

THE FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

BY

MENES ABDUL NOOR

THIS BOOK

CHRISTIANITY IS A LIFE THAT WE LIVE IN CHRIST. A Christian says, “For to me, to live is Christ” (Philippians 1:21). The Christian’s motto is: “*It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me*” (Galatians 2:20). Christ is alive and He lives in anyone who believes in Him and abides in Him just as a branch abides in a vine and bears much fruit. Christ said, “*I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing*” (John 15:5).

Christianity was called at first “the Way” (Acts 9:2), because it was, and still is, a way of life revolving around Christ. It does not just consist in a set of dogmas, laws, and practices. It is a life ruled by the law of love. Christ summarized all of His law in His declaration: “*Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.*” This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: “*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*” (Mark 12:29-31).

When we wonder how we can fulfill all the law, Christ’s words give us the answer: “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). The more abundant life, then, is the purpose of Christ’s coming to our earth through His birth from the Virgin Mary. Christ does this for whoever opens His heart to Him so that He may come in and live in it by the Holy Spirit, resulting in much lasting fruit.

This book shows how Christ changes man through the work of the Holy Spirit in his heart, then how He takes possession of and reigns over his life. As a result, He enables him to bear the fruit of love, joy, and peace in his relationship to God; longsuffering, kindness and goodness in his relationship with men; and faithfulness, gentleness and self-control in his personal life.

The author wishes the readers to experience all the fruit of the Holy Spirit in their personal life.

Contents

Part One- **The Christian Life is a New Life**

Chapter One- The state of the unbelievers

Chapter Two- The state of believers

Chapter Three- The virtues of believers

Part Two- **The Christian Life under the Dominion of the Holy Spirit**

Chapter Four- Who is the Holy Spirit?

Chapter Five- How do we become filled with the Holy Spirit?

Part Three- **The Fruit of the Holy Spirit**

Chapter six- Introduction

Chapter seven- The Fruit of the Holy Spirit

The first fruit- Love

The second fruit- Joy

The third fruit- Peace

The fourth fruit- Longsuffering

The fifth fruit- Kindness

The sixth fruit- Goodness

The seventh fruit- Faithfulness

The eighth fruit- Gentleness

The ninth fruit- Self-control

Part One

The Christian Life is a New Life

Chapter One

The State of the Unbelievers

“This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their heart; who being past feeling, have given themselves over to licentiousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness” (Ephesians 4:17-19).

Many believers in Christ came from an ignorant, pagan background, and carried with them the characteristics and customs of the pagan nations. The Apostle Paul appealed to them not to walk as they walked before, nor as the rest of the pagans walked. He said to them, *“I ... testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind”* (verse 17).

The Apostle Paul knew the mind of the Lord, because He had revealed it to him, so he testified to, and in, the Lord who had asked him to be a witness to Him. He spoke in the name of the Lord and with the authority of Christ. Both readers and listeners would do well to obey the command: *“Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God”* (1 Thessalonians 4:1).

The Apostle asked that they *“should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind”* (verse 17). The Ephesians lived in ignorance and error, so God assigned the Apostle Paul to take the message of salvation and light to them. He told him to *“open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me”* (Acts 26:18). Once their eyes were opened, they had to separate themselves from the old corruption and to touch nothing unclean (2 Corinthians 6:17). Their new behavior was a new way of life that was totally different from the old one in which they used to walk. It is the new in their visible and invisible acts. It is a totally new life for them.

The Apostle Paul did not speak of the pagans in contempt, as the Pharisee spoke of the tax collector, saying, *“this tax collector”* (Luke 18:9-14). The futile, pagan mind is the work of the devil; whereas pure conduct is the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart. The change did not happen in the hearts of believers as a result of their own efforts, but as a result of their acceptance of

Christ's free salvation. The Roman writer *Pliny the Younger* wrote a message to the Emperor Trajan in the 2nd. century AD, in which he said, "Christians live a life of purity among much corruption." There is a world of difference between what they were, and what they have become. Thanks to the renewing grace of Christ.

The futility of the unbelievers' mind

Pagans walked according to the "futility of their mind." By the "mind" here, the Apostle means the heart, the intellect, and the conscience. These three bear the knowledge of God, and lead to sound wisdom. The "mind" of the pagans was futile; meaning that it was useless, aimless, and empty of any truth, justice, nobleness, and purity. It was futile because they did not use the power of the intellect, which God had given them, in doing good, but in wrongdoing. They ought to have listened to the words of the Prophet Isaiah: "*Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy?*" (Isaiah 55:2).

Their futility of mind manifested itself in that "*although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.*" As a result, "*God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting.*" This is because "*they suppress the truth in unrighteousness*" (Romans 1:21,28). Such things cannot be done by believers who returned from falsehood to the living God, who created the heavens, the earth, the sea, and all the things that are in them (Acts 14:15). How could they walk any longer as the pagans walked in the futility of the mind? They have been transformed by the renewing of their mind!

Seven characteristics of the pagans

The Apostle presented in verses 18 and 19 seven characteristics of the pagans, which were the ultimate futility and corruption. He wrote, "*having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their heart; who being past feeling, have given themselves over to licentiousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.*" Let us study these seven characteristics:

1- "Having their understanding darkened":

The understanding of the pagans was darkened by sin, because immersing oneself in sin darkens the mind and destroys the body. The effect of darkness

in their hearts continued in spite of their knowledge of philosophy (which is the love for wisdom), which did not lend wisdom to their conduct. Pilate, the Roman governor, asked Christ, “What is truth?” (John 18:38). But he did not even wait to hear the answer, because his understanding, having been darkened by the futility of paganism, was not prepared to receive the truth.

The pagans claimed they were wise, but they were in fact foolish. The light of knowledge they had was darkness! Among the pagans were the Athenians who “spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing” (Acts 17:21).

The Apostle Paul explains why their understanding was darkened, saying that “*The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*” (1 Corinthians 2:14). The ordinary, natural man, who has not been renewed by the Holy Spirit, does not receive spiritual things. He does not know the value of the truths revealed in the Bible by the Holy Spirit. Nor does he believe them or yield to them. He thinks they are useless foolishness. The ordinary, natural man cannot recognize spiritual things or value them, because those who love the darkness do not know the value of light. No one can judge the spiritual revelations of God except the spiritual man who has been enlightened by the Holy Spirit, whose heart has been changed by God. The Gospel, however, is veiled to those who are perishing (2 Corinthians 4:3).

It is true that the intellectual understanding of the pagans may have been enlightened by philosophy and science. But their spiritual understanding was darkened by sin and evil. For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses the knowledge of Christ, thus losing his own soul?!

2- “Alienated to the life of God”:

The pagans alienated themselves deliberately from that holy, meaningful life that God gives! True, they were “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel,” because God did make them part of the Jewish nation that was the recipient of His law, though this was not their fault. Yet, the fault they are guilty of, was the fact that they willfully alienated themselves even further from the life of godliness that pleases God. They did not open their hearts to God and kept themselves away from His knowledge. They deprived themselves of His company, thus they lost “the life of God.”

God breathed a breath of life into Adam, and sinners detached themselves from it! But the physical, biological life is meaningless without the life of the spirit. The Apostle Paul was appointed to open their eyes, that they might turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, and receive

forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified (Acts 26:18).

3- “The ignorance that is in them”:

By “ignorance” the Apostle means spiritual ignorance, of which Christ said, “Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do *not know* the Scriptures nor the power of God” (Mark 12:24). He pointed this out again in John 5:39,40 when He said, “*You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.*” The audience knew the Scriptures on the intellectual level, but they did not grasp them in their heart. Their ignorance was of the spiritual kind, which springs from their evil surroundings, or from within themselves.

The Apostle Peter said to the sinners who rejected and crucified Christ, “*I know that you did it in ignorance*” (Acts 3:17). Again Paul said, “*These times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands men everywhere to repent*” (Acts 17:30). God had revealed His power to mankind through His creation and works, but their foolish hearts were too darkened to perceive it!

4- “The hardening of their heart”:

A hardened heart is a heart like a rock; petrified. The Greek word used here indicates a kind of rock that is harder than marble. It also characterizes the “corn” on a toe or the “calcification” that affects the joints and other parts of the body, causing them to go dead and senseless, yet painful and tiresome.

So the Bible must have meant that the hearts of those people were as hard as a rock, as dead and hurtful as a corn; and full of calcification that hindered their advance toward goodness and truth!

The hardening of the heart can be caused by Satan, the god of this age, who also has blinded the minds of those who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them (*see 2 Corinthians 4:4.*)

The hardening of the heart can also be caused by the person himself. Pharaoh hardened his heart, so God left him as hard-hearted as he was (Exodus 8:15,32).

The hardening of the heart can be a punishment for the man who insists upon disobeying God. The Evangelist says, “But although He [Christ] had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him, that the word of Isaiah the Prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke: *‘Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?’*”

Therefore they could not believe, because Isaiah said again: *'He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they should see with their eyes and understand with their hearts, lest they should return, so that I should heal them.'*” (John 12:37-40).

5- “Being past feeling”:

Their hard heart no longer feels sorry for the evil they do, nor does their conscience sting them any more. They no more feel ashamed of sin, and they fail at every attempt of self-reformation.

They begin to sin gradually. Usually man is afraid of sin at first, and feels sorry if he falls into it. But after many times of committing it, he gets used to its hideousness and his conscience dies. Then he becomes like a drunkard, who drinks in secret, but after he is full of drink he does not care if anyone sees him staggering on the streets.

6- “Have given themselves over to licentiousness”:

Licentiousness means breaking away from balance, rebellion against the law, no moral restraint whatever, committing unchaste sins without the fear of God or the shame of man. Someone who has given himself over to licentiousness does not care if what he does annoys others as long as it brings him pleasure! Like Judas Iscariot who lost his balance, rebelled against God’s grace, gave himself over to the love of money, and sold his Master for thirty pieces of silver.

7- “To work all uncleanness with greediness”:

“Work” indicates that they have become unclean by profession. Uncleanness has become their trade, their craft, and the business of their lives! As though it was not enough for them to work uncleanness, they were even greedy in working it. The Apostle Paul describes the likes of those men in Romans 1:29 as *“being full of all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness...”*

To be greedy is to seek more than what is your right. Greediness is a rapacious desire to usurp what belongs to others, so much that one would trample on his associates to get what he wants!

* * *

Ignorance in the state of the Gentiles may be summed up in three points:

1- Their hearts are hard as rock, so they do not feel the wrong they are doing.

2- They are sunk into sin, so much that they lose all awareness and shamefulness of it.

3- They are under the yoke of their greedy desires, so much that they do not care if people are hurt as long as their own desires are fulfilled!

Chapter Two

The State of Believers

“But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in righteousness and true holiness” (Ephesians 4:20-24).

After speaking of the total corruption and ignorance of the state of the pagans, the Apostle Paul pointed out the difference between them and the believers. As introduction to this new theme, he said, *“But you have not so learned Christ.”* “But” is used here to show a contrast. The Gentiles live in uncleanness, *but* the believers in true holiness. The pagans have learned evil, but believers have not so learned Christ! They have heard His new, unprecedented teachings, and have observed Him doing miracles of love that touched all aspects of life. Above all, they have learned through experience, and have known His power to change, which puts and end to their previous evil conduct.

The Apostle Paul does not say they have not so learned *about* Christ, but he says they have not so learned *Christ*. It is not adequate to know only about Christ; we have to know *Him* personally. To know His teaching is not as important as to know Him personally as a Redeemer. What we need is to *experience* what the Apostle said: *“That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death”* (Philippians 3:10).

1- Believers learn:

“If indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him” (verse 21).

It is not meant by “if indeed” to throw doubt on the fact that they have heard the message, but to emphasize and accentuate the fact that they *have* heard it. They have heard Christ’s message through His apostles who taught them, and they have heard Him, after He had dwelt in their hearts, guiding them into all truth. So they have heard and learned the truth. Now, the truth refers to the true religion. So, since they now know Christ, they have to leave sin, because God is true and holy. They have heard and learned “in Christ,” and have become a new creation. Now Christ’s words can apply to them:

“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me” (John 10:27).

2- Believers put off the old man:

“That you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts” (verse 22).

Believers have learned the truth, so they should put off everything they used to practice *concerning their former conduct*. This means that they should put off the principles according to which they used to walk, as one puts off his old, filthy, worn-out clothes. Patching up the old is no good; we have to put it off and put on the new (*see* Luke 5:36-38).

The “old man” is the corrupt nature which has not yet been regenerated by the work of the Holy Spirit. The Apostle describes it as “old” because it is so old, worn-out, and torn apart that it can no longer cover. And he calls it “man” because he has in view the corrupt, incorrigible human nature, which is in need of total change and renewal!

If we try to reform ourselves, we are actually doing a “patch-up” job. But “in Jesus” we put off the old, worn-out self (the old man), that is the corrupt nature, which the Apostle refers to as *“another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members”* (Romans 7:23). This is the way the Apostle explains how it works: *“For the flesh lusts against the Spirit; and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish”* (Galatians 5:17).

This corrupt nature within us brings us down. It grows more corrupt, and leads up to the destruction of the human soul. We have to put it off. It behaves *“according to the deceitful lusts”* because it is corrupt and is inclined to lusts. It deceives and kills us, as the Bible says, *“For sin...deceived me,...and killed me”* (Romans 7:11).

There is the lust for illegal gain, the lust for vain glory and authority, and the lust for physical pleasure. All these are vain, futile, and totally useless.

The lust for vanity tempted Adam and Eve, so that they thought they would be happy if they ate of the forbidden tree (Genesis 3:6)! It deceived the foolish, rich man into thinking that he would live long enough to pull down his old storehouses and build up new and bigger ones. Yet, death came to him that same night (Luke 12:20)! It deceived the prodigal son into believing that he would find happiness in the far countries, away from his father (Luke 15:14)!

The believer has to cast off the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, together with all *“the works of darkness”* (Romans 13:12).

3- Believers are renewed:

“And be renewed in the spirit of your mind” (verse 23).

It is not enough to put off sin; we have to put on holiness. The only way to do that is through the renewal and the change that the Holy Spirit produces in our hearts. Some people make up their minds to live a “godly” life, depending on their efforts, determination, and self-righteousness. But they never continue because it simply does not work that way. Yes, a man may correct some of his mistakes by his own efforts; but he finds, at the same time, that he makes another mistake. What we need, then, is a renewal through the work of the Holy Spirit. For *“according to His mercy He [God] saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit”* (Titus 3:5). Through this renewal the soul is restored to the image of God. There is always strength and beauty in the new things. Therefore we say, *“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them”* (Ephesians 2:10).

This renewal takes place “in the spirit of your mind.” St. Chrysostom said that this means “the renewal of your minds and thoughts by the work of the Holy Spirit.” The renewal that causes a change in the heart and mind of a believer, also changes his world-view, the principles according to which he has so far lived, his reactions, and his evaluation of things. Paul summed this up in his command: *“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God”* (Romans 12: 2).

This is not a change of outward habits and appearance, but a change of the inward principles of life by the renewing of the mind. The effect of this change appears in the outward actions: the crucifixion of passions and desires, pressing on in prayer and the study of God’s word to strengthen one’s spiritual life, and making Christ the supreme authority over one’s whole life.

“Be renewed” has a sense of continuity. Man is renewed day after day. Each day finds him closer to God, and in a better state than the day before.

4- Believers put on the new man:

“That you put on the new man which was created according to God, in righteousness and true holiness” (verse 24).

After they repent and put off the old, believers are renewed, and they put on the new man. The “new man” is the God-given new nature, for *“if anyone*

is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

This new man is “*created*” because God creates it within us. And “*created according to God*” means that it is in the likeness of God and after His own image. The “man” that the Holy Spirit renews is the man who is after the image of God, the Merciful One.

God created the first Adam “*in His own image; in the image of God He created him*” (Genesis 1:27), but man went astray and lost the original image. So what God did, is to recreate him “in Christ” according to the original image he had. Therefore the Apostle says, “*...have put on you the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him*” (Colossians 3:10). The Apostle Peter says, “*As He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct*” (1 Peter 1:15).

The new believer is created in the likeness of God and after His own image “*in righteousness and true holiness.*” Righteousness is an upright and just behavior toward all men, and a righteous person is someone who is just and gives everyone what belongs to him by right. He renders to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s. He is the one who “*walks uprightly and works righteousness, and speaks the truth in his heart*” (Psalm 15:2). The Holy Spirit always proves to us that the righteousness of Christ is of a unique kind. All men have sinned, except for Christ who alone was perfect. He said to His enemies, “*Which of you convicts me of sin?*” (John 8:46). And no one dared to answer Him!

“True holiness” is the holiness that results from the knowledge of the truth and the ability to distinguish between truth and falsehood. The truth sets us free from sin, which gives us joy and holiness. Christ is the way, the truth, and the life; only through Him do we find the way to the Father and to holiness.

God recreated us so that “*we...might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life,*” as Zacharias the priest proclaimed (Luke 1:75). The Apostle Paul also says, “*...devoutly and justly and blamelessly we have behaved ourselves among you who believe*” (1 Thessalonians 2:10).

* * *

From these verses we see that believers:

1- Put off the old and put on the new.

2- Put off the corruptible, and put on that which is created according to God.

3- Put off that which is according to the deceitful lusts, and put on that which is according to God in righteousness and true holiness.

Chapter Three

The Virtues of Believers

“Therefore, putting away lying, each one speak truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. ‘Be angry and do not sin’ do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil. Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you” (Ephesians 4:25-32).

The Apostle Paul explained the corrupt state of the pagans in which believers had lived before their faith. He went on to clarify the state of believers who put off that corruption, were renewed, and put on the new. Then the Apostle shows the virtues of believers; stating the things they should refuse, the things they should live out, and the motive that prompts them to refuse evil and do good.

1- Refusing to lie, and living in truth:

“Therefore, putting away lying, each one speak truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another” (verse 25).

On another occasion the Apostle Paul said, *“Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him” (Colossians 3:9,10).*

We must put off lying because it is one of the characteristics of the devil, who is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44). The Prophet Zechariah says, *“Speak each man the truth to his neighbor; give judgment in your gates for truth, justice, and peace” (Zechariah 8:16).*

The Greek society allowed lying if it was useful.

Mohammed, the founder of Islam, claimed that lying is permissible in three situations; in war, in reconciling quarreling parties, and between husbands and wives! The Bible, however, teaches us to put away lying and speak the truth always.

People lie in order to evade a problem, to avoid blame, or to show they are good. They may lie openly and shamelessly, calling it “a white lie”, or they may lie by just passing over a fault in silence and not revealing the truth. But the believer who has put off the old should put away all lying for “*no lie is of the truth*” (1 John 2:21).

The reason why we should put away lying and speak the truth, is that we are “*members of one another.*” John Chrysostom says, “Can the eye deceive the hand?” A wise man asked, “If the nerves tell the brain that the hot object is cold, and that the body may touch it without any harm, won’t the body burn as a result?!”

Lying harms the whole “body.” The body is the society, the church, and the family. We are members of all these bodies. How could we harm the body we belong to?

2- Refusing sin and practicing lawful anger so as not to give place to the devil:

“*‘Be angry and do not sin’ do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil.*” (verses 26,27).

This verse may mean: “Do not let your anger lead you into sin” or “Be angry only on the one condition that you do not sin.” Most probably it is the second meaning that is intended.

There is a sinful anger, and there is a lawful anger. The lawful anger is the one directed toward sin, and the sinful anger is the one directed toward the sinner. The latter is unjustifiable. It ensues from grudge, and leads to harm.

Christ was provoked to lawful anger when he saw the religious leaders of the day using the house of God as a marketplace for selling merchandise. So He cleansed the temple, making a whip of cords and casting the sellers and money-exchangers out of it (John 2:13-16). He got angry with the religious leaders of His time because they hindered the doing of good. He rebuked them and looked at them in anger and in sorrow because of their hard hearts (Mark 3:5). The Apostle Paul, therefore, commands us to “*give place to wrath*” (Romans 12:9), meaning that we should give time for wrath to go away and vanish.

Yet, we need to be careful because he says, “Be angry and do not sin.” We can so quickly get angry and sin. Let us be careful not to get angry because of our own interests, or because of a personal offence against us; for this is the sinful anger.

“Do not let the sun go down on your wrath,” means: Do not harbor anger in your hearts, for *“anger rests in the bosom of fools”* (Ecclesiastes 7:9). The day you quarrel with somebody should be the same day you get reconciled with them. A Jewish Rabbi commanded his disciples not to go to bed before they have cleared their souls of all the negative things they held against others, on the grounds that if they did not seek reconciliation quickly they would probably never get reconciled at all. The Greek philosopher Pythagorus told his disciples to greet the ones they got angry with before sunset.

The Jews calculated sunset as the beginning of the day. So the Apostle Paul tells us not to begin a new day with hearts harboring sinful anger!

The reason for putting away sinful anger is to *“not give place to the devil.”* This is because *“your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour”* (1 Peter 5:8). So if we, by getting angry, give him a chance, he will devour us. Give him an inch, and he will take a mile, as the saying goes. If you give him a little, he will take more and more till the whole place becomes his. So we must not give him any place from the very beginning.

