), let us also walk in the Spirit (on an experiential basis - conditional).*

To walk in the Spirit is simply to allow the Holy Spirit to lead us in all things, so that we, by following Him, can do the will of God. There are two elements involved in walking in or after the Spirit, one which is concerned with the welfare of self, and the other which is concerned with the welfare of others. The first involves allowing God to empower us to overcome sin, i.e. to nail the fleshly or carnal desires to the Cross. We do this, through an act of our will, by yielding to God and not the sin nature with its fleshly desires. As we, having proper focus, yield to God, we need to believe for His power to become available to us so we are enabled to do the right we have chosen to do. The second aspect of the Spirit-led walk involves allowing God to empower us to do the work He has called us to do, moment by moment, whether this be witnessing to someone, praying for the sick or praying privately on behalf of others. We do need to be strong within ourselves, however, before we can be used by the Lord to help others, and both of these elements involved in walking after the Spirit are necessary if we are to be effective in His service. Therefore, as we walk after the Spirit, consciously submitting ourselves to the Lord in every area of our lives, we can fulfill God's will for us and accomplish the purpose He has for us (through the graces and energies of the Divine Nature.)

“. . . To walk in the Spirit is simply to allow the Holy Spirit to lead us in all things, so that we, by following Him, can do the will of God. . .”

We need to realize that it is not enough to simply cease from doing evil - we must strive in God and with God to do good. As Christians we are responsible not only for denying the desires of the flesh, but for bringing forth fruits of a righteous life. In order to do this, we must purpose to mortify the deeds of the sinful nature and to walk in “*newness of life*” in Christ. Then the fruit of the Spirit will come forth “naturally” within our lives. This will only happen however as we take up the cross of self-denial under the power of the Spirit. Only through the Divine Nature energizing us can we have both proper holy desire and also the power to live according to God’s will and not ours. Willpower simply will not suffice. The will is merely the trigger by which we decide to go God’s way and yield to Him. As we believe for it, the empowerment to do God’s will then becomes available to us through the Divine Nature energizing our human nature. If we decide to go our own way, which constitutes self-rule, the power of the sin nature becomes available to us to do that which we have chosen. However, as we focus on the finished work of the Cross, God’s grace at work in and through us can bring us into victory - and God’s good pleasure. Amen.

ROMANS 8:5 For they that are after the flesh (Christians who allow the sin nature to dominate their lives) do mind the things of the flesh (are concerned with worldly, fleshy pursuits); but they that are after the Spirit (submit to God and allow the Divine Nature to reign in their hearts) the things of the Spirit (are focused on spiritual issues - how to please the Father).

ROMANS 8:6 For to be carnally minded is death (darkness and bondage); but to be spiritually minded is life and peace (“no condemnation”: Romans 8:1).

ROMANS 8:13 *For if you (Paul is speaking to Christians) live after the flesh, you shall die (presents a double-barrelled warning: you will be dead to God's grace and ultimately even possibly dead to God): but if you through the Spirit (by His power) do mortify (put to death) the deeds of the body, you shall live (in victory, in vital union with the Lord).*

The only way to avoid fulfilling the desires of the carnal nature is to walk after the Spirit by God's empowerment.

“. . .As Christians we are responsible not only for denying the desires of the flesh, but for bringing forth fruits of a righteous life. . .”

The term “the flesh” in scripture can refer to the physical flesh of man (the body), the weakness in man's nature that does not want to exert itself or be subject to discipline, and the base nature of man (the sin nature). The flesh as the sin nature is also referred to in scripture as the carnal nature. At the beginning of First Corinthians Ch.3, the Apostle Paul speaks of carnally minded Christians, stating that they are still babes in Christ, not ready to receive the solid meat of the Word. Paul says to them, “*Are you not carnal, and walk as men?*,” meaning that they were still worldly in nature and were living as unregenerated people would live, envying one another and quarrelling. These people, though saved, were obviously not walking according to the standards of true Christian conduct as described in the Word. Rather than walking according to the leading of the Holy Spirit, they were indulging their fleshly lusts, with the sin nature gaining obvious expression through their lives.

Through responding to the Lord's direction and correction, however, we may expect a harvest of the peaceable fruit of righteousness. At times this means accepting the chastening of the Lord and responding to it with humility. Indeed, we can live holy lives and “*mortify (or kill) the deeds of the body*” as we purpose to follow the Spirit's direction, and receive His empowerment to do so.

HEBREWS 12:11 Now no chastening (correction and discipline) for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous (hard to bear): nevertheless afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them who are exercised thereby (have allowed themselves to be trained by it).

HEBREWS 12:10 . . . that we might be partakers of His holiness (this is the purpose of God's discipline).

We need to remember, however, that while gifts such as salvation and the Holy Spirit Baptism are experienced instantaneously, the fruits of the Christian walk generally are not. It takes time, commitment and dedication to cultivate, nurture and produce the virtues of the Spirit-led life. That is why the Word of God tells us that “*by their fruits you shall know them*” (Matthew 7:20), for the fruits are a visible expression of the love and power of God working at an inward level. They cannot be produced by the flesh.

“. . . It takes time, commitment and dedication to cultivate, nurture and produce the virtues of the Spirit-led life. . .”

So let this be our goal, to be ever increasing in the knowledge of God and His will for our lives, our relationship deepening daily as we seek His truth, presence and power. Then as a result we may live accordingly, bringing forth fruits which are pleasing to our Lord.

The Apostle Peter taught:

2 PETER 1:2 Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,

2 PETER 1:3 According as His Divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness (everything we need to live a Godly life), through the knowledge of Him Who has called us to glory and virtue:

2 PETER 1:4 *Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises (found in the Word of God): that by these (promises) you might be partakers of the (Lord's) Divine Nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through (because of) lust. (This presents the Salvation experience of the sinner, and the Sanctification experience of the Saint: E.S.B.)*

We see the inward workings of the Divine Nature described by Paul in Philippians:

PHILIPPIANS 2:13 *For it is God Who works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure (by means of Divine enablement).*

Kenneth Wuest speaks of the empowering presence of the Divine Nature as follows:

"In addition to breaking the power of the evil nature, God imparts His own divine nature to us. We have this truth given us in Paul's words in verse 4, "Even so we also should order our behavior in the power of a new life imparted" (Romans 6:4). This new nature gives the Christian both the desire and the power to do God's will, and the desire and the power to refuse to obey the evil nature. Paul gives us this precious truth again in Philippians 2:12, 13, "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only but now much more in my absence, carry to its ultimate conclusion your salvation with fear and trembling, for God is the One who is constantly putting forth energy in you, imparting to you both the willingness and the ability to do His good pleasure." Since the Christian does not have to obey the evil nature, and since he has the desire to obey God, Paul says it is a mechanical impossibility for him to sustain habitually the same relationship to the evil nature which he did before salvation. This means that he gains consistent victory over sin. And the beautiful thing about it all again is, that the more often the Christian says YES to the admonitions and commands of the divine nature, the easier it becomes to say YES, until it becomes a habit to do so. Thus, the

Christian life is also a matter of forming the good habit of obeying the Word of God.”²

(underlines and reference added)

“ . . . This new nature gives the Christian both the desire and the power to do God’s will, and the desire and the power to refuse to obey the evil nature. . . ”

The more we live according to God’s Word, yielding to the Holy Spirit and taking hold of the promises contained within it, the more Christ-like we will become, increasing in His strength and ability, and decreasing in our own.

EPHESIANS 3:14 For this cause (the proclamation of the Gospel) I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (in order to do His will),

EPHESIANS 3:15 Of Whom (Jesus Christ) the whole family (the Body of Christ - all Believers) in heaven and earth is named,

EPHESIANS 3:16 That He (the Lord Jesus) would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man;

EPHESIANS 3:17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that you, being rooted and grounded (securely established) in love,

EPHESIANS 3:18 May be able to comprehend with all Saints (means not only to understand, but as well, “to lay hold of so as to make one’s own”) what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height (metaphors used by Paul to explain the vastness of God’s Love for the Saints); (E.S.B.)

EPHESIANS 3:19 And to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge (the knowledge of this love is inexhaustible), that you might be filled with all the fullness of God.

God desires each of us to have our hearts firmly established in the Word so that we might all be filled with the fullness of Him in every aspect of our lives. In fact His Divine Nature is meant to be the source of our power to do that which is right.

The enemy's ploy, however, is to render God's Word ineffective and unfruitful in our lives. He attempts to do this through persecution, the influence of the cares and pleasures of this world and the deceitfulness of riches. We need to be aware of his tactics and guard against them by putting on the whole armour of God (Ephesians 6:10-17). We need to daily remember to apply our blood covering by faith. We also need to remember that Satan is a liar and indeed is called the father of lies (John 8:44). By these means, with spiritual knowledge and power, we can live effective Christian lives and not be deceived by the enemy.

“. . . God desires each of us to have our hearts firmly established in the Word so that we might all be filled with the fullness of Him in every aspect of our lives. . . ”

THE PRINCIPLE OF PRUNING

Background Reading: Hebrews 12:5-13

There are many people who profess to be Christians and Disciples of Christ, and some may even display fruits that would seemingly confirm their statements. However it is only under the pressure of trials and testings that the quality of a Christian's fruits can be fully assessed.

Let's turn to John Ch.15 where Jesus is presenting the parable of the true vine.

JOHN 15:1 *“I am the true vine (the only Source of life), and My Father is the husbandman (vinedresser and owner).*

JOHN 15:2 *Every branch in Me (Believer) that bears not fruit He takes away: and every branch that bears fruit, He purges (prunes) it, that it may bring forth more fruit.*

JOHN 15:3 *Now you are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you (it is the Word which purifies: John 17:17; Ephesians 5:26).*

JOHN 15:4 *Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide (remain) in the vine; no more can you (the Believer), except you abide (live, remain, continue) in Me.*

JOHN 15:5 *I am the vine (Jesus alone, not a particular denomination or minister), you are the branches: He who abides in Me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit: for without Me you can do nothing (you cannot produce fruit).*

JOHN 15:6 *If a man abide not (does not continue) in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered (dies spiritually); and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned (a reference to the fires of hell).*

JOHN 15:7 *If you abide in Me, and My Words abide in you (you remain in vital union with Me), you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.*

JOHN 15:8 *Herein is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit (through the grace of the Divine Nature); so shall you be My Disciples (and show yourselves to be such: Matthew 7:20; John 8:31).”*

Jesus speaks of Himself figuratively as the true vine, and we, His followers, as the branches. He gives the example that as a branch of a vine cannot exist and bear fruit unless it is joined to the vine, so it is with us. Unless we are connected to Him and abide in Him, it will be impossible for us to produce fruit that is pleasing to God, the fruit of the Spirit. This is why Jesus said “. . . *without Me you can do nothing*” (John 15:5).

A branch, however, that does bear fruit is pruned by the husbandman who removes the dead wood along with anything else which would hinder its fruitfulness - for in order to increase their productivity, even fruitful branches need pruning. Such pruning needs to be done to a proper degree and in the right season. The pruning of fruitful branches in relation to the life of the Christian is the responsibility and work of the great husbandman, God. He performs this pruning with great skill, in the right season, if we allow Him to do so.

The word translated “*purges*” in K.J.V., has been translated in the N.I.V. as “*prunes*.” “To purge” in the Greek means “to cleanse” as in “to make pure.” This refers to our ongoing sanctification which would cause us to progress in faith and righteousness at an experiential level. Through this process God can bring forth much fruit in our lives, causing us to grow in the stature of Christ.

