

**Gal. 5:22**  
**John 4:5-42**

**Feb 24, 2008**

**“Adding Value to Life Through Patience, Kindness, and Goodness”<sup>1</sup>**

**Last week I focused on the first three of the aspects of fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, and peace. They remind us of the Christmas spirit, which God intends for us to live all year round; eternal as the salvation message of Christmas. Love in Christ enables us to approach all life’s challenges with joy and peace.**

**This week let’s look at the next three aspects of fruit of the Spirit: patience, kindness, and goodness. I have mentioned before that many non-believers are not convinced of the truth of the Christian faith, because so many followers of Christ don’t act like him. Here are three aspects of the fruit of the Spirit that can make a difference in that perception, and make it possible for us to make connections with those who may not think they can connect with us. Patience, kindness, and goodness can build bridges to those who need to know Jesus.**

**Take this example of Jesus meeting a Samaritan woman at the well. The whole scene begins with Jesus asking her for a drink, and we learn that Jews do not associate with Samaritans. Throughout the exchange, Jesus is patient with the woman’s questions and needs, acts with kindness toward her (rather than pointing to her sinfulness), and leaves her with the goodness of God. He certainly added value to her life and this led to two days of witnessing to those in her community. In the meantime he reminds his followers (that’s us) that the fields are ripe for the harvest: meaning people are hungry to hear the good news of God. With patience, kindness, and goodness we can connect with nonbelievers!**

**Next to the fruit of the Spirit, Paul lists the deeds of the flesh such as: enmity, strife, jealousy, rivalries, dissensions, and divisions. That’s what stood between Jews and Samaritans. It could also be said of many groups and people we know. [Paul lists 16 deeds of the flesh (making it clear it is not an exhaustive list), opposing 9 aspects of the fruit of the Spirit.] Those deeds sound potent and they are painful in relationships. Yet the fruit is stronger than the deeds. We might think of patience, kindness, and goodness, perhaps, as “wimpy” characteristics. But they make possible strong and healthy relationships, with family, neighbor, coworker, friends, and church members. So listen up!**

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<sup>1</sup>For more on this subject see: Beth Moore, *Living Beyond Yourself*, (Nashville, TN: Life-Way Press, 1998), 107-146.

## **PATIENCE**

**Ask God for patience and you most likely will be given opportunities to practice patience. English uses one word for “patience,” whereas in the Bible the Greek has two: μακροθυμια and ηυπομονε. Ηυπομονε is often translated as “endurance” whereas μακροθυμια is translated as “patience.” (2 Tim. 3:10 & Col. 1:10-12). Ηυπομονε – endurance - is used with respect to circumstances. Endurance is inspired by hope – hope in Christ. No matter how bad the circumstances you find yourself in, you can endure because Christ is with you and gives you hope for a better future.**

**Μακροθυμια – translated as patience – is used in respect to persons. How often do the failures, emotions, or outright sins of someone else ruin your peace of mind? What would it be like if you refused to allow the behavior of others to spoil your day?**

**The quality of fruit of the Spirit “Patience,” is μακροθυμια, which means “to be long suffering” or to have “long temper.” It means forbearance or self-restraint before proceeding to action. It is the quality of a person able to avenge himself when wronged, yet refrains from doing so.**

**Patience, is inspired by mercy. It is a quality of the fruit of the Spirit, because this kind of patience comes from God’s power. 2 Peter 3:9 “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting any one to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” We are saved because mercy prompted God’s patience. The essence of patience, is the delaying of judgment. [The Lord cannot judge swiftly *and* be patient.] We know that ultimately God’s patience will be complete and He will make judgment. Until then, the Lord is patient so that many will be saved. 2 Peter 3:15 says, “Bear in mind that our Lord’s patience means salvation.”**

**Knowing this, we can put up with someone’s behavior because of Christ’s mercy, shown to us, and which we must show toward others. We all know that enduring tough circumstances is a lot easier than being patient with people. In trying circumstances we need hope. But with trying people we need God’s mercy! Patience is inspired by mercy, devoid of condemnation, and evidence of the presence and power of God.**

**In order to be God’s vessels of patience we must learn to suspend judgment toward others. When we fan the flame of judgment, we quench the Spirit of patience.**

[There are good reasons to refrain from judging others: When we judge others we invite the discipline of our Heavenly Father, as we do many of the same things we condemn in others (Rom. 2:1-5). We risk application of the same type of judgment to ourselves. The same lack of mercy I’ve dispensed, could be returned to me (Matt. 7:1-5). When we judge others, we cause God to be harder on us. We do many of the same things we condemn in others. Judgment often bears hypocrisy.]

[Our judgment is tainted by our own attitudes and personalities. We cannot judge the speck of sawdust in another's eye because of the planks in our own. Our sight is hindered by our own sin. God's judgment is always righteous. Ours is colored by our prejudices. We do not know the whole truth – God only knows. We are humans – we cannot assume God's role.]

**When we judge others, we are judging God. Our judgment reveals contempt for the richness of God's patience. To judge why God won't bring speedy punishment to those who mock or despise Him is not our responsibility. "Time is not nearly as important to God as timing."**

[Finally, "There is only one lawgiver and judge." James 4:12. There's no more room on the bench! God wrote the commands. Only God has noble purpose in His judgment. We judge to make ourselves feel righteous or avenge a wrong. God's judgment is a practical action by which he determines the fate of all humanity.]

[John 8:14-18 Human judgments cannot qualify because they cannot be consistent with God's. He must agree with us for our judgment to be valid. Humans lack a heavenly perspective. Our second testimony must be God, not another person.]

**To refrain from judgment is not to throw out discipline, either in the home or the church. Some situations demand discipline. We all correct our children. But we do not condemn them. You will notice that Jesus did not condemn the Samaritan woman, though her sins were many. His patience gave her opportunity to come to a saving knowledge of God.**

**During the Great Awakening (1734) Jonathan Edwards was asked the difference between those who resisted the Holy Spirit and those who responded. He said, in essence, that the trait of the resisters was that they always suspected everybody else's righteousness. The trait of the respondents was that they consistently only suspected their own righteousness.<sup>2</sup>**

**You've noticed by now that patience is tied up with forgiveness. Matt. 18:15-35 contains the story of the man who owed the king a great debt. The king showed him mercy and forgiveness. Then that man turned on another who owed him a very small debt and showed only judgment. For this he is called wicked and condemned to punishment. The story of the unmerciful servant is about forgiveness ... forgiveness prompted by patience, and a patience perfected by mercy.**

[What is biblical forgiveness? "To let go from one's power, possession, to let go free or escape." Who and what must we forgive? "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us" (Luke 11:4). "...if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins" (Mark 11:25). Jesus intends that we forgive every offense no matter how painful. But what of those offenses of which I have every right to be angry and to avenge (think of sexual abuse, or murder, etc.)? If you have the "right to be mad" or the "right to hold a grudge" you are a prime candidate for μακροθυμία – godly patience. What better choice for one through whom God can pour his mercy?]

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<sup>2</sup>Jack Hayford Discusses Unity in the Local Church," PENTECOSTAL EVANGEL, July 14, 1996, 9.

[Why must we forgive? We must forgive because God calls us to forgive. Scripture tells us that God links our forgiveness with our forgiving others (Luke 6:37, Matt. 6:14-15).]

[We must forgive for our own sakes. The one who will not forgive always suffers more than the one not forgiven. It is too difficult to live with that wound, that hurt, and that offending person roped to your back. You cannot be free to keep step with the Spirit when you are encumbered by the load of unforgiven wounds. Forgiving will not make the offense all right, it will make you all right.]

[We must forgive so that we do not provide Satan with opportunity to take advantage. 2 Cor. 2:10-11 Satan plays on our anger and distrust – our weakness. When we do not forgive the evil one is able to fan the flames of bitterness within us.]

[We must forgive because we are not the only ones bound by the rope of unforgiveness. If we refuse to forgive we tie God's hands. He cannot bring good to you out of your pain (restoration) if you do not release Him through your forgiveness. Until we surrender to His purpose in the specific challenge at hand, he cannot shape it for good, and then it all happened for nothing. God can create ministry from misery.]