If we get angry and sin, we find ourselves getting into an endless cycle of sins! And we give place to the devil! How many families have been divided, friendships lost, and churches weakened as result of sinful anger which the devil exploited!

The Psalmist says, *“Be angry, and do not sin.”* David said this to his followers after the failed insurrection his son Absalom led against him. But they were driven to anger, so they sinned and committed murder. They gave lots of place among them to the devil. The same thing happened to Moses; who got angry, and sinned by speaking rashly with his lips, thus losing the opportunity of entering the promised land (Psalm 106:33).

Do not give place to the devil to accuse you when you sin. If he accused the righteous Job who did no sin, how much more will he accuse you who get angry and sin? Nor give place to the devil to make you get into deeper anger and bigger sin. Be careful of the first fault because it drags along the second and the third. Do not believe the devil’s accusation against your brothers and sisters, so that you should hate them, be angry with them, and speak evil of them.

The one who does not love his brother gives place to the devil (1 John 2:11).

The one who gets angry benefits nothing and does not produce the righteousness of God (James 1:20).

Therefore, the Apostle Paul says, *“Now whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ, lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices”* (2 Corinthians 2: 10,11).

3- Refusing to steal and practicing good works:

“Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need” (verse 28).

Stealing was a common vice among the Gentiles; especially in two places: at ports where ships come to anchor, and in the public baths where people left their old clothes and put on new clothes that belonged to others. They also said that one may steal to help the poor.

The Apostle Paul says that whoever used to be a thief, and came to know Christ the Savior, should not revert back to stealing anymore. He has put off the old, and put on the new.

There are different sorts of theft in society:

When an employer does not pay full wages to his employee, he actually wrongs and robs him. Also an employee steals from his employer when he does not do his job as he should.

When a person slanders people’s reputation, he steals their good name and upright character.

When a man borrows some money but does not pay it back, he robs the one who lent him.

When someone gambles and wins, he steals the money of his fellow gamblers.

When someone claims that he is poor and asks for help, although he can help himself, he steals people’s charity and financial support.

When someone does not pay tithes, he robs God of His right to his money. God says to such a thief of this kind, *“You have robbed Me...in tithes and offerings”* (Malachi 3:8).

“Let him...steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good.” Christianity holds work as sacred, because work is a duty and an honor. *“If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat”* (2 Thessalonians 3:10). The Apostle Paul set us a good example when he said, *“These hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me”* (Acts 20:34). He commanded the Thessalonians to *“aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you”* (1 Thessalonians 4:11).

The reason for abandoning stealing and working what is good is *“that he may have something to give him who has need.”* Whoever can work should have a job, only the handicapped who cannot work deserve to be helped by those who can. Whoever is fit should work to help the one who is invalid, for none of us lives for himself: *“But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?”* (1 John 3:17). *“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith”* (Galatians 6:10).

4- Refusing corrupt speech, and speaking what is good:

“Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption” (verses 29,30).

Corrupt speech proceeds out of a corrupt heart. For every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it on the day of judgment (*see* Matthew 12:35,36). Corrupt speech consists in bitter words that upset the hearers (Psalm 64:3), and it comes forth from a deceitful mouth and perverse lips (Proverbs 4:24).

The word “corrupt” means in the original Greek: rotten, putrid, unfit for use, and of poor quality (*see* VINE’S EXPOSITORY DICTIONARY OF NEW TESTAMENT WORDS, p.87, under BAD.) That is why the Psalmist prays, *“Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips”* (Psalm 141:3).

It is required of us to use words that are *“good for necessary edification.”* Because Job’s words were good for edification, his friend Eliphaz the Temanite said to him, *“Your words have upheld him who was stumbling, and you have strengthened the feeble knees”* (Job 4:4). Let our words be good, so that they could build up the personality of him who hears them, and be refreshing to his spirit, mind, and body. This way he can be in a better state after hearing them.

Our speech should be *“necessary,”* namely that it should be according to the need and suitable for the situation at hand. The Bible says of this, *“A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver”* (Proverbs 25:11).

Also, it has to *“impart grace to the hearers.”* Let our speech be good, pleasing to the hearers, and able to beautify their lives by the grace that is poured upon our lips (Psalm 45:2). Then we can keep the Apostolic commandment that says, *“Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with*

salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one” (Colossians 4:6).

We should abandon corrupt words and adhere to good ones, in order to “*not grieve the Holy Spirit of God.*” The Bible teaches us not to resist the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:51), not to quench Him (1 Thessalonians 5:19). Here the Bible tells us not to *grieve* Him, which is a warning to us not to rebel against or grieve His Holy Spirit (Isaiah 63:10) as the children of Israel grieved Him by their disobedience and unbelief (Psalm 78:20). We must not grieve Him by using corrupt words, but instead we should offer Him our worship and honor through good, edifying words which impart grace to the hearers.

“Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are” (1 Corinthians 3:16,17).

5- Refusing evil reactions, and developing attitudes of kindness:

“Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you” (verses 31,32).

On another occasion the Apostle also said, “*Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do” (Colossians 3:12,13).*

In these two verses the Apostle asks us to put off bad reactions, and put on loving attitudes. The reason for this is that Christ has already forgiven us. We must put off all “*bitterness.*” Bitterness is the feeling of distress one has whenever he reacts to the offenses of people and inequalities of life. It causes a man to be ill-tempered and implacable. It is the opposite of sweetness. As poisonous as a sharpened spear; bitterness spoils and often destroys our lives. When king Hezekiah was delivered of bitterness in his life, he said, “*Indeed it was for my own peace that I had great bitterness; but You have lovingly delivered my soul from the pit of corruption, for You have cast all my sins behind Your back” (Isaiah 38:17).*

Let us put off all “*wrath.*” Wrath could be interpreted as a strong, revengeful anger that burns as quickly as a fire burns dry straw. It burns the mind and stops it from thinking rationally.

Let us put off all “*anger.*” Anger is a quick reaction to insults from people, which is stored in our memories and hearts till it turns into hatred and rancor.

We have to put off all “*clamor.*” Clamor means the loud voices of people who are having a heated discussion or argument. A wise man once said, “When your voice gets loud, you should stop speaking.” The Bible said of Christ, “*He will not quarrel nor cry out, nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets*” (Matthew 12:19).

We are to put off all “*malice.*” Malice is the state of a corrupt heart, from which proceed all kinds of evils. Chrysostom said that malice is the fire that burns the fuel on the inside, without being noticed by people, but they all touch its destructive effect.”

As we put off these evil reactions, we should also put on loving attitudes.

“*And be kind to one another*” Kindness means to help and support others. It is a fruit of the Spirit. The word “*kind*” that occurs in this verse is the same word in Greek as “*light*” that is used in Matthew 11:30 to describe the burden of Christ.

“*Be tenderhearted.*” Tenderness means compassion and consideration for people. It implies treating people as brothers and sisters, as the Bible says in 1 Peter 3:8: “*All of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted.*” A tenderhearted man will show compassion for people in their weakness, and not cause them harm without reason.

“*Forgiving one another.*” To forgive others means to forgive them their faults, just as we ask God to forgive us ours. After this we should forget them, just as God forgave us and cast our sins behind His back, that He may forget them and never remember them any longer!

The reason why we should get rid of bad reactions, and put on loving attitudes, is given in the following part of the verse: “*Just as God in Christ also forgave you.*” Christ forgave us while we were sinners, enemies, and no good at all. He forgave us not expecting anything in return from us. So we have to forgive and overlook others’ faults according to His example; putting off anger, clamor, and malice!

Clement wrote in one of his messages, “To avenge ourselves on those who offend us is human. To not avenge ourselves on those who offend us is philosophical. But to do good to those who offend us is divine.”

“The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore, let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light” (Romans 13:12).

Let us put off the old and the worn-out, and be renewed each day. Let us also put on the new that is in the likeness of God in righteousness and true holiness.

PART TWO

The Christian life

is to be lived

under the Control of the Holy Spirit

Chapter Four

Who is the Holy Spirit?

It is of paramount importance to know who the Holy Spirit is. Whether He is a mere divine influence, or a great spiritual power. Or the Spirit of God; the third¹ Person of the Godhead.

The Christian creed says: *“We believe...in the Holy Spirit, The Lord, the Giver of life, who proceeds from the Father.”* Now, if the Holy Spirit were a mere divine influence or power, we could receive Him by right to use in our spiritual life, church activities, and spiritual work. But since the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, who gives life to those who are dead in sins, then we are obliged to offer Him our worship, believe in Him, dedicate ourselves to Him, love Him, give ourselves over to Him, so that He may use us as He wills. There is a large difference between the Holy Spirit using us, and we using Him.

Anyone who reads the Bible can see clearly that the Holy Spirit is definitely a person, possessed of divine character, and executing divine acts. He is the One who gave great blessings to the believers who knew Him and committed their lives to Him as the third Person of the divine Trinity. The Bible attributes to Him, as a person, certain faculties, such as; intellect, knowledge, and feelings of love and sadness. In addition people take attitudes toward Him as a person; rebelling against Him, lying to Him, blaspheming Him, insulting Him, and grieving Him. The Holy Spirit, then, is neither an influence, an excitement, nor just a power; He is the person of God Himself. He is the Spirit of God, and one of the three divine Persons of the Trinity: *“For there are three who bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one”* (1 John 5:7).

The Holy Spirit is given many names in the Bible. Some of these names are: *“The Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, and the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord”* (see Isaiah 11:2). *“The Spirit of grace”* (Zechariah 12:10). *“The Helper”* (John 14:26). *“The Spirit of truth”* (John 14:17; 15:26). *“The Spir-*

(1) The word “Person” is the Latin translation to the Greek word “Hypostasis”, which denotes a real personal substance or person. In philosophy it signifies the underlying or essential part of anything, as distinguished from attributes which may vary. In its theological application, it indicates the consubstantiality (unity of essence) of the divine Persons, and at the same time, that they may have different roles, functions, or manifestations.

it of holiness” (Romans 1:14). “*The Spirit of life*” (Romans 8:2). “*The Spirit of Christ*” (Romans 8:9). “*The Spirit of adoption*” (Romans 8:15). “*The Spirit of His the Son*” (Galatians 4:6). “*The Holy Spirit of promise*” (Ephesians 1:13). “*The spirit of wisdom and revelation*” (Ephesians 1:17). “*The Spirit of Jesus Christ*” (Philippians 1:19). “*The Spirit of glory*” (1 Peter 4:14).

Calling the divine Spirit “the Holy Spirit” signifies His invisible enlightenment, renewal, sanctification of, and guidance to our spirits. He is the one who initiates all virtues within us. Calling Him the Holy Spirit also distinguishes Him from all other created spirits, which are immeasurably less holy than He is.

1- The Holy Spirit is consubstantial with the Father and the Son: The Bible presents to us God, the Holy Spirit as being on an equal footing with God, the Father, and God, the Son. It says that He was hovering over the face of the waters (Genesis 1:2), signifying His participation in the act of creation. It says that God gave Moses and his companions power by the Spirit of God (Numbers 11:17,25). God poured out His Spirit upon His people to bring them back to Him (Isaiah 44:3). God said, by way of referring to His great might and glorious power, “*Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit*” (Zechariah 4:6). Christ said, “*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*” (Matthew 28: 19). Christ did not say, “...in the **names** of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” but “...in the **name**” of the One and Only God; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Apostle says in the benediction: “*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all*” (2 Corinthians 13:14). The Apostle John begins His Revelation by greeting the believers and saying to them, “*Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne [namely from the Holy Spirit in His diverse and perfect attributes and acts, who is one in essence], and from Jesus Christ*” (Revelation 1:4,5). Is it unthinkable to associate the name of another person with God unless he is equal to God.

Come along in reverence to see the three divine Persons together at the baptism of Christ: The Father announcing from heaven that this is His beloved Son with whom He is well pleased, the beloved Son being baptized on earth into the water of the Jordan River, while the Holy Spirit descends upon Him in the bodily form of a dove (Matthew 3:16,17). And in adoration and respect we see Them in the prayer God the Son offered to God the Father to send God the Holy Spirit (John 14:11, 16). When the devil tempted Christ, the Holy Spirit led Him into the wilderness where He faced the tempter (Mat-

thew 4:1). Christ said, when He declared His message in the synagogue in Nazareth, *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor”* (Luke 4:18). As He was accused by the elders of the Jews of driving out demons by the power of Beelzebub, He said, *“I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you”* (Matthew 12:28). On the last and great day of the Feast of Tabernacles Christ cried out, saying, *“If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive”* (John 7:37-39). Later, Christ told His disciples He would send the Holy Spirit to them when He said to them, *“But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me”* (John 15:26).

In veneration we listen to the Apostle Peter speak of the three divine Persons on the Day of Pentecost, saying, *“Therefore [Jesus] being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear”* (Acts 2:33).

Thus we see the Holy Spirit, the Spirit God, the third Person of the Trinity, who is worthy of our worship, reverence, and magnification. So let us come before Him in complete veneration, and give our heart and life into His hands.

The word “spirit” means “a breath” or “a breeze”. The Holy Spirit is the breath of the Almighty God. Christ said to Nicodemus, *“The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit”* (John 3:8). Here Christ compares the Spirit to the wind in its irresistibility, for it blows wherever it wishes. The wind is invisible; and likewise is the Spirit. The wind cannot be examined, for you *“cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes,”* and thus is the Holy Spirit. Without the wind (the air) we die; for we need air in order to breathe. And in the same way we need the life-giving Holy Spirit who invests us with power to sustain our spiritual lives, as Christ breathed on His disciples and said to them, *“Receive the Holy Spirit”* (John 20:22).

The work of the Holy Spirit in us is like the effect the mind has on the body. The mind controls the body and uses it however it wishes, in a way that we cannot begin to grasp. This can also be true of the influence a man may exercise through his thoughts on someone else’s mind, managing to persuade him to do certain things.

And if the devil is able to lure us and egg us on to evil, bringing our hearts and minds into powerful temptations, will God not be able to lead us into repentance, set our lives right, and guide us into doing good by His Holy Spirit?

The influence of the Holy Spirit and the free human will are linked together in a way that is above our understanding. He does whatever He wishes with humans and influences them to choose with their own free will what He wants them to do for their own good and the good of others. He never forces them to do something that goes against their wills. Through His loving influence on them He makes them want and choose the same things He wants, in a way that does not deny them their freedom or take away their responsibility for what they do.

2- He creates: Job, who is our example of patience, says, *“The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life”* (Job 33:4). The Psalmist says, *“You send forth Your Spirit, they are created; and You renew the face of the earth”* (Psalm 104:30).

3- He gives new birth: The new birth is a spiritual rebirth, which totally changes us when we receive it and start living a new spiritual life, having hated sin and sought after holiness. This is why we say the Holy Spirit is the life-giving God. The Apostle Paul said, *“But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you”* (Romans 8:11).

The Holy Spirit convinces man of his sinfulness and need for someone to save him from the wrath of God, which is the deserved lot of those who are far away from Him. Christ said, *“And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment”* (John 16:8). When a sinner is convicted, and repents, the Holy Spirit gives him a new birth, as Christ said to Nicodemus, *“That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit”* (John 3:6). The Apostle John said, *“For whatever is born of God overcomes the world”* (1 John 5:4).

4- He sanctifies life: The Holy Spirit sanctifies whoever gives Him a chance to work on Him, causing Him to grow in holiness and in knowledge. And the words of the Apostle become true of him: *“But you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God”* (1 Corinthians 6:11). The Holy Spirit works out His holiness within by controlling our emotions and giving us His ceaseless companionship and guidance, so that our bodies may become holy temples for Him, and that the Spirit of glory and of God may rest upon us (1 Peter 4:14).

5- He inspired the Holy Scriptures: The Apostle Paul said, “*All Scripture is given by inspiration*” (2 Timothy 3:16). “*The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet*” (Acts 28:25). The Apostle Peter said, “*For [true] prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit*” (2 Peter 1:21). And Luke the Evangelist reemphasizes this, saying, “*The Lord God of Israel...spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets*” (Luke 1:70). So it was God the Spirit who spoke through the prophets of old.

6- He is omnipresent: The Psalmist says, “*Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me*” (Psalm 139:7-10). Also Christ said, “*The Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you*” (John 14:17). The Holy Spirit dwells in every believer and rests in power upon the Church.

7- He is omniscient: Christ said, “*But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and brings to your remembrance all things that I said to you...However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth*” (John 14:26; 16:13). Also Apostle Paul said, “*Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him. But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God*” (1 Corinthians 2:9-11).

8- He is everlasting: He was hovering over the face of the waters before the foundation of the heaven and earth (Genesis 1:2). The Scripture also tells us that “*By His Spirit He adorned the heaven*” (Job 26:13). It is written, too, that Christ “*through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God*” (Hebrews 9:14). Who else can be called eternal but “*the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is holy*” (Isaiah 57:15).

9- He has the authority: It was the Holy Spirit who commanded the disciples to “*separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them...So being sent out by the Holy Spirit...they sailed*” (Acts 13:2,4). The disciples have also “*been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia.*” And when they tried to go to Bithynia “*the Holy Spirit did not permit them*” (Acts 16:6,7). Concerning the gifts the Bible says, “*To one is given wisdom by the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge, through the*

same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:8-11). These works of authority are the characteristics of God who alone is wise (Romans 16:27).

The Scripture testifies that the people who argued with Steven “*were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke*” (Acts 6:10).

It says in the prophecy of Ezekiel, “*Then He [the Lord] said to me [to the prophet], ‘Prophecy to the breath [the Spirit], prophecy, son of man, and say to the breath, ‘Thus says the Lord, ‘Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.’’’ So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived and stood upon their feet, and exceedingly great army*” (Ezekiel 37:9,10).

10- He works miracles: The Bible says that only God does wonders (Psalm 72:18). And the Apostle Paul says that mighty signs and wonders were done “*by the power of the Spirit of God*” (Romans 15:19).

Let us put off our shoes and stand in awe before God the Holy Spirit, asking how we can be filled with Him, or rather how can He take hold of us and control our actions.

Chapter Five

How do we become filled with the Holy Spirit?

To be filled with the Holy Spirit means to be totally possessed by the Holy Spirit. It means that He is in control over our bodies, minds, emotions, time, and money. It does not only mean that He dwells in a believer, but that He totally owns his life, that He may have the preeminence in all things in the life of a Spirit-filled person (Colossians 1:18).

When we receive Christ as our Savior, our lives are renewed and the Holy Spirit dwells in us, making us His temples. At the beginning our knowledge of the Lord is limited, because as babies in the faith we desire the unadulterated milk of the word, that we may grow thereby (1 Peter 2:2). The newborn believer is a baby that needs food in order for him to grow, and the holy word of God provides this food.

Salvation and renewal of our souls are the beginning of our friendship with Christ. Friendship, however, is not complete until friends fellowship together and get deeply acquainted with each other for a long time. A newborn believer should assume that he has attained holiness. He is at the beginning of the road, and he needs a lot of ever-increasing spiritual knowledge to know the deep things of God, and become a partaker of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). Rebirth is like standing at the seashore of faith. After it, the believer steps into the river of grace, till water come up to his ankles. He then steps deeper into the river, so that water comes up to his knees. When he reaches the deep, water comes up to his waist. Soon the waves of grace draw him into the depth of a river that cannot be crossed (*see* Ezekiel 47:3-5). In the depth, waves carry the believer, and he does his ministry in obedience; for both the will of God and his own will agree together. This is the sea of the infilling of the Holy Spirit, or the river of spiritual overflowing.

The infilling of the Holy Spirit is a privilege that God grants to every believer. Yet, many do not have it, and deny themselves the fruitful, abundant life God promised to all those who believe in Him. What is then that hinders their getting this privilege? How can they get it?

First: Hindrances to Faith

Once there was a little village that used to draw water by means of a small pump which often broke down. As a result, the people of the village had to go without water many times. So they thought about getting water down from a lake that was situated at the top of a nearby mountain. They fixed a pipe to bring the water over to them. One day one of the villagers noticed that the force of the water gushing out the pipe was powerful enough to generate electricity. Accordingly, the people began to use this force in operating a number of factories. The village thrived and grew into a big town. One day, however, water stopped coming through the conduit. The factories stopped working and the people had no water left to drink! After searching to find out the secret behind what happened, they found out that some old rags had clogged the pipe and kept the water from running!

I wonder what is it that stops *you* from getting filled with the Holy Spirit? What are the hindrances that kept the living water from flowing into your heart?

Here is a list of some of the things that hinder the Holy Spirit from filling us and stop the flow of blessings into our lives:

1- Lack of repentance:

Repentance is the chief condition for receiving the Holy Spirit, as the Apostle Peter said, "*Repent, and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*" (Acts 2:38). One of the reasons why we do not get filled with the Holy Spirit is sometimes due to not abandoning some sins that are known to us.

Is it not amazing that some people want to be filled with the Spirit of life, yet, at the same time, cling to death? Is it not strange that someone who wants to be filled with the Spirit of holiness, clings to uncleanness?! The Psalmist says, "*If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear*" (Psalm 66:18)!

Once a godly man said, "Suppose I came to your home, and you invited me to come in, but you put a heavy weight behind the door. How can I come in then? You can tell me, 'Please come in,' invite me with all persistence, and use every impressive expression all you like! But I cannot go in because the heavy weight behind the door practically shouts at me, saying 'Do not come in!'" It is the same with the Holy Spirit; He will never come into your heart to take possession of it as long as you place sin behind the door of your heart, which you are quite aware of.