***“. . .The great husbandman, God,
performs this pruning with great skill, in
the right season, if we allow Him to do
so. . .”***

Note: The process of ongoing sanctification is a continual work of the Holy Spirit that brings our daily condition to our position in Christ. Only as we yield to His grace can this truly take place. And like a guided missile, His holy fire (the truth, wisdom and love of God lit and aflame) seeks to dwell in the very centre of the Christian’s heart, giving them a passion to love as God loves, and so order their actions and reactions accordingly. To allow the process of ongoing sanctification to progress as the Lord would desire, we need a close relationship with Him, and a desire to indeed be holy as He is

holy (1 Peter 1:15-16). If we progress after salvation to receive the Spirit Baptism, we position ourselves, potentially, to enter into a more intimate relationship with our Lord. Then as we seek His holiness, and desire it, ongoing sanctification can progress in our lives to the glory of God.

It is our duty as Christians to be fruitful workers for Christ. When we see a vine, we look for grapes. Similarly, when we see a Christian, we look for Christianity, that being a display of Christ's temperament, attitudes and standards.

John 15:2 tells us:

JOHN 15:2 Every branch in Me (Believer) that bears not fruit He takes away: and every branch that bears fruit, He purges (prunes or cleanses) it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

JOHN 15:3 Now you are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you.

The Apostle Peter expanded on this principle in 1 Peter 1:22:

1 PETER 1:22 Seeing you have purified your souls (speaks of ongoing sanctification) in obeying the truth . . .

The same principle comes through in Ephesians where Paul is speaking about the Church:

EPHESIANS 5:26 That He (God) might sanctify and cleanse it (the Church - all Believers) with the washing of water by the Word.

Therefore we are “cleansed,” “pruned” or “purged” through obeying the Word of God.

“ . . . God's holy fire seeks to dwell in the very centre of the Christian's heart, giving them a passion to love as God loves, and so order their actions and reactions accordingly. . . ”

God's pruning can also be done through a trial for the purpose of building character within His son or daughter.

This “purging” is not because of a lack of fruit but is needed so that fruit may continue year after year. It is needed in order to retain or increase the quality and quantity of fruit. So we are not saying you are being pruned because you have not borne fruit. A vinedresser would not prune a tree unless he thought it would bear fruit in season. So we should consider it a privilege that the Lord, our Vinedresser, would take the time to prune us, believing that in Christ we will indeed bear much quality fruit. While we live in our physical body, we will always need the hand of the Vinedresser to prune us, for we know only too well that while Christ has made us fit for the Kingdom after this life, we are certainly not perfect in action and thought in this life.

So again, it is helpful to remember that we are being pruned because there is hope. If we were not being pruned, it would be because the Vinedresser could see no future for us, or we were not ready to be used, and therefore we were not allowing the Father to prune us. In this case we would be living our life the way we wanted, which would produce no fruit.

We find in Hebrews the account of God the Father disciplining us as His true children, “*that we might be partakers of His holiness.*” Once again we should count it a privilege to be corrected and pruned by the Lover of our souls.

HEBREWS 12:5 And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks unto you as unto children, “My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, nor faint (lose heart) when you are rebuked of Him: (Proverbs 3:11)

HEBREWS 12:6 *For whom the Lord loves He chastens (disciplines), and scourges (punishes) every son whom He receives.” (Proverbs 3:12)*

HEBREWS 12:7 *If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chastens not? (If an earthly father truly cares for his son, he will use whatever measures necessary to bring the boy into line. If an earthly father will do this, how much more will our Heavenly Father do the same?: E.S.B.)*

HEBREWS 12:8 *But if you be without chastisement (discipline), whereof all (all who are true Believers) are partakers, then are you illegitimate, and not (true) sons.*

