

Trees are known by their fruits! And Christians are known by the fruits of God's holy spirit working in them!

The fruits of God's spirit are listed in Galatians 5:22-23: "Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law."

These fruits stand in sharp contrast to the "works of the flesh," listed in verses 19-21: "Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like."

Of these God warns, "Those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God!"

We cannot see electricity, yet we can see what it does. In the same way, we cannot see God's holy spirit, which is God's own mind and power. Yet the fruits of the spirit are just as evident spiritually in converted Christians as the effects of electricity are physically in the world around us.

Beginning with this issue of *The Good News*, an entire series of important articles will examine the fruits of God's holy spirit in detail. They are living power every Christian needs to "overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:21).

What about the first fruit of God's spirit—love?

Where is the love of God?

This world is on fire! Trouble spots are everywhere. War and terrorism rob the world of peace. Starvation stalks millions. Crime, family strife and mental illness afflict individuals. In such a setting as this, many ask, quite understandably, where is the love of God? If God is love, why is there so much violence and ugliness in the world?

Love, the first fruit of God's spirit, means doing what pleases God and what serves our fellowman. Love is rooted in good deeds and works. Love is a gift of God.

But this world has rejected God

Fruits of the Spirit

Are You Expressing the Love of God?

Why is love the most important fruit of God's spirit? Are you bearing this fruit in abundance? A new series of articles begins.

and His love! The result is the evil world we live in!

Only God's called people can understand God's love and live God's way of love now.

God's love revealed

God's love is not the fickle, selfish attitude that masquerades as love today. The attitude of the "me" generation is not true love. Despots do not dispense godly love. Rioters do not express godly love.

Millions have heard what is perhaps the Bible's best-known verse, John 3:16: "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." But few really understand this scripture. Many churchgoers are familiar with the little song that goes, "Jesus loves the little children." But if He does, why does He allow their parents to abuse them? If He does, why does He allow nations to send them to the front lines in war?

The fact is that for the present, God has a hands-off policy with this world. He most certainly does not approve of the way the world is living. But He is allowing the world to go its own way and experience the bitter suffering that comes from rejecting the sweet fruits of God's spirit.

For more information, write for a free copy of our booklet *Is God Trying to Save the World Now?*

John 3:17 says God has proven

His love for humanity because "God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, in the same corruptible flesh that we live in today. Why? So Christ could carve out the way of salvation—deliverance. Notice Romans 5:8: "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

God's action clearly demonstrates the living definition of love—a sincere concern and action to produce the lasting welfare of others.

Have you rejected God's love?

God's love—His way of outgoing concern—can be rejected by the loved party. This is what mankind, under Satan's influence, has done. Satan, the god of this age (II Corinthians 4:4), has convinced mankind that it is God whose ways are unequal—that God is at fault—that God is to blame for the world's troubles.

But the Bible reveals the truth. God, in His love, has granted humanity free moral agency. Why? He desires to share what He is—love. But love must be freely chosen. Man has chosen to reject God and His revealed knowledge. So true godly love—and the beautiful results it would produce—have been hidden from mankind.

John, called "the apostle of love," noted why. Few lay down

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their lives—give of their time and energies in a selfless manner:

“And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 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? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth” (I John 3:16-18).

“Greater love has no man than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends,” says John 15:13. This certainly is not a battle cry for war! It is God’s explanation of how the godly should live—how Christians should give their lives daily for the safety and success and joy of others.

God is the very personification of love. It is His dominant quality (I John 4:8). The original Greek word for this type of love is *agape*.

God is love

God has shown the remarkable quality of His love in creation. The earth—without the effects of man’s abuse—is a marvelous habitation for mankind. God provided everything for our health, pleasure and well-being. But above all this, God made man like Himself (Genesis 1:26)—

with a great capacity to love.

The love of God, imparted by God’s holy spirit, is based on obedience to God’s law (I John 5:3). “He who loves another has fulfilled the law,” says Romans 13:8. “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments” (I John 5:3). God’s love expresses itself in right attitudes and actions. One who expresses God’s love is becoming like God.

God’s love is manifested, first, in wholehearted devotion toward God, and then by an intense concern for fellow humans (Matthew 22:37-40). The fruit of love, imparted by God’s spirit, works no ill to anybody (Romans 13:10).

God’s love is explained in the “love chapter” of the Bible—I Corinthians 13:

“Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (I Corinthians 13:4-7). Love never fails (verse 8). What you give in love lasts. Unselfish, freely given devotion to righteousness and the

lasting good of others is the greatest spiritual gift of all (verse 13).

Freely give God the praise He deserves for what He has done. Freely give love to your neighbor equal to love for yourself. And love even your enemies (Matthew 5:44-45). Pray that they can enjoy the same fruits of God’s spirit as you do, and treat them the way you would like to be treated (Matthew 7:12). Overcome envy by enjoying others’ success. Overcome selfish interest by showing concern for your fellowman. Don’t rejoice in the calamities of others, but rather rejoice when truth triumphs.

“My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue [don’t just say you love], but in deed and in truth [prove your love by actually serving others]” (I John 3:18).

Think how different the world would be without murder, theft, adultery and all the other evils that selfishness and hatred produce. What a change God’s law of love would make.

God does not presently force this world to follow what He is—love. We who are called must decide for ourselves, freely choosing the way of love.

Love is the way all who enter God’s Kingdom will live forever! □

In his epistle to the Galatians, chapter 5, verse 22, the apostle Paul lists the fruits—or characteristics—of a mind led by the spirit of God. The second of these is joy.

Joy isn't just happiness. Paul is referring to something much greater than the joy generated by human emotions in a human mind.

The joy that comes as a fruit of God's spirit is different. Do you know how it is different? And most important, do you know how *you* can experience it?

Joy is the easiest of emotions to experience when everything is going right. But there are also the hard times in life. This is an imperfect and frequently tragic world. Some of its wretchedness is bound to break on our emotional shores sooner or later.

Hard times and setbacks can stop us in our tracks and plunge us into the depths of depression. Then, frustration, misery and even despair seem to be the logical emotions to display. That's when we need God's help in being joyful, positive and constructive about our lives.

A Christian life must be spent going forward, growing in grace and knowledge, not wrapped up in a ball of misery. God knows that. That's why, as one of the fruits of the holy spirit, He gives us joy.

A lesson in joy

Some years ago I had an experience that taught me an important lesson about joy. It was in Calcutta, India, on what I thought was going to be one of the most *joyless* days of my life.

