

The fruit of the Holy Spirit – 29th May 2016

Introduction

Galatians 5:22-23

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control.

Rob spoke a fortnight ago on the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and Paul Duckworth spoke last week on the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Today I want to talk to you about the Fruit of the Holy Spirit.

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit and the gifts of the Holy Spirit share something in common in that they are a grace impartation from God. They are given by the Holy Spirit in response to asking and believing or in response to a need in a situation.

The fruit of the Holy Spirit is different in that it is a manifestation of the consistent work of the Holy Spirit in a believer's heart, mind and soul. The Fruit is not a gift; it is the character of the Holy Spirit made manifest as He takes root in our lives.

So unlike the baptism and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, you cannot pray for God to impart fruit, you can only make space for the truth of His Word and His Holy Spirit which when they take residence in your heart begin to grow and develop into fruit.

Fruit takes time to grow

Another difference between the gifts and the fruits is the time taken to manifest them. If I gave you a gift you would have it instantly, but fruit takes time to grow. If I planted an apple seed and went back the next day to check if it had fruit on it you would think me mad!

Well God planted in us an incorruptible seed, the seed of His own Spirit, but it takes time for us to yield to the Holy Spirit's nature and bear the fruit described in Galatians 5:22.

The fruit of the Spirit is **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.**

Well that's the theory anyway!

Because the reality is a little different isn't it. I've been a Christian for 24 years and when I look at that list my first thought is 'Arrrrrrgh.....I've got quite some way to go yet!'

Let's see, well I think I may have Love nailed down....I tell my wife I love her and more often than not I demonstrate that its true too. I love my kids and they really know I love them. We play, we laugh, we hug, we cry, and go gooey with emotion, so that's good right.

I love God and have dedicated my life to His service so yea I think I have love thing pretty much nailed down.....but wait a minute....I'm part of a church.....what about my love for my brothers and sisters? Mmmmm well, I can tell you there are times when I want to throttle

some of you rather than love you, and I dare say the reverse is probably true, so perhaps I'm not there yet.

Then Jesus tells me that I am to love my enemies.....OUCH, let's not even go there!

OK, what about Joy?

Well, I'm a happy soul by and large and I'm hardly ever 'down'. So perhaps I have this one nailed down.....

1/9

Peace? Well, yea most of the time, except when the kids push all my buttons at once or if I see someone mistreating my kids, or if someone in front of me drives like a moron, or if I come across a self-righteous, pompous, judgmental, religious fanatic, then I see red and hot flames come shooting out of my nose.

The rest can take a running jump, so for 24 years of Christianity I'm barely 1 for 9.

It's not as if I don't try. I mean, I wake up every morning with the intention of being loving, joyful peaceful patient and the rest. But then after I wake up, I have to deal with 'actual real people'. And most of those are church people so it's doubly hard and in no time my love, joy, peace etc disappear faster than the England football team at a major championship.

And if you will care to admit it, the truth is, you're probably no better than me!

Some of you like me are not particularly patient or gentle. Some of you are not consistently kind or self-controlled. I know I'm not always full of faith and I know some of you struggle with loving the people in your lives. Some of you have no peace. The same when it comes to joy (and with good reason). But if you were to measure yourself against that list you would feel like a failure.

But, you see, that list is like an airbrushed version of a magazine cover – Its perfect, with no blemishes, wrinkles or spots, but it bears little to no resemblance to the reality you and I face day to day. If this list is a description of what a genuine Holy Spirit-filled believer looks like- if it's like an advertisement for what being a Christian is like, then like all advertisements it's too good to be true.

But this list and this letter wasn't written to you (as an individual). It's not a promise meant for you (as an individual), It's written to the church and it is a promise for us as a church

And that promise, the incredibly good but still believable news- the gospel- behind this list is that the Holy Spirit can take all us impatient but good people and all us out of control but kind people and all us people with great faith and kindness but little peace and all of us who love God but have a hard time loving other people- the Holy Spirit can take broken, imperfect people like you and I put us into a community that we call Church and somehow, by the grace of God, you and I, US, TOGETHER, WE- can look like Jesus.