HEBREWS 12:9 *Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh who corrected us, and we gave them (our earthly parents) reverence (respect): shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? (“Father of spirits” is contrasted to “Fathers of the flesh.” The latter concerns our earthly parents. Their relation to us is limited. He is universal and eternal: E.S.B.)*

HEBREWS 12:10 *For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure (sometimes this correction by earthly parents may not have been entirely just or wise); but He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness (His correction is always righteous and perfectly motivated).*

HEBREWS 12:11 *Now no chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous (a trial may be hard to bear): nevertheless afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them who are exercised thereby (allow themselves to be trained by it).*

What God desires to prune are such things as self-reliance, self-rule, self-promotion and self-desire. What is then fed into that

branch (which represents the Christian) is the true empowering nourishment of God's power to do His will. From this exchange, in due season will come fruit that belongs to the true vine (Jesus), being expressed through the branch.

It is our privilege to be vessels of honour, displaying the impact of God's grace upon a yielded branch. If we do not yield to God's pruning, then in the next season there will be no fruit. No pruning equals no fruit and no power - nothing except self-reliance, self-rule, self-promotion and self-desire. The fruit which will then show forth will be the fruit of the flesh, not the Spirit.

It is God's Word made alive and powerful by the Holy Spirit which effectively prunes, purifies and cleanses us of impurities, as we yield to the Lord and act in faith on the direction and correction that the Word provides.

Again pruning happens when we allow God to prune us of self - the self that acts without God's approval, doing its own thing, usually with self-interest at its core. This comes when we not only seek truth but the Giver of truth, the Lord Himself. The less of self we hang on to, the more God can empower us with His grace as He teaches us His ways and leads us into them at an experiential level. This takes place through us becoming one with Him as we yield to the Holy Spirit and partake of the graces of His Divine Nature. Then it is us in Him and Him in us, energizing our human nature to even have the mind and attitudes of Christ in these things.

“. . .What God desires to prune are such things as self-reliance, self-rule, self-promotion and self-desire. . .”

Our leading comes as we seek God's will. This will be found through both the logos (written Word) and the rhema (revealed Word). As we study the Word daily, the Lord will speak to us through it, giving us illumination regarding truths that are needed for us to run the race straight and strong. We must, however, ready ourselves for this leading. We need to be awake spiritually, for God's direction can also come through the preaching and teaching of His

Word. He will even use the gifts of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12) to speak into the hearts and lives of His children to bring about His will. But if someone does say to you, “The Lord has said such and such,” then always take this in prayer to the Lord until He confirms to your heart that it is true. To ready oneself for this, one may even have to study, fast and pray before the confirmation comes. Alternatively it may not have been a “word from the Lord.” At other times, a “word from the Lord” will be delivered by God’s messenger through preaching and teaching. Or the Divine knowing that “this is not God’s word” will come. But realize that God will prune us if we allow Him to do so, through the logos Word and the rhema Word. We all need to be sanctified daily - pruned daily. Our attitudes and thoughts need to be straightened daily, for positionally we may be sanctified in Christ but conditionally we need God’s grace to bring our condition up to our position.

Those who experience the power of the Word pruning them from dead works, wrong attitudes and erroneous beliefs, etc., will set to work in the power of the Spirit to do more for Jesus. Indeed scripture promises us that God is at work within us, working with us to accomplish His will and pleasure through the energies and graces of His Divine Nature.

PHILIPPIANS 2:13 . . . for it is God Who is all the while effectually at work in you (those who allow Him) - energizing and creating in you the power and desire - both to will and to work for His good pleasure . . . (Amp.)

The fruit produced by those who have been pruned will be greater in quantity and quality than in those who have not allowed God to prune them. Those who have been pruned may not, for example, pray more often but they will be able to pray more effectively - for “*the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails (is able to accomplish) much*” (James 5:16). They may or may not spend more time studying, but their studies will be more meaningful, deeper and more productive. For all this to happen as the Lord would want, the Saint needs to be Spirit-baptized. Without it he or she can do very little.

Unfortunately, many will not respond to the pruning of the Husbandman. They prefer to lead their own lives as they see fit,

being caught up with fear, pride, error, confusion, selfishness, unbelief, etc. They reject or do not seek the Lord's direction and correction, and as a result, they not only greatly hinder their growth and effectiveness as Christians, so that people they could have reached remain unsaved, a terrible eternal consequence, they also become liable to suffer loss at the hands of the enemy.

“ . . . Those who experience the power of the Word pruning them from dead works, wrong attitudes and erroneous beliefs, etc., will set to work in the power of the Spirit to do more for Jesus. . . ”

Therefore, let us yield ourselves to be pruned by the Word, under the direction and influence of the Holy Spirit, so we will not need to be pruned by “awful sorrows.” Let us abide in the vine and allow the Husbandman to prune us according to His will and His desire, so that much fruit in due season can be brought forth.

THE ROAD TO DISCIPLESHIP

Background Reading: Philippians 3:7-14

JOHN 15:8 Herein is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, so shall you (show yourselves to) be My Disciples.

The statement “*so shall you be My Disciples*” literally means to show ourselves as being Christ-like. However, as we have learned, without the Baptism in the Holy Spirit we will be limited in the potential that is available to us to truly develop this likeness. This statement points to a wholehearted commitment to following Christ, which includes being Spirit-baptized. Second Timothy 2:20-21 tells us:

2 TIMOTHY 2:20 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour

(points to the need for the process of ongoing sanctification in each Saint's life, for there is no sinless perfection in this life).

2 TIMOTHY 2:21 *If a man therefore purge himself from the latter (separates himself from sin), he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet (fit, qualified) for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work (usable for the Kingdom's sake).*

Second Timothy 2:15 instructs us how we are to do this:

2 TIMOTHY 2:15 *Study to show yourself approved unto God* *(by acting on the truths of His Word in His power), (being) a workman who needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth.*

We are also told how to put our knowledge into practice:

JAMES 1:22 *But be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only . . .*

ROMANS 6:11 *Likewise reckon you also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin (the sin nature), but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

ROMANS 6:12 *Let not sin (the sin nature) therefore reign (rule) in your mortal body (shows that the sin nature and not the Divine Nature can rule in the life of the Christian), that you should obey it (the sin nature) in the lusts (its ungodly lusts) thereof.*

These scriptures speak of the application of God's truths. Unfortunately, many people have truths from God's Word revealed to them, but do not apply these truths to their lives. Thus they receive no benefit and produce no fruit. Those who do implement God's truths by the Spirit's empowerment and apply them to their lives, however, will live in the ensuing benefits and experience the reality of that which Jesus promised when He said ". . . you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

“. . .The statement “so shall you be My Disciples” literally means to show ourselves as being Christ-like. . .”

Jesus also stated that those who, being empowered, obey His teaching, will become more than just servants. Jesus considers His Disciples to be His friends - and therefore worthy to be partakers of His Divine knowledge (John 8:31-32; 14:21). Jesus said:

JOHN 15:14 “You are My friends, if you do whatsoever I command you (obey - allow Jesus to be Lord in every area).

JOHN 15:15 Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knows not what his lord does: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you (reveals Himself and the Father’s plans: John 14:21).

JOHN 15:16 You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever you shall ask of the Father in My Name, He may give it you (as we “abide in the vine”: John 15:7).

How do we attain that position of friendship rather than just servanthood? It is through discipleship.

