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The Fruit of the Spirit Is...

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Series: The Fruit of the Spirit

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INTO HIS LIKENESS RADIO

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The Fruit of the Spirit Is...

I- THE NEED OF THE HOUR

Ever so often you meet someone whose life has been so dramatically transformed by Christ that even casual observers are in awe. Every now and then you meet someone who so demonstrates the nature of God in everyday life that you have to admit, even if you don't understand it, *that their response is supernatural*. Every now and then you meet someone whose life evidences a quiet peace in the midst of unbelievable turmoil; someone who demonstrates joy when there seems to be no reason; someone who is gracious in response to the taunts of others holding no grudges, bearing no animosity. Ever so often you meet someone like that. Ever so often the world sees someone like that, but not nearly often enough. Because that, you see, is *the normal Christian life*. That's the way you and I are supposed to be, if we've walked with Christ any time at all. In fact, the longer we walk with Him, the more perfectly we ought to reflect that supernatural lifestyle that we see in only a few. It's the kind of transformation we see in the Apostle Peter. Here was a man so brash, so arrogant, so sure of himself that he assured the Master that though all those other guys might let him down, not me. Here was a man so self-centered that he always had to have the last word. Here was a man so impulsive that it was dangerous to let him have a knife in his hand; he just might cut off someone's ear.

Here was a man of whom it was said,

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.
(Acts 4:13 NKJV)

His very countenance, the way He communicated what was on his heart, gave it away. Here was a man whose life had come in contact with God, and he was never to be the same.

Read First and Second Peter. Read them over and over. As you do, remember that this was written by the same Apostle Peter who walked the dusty roads of Israel with the Master. Read of his joy in I Peter 1:6. Read of his love in I Peter 1:8. Read of his goodness in I Peter 2:12-16. Read of his gentleness in I Peter 2:18-25. Read of his peace in I Peter 3:13-18. Here was a man who was *totally transformed*. In fact, the very qualities that were so objectionable in his life before Pentecost were the most obvious in

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their absence after Pentecost. Each of those qualities seemed to have been replaced with a supernatural counterpart. Something had happened to Peter...something incredible.

You are probably saying, “He met Jesus Christ and was born again.” You get a gold star. That’s exactly correct. But wait a minute. You’ve met Jesus, too. Perhaps you’ve walked with Him for many, many years. You then must ask, “But am I as demonstrably different as Peter was? As Paul was? As John was?” You say, “But they were His hand-picked disciples. They had something we don’t have.”

Negative. They had the Holy Spirit. The same One we have. What they didn’t have was the completed canon of Scripture that we have. We have the total Mind of God engraved on the tablets of His Word, and we have been told that “this same power that raised Jesus from the dead” is now operable in us. Then why are we, in this twentieth century of affluence and technology, not as on fire for Jesus Christ and as incredibly changed in character as they were?

Did God ordain for the power to wane, the momentum to decline, the church to lose its intensity? Read the first few chapters of Revelation. That will give you the answer. No, God intended, in fact, as the last days approach, for us who are believers, to be living picture books of the nature of God. Peter even asks the question:

Therefore, since all these things will (soon) be dissolved,
what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and
godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of
God,
(II Peter 3:11,12a)

The closer it gets to His marvelous return, the more holy, the more yielded, the more incredibly transformed, the more decidedly different our lives ought to be. You may be the exception. You may be *that different*. You may be. But even if you are, being exceptional ought not to be an exception. The natural life of the child of God is a life so different that *nothing is ever the same again. All these things ought to be passing away. All things ought to be becoming new.* That’s the plan of God for you. That’s the plan of God for me.

You say, “What’s happened? Why are we not as vitally alive in Christ as they?” I’ll venture a few reasons:

1- We have too much. We have so much we take it all for granted. We have too much affluence, too much technology, and too much freedom. Oh, those are wonderful things to have...but we, like the

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children of Israel, simply have a hard time handling success. We may even have *too much spiritually*. By that I mean too many books, too many translations, too many tapes, too many radio stations. Everywhere we turn, there is Christian this or Christian that, and we have cheapened it in our minds, because it is not scarce.

2- The church, as it has at various times in history, has become organizationally successful on its own, and therefore the miracles of God's sustaining power are almost overlooked by the accomplishments of individual groups of men. We marvel at the "fastest growing churches" and want to know why. We marvel at television empires that gross "millions for Christ". We marvel at denominations that are financially secure and organizationally excellent. We marvel and we forget, in the process, to marvel that the power of God is often perfected in the weakness of men. God is not impressed with our ability, but with our availability.

3- Persecution is at a minimum in our part of the world. Most of us don't understand what it means to fear carrying a Bible in public. Most of us don't understand what it means to go to church knowing you will be watched and perhaps have your family taken from you because you went. The early church flourished under the scepter of Roman oppression. The church of today thrives on the surface, but lacks the character of its predecessors, because our definition of persecution is when someone laughs at our bumper stickers.

4- The church has conveniently lowered its standards of behavior and morality lest it be rejected by a permissive society. Although God warned against it, even those of us who claim to be evangelical, fundamental, and all those other ominous words have changed our concepts of holiness, because it's the "expedient" thing to do.

5- Too few people today fully teach or understand the reality of Lordship living. We think if it's going to be done, we've got to do it; and we try, and we can't, so we give up. We were never told to live the Christian life. We were told to let God live it. The constant teaching of the Lordship lifestyle is painfully missing in our "can do" society today.

6- Finally, I believe the teaching of meditation on the Word of God as a constant, continual, all-consuming way of life is at a minimum in our world. Because it is, we who comprise this, perhaps the most Scripturally literate generation in history, find

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ourselves for the most part so devoid of power, that seldom do we even hear men hint that “these are those who will turn the world upside down.” Some may compliment our church, our teaching, our music, or our buildings; but precious few are standing in awe at the unbelievable, supernatural change in our lives.

We ought to be ashamed. We ought to bow in utter repentance before the King of Glory and beseech Him to release His divine power in us in such a way that this generation that has so much and yet has so little will stand in awe and want what we have. They might see us as unlearned and ignorant men and women. But, oh, dear God, that they might take note that *we have been with Jesus*.

That is the need of the hour in a nutshell. Transformation. Total transformation. Transformation of character from within that then produces transformation of behavior without. Not hypocritical religiosity, *genuine spirituality*. The world is literally begging to see it. That is the topic of this series of lessons. Our objