

Fruit of the Spirit
Lesson 4A
Speaking the Truth in Love

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We have established that there is a difference between being saved and being a Christian. Being saved gets you to heaven when you die. Being a Christian changes your life for the glory of God in the meantime. Sadly, most people who are saved are living no differently than they were before they trusted Jesus Christ. They wanted someone to deliver them from the penalty of their sins or provide them an escape from hell but didn't want a constant companion to guide and govern their daily conduct.

We have also seen that the fruit of the Spirit is the operation whereby the Holy Spirit of God reproduces the communicable attributes of God in the life of the born again believer. These products of the indwelling Holy Spirit make us more than we could ever be living after the flesh.

The fruit of the Spirit cannot be governed, hindered, nor aided by human means. It is entirely the operation of God. You cannot forbid joy. No decree may prevent longsuffering. While we are taught of God to be meek, gentle, and temperate, His commandments cannot force us to live in such a manner. We do not bear fruit because we are ordered to do so. We are instructed to abandon ourselves to the Spirit's control so that His life can be manifest in ours.

We have all experienced people who are strict adherents to the commands of the Bible yet are impossible to get along with. They are upright, but they are wrong. Obedience to commandments is better than open sin, but such will not produce spiritual fruit. We are not saying we should be libertines and disobey the word of God. We are saying that we should not only obey the letter of the law with regard to our outward actions but should understand the spirit of the Bible's teachings so that our inward life produces those fruits made possible by the Spirit of God. The Pharisees kept the letter of the law but had nothing but contempt for Christ and His followers. Look at Psalm 7:11 ***God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day.*** Couple that with John 3:16-17 ***For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.*** God is judging, angry, loving, and saving.

Shake off a life of indoctrination from Hollywood, secular music, social media, and the world's philosophy. Love is not a feeling. Love is not an emotion. God's feeling toward the world is one of anger. God's emotional response to the devilment and wickedness is one of contempt. But God, who

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is temperate, longsuffering, and loving, does not eliminate the anger. He overrides the anger with something stronger than feelings, stronger than emotions, stronger than a mere reflex action to the external stimuli. God governs His emotions and thoughts in righteousness. Therefore, though He may not feel warm and fuzzy toward the murderers on death row, He loves them enough to pardon them and save them if they will call upon His name.

Love in the Bible is never defined as an emotion or feeling. It is defined as the voluntary sacrifice of one's self for the benefit of another. Husbands, love your wives (Ephesians 5:25) has nothing to do with always feeling romantic. It means every day of your life, you lay down your self-interest for her well-being. That is love.

Consider the thrilling rapture passage in 1 Thessalonians 4:13 ***But I would not have you...that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.*** Did He say not to sorrow? Absolutely not! That would be an unreasonable demand. How do you bury a loved one and not sorrow? The Lord says, 1 Thessalonians 4:14 ***For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.*** In the midst of our feelings of loss and sorrow, we have joy. The Holy Ghost overrides the feelings. The unlearned define peace as God taking away everything there is to be troubled about. Peace, according to scripture, is the Holy Ghost ruling my emotional response to the trials of life and giving me an abiding rest in the Lord, though the world seems to fall apart around me.

Would we have the Lord rewrite His parables? In our thinking, because the foolish man built his house upon the sand, God sent a storm his way; but because the wise man built his house upon the rock, God never let a storm move in his direction. We do not need the Holy Spirit to give us peace if there is no flood, and we do not need Spirit-produced joy if every day is a happy one. We need the Holy Spirit so that we may have peace even when the house we wisely built upon a rock is being lashed by a terrible storm.

When we read of the Spirit producing love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance, we must understand that these are not emotions but character traits which are far superior to feelings. The power of God is greater than our feelings.

When one person asks another, "How are you?" the answer is almost always a statement about feelings. If we are sick, it is a bad day. If that problem has cropped up again, it is a bad day. If things are not going right, if that thing we prayed about has not been worked out yet, it is a bad day. If we are healthy, the bills are paid, and nothing is broken down, then it is a good day. While we could be reminded that the scripture calls for glorying in tribulation and rejoicing in infirmities, the flesh does not allow us to act upon this knowledge.