Where I am not yet consistently bearing one aspect of this fruit, I can guarantee that some of you are. It is why we are called 1 body and why we need each other. Together we make up the 9 for 9 and together we look like Jesus.

Because even if it feels like the Holy Spirit's work in you or I is slower than a 'Lada full of elephants going uphill' we can rest assured that He has worked, is working and will work to yield this fruit (singular) in you if you will let Him. If you take a moment to look and reflect, you'll see it in yourself and in others.

Patience and kindness

My dad is ace. He's brilliant at lots of things. He loves technology but is useless at computers. He types slower than a man with no fingers and he has no idea how to Google....I installed some remote control software on his PC so that in times of need I could help him if he needed it. Little did I know that I would become his personal on-demand assistant. I tuck the kids up in bed, go downstairs and make a cup of tea, finally sit down and then the phone goes off. It's dad! We exchange chit chat and catch up on what's been going on when dad launches into his 'I need help speech'. When he says 'T, can you just log in and....' My eyes roll and I realise that the next hour of my life will be taken up finding a cheap hire car, finding a better deal on house or car or car-hire insurance, tracking down Tivusat Italian satellite receivers or helping with an awkward email reply. And then I take a deep breath, think of how much this man means to me, think of all the countless sacrifices he has made for me and my sisters, smile, and gladly demonstrate that I love him by helping him out. Maybe, the Holy Spirit is developing the fruit of kindness, goodness and patience in me after all!

Peace and Patience

Then there's the neighbour next door and the episode over our new fence. This delightful man wouldn't let the fencing guys onto his property to install the new fence so I had to fork out another £250 for them to demolish an old lean-to shed on our side and fit a new end panel. Not only that, he called me a bully and a nasty piece of work in the process too.

Patience, which in some translations is "longsuffering" or "endurance", is defined in Strong's by two Greek words, makrothumia and hupomone. Generally, the Greek world applied these words which we translate as 'Patience' to a man who could avenge himself but did not. Patience includes the concepts of forbearance, long-suffering, and the willingness to bear wrongs patiently.

If this is what patience looks like, if I can overlook that wrong without wanting to pour weedkiller over his prized begonias, then perhaps the Holy Spirit is developing the fruit of patience and peace in me after all.

Faithfulness and Self-control

Then there is the issue with my relationship to food. I grew up in a house that over time had plenty, but with parents that came from a backdrop of poverty. I remember the 'starving kids in Africa would love that food you are wasting' guilt trip many times if I struggled to finish what was on my plate. That wouldn't be so bad if mum's portions weren't the size of North

Wales. As anyone who has eaten at my parent's house can testify to, my mother has a matriarchal drive to ensure no-one leaves her house without bursting at the seams.

So for as long as I can remember, I have finished everything on my plate, small, medium, large or Toddy portion.....until a few weeks ago. I don't really know how this happened except to say that 2 things have changed. Firstly, God gave me the wisdom to finally realise that I have the power to say 'No' to food. The second thing is the realisation (from my missus working in weight management) that small changes can have dramatic effects over long periods of time.

Last week I was in the office when Hannah walked by the door. I called her over and in a fit of excitement announced that I had dropped down a jeans size. Not really knowing how to take that news she smiled awkwardly, said 'That's nice' or something like that and went on her way. I'm sure she thought to herself that I was losing it or something like that! What Hannah didn't know, is that prior to a few weeks ago I never actually believed that I was capable of losing weight. In my heart I always saw myself as a fat Italian fella who would always be fat.

The Greek word used in Galatians 5:23 is "egkrateia", meaning "strong, having mastery, able to control one's thoughts and actions." So perhaps the Holy Spirit is developing the fruit of faith and self-control in me after all.

It takes time

I'm sure that most of us have similar stories we could share. Times where the Holy Spirit's fruit has been in evidence and we didn't really plan it that way, and there was no fanfare about it, but nevertheless we can recall those times if we choose to.