Calcutta is a sinkhole of human misery. Millions of its inhabitants live in horrendous slums. Countless thousands eke out a wretched existence on a few square feet of sidewalk.

Even for the able-bodied and sound-minded, life in Calcutta can be a continual trial. For the handicapped and retarded, it must be unspeakably dreadful. But it was the handicapped and retarded that I had come to see.

I had learned of a remarkable group of handicapped people who

Fruits of the Spirit

Reflecting True Joy in Your Life

Yes! You can experience real joy—even in severe trials. Our series continues.

had banded together in a courageous attempt to survive. A friend recommended that I visit them.

As my taxi plunged further into the maze of ramshackle streets lined with squalid shacks and hovels, and teeming with gaunt and ragged people, I wondered what I had got myself into.

I found the group I was looking for in a broken-down old building. I was greeted by a man who had no hands, who introduced me to his friend, who had no legs. Several physically handicapped and mentally retarded girls were working at old foot-operated sewing machines. A strong but retarded boy was packing envelopes into a box. A blind man squatted on the floor, trying to unravel a tangled mess of old electrical cable.

All together, about a dozen people were working in that small, stifling, hot room. Each one lacked something—limbs, mental capacity or some of the five senses. But they all had one thing in common: They were cheerful. That dingy room was a joyful place.

In Calcutta, even the able-bodied often resort to begging to survive. But these people wanted to work instead. Individually it was hopeless, but by pooling their resources, they did make up several complete human beings.

A man paralyzed from the waist down could be propped up at a bench to make envelopes. The strong boy who was slow mentally

could be taught to fetch and carry. The old blind man still had nimble fingers.

A woman who had once been a fine seamstress, until an accident mangled her arms, still had her mind. She could supervise the deformed and retarded girls as they did the work.

The man with no arms had a strong pair of legs. The others draped him with bags full of the things they had made, and off he would go to the local merchants and bring back the earnings.

In this way, this brave little band of people had stayed busy and maintained their dignity. And they were happy! These people faced a situation that could have plunged them into the most depressing misery, but they decided instead to make the most of it.

They weren't kidding themselves that things were better than they were. They were facing facts.

Get the facts

Often, we try to pump joy into ourselves (and others) with contrived cheerfulness. "Come on, cheer up," we say. "It's not so bad." That may be avoiding the facts. That kind of joy doesn't last.

When Jesus encouraged His disciples the night before He was crucified, He wanted to help them face the future with genuine confidence. "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may *remain* in you," He said (John 15:11).

Jesus realized that the loyal little team He had built was about to face some major traumas. For three years they had enjoyed His company, learning from Him. With His guidance and support, they had begun to experience a new way of life.

The years had been good. But now it looked as if something had gone terribly wrong. Jesus said He was going away. He had hinted that one of them was going to betray Him. He even said Peter would deny Him three times. It was unsettling. Soon the whole group was worried and confused.

Jesus saw this: "Because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart" (John 16:6). Jesus needed to encourage them. But He didn't just slap them on the back and tell them to cheer up. He knew that to have real joy in the face of adversity, you must face the facts.

So Jesus explained the situation. Yes, He was going away. But what would seem like a catastrophe would be the best thing that could happen. He would be returning to heaven, to direct operations from there. The circumstances might seem to have changed, but nothing substantial had been altered.

He would still be with them, supporting, guiding and teaching.

And they would still be working together. In fact, they would be accomplishing even more, now that He was back with the Father. They would have access to the holy spirit, and that would lead them into more understanding.

Look beyond the present

Jesus taught His disciples to look through the immediate adverse circumstances so that they could continue to be constructive and positive. It was a lesson they learned well.

"Count it all joy," the apostle James could write later, "when you fall into various trials" (James 1:2).

"Do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you," Peter wrote during some difficult times (I Peter 4:12), "but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy" (verse 13).

"You . . . joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods," Paul wrote in Hebrews 10:34, "knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven." They saw through the problem. It was a trial, not a catastrophe.

The apostles reminded the early

Christians that, in spite of trials and persecution, they still had the Kingdom of God. They still had work to do. And—very important—they still had each other. "I have no greater joy," wrote the apostle John (III John 4), "than to hear that my children walk in truth."

Joy is not just a fringe benefit of the holy spirit, given only so that *you* can feel better. It must flow through you, so that the joy you feel will also be felt by others. Once you have let God, with His spirit, cheer you up, you then can help others in the same way (II Corinthians 1:3-4).

Have you ever tried to comfort someone who has been through some terrible trial only to come away feeling inspired yourself? Their courage and cheerfulness, which came through accepting the facts, has been passed on to you.

This world is in for some tough times. Before it is over, there will be tribulation and trials such as never before. It will not be pleasant. But God's people have all the facts. They know that the death throes of this world are also the birth pangs of the world tomorrow.

So when those times come, they, with the help of the holy spirit, will be able to "Rejoice in that day and leap for joy!" (Luke 6:23). □

Have you ever overheard a lament such as this? "How in the world can I enjoy any peace in my life when all I ever see is trouble?"

Maybe you have felt this way yourself.

Is it really possible to enjoy true peace that lasts longer than a few fleeting moments?

The simple answer is yes. But getting to that *yes* means a little work, a little self-control, a little help from a power greater than yourself.

But you can get there—you can have lasting peace!

In this third article in our series on the fruits of God's holy spirit (Galatians 5:22-23), we will explore the ingredients that make up peace and how you and those with whom you come into contact can benefit from the peace of a loving God.

The source of strife

This world desperately needs and desires peace. But why is peace so elusive?

U.S. General Douglas MacArthur, at the end of World War II, cautioned: "Men since the beginning of time have sought peace. Various methods through the ages have been attempted to devise an international process to prevent or settle disputes between nations. . . . Military alliances, balances of power, leagues of nations, all in turn failed, leaving the only path to be by way of the crucible of war.

"The utter destructiveness of war now blots out this alternative. We have had our last chance. If we will not devise some greater and more equitable system, Armageddon will be at the door.

"The problem basically is theological and involves a spiritual recrudescence and improvement of human character that will synchronize with our almost matchless advances in science, art, literature and all material and cultural developments of the past 2,000 years. *It must be of the spirit if we are to save the flesh*" (*Reminiscences*).

That is the key to lasting peace! General MacArthur hit on it,

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You CAN Have Peace of Mind

Even in this world of hatred, violence and war, you can enjoy lasting peace that surpasses all human understanding.

precisely. The way to peace is *through the spirit*, not of the flesh.