When God points at something in your life that does not please Him, leave it at once! Know that your hand has got to be empty before you can reach out in faith to be filled. Abandon every favorite sin you cherish, that you may be filled with the Holy Spirit. Have you not heard that your offering cannot be accepted as long as there is a sin of quarreling in your life? (Matthew 5:23). Now if you lay your life as an offering to God at the altar of consecration, and there you remember that you harbor a certain sin, leave your gift there at the altar and hurry to settle the account with your brother first. Then, come back to offer your sacrifice to God!

One day a minister of God met a great spiritual leader, and complained to him that he was spiritually weak and lacking the filling of the Holy Spirit, despite his frequent prayers for it. The great leader asked him several penetrating questions that helped him realize that there was sin in his life, which he cherished. At once he decided to let go of it. Immediately the Holy Spirit overwhelmed his heart. In the same place there was another believer seeking to be filled with the Holy Spirit, but he did not get filled until he returned a certain amount of money he had borrowed but never paid back. He, too, was filled.

Kneel down and calm down your heart before God. Ask Him to reveal to you the sin that hinders you from getting filled with the Holy Spirit. Tell Him, *“Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting”* (Psalm 139:23:24).

If you sincerely and honestly lift up this prayer, God will reveal to you every wicked way in your life, because sin is made manifest by the light of holiness. He will tell you, “This is the sin that kept you away from blessing. Leave it!” He will bring to the light every sin in your life, however small you think it is. Lift up to God the prayer that Elihu prayed: *“Teach me what I do not see; if I have done iniquity, I will do no more”* (Job 34:32). Ask God to tell the things you were unable to see, so that you do not do them any more.

2- The purpose is not holy:

The Holy Spirit will never fill a person who seeks Him only because he wants to gain a lofty position among people, to be the best preacher, to attract crowds to him, to have a distinguished standing among the believers, or for any other selfish purpose.

So why do you seek to be filled? Is it for your own interest, or for His glory? The Apostle James said, *“You ask and do not receive, because you*

ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures” (James 4:3). The Holy Spirit will never fill anyone unless they want to glorify God.

The “oil of anointing”, which symbolized the Holy Spirit, was set aside for anointing the temple and its utensils, that they might be most holy. It was also set aside for anointing Aaron and his sons, to sanctify them, that they might minister to the God. The oil of anointing was not poured on the body of any man (Exodus 30:22-33). This means that the Holy Spirit does not fill anyone with any unholy purpose! The incident of Simeon the magician shows us that when the purpose is unholy, not only the filling of the Holy Spirit will be stopped, but also the selfish seeker gets hurt (Acts 8:9-25).

3- Lack of total dedication:

When we keep something that is not dedicated to Christ in our lives we do not get filled with the Holy Spirit. Everything that we keep for ourselves, and not dedicate it to Christ, will be the cause of all misfortune. The lack of dedication to the Christ is the cause of all defeat that we meet. Let us, therefore, give everything over to Him, and keep nothing whatever for ourselves.

Once a godly man was praying and wanted to commit himself totally to the Lord. When he got deep into prayer, he saw himself, in seemed like a dream, holding a key-holder in his hand. It held the keys to every important thing he had. He also saw Christ standing in front of him wanting to get that key-holder. The man took out one little key from the key-holder and kept it for himself, then gave the rest of the keys to Christ. He was surprised, though, to see that Christ refused to receive the key-holder. It was only after the man gave Him the small key, together with the big ones, that Christ received it. At that point the man’s heart was overwhelmed by joy as the Holy Spirit filled him.

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies as living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service” (Romans 12:1). Christ will not receive the offering of your dedication and the purifying fire of the Holy Spirit will not come down upon it unless the whole sacrifice is at the altar, not missing a single trifling thing! Give the keys to your life to Christ; the key of time, the key of gifts, the key of thought...etc. Give Him everything, and then you will be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Ignorance of how to how faith works:

Christ’s disciples assembled together in Jerusalem waiting for Christ’s promise to be fulfilled through the Holy Spirit falling down on them. They did not know when or how the promise would be fulfilled, yet they were sure

it would be fulfilled. But for their faith, they would not remain waiting in Jerusalem.

Many people confuse faith with emotions. They wait for tangible feelings and signs to assure them that the Spirit of God filled them. This wrong understanding of faith has kept many people from reaching the ultimate goal of being filled with the Spirit. We do not live by emotions, but by believing God's clear promises. I cannot imagine, though, how we can fail to believe God's promises! God does not give the Spirit by measure (John 3:34), and He promised to give the Spirit to those who ask Him in obedience (Luke 11:13; Acts 5:32). You can believe God's promise (that if you have given everything over to Him), and trust that you are filled, even if you have no physical or emotional feelings. Perhaps the reason you have not been filled so far is that you depend on your feelings and emotions, while you should walk by faith not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7).

A lady came to the pastor of her church to complain to him that her prayers for the filling of the Holy Spirit were not answered. He promised to visit her to discuss the problem with her. Not long after that he paid her a visit at home. She had made some tea, and he asked her for a cup. She handed him the cup but he never reached out to take it. He just repeated his request for a cup of tea. He kept on repeating until the lady got upset. Every time she gave him exactly what he asked for but he never reached out to take it! She sat there at a loss, not knowing the reason why. The pastor had never behaved that way before! So the pastor explained to her that she behaved with God in a similar manner. She had asked the Lord, the Lord gave her what she asked for, but she never reached out in faith to take it. She just repeated her request!

The Lord offers the filling of the Holy Spirit to every believer who seeks Him, because He wants His children to be strong and victorious. Do not be unbelieving, but believing. Reach out your hand in faith to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, that is if you have decided to obey Him with all your heart.

A little girl asked her grandpa to buy a certain kind of candy that she liked. Grandpa promised to get her what she wanted. In the morning the grandfather went out and drove his car to do some things that needed to be done. When he put his hand into his pocket he found a piece of paper with childish handwriting on it. The writing said: "Grandpa, I thank you for bringing me the candy!" The girl's faith in her grandfather's promise was so big. Let your faith in God's promises be as big as that of the little girl.

5. Making the filling of the Spirit bound by other requests:

Some people impose different condition for the filling of the Holy Spirit. Some people imagine they will walk on the water when they get filled with the Spirit as Peter did! Some people even let their imagination go as far as thinking that they will soar into space when they get filled as Enoch and Elijah did! Others ask God for the filling of the Holy Spirit on the condition that they speak in tongues, otherwise they will consider themselves not Spirit-filled! In order to be fair to those who do speak in tongues, and to those who do not believe in it, I say, "Was it obligatory for all who got filled with the Holy Spirit to speak in tongues?" No, some spoke, and some did not! Jesus our Lord did not speak in tongues, even though He told of the great things of God! When the Apostles prayed, the place where they gathered was shaken, and they all were filled with the Holy Spirit, and spoke the words of God boldly, yet it is not mentioned that they spoke in tongues (Acts 4:31). When Ananias lay his hands on the Apostle Paul to regain his sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit, the latter saw, was baptized and ate. Yet, it is not mentioned that he spoke in tongues (Acts 9:17).

The Holy Spirit gives manifold supernatural gifts and ministries to the believers. The Holy Spirit gives to the believer whatever the Spirit wants to give him. There is no believer who *possesses* all the gifts, as well as no believer who has *no* gifts. Some of these are related to social and administrative ministries (Romans 12:8; 1 Corinthians 12:28), and some are gifts of teaching and organization (Ephesians 4:11), while others are spiritual. In addition to these, God has bestowed natural gifts upon all. We should use of them without pride or selfishness. You may have a certain gift that someone else needs, because he does not have it; and you need your brother to minister to you with his gift, which you do not have. In this way we serve each other by the gifts, since we need one another.

Do not hinder the outpouring of the Spirit on you because of the conditions you place on the Lord, or because of the specific gifts you want as a sign of being filled with the Holy Spirit. If you act like a boss, and make Him your servant, you will only deny yourself many blessings!

6- Lack of love:

A life of love and obedience is the condition for getting filled with Holy Spirit. Christ said, "*If you love Me, keep My commandments*" (John 14:15). John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, said, "Perfect holiness is perfect love for God" believers, and sinners. Having no love for any man denies the filling of the Spirit! Notice that love must be perfect, even for those who criticize you, insult you, and defame you! Do you have such love? Or are you willing to have such love?

If you do not forgive people their sins God will not forgive you. Christ taught us this truth after He had taught us the Lord's prayer (Matthew 6:14,15). Love is the first fruit of the Spirit. Your spitefulness toward the people who mock you proves your lack of faith. Your hatred of them proves that you are a long way from the Spirit of Christ, who prayed for those who crucified Him, saying, "*Father, forgive them*" (Luke 23:34)!

The Lord sees you as a believer who has passed from death to life, not because you do not commit sin; for no one is infallible, but because you love the brethren (1 John 3:14)! Love is the gospel. It is the fulfillment of the law (Romans 13:10). Even God Himself is Love (1 John 4:8,16)!

Now, ask yourself and search inside you: What is it that hindered your getting filled with the Holy Spirit?

Second: The Way to be filled

Spiritual infilling is for all. This is the high note in the melody of spiritual life, even if some people ignore it. One time a registrar who was engaged in writing down a symphony of Beethoven's noticed a very high note. He thought it was wrong and did not bother to record it. After finishing the transcription, he started to play the melody, but to his surprise he found that the melody did not sound proper without that high note! The melody of spiritual life does not sound proper, either, without the filling of the Holy Spirit. Therefore a spiritual man said, "O, how much we thank God that the filling is for all, for without it we cannot live victoriously!"

You have the right to be filled with the Holy Spirit; rather it is your duty to be filled. Christ prayed for you as much as He prayed for His disciples to be filled. The disciples received the promise, so why would you not receive it? The believers who do not enjoy the filling of the Holy Spirit are "*orphans*" (John 14:18)! Why should you stay an orphan while the Holy Spirit is ready to fill you?

The Bible calls the first infilling "baptism," and calls the following times "being filled." We find this in the following references: Acts 1:5, 2:17-21, 11:16,17. After this "baptism" we see that there is a repeated filling. Peter and Paul, for example, were filled with the Holy Spirit several times after their baptism.

And now, have you been baptized in the Holy Spirit? Have you received the power of the Spirit? Do not be like that girl who saw the Christmas gifts and said to her brother, "These are not for us. They are too expensive!" Rather, step up in faith and say, "Yes, I want to receive my inheritance."

Man has imposed many conditions on the infilling of the Holy Spirit that confuse anyone who seeks the truth, and makes the path unclear before him! The Bible, however, only has two conditions for it: Obedience, and faith.

The first condition: Obedience

The Apostle Peter said, “...*the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him*” (Acts 5:32). The genuine proof of love is obedience, the obedience that is out of love not out of compulsion. Obedience means to consecrate our will to God and give everything we have over to Him.

Dedication is your duty as a believer. You are the one who is going to voluntarily offer yourself to Him, and He will receive what *you* offered Him. The truth is that you are not your own; you are Christ's. You are His by right of creation, for He is your Creator: “*All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made*” (John 1:3). You are also His by right of purchase, for he redeemed you By His precious blood. The Apostle Paul says concerning this, “*For you were bought at a price*” (1 Corinthians 6:20). You are His by right of providence, because He has provided you with all you need. You say, “*The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want*” (Psalm 23:1). You are His because you have been given Him by the Father. In this respect Christ said to the father concerning us, “...*those whom You have given me*” (John 17:11).

The following true story illustrates the idea. A boy made a boat and went out on the lake by his home to play with it. However, the boat sank! The boy felt so sorry for it. One day when he was taking a walk through the town, he found his boat on sale in one of the stores. He went in and demanded it from the assistant. Off course the man would not give him the boat unless he paid up for it. So the boy worked hard until he was able to save up some money and bought the boat. When he had it, he hugged it tightly and said, “My dear boat, you are mine two times, once because I made you, and once because I bought you.” Christ calls you and says “You are Mine four times; once because I made you, once because I bought you, once because I took care of you, and once because you have been given Me by the Father.”

So, you legally belong to Christ, and though your dedication you become His voluntarily, when you say to Him, “I am Yours; take possession of me.” Yes, you belong to Christ legally, but you may not be dedicated to Him. You have to come to Him in submission and commit to Him everything you do and are in order to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Yet, many people are afraid of committing their lives entirely to Christ, lest he should demand them to do difficult things or give them arduous tasks to fulfill. However, the Psalmist says, “*Commit your way to the Lord, trust*

also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass. He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday” (Psalm 37: 5,6). This was the problem of one lady who was seeking to be filled with the Holy Spirit. She was afraid of dedicating her life to the Lord. Her pastor said to her, “Assume that your son threw himself into your arms and told you, with genuine emotion, that he was ready to do all you tell him to. Would you think of sending him to the desert, or of making him do the hardest jobs ever?” At that point the lady realized that God loved her more than her own love for her son. The lady committed her life entirely to the Lord with joy and without fear!

What great blessings we have when we consecrate our lives to the Lord! The greatest blessing of all is the infilling of the Holy Spirit. The way to experience this is to come to Christ and drink of His overflowing well, that we may be filled and have rivers of living water flowing out of us (John 7:38). The Indian poet *Tagore* wrote a poem in which he said that a beggar went around begging from the passersby on a main road. One day he saw the royal procession passing by, and waited for the king to give him a big gift. The royal procession stopped when it passed by him, the king went to the beggar, and asked him to give him all he had! In utter surprise, the astonished beggar took out some grains of wheat from his pocket and gave them to the king! The king took the grains, gave them to his minister, and told him to give the beggar as much gold as the grains weighed! Then the beggar shouted in sorrow, “I wish I gave him all the wheat I had.” He blew his chance.

When the King of kings asks you to hand Him over everything He will give you in return something better than gold; He will give you the filling of the Holy Spirit. Do not hesitate, but hand everything over at once to be filled with the Spirit.

Can you repeat this wise prayer: “Lord, make me Your servant, for then I will become free. Compel me to give up my sword to You, so as to be victorious. In order to reach the throne I have to throw down my crown at Your feet; and in order to lift up my head in triumph I have to bow down before You.”

Have you learnt how to give everything you have over to Him? The revivalist Jonathan Edwards wrote in his memoirs, while still a pupil: “Today I gave the Lord everything in me, and handed Him over all I have. I am not my own, for I have no right to my body. I gave all my strength over to the Lord; I do not ask for any right for myself either now or in the future.”

Sing with Psalmist to the Lord: “You are my King, O God” (Psalm 44:4), with the bride of the Song: “My beloved is mine, and I am his” (Songs 2:16), with the Apostle: “to whom I belong and whom I serve” (Acts 27:23), and

with the man of God who said, “God, be mine, and let me be Yours. I have neither silver nor gold; I have only my life, so take possession of it, O God.”

Frances Ridley Havergal was reading a book titled *All is Christ's* when she stumbled over the secret of Christ's possession of her and the need to consecrate her life to Him. She completely committed her life to the Lord. Her sister wrote of her: “All her previous experience were like a feeble candle against this experience which shone like the sun.” Havergal wrote down the following devotional song:

Take me life and let it be⊂
consecrated, Lord, to thee;
take my moments and my days,
let them flow in ceaseless praise.

2

Take my hands and let them move⊂
at the impulse of thy love;
take my lips, and let them be⊂
swift and beautiful for thee.

3

Take my voice, and let me sing
always, only, for my King;
take my lips, and let them be⊂
filled with messages from thee.

4

Take my silver and my gold;
not a mite would I withhold;
take my intellect, and use⊂
every power as thou shalt choose.

5

Take my will, and make it thine:
it shall be no longer mine;
take my heart: it is thine own;
it shall be thy royal throne.

6

Take my love; my Lord, I pour⊂

at thy feet its treasure-store;
take myself, and I will be
ever, only, all for thee.

Frances R. Havergal (1836-79)

Come now and consecrate your whole life to Him: your time, hands, feet, voice, lips, will, money, intellect, emotions, soul and everything... thus you will be filled with Holy Spirit.

The second condition: Faith

The Apostle Paul said, *“that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith”* (Galatians 3:14).

After having committed yourself totally to the Lord, and determined to obey Him with all your heart, pray in faith and ask the Holy Spirit to fill your heart. Christ said, *“If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him”* (Luke 11:13). The Holy Spirit was poured on the disciples in the upper room while they were asking for His outpouring. So pray now that the fire of God, which He promised us, may come down on the burnt offering which you offered at His holy altar, that you may be baptized with the Holy Spirit and fire (Matthew 3:11). Trust that the Lord has sent the Holy Spirit to fill you, so that you may receive, through faith, the promise of the Spirit. Christ says that whoever believes in Him will be so filled with living water that it will overflow from his heart, that is the Holy Spirit (John 7:37-39).

When you pray, do not say, “If you want to fill me,” because He does want to do so. Rather pray, “Fill me now, my King.” Know and trust that he will give the filling of the Holy Spirit at once. You may feel nothing, but do not be afraid; for it is not a matter of feeling, but a matter of divine promises. Feelings may deceive you because they come from the flesh, and we do not walk according to the flesh. All the feeling of the world cannot change the word of God. When God reveals to a believer that he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, he must be sure that he is filled with the Holy Spirit despite what he feels.

You can pray as follows:

“Good Father, my Master and King, owner of the authority over my body, soul, and all that I have, here I am putting at your feet all I possess. Have me as your own, that I might be your all the days of my life. And I ask You to pour the Holy Spirit on me and to baptize me now into Him according to Your blessed promise.

And now I thank You because you fulfilled Your promise to me, and because now I can enjoy being filled with the Holy Spirit. Receive my prayer in the name of Jesus. Amen.”

Now that you have been filled with the Holy Spirit, you will experience more and more every day that He is the person of God who dwells inside you. The filling of the Holy Spirit means that this satisfying spring gushes all over your life to control all its aspects. So if the rebirth through the Spirit is a beginning of Christ’s life in you, the filling of the Spirit is the continuous flowing of this life in you, until Christ is formed inside you (Galatians 4:19). You will walk according to the Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit will grow in you, and thus you will continue the journey of faith victoriously and triumphantly through the continuous work of the Holy Spirit within you.

ΛPart Three:

ΣThe Fruit of the Holy SpiritΓ

Chapter Six

Introduction

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Galatians 5:22,23).

The Holy Spirit came upon the disciples fifty days after the resurrection of Christ and filled them with power and boldness. Their lives changed completely and everything about them became new. What a difference between “before” the Pentecost and “after” the Pentecost! There will also be a radical change in your life if you let the Holy Spirit take full control of your life.

Are you dissatisfied with your spiritual life as it is now? Do you seek to be lifted up spiritually? Do you want to change to the better, become more profitable to Christ’s ministry, and fulfill what the Lord expects of you?

This is only possible if you remove the obstacles that keep the Holy Spirit from controlling you, and open your heart to Him to fill you up. For then God will fulfill His promise to you: *“You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me” (Acts 1:8).* Christ said to His disciples that, after His resurrection and ascension to heaven, He will not leave them orphans *“And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him...I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you...But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you...But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. And you will also bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning” (John 14:16-18,26; 15:26,27).*

One Fruit:

The Apostle Paul presents us with nine fruits, which he mentions as one “fruit”. Using the singular depicts unity and homogeneity. Some Christian commentators have compared these nine qualities with nine grapes hanging in one cluster, or nine glimmering pearls threaded on one necklace. Perhaps they so interpreted the usage of the singular, bearing in mind Christ’s words: *“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that does bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit”* (John 15:1). Christ wants us to bear more fruit and He wants our fruit to last. The more we abide in Christ the more the Holy Spirit takes possession of us and reigns over our hearts, making us bear more of this one, homogeneous fruit.

We will meditate on the fruit of the Spirit, which the Apostle Paul listed in his first Epistle to the Galatians, saying, *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control”* (Galatians 5:22,23). These nine qualities are naturally divided into three trios:

1. Man’s relationship with God: Love, joy, peace.
2. Man’s relationship with his fellow-men: Longsuffering, kindness, goodness.
3. Man’s relationship with himself: Faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

If we let the Holy Spirit control our lives our relationship with God will be filled with love, joy, and peace. Our relationship with others will be an exemplary relationship controlled by longsuffering, kindness, and goodness. Also our relationship with ourselves will be brimming with the confidence of faith, gentleness, and self-control. How happy is the man who gives the Holy Spirit the chance to possess his heart and reigns over his life in order to bear such great fruit!

Before listing the nine-fold fruit of the Spirit, the Apostle Paul listed the sins of people who are not controlled by the Holy Spirit. He called these sins “the works of the flesh”. There is contrast between the fruit of the Spirit and the works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21):

* The Apostle Paul lists the works of the flesh in the plural because they are many and contradictory. They represent the chaotic state of a man’s life who is ruled by his physical inclinations that contradict God’s will. This is the opposite of the life of the man who gives the Holy Spirit control over it.

Our world is in a desperate need for seeing some examples of virtue in the life of a believer who bears the fruit of the Spirit in his daily life. The world has grown weary of hearing speeches, lessons, and theories about virtue. It needs to see this nine-fold fruit being applied practically in the everyday lives of believers, who bloom and bear fruit to the blessing of the world.