So, maybe we aren't all abject failures after all. **Maybe the point of this message is to blow away the myth of perfection and to celebrate the fact that the Holy Spirit can bear fruit in broken, messed up, imperfect people like you and I.**

Perhaps we need to be reminded that we ought to show ourselves and others a little more grace and accept the fact that the Holy Spirit's fruit bearing project is a long term one. One that sees branches pruned, tended to, growth and finally seasons of fruit, before the process starts over again.

2 Cor 3: 17-18

Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. 18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

And perhaps we just need to acknowledge that we all have our strengths and weaknesses and that God designed us to need each other. Perhaps our tendency to isolate ourselves is counter-productive to bearing the fruit He desires to bear in us.

So, perhaps the proper reaction to reading this list shouldn't be "Arrrrrrgggggh, I don't measure up", but instead, 'Thank you Lord, that you are at work in me and in my brothers

and sisters'. Maybe this is what the scripture means when it says that we are to 'regard no one according to the flesh'

2 Cor 5:16-17

16 Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

The 9 fruits

Love

Agape (love) denotes a really undefeatable benevolence and unconquerable goodwill, that always seeks the highest of the other, no matter what s/he does. It is the self-giving love that gives freely without asking anything in return, and does not consider the worth of its object. Agape is more a love by choice than philo, which is love by chance; and it refers to the will rather than the emotion. Agape describes the unconditional love God has for the world. Paul describes love in 1 Corinthians 13:

Love is patient, love is kind. (love) is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.

Joy

The joy referred to here is deeper than mere happiness, is rooted in God and comes from him. Since it comes from God, it is more serene and stable than worldly happiness, which is merely emotional and lasts only for a time. The fruit of joy is the awareness that God is one's strength and protector.

Paul wrote in Philippians 4:4, "Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice!"

Peace

Peace is the result of resting in a relationship with God.[10] Peace is more than an absence of conflict. It is the tranquil state of a soul fearing nothing from God and content with its earthly lot, of what so ever sort that is. It is a kind of equilibrium that comes from trusting that everything is in the hands of God.[11]

The word "peace" comes from the Greek word eirene, the Greek equivalent for the Hebrew word shalom, which expresses the idea of wholeness, completeness, or tranquility in the soul that is unaffected by the outward circumstances or pressures. The word eirene strongly suggests the rule of order in place of chaos. When a person is dominated by peace, he has a calm, inner stability that results in the ability to conduct himself peacefully, even in the midst of circumstances that would normally be very nerve-wracking, traumatic, or upsetting...Rather than allowing the difficulties and pressures of life to break him, a person who is possessed by peace is whole, complete, orderly, stable, and poised for blessing.[12]

Jesus is described as the Prince of Peace, who brings peace to the hearts of those who desire it. He says in John 14:27:[13] "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid".

When having peace with God through the sacrifice of Jesus, we are then able to make peace between men, and also between men and God, also called "evangelism". It is understood that those who have peace with God, and are therefore sons of God, will act like their Father in heaven and become those who are able to make peace, or be peace makers, as Jesus says, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God"[14] and "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me".[15] So by saying this, Jesus is stating that only those who have received peace with God through Himself, the "sons of God", are able to make peace, no one else. These sons of God are specified by John when he says, "None of those who are children of God continue to sin, for God's very nature is in them; and because God is their Father, they cannot continue to sin".[16] Paul also says, "Never pay back evil for evil. Take thought for what is right in the sight of all men".[17] Peace, in the Bible, is much more than just a lack of yelling or lack of war, it is the presence of YHWH allowed into a place and a person. Only with the Jewish God is there peace, as Isaiah writes, "'There is no peace,' says the Lord, 'for the wicked.'"[18] Jesus is the Jewish God,[19][20] and He is alive.[21]

Patience

This word is often used in the Greek Scriptures in reference to God and his attitude to man.[11] Exodus 34:6 describes the Lord as "slow to anger and rich in kindness and fidelity."