So why, then, doesn't man just change his attitude and practice peace with his brother?

Strange as it may seem, there is a mighty force at work on this earth whose avowed purpose is to annihilate human life from the planet (Isaiah 14:12). Satan the devil is the author of contention, fighting and war. Christ said Satan's purpose is only "to steal, and to kill, and to destroy" (John 10:10).

Satan has influenced men to argue, fight, war and kill one another. He has deceived the nations into thinking that might makes right—that "survival of the fittest" is the way to peace.

And now man has the power to wipe all life from the face of the earth. History proves that man has never invented a weapon he has not used. Unless God intervenes soon, man is doomed to destroy himself!

Where does this leave you and me? Is there some way whereby we can overcome Satan's influence, which taints our thoughts and sways our actions?

God's peace is available

Jesus Christ, shortly before His crucifixion, explained to His disciples that His lasting peace was to be theirs: "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).

Christ's peace is different from this world's brand of peace. His peace surpasses human understanding. It guards our hearts and minds (Philippians 4:7). It is based on God's great purpose.

God's purpose for humanity is that we enjoy eternal life in peace. God is the author of peace (I Corinthians 14:33). He wants to give peace to mankind. Peace is not inherent within man's nature (Isaiah 59:8).

Now how can we receive, enjoy and practice God's peace?

A fruit of God's spirit

A change of heart is needed in man, as General Douglas MacArthur suggested.

Christ is the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6). He is willing to give you God's lasting peace. But you need to go to God the Father and ask Him for true peace. It is a fruit of God's holy spirit (Galatians 5:22).

The Bible is filled with helpful instructions on down-to-earth ways we can secure peace. We should avail ourselves of these words of wisdom so we can apply them!

Humility precedes peace. Humility is the opposite of pride. And pride breeds contention (Proverbs 13:10).

"Depart from evil, and do good;

seek peace, and pursue it" (Psalm 34:14). God tells us to consciously avoid evil, to seek and pursue peace.

"When a man's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him" (Proverbs 16:7). God honors those who honor Him. We honor God by obeying His Ten Commandments (Exodus 20), which define the way of peace.

"Great peace have those who love Your law, and nothing causes them to stumble" (Psalm 119:165). Not only will you enjoy peace among your friends, but God can cause even your enemies—those who despise you, gossip about you and assassinate your character—to be at peace with you.

"The beginning of strife is like releasing water; therefore stop contention before a quarrel starts" (Proverbs 17:14). Nip contention in the bud before it gains a head of steam. Humility is the key. Pride is the culprit. Prayer makes the difference. You must see it coming before it arrives or you will become part of quarrels before you know it. Ask God for help in this.

"It is honorable for a man to stop striving, since any fool can

start a quarrel" (Proverbs 20:3). This world, steeped in pride, falsely believes that you are a coward if you don't strike back against any putdown. Not true. This is of Satan the devil. Christ didn't conduct Himself this way.

Proverbs 15:1 tells us, "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." Before you know it, other people will notice the control you have over your emotions. They will want to be like you. Your reputation will become highly regarded by your family and friends.

It just takes a little diligent attention to these critical areas to experience the joy of God's peace. And you will help others in the process.

Christ exhorts us to have peace with one another (Mark 9:50). He said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (Matthew 5:9).

Through Paul, Christ urges us to follow after the things that make for peace (Romans 14:19). He instructs us to esteem others better than ourselves and to look out for the interests of others (Philippians 2:3-4). He commands us to "do good to all, es-

pecially to those who are of the household of faith"—to other members of God's Church (Galatians 6:10). This promotes peace.

Peacemakers are powerful people. They please God and persuade men. Because they are meek, they shall "inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace" (Psalm 37:11). This is how you can enjoy lasting peace in the midst of hatred, violence and war. God the Father sent His Son, the Prince of Peace, to give His peace to us in the Church, now, and to the rest of mankind soon.

Pursue peace

Don't forget your immediate family. This is where you start. Practice peacemaking with them first, last and always. Overcoming in this area will make it much easier to make peace outside your home.

Keep in touch with God, the greatest peacemaker of all. And don't forget to thank Him for His lasting peace that He gives to you.

God has called you to be a peacemaker. Love Him for it, rejoice in it and pass His peace to others! □

As I neared the pedestrian crosswalk at the corner, the traffic light began to flash "DON'T WALK."

I was in a hurry to get to the bank, but I knew that I should nevertheless keep the law. I reluctantly waited.

Perhaps, I hoped, I wouldn't have to wait long in the bank. Then, in the small fraction of a second that thoughts take, I thought I had reason to hope. Doesn't God bless those who please Him? Perhaps I would be blessed by not having to wait a long time.

Then, in the next fraction of a second, I realized that although I was waiting, I was not waiting patiently. In my mind, I was still in a hurry. I could not expect to be blessed for patience. Appropriately enough, it was while I was waiting that I realized a little better what patience is.

Patience is an attitude

Patience, the apostle Paul wrote, is one of the fruits or results of God's spirit (Galatians 5:22). If we allow God to develop His own nature in us, we'll be more like Him, and that includes patience. Not just acting patient, but actually *being* patient.

So what is patience? Dictionaries tell us that patience is "the capacity, habit or fact of bearing pains or trials calmly or without complaint." Two things are involved: 1) being in an unpleasant situation, and 2) being calm about it.

Consider the mildly unpleasant but common situation of waiting for service, perhaps in a store or government agency. Most people prefer to pass their time in more interesting and comfortable activities. But most people realize that waiting is the only way to get the particular service they want.

It really irritates some people, though. They fidget and squirm, fume and curse. Others fume inside, harming their own health and peace of mind, but at least they have learned that it does no good to share their bitterness with others. And a few have learned to be truly patient in such situations.

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Why Wait? The Reward of Patience Comes Instantly!

True patience produces a reward we don't have to wait for. Waiting, by itself, is not enough.

Whether they have something important to do or not, patient people make the best of a less-than-best situation. Instead of thinking about the inconveniences that the situation may have given them, patient people find a way to use the time profitably. Perhaps they think about possible solutions to a problem at work, perhaps observe the often interesting actions of others or meditate on laws and principles of human behavior.

When trials hit

We must learn to be patient in good times. But we must also learn to be patient in times of trial. Jesus, while warning His disciples that they would be persecuted, said, "In your patience possess your souls" (Luke 21:19).