Coming back to Philippians 2:13, it is not a matter of “let go and let God” as Wuest describes it, but rather a matter of “take hold with God” to produce strength and character. Let’s study what else he has written in regard to this principle. Kenneth Wuest speaks of the Christian’s responsibility in their walk with the Lord to develop “moral stamina and spiritual power.” He does not advocate “jelly-fish Christians” but “spiritual giants” who can work effectively for the Kingdom of God:

“But this desire for the control of the Holy Spirit, and this trust in the Lord Jesus for that control, is but part of the believer’s obligation in the premises. One cannot say, “Just to realize with joy the Spirit’s passionate longing to control my thoughts, words, and deeds for the glory of the Lord Jesus, and to rest quietly in His energizing and supervising ministry, is all that is necessary.” The Christian life is not a mere “let go and let God” affair. It is a “take hold with God” business. It is not a mere rest in God, an existence somewhat like that of a jelly-fish floating in the warm currents of the Gulf Stream. God is not developing jelly-fish Christians. God wants to develop heroes, Christian men and women of moral stamina and spiritual power. In the physical realm, no one becomes strong by merely eating wholesome food and resting. Exercise is what is needed to change the food-energy into bone and muscle. In like manner, the Christian must exercise himself spiritually if he is to grow strong in his Christian life. That demands the exercise of his free will, the making of choices, the deciding between right and wrong, the saying of a point blank NO to temptation, the constant striving to improve one’s spiritual life, grow in the Christian graces and in Christlikeness. It involves not only the desire to be loving, but the definite endeavor to be loving. It is not merely a trustful rest in the Holy Spirit to make us loving, but a positive exertion of our own will to be loving. It is like bending one’s arm. The strength to bend one’s arm is in that member of the body, but the strength is only potential and not active unless the will power is exerted which will cause that strength to function. Just so, the power of the Holy Spirit is potentially resident in the saint by virtue of His indwelling presence, but it is only operative in that believer when he is yielded to and dependent upon the ministry of the Spirit, and then steps out in faith in the performance of the action contemplated. For instance, when the believer is confronted with a temptation, it is not enough to rest in the Holy Spirit’s ministry to overcome that temptation for us. We must by an act of our own free will say a bold, positive, and fearless NO to it. The instant we move in that direction, the Spirit is there with His wonderful energizing power. Indeed, you will say, that the very start of the step taken in the direction of the act of saying NO to that temptation was motivated by the Spirit. And that is true. Yet it is also true that it is the free action of the believer’s will, and is his responsibility. Right here lies that mysterious, incomprehensible,

and not-to-be-understood interaction and mutual response between the free-will of man and the sovereign grace of God.

“ . . .The Christian must exercise himself spiritually if he is to grow strong in his Christian life. . . ”

This necessary action of the will on the part of the believer, in addition to the trust in and dependence upon the Holy Spirit which the saint must have, is seen clearly in the expression, “a certain fellowship of the Spirit” (Philippians 2:1) which we found referred to “a relation between individuals which involves a common interest and a mutual active participation in that interest and in each other.” It is the obligation of the believer to be supremely interested in the things of God, for the Spirit is constantly exploring the deep things of God (I Corinthians 2:10). The Christian who does not maintain a real interest in and hunger for the Word of God, and satisfy both by a constant study of that Word, is not co-operating with the Spirit, and is not giving the Spirit an opportunity to work in his life and cause him to grow in the Christian graces. The Spirit works through the Word of God that we have stored in our hearts, and not apart from it.

Likewise, the believer who does not actively participate in the activity necessary to the saying of YES to the will of God and of NO to sin, is not co-operating with the Spirit. And the Christian who does not engage in a Holy Spirit directed ministry of some kind in the work of furthering the knowledge of the Word of God, is not co-operating with the Spirit. It is this ideal combination of a moment by moment trust in, submission to, and dependence upon the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and the constant interest in and participation with the Holy Spirit in the things of God, that produces the best results in the Christian’s experience. This combination develops Christian men and women with a sense of responsibility, with moral courage and stamina of a high order, with a balance and poise that weathers the severest storms, with a delicate sense of tact that enables them to move among their fellowmen without riding roughshod over their tender hearts, but rather in a loving way so that their passing leaves a sense of the presence of the Lord Jesus. It develops spiritual giants,

men and women who can be trusted in a time of crisis. ”³ (underlines added)

A king has a “close court” of trusted people who serve him, people who are dedicated, committed and loyal. Through their service they experience an intimate association with their king. This service is highly sought after and highly prized. Likewise, Jesus, our King, our sovereign Lord, has called us into His “close courts” to be His servants and to do His will. In His service, as His Disciples, we too can have an intimate association with Him. But this intimacy can only be experienced by the Disciple - one who has truly surrendered himself to his Lord, with a proper focus for his faith which is the message of the Cross.

