



Core Seminar How to Grow Class 11: Cultivating Spiritual Fruit (Part 1)

I. Introduction

Welcome to week 11 of the Spiritual Disciplines core seminar. Today we are beginning a two-week look at how the spiritual disciplines flow out of our biblical spirituality. As we exercise the spiritual disciplines in our lives for the purpose of godliness which manifests itself in what the Bible calls, “fruit of the Spirit.” We’re going to begin by considering the context of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians. Then we will begin to consider how the spiritual disciplines help cultivate fruit of the Spirit.

II. Overview of Galatians and Paul’s Approach to Works

A. Paul’s Message is Based of the Gospel’s Power to Save from the Present Evil Age

Paul’s letter to the Galatians begins with a greeting that is gospel centered. In Galatians 1:1 he first mentions that he was *sent by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead*. Look at 1:3-4. Here Paul declares *grace and peace* to them from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, “who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.” It is on the basis of the deliverance talked about in verse 4 that Paul is able to write what follows in Galatians.

B. Justification is by Faith in Jesus Christ, Not Works!

Paul lays out the grounds for how they could truly be Christians. Look at 2:16:

Galatians 2:16

...we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.¹

If any of us would be justified before God it is our faith in Jesus Christ alone, not by our works. Paul makes a profound statement here that if righteousness could be gained through the law then Christ died for no purpose:

Galatians 2:20-21

20 “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. **21** I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose!”

III. The Role of the Holy Spirit

A. Are You Trying to Attain “Your Goal” by Human Effort?

¹ Sister verse to Ephesians 2:8-9.

Consider this question: “***Does the fruit come as a result of our efforts or solely as a result of the work of the Holy Spirit?***” As the Holy Spirit works in our lives, so good works are borne. As we strive to glorify God in our lives, the Spirit’s work in us bears fruit in our lives:

Galatians 3:2-3

2 Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? **3** Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?²

Paul doesn’t tell us to just sit back and be lazy.

B. The Goal

What is the **goal** that Paul is talking about in this verse? Let’s look at some of Paul’s other letters for help.

In Philippians Paul describes that his goal is the **prize of the upward call of God in Jesus Christ** (Phil. 3:14). What is the **prize** of the **upward call** of God in Jesus Christ? **That he may gain Christ**, and he elaborates on what that means in verse 10 :

Philippians 3:10-11

10 that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, **11** that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Paul understands that his pursuit of this goal is empowered by Jesus Christ alone because it is Jesus who first made Paul His own (Phil. 3:12). “Clinging to Him is our duty, but it is His work.”³ The Holy Spirit is working through Paul in the same way that the Spirit works through us (Col 1:29).

C. Our Upward Call

This is our upward call. Spiritual fruit evidences His presence within us. We are now motivated by the relationship we have with Christ. We are further motivated by God’s promise that we are being progressively changed more and more into Christ’s image (Phil 1:6; Rom 8:29).

With this framework in place let’s turn to the fruit of the Spirit:

Galatians 5:16-26

16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. **17** For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. **18** But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. **19** Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, **20** idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, **21** envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. **22** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23** gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. **24** And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. **25** If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. **26** Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

IV. Fruit of the Spirit

² My emphasis.

³ Andrew Nichols said this during his evening service sermon on Hebrews 3:18-19 on August 16, 2009.

Fruit is an image that we are all familiar with. The kind of fruit that a tree bears says something about the tree and all of the conditions that have combined to contribute to its growth. Everyone bears fruit,⁴ the question is, “are we bearing fruit of the flesh or of the Spirit?” Let’s turn to the first aspect the fruit of the Spirit, Love.

V. Love

A. What Love Is Not

First, let’s consider what love is **NOT**. Love is not what our culture often defines as tolerance or acceptance. “Live and let live even if the way one chooses to live leads to eternal death.” Love in this list is not isolationism; it’s actually both how we approach others and how we approach God. We often try to redefine love by what our thoughts and tendencies are. Praise God that love is not defined by our character! Listen to how Paul defines love:

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

4 Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant **5** or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; **6** it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. **7** Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

First, Paul says that love is not **envious**. This can also mean it is not jealous for what does not belong to you. It is not covetous. **Second**, love does not boast and isn’t prideful. Do you boast in anything other than the Lord? What kind of things do we boast in? Ask yourself how that boasting is showing love to God, and to others. John describes the boasting and prideful attitude of the world by saying:

1 John 2:16

For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world.