The first, pronounced (mak-roth-oo-mee-ah) comes from makros, "long", and thumos, "temper". The word denotes lenience, forbearance, fortitude, patient endurance, longsuffering. Also included in makrothumia is the ability to endure persecution and ill-treatment. It describes a person who has the power to exercise revenge but instead exercises restraint. (Strong's #3115)

The latter, hupomone, (hoop-om-on-ay) is translated "endurance": Constancy, perseverance, continuance, bearing up, steadfastness, holding out, patient endurance. The word combines hupo, "under", and mone, "to remain". It describes the capacity to continue to bear up under difficult circumstances, not with a passive complacency, but with a hopeful fortitude that actively resists weariness and defeat, (Strong's #5281) with hupomone (Greek ὑπομονή) being further understood as that which would be "as opposed to cowardice or despondency"[23]

"With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love".[24]

Kindness

In Greek, old wine was called "chrestos" which meant that it was mellow or smooth.[11] Christ used this word in Matthew 11:30, "For my yoke is easy, and my burden light."

In contrast, kindness is acting for the good of people regardless of what they do, properly, "useable, i.e. well-fit for use (for what is really needed); kindness that is also serviceable".[25]

Strong's #5544: Kindness is goodness in action, sweetness of disposition, gentleness in dealing with others, benevolence, kindness, affability. The word describes the ability to act for the welfare of those taxing your patience. The Holy Spirit removes abrasive qualities from the character of one under His control. (emphasis added)

The word kindness comes from the Greek word chrestotes (khray-stot-ace), which meant to show kindness or to be friendly to others and often depicted rulers, governors, or people who were kind, mild, and benevolent to their subjects. Anyone who demonstrated this quality of chrestotes was considered to be compassionate, considerate, sympathetic, humane, kind, or gentle. The apostle Paul uses this word to depict God's incomprehensible kindness for people who are unsaved (see Romans 11:22;[26] Ephesians 2:7;[27] Titus 3:4[28]).

One scholar has noted that when the word chrestotes is applied to interpersonal relationships, it conveys the idea of being adaptable to others. Rather than harshly require everyone else to adapt to his own needs and desires, when chrestotes is working in a believer, he seeks to become adaptable to the needs of those who are around him. (Sparkling Gems from the Greek, Rick Renner)

Kindness is doing something and not expecting anything in return. Kindness is respect and helping others without waiting for someone to help one back. It implies kindness no matter what. We should live "in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left".[29]

Goodness

The state or quality of being good

Moral excellence; virtue;

Kindly feeling, kindness, generosity, joy in being good

The best part of anything; Essence; Strength;

General character recognized in quality or conduct.

Popular English Bibles (e.g. NIV, NASB, NLT) translate the single Greek word *chrestotes* into two English words: kindness and goodness. "Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power".[30] "For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth",[31] with *agathosune* being "found only in Biblical and ecclesiastical writings, uprightness of heart and life"[32]

Faithfulness

Faithfulness is committing oneself to something or someone, for instance, to one's spouse, to a cause, or to a religion. Being faithful requires personal resolve not to wander away from commitments or promises. It's not always easy to be faithful. True faith requires trust in God. "O Lord, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things; thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth".[33] "I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith".[Eph 3:16-17]

The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews describes it this way: "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God".[34]

The root of *pistis*[35] ("faith") is *peithô*[36] that is to persuade or be persuaded which supplies the core-meaning of faith as being "divine persuasion", received from God, and never generated by man.

Gentleness

Gentleness, in the Greek, *prautes*, commonly known as meekness, which is "a divinely-balanced virtue that can only operate through faith (cf. [1 Tim 6:11] ; [2 Tim 2:22-25]).[37]

. The New Spirit Filled Life Bible defines gentleness as

"a disposition that is even-tempered, tranquil, balanced in spirit, unpretentious, and that has the passions under control. The word is best translated 'meekness,' not as an indication of weakness, but of power and strength under control. The person who possesses this quality pardons injuries, corrects faults, and rules his own spirit well".

"Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted".[Gal 6:1]

"Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love".[Eph 4:2]

Self Control

The Greek word used in Galatians 5:23 is "egkrateia", meaning "strong, having mastery, able to control one's thoughts and actions."[38]

"...make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love".[2 Pet 1:5-7]

Against such there is no law.