

Nine of Nine – The Fruit of Temperance

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

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy (gladness), peace, patience (an even temper, forbearance), kindness, goodness (benevolence), faithfulness, gentleness (meekness and humility), and self-control (self-restraint, continence) (Galatians 5:22-25, AMP).

Temperance is in a word self-discipline or control. But it is also a character trait in us built day by day through the Holy Spirit. And as we have said in other times that just because a person is born again and has repented of sin does not automatically mean we are complete outwardly in every aspect of our character. It is a process and one that is often referred to in years past as sanctification. Without self-control it is impossible to exhibit the true character of Christ and show forth His life and goodness on the earth. It can seem like an overwhelming task to have self-control in all the areas of our life and can be burdensome if we try to accomplish on our own.

I was for many years in a denomination that stressed their laws of self-control, one could only be holy if they obeyed all the rules of the church, such as not wearing jewelry or swimming in public, women could not wear pants or makeup but must be only in a dress down below the knees and longer was better. No movies, no sporting games and on and on. About the only thing that was looked upon as acceptable was eating and we did and many were grossly overweight and thought nothing of it because they had no self-control or restraint in the area of food.

Reading an article by Derek Prince, he outlined seven stages of spiritual development he had extracted from II Peter 1:5-7.

*And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge **temperance**; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.*

(2Peter 1:5-7)

Peter warned us that to complete this process we would have to have diligence and discipline. Another way of saying it would be to have a made-up mind. James said that we were to be people who were not tossed about with every change in the wind but we were to be steadfast and determined. The work of the Spirit in us is to develop the believer into Christ-likeness for others

to see and not only hear. We are to be a living epistle read by all to show forth the grace of God in the earth.

This process that Peter describes could be compared to the way the seed of an apple develops into a mature apple. The seed is God's Word planted in the hearts and watered. It produces faith, which is the thing that without one cannot please God, because the scripture tells us without faith it is impossible to please God (It does not say without obedience it is impossible to please God.)

Then out of faith there follows seven successive stages of development:

- Stage One - "Virtue" or moral excellence
- Stage Two - "Knowledge"
- Stage Three - "Self-Control"
- Stage Four - "Perseverance"
- Stage Five - "Godliness"
- Stage Six - "Brotherly Kindness"
- Stage Seven - "Agape Love" This is the full ripe fruit of the Christian character.

Even though it would be extremely interesting to look at each of these stages and pick them apart it is not for this time as we are looking at the final fruit of Temperance or Self-Control. (This article has to end at some point.)

Temperance is the inner strength to be a master over self and to be ruled with a Christ-centered purpose in life. When we are temperate we don't let ourselves become a slave to every whim and uncontrolled passion. When we are temperate we can be under such self-control that whatever things are good and profitable they become our desire to do, the godly thing we pursue by faith. This is the kind of discipline that must be applied in every major area of our personality, our emotions, attitudes, appetites, and of course, our thought life. And it must govern not only our actions, but our reactions in order to stay in peace and to maintain the attitude that is so noticed in this chaos filled world.

The Apostle Paul said this in his letter to the Thessalonians, "*Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.*" (1Thess 5:6) He used the two words watch and sober. Often when we hear the word sober we think of someone not being intoxicated with alcohol and outside of a level of intoxication we think of somberness, no joy, serious always. But the heart of the word "**sober**," as used in relation to watching, is seriousness, **self-control**, without excess, reasonable, and sane. Paul was talking about someone in a battle watching, being on guard and being aware of their surroundings. Now this can be done with joy but it cannot be done without being focused or having self-control.

We are in a battle every day and if you did not know it we are to be ever watchful guarding our minds and capturing every thought and casting down imaginations and high things that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God, we are to bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. We are to have a sound mind and the Bible teaches we are not given a spirit of fear but we are given a sound mind and a sound mind is having self-control and self-discipline. The Amplified Bible translated as II Tim. 1:7 "*For God did not give us a spirit of*

timidity (of cowardice, of craven and cringing and fawning fear), but [He has given us a spirit] of power and of love and of calm and well-balanced mind and discipline and self-control."

So we can see that the fruit is developing character in each and every one of us. And we can plainly see that the best character developed only comes through the cross of Christ. God has given us a picture of the type of character He expects and it is found in Psalms 15

A Psalm of David. LORD, who may abide in your tabernacle? Who may dwell in your holy hill? He who walks uprightly, And works righteousness, And speaks the truth in his heart; He who does not backbite with his tongue, Nor does evil to his neighbor, Nor does he take up a reproach against his friend; In whose eyes a vile person is despised, But he honors those who fear the LORD; He who swears to his own hurt and does not change; He who does not put out his money at usury, Nor does he take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things shall never be moved.

As a New Testament believer we are the righteousness of God in Christ and we work the righteousness of God through Jesus. We have faith in His work and it is complete and accepted by God the Father. Because of this work, done by Christ on the cross, we now can and do have a relationship with God.

One man said it like this, "Christianity is primarily about right relationships, not right doctrine. The Gospel is not a set of rules. It's not a statement about God. It doesn't come through knowing everything about God. The purpose of the Gospel is a right relationship with God. Any preaching of the Gospel that does not produce that is a disaster". When we have our relationship right with the Father we will have peace with others, Oh there will always be an enemy and we must always stay on guard. Unfortunately everyone who claims the name of Christ does not always allow Him to mold them and sometimes they are motivated by another spirit. That is usually easy to discern as those people like to hold on to an unforgiving spirit and do the works of the spirit they are yielded to. But those who will allow the work of the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit to work through them will most assuredly develop into the person that shows forth the love of Christ and the righteousness that is given by Him.

Therefore, if we feed our spirits upon the Word of God and exercise it, the fruit of love will grow and develop in our lives. None of these fruit starts out being fully mature. Love starts out in our lives as a tiny bud; but just like the fruit on the branch, it grows and matures as it is properly nurtured. No amount of right doing will cause a person to be righteous or have righteousness with God, but when we accept the free gift provided for us by Jesus Christ then we have our fruit unto holiness (Rom. 6:22). Holiness is a fruit, not a root, of salvation, and when you are born again then holiness is a by-product and not the way to a relationship with God.

Our spirit always has these attributes even when we don't feel like it. They are being produced regardless of how we feel in our emotions. When we are joined to the Lord we are one with Him as the scripture teaches us in I Cor.6:17 and that is why we also produce this fruit.

The fruit of the Spirit is constant and does not come and go, it is not on and off. Even when we are feeling like we have no “Love” it is being produced. The same is true with joy or faith. We may fluctuate or be inconsistent and use not our faith but the truth is the fruit of Love or Faith or Joy is constantly in our spirits. We simply have to draw them out from the wells of our salvation. Again it is not by our efforts or our works but it is totally by what has already been done for us through the cross and work of Jesus Christ thru salvation.

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