Third, love is not rude or impolite. Ask yourself these questions: Are you considerate? Do you consider the feelings of others? Are you selfish? Are you quick to let someone else’s interests impose on your schedule? Are you easily angered? Do you have an axe to grind with any particular coworker or fellow commuter as you cut him off or as he cuts you off? Do you have a literal or figurative checklist of all the wrongs your siblings, parents, spouse, or friend has committed? **Fourth**, love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. Friends, do you love evil? Do you love sin? May David’s description of the wicked not be true of us, that we, “love evil more than good, lying more than speaking what is right (Psalm 52:3).”

B. What Love Is

Now let’s consider positively what love is. Herman Ridderbos has helpfully written that, “Love is to be understood especially as the love for the brethren (*cf.* verse 14 ff.). As the fruit of the Spirit, this love is entirely determined by the salvation granted in Christ: that is, its motive (*cf.* *e.g.*, Mt. 18:23 ff.), its intensity (*cf.* *e.g.*, Mt. 18:22 and 5:43 ff.), and its object (*cf.* Lk. 10:30 ff.).”⁵ There is no place in Scripture that this is easier to see than in 1 John 4:7-21. Let’s read the first half of it:

1 John 4:7-12

7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. **8** Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. **9** In this the love of

⁴ Bruce, F. F. *Commentary on Galatians, New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 251.

⁵ Ridderbos, Herman *The Epistle of Paul to the Churches of Galatia* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1953), 207.

God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. **10** In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. **11** Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. **12** No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

This part of the fruit of the Spirit is seen most clearly in outward expression toward others, particularly how we love fellow believers.⁶ Further, Jesus said that the world knows that we are His disciples if we have love for one another (John 13:35). Scripture also teaches that we are to love our neighbors (Matt 22:34-40) and our enemies (Matt 5:43).

C. How To Cultivate Love

How do we cultivate this kind of love? We should do it in the way Paul cultivated his love of others. We should meditate on the great love that we know as sinners that have been saved from the wrath of God by Christ. We really should memorize this verse in order to facilitate the ability to meditate on this truth:

Galatians 2:20

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Meditating on the love of God for us in Christ (Rom 8:38-39) should make our lives overflow in love toward our brothers and sisters in Christ. It should result in humility, and in a giving up of our self for others for their good and the glory of God. We also learn to love others when we have a vested interest in their good. Do you want to see others prosper spiritually? Do you long for those in our church to fight their sin with the gospel? Do you pursue others' spiritual good in the church at expense to yourself the way you would for your biological family? Do you love God, the church, and others?

The next two aspects of fruit of the Spirit, joy and peace, are thought to have been closely attached to love as part of a triad.⁷ If you are interested in a deeper meditation of Christian love consider picking up Jonathan Edwards' book *Charity and Its Fruits*⁸ or Jonathan Leeman's book *The Rule of Love*.⁹ With that let's look at what joy is **not**.

VI. Joy

A. What Joy Is Not

Christian joy is not simply the absence of trouble, pain and suffering.¹⁰ The way our culture would define happiness is a distortion of what true joy is. What the world does believe about happiness, however, sometimes displays momentary glimpses and whispers of true joy.

"Joy" ... is not so much happiness as contentment. Joy is the ability to take good cheer from the gospel. It is not, therefore, a spontaneous response to some temporary pleasure. It does not depend on circumstance at all."¹¹

⁶ Morris, Leon *Galatians, Paul's Charter of Christian Freedom* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 173.

⁷ Derek Thomas describes this first triad as, "three graces demonstrating the believer's attitude to God." Thomas, Derek *Let's Study Galatians* (Carlisle: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2004), 141.

⁸ Edwards, Jonathan. *Charity and Its Fruits*. Carlisle: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1969.

⁹ Leeman, Jonathan. *The Rule of Love: How the Local Church Should Reflect God's Love and Authority*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2018.

¹⁰ Richard Longenecker considers the hellenistic definition of joy compared to a Christian meaning of joy. It's very similar to the difference of definitions in our culture compared to what the Bible says now. Longenecker, Richard N. *Galatians, Word Biblical Commentary 41* (Nashville: Nelson Reference & Electronic, 1990), 261.

¹¹ Ryken, Philip Graham *Galatians* (Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing, 2005), 233.