The apostle James wrote: "Count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing" (James 1:2-4). To be people God wants in His Kingdom, we must be patient.

The word *patience* here is translated from the Greek word *hupomone*, which means "cheerful or hopeful endurance, patient waiting." It comes from root words meaning "remain under."

Some trials and persecutions we can do nothing about; we must simply remain under them, patiently, until the trials are over. As best we can, we should endure them cheerfully.

Cheer is easier to endure than bitterness and self-pity. It sets a better example for others (including, perhaps, those who may have caused our trials or persecutions). And cheerfulness helps us have a more positive approach to our problems.

Of course, if there is something we can do about the problem, then we should do so. For example, if we are unemployed, we should try to find another source of income. We may not find it immediately, so we need to patiently continue looking. Patience does not mean that we should sit around waiting when we should be working.

When our problems seem too large for us to handle, they may indeed be. Through our High Priest Jesus Christ, we can ask God the Father for His help. If it is urgent, He'll intervene right away.

If our problem isn't urgent, God may make us wait but at least we know, by His non-intervention, that the problem isn't quite as urgent as we may have thought. This also requires patience. "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for

Him; do not fret" (Psalm 37:7).

Jesus told us to pray with persistence (Luke 18:1-8), but this does not mean impatience. With patient persistence, we show that we still want God's solution to the problem calmly assured that God knows what is best for us, and when.

"God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted [tested with trials] beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (I Corinthians 10:13).

If God does not solve the problem right away, He will at least help us have the patience we need to cope with it cheerfully.

Patience with ourselves

When we think of patience, we usually think of enduring situations and other people. But we also need patience with ourselves. Some people get frustrated when they can't learn to play the piano, for example, in one month. Some are frustrated when they don't grow spiritually as fast as they would like.

We need not lose our zeal for personal improvement or spiritual growth, but it doesn't help any to get frustrated when it doesn't happen overnight. God is the one doing the work (Philippians 2:13), and as we learn to cooperate with Him, He will complete His work in us (Philippians 1:6). God gives "eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good

seek for glory, honor, and immortality" (Romans 2:7).

"Do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Hebrews 6:12).

The apostle James gives us this advice: "Be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand" (James 5:7-8).

The results of patience

One of the results of patience is a calm, optimistic attitude—peace of mind.

Patience often produces physical blessings, too, especially when we are working with others. In dating, marriage, child rearing or talking with your neighbors or fellow workers, the blessings of patience are magnified.

By cheerfully enduring difficult circumstances, we can avoid the penalties associated with impatience—higher blood pressure, increased frustrations and strained relationships. Patience produces fewer hasty words and hurt feelings, fewer jobs of poor quality that must be done again, no irritating outbursts or complaints that make it harder for others to do their work.

Impatience leads to stress and mental frustration; it is self-defeating. Patience, however, is self-

rewarding; the blessings are automatic. God does not need to supernaturally intervene every time we go to the bank. He could, of course, but it isn't normally necessary. God's laws are so well designed that they work every time.

Patience will not necessarily make our trials go away any quicker. Patience does not make the line shorter or the trip quicker (although it usually makes the job easier). But patience *always* makes the delay more bearable.

Patience is much more than the outward action of waiting—it is an inner, mental attitude that helps us be calm rather than annoyed while we wait.

The blessings of patience are not necessarily outward and physical; they are inner and spiritual. And these blessings come instantly, as soon as we are patient in attitude. Impatience, even if it comes with waiting, cannot produce the mental blessing of peace of mind.

If we ever think we are not being blessed for patience, we need to examine our attitude to see if we really are patient—not just in the action of waiting, but also in the attitude of patience, of calm endurance.

Patience has an automatic reward, as automatic as a law of chemistry or physics. If we don't see the reward of patience, we need to look harder. Because if we are being patient, the reward is already there. □

Kindness? But what about “gentleness”? If we are following in order the list of the fruits of the spirit as given in Galatians 5:22-23, shouldn’t we be discussing gentleness in this issue of *The Good News*?

True, the King James Version has, as the fruit of the spirit following longsuffering, “gentleness.” But the word *gentleness* as a translation leaves something to be desired.

Much better is the word *kindness*, as found in the New King James, the Revised Standard Version and other translations. An elephant can be gentle. So can an earthquake. But kindness is an *attitude*. It involves action directed away from the self.

Many other words often used in the Scriptures cover common ground with kindness. Compassion, mercy, grace and forgiveness are such words. Kindness is the desire, the inclination, the willingness to do good—even when that good is undeserved. It is being merciful, mellow and easily approachable.

The kindness of God

Are you sometimes discouraged because of the obstacles God allows in your life? Do you sometimes pray that God will help you, yet you lack real conviction that God will answer your prayer because you know you don’t deserve an answer?

If your reply is yes, you need to understand more deeply the kindness of God.

Whatever set of circumstances you find yourself in, God has allowed for your ultimate good. He is not out to trip you up, nor is He indifferent to your situation. He cares! He wants to work things out for your benefit.

God knows better than you do that your previous sins have separated you from Him (Isaiah 59:1-2). You don’t merit His attention! But His merciful kindness overrides that fact.

Perhaps the most oft-quoted Bible verse is John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that

Fruits of the Spirit

God Loves Kindness—Do You?

Have you considered to what extent kindness is a part of Godlike character?

whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” But how many who so glibly recite John 3:16 stop to realize that this verse and the verse that follows it describe the greatest act of *kindness* that ever has been or ever shall be? God sacrificed His beloved Son to save the undeserving world.

The Bible records many instances showing how the kindness of God was manifested in Jesus’ life as a human.

One day an individual suffering from the horrible disease of leprosy threw himself on his knees before Jesus. Lepers were supposed to keep their distance from the rest of the population. Jesus could have stepped away, as many others would have. But He didn’t. That was already kindness on His part.

“If You are willing, You can make me clean,” the leper appealed (Mark 1:40). Notice that the leper had no doubt as to what Jesus was capable of doing. But He wasn’t sure how great Jesus’ kindness toward him would be.

Now, Jesus didn’t have to respond to this request. This leper was not of a mind to become one of Jesus’ followers. In fact, immediately after being healed, he directly disobeyed Jesus’ instructions and caused Jesus considerable inconvenience.

But here was a person in desperate need. “And Jesus, moved with compassion”—God’s lovingkind-

ness—“put out His hand and touched him, and said to him, ‘I am willing; be cleansed’ ” (Mark 1:41).