The Holy Spirit calls each of us to bear such fruit and to pray that the fruit might increase in us.

* This nine-fold fruit comes by the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer; it is not an outward beautification to the old man such as culture, civilization, and personal efforts would do. It is not achieved by man's attempt to change himself gradually, working on a part of his corrupt soul at a time. It comes by committing the soul totally to the Holy Spirit, who then takes possession of it and changes it completely. The fruit comes about in a natural way from within man as an inevitable result of the work of the Spirit in him. This fruit is as beautiful as the lilies of the field, of which the Lord Jesus said, "*Even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of them*" (Matthew 6:29). Christ does not mean by this that the colors of the lilies of the field are more costly than those of Solomon's clothes, for certainly Solomon's clothes cost much money. Neither does He mean that the colors of the lilies of the field are more than those of Solomon's clothes, for Solomon's clothes certainly had more colors. Christ, however, meant that the lilies are arrayed more gloriously and magnificently than Solomon, because Solomon was arrayed in outward clothing, which he put on and off at will, whereas the colors of the lilies are natural and do not fade away. They do not change under the effect of the sun, nor are they influenced by the natural factors as long as the lily lives.

We may put on outward qualities to seem good in people's eyes. Christ, however, demands us to bear fruit and to have inward beauty that appears naturally and unaffectedly in our daily conduct. You can clothe a dry stalk with outward greenness, and hang onto it such colorful flowers, but soon the greenness will dry up, the flowers will fade away and fall off, and the dry stalk will return once more to its original ugly shape! We do not need a believer covered on the outside with artificial beauty, but one with an open heart to the activity of the Holy Spirit, who will bear all the fruit of the Spirit, and whose fruit will spring from being possessed by the Spirit of God Himself.

Chapter Seven

THE FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

σTHE FIRST FRUITγ

Love

“God is love” (1 John 4:8, 16).

“By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35).

Could the great and holy God condescend and love the weak and sinful person? This thought transcends man’s logic, but it reached the realm of mankind when God condescended and demonstrated His love toward us *“in that while were still sinners, Christ died for us”* (Romans 5:8). Will a person who experienced the love of God be able to love God and his fellow-men?

God has taken the initiative by demonstrating his love toward people, when He provided the Garden of Eden for Adam and Eve and placed in it everything that could bring gladness into their hearts while on earth, before He even created them. And when they fell, He demonstrated His love for them in a deeper way, by covering their nakedness with the garment of godliness and righteousness and granting them the promise of salvation, forgiveness, and redemption. Through the story of the prophet Hosea’s love for his wife Gomer, despite her fallen state, God illustrated to the Old Testament people how much He loved them in spite of their fallen state and deception of Him! (Hosea 1,3). In the new Testament we see love spelled out in a perfect example: *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life”* (John 3:16). And in the name of this love God calls us to love Him, and to love each other. For the love of God teaches us how to love Him and how to love the people around us.

A teacher of the Mosaic law asked Christ, “Which is the first commandment of all?” Jesus answered him, “The first of all the commandments is: *‘The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’* This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: *‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’* There is no other commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:28-31). The Apostle Paul said, *“But through love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”* (Galatians 5:13b,14).

Love, then, is the first fruit of the Spirit in the cluster that grows on each branch of the vine of Christ: A love for the Lord, and a love for others that comes a natural result of the Lord's love for us, and the filling of the Holy Spirit.

First: The Fruit of the Spirit is the Love of God

Everyone possessed by the Holy Spirit bears the fruit of the love of God, which is manifest in:

1- A desire to talk with God:

Anyone possessed and ruled by God will love, call upon, and talk with God often, because he wants to have an intimate relationship with Him. When you love somebody you communicate with him, talk to him, spend a long time with him, and even consider every time you spend without communicating with him as wasted of your life. How much more do you have to speak with God because you love Him! Loving God with all one's heart means continual communication and conversation with Him. The Psalmist said, *"Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation. Give heed to the voice of my cry, my King and my God, for to You I will pray. My voice You shall hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning I will direct it to You, and I will look up"* (Psalm 5: 1-3).

The Bible calls this talking with God "prayer". Prayer is not an obligatory duty on the believer, but a friendly, ample, and regular talk with Him. David describes this by saying, *"I give myself to prayer"* (Psalm 109:4).

Christ is the best example of expressing His love for the heavenly Father through talking with Him. For He used to begin His day *"in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed"* (Mark 1:35). He began His day alone, away from His disciples, in order to spend a quiet time in the company of His heavenly Father. And He used to end His day by the same: *"And when He sent them [the disciples] away, He departed to the mountain to pray. Now when evening came, the boat was in the middle of the sea; and He was alone on the land"* (Mark 6:46,47). He also spent all the night in prayer (Luke 6:12). When the disciples saw how often He spoke with the Father, they asked Him to teach them how to pray (Luke 11:1). Christ, the Son of Man, gave us this model prayer to teach us how desperately we need Him; for the believer who loves the Lord much is the one who will spend much time alone with Him. He will talk deeply, intimately, and continually with Him.

In order to increase the time you spend with the Lord, I suggest that you pray while doing any sort of work that does not require concentration. For instance, when you do a routine work (such as driving the car, waiting for a train, working in the kitchen, or arranging the house) I suggest that you invest this time in talking with God and engaging in conversation with the heavenly Father. In doing so these times of mental inaction will turn into times of prayer. Your spiritual life will become richer, your relationship with God will go deeper; and your love for Him will come from all your heart, mind, and will, as Asaph said, *“But it is good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in the Lord God”* (Psalm 73:28). For after many doubts, mental questionings, and several complaints Asaph found out that the best thing for him was to draw near to God, to talk to Him and rely on Him.

2- A desire to study His word:

When we get a letter from someone dear to us we are eager to read it, re-read it, and think over its words time and time again. And by the time we put it aside our minds would be full of the thoughts written in it, because we love the one who wrote it. Now, is there anyone nearer or more loving to us than the heavenly Father?! You began to love your marriage partner the day you got to know him (or her), and this love will end by the time either of you dies and leaves this earth. The love of the heavenly Father, however, began before we knew Him, and it will continue endlessly. Our love for Him began the day we repented and returned to Him, and it will also continue endlessly. *“God is love,”* and He sent us His God-breathed words, which He keeps from being tampered with or distorted, to be a lamp to our feet and a light to our path (Psalm 119:105). We say with the Psalmist, *I will delight myself in your commandments, which I love...Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day...Your word is very pure; therefore Your servant loves it”* (Psalm 119:47,97,140). Let these verses be a guiding light, causing us to increase our love for the Lord and His word, that we may repeat it, meditate, and act upon it out of love for its Author. We will find it is a perfect and pure word, and we will do as Jeremiah did: *“Your words were found, and I ate them. And Your word was to the joy and rejoicing of my heart; for I am called by Your name, O Lord God of hosts”* (Jeremiah 15:16). And we will hear with the Prophet Ezekiel the command of the Lord: *“Feed your belly, and feed you stomach with that scroll that I give you.’ So I ate it, and it was in mouth like honey in sweetness”* (Ezekiel 3:3). The more we love God, the more we will read His word, and the more we meditate on it. It will not do to just commit it to memory or repeat it only with our lips, but we will make sure that it will be a daily nourishment to our spirits and a true reality that we experience everyday.

3- A desire to imitate Him:

The Apostle Paul said, *“Be followers of God as dear children. And walk in love as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us”* (Ephesians 5:1). He also said, *“Imitate me, just as I imitate God”* (1 Corinthians 11:1). He wrote to the Galatians that the purpose of all his evangelization to them was that Christ might be formed in them (Galatians 4:19). He meant that anyone seeing them would see Christ in them.

No doubt you imitated your parents, just as your child will imitate you. It is truly said in the proverb: Like father like son. The more a child loves his parent the more he will imitate him. The more you meditate on his teachings and consider His earthly life the more you will become like Him, because you will like to take Him as your example.

Second: The Fruit of the Spirit is Love for people

Those who bear the fruit of the Spirit called “love” will love all mankind whom God created. They will feel and sympathize for them in all the circumstances of their lives, no matter their race, religion, or the color of their skin! They love all people, just as God loves them as His creation: *“For He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good”* (Matthew 5:45).

1- The Holy Spirit produces in us a love for the brethren:

To prove that we love God, whom we cannot see, we are to love the people, whom we can see. Brotherly love was a characteristic of believers in Christ all through the ages; so much that heathens said, “See how the Christians love each other.” Christ declared that love is the proof of true discipleship when He said, *“By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another”* (John 13:35). John said, *“We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him”* (1 John 3:14,15).

We know that the new life in Christ is the result of the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart. And we know that everyone who passed from destruction to eternal life by repentance loves his fellow-believers who share the same kind of life and love for God with him. The Holy Spirit in them produces the same longings, drives them to the same goals; He thinks the same thoughts within all of them.

2- The Holy Spirit produces in us a love for the poor:

Those who are in need of the necessary foodstuff are numerous; Christ said, *“For you have the poor with you always”* (Matthew 26:11). And again, *“It is more blessed to give than to receive”* (Acts 20:35). Paul said, *“God loves a cheerful giver”* (2 Corinthians 9:7).

It is not enough to advise the needy to go eat or get dressed; we should offer them what we have in obedience to the apostolic commandment: *“If a brother or a sister are naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,’ but you do not give the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?”* (James 2:15,16).

Christ has set such a great example of looking after the hungry, for before the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit, five thousand men, together with a large number of women and children, assembled around Christ to listen to His preaching. At the end of the day, the disciples told Christ that all those people had to return home and fill their hunger, because it was late and the disciples had nothing to offer them for food. However, Christ answered, *“You give them something to eat.”* Andrew said, *“There is a lad here who has five barely loaves and two small fishes, but what are they among so many?”* In true love Christ took the five loaves and the two fishes, blessed them, and fed the hungry multitude, teaching His disciples and us to do all we can and place into His hands all we have, so that He may work through and with us, that we may provide the needy with what they need (John 6:1-15).

John the Apostle said, *“Whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or tongue, but in deed and in truth...Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love...If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit”* (1 John 3:17,18; 4:7,8,12,13). To confirm that we love the invisible God we must love the visible human being, sympathize with them in their calamities, and lend them a hand whenever they are found in need of something.

The best that we can do to help the needy is to teach them how to help themselves, so that they can earn their own living with the sweat of their brows. It is easy to give a dollar to a pauper, but it is difficult to give him some of your time, thought, and effort, trying to help him develop himself. If you truly love someone in need, as God loves him, you will help him develop his own capabilities by teaching and training him.

So, what will you do to help the poor? What does the Holy Spirit tell you to do to help them?

3- The Holy Spirit produces in us a love for the weak:

Christ sets before us the example we should follow. He is the loving Master who feels the weakness and the needs of the weak, and takes care of them; He feels their heartbeats! Once He was viewing the sick people lying at the pool of Bethesda, who believed that an angel would come and stir the water of the pool, and the sick man who gets into the water first would get healed. Christ saw a sick man who waited for someone to push him into the pool when the water moved in order to get healed, but he had none. This sick man had been waiting for thirty-eight years with no one to sympathize with him, so much that he started to believe that apathy was the rule! But Christ went to him, was moved with compassion for him, and in perfect love healed his body of sickness and his spirit of sin (John 5:1-9).

Christ entered the synagogue on a Sabbath and saw a woman who was bent over and had not been able to stand straight at all for eighteen years. She did not ask Him to heal her; but when He saw her, He had compassion on her, called her, laid His hands on her, and she was immediately healed and praised God. The Jews regarded the Sabbath as a holy day and did not do any kind of work on it. Christ knew quite well that performing a miracle of healing like this on the Sabbath will cause many people to criticize Him. Yet, He paid no attention to criticism, and made her whole anyway! The leader of the synagogue criticized all those who came asking Christ to heal them on the Sabbath, and Christ answered him, *“Hypocrite! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or his donkey from the stall, and lead it away to water it? So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound- think of it- for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?”* (Luke 13:10-17). How much we need to learn the feelings of love in Christ’s heart for all men; especially for those in need!

The Spirit-controlled lovers of Christ have learned how to help the weak: The monk Thalsius established the first institute for the blind, the Christian merchant Apollonius established the first free center for the distribution of medicine, and the princess Fabiola established the first hospital after she had espoused Christianity.

4- The Holy Spirit produces a love of solidarity among mankind:

The Apostle Paul exhorted the believers to join forces and supply the needs of each other so that when circumstances are adverse one would find help from those he had previously helped.

The one who has may be upset when asked to give to the one who has not, so Paul advised, *“For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened; but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may supply their lack, that their abundance also may supply you lack- that there may be equality”* (2 Corinthians 8:13,14).

Love always shares what it has with others, in accordance with the apostolic law that says: *“Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another”* (Romans 12:15,16). John Chrysostomos said, *“It is easier to weep with those who weep than to rejoice with those who rejoice, because envy may keep us from rejoicing with those who rejoice.”* Love does not envy (1 Corinthians 13:4), because envy means to get upset because of other people’s success, good health, position, riches, fame, or progress. But we should equally share with all people in their joys and sorrows, that they too may share with us in our time of need.

Our world is in a crushing need for real solidarity, of the kind hinted at by Solomon the master wise man: *“Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days”* (Ecclesiastes 11:1). *“For whatever a man sows, that he will also reap...And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those of the household of faith”* (Galatians 6:7-10).

5- The Holy Spirit produces in us a love for our enemies:

Plato said, *“A good man puts up with harm, but does not do it.”* It is easy to treat good people gently, to love those who love you, or to do good to those who do you good. True love, however, still flows toward those who oppose us or do us evil. We will not be able to love our enemies until the Holy Spirit fills us, invests us with power, and controls our behavior, aiding us to obey the commandment: *“Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you”* (Matthew 5:44).

The Holy Spirit helps us overlook differences and live peaceably with one another. It is true that we cannot possibly agree with everybody on every minute detail in life, but the Holy Spirit helps us pay attention to the points on which we agree together. He rids us of pride that makes us take offense quickly, seek revenge for the so-called honor, because the Holy Spirit gives us patience and longsuffering and teaches us goodness.

It takes two or more people to quarrel and fight, but it takes one person only to make peace and reconciliation! When the Holy Spirit controls us, He gives us purity of heart and a love for peace, thus we can be at peace with all as much as we can, without committing any sin, such as denying anyone his rights, or being at variance with our consciences (Romans 12:18). He helps us pursue peace with all men, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14).

6- The Holy Spirit produces in us love for everyone who needs us:

Once a teacher of the law asked Christ, *“What shall I do to inherit eternal life?”* Christ answered him, *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as your yourself.”* The man asked him again, *“And who is my neighbor?”* So Jesus told him the parable of the Good Samaritan who found a wounded Jew on the road, and even though he had never known him before, he dressed his wounds, carried him on his donkey to the nearest place and paid for his treatment until he completely recovered. Christ said that the Samaritan was the neighbor of the wounded Jew, because anyone who needs our help is our neighbor (Luke 10:25-37). In the parable of the Good Samaritan we find four characters:

(A) The wounded man: He was a Jew traveling from Jerusalem in the direction of Jericho, who fell among thieves, who stripped him naked, wounded him, robbed him of all he had, and left him half dead (Luke 10:30). The Jews hated the Samaritans and did not deal with them at all. And if a Samaritan happened to touch a Jew, the Jew would be ritually unclean and would have to wash himself to be made clean! This means that if the wounded Jew had been physically sound, he would not have let the Samaritan touch him!

(B) The priest: He passed by the wounded man on his way to perform his religious ministry at the temple. The wounded man belonged to the same race and religion he belonged to, but he crossed to the opposite side without lending him any help (Luke 10:31). There were logical reasons that made the priest behave in this way:

* The priest’s life was in danger; because thieves sometimes would pour the blood of a sheep on one of them, make him lie on the road as though he was wounded! Whenever someone would feel pity for him and try to help him, the thief would hold him up until his accomplices come around from behind the rocks to attack the traveler and rob him of what he has.

* There was the likelihood that the wounded man would die in the hands of the priest, which would make him ritually unclean and keep him from fulfilling his religious duties. The priest must have thought, “What is it that I should give my priority to: helping the wounded, and thereby get defiled and be unable to fulfill my religious duty, or fulfilling my religious duty, which means leaving this wounded man alone?” He decided to put his religious duties first!

(C) The Levite: He was the priest’s assistant in the performance of religious duties. The Levite paid more attention to the wounded man than the priest, because he came and cast a look of compassion on him. The priest did not do even that. Yet, the Levite hesitated a lot to offer help. Perhaps he said to himself, “The priest is my master. He is my example, and he knows more than I do. Now since he went on without helping the wounded man, there must be a reason why he did that.” Maybe the Levite used this to excuse himself from doing his human duty.

(D) The good Samaritan: He was a foreigner to the wounded man, and differed from him in doctrine. But he was the one to dress the wounds of the Jew, place him on his donkey, take him to an inn, give the owner two denarii, and say to him, “Whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.”

Christ presented to us in this parable a wounded man, but there are people who are much more miserable than those physically wounded. They are the ones who are wounded by sin. True, their blood does not flow, but their souls which are wounded by transgressions are in danger of eternal destruction. It is incumbent on believers to offer them the message of Christ, explain to them their spiritual experiences, perhaps they will repent and be saved. God commissioned those who love Him to love others and seek to save them from their sins, even if they treat them badly; for love suffers long, is kind, bears the evil treatment of others, and is able to obey the apostolic commandment that says: “*Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Therefore if your enemy hungers, feed him; if he thirsts, give him a drink; for in so doing you heap coals of fire on his head*” (Romans 12:14,20,21).

7- The Holy Spirit produces in us love a for the family:

When the Holy Spirit controls our life, He makes us love our family members; the husband loves the wife, the wife the husband, and love becomes the dominating atmosphere at home. The Apostle Paul illustrated this marital love as follows: *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it...So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church*" (Ephesians 5:25,28,29). Peter advised men as follows: *"Husbands, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered"* (1 Peter 3:7).

How beautiful and happy is the home in which the Holy Spirit controls the behavior of its members, thus fulfilling the words of the Psalmist: *"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity...For there the Lord commanded the blessing- life everlasting"* (Psalm 133:1,3).

* * *

We should ask for the filling of the Holy Spirit and allow Him to control our lives, that we may be able to love God our Father with all our hearts. Then the fruit of the Spirit, which is love, will grow within us, making us love others regardless of whether they love us or not. When we take the initiative of loving others, they come to know Christ who taught this genuine, truthful love, which gives and does not expect anything in return. Unbelievers will find in us a practical application of the apostolic statement: *"Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith"* (1 Timothy 1:5).

A PRAYER

Lord, You loved me while I was still weak and fallen. You extended Your mercy to me, which I did not deserve. Plant in my heart love for You, my family, friends, society, and enemies. Make this holy love grow deeper in me. Grant me the prayer that the Holy Spirit may control my daily conduct, so that I may bear the fruit of love that warms the hearts of all those around me, and all those who come in contact with me. Amen.

σTHE SECOND FRUITγ

Joy

When we consider the power of God, who created the universe for us to live in, and when we consider the love of God, who redeemed our souls through Christ the Lamb of God, the great sacrifice, our hearts fill with deep spiritual joy, and we shout, saying, *“Oh come, let us sing to the Lord! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms”* (Psalm 95:1,2) *“Oh, clap your hands, all you peoples! Shout to God with the voice of triumph!”* (Psalm 47:1). When we think of Christ’s return to our earth, we look forward to hear His voice saying to every faithful believer, *“Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord”* (Matthew 25:21).

But when we consider the painful and cruel circumstances of people around us we are surprised and wonder, “How can we possibly rejoice when our world lies under the sway of the wicked one?” (1 John 5:19). The wicked one, the devil, persecutes everyone who lives for the Lord, so how can we have the fruit of joy while we are living in a society that has set itself against the kingdom of God?

We are even more surprised to read the advice the Apostle Paul wrote as a prisoner in Rome to a group of persecuted Christians in Philippi, saying, *“Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I say, rejoice!”* (Philippians 4:4). How could he ask them to rejoice in the midst of suffering? How could he himself rejoice under the harsh circumstances of the Roman jail?! The answer is: *“But the fruit of the Spirit is...joy.”*

Our surprise even increases when we find out that the advice Paul gave from his prison was not mere words, but a true description of what took place with the Apostle and his companion Silas when they were thrown into jail in the city of Philippi. Their hands and feet were put in the stocks, which consist of four timbers each one shaped as a semicircle. The feet were put into the hollow of two timbers, and the hands in the hollow of the other two timbers. Another piece of wood was placed on them to lock the feet in, and a fourth one to lock the hands in. Thus the prisoner could not move, drive away the insects that crawl on his body, or even go to the toilet. His life becomes painful and miserable beyond the imagination of a civilized man in the modern age. Yet, despite all that the Holy Spirit overflowed with joy in the hearts of the two prisoners, because they considered themselves worthy of being humiliated for the sake of Christ (Acts 5:41). They lifted up their songs from joyful hearts with such intensity that aroused all the prisoners from their sleep! After that an earthquake hit the jail, so that the doors were opened, and all the prisoners went out. The jailer came quickly and asked, “*Sirs, what must I do to be saved?*” God gave Paul and Silas a chance to evangelize him, so he believed and held a banquet for them in his own house (Acts 16). God was faithful with Paul and Silas, and did not allow them to be tempted beyond their ability; but with the temptation He gave them a way of escape and joy (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Suppose we asked Paul and Silas how they were able to sing despite the intensity of their sufferings, the answer, I am sure, would be that the power of the Holy Spirit, who controlled them, gave them joy in the midst of sorrow, so the standards of the world changed completely and the words of Christ were fulfilled: “*Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted*” (Matthew 5:4). This means that spiritual joy is not a result of the circumstances under which the believer lives, but it is a joy, through the operation of the Holy Spirit in the heart, in the midst and in spite of these circumstances,.