Joy is not a, “joy that comes from earthly things or cheap triumphs; still less is it the joy that comes from triumphing over someone else in rivalry or competition.”¹²

We have to guard our minds and hearts from making the idea of “joy” into a subjective feeling that mysteriously blows wherever the wind wishes. Joy is at the cross-section of where our wills affect our emotions. “We are not at liberty to leave this fruit aside as though it were merely a matter of temperament and disposition.”¹³

B. What Joy Is

Matthew Henry describes joy as a, “constant delight in God.”¹⁴ Paul reminds the Galatians of the joy found in the fruit of the Spirit so that the Galatians might understand the choices before them when they face trials. You can face sorrow with or without hope. Godly sorrow is mixed with joy.

This is a difficult truth partly because of our sin, which has broken this world. Since we have not been glorified yet our joy will be mixed with sorrow here. Christians can face sorrow with joy only because of the gospel. The sorrow that is not antithetical to joy is the sorrow that Paul explains is navigated with the hope of the gospel.

1 Thessalonians 4:13

But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.

As Christians we have a great hope, and this is the source of our joy. Paul describes the Christian hope as the riches of the glory of Christ in us. He calls this the hope of glory (Col 1:27). Our certain hope is that we have Christ, and that we will be glorified with Christ. Peter wrote that we were caused to be born again to this living hope through the resurrection (1 Pet 1:3). And finally, Paul wrote that we are waiting for our blessed hope, namely Christ’s return, “the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13).” The Christian life is one that consists of continual repentance, so it’s no surprise that this is the main end of sorrow:

2 Corinthians 7:10

For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.

As Christians we have a joy in the midst of this life because the trials and troubles in this life remind us of our sin and point us to our need for Christ.

C. How to Cultivate Joy

Set your hope on Christ alone! Nothing else can satisfy. One author has noted that, “hope is implied by joy even though it isn’t listed separately in Galatians to be part of the fruit of the Spirit.”¹⁵ This is clear to see from what Paul wrote in Romans 15:13 by saying, “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.”

¹² Barclay, William *The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1958), 55.

¹³ Thomas, Derek *Let’s Study Galatians* (Carlisle: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2004), 142.

¹⁴ Henry, Matthew *Matthew Henry’s Commentary, Acts to Revelation, Volume 6* (Peabody: Hendrikson Publishers, 2006), 545.

¹⁵ Bruce, F. F. *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 252.

Another way to cultivate joy in our lives is to stoke up a desire to be built up in the knowledge of God in Christ. John the Baptist talked about how the very voice of Christ completed his joy (John 3:29). We have the words of Christ in the Scriptures. Our joy is complete in the Word of God and the gospel!

Joy can be experienced individually, but here, like love, joy is meant to be shared with others corporately. Who when they receive a great blessing keeps it all to him or herself? When all hope seemed to be gone, God provided salvation for those who trust in Christ, how can we keep that silent? We see this kind of expression in how John wrote that he was making his joy complete by writing of the great truths to the church in Ephesus (1 John 1:4). Godly joy also feeds back into to our love.

VII. Peace

A. What Peace Is Not

What's the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word "peace"? The cessation of war and strife. Biblical peace is not only defined in terms of the cessation troubles. This is one aspect, but "the Hebrew concept of *shalom* is much more positive than that."¹⁶ It's more active than the passive cessation of something.

When conflict arises we can't just wish it away, we have to deal with it. Jesus Christ is the Prince of Peace. He didn't snap His fingers and every evil magically ceased; He fought for peace; He bled for peace. Peace in the mind, peace in the spirit, and physical peace is achieved by actively fighting evil with the gospel.

B. What Peace Is

One commentator calls joy and peace spiritual twins.¹⁷ Paul wrote in Romans 14:17-18 that the kingdom of God is composed of joy and peace:

Romans 14:17

17 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. **18** Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men.

Since we are justified by faith we have peace with God through Jesus Christ (Rom 5:1), and it is those who have been reconciled to God through Christ who have the greatest reason to rejoice in God (Rom 5:11).¹⁸ It is because believers have experienced the peace of God in Christ that they can become peacemakers. Jesus alludes to this in the beatitudes: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God (Matt. 5:9)." God is a God of peace,¹⁹ and it is because believers have been adopted as sons of the living God that they can display this fruit of peace to others (1 Cor. 7:15), in the church (1 Cor. 14:33; Eph 4:3), and in the world (Rom. 12:18).