Now as we have said, through the baptism of regeneration we gain a Divine connection, and the Holy Spirit comes to dwell within (1 Corinthians 6:19; John 14:17). This makes us a part of the family of God, and as a son or daughter we can call Him “*Abba Father*” (or Daddy). Can this connection be any closer in a legal sense? No.

“ . . . The Christian who does not maintain a real interest in and hunger for the Word of God, and satisfy both by a constant study of that Word, is not co-operating with the Spirit. . . ”

When the Christian is Holy Spirit baptized, however, the Holy Spirit positions Himself in the very centre of the heart of man, giving the potential of a more intimate relationship between the Saint and his God. Then as the child of God yields and moves in Him, the graces of the Holy Spirit flow out from his innermost being (John 7:38-39), outwards to meet the need. (This once again is God in us, not us in God). Whether this need be for the renewing of his mind, the healing of his body, or another requirement, it is the wonderful work of the Holy Spirit that gives this potential. Those not baptized in the Holy Spirit are limited in the measure of these graces - to meet the need of man. Included here of course are the gifts of the Spirit,

given to individuals to minister to the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:7-11).

The Spirit has chosen for us to be co-labourers with Him in order to do the work of God (1 Corinthians 3:9), and if our full potential is to be realized in a powerful way, He must be working from the very centre of our being. For this to happen, we must be baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Indeed the Spirit Baptism brings such a greater potential into our lives. But that alone will do very little. We must flow in the new graces that He will bring into our lives, and do His will and not ours.

Only with the Spirit Baptism comes the potential for His power to work in us in a greater measure that would enrich our very character because of our closer relationship with God through Him. In fact our nature can be changed so that we become more Christ-like in thought and intent through truly being a partaker of God's Divine Nature in the atmosphere of the grace of the Spirit Baptism. Then we are enabled to possess the mind of Christ (meaning having His thinking, His understanding, His attitudes in the areas in which we are trusting God) to a much greater degree (1 Corinthians 2:16).

Let us therefore move on as Disciples of Christ, so we can realize the full potential that the Spirit Baptism offers. Let us desire to enter into deeper levels of fellowship with our Lord - for He wants to reveal Himself to us and commune with us in a deep and personal way (Revelation 3:20). Let us walk after the Spirit, allowing time to cultivate the fruits of the Spirit as we yield to Him and co-operate with Him, in this way showing ourselves to be His Disciples. Then the world will see and know that we serve a risen Lord Who watches over, protects and provides for His people. Let us goal to be walking epistles of Christ so that our Lord may be glorified in all that we do, knowing that fruitbearing is not an end in itself, but rather a means by which the Father is glorified.

JOHN 15:8 Herein is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; so shall you be My Disciples.

To God be all the glory and may you have the victory in Christ Jesus.

For further information or teaching material to help you grow in the Christian faith, please visit:

CROSSROADS INTERNATIONAL
FULL GOSPEL MINISTRIES
crossroadsministries.org.au

NOTES

NOTES

- 1 Wuest K. S., Word Studies From The Greek New Testament, Galatians 5:25.
- 2 Wuest K.S., Word Studies in the Greek New Testament, Great Truths To Live By, pg. 80.
- 3 Wuest K. S., Word Studies from the Greek New Testament, Untranslatable Riches from the New Testament, pg.114.

*"We have a vision
to see people living
in abundant life
by the power of God
through Jesus Christ"*



www.crossroadsministries.org.au