The Apostle Paul begins the list of the fruit of the Spirit with the word “but”, which indicates a contrast. As though he says that in the world we will have tribulation, *but* the Spirit produces in us the fruit of joy, because Christ has overcome the world (John 16:33). Yes, there are sorrows in the world, but Christ said, “*You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy...you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you*” (John 16:20,22).

Our outward circumstances, possessions, social status, and education cannot give lasting joy. This comes from within, as a result of the Holy Spirit's possession of us. Solomon, the epitome of wisdom, explained this by saying, *"I said in my heart, 'Come now, I will test you with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure'; but surely, this also was vanity. I said of laughter, 'It is madness,; and of mirth, 'What does it accomplish?'"* Solomon went on to enumerate his possessions and said, *"I searched in my heart how to gratify my flesh with wine, while guiding my heart with wisdom...I made my works great, I built myself houses, and planted myself vineyards...I acquired male and female servants, and I had servants born in my house...I also gathered for myself silver and gold...Also my wisdom remained with me."* What was the result of all this? *"Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done, and on the labor which I had toiled; and indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun"* (Ecclesiastes 2:1-11). He also said, *"There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death. Even in laughter the heart may sorrow, and the end of mirth may be grief"* (Proverbs 14:12,13).

On the other hand, we find how beautifully the Psalmist expressed himself when he compared himself with those who tried to draw gladness from what they possessed. He said, *"You have put gladness in my heart, more than in the season that their grain and wine increased. I will both lie in peace, and sleep; for You alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety"* (Psalm 4:7,8). Evidently, no one can "lie in peace and sleep" unless he is definitely sure that the eternal God, whom he has experienced and known, is his refuge, that the everlasting arms are carrying him from underneath (Deuteronomy 33:27), and that his strong tower is the Lord, to whom the righteous run and are safe (Proverbs 18:10). He is the Master, the Redeemer, and the Holy One, who washed the believers clean of their sins by the precious blood, and made them kings and priests for Him. Their deep, personal relationship with Him and the filling of the Holy Spirit assure them that the fruit of joy will always overflow in their hearts: *"For the kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit"* (Romans 14:17).

Because of the lasting, constant, and perfect joy of the Holy Spirit the prophet Habakkuk said, *"Though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines; though the labor of the olive may fail, and the fields yield no food; though the flock be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls- yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation"* (Habakkuk 3:17,18).

The joy we get from human beings or from material things does not last. The joy we get from the Holy Spirit lasts, endures, and becomes a great and permanent blessing.

Here are four kinds of joy that the Holy Spirit gives us:

First: The Joy of Salvation and Forgiveness

As Christ came into our world born of the Virgin Mary, He brought along the joy of salvation, which caused the blessed Virgin to sing, “*My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior*” (Luke 1:46). The prophets of old rejoiced at this salvation even before it ever happened, as the Holy Spirit unraveled its greatness to them. Christ said to the Jews, “*Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad*” (John 8:56). This joy is available for everyone who accepts the salvation of Christ when the Holy Spirit convinces him of the truth of the gospel message (Ephesians 1:13). No one can describe the joy of giving one’s life over to Christ except the one who has experienced it, for the Apostle Peter says, “*You rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory*” (1 Peter 1:8).

In the fifteenth chapter of Luke Christ narrates a parable on a shepherd who lost one of his hundred sheep, and shows how he was distressed over it. He relates another parable of a lost coin among ten coins, and how the lady who lost it became so sad. And finally tells a parable of a man who lost one of his two sons, and expresses how he was so grieved for his loss. Yet, the stories do not end in sorrow; they have a happy end! The shepherd rejoices greatly as he finds his lost sheep, and holds a great celebration for the occasion. And as the lady finds her lost coin, she calls all her female neighbors to share her joy. And the father is so overjoyed for the return of his lost son that he commands his servants to hold the best banquet, because his son was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found. Christ says in conclusion, “*There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents*” (Luke 15:7).

The Book of Acts describes the joy of salvation in a unique way when it says, *“Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word”* (Acts 8:4). We may pass by the word “scattered” quickly and not give it the consideration it deserves. But imagine the situation of those Christians who were driven out of their homes, their possessions were taken by force, they had no place to stay or work, and were scattered from home and family. As a natural result of that persecution we would expect them to think of fighting those who drove them away from their homes, or to grumble against God who allowed them to be persecuted. Yet, nothing of the kind happened, because the Holy Spirit was in control of their lives. They did not draw out their swords, because all who take the sword will perish by the sword (Matthew 26:52). Nor did they grumble against God, because Christ had told them in advance that those who persecuted Him would persecute them, and that tribulation awaits all godly men (John 15:20). So, those who were persecuted went everywhere preaching the word of God. They had good news about the love and forgiveness of God, so they preached it both to those who listened and those who did not listen to them. This was a supernatural and superhuman attitude; it was the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:4-8).

This attitude resulted in great joy everywhere they preached. This joy was the joy of salvation which filled the hearts of everyone who accepted the good news. Also the evangelists themselves had joy when they witnessed how others accepted the good news as they had done. They all shouted the old song: *“Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and will not be afraid; For YAH, the Lord, is my strength and my song; He also has become my salvation.’ Therefore you will draw water from the well of salvation”* (Isaiah 12:2,3).

How beautiful it is to wear the garment of godliness which the Holy Spirit weaves for us, so that we can repeat the words of Isaiah: *“I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he has clothed me with the garment of salvation, He had covered me with the robe of righteousness”* (Isaiah 61:10).

Second: The joy of having one’s name written in the Book of Life

God writes the name of everyone who receives His forgiveness in the Book of Life. As a result, spiritual joy overwhelms his heart; as Christ said, *“Rejoice because your names are written in heaven”* (Luke 10:20), and he escapes the painful destiny of which God said, *“Those who depart from Me shall be written in the earth [dust], because they have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living waters”* (Jeremiah 17:13). The Holy Spirit bears witness to everyone who repents that he is a child of God, and that he has the right to have his name written in the Lamb’s Book of Life *“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God”* (Romans 8:16). The Holy Spirit gives us access to the heavenly Father by one Spirit, thus making applicable to us what the Bible said: *“You are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God”* (Ephesians 2:18,19).

The Holy Spirit will assure you that your sins have been forgiven and that your name has been written in the Book of Life, because *“Having believed you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance”* (Ephesians 1:13,14). If you have opened your heart to Christ and His salvation, you will receive the seal of the Spirit, which assures you of the authenticity of your faith. Now, since you have become a child of God, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your heart (Galatians 4:6) as an earnest that guarantees your commitment to Christ, and certifies that your coming blessings are more than all the blessings of the past.

Third: The Joy of the Complete Presence of the Lord

As the Holy Spirit fills your heart and reigns over your life, you can be sure of the complete presence of the Lord with you, as Christ promised, *“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there in the midst of them”* (Matthew 18:20). He also said, *“I am with you always, even to the end of the age”* (Matthew 28:20). Only then Christ’s promise to His disciples will be fulfilled in our lives: *“And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of truth...I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you...If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, ‘I am going to the Father,’... But when the Helper comes,... the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me...It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you”* (John 14:16,18,28; 15:26, 16:7). Christ had to ascend into heaven in order to send the Holy Spirit to fill His disciples with joy, so that they could experience the continuous presence of God with them. He would comfort them in their sorrow, assist them in their weakness, give them safety in fear, and guide them when confused.

Every believer has the privilege to live in perfect certainty of God's presence with him, which surrounds him and lifts him above temptations. This comes true when a believer is filled with the Holy Spirit, with the result of being controlled by Him and belonging to Him. This naturally leads to the production of all the fruit of the Spirit. The Psalmist said, "*In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hands are pleasures forevermore*" (Psalm 16:11). This joy also gives power to the believer to overcome sorrow, sighing, grumbling, and anxiety in his life, because the Lord fills him with gladness. Yet, one feels sorry for the children of the King who do not enjoy the filling of the Holy Spirit, those who walk about in rags, starving to death, like the prodigal son who could not find the food of swine to eat, although the servants in his father's house had bread enough and to spare!

The Apostle Paul said of God, "*He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.*" (Acts 14:17). This is what we richly get when the Holy Spirit rules over us, filling our hearts with provisions for the necessary needs, and producing within us lasting and deep joy.

Fourth: The Joy of Complete Ministry

When we become filled with the Holy Spirit we become better servants to the Lord, because we receive from Him power that helps us overcome our sins and weaknesses, and makes us better witnesses to Christ in our homes, churches, and societies (Acts 1:8). This power enables us to preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified, even if this makes us carry a heavy cross ourselves; for those who sow in tears shall reap in joy, as the Psalmist said, "*He who continually goes forth weeping, bearing seed for sowing, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him*" (Psalm 126:5,6). How great is the joy that overwhelms the believer's heart as he experiences success in his ministry for the Lord and for the people, seeing lost souls repent and receive eternal life, others who despaired filled with hope, and others soaring above their weakness into the high realms of the heavenly places! How beautiful it is to see a quarreling couple reconciled, and a chronic problem solved! "*The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose...They shall see the glory of the Lord, the excellency of our God. Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are fearful-hearted, 'Be strong, do not fear!...He will come and save you.'*" (Isaiah 35:1-4).

When you offer the Lord complete service you fulfill God's good will for your life, and your heart will overflow with joy. The Psalmist said, "*I delight to do Your will, O my God*" (Psalm 40:8). You will greatly rejoice when you lift up this prayer: "May Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." God's will for you is to share with others the good news of salvation, spreading it by word, in writing, or by being a good example. Then you will say with the Apostle John, "*And these things we write to you that your joy may be full*" (1 John 1:4). You will rejoice when you practically apply the content of the statement: "*It is more blessed to give than to receive*" (Acts 20:35), as Peter rejoiced when they said to the lame man, "*Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk*" (Acts 3:6). The man leapt up, stood, and walked!

A PRAYER

My God, I thank You because You drew my attention to the fact that the world will cause me trouble, but I thank You all the more because You make me glad in You, and make Your joy my strength. It is pleasant for me to draw near to You, because You give me the joy of salvation, and the guarantee that my name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life, according to what Christ did for me on the cross. I thank You because You are with me always, even to the end of the age. Gladden my heart by spiritually working in me and through me. Amen.

ATHE THIRD FRUITH

Peace

Every person wants to live in peace and harmony with himself and others, but the big question is: How do we get true and lasting peace?

I received a letter from a student who was studying to get her MA. She said she was psychologically ill, she hated herself, quarreled with her family, and that she got fed up with life. She also asked, “Am I crazy? Is there any treatment? How can you help me?”...etc. I wrote to her that a person’s essential need is to find peace with God, which will give him inner peace and will result in peace with those around him. True peace starts by being in harmony and concord with God, which will be followed by peace with oneself and with others.

In its deep spiritual meaning peace is the existence of something where it naturally belongs, just as God wanted Adam to be on the day He created him and made him dwell in the garden of Eden. In the garden there was peace between man and God, which could be felt in the friendly conversation they engaged in all the time (Genesis 3:8). There was peace between Adam and his wife, which could be felt in the fact that the first lyric in history was a love song composed by Adam for his wife Eve, in which he said,

“This is bone of my bones

And flesh of my flesh;

She shall be called Woman,

Because she was taken out of Man.”

(Genesis 2:23).

No doubt our first progenitors enjoyed the magnificent garden, but when sin entered the world, peace was lost. So Adam evaded meeting God because he was ashamed of his nakedness, and then held Eve to blame for committing the disobedience they both shared in! We can never have our peace back until *we* return to our natural place in God which He designed for us in the first place, and in so doing we return to the paradise we lost.

The Old Testament offers us a terrific example of spiritual peace that is based on God, despite the bad circumstances all around. It is the peace of the Shunammite (2 Kings 4). She had no children, and God gave her a son by a miracle through the prophet Elisha. But suddenly the boy dies by a sunstroke, and she loses her long-awaited child! Yet, she was full of the peace of God, which inspired her to lay the boy down on the prophet's bed and ask her husband to send her someone to take her to where the prophet was. When her husband asked her about the reason for going to meet him, she answered, "*It is well.*" As she met the prophet, he asked her why she came. She repeated the same thing three times: "*It is well!*" [Literally: It is peace.] The Shunammite could not have said she was in peace unless she was giving a meaningless routine answer, was deceiving herself due to the shock of her son's sudden death, or really had something extraordinary! If you read the life-story of the Shunammite you realize she had something the world could not have given her, which is the peace of God that passes all understanding that kept her heart and mind in peace at the distressing hour of trial, so that she was able to control her emotions in the face of a shock that would have shaken most people. It is the fruit of the Spirit: peace.

How much we are in need of this peace! But here is a good news for all of us: We can have the perfect peace of God if we completely give ourselves over to the Holy Spirit to bear this fruit of peace within us. This is what God has promised in the apostolic statement: "*Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace*" (James 3:18).

C. S. Lewis said that peace consists in soundness of the ship's instruments, concord among the seamen, not colliding into the surrounding ships because we take into account that others will make mistakes.

In order to live in peace we must ask God to fix every disorder within us; give us inner peace, so that we should not be double-minded, and help us not to crash into those around us. If we receive these three blessings we will be able to live in peace, accomplish the goals we want, and reach our destination. This can only happen through His grace and the work of the Holy Spirit in us.

First: The Holy Spirit Fixes the Disorder of the Soul

Every success in life is founded upon peace with God, but sin destroyed this peace, and made man escape from his God. When Adam, our forefather, sinned and ate from the forbidden tree, he avoided meeting his Lord and was no longer able to talk with Him, because he no longer was the splendid creature God had created, but a disobedient creature who fell for the enticement of the devil. The Apostle Paul said regarding this, *“Through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned”* (Romans 5:12). Adam sinned and his descendants sinned with him. He had to leave the garden and from that time on humans became enemies to one another, so much that one brother killed his brother. This was the greatest disorder that occurred to man’s life, which naturally made him miss all the good goals.

We thank God, however, because He designed a plan of salvation for fallen mankind, through the atonement of sins that Christ accomplished for them on the cross, and through the influence of the Holy Spirit who sanctifies their lives and brings back to them the peace with God which they lost. Our sins have separated us from God, and we were doomed to eternal death. But thanks to God, His Spirit recreates us, as the Psalmist says, *“You take away their breath; they die and return to their dust. You send forth Your Spirit, they are created; and You renew the face of the earth”* (Psalm 104:29).

The prophet Jeremiah depicts this notion of recreation in a beautiful allegory. God commanded him to go to a potter's shop, where the potter was making a pot of clay. The pot was marred because the clod fragmented and was scattered. The potter, however, did not cast it away or discard it; he collected the clay, removed the cause of fragmentation and disharmony. Perhaps there was a piece of clay drier than the rest, or there was more moisture in one part than in the others. The potter reshaped the clod of clay, made it homogenous, placed it again on the wheel, and remade the pot as he wanted it (Jeremiah 18). God said to the prophet Jeremiah that human beings are in the hands of God like the clay in the hands of the potter; He wants to make out of them beautiful vessels, but they mess things up by the hardness of their hearts or carelessness in their behavior, so God has to reshape them. He sends forth His Spirit and recreates the corrupt person afresh, and changes all his life and conduct, thus fulfilling the words of the Apostle: *"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new...that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them...For He made Him who knew no sin be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him"* (2 Corinthians 5:17,19,21). We can say with everyone whose life the Lord has changed, *"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them"* (Ephesians 2:10).

God prepared a covering for us through the atonement of Christ, which enabled us to have peace with God because it was based on the right foundation- redemption through the great heavenly sacrifice. The Apostle Paul says regarding this, *"Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"* (Romans 5:1). The prophet Isaiah had already prophesied the same thing 700 years before the crucifixion of Christ and said regarding Him, *"He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we were healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all"* (Isaiah 53:5,6).

The Apostle Peter said in his sermon in the house of Cornelius, *"In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him. The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ - He is Lord of all-...To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins"* (Acts 10:34-43).

By virtue of the redemption and atonement of Christ Jesus all our sins are forgiven and peace reigns over our relationship with God. If you see some disorder in your life that robs you of your peace, take refuge in Him, seek His mercy, and He will forgive you your sin, wipe out your transgression, and fill you heart and mind with His overflowing peace.

Second: The Holy Spirit Guarantees the Inner Peace

God said through the prophet Isaiah to those who lost their peace because they went away from God, *“Oh, that you had heeded My commandments! Then your peace would have been like a river”* (Isaiah 48:18). Man is at a continual inner warfare, which Paul described in the following verses: *“For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin...For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do...For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice”* (Romans 7:14-20). Again the Apostle Paul describes this on-going war within us in these terms: *“The flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not the things that you wish”* (Galatians 5:17).

When the Holy Spirit reigns over your life and manners, you will win this inner war, stand on God’s side, and be able to obey the commandment of the Apostle that says; *“Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh...And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit”* (Galatians 5:16, 24,25). When you walk according to the Spirit, you live in overflowing peace with God, you immerse yourself deeply into it as into an overflowing river, and shout in triumph over your inner war, saying, *“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free of the law of sin and death”* (Romans 8:2).

When a Spirit-filled believer is established in Christ and relies entirely on Him, his peace flows like a constant river, and words of the prophet become applicable to him: *“You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed [established] on You, because he trusts in You. Trust in the Lord forever, For in YAH, the Lord, is everlasting strength”* (Isaiah 26:3,4). The Spirit-filled believer does not walk on quicksand, in which he flounders aimlessly and sinks, but on solid rock; thus he reaches his goal because the Lord supports him. *“He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice. A God of truth and without injustice, righteous and upright is He”* (Deuteronomy 32:4). The Spirit-filled believer does not walk on the miry clay so as his steps may slip, because he shares in the experience of the Psalmist who said while going through it, *“I waited patiently for the Lord; and He inclined to me, and heard my cry. He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my steps. He has put a new song in my mouth- praise to our God; many will see it and fear, and will trust in the Lord”* (Psalm 40:1-3).

If you have been filled with the Holy Spirit, and if He now controls all your actions, you will receive all the good promises of God which Christ gave to His disciples. Here I mention two of them, which He had said in the upper room, right before He was arrested by the Jews and led to be crucified:

* Christ said, *“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”* (John 14:27). Then Christ said to His disciples that He was going to the Father to send the Holy Spirit to them, to fill them and give them perfect peace.

This is not a kind of apathy, negativity, or escapism; but an inner, heartily assurance and confidence that everything going on around is done by the sovereign God, who holds all authority in heaven and on earth. Christ’s peace was not just a lesson His disciples had to learn by the intellect, but a heavenly gift that turned into a lifestyle. This peace is in Christ, and it is the lot of all who follow Him, give themselves over to Him, and lay themselves open to the work of the Holy Spirit.

* Christ said, *“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world”* (John 16:33). When we lay hold of these divine promises with all our strength, we receive this peace. As for the material things, which people think of as sources of peace, they are as frail and weak as a useless cobweb.

These great two promises have come true in the lives of Christ's disciples. Let us consider, for instance, what happened with Peter. King Herod had had James, the brother of John, arrested and killed. The Jews greatly rejoiced because of this. Now, since Herod was strongly hated by the people, he wanted to calm their anger against him and distract them from the political issues. So he offered them another scapegoat -the Apostle Peter- whom he had arrested as a preparation for his execution (Acts 12:1-5). During the night of his execution, Peter was sound asleep. His deep sleep was not an escape from the problem, but it resulted from assurance and peace, because he received Christ's promise of peace to him which caused an inward balance between himself and the outward pressures on him. The Apostle Peter experienced the power of a law that was higher than the law of fear- the law of the Spirit of life in Christ. It lifted him above fear, as it is able to lift *us* above the pressures that draw us down, and thus the peace of God preserves our hearts and minds.

Third: The Holy Spirit Guarantees we will not crash into others

There are many ships that journey with us on the sea of life; all of them have different directions and destinations. They might have some disorder in their machinery that make them crash into us. The Lord warns us of the danger of this crash because it endangers us. The Bible says, "*If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men*" (Romans 12:18). There are people who have aggressive attitudes, and we should avoid colliding with them.

We have a promise not to be hit by others, if we pay attention to other people's mistakes. The Bible says regarding this, "*Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good*" (Romans 12:21). We also have a challenge not to make a mistake and crash into others. The Bible says, "*Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another*" (Romans 14:19). The more the Holy Spirit controls us the deeper our relationship with God becomes, and we become too high to collide with others.