We see what peace is clearly by the way that Paul described that peace is achieved through justification by faith alone in Christ alone. The only way that we can cultivate this peace again is by being firmly rooted on where peace comes from. Peace with God because of the love of God is part of the foundation of our joy. Take a look at Romans 5 with me:

¹⁶ George, Timothy *Galatians* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 402.

¹⁷ Bruce, F. F. *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text (NIGTC Series)* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 252.

¹⁸ Bruce, F. F. *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text (NIGTC Series)* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 252.

¹⁹ Rom 15:33; 16:20a; 2 Cor 13:11; Phil. 4:9; 1 Thes. 5:23; cf. Heb. 13:20

Romans 5:1-5

1 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. **2** Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. **3** Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, **4** and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, **5** and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

And finally, any glimpse of peace here and now though is a glimpse of what is yet to come when all things will be made new. Our reconciliation with God and one another now, points forward to a day when joy and peace is all we'll know.

C. How to Cultivate Peace

This is how peace is cultivated in our lives. Set your mind upon the peace offered to us in Christ, and set your mind upon the love of God for us in Christ. This is what will cultivate a quiet spirit (1 Pet 3:4). This is how we can overcome our fears, by fearing Him who can destroy both body and soul in hell. We should do this instead of fearing those who can kill the body but cannot kill the soul (Matt 10:28).

VIII. Patience

A. What Patience Is Not

An appearance of long-suffering is not necessarily patience. "Some by ordinary human calculation will endure a temporary hardship to gain a long-range advantage."²⁰ The people that we think are the most patient people in the world may actually be the least long-suffering of all. The guy that waits until everyone on his flight exits before he gets out of his seat is not necessarily a patient man. Patience is expressed in action, but it primarily a condition of the heart. It is like peace and joy in this way. The source of true long-suffering is God's long-suffering. The motive of patience is the gospel itself and the desire to visibly display the affect of the gospel on our attitude and affections.

Impatience is expressed also in our tendency to not trust in God's providence and trying to take things into our own hands. The corporate expression of patience can be seen in bearing each others' burdens. This can be seen in Paul's exhortation to Timothy to preach:

2 Timothy 4:2

...preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.

B. What Patience Is

Patience always has the meaning of "steadfastness" or "long-suffering" built into it, and this often takes place in the face of persecution or attack.²¹ As God is patient with us, so we should be patient in our circumstances. Patience is an attribute of God:

Exodus 34:6-7

6 The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, **7** keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the

²⁰ Sanderson, John W. *The Fruit of the Spirit* (Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing, 1985), 90.

²¹ Longenecker, Richard N. *Word Biblical Commentary, Galatians* (Nashville: Nelson Reference & Electronic, 1990), 261

iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation."

God's patience should have the affect of bringing thankfulness out of our hearts. Thanks to God that He relented from pouring out His wrath on us before we could repent. It should motivate thankfulness that there is still time to share the gospel with others that they might repent before there is time. Paul's rhetorical question in Romans 2 gets to this point:

Romans 2:4

Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

Apart from Christ, we God's enemies. God's wrath is being stored up for those who will not repent and believe. This isn't because He is arbitrarily wrathful. There is a reason. We have attacked Him. Psalm 2:2 says describes us well, "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his Anointed." Our hearts claim the rights of kings, and in our sin, we have tried to usurp God's rule and authority.

C. How to Cultivate Patience

Patience is a large part of how we persevere in our faith to the very end. As we exercise patient endurance in the face of wrongs without anger or taking vengeance we persevere in the gospel. Paul urges us to live out our faith in terms of patience toward one another and toward all people.²² You can't cultivate patience without relationships.

Ephesians 4:1-2

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, **2** with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love.

And the source of the fruit of patience is directly from the Holy Spirit:

Colossians 1:11-12

11 [B]eing strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; **12** giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

Persevering in love, joy, and peace are all connected to the rest of the fruit. This may be why it is called fruit (singular) of the Spirit. Patience is active. Hebrews speaks directly to this.

Hebrews 6:11-12

11 And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, **12** so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

IX. Conclusion

²² Longenecker, Richard N. *Word Biblical Commentary, Galatians* (Nashville: Nelson Reference & Electronic, 1990), 262.

Hopefully this lesson has helped you understand more of how the spiritual disciplines aid our biblical spirituality, and how God sovereignly uses the spiritual disciplines in our lives to cultivate fruit of the Spirit. Next week we'll be looking at the next five fruits of the Spirit, so I hope you'll come and join us next week as well. Let's pray together.

Pray