You may be aware of what God *can* do for you. But you may be limited in your understanding of how great His kindness is. God is merciful. Never lose sight of that truth.

Over and over again the Psalms express assurance that God will help us. Why? Because we deserve it? No, but because “His merciful kindness is great toward us” (Psalm 117:2).

Do you want to understand how great? Then consider Psalm 107 as it describes various situations in which God is kind to those who look to Him for help. (Note that the Hebrew word translated “mercy” in verse 1 and “goodness” in verses 8, 15, 21 and 31 could just as easily be translated “kindness.”)

In His kindness, God supplies the needs of those who have lost their way (verses 4-9). He sets free those who are in bondage (verses 10-16). He helps those suffering the results of their own blunders (verses 17-22). He delivers those threatened by forces beyond their control (verses 23-32).

Do you see yourself in any similar situations? God is extremely generous with His blessings (verses 33-42). And we deserve none of them. Meditate on these things. “Whoever is wise will observe these things, and they will understand the lovingkindness of the Lord” (verse 43).

What does your life reflect?

A person with God's spirit will reflect the kindness of God in his or her dealings with fellow humans. Kindness is the inclination to do more than what a situation may strictly call for or require. It is wanting to go that extra mile, being thoughtful, considerate, forgiving and merciful.

Jesus pointed out to His disciples that loving one's friends is not sufficient. For "if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. . . . But love your enemies, do good . . . and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Highest. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil" (Luke 6:32-35).

And whereas Matthew records Jesus as saying, "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect" (verse 48), Luke quotes Jesus' statement, "Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful" (Luke 6:36).

In view of this, you can see how much being merciful, compassionate and kind is a part of God-like perfection.

A godly motivation

This is not to say that kind

deeds are never done by unconverted persons. To the contrary. Many kind, charitable works have been done by individuals not having God's spirit. Sporadic manifestations of various degrees of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, goodness, faithfulness, meekness and self-control are possible in the lives of unconverted people.

But the strength of such manifestations is strictly from the human sphere and therefore may be from peer pressure, fear, guilt, intimidation, vanity, pride, self-righteousness or a combination of such characteristics of human nature.

A Christian must have the good traits listed in Galatians 5:22-23 in his or her life, but their strength and motivation must be from a different source. They must be the unselfish, ever increasing fruits of the holy spirit—God's nature—not the undependable fruits of human nature.

Simple acts of kindness

There is no list of dos and don'ts when it comes to kindness. The main rule is "just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise" (Luke 6:31). The apostle Peter urged Christians to "be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous" (I Peter 3:8). The Greek word translated "courteous" literally

means "friendly minded."

Be thoughtful. Put yourself in the shoes of others. Be on the lookout for things you can do or say to make the lives of others more pleasant.

"And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32).

When Jesus talked about judging between the "sheep" and the "goats," notice what He mentioned as being the ultimate determining factor as to who will inherit the Kingdom of God. It is to what extent knowledge and spirituality is translated into actively helping and serving others, especially Christ's brethren:

"For I was hungry," Jesus said, "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" (Matthew 25:35-36).

None of these are complicated acts requiring great talent and ability. They are simple acts of kindness. Micah summed up all God requires of you this way: "To do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8, Revised Standard Version).

Be helpful. Be flexible. Be approachable. Be agreeable. Be forgiving. Be, in a word, kind. □

Ever argue with someone about whether a book or a movie or a work of art was "good"?

If you have, you know how hard it is for humans to agree on what is good—and you also know how much each of us, by nature, nevertheless wants to decide for ourselves.

And right there lies the point that separates humans from God!

Only God can define it!

Speaking of morality, God reveals, "It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps" (Jeremiah 10:23). When it comes to basic ways of living, God must tell us the difference between good and evil. He is the Creator and Lawgiver, and therefore the only one who can judge.

But humans refuse to accept God's definition of good. Instead we desperately hold to our own philosophies and ways—even to our own destruction.

It all started in the Garden of Eden. When He finished the creation, God—the only one with the authority to define good and evil—"saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good" (Genesis 1:31).

But Satan got to Adam and Eve, the first humans, and convinced them to reject God's definition and to decide for themselves what was good. That's what humans have been doing ever since. (For more information, write for a free copy of our booklet *A World Held Captive*.)

So, depending on who has the most firepower, one side or another in a war can force its own definition of good on whoever it defines as the enemy.

The political party that can beg, borrow or steal the most votes gets to lead a country in a direction it feels is good.

High-school health centers can dispense birth-control devices to teenagers without the consent of their parents because someone thinks this is good.

But look at the world around you! What man, apart from God and influenced by Satan, *thinks* is good *isn't*. As Proverbs 14:12 says,

Fruits of the Spirit

Walk in the Way of Goodness

Humans want to decide for themselves what is good. But only God can define goodness—it is a fruit of His spirit!

"There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death."

God must define good for us. Goodness is a fruit of His spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). What is God's goodness, and how should we who want to obey God express it?

Goodness is an action

We should first take note of some Bible words translated into English as "goodness."

In the New Testament, we will notice two words translated from the Greek. The first refers to an internal quality of wanting to provide for and serve others; the second refers to the outward expression of that inner intent. Goodness is God's way of love in action!

The first word, in Greek, is *chrestotes*. It describes a basic internal quality of God.

Notice, for example, Romans 2:4: "Do you despise the riches of His goodness [*chrestotes*], forbearance, and longsuffering . . . ?"

And Romans 11:22 tells us to "consider the goodness [*chrestotes*] and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness [*chrestotes*], if you continue in His goodness [*chrestotes*]. Otherwise you also will be cut off."

The second Greek word is *agathosune*, referring to goodness that is expressed outwardly in acts

of helping others. *Agathosune* is the word found in Galatians 5:22-23, where the fruits of God's spirit are listed.

II Thessalonians 1:11 commands, "Fulfill [meaning to put into action, to express] all the good pleasure of His goodness [*agathosune*] and the work of faith with power."

Paul told the Romans, "Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness [*agathosune*], filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another" (Romans 15:14).

The brethren at Rome were expressing God's love outwardly. In fact, in greeting certain brethren at Rome by name, Paul first mentioned Priscilla and Aquila, "who risked their own necks for my life" (Romans 16:3-4). Priscilla and Aquila had risked their own lives to help Paul! This was love in action—goodness!

Two main Hebrew roots are translated "goodness" in the Old Testament. They both describe God's own goodness.