**We must forgive because we have been forgiven.** [Paul is a prime example of one who was capable of giving extensive forgiveness because he had *received* extensive forgiveness.] **For most of us, our salvation did not simply begin as God's forgiveness (grace), but daily persists by that grace.**

[How do we forgive? Colossians 3:13 says, "...Forgive as the Lord forgave you." Here's how God forgives:

He forgives all confessed sin. If you have a heart full of godly sorrow, He is no longer angry nor is He plotting wrath in your behalf.

He removes our sin from us as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12). Your sins have been nailed to the cross and God desires that we build no monuments and reminders of our past sins.]

[God keeps no written records of our wrongs (Psalm 130:3-4). God keeps no mental records of wrongs (Jer. 31:34b). [God not only erases our sins, he also erases His memory of our sins. He does not mentally replay our sins against Him, as we tend to do when others sin against us.]

[By now you're probably thinking, "Only God can forgive like that!" You're right. But the Spirit-filled life can be the vessel for such a miracle.]

**Through the supernatural work of the H.S. we can indeed forgive as God forgives. Patience is the vessel through which God pours his mercy, and mercy is fueled by forgiveness.**

[When must we forgive? Now. God desires for you to be free.]

## **KINDNESS and GOODNESS**

**Would you rather be known as a kind person or a good person? Kindness and goodness are complementary aspects of the fruit of the Spirit. Without kindness, goodness becomes harsh and self-righteous. Without goodness, kindness becomes indulgent tolerance. Through the H.S. these two essential qualities can grow and be balanced in our lives. Jesus said "I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves" (Matt. 10:16). Practice kindness as though innocent as a dove. Bring goodness as though shrewd as a snake.**

**The Greek for kindness is *χρηστότης* which means tender concern for others. It does not imply weakness or lack of conviction on the part of the**

**one showing kindness. Rather, it implies a mellowing of all that would be harsh or austere into a nurturing spirit – a tenderness of heart. Many believers know more of God’s sovereignty and judgment than they do his tenderness.**

**Yet the Bible portrays God as a tender nurturing parent. Gen. 21:8-21 (just to give one example) tells the story of Hagar and Ishmael whom Abraham sent away into the desert. They ran out of water and were on the brink of death. God saw their plight and brought them refreshment and salvation. Long before Christ drew a woman to a well, God drew a well to this woman. In the place of an absent father, God vowed to abide with the boy as he grew. God had compassion and sympathy for Hagar and her son, and also empathy. He responded to Hagar as a loving God *and* as a fellow parent. God responded to Hagar not just as God – though that would be enough. He responded as a parent with the power to intervene. Too tender was his heart to remain passive.**

**It is the response of a Father who knew that one day He also would face the intense pain of separation. God suffered the torment of watching his own Son suffer ... and agony when he turned his back on His only Son, for the sake of something greater: the salvation of all humanity.**

[From, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:17) to “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46). The physical pain was not near as large as the pain of two broken hearts.]

**God knows the intense pain of intense love. If you are a parent you have already experienced fear, vulnerability, and pain. Our Father has noticed each moment of your parenthood; the difficulties, the joys, and the pains.**

[Do you have a child rejected by his peers? God knows how you feel. Do you have a child not considered pretty? God knows how you feel (see Isa. 53). Has your child ever been betrayed by friends? God knows how you feel. If you’ve had a child who begged you to fix something you could not fix, He knows how you feel. If your child is suffering... if you’ve lost a child... If you long for the child you never had. He’s been there.]

**If you’re a hurting parent today, or if you’ve longed to be a parent, and for all whose true Father is our Heavenly Father, this is the day to allow God to open your eyes as He did Hagar’s long ago. Let Him refresh you at the well of Living Water. Let your eyes have a glimpse of God’s tender heart.**

**“How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does know us is that it did not know him.” 1 John 3:1**

[Zephaniah 3:14-17 – vs. 17 “The Lord your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing.” This verse portrays God’s tender heart and nurturing Spirit like a father calming his child’s fears. Like a mom or dad who has rocked his/her child in his/her arms with soothing a consoling words.]

[Hosea 11:1-4 It’s good to know that rebellious children aren’t all the fault of the parents. Vs. 3-4 God is speaking, “It was I who taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by the arms; but they did not realize

it was I who healed them. I led them with cords of human kindness, with ties of love.” Whether we recognize it or not God will nurture us with His kindness and love.]

[Successful parenting on our part is dependent on how successful we are at being children to our Heavenly Father. Having a healthy parent/child relationship with God is not easy, but unwillingness to try will result in poor spiritual health and stymie growth in this aspect of the fruit of the Spirit. Few us have had the parenting that God is capable of giving us. Next time you’re hurting, anxious, or fearful call on the Father.]

### **Christ, the tenderhearted Savior, was a true son of His Father.**

[Tenderness toward children: Matt. 18:1-9 and Mark 9:36-37 Who is greatest in the kingdom? He embraced a child to illustrate. He chose to touch: the blind man (Matt. 20:32-34); a “dead” child (Mark 5:41). Jesus readily received children and showed great care for them.]

[Tenderness toward his nation: Matt. 23:27-39 Christ wanted to protect Israel from future pain, persecution, and separation. He wanted to draw them close to his warmth, but they refused. Jesus desires respond to us with the same tenderness – how often do we turn away?]

[Tenderness toward his followers: John 20 – the Risen Christ meets Mary in her mourning and tenderly calls her by name. He meets his disciples and comes back to show Thomas – he was sensitive to their fear and doubt.]

[He showed tenderness toward his family members. 1Cor. 15:1-8 Risen Christ appeared to Peter, the twelve, 500 disciples, and James – not one of the twelve. This is James, the half-brother of the Lord, mentioned in Matt. 13:55. Jesus came back to see his followers face-to-face. But he made certain to include his brother. His brothers had not believed in him. But now Jesus returns to include him, a mourner, doubter. Do you have family members who do not believe in Jesus? He has a tender heart for them as well.]

**I used to see bumper stickers that said, “Practice random acts of kindness.” For Christians kindness is not a random practice, but a regular part of a Christian lifestyle, because it has grown into us as fruit of the Spirit.**

## **GOODNESS**

**Ἀγαθωσύνη means benevolent and active goodness. It is character energized in benevolent action. This character has zeal for goodness and truth, and will even rebuke to cause good in others.**

[Eph. 2:1-10 God made us alive in Christ – God shows the incomparable riches of his grace, through his kindness.]

**Ephesians 2 reminds us that we were saved to do good works – our purpose on earth is to do kingdom good. We weren’t saved to look attractive on Sundays, but because God has work for us to do – to make mission gains in each generation. If we miss our ministry we miss our whole purpose for being here. We are surrounded by those we work with, live among, the neighbor, the children at school, the elderly, the rich, the poor. This is our generation, our turn. We’ve been called to Ἀγαθωσύνη - to do a little good, or a lot of good. How much depends on our obedience.**

**Titus 3:1-8 says, “...so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and**

**profitable for everyone.” What is good is excellent and profitable for all (Vs. 8). That which is good, profitable, or beneficial is not always fun, easy, or pleasant. The purpose of this aspect of the fruit of the Spirit is to bring about that which is most beneficial, whether or not it is most popular.**

**God’s word is always for the purpose of bringing good. God prioritizes goodness over gladness, because God knows that goodness ultimately brings gladness. There are times when we must rebuke and exhort, even though it may be painful for people to hear the word of correction – Matt. 21:12-13 (Jesus cleansing the Temple). Nevertheless, we cannot excuse sharp tongues and self-righteous attitudes in the name of good works. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness all precede goodness in God’s word. Kindness tempers the zeal for goodness (“a spoonful of sugar makes the medicine go down). This is why this fruit is entrusted to those filled with the Holy Spirit. One must be yielded to God to be properly used as a vessel for bringing about goodness, not for personal gain, or to pamper our personal opinions. If we cannot accept the teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training of God’s Word in our own lives, then we cannot be vessels of teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in the lives of others. We can be entrusted to do good works when the Word of God has done its good work in us.**

**Remember, all aspects of the fruit of the Spirit work together and are dependent on one another. Patience is something we all long for and it arises out of the mercy of forgiveness, just as God has been merciful to us. Kindness and goodness are genuine and build up those around us, beginning with the Body of Christ and spreading outward from there. All this adds value to your life and adds value to our community and world. God wants to express patience, kindness, and goodness through you and me.**