God demands us to make efforts to live in peace with others, and gives us in Abraham a great example of making peace. Lot, Abraham's nephew, was an orphan. Abraham adopted him and took him along to the Promised Land. Thanks to Abraham, Lot's riches increased so much, but a disagreement took place between Lot's herdsmen and Abraham's herdsmen. Abraham recognized how dangerous this fight was, for it threatened both Lot and Abraham at the same time. The neighboring Canaanites would take advantage of this fight and eat them all alive. So for the sake of peace, Abraham called for Lot and said to him, *"Please, let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are brethren. Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me. If you take the left, then I will go to the right; or, if you go to the right, then I will go to the left."* Abraham spoke with great wisdom, which teaches us to avoid all causes of strife by separating ourselves geographically from them, so as to prevent strife from repeating itself. This geographical separation, however, did not weaken Abraham's love for his nephew. He showed his love for him by giving him the first chance to choose the place he would like to live in. Lot chose the fertile land. Again Abraham's love for Lot was manifested in rushing to Lot's aid when he and his family were taken captives. Abraham and his men hastened to rescue Lot from the hands of the invaders. Abraham did not regard what happened to Lot as punishment from God, nor did he deride his nephew's foolishness! The separation between Abraham and Lot was only geographical. Abraham never abandoned Lot emotionally nor banished him from his consideration. After Abraham had rescued Lot, each one of them remained in the places they had chosen to live at, for Abraham wanted to keep strife away and had a desire to keep peace (Genesis 13,14).

God grants us inner peace, and gives us wisdom to behave well with the persons who cause us troubles. How beautiful is the apostolic advice: *"All of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing. For 'He who would love life and sees good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking guile; let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil'"* (1 Peter 3:8-12).

People will never be like us in everything. The early church was made up of members who came from a biblical, Jewish background, and others who came from a pagan background. Yet, Christians, of both backgrounds, lived in peace in Christ and through the work of the Holy Spirit *“For he Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of division between us, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace”* (Ephesians 2:14-17).

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God” (Matthew 5:9).

A PRAYER

O Lord, I thank You so much because Christ lets me share in His own peace, saying, *“My peace I give to you.”* Give me. I pray, this peace that would put me in order, bring back to me all the privileges I forfeited because of sin, and guarantee to me deep, inner peace within my soul, and outer peace with those around me. Show grace to me by making me a peacemaker, even if this will cost me much. Amen.

ϕTHE FOURTH FRUITϑ

Longsuffering

How great is God's longsuffering toward mankind, whether they believe in Him or not, for He desires that all men be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4)! The prophet Joel said in this respect, "*Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness; and he relents from doing harm*" (Joel 2:13). How great is Christ's longsuffering toward sinners who have closed the door of their hearts and locked themselves in! He stands by the door of their hearts and knocks, perhaps they may hear the heavenly call and open. Christ says, "*Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me*" (Revelation 3:20). How great is His longsuffering toward the believer when he falls into sin, for He says to him, "*I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye*" (Psalm 32:8). The vine dresser said in Christ's parable to the owner of the vineyard regarding the unfruitful fig tree, "*Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it*" (Luke 13:8).

The believer should follow the example of divine longsuffering, because the disciple should be like his Teacher and the servant like his Master (Matthew 10:25), in enduring troubles, persecutions, and temptations steadfastly, joyfully, and hopefully. He should be able to put up gently and patiently with the weaknesses of others, considering his own faults and weaknesses (Galatians 6:1).

If the fruit of longsuffering influences people, our earth will become heaven, because everyone who practices longsuffering toward others obtains peace with others, as well as with himself. Let us imagine a husband who is patient with his wife if she is late with cooking food or to a certain appointment. Let us imagine a mother who is patient with her son when he disobeys her advice, breaks the furniture, or spills his drink on the carpet. Let us imagine a teacher who bears with a faltering student, and explains the lessons to him until he grasps them. Let us imagine an employer who bears with his employee even though his repeated instructions have not been carried out. Let us imagine an employee who bears with his employer who showers him with torrents of instructions, without boredom or grumbling...etc. Isn't this heaven on earth?

We have to suffer many undeserved insults. So let us come to the Holy Spirit, the greatest Teacher of longsuffering, and ask Him to grant us the patience we need. We can take Job as a perfect example of patience. He was af-

flicted by one calamity after another, for no fault of his, but he was not broken by them; rather he fell to the ground and said, *“Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord”* (Job 1:21,22). Seeing the intensity of his sufferings, his wife said to him, *“Do you still hold to your integrity?”* *Curse God and die!”* (Job 2:9,10). Even his friends accused him, claiming that he must have committed enough transgressions to make him deserve the calamities that befell him. His friend Eliphaz said to him, *“Remember now, whoever perished being innocent? Or where were the upright ever cut off?”* (Job 4:7). Job answered, *“I have not concealed the words of the Holy One”* (Job 6:10). Those who share in Christ’s sufferings, being conformed to his death, attain to the resurrection of the dead (Philippians 3:10,11). *“If indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together...the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us”* (Romans 8:17,18).

When the Holy Spirit gives us the fruit of longsuffering, we increase in wisdom. The Bible tells us about the blessings that God gave to Solomon, saying, *“And God gave Solomon wisdom and exceedingly great understanding, and largeness of heart like the sand on the seashore. Thus Solomon’s wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the men of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt”* (1 Kings 4:29,30). “Largeness of heart” means longsuffering. Let us ask for the fruit of longsuffering, to live wisely as Solomon did.

First: What is the Fruit of Longsuffering?

There are four definitions of the word “longsuffering”:

1- The fruit of longsuffering means to stand firmly and steadfastly under the pressure of a heavy weight, without growing angry or thinking about revenge.

We all live under pressures. The person whom God grants longsuffering will hold out under these pressures without grumbling, escaping, growing angry, or thinking of revenge.

The family puts us under pressure; the husband expects certain things from his wife, and vice versa. A baby poses some pressures on the parents from the time it exists as an embryo, then is born, and grows up. Likewise does the daily work of any man. Yet, there is something more difficult than all this: to expect of oneself what one cannot do. Wanting to succeed, excel, and rise with God and men puts on one an unending series of pressures! All these pressures can break the small of our backs if we do not have the fruit of the Holy Spirit: Longsuffering.

The Apostle Paul faced some of these pressures, but he did not let them bother him. He said, "*We are hard pressed, yet not crushed* [meaning that the pressure of persecutions did not prevent him from carrying out his ministry to the Lord]; *we are perplexed, but not in despair* [meaning that he did not know how to get rid of the obstacles, but never despaired of God's guidance, deliverance, and opening of doors to evangelism]; *persecuted, but not forsaken* [meaning that he was persecuted by men, but not forsaken by God]; *struck down, but not destroyed* [meaning that he was struck down and lashed with whips, but he still evangelized]- *always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh* [meaning that he suffered as Christ did, but Christ lived in him]." (2 Corinthians 4:8-10).

If you have had to carry a heavy cross (for the sake of Christ), have had your hands and feet nailed to it, and have been unable to move, trust that Christ, whom you serve, will grant you longsuffering through the Holy Spirit, so that you may hold out under the burden "*For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake*" (Philippians 1:29). This burden will eventually be removed from you, because final victory belongs to Christ, and to all who are united with Him.

2- The fruit of longsuffering means forgiving the offense of someone from whom we expect much:

It is much easier to forgive someone we do not know or expect him to offend us than to forgive someone we love or expect much from. May God give us the grace not to expect much from people so that we may not be disappointed. There is only one person who deserves our expectation, and He does not disappoint those who wait on Him; He is the friend who sticks closer than a brother- the Lord Jesus Christ. As to mankind, we should not expect anything from them. But decreasing our expectation from others does not mean decreasing our responsibility for them. They should always find you up to their expectations, even if they have not been up to yours.

The fruit of longsuffering means to forgive those near to you as much as those far from you; that is those you love, and those who do not love you. We are in such a crushing need to bear with our marriage partners, with brothers and sisters, with our children, and with friends, so that we love our neighbors as we love ourselves, and endure hurt from those we expect much from.

The Apostle Paul traveled to Rome and lived two years there, waiting for his case to be presented to Emperor Nero. He spent all that time ministering and preaching. When it was time for the case to be looked into, Paul said, "*At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me.*" Did not Paul deserve that one of the advanced believers should stand with him? Has he not

won anyone for Christ who was willing to stand by him? After all, he taught us a lesson in forgiving the ingratitude of those we expect much from when he said, *“May it not be charged against them. But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear. And I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion [that is Emperor Nero]”* (2 Timothy 4:16-18). No doubt he applied what he said earlier: *“Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us”* (Romans 8:37).

3- The fruit of longsuffering means continuing to do good works without despair:

A man possessed of longsuffering will continue doing good without getting weary or frustrated, but will hold out in patience and love. This is how Christ was with His disciples. Supposing that Christ despaired of His disciples while teaching them, He would have stopped teaching them, and consequently the happy message of the gospel would have never reached us. He said to nine of them after they had come down from the Mount of Transfiguration, *“O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you?”* (Mark 9:19). Despite their lack of faith, He bore with them and was patient with them!

Christ had warned Peter that he would deny Him three times. Peter, being too sure and overestimating himself, said to Christ, *“Even if all are made to stumble [doubt] because of You, I will never be made to stumble.”* But unfortunately he denied his Master three times (Matthew 26:69-75). Yet, Christ did not give up on Peter. He called him one morning at the Lake of Tiberias, fed his physical hunger, and said to him, *“Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?”* He repeated the question three times to blot out Peter’s triple denial (John 21:15-17). God is longsuffering toward us, and is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. So, let us count that the longsuffering of our Lord as salvation (2 Peter 4:9,15).

Paul said that love suffers long and is kind (1 Corinthians 13:4). God's love for us suffered long with him, and still suffers and is kind with us. The Apostle proved this longsuffering by his experience. He said, *“Although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first God might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life”* (1 Timothy 1:13-16). God showed His longsuffering toward Paul and saved him, as much as He shows His longsuffer-

ing toward all people to save them. As soon as the Apostle mentions what God did with him and the rest of the believers, he shouts, “*Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen*” (1 Timothy 1:17).

4- The fruit of longsuffering means not to expect the results too soon:

Mankind prefer anything that is easy and quick because they do not want to get tired. However, God in His love bears long with us and waits for us to open the door of our hearts to Him, to come in and satisfy our essential needs. Think of how many times God tried to convert Saul of Tarsus: he heard a lot about Christ and His miracles, witnessed Steven, the first Christian martyr, being stoned, and heard his prayer: “*Lord, do not charge them with this sin*” (Acts 7:60). He must have heard Christ say on the cross, “*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do*” (Luke 23:34). Nevertheless, he did not decide to accept Christ as Savior. He was pleased with Steven’s murder, and went about arresting Christians. The Lord, however, showed longsuffering toward him, until His grace surprised him on the road to Damascus, and shone on him with His light that was brighter than the noon’s sun. He completely changed his life. This is how God’s longsuffering and mercy saved Saul and created out of him the Apostle Paul.

God’s longsuffering toward you should save *you* too, and make a great man in Christ out of you.

Also your longsuffering toward others should save *them* in Christ and for Christ. The fruit of the Holy Spirit is longsuffering and continuing to go without giving up on others, in compliance with Apostle Paul’s advice to his disciple, “*Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching*” (2 Timothy 4:2).

Paul learned longsuffering from the longsuffering of the Lord toward himself, and thus he showed longsuffering toward sinners and believers, served, and continued to serve; endured sufferings at the hands of the Jews, the pagans, the nominal Christians, and weak Christians who denied his apostleship. Paul gave an advice to the pastors of the church in Ephesus, in which he said, “*From the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews; and how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ*” (Acts 20:18-21).

Second: How Do We Develop Longsuffering?

Some of us are born and live in homes that practice more longsuffering than others. This is a natural blessing that is due to personal aptness, culture, and upbringing. Being brought up as such, one practices the virtue of longsuffering so long as pressures are within the limits of his personal capacity to endure. When the pressures increase, however, the person flares up and loses his longsuffering. At this point there need be an extraordinary grace to help him face the extraordinary pressures. And this comes through an extraordinary virtue, which is “the fruit of the Spirit: Longsuffering”.

Here are three pieces of advice on how to develop longsuffering as a fruit of the Holy Spirit:

1- Give up more of yourself to the Holy Spirit:

The more we give ourselves over to the Holy Spirit and submit to His instructions, the more He works in us and makes our breath longer. All of us need the overflowing filling of the Spirit to control our thoughts, words, and feelings. Let us calm ourselves down before Him, so that He may remove anger from us, teach us, and plant in us the mind of Christ, which the Apostle Peter explained, saying, *“For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example: ‘Who committed no sin, nor was guile found in His mouth’; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously”* (1 Peter 2:21-23).

Oh, how much do we all, educated and uneducated, leaders and followers, need longsuffering to bear each other in love, without losing our temper or yelling at each other! Oh, how much do we need the way God dealt with mankind at the time of Noah! The ark took 120 years to be built, during which Noah kept warning the people of the danger and exhorting them to repent, telling them that God’s longsuffering only waited for them to give them a chance to repent (1 Peter 3:20).

2- Claim the promises of God:

God promised to give rest to the believers, as Christ said, *“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”* (Matthew 11:28). The Apostle Paul, however, labored under a “thorn in the flesh”, which might have been a disease in his eyes. So when he asked God to remove it, God did not do so; but simply said, *“My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness”* (2 Corinthians 12:9). The Apostle waited for the divine promise to be fulfilled, in the manner that God promised it.

Present your request before God, and wait patiently and faithfully for the fulfillment of the divine promises, in the manner that God sees fit, and at the proper time which His wisdom appointed. As you wait, you will learn longsuffering.

3- Know that our troubles are short-termed, and they always give happy results:

When we know that suffering and labor must come to an end we show more longsuffering, being confident of the fact that the clouds will eventually be dispersed and that the happy end will come. The Psalmist said, *“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil”* (Psalm 23:4). He never said he stopped at the valley of the shadow of death, because he was “walking” out of it. He never said he was running through, or from, the valley of the shadow of death, because he was not terrified. He was in the company of a loving, almighty God. He was sure that the night must have an end *“For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for life; weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning”* (Psalm 30:5). *“God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation also make the way of escape, that you may able to bear it”* (1 Corinthians 10:13). *“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose”* (Romans 8:28).

A PRAYER

Lord, teach me how to be longsuffering at the time of composure, so as to be longsuffering at the time of distress. When it is a troublesome day, lessen my burden, that I may be able to bear it, or increase my strength to carry it and not fall down under it. Amen.

ϕTHE FIFTH FRUITS

Kindness

Someone described kindness as follows: “It is a lamp full of aromatic oil, that fills the house with both light and fragrance. It is a carpet with a deep down that comforts you when you step on it and absorbs the noise that might fill the house. It is a curtain that keeps away the scorching glare of the sun in summer, and the intense, cold winds in winter. It is a soft pillow on which a tired head may repose.”

This description of a kindness applies perfectly to the Lord Jesus, who was described by the prophet Isaiah 700 years before His birth, saying, “*A man will be as a hiding place from the wind, and a cover from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land*” (Isaiah 32:2). The kind Jesus is our hiding place from the wind, our cover from the tempest, a spring of water in the deserts of life, and a shadow of a great rock in a barren wasteland. Let us ask God to make us like Christ, so that the Spirit may produce in us the fruit of kindness (Romans 8:29).

The word “kindness” (in the Bible) refers to a man from a good family. And what family is there better than “the household of God”? (Ephesians 2:19). Every believer should be kind, because God has been gracious to him and adopted him. Our God is a kind God, and His household must be kind, because they learn from Him and take Him as their example.

God’s kindness and ours can be made clear in three things:

First: Forgiveness

The Apostle Paul told us of God’s kindness in forgiving us, and urged us to practice kindness and forgiveness with those around us, just as God is kind with us. He said, “*Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do*” (Colossians 3:12,13). Our Teacher and Master is our example. The more we love Him and submit to the directions of His Holy Spirit, the more we will follow His example and walk in His footsteps, so that all might know that we are His disciples.

The kindness of God manifests itself with sinners, weak and lukewarm believers, and godly believers when they are caught up in any trespasses. Likewise our kindness should manifest itself with sinners, weak believers, and strong believers, even if they stumble and fall down in their Christians walk time after time.

1- God's kindness and our kindness toward sinners:

The Apostle Paul wrote, *"But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior"* (Titus 3:4-6). As he said this, he remembered well the kindness of God his Savior toward him personally, for He has laid hold of him when he was on his way to Damascus to arrest the believers in Christ there. He did not leave him in his wickedness, but laid hold of him and saved him. Up to that time Paul thought he was righteous, because he opposed the church in physical jealousy. But the kindness of God opened his eyes to the truth, and henceforth he began to strive for spreading the gospel. He said, *"I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me"* (Philippians 3:12).

God's kindness appeared in His forgiveness to us. The price He paid to spare us was that He did not spare His own Son, so He delivered Him up for us all, to rescue us from our sins, and guarantee the eternal life for us. The with Christ He freely gives us all things (Romans 8:32).

When the Holy Spirit controls our behavior, He will teach us how to be kind to those who do us harm. One day I was watching two kids, and learnt from them a lesson that I will never forget. The older kid held his younger brother in anger and shook him violently. Quickly the younger brother stuck his hand in his pocket, got out a piece of candy and put it in his older brother's mouth. The older brother was ashamed. I learnt from the little kid the benefit of doing good to those who do us evil, the blessing of rewarding evil with good, and the grace of bearing the fruit of kindness, because God our Savior is kind to us.

There is no man who does not get hurt, even by the nearest people to him. There are those who misunderstand us, or do not understand us at all; there are those who do not appreciate our services to them, and when we do them a good turn they reward us with an evil one; and those from whom we expect help and all we get is damage. Let us not expect much from people, but from the Lord, who gives liberally and without reproach. The going forth of His good deed is as established as the morning; He will come to us like the rain, like the latter and the former rain to water the earth (Hosea 6:3). Do not become upset when you expect something good from people but you never get it. Learn to wait on the Lord and expect from Him alone, for you will find kindness, blessing, victory, and triumph.

2- God's kindness and our kindness toward weak, lukewarm believers:

God exercised kindness toward a weak believer, that is Lot, who was defeated, overcome, and sad because of the wicked conduct of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah who indulged in lasciviousness. Their disobedience to God tormented his righteous soul day in and day out, seeing and hearing their lawless deeds (2 Peter 2:7,8). But God had mercy on him in spite of his weakness, forgave him, and sent him two angels to deliver him from the destiny of Sodom and Gomorrah. For as he was late to go out, and it was already dawn, *"the angels urged Lot to hurry, saying, 'Arise, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be consumed in the punishment of the city.' And while he lingered, the men took hold of his hand, his wife's hands, and the hands of his two daughters, the Lord being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city"* (Genesis 19:15,16).

Lot was carnal; he loved God *and* the world also. He walked with God, but his heart was engrossed by the world. Despite this saint's weakness, whose soul was tormented among the wicked, God had mercy on him. Out of gratitude for what God did with him, Lot said to God, *"You have indeed increased your mercy which you have shown me by saving my life"* (Genesis 19:19).

Likewise we should be kind to the carnal (worldly) Christians, who we think are not up to the proper spiritual level. We will get this kindness from the Holy Spirit, who helps us in our weaknesses, so that we too help the weak in their weaknesses.

2- God's kindness and ours toward strong believers, when they stumble and fall:

No holier man has ever set foot on our earth than Christ. All humans commit sin, and every believer falls into sin at some time. The Scriptures described David as *"the lamp of Israel"* (2 Samuel 21:17), as God also said about him, *"I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart"* (Acts 13:22).

Yet, he usurped the ewe lamb of the poor man. When he felt the heinousness of his sin, he said, *“I have sinned against the Lord.”* Nathan said to him, “The Lord also has put away your sin. You shall not die” (2Samuel 12:13). God’s kindness led David to repentance (Romans 2:4). No one would expect David, the composer of the Psalms, to fall into such a sin, but strong believers often fall in their point of strength!

The Bible commands us to be kind to the advanced believers when they make mistakes. Paul says, *“Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourselves lest you also be tempted. Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ”* (Galatians 6:1,2).

If you have experienced the forgiveness of the All-forgiving, All-compassionate God, forgive others as God has forgiven you.

Second: Soft Treatment

A kind man will treat all people softly, in obedience to the apostolic commandment: *“Have regard for good things in the sight of all men”* (Romans 12:17).

The Scriptures tell us how kind God was to Jacob, how He treated him softly despite his defects, and how He delivered him from all adversities. Jacob could only say, *“O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, the Lord who said to me, ‘Return to your country and to your kindred, and I will deal well with you’: I am not worthy of the least of all your mercies and of all the truth which You have shown Your servant; for I crossed over this Jordan with my staff, and now I have become two companies”* (Genesis 32:9-12). Jacob had crossed over the Jordan River to travel from his father’s house to the house of his uncle Laban, to a strange land, being afraid and anxious, having nothing but his staff. The Lord blessed him, dealt well with him, brought him back to his land in peace, and now he has become two armies! Every believer should repeat this prayer in complete thankfulness, confidence, and reliance upon the Lord and upon His kindness.