The first, *tuwb*, refers to the fairness of God, to His concern for the welfare of people, to His joy and His desire that life go well.

David exclaimed to God, "Oh, how great is Your goodness [*tuwb*] which You have laid up for those who fear You" (Psalm 31:19).

The second Hebrew word, *cheqed*,

refers to God's mercy, pity and kindness toward others.

"He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the goodness [*cheched*] of the Lord," says Psalm 33:5. This same word was used to describe the goodness of kings Hezekiah (II Chronicles 32:32) and Josiah (II Chronicles 35:26). This means humans, inspired by God's spirit, can express the same kind of goodness, mercy and pity toward others that God does. It means *you* can express goodness as a fruit of God's spirit in you!

What does goodness do?

Herbert W. Armstrong, the founder of this magazine, observed that people in this world want to *be* right, but they don't want to *do* right. It's the same with goodness. People want to be seen by others as being good—indeed, they want to see themselves as good—but they don't want to *do* the things God defines as being good!

So some confused people want psychiatrists to help them rationalize away the guilt they feel for ugly actions they commit. It's not that they want to stop the actions—they just want to be able to feel good about committing them.

Certain artists take pride in creating works—and in many cases, winning prestigious awards for those works—that attack the family, marriage, authority and other right values.

Some educators feel they must

teach subjects to their students in what they call a "value-neutral" way, taking pains to avoid giving any impression that they believe what they are teaching is either good or evil. They wouldn't think of trying to impart morality to young minds!

Is it any wonder God thunders, "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" (Isaiah 5:20)? Proverbs 20:6 asks, "Most men will proclaim each his own goodness, but who can find a faithful man?"

God's goodness leads Him to call us and to perform His works through us. Paul wrote the Thessalonians: "Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power" (II Thessalonians 1:11).

God's goodness leads us to repentance (Romans 2:4). It leads us to turn from the evil of deciding for ourselves what is good and to living according to God's definition, found in His perfect laws.

God's goodness fills us with knowledge of His wonderful way and makes us want to share that way with others: "Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish

one another" (Romans 15:14).

God's goodness makes Him provide every good thing for us to enjoy, both physically and spiritually, because He loves us.

God's goodness, in short, encompasses a whole way of life that will continue forever—unlike the ways of this world, which will end forever very soon now! As Psalm 52:1 asks: "Why do you boast in evil, O mighty man? The goodness of God endures continually."

In *your* life, God's goodness, which you can express only through the power of God's spirit in you, will make you want to live God's good way, based on His law.

It will make you want to help others learn to live that way.

It will make you want to support God's Work of warning this world about the consequences of choosing the *wrong* way to live.

It will make you want to be more like God, to give to others, to share with others, to make life more pleasant for others, to forgive those who have wronged you, to take pity on those less fortunate than you, to think less of *self* than you may have in the past, to be thankful for all the blessings God has given you, to be a blazing example of *all* the fruits of God's holy spirit, which flow from the first one—love (Galatians 5:22-23).

So pray that God will express His own goodness through you, and "Walk in the way of goodness" (Proverbs 2:20)! □

If you are a Christian, you have made a lifetime commitment to God and Jesus Christ. You want to be faithful to that commitment.

But how can you be sure you will?

No one has to fail

The Bible is an encouraging book. It gives us God's promise that He will not forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). If we cooperate with Him, He will complete the work He has begun in us (Philippians 1:6). No power can *force* us to fail, but we know that *it is possible to fail*.

Jesus warned us, in the parable of the sower, that some people receive God's word with joy, but quit when trials come. Others receive the word, but "the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word," and they become unfruitful (Matthew 13:20-22).

Faithfulness is important to God, and it should be important to us.

The apostle Paul's example

The apostle Paul told us how he worked to remain faithful: "I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified" (I Corinthians 9:27).

Paul—an apostle who was used by God to bring salvation to the gentile world, who was full of zeal for spreading the Gospel—did not assume that his own salvation was sure. Neither can we.

Let's notice what Paul did:

"I also count all things loss . . . and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ . . . if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on . . . I do not count myself to have apprehended; but . . . I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God" (Philippians 3:8, 11-14).

We, too, to remain faithful, must be willing to give up all things for Christ. This is part of the cost we must consider before baptism.

Fruits of the Spirit

Is God's Faith In You?

How can you make sure you will continue being faithful to God?

To remain faithful to that commitment, we must remain aware of it. No matter how wealthy (or poor) we might become, we must remember that the riches of this world are rubbish compared to being in God's Kingdom.

Paul, near the end of his life, no longer had any doubts: "The time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (II Timothy 4:6-7). He had endured all his trials, exercising and developing more faith right to the end of his life.

Faith and faithfulness

Faithfulness is part of the fruit of God's spirit, Paul wrote (Galatians 5:22-23). The King James Version says *faith*, but the Greek word also means *faithfulness*. Modern translations have chosen *faithfulness* because it more closely matches the other items in this list.

Of course, we must have faith to be faithful. The men and women of faith listed in Hebrews 11 were noted not just for mental trust and belief, but also for what they *did*. They, in action, were faithful and reliable.

Faith is a trust and confidence in God's reliability. He is faithful. We must be like Him. Let's notice an important reason:

God promises eternal life to all who in this age are faithful. Not just eternal life, but eternal *spirit* life, with the powers of a spirit being. God has faith and confidence in us that we will never misuse any of that power.

How can God be so sure? He

can be sure if, in this life, in tests, trials and time, we have demonstrated a pattern of faithfulness.

God's Church today has many men and women of faith. They have been faithful even though their faith has been tested. Those who have been members for a long time are often described as "faithful." It is a notable quality because we know others have not been faithful.

Faithfulness day to day

New members can be faithful, too. God gives us a simple principle. He has confidence that it will work: "He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much" (Luke 16:10).

To be faithful to God and Christ, we must be faithful in the small matters of life: faithful to our promises, faithful to our mates, faithful to our duties. Day to day, we should be faithfully obeying God's laws about how we should worship Him, how we should treat others, how we should live.

Faithfulness is much more than simply "sticking with it." It requires effort. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," Paul encourages (Philippians 2:12). The path to life is difficult, said Jesus (Matthew 7:14).

Nevertheless, "Let us not grow weary while doing good," Paul tells us (Galatians 6:9). Although some do grow weary, we do not need to. The book of Hebrews, after listing the heroes of faith, tells us how we can be like them:

"Let us lay aside every weight,

and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith . . . for consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged" (Hebrews 12:1-3).