If we yield to the flesh, our feelings will override all that we have in Jesus Christ. When the fruit of the Spirit is being produced in our lives, God will override everything that seeks to nullify the blessings of God. One day we are rejoicing that we are saved and on the way to heaven; the next day we are gloomy and depressed. This is owing to walking by sight and not by faith.

Look carefully at the balancing point found in Colossians 2:16-23 *Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ. Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God. Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.* This is very important. Here the Lord addresses a group of people who are trying by decrees, standards, rules, regulations, and dogmas to force the flesh to be spiritual. And the Holy Spirit says our self-will is not sufficient. Worshiping God with the flesh and serving God in the flesh is far better than sinning, but it comes well short of His objective for us and in us. The statement is that if Jesus Christ controls the heart, we will not need to prove we are spiritual by pointing to our diet, the length of our prayers, or the peculiarity of our garments. The spiritual fruit produced by God in our lives will be a far greater testimony than these outward displays of the flesh.

This truth leads right into the next one. In Colossians 3:1-4 *If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.* In these verses, we see one who is fully occupied with the risen Christ. The affections (not the feelings or emotions) are set. The heart and mind are permanently fixed on the risen Christ. The believer is reckoned dead to the old life and fully alive in a new life with God in Christ.

On that basis, the passage continues, Colossians 3:5-8 *Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: In the which*

ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth.

In Colossians 2, there are saved people who are trying to tame the flesh and force it to worship God. This is where the new convert begins. Just as a parent must train a child by putting rules in place and enforcing them, so the Lord through His word puts rules in place in the Bible and puts saved people in a church fellowship where leadership enforces the rules. But the objective in both cases is for the rules to take hold so that they become voluntary actions, and the rules and the enforcement thereof are no longer needed.

If a child becomes an adult who accepts parental teaching and loves father and mother, the rules forced upon them in their youth will be practiced in adulthood as an act of will, not because punishment or restraint demands obedience. When the affection of the child of God is set upon the ascended Savior, when the heart, mind, and thoughts are continually occupied with the Lord Jesus Christ, the Bible is not viewed as a collection of unreasonable demands, restrictive oppression, or a set of heavy burdens. Rather, the trust the mature Christian has in God and the understanding that His ways are blessed causes one to delight in walking on the narrow road in the light of the Master's love.

The flesh cannot subdue anger, gossip, fornication, lying, etc. because the flesh longs to sin. The Holy Spirit has no desire for that which is unrighteous. The only solution to a life of failure is to get occupied with Jesus Christ. This enables you to overcome the operation of the flesh.

That which is born of the flesh is flesh (John 3:6). The flesh is not going to tame the flesh. The natural man is not going to cooperate with attempts to put it under restraint. It will not allow for reformation. Victory is available but requires repentance, surrender, humility, and presentation of the body as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God (Romans 12:1). I recall hearing a preacher say a man cannot nail himself to a cross. He may painfully fasten one hand, but the other will be free to work iniquity. We can only go so far in putting down the flesh. At some point we must offer ourselves to the Lord, showing Him that our desire is that He put down our old life and usher us as completely as possible into the new one.

Notes



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Name

Note: (*) An asterisk indicates you must include scripture with your answers.

1. How can the flesh overcome anger, gossip, fornication, lying, and other sins of the flesh?
2. Can you produce the fruit of the Spirit by keeping commandments? Why?
3. Explain the following verses:
 - a. Psalm 7:11
 - b. John 3:16-17
4. Explain why being sinful will never produce the fruits of the Spirit.
5. What does Hollywood entertainment, politics, secular music, and the world's philosophy teach us about love?

6. What is the difference between being saved and being a Christian?

7. What is God's feeling towards the world? Why?

8. Will God save a murderer who is on death row? Why?

7. What is the definition of Love in the Bible? *

8. What is the world's definition of peace?

9. What happens when we yield to the flesh?

10. Define Colossians 3:5-8

(Use the back page or a separate piece of paper for your answer)

True/false

- In order to stay in the spirit, we must deny the flesh on a moment by moment basis.
- God is angry with wicked everyday. *



Scripture memorization

Colossians 3:1-8; Psalm 7:11.

Write out these verses on the back on this page: (must be in KJV)

any questions?