As Jacob experienced all God's mercies, his descendant David experienced three blessings from God's kindness, and said, "*Blessed be the Lord, for He has shown me His marvelous kindness in a strong city!*" (Psalm 31:21) . God protected David like a strong, fortified city or a shield and rescued him from being wrongly attacked. A shield was a piece of wood covered with animal skin with which a warrior would ward off the arrows of the enemy, and not be harmed himself. The right arm of God supported David and held him up so that he should not fall. God's kindness made him great, took him from the sheepfold, and seated him on the throne of the kingdom (2 Samuel 7:8). God's kindness has also overcome the believers, so they submitted to Him, resigned themselves to His good will, and as a result the Holy Spirit filled them.

I urge you, my reader, to live a life of soft kindness, for it is the kind of life that will win at the end. One narrator said that a contest happened between the sun and the wind on who of them would make the traveler take off his clothes. The wind took the first chance and blew fiercely and violently. But the stronger it blew, the more the traveler held on to his clothes. When the wind failed, the sun took the chance and shone with its soft warmth, with no violence, noise, or stir of dust, and the traveler took off his clothes. This teaches us that kindness is the way to win others. If we want to win our household, neighbors, colleagues, and even enemies, let us captivate them with our kindness and soft treatment.

There was a mother who was always very quick to blame and reproach her children. She loved them all right, but her way of expressing her love was wrong. One day the pastor went to visit her at home, and she complained to him of her children who never did anything properly. The pastor asked her to fetch him a burning candle and to bring it in the room as quickly as she could. On doing so the candle was put off because the wick had not yet caught fire perfectly. The pastor said to her, "What you want is longsuffering and kindness with your children till they start to catch up and know how to do things the way you want them to do them. It is written, '*Fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath*'" (Ephesians 6:4). They will be up to your expectations if you are kind to them."

If we give the Holy Spirit the opportunity to control our lives He will teach us how to be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave us. Only then can we win the hearts of many, just as God won the hearts of Jacob, David, and the rest of believers.

Third: Helping the Afflicted

How great our God's kindness is, which Isaiah the prophet described, saying, "*In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the Angel of His presence saved them; in His love and in His pity he redeemed them; and He bore them and carried them all the days of old*" (Isaiah 63:9). He feels what we feel, is upset when we are upset, and because of His kindness He saves us, sets us free, carries us, and lifts us up. Moses, God's mouthpiece, said to the children of Israel, "*In the wilderness where you saw how the Lord your God carried you, as a man carried his son, in all the way that you went*" (Deuteronomy 1:31).

When Potiphar's wife accused Joseph, Potiphar was angry against him and put him in jail, a place where the king's prisoners were kept. "*But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.*" Joseph was afflicted and imprisoned because of his obedience to the Lord. No doubt Joseph lifted up his complaint of injustice to God, asked Him for help, and the Lord responded by showing him kindness and giving him favor in the sight of the jailer (Genesis 39:19-23).

Joseph learned from his God how to be kind to others, so he honored his brothers who had sold him as a slave and had them in Egypt as guests as long as their father Jacob lived. But as Jacob died they feared that Joseph would repay them for the evil they had done him, and they all came to him weeping asking for his forgiveness. Joseph did not treat them the way they expected, rather he said to them, "*Do not be afraid, for I am in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive*" (Genesis 50:15-21).

No doubt that God extended His hands to you with kindness and grace, not because you deserved it, but because He loves you so much. You, too, have to extend grace and kindness to those who are at loggerheads with you and hurt you, just as Joseph did.

If you have responded to Christ's call: "*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,*" and have actually found rest with Him, then you will likely hear His command: "*Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light*" (Matthew 11:28-30). His yoke is easy because it is soft and does not hurt the shoulder. **{May I add the following:** and His burden is light, because He Himself carries it with you??} When He gives you rest, you should endeavor to give rest to those who are weary, and become a source of joy to those around you.

The prophet Isaiah acknowledged God's favor which He gave him and said, "*The Lord has given me the tongue of the learned.*" This is a great kindness of God. The prophet also expressed his acknowledgment of this favor in a practical way. He said, "*That I should know how to speak a word in season to him who is weary*" (Isaiah 50:4). There are many weary people around us who need to be rescued by a word in season from us, uttered by the tongue of the learned given to us by the Lord. We are indebted to our mother, wife, father, teacher, or minister in the church with a word of thanks. We often feel in our hearts how much we are indebted to others, but we never let this feeling come up to our lips. Let us be kind to our parents, brothers, sisters, teachers and encourage them with a tender word that they deserve.

When the Apostle Paul was shipwrecked, he and the people traveling with him were saved. They resorted to an island, which they knew later to be the island of Malta. The ruler of the island was named Publius. The Evangelist Luke said regarding him, "*...who received us and entertained us courteously for three days*" (Acts 28:8). In fact the whole island showed them unusual kindness and gave them a hearty welcome (Acts 28:2). God rewarded the kindness of the people and the courtesy of the ruler with Paul by healing the ruler's father who was sick with fever and dysentery. For when Paul prayed for him and laid hands on him, he was instantly healed. Undoubtedly, God rewards all those who help the afflicted and shows kindness to them.

May the Lord grant us to give ourselves over to the Holy Spirit unreservedly, that we may bear the fruit of kindness.

A PRAYER

Oh, how great is Your goodness, which You have laid for those who fear You, O Lord. How great is Your tenderness when You treat me at my time of weakness and need. Produce in me the fruit of kindness toward those surrounding me, whether they are friends or foes, family or strangers. Grant me kindness by Your kind Spirit, to give rest to all who have to deal with me. Amen.

ϕTHE SIXTH FRUITδ

Goodness

Goodness is love in action. A good man will bear the cares of others, give medicine to the sick, food to the hungry, clothing to the naked, and consolation to the sorrowful. He is the person who looks after others, not only physically, but also spiritually. He looks for someone who has not received Christ yet to call him to enjoy the blessings of salvation. He reads a chapter of the Bible to someone who cannot read, explains the words of the gospel to someone in need, and volunteers to serve in the church. In short: He is the person who walks in the footsteps of Christ, who Himself went about doing good deeds. This person will hear on the Last Day, together with all believers who did good, the joyous words of our Lord, saying “*Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.*’ Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘*Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?*’ And the King will answer and say to them, ‘*Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of My brethren, you did it to Me*” (Matthew 25:34-40).

Every believer must bear the fruit of goodness when the Holy Spirit reigns over him, putting his love to action.

Our goodness may be visible in two circles:

First: Concerning Oneself with Serving Others

The Scriptures give us a model of goodness in the life of David, the Psalmist, of whom it was said that he was a man after God's own heart who did all His will (Acts 13:22). David's goodness appeared after he had come into power after the death of Saul, who chased him and wanted to kill him. David asked his men, *"Is there still anyone who is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?"* His men brought to him a servant named Ziba who worked in Saul's palace. David said to Ziba, *"Is there not still someone of the house of Saul, to whom I may show the kindness of God?"* Ziba answered and told him that there was still a son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, who was lame in his feet named Mephibosheth. David summoned him and said to him, *"Do not fear, for I will surely show you kindness for Jonathan your father's sake, and will restore to you all the land of Saul your grandfather; and you shall eat bread at my table continually"* (2 Samuel 9:1-8).

David was the youngest among his brothers. He was shepherd of sheep. But God took him from following the sheep and made him a king and a ruler over His people. David appreciated God's goodness with him, and wanted to show kindness, even to his enemy, because he himself had received kindness from God. David is a good example of goodness for us. If you appreciate God's goodness to you, and if you have opened your heart to the Lord so that the Holy Spirit may reign over you, you will be after God's own heart, will do His will, bear the fruit of the Spirit, which is goodness, even with your enemies who oppose you.

Scriptures give us another example of the fruit of goodness: a virtuous lady by the name of Tabitha. We read that *"At Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did."* This lady was full of the Holy Spirit, who produced in her the fruit of goodness. Tabitha fell ill and the church prayed for her a lot; but she died. They washed her, placed her in an upper room, and called for the Apostle Peter to come. On entering into the room where Dorcas' body lay, all the widows stood in Peter's presence weeping and showing him shirts and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them. Peter put them all out, knelt on his knees, and started praying. He turned and looked at the dead body and said, *"Tabitha, arise."* She opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up (Acts 9:36-43). Tabitha translated her goodness into shirts and garments, which she did not sew for one widow, or a group of widows that was close to her heart, but for all the widows. The fruit of the Spirit overflowed from the tree of her life to feed and satisfy everyone who came close to her, no matter their background or doctrine. If your heart becomes filled with the Holy Spirit you will practice good deeds with all, no matter how different they are from you, because the Holy Spirit will fill you with good works and charitable deeds.

The Scriptures give us another example of goodness in a righteous man named Joses, who was one of the disciples. The Bible says concerning him, “*And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles feet*” (Acts 4:33-36). He did not lay the money into the hands of the apostles, but at their feet, so that no one should notice his offering. He did not let his left hand know what his right hand was doing!

Joses got the title of Son of Encouragement because he always had a word of encouragement to say to a fainting soul, after the Holy Spirit had given him the tongue of the learned. He was able to speak a word in season to the weary, to encourage and treat the wounded hearts, and help the souls who needed to be saved, have victory over sin, or face persecution.

Because Barnabas was a source of encouragement for all, the apostles chose him to visit Antioch and encourage the believers there by his preaching. He went there and encouraged the believers to stand firm in the Lord. And because he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, a great many people were added to the Lord (Acts 11:19-24).

In 1982 I went to Nairobi, Kenya, to attend a conference of ALL AFRICA COUNCIL OF CHURCHES. The rest of the buildings of the counsel needed to be finished. Daniel Arap Moi, Kenya’s president, came to participate in collecting the donations. He entered to the platform on the red carpet for an official reception, which was attended by all the media. He gave a speech that had two main points in it:

1- The Lord Jesus praised the woman who threw in two mites (worth a fraction of a penny) in the offering plate, not because they were worth much, but because they were all that was left with her. After offering them she had *nothing*. For “*She...put in all that she had, her whole livelihood*” (Mark 12:41-44).

2- Do not think that you will enter heaven because you give donation for the building of a church; we enter heaven on the basis of the blood of the Lamb alone, the Lord Jesus Christ, only by grace and through faith.

It was such a beautiful speech; especially since it came from a president of a country. President Moi gave his donation, and then all the attendance gave theirs: thousands and hundreds. After that a young man came up pulling a sheep and wanted to give it as a donation. The Kenyan president stood up and ordered the man to stand with the sheep on the red carpet, and said, "This sheep must be sold by auction." A certain lady paid two thousand Kenyan shillings for it (it was not worth more than two hundred at the time). We were all surprised, however, for the new owner of the sheep said, "This sheep is all what a poor lady owns. She sent it with one of the young people in the church as an offering to the Lord. And now I will bring it back to its original owner because it is all she has."

The Holy Spirit is at work everywhere: in a president of a country, as well as in a poor lady who gave all she had. Between the president and the poor woman there are millions of believers who love the Lord, and give the Holy Spirit the chance to take over their lives, resulting in the production of the fruit of the Spirit: goodness.

Second: Concerning Oneself with Serving the Church

As the Holy Spirit fills our hearts and controls our actions we start doing good works for the Lord Himself, and apply ourselves to His service. The gospels offer us an example of this in the lady who poured a flask of very costly perfume on Christ's head when He was reclining. When Christ's disciples saw she poured perfume, they were indignant and said, "*To what purpose is this waste? For this fragrant oil might have been sold for much and given to the poor.*" But Jesus defended her and said, "*Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a good work for Me.*" She gave her offering and did not seek the approval or the criticism of the spectators. Her judgment of her would not change what she determined to do; for the love of Christ had taken hold of her heart and mind, and there was no longer anyone else to affect her thoughts or feeling but Jesus alone. When she loved Him, she did a good work for Him (Matthew 26:7-13).

Man is wicked by nature and action; his heart is void of all goodness because his soul impels him to do wrong. He cannot do any good unless Christ changes his heart by the work of the Holy Spirit. The natural man, however, does not seek God and is not pleased with His law, even as it is written, *“There none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all gone out of the way; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one”* (Romans 3:10-12). It is every man’s duty to accept Christ’s salvation and be reborn spiritually, from above, by the work of the Holy Spirit. God will recompense those who are born from above, because they will bear the fruit of the Spirit. God *“will render to each one according to his deeds’: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality...glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good”* (Romans 2:6,7,10).

What good things shall *we* do to our good Master? What service shall we offer to Him who came, not to be served, but to serve and give His life a ransom for many (Mark 10:45)?

I hope that the words of Paul apply to all of us: *“We give thanks to God always for you all...remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope”* (1 Thessalonians 1:2,3).

May the Lord help us offer ourselves and all we have to Him, for a good servant invests the talents the Lord has given him in doing good, and he hears his Lord’s approval, saying, *“Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord”* (Matthew 25:21). Will the Lord commend you like this? Will He also say to you, *“I know your work, your labor, your patience...and you have persevered and have patience. and have labored for My name’s sake and have not become weary”*? (Revelation 2:2,3).

A PRAYER

Give me of Your goodness, so that all people should see my good works and glorify You. Help me carry the burdens and cares of others, and be concerned with them. I want to hear You say, *“Well done, good and faithful servant.”* Amen.

ATHE SEVENTH FRUITH

Faith

Paul said, *“Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”* (Romans 10:17). The simplest definition of faith is: Trust and belief in God’s words and promises. When we put our trust in someone we believe what he says. When we believe in the Lord we believe what He says in His word. *“Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen”* (Hebrews 11:1 NASB). Faith means to be sure that what you hope for will come true, and the conviction that what we do not see is actually there. Without faith we cannot please God (Hebrews 11:6).

It is the Holy Spirit who convicts us of the truth of the good news when we hear it and believe it, guides our hearts into all the truth, and make us produce the fruit of faith, which means putting our trust in those who deserve it. If we want to strengthen our faith, let us take God’s revelations as foundation for our trust: *“For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and the comfort of the Scriptures might have hope”* (Romans 15:4).

Faith has three meanings:

- 1- Trusting God’s saving power.
- 2- Dependence upon God’s providing care.
- 3- Faithfulness when dealing with people.

First: Faith is Trusting God’s Saving Power

Who confirms the truth of a message that claims to be from God? It is the Holy Spirit. Before his conversion, Paul persecuted the church and opposed the Christian faith, thinking that in doing so he was offering God service. What induced to change his thinking, so much that he said, *“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief”* (1 Timothy 1:15)? It is the work of the Holy Spirit in his heart and mind, because *“no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit”* (1 Corinthians 12:3).

The Apostle Peter summarized the Christian message in his first sermon on the Day of Pentecost, which he concluded saying, “*Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ*” (Acts 2:36). He said this in a place that was very close to The Mount of Calvary, where Christ was crucified, only fifty days after the episode of crucifixion. He said in very sure tones that God made this crucified Jesus both Lord and Christ. “*Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’ Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*” (Acts 2:37,38). Around three thousand people believed in Christ as Savior that day. There is no doubt that it was the Holy Spirit who convicted the hearers and convinced them of the truth of the message, that they were “*cut to the heart*” and believed the word the Apostle spoke.

A rich young man asked Christ, “*What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?*” (Mark 10: 17). This was a repetition of a question that the Jews had asked before: “*What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?*” Jesus answered and said to them, “*This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent*” (John 6:28,29). The first work we need to do for God is to believe in Jesus Christ, whom the Father sent to us, and to believe that He is the only Savior.

The penitent thief on the cross lifted up a prayer to Christ, and said, “*Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom*” (Luke 23:42). How could that thief perceive what the Jewish priests could not? The answer is, that the Holy Spirit convinced him of every word Christ said regarding Himself, and he was able to see in the person crucified next to him a Lord possessed of a kingdom and an authority to grant entrance into that kingdom. And it is the Holy Spirit who convinces us of the truth of the gospel message, so that when we hear it we believe it and realize it is the truth from God. The gospel is the good news that Christ brought into our world, and we get saved when we receive it.

The Holy Spirit uses many means to convince us of the word of the truth of the gospel: through a sermon, a written message, or a good example of a godly man. The means is important, but the convincing, renewing power comes from the Holy Spirit who draws souls to the knowledge of Christ.

Second: Faith is Dependence on God’s Providing Care

When we trust we can start to depend. You trust that the means of transportation will take you to where you want to go, so you get into it and depend on the driver who drives it. You believe and then rely. Faith means security, and we get that when we rely on God and hold fast to His promises with all our hearts. God said through Isaiah, *“If you do not believe, surely you shall not be established [secure]”* (Isaiah 7:9). When we believe we rest assured, and our hearts fill with faith, because *“Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God”* (Romans 5:1-3).

The Scriptures warn us that *“‘There is no peace,’ Says my God, ‘for the wicked’”* (Isaiah 57:21). The wicked are those who doubt God’s words and do not believe them. The serpent said to Eve, *“Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’”* (Genesis 3:!). The devil made her doubt the words of God. Our first forefathers believed that the devil’s advice would bring them greater happiness and more abundant goodness, so they ate of the tree, lost their peace with God, and were kicked out of the garden.

Peace belongs only to those who are protected in the atonement of Christ, who follow the Holy Spirit’s instructions for their lives; for only they can experience the faith of Abraham who trusted God’s promise to give him a son from Sarah who was barren. Abraham’s faith was strengthened by faith, giving glory to God, and he was sure that God was able to fulfill what He promised to do (Romans 4:20,21). Abraham’s faith was not a result of any physical cause, but was wholly established on God’s promises. After 25 years have gone by since God gave the promise, God gave Abraham a son by Sarah, and they called him “Isaac”, which means “laughter”. Sarah was ninety years old then, and Abraham was an old man of hundred. Isaac was the only son God promised to Abraham, yet he took him to slay him with his own hands, out of love for God and out of obedience to Him. Abraham’s heart was so full of peace, that he started taking this difficult step with no hesitation. He knew that God could raise Isaac from the dead after having been slain (Hebrews 11:19). Isaac asked his father a question that cut his heart like a sword, *“My father...Look, the fire and wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?”* He did not tell his son that *he* was the burnt offering, but simply said, *“My son, God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering”* (Genesis 22:7,8). And indeed God provided a burnt offering that substituted Isaac, and Isaac was redeemed by a great sacrifice!

By analogy, God prepared the great sacrifice of Christ, which was adequate for the redemption of mankind. The prophet Isaiah had foretold it 700 years before it happened, and said, *“He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we were healed”* (Isaiah 53:5). Abraham was justified in the sight of men and his obedience was manifested through his willingness to sacrifice his son. Also he was justified in the sight of God on the basis of Christ’s great sacrifice and redemption. The Apostle James said concerning this point, *“Was not our father Abraham justified by works when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, ‘Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.’”* (James 2:21-23).

When the Holy Spirit works in us, and when we look only at Him, and depend on God’s providing care, we will obey God as Abraham did, no matter the sacrifice, and be justified by the perfect sacrificial justification of Christ.

Peter, together with other fishermen, spent a whole night without catching a single fish. In the morning, Christ ordered Peter to go into the deep and throw the net. Peter said, *“Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net”* (Luke 5:5). Their nets were breaking because of the huge amount of fish they caught, after a long, futile night. How great is the faith that brings security as a natural result of putting our trust in our Lord.

Let us hold fast to God’s promises, and be bold enough to claim the fulfillment of these promises from the Lord. For He is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think (Ephesians 3:20). Let us offer thanksgiving to the Lord for fulfilling His promises to us, even before they are fulfilled, as David also prayed, *“And now, O Lord, the word which You have spoken concerning Your servant, and concerning his house let it be established forever, and do as You have said”* (1 Chronicles 17:23).

The Apostle Paul held fast to God’s promises to him, and said to his companions on the sinking ship, *“There stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve, saying, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you.’ Therefore take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me”* (Acts 27:23,24). As we have put our trust in God’s promises, we depend even more on His providing care and obey the commandment: *“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God”* (Philippians 4:6). *“And those who know Your name will put their trust in You”* (Psalm 9:10).

Third: Faith is Faithfulness with God and Man

We truly need the activity of the Holy Spirit to generate in us faith that will make us faithful in whatever we do, thus fulfilling Christ's advice: *"Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life"* (Revelation 2:10).

The Old Testament gives a biblical example of the faithfulness of workmen. When king Jehoshaphat wanted to restore the temple, Jehoiada the priest brought a chest, bored a hole in its lid, and set it beside the altar so that the people could put their donations in it. Whenever the chest became full of money the king's men would count the money and give it to the workmen to complete the restoration of the house of the Lord. *"Moreover they did not require an account from the men into whose hand they delivered the money to be paid to workmen, for they dealt faithfully"* (2 Kings 12:14,15). Because of their faithfulness, they did not need an accountant or treasurer.

The same thing happened under Josiah. In the eighteenth year of his reign, they collected the money which they were going to use for restoring the house of the Lord and *"let them deliver it into the hand of the those doing the work,... to carpenters and builders and masons- and to buy timber and hewn stone to repair the house. However there need be no accounting made with them of the money delivered into their hand, because they deal faithfully"* (2 Kings 22:3-7). Most probably those workmen did not charge anything for their services, but offered them free to the Lord and to His house. Their love for the Lord was overwhelming and their faithfulness was so great that no one made an accounting with them.

The more we give ourselves over to the Holy Spirit, the more the fruit of faith increases in us, the more we will believe God, find our security and safety with Him, and be more faithful in every work we do for the glory of His name.