Jesus, although He faced far greater trials than we will ever have, did not get tired of doing good. He, working in us, can complete our faith and help us be faithful.

The kind of faith required for salvation, in fact, is actually Christ's own faith in us as He lives His life over in us (Galatians 2:20). That faith by which we are saved is a gift of God (Ephesians 2:8)!

Peter's guarantee

Peter gives us a sure formula for faithfulness: "Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue . . . knowledge . . . self-control . . . perseverance . . . godliness . . . brotherly kindness . . . love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful" (II Peter 1:5-8).

And Peter guarantees that this formula will work: "Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your calling and election sure, *for if you do these things you will never stumble*" (verse 10).

Faithfulness, Peter wrote, requires diligence and growth. We must add to our faith. We must continue growing in grace and knowledge (II Peter 3:18). Growth

is part of the commitment we make at baptism, and our Christian success depends on it. As God's Church moves forward, those who stand still will be left behind.

True Christians want to hear the words that Jesus used in the parable of the talents: "Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things" (Matthew 25:21).

In the parable, the faithful servants had increased their talents; they had grown. Christian growth and faithfulness are inseparable; one leads to the other.

To remain faithful, renew your commitment to diligence and growth. Renew your commitment to allow God's spirit to produce in you the fruit of faithfulness! □

Jesus Christ promised, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5).

If you want to be among that group—if you want to help administer the government of God in the world tomorrow—and if you want to enjoy the blessings that real meekness will bring you now, in this life—you need to express this important fruit of God's spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

How? The Bible tells!

Moses and Israel

"I have seen this people, and indeed it is a stiff-necked people!" said God to Moses, speaking of ancient Israel. "Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation" (Exodus 32:9-10).

What would *you* have done, had God been talking to *you*?

The Israelites had caused Moses no end of trouble. Even after seeing God's power firsthand, they lacked faith. They complained all the time. They showed no respect for Moses as their leader. They had rebelled before and would again. Now God proposed to destroy Israel, and start a new nation through Moses.

What would *you* have done?

Moses didn't think about himself. He cared more about Israel's future. He refused to take a self-righteous stance. He relegated himself under God's power and rule. He told God he was willing to give up eternal life if God was not willing to spare Israel!

"Then Moses returned to the Lord and said, 'Oh, these people have sinned a great sin... Yet now, if You will forgive their sin—but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written'" (verses 31-32).

Is it any wonder the Bible tells us, "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth" (Numbers 12:3, King James Version)? What about *you*? Do you know what it means to be meek? Do you see why you should be?

Fruits of the Spirit

How to Inherit the Earth!

One of Jesus Christ's best-known promises says the meek will inherit the earth. But what does it really mean to be meek?

Saul forgot

Contrast Moses' state of mind with that of Saul, whom God later placed over Israel. When Saul was about to be proclaimed king, it seems he thought so little of himself that he hid among some equipment and had to be sought before the ceremony could be held (I Samuel 10:21-24).

But Saul lost this viewpoint. He began to think more of himself than he should have. He stopped letting God work through him and started taking matters into his own hands, directly disobeying flat commands from God. God had to reject him as king!

Samuel told Saul: "When thou wast little in thine own sight wast thou not made the head of the tribes of Israel, and the Lord anointed thee king over Israel? ... Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king" (I Samuel 15:17, 23, KJV).

Why Lucifer fell

A meek person cheerfully submits to being ruled by God and by those God places in power.

But a person who tries to exalt himself and advance his own selfish cause will not submit to being ruled. Thus he cannot learn to rightly rule others—and he forfeits any chance of serving in God's government, now or in the coming Kingdom of God!

That's exactly what happened to the archangel Lucifer.

When God created him, Lucifer was "the seal of perfection, full of

wisdom and perfect in beauty." God told Lucifer, "You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created" (Ezekiel 28:12, 15).

Eons ago, God gave Lucifer charge over one third of all the angels, and put him on earth to prepare the earth for human life. But Lucifer decided to reject God's rule over him. He turned his angels against God, too. He decided to mount an assault on heaven itself! God repelled the attack, casting Lucifer, who became Satan, back down to earth. Jesus said, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven" (Luke 10:18).

God told Lucifer: "How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! ... For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High'" (Isaiah 14:12-14).

God found iniquity in this once beautiful and brilliant but now fallen archangel (Ezekiel 28:15). Why? Because "Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor" (verse 17).

Lucifer became proud and vain. He lusted for more than God had chosen to give him at the moment. He resented God's rule over him. Self-righteousness and self-importance entered his heart. He decided to take matters into his own hands and lashed out in violence.

Lucifer lost the quality of meekness! He thus disqualified himself

from being used further by God. He set himself to always oppose God and so can never have a part in God's government. He lost the privilege of ruling over the earth and is soon to be replaced by Jesus Christ Himself.

Jesus said the meek will inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5). No one filled with Satan's nature qualifies!

Jesus was meek

God sent Jesus to earth, in part, to die and pay for the sins of humans, all of whom, from Adam on, have followed Satan's way instead of God's. Jesus came willingly—meekly!

Paul told the Philippians—and, by extension, all God's people today: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:5-8).

Jesus cared more about our interests—about *your* interests—than about His own. He felt no self-importance. He cheerfully fulfilled His part in God's plan—and thus

made salvation possible for you.

Isaiah wrote of Jesus: "Surely [confidently, trusting God to make everything work out right] He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows . . . He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter . . . He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth" (Isaiah 53:4, 7, 9).

That is the spirit of meekness!

Express meekness in your life

How can you express the godly character trait of meekness in your own life? Let's look at what the Bible says about a few specific cases.

Have you had a misunderstanding with someone? What should your approach be? "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" (Colossians 3:12-13).

Does someone you know have a fault? Should you condemn and judge—or recall the mercy God and Christ have had on you? Paul advises, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be

tempted" (Galatians 6:1, KJV).

Do you often find yourself in arguments with others? Have gossip and slander brought you grief? Titus 3:2 says to "speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men" (KJV).

Should you argue religion with others, or try to force your beliefs on other people? No, but Peter writes, "Be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear" (I Peter 3:15).

What should your basic motivation toward life be? "Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom" (James 3:13).

Get the point? Meekness, one of the beautiful fruits of God's holy spirit, should be basic to all your inner thoughts, and should be behind every action you take.

Being meek means you won't think more of yourself than you should. It means you will place the best interests of other people above your own selfish desires. It means you will be gentle and humble toward other people. It means you will cheerfully submit yourself to God's government and to God's purpose in your life.

Being meek means you will inherit the earth! □

Fruits of the Spirit Last – But Not Least!

Vienna, Austria, is home to the Lippizaners. These magnificent horses are proud and noble in appearance, with a lively temperament.

The words *courage*, *endurance* and *perseverance* accurately describe the Lippizaners. Carefully bred since the 16th century, they combine power, flexibility and beauty (especially as seen in their attractive, expressive eyes).

Audiences marvel at the Lippizaners' precision. The young steeds are "enrolled" in "school" near age 4. Rigorous daily training sharpens natural ability.

Two years are required to teach the horses just to walk properly. However, they are not fully trained until nearly age 8. Shortly thereafter, on graduation, they may join performances. Their grace and beauty of movement are now fully prepared and fully controlled.

The performance varies from a walk to almost ballet-like movements. The stallion and rider are so in harmony that the rider "disappears" and the horse seems riderless. The seemingly effortless performance pays tribute to acquired self-control. It is beautiful to behold. The unity of control in rider and horse anchors the show.

Here we find an important illustration of the value of self-control.

The anchor

All the traits discussed in this series of articles on the fruits of God's spirit amplify *love* – what God is (I John 4:8). This final trait, self-control (or temperance), anchors God's love – and your salvation. Do you understand this anchor? Are you using it?

Is self-control the least important fruit of God's spirit? After all, it appears last in the list. No. In fact, none of the fruit is "least." Each is vital. When this safeguard of self-control is missing or neglected in life, people frequently stumble into folly and shame.

Why is this anchor so important? The apostle Paul explains for us: "I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified" (I Corinthians 9:27).

How did Paul bring himself into subjection? Notice Romans 14:21: "It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak." Paul is not discussing a temperance movement. He is discussing self-restraint. He is explaining obedience to law – outgoing concern for neighbor that exceeds and rules over one's own self-interest.

You see, Paul realized that self-control is not for self alone.

How many catch and understand this important truth? Paul, with eyes wide open, realized that even lawful acts might on occasion cause a brother to stumble or to be made weak. Self-control provides the ability to resist that which may cause pain to others.

Self-control is thus exercised *for others*. As a result, love is made personal. Self-control is active self-mastery. A truly converted Christian isn't ready for God's Family until the anchor – self-control – is in place.

Israel was castaway

When God called the children of Israel out of Egypt, they "passed

through the sea, [and] all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (I Corinthians 10:1-2). By all outward appearances, it seemed they would enjoy the privileges of being God's people.

Tragedy soon trampled the hope. Why? Carnal excesses marched over the law and love of God. Self-interest overran concern for others. The "it's my right" attitude moved to the front. The miraculous deliverance from Egypt was forgotten. And all the Israelites above 20 years of age, with few exceptions, were overthrown in the wilderness!

So Paul warns, "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (verse 12). Here is an important lesson in the development of self-control. The Israelites assumed they were special (and they were). But their assumption led them along a road where they didn't consider the need for self-control. The result was a whole nation castaway.

In the world today it appears most people are concerned about little but themselves and their personal interests. Paul states, in fact, that lack of self-control will be common in the last days (II Timothy 3:1-5).

A fate similar to Israel's awaits us!

Self-mastery is of utmost importance

Jesus Christ's mastery of self is the premier example. He suffered for us. He was reviled. Yet He committed no sin.

Peter explains clearly the character of our Savior, "who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten" (I Peter 2:23).

Christ's self-control was remarkable as he faced his excruciatingly painful death. His restraint and outgoing concern for others – for you – instead of for himself, when he could have called down great heavenly power, forces one to marvel.

What a powerful example! All humans fall short in showing concern even to loved ones, let alone with

individuals seeking to personally harm them. This mastery was the fruit of God's spirit in the life of his Son Jesus.

How did Christ obtain such mastery?

Consider the Lippizaners again. These stallions are reshaped. They are trained by established, successful standards. The commands of training are supported by a long history of success. It would seem strange for trainers to forget past success and choose a new approach with each stallion.

Christ controlled himself

Early in his ministry, Christ revealed the basis of his self-mastery: "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17).

Christ knew these valuable commands, standards and teachings came from a long line of success. God's laws *are* righteousness (Psalm 119:172). Thus Christ amplified God's laws. He was a light. He learned and walked by God's standards (John 12:49). John calls him "Jesus Christ the righteous" (I John 2:1). Though he never sinned and therefore didn't need to be reshaped, Christ did have to master the corruptible flesh he lived in. He had to resist temptation and submit to God's law (Hebrew 4:15). That mastery wasn't easy.

Christ, "being found in appear-

ance as a man...humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:8). Paul admonishes, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (verse 5).

How can we come to have Christ's mind? Through Ezekiel, God says, "I will put a new spirit within them." Why? "That they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God" (Ezekiel 11:19-20).

God clearly states that we need to be reshaped. In other words, self-control doesn't come naturally. Jesus, God's Son, fought and struggled against the natural, corruptible pulls of human flesh. In this he set the example.

John says, "He who says he abides in Him [in Christ] ought himself also to walk just as He walked" (I John 2:6). Walking as Christ walked means to consider, in every situation, "What would Christ do here?" Ask yourself, "How do I apply God's law in this situation?" Remember: Self-control is not for self alone.

Say no to self

Attaining self-mastery requires daily dedication to and walking in God's law. Christ walked this way to establish mastery and control over potentially lustful and destructive thoughts and actions.

Likewise, we must "cast down arguments and every high thing that

exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (II Corinthians 10:5).

Finally learn to say no to self! Learn to say no even to things that, though they may be lawful, might cause offense to a brother.

Temperance anchors harmony between God's law and human actions. The fruit of God's spirit, including temperance, unifies God's begotten children to him in much greater harmony than the rider experiences with the Lippizaner stallion.

The marvelous grace and beauty of self-control almost defies description. Its guarded step and total giving, out of concern for others, is invaluable. The tongue, feet, eyes, hands, temper, tastes, desires feel its curbs. The man and his neighbor both receive remarkable benefits.

Remember what Paul said?

"Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection" (I Corinthians 9:26-27).

The unifying fruit of God's spirit is thus borne, the person producing these fruits reshaped. Each fruit contributes to the whole – to the development of God's own holy, righteous character. "Against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:23)!

Article by James E. Kissee from the May/June, 1989, Good News.