A PRAYER

I thank You, Lord, for the grace of faith, which is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. My faith is a gift from You and a result of Your Holy Spirit's work in me. Make me more attached to Your word, because my faith grows stronger when I get to know Your promises and hold fast to them. Grant peace and dependence on Your true and faithful words, that I might be faithful until death, and be given the crown of life. Amen.

AT THE EIGHTH FRUIT

Gentleness

Gentleness is an inner quality of the heart that reveals itself in daily actions. Once a believer said to his gentle and loving leader, “When you are with me I feel that God is pouring honey down my throat!” This means that God blessed that leader with the fruit of the Spirit.

Gentleness means to submit to God with humility. It means to obey His word. Gentleness is characterized by forbearance, tolerance, teachability, and lawful anger against sin, but not against the sinner himself. It is a great fruit of the Holy Spirit, because Jesus used it in describing Himself as He said, “*Learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart*” (Matthew 11:29). Also Paul described Christ with this quality as he said, “*I...am pleading with you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ...*” (2 Corinthians 10:1). The quality of gentleness has been connected to love in 1 Corinthians 4:21, with humility in Ephesians 4:2, and with love and patience in 1 Timothy 6:11.

This great quality is required of all believers; for Christ says, “*Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth*” (Matthew 5:5). The Apostle Paul also says, “*Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering...*” (Colossians 3:12), and says, “*Let your gentleness be known to all men*” (Philippians 4:5). This is a quality of God the Father. David said to Him, “*Your gentleness has made me great*” (Psalm 18:35). As it is also a quality of God the Son (Matthew 11:29) and of God the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:23).

The quality of gentleness is also required of young people; for Paul says to his disciple Timothy, “*Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness*” (1 Timothy 6:11). It is required as an ornament for women “*the ...ornament of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God*” (1 Peter 3:4). This gentleness is also required of leaders, for a leader has to be “*gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous*” (1 Timothy 3:3). This quality was fully developed in Paul, for he said to the Thessalonians, “*But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children*” (1 Thessalonians 2:7).

In order to have the gentleness of Christ we need the control of the Holy Spirit over our lives.

Let us study these three meanings of gentleness:

First: A Gentle Person Submits to the Holy Spirit

A gentle person is a person who submissively and joyfully lets the Holy Spirit take over him to do the will of God. Christ is the best example in this respect. He said, *“Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner”* (John 5:19,20). We may marvel at the fact that the Son submits to the Father, but we must remember that Christ assumed a human nature; He is fully God and fully man. We would be telling the truth if we say that Christ is God, because Christ is *“the Word made flesh”* (John 1:14). And we would be telling the truth if we say that Christ is man, because Christ is *“God manifested in the flesh”* (1 Timothy 3:16). Evidently, a great person can condescend, but a lowly person cannot ascend. The Scriptures say that Christ, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant (Philippians 2:6,7). We might forget Christ’s humanity when we think of His divinity, or forget His divinity when we think of His humanity; yet we must remember that He is the *“Son of God”* and the *“Son of Man”* at the same time. As fully human, He submitted Himself to doing the will of the Father with full volition, and did nothing other than what he saw the Father doing.

The gospels depict man as rebelling against God, not wanting to do His will. But the Holy Spirit impels him to submit to do God’s will joyfully. We can say that the Holy Spirit *“tames”* the rebellious man and makes him meek and good for service. The prophet Hosea described the man who is far away from God as *“stubborn”*, unwilling to be disciplined, but the Lord tames him and lets him forage like a lamb in open country (Hosea 4:16). Yes, the Holy Spirit makes a stubborn man as docile as a lamb, and changes the brutal man and makes him meek and submissive to the divine will. The prophet Hosea continues, saying, *“Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone”* (Hosea 4:17). The idols have bound him and destroyed his life, but God advises that he should be left alone for God’s love to deal with him, making him abandon his stubbornness, rebellion, and bonds, and submit to God.

Let me mention two examples of two people who were rebellious, but the Holy Spirit worked on them and made them meek:

1- Paul: He wrote of himself, *“I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant...for this reason I obtained mercy”* (1 Timothy 1:13-16). The wild became tame, and the stubborn submissive, because the Holy Spirit *“tamed”* him and made him say *“Lord, what do You want me to do?”* (Acts 9:6).

2- Onesimus: He was a runaway slave, who ran from Philemon, his master, and left for Rome after having stolen his master's silver. There he opened his heart to Christ through the evangelism of the Apostle Paul. The Lord tamed him and transformed his life. Paul wrote to Philemon regarding him, "*who once was unprofitable to you, but now is profitable to you and to me*" (Philemon 11). He became profitable to his master, whom he previously robbed, and profitable to Paul, and even able to serve Christ together with him.

When Paul attacked the church, and when Onesimus robbed his master, they were as unruly and riotous as a vehement waterfall. But when the Holy Spirit restrained them, they became like a waterfall that is utilized by engineers to generate electricity and bring light to benefit the people. Every soul that is far away from God is unruly and destructive, but when it gives in to God it bears the fruit of gentleness; and, instead of being destructive, it becomes constructive; instead of uprooting, it plants; instead of cursing, it blesses; and instead of causing darkness, it illuminates.

Second: A gentle Person Opens his Heart to Learn

Jesus was an excellent example on being open to learn when at the age of 12. His parents searched for Him and found Him "*in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions*" (Luke 2:46,47). Here we see Christ's divinity as He asked the Jewish religious teachers, astounding them because of His understanding and answers, as well as His humanity as He listened to them, trying to increase in knowledge.

The Apostle James said, "*Receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your soul*" (James 1:21). A meek, gentle person will open his heart to learn, but a foolish one will reject that. A gentle man is like a sponge that imbibes, because he wants to be filled to the brim. "*How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You. Blessed are You, O Lord! Teach me Your statutes. With my lips I have declared all the judgments of Your mouth. I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches. I will meditate on Your precepts, and contemplate Your ways. I will delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word*" (Psalm 119:9-16).

The Holy Spirit teaches us how to benefit from God's word, reminds us of every thing that Jesus said, and guides us into all the truth (John 16:13). Therefore we seek more knowledge by sitting down before the Bible as little children, opening our eyes, ears, and hearts to hear the stories that tell of God's way of dealing with His people, and asking again to hear what we have already heard, without boredom. May God help us take Mary, Martha's sister, as our example, who sat at Jesus' feet and listened to His words. On the other hand, Martha spent her time in preparing food for Jesus and being physically hospitable to Him. As Martha complained to Christ of her sister Mary, because she left her to serve alone, Christ answered her, "*You are worried and troubles about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her*" (Luke 10:38-42).

Third: A gentle Person Gets Angry for a Lawful Reason

There is wise advice that says, "*As soft answer turns away wrath*" (Proverbs 15:1), and another that says, "*By long forbearance a ruler is persuaded, and a gentle tongue breaks a bone*" (Proverbs 25:15). Yet, we have an apostolic advice that says, "*Be angry and do not sin*" (Ephesians 4:26). This advice is quoted from Psalm 4:4, where it says, "*Tremble and do not sin*" (NASB). So there is a forbidden anger, and there is a lawful one, that may reach the point of trembling, for the sake of goodness, peace, and well-being. A gentle person may have the latter, but not the former.

Our example of lawful, holy anger is Christ Jesus; which He expressed several times:

He was angry twice at the merchants who defiled the Lord temple and turned it into a market place, which was done by agreement with the priests. The first time was at the commencement of His ministry, and the second was at its end (John 2:13-22; Luke 19:45-48). At the first cleansing of the temple Jesus made a whip of rope and said, "*Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise.*" At the second cleansing He did not beat with the whip, but only said, "*It is written, 'My house is a house of prayer,' but you have made it a 'den of thieves.'*" At the first cleansing the men demanded from Him a sign to show them the authority He had to cleanse the temple; at the second they conspired to kill Him. After the first cleansing Christ left Jerusalem for Judea; after the second He was lifted on the cross.

Christ was angry when the Jewish religious leaders brought Him a man with a withered hand to heal him on the Sabbath to see if He would heal him on that day, which would prove that He broke the commandment of the Sabbath. He said to them, *“Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil?”* They kept silent. So He looked around Him in anger and sadness for the hardness of their hearts, and said to the man, *“Stretch out your hand.”* And He stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other (Mark 3:1-5).

It is not a gentle person who gets angry for his own interest; a gentle person gets angry for the truth. The gospels show us that we should be positive and active in the Lord’s service. There is a holy jealousy that is according to knowledge, unlike the ignorant jealousy which is against the Spirit of Christ. Disciplining our children is another example of gentleness that gets angry lawfully. For when one of our children makes a mistake, we get angry because of the mistake they made, and punish them, not because we hate them, but because we want to straighten them out and correct them.

There is an advice that says you should not discipline your child when you are angry, because your child will not keep his temper in the presence of a father who lost his! You should calm down first before you punish him. The parents should agree on how to discipline their children. So when a child makes a mistake, the parent should calm down, then explain to the child what he did wrong, and ask him how he would like to get punished. And if the child cries when punished, the parent should hold him (or her) and kiss him. The parent should tell them that he punished them because he loved them. He should keep on holding the child till he calms down, in order to feel loved, cared for, and accepted, and that he got punished only for the mistake he did. The parent should tell him he loves him, but that he hates the mistake he did. Every father and mother, whose lives and emotions have come under the influence of the Holy Spirit, can apply this educational advice.

And in order for anger to be lawful let me remind you again of the apostolic commandment: *“Be angry and do not sin’, do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil”* (Ephesians 4:26,27).

The big question is: who can be angry and does not sin? And the big answer is: The one who entirely gives himself over to the Holy Spirit’s activity and gives in to His guidance.

A PRAYER

Gentle Lord, make me submit to your good will and uproot any disobedience in me, so that I may become meek and accept Your word that has been planted in my heart and act on it. Lord, let my submission to You and make my love for Your word grow. And if I should get angry, let my anger be only for Your glory, not due selfish and sinful fury. Do not let the sun go down on my wrath, that I may not give place to the devil. Amen.

ATHE NINTH FRUITH

Self-control

Self-control (or temperance) means putting one's emotions under the power of the Spirit-controlled intellect. Plato said, "A self-controlled man has conquered the desires of his own soul and overcome its love for pleasures." But Plato did not tell us how to have control over ourselves. The Stoics (the followers of Zeno) at the time of Apostle Paul tried to control themselves to show their willpower, but they said, "When we cannot do what we want, we want to do what we can." The Stoics have exerted their personal efforts and willpower to be self-controlled, but when their wills failed to control their lusts, they reconciled to themselves to accept what they could not accomplish.

The Bible, on the other hand, tells us that human nature is corrupt, that man is dead in sins and trespasses, and that he cannot bear good fruit unless Jesus saves him and the Holy Spirit sanctifies and possesses him, making him fruitful, even as Christ said, "*You did not choose Me, but I choose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain*" (John 15:16). So we bear this blessed fruit because of Christ's election of us, and His revival of us from the death of our sins. Every believer can be self-controlled when he responds to the activity of the Holy Spirit in him, thus becoming able to rule over himself by the power of the Holy Spirit who controls him.

The word "temperate" occurs in the Bible in relation to the athlete who controls himself in all things to win the prize. It says, "*Everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things*" (1 Corinthians 9:25).

The word of God shows us that every believer is like a runner who competes in a race, and that he has to take care of many things that an ordinary person would not pay attention to. He has to be careful with the kind and the amount of food he eats, so that he should not put on weight. He should take care of his resting times in order to be in perfect shape, and he should regularly and diligently practice in order to be fit. In short, he controls himself in all things.

Every Christian is running in a continual spiritual race, pushing on toward the goal, reaching out for winning the heavenly prize. Consequently he has to be temperate and to bear the fruit of the Spirit: Self-control (1 Corinthians 9:24-27). Peter wrote to the believers, “*Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (2 Peter 1:5-8).

Paul commanded that the believer should overcome his lust and have temperance (1 Corinthians 7:9). He spoke of wanting to betroth a chaste (temperate) virgin to Christ, which was the congregation of believers, having not been contaminated till the day of her union with Christ, her bridegroom and Savior, comes (2 Corinthians 11:2).

Here are some actions in which we should control ourselves:

First: Self-control in Speech

We all need temperance when we speak. We achieve this by controlling our tongues. A self-controlled man will only speak things that are good for necessary edification, that it might impart grace to the hearers (Ephesians 4:29).

The Apostle James wrote in his Second Epistle that man could control, tame, and use many creatures and beasts, but could not control his own tongue. The tongue still defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. Obviously, we cannot control our tongues until the Holy Spirit controls us, and then our tongues!

The Apostle says that the tongue is very small in size, but so great in effect. He compares it to three things: A small bit which we place in the mouth of a big horse to drive it easily wherever we want it to go; with a small rudder that adjusts the direction of a huge ship; and a little fire that burns a great deal of fuel. The tongue is a small member, but it has a great effect: it just says something and causes disaster, and says something else and causes a blessing. “*Death and life are in the power of the tongue*” (Proverbs 18:21). With the same tongue we bless God the Father and curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God! How can fresh water and bitter water come forth from the same opening? How can the same tongue bless and curse at the same time? This is, indeed, an extraordinary phenomenon that is not found in the natural world; for a fruit tree always bears fruit. It cannot yield fruit one day, and thorns the other. The same spring cannot send forth fresh and bitter water together! Yet, the same person may speak sweet words now, and after a few minutes bitter ones!

Discussing family responsibilities the Apostle Peter speaks first to wives, and then to husbands. He says to the husbands that quarrels at home hinder the answers to their prayers. Then he says, *“All of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing. For ‘He who would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking guile; let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to his prayers; but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil’”* (1 Peter 3:7-12).

God wants to bless us with the grace of a temperate tongue, so that we may answer a curse with a blessing, that God may turn the curse into a blessing for us. Solomon said, *“He who guards his mouth preserves his life, but he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction”* (Proverbs 13:3). As he also said, *“Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from trouble”* (Proverbs 21:23).

How great is the loss of those who have a loose tongue! And how exorbitant is the price they pay for their slip of tongue! Let us attend to the apostolic commandment: *“Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath”* (James 1:19). The wise men have said that God gave two ears and one mouth, so as to hear twice more than to speak. They also said that he placed the ears outside the body, and placed the tongue behind two gates, that is the jaws and the lips, so that man might have time to think before he speaks. Therefore the Psalmist says, *“I said, ‘I will guard my ways, lest I sin with my tongue...I will restrain my mouth with a muzzle, while the wicked are before me”* (Psalm 39:1). The Psalmist prayed: *“Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer”* (Psalm 19:14).

Second: Self-control in Eating

As the Holy Spirit controls our lives, He makes us temperate when having food. Some folk eat too much, while others do not have enough to eat. Those who eat more than their bodies need spend their money and effort later on trying to lose weight. Well, they did not need to do either! He who is controlled by the Holy Spirit, however, eats to live, and looks after his body because it is a holy temple of the Lord. He does not live just to eat and fill the needs of his body.

Solomon, who is the epitome of wisdom, instructed that one should be temperate and disciplined when having food. He said, *“Put a knife to your throat if you are a man given to appetite...Have you found honey? Eat only as much as you need, lest you be filled with it and vomit”* (Proverbs 23:2; 25:16). Christ also demanded His disciples to be temperate and warned them of the things that hindered their being ready for His second coming; which are the love of the world, luxury, physical pleasure, and being preoccupied with the affairs of this life. He said, *“Take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down by carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day [the Day of Judgment] come on you unexpectedly”* (Luke 21:34).

Let me mention two examples about self-control with regard to eating:

1- The Rechabites: They were the sons of Rechab. They made a covenant with their father not to drink wine and to live in the open, and abided by their covenant. God commanded the prophet Jeremiah to test their loyalty to their father’s commandment by calling them into a room of the temple and offering them wine to drink. Although it was a prophet who gave them the command they refused it and held fast to their fathers’ covenant. God told the prophet that the sons of Rechab were more faithful to their covenant with their father than the children of Israel were to theirs with the Lord (Jeremiah 35). They were temperate in spite of the authority that gave them the command to drink wine!

2- Daniel: He was taken as captive to the king’s palace in Babylon. He was forced to eat food that his conscience was not comfortable with and to drink things that were forbidden by the Mosaic law. If Daniel had wanted to eat or drink those things he would have found some convincing excuses. But *“Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank”* (Daniel 1:8). God honored Daniel as much as he honored God. We are in a desperate need to bear this fruit of the Spirit: self-control. Then we will keep away from doing wrong and be in full control of ourselves.

Third: Self-control in Dealing with Others

The Bible demands from us to be temperate in all our dealings and to control ourselves when we are angry. Solomon said, *“He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city (Proverbs 16:32). A military leader may invade a city, overcome his enemies, and take the city. But unless he rules his spirit and overcomes his anger and temperament he will surely lose what he has got.*

Solomon said also, *“Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down, without walls”* (Proverbs 25:28). If you have no control over your spirit you are like a devastated city, without walls, vulnerable to attack at any moment, and ready to fall without resistance, because it is not protected.

All those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit are also temperate in sexual matters. The Apostle commanded, *“Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge”* (Hebrews 13:4). This is possible even under hard circumstances. Joseph was a slave in the house of Potiphar, the captain of the Egyptian guard, and Potiphar’s wife tried to seduce him, but he said to her, *“Look, my master does not know what is with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand. There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?”* (Genesis 39:8,9). Joseph was only a captive and a slave; if he wanted to sin he would have found enough reasons to excuse himself and pacify his conscience. But the work of the Holy Spirit within him kept him from committing sin.

The Holy Spirit controlled Paul’s actions. As he stood before the governor Felix for the charge of defiling the Jewish temple, he defended himself and told the governor about righteousness, self-control, and the coming condemnation, which terrified Felix. He stood in chains as a prisoner before the governor himself, but his chains bound him only on the outside, but on the inside he was free because he knew the truth of God, and this truth set him free (John 8:32). Felix the governor sat on the judgment seat, and beside him was his Jewish wife Drusilla, whom he had enticed and taken from her legal husband. Felix was a slave to lust, cruelty, and bribery. So he, the governor, was terrified of Paul, the prisoner. But the prisoner did not even flinch. The governor left the prisoner in jail because he wanted to receive a bribe from him, although he had much already! Paul, although poor in possessions, was temperate and rich in God. The governor, although rich in possessions, was poor on the inside. Felix ended up in destruction because he did not control himself, and the Apostle Paul will remain in divine glory because he realized that the fruit of the Spirit is self-control (Acts 24:24-26).

* * *

Every born-again believer is dwelt in by the Holy Spirit, but not every born-again believer is filled with the Spirit. Therefore, we as believers differ from each other in terms of bearing the fruit of the Spirit; some of us bear thirty percent, others sixty percent, and others may bear a hundred percent (Matthew 13:23). When our dedication for God decreases and our love for Him grows lukewarm, also our spiritual fruit decreases. But the heavenly Father watches

us always, advising us, reminding us of His words, and demanding from us to bear the nine-fold fruit of the Spirit.

A PRAYER

Lord, by the power of Your Holy Spirit put my emotions under the authority of my intellect, which is enlightened by Your word and the guidance of Your Holy Spirit. Lord, without You I can do nothing to restrain my anger and control my feelings. Give me the mind of Christ, and control my heart, tongue, and body to do Your will always. Amen.

Quiz

- 1- Why was Christianity called “the Way”?
- 2- What is spiritual ignorance?
- 3- What does “the hardness of the heart” mean?
- 4- What does it mean to put off the old man?
- 5- What is the renewal of the mind?
- 6- What are the damages of lying?
- 7- How can you get angry without sinning?
- 8- What stops a thief from stealing and makes him do good to help others?
- 9- List five titles of the Holy Spirit together with their biblical references.
- 10- Prove that the Holy Spirit is an equal divine person to the Father and the Son.
- 11- What are the points of similarity between the spirit and the wind?
- 12- How does the Holy Spirit give new birth?
- 13- Write down Acts 2:38 and explain it.
- 14- What are the keys to your life that you should give to God?
- 15- What are the two necessary conditions for being filled with the Holy Spirit? Write down the Bible references.
- 16- Which commandment is the first of all? Write down the reference and explain why it is so.
- 17- Write down three ways of showing your love for God.
- 18- How do you show love for the poor?
- 19- How do you show your love for your enemy?
- 20- How does the Holy Spirit produce in you love for you family?
- 21- How could Paul and Silas sing in the prison?
- 22- Write down Habakkuk 3:17,18 and explain the two verses.
- 23- Based on Luke 10:20, what is the greatest reason for rejoicing? How can you get that?
- 24- Write down Psalm 126:5,6 and explain the causes of joy in the two verses.

25- Our life is like a ship on the sea of life. What are the three dangers that threaten it? How do we avoid them?

26- Explain the following statement: "If longsuffering influences people, our earth will become heaven."

27- How did God's kindness appear to sinners? How do we show that?

28- Based on Genesis 32:9-12, how did God show His kindness toward Jacob?

29- Goodness is love in action. How can you show goodness in your life?

30- "Faith" has three meanings. What are they? Give an illustration of each one of them.

31- "Gentleness" has three meanings. What are they? Give an illustration of each.

32- How can you be temperate in speech?

33- How can you be temperate in eating?

34- Who are the Rechabites, and what is great about them?

35- Write down Proverbs 25:28 and explain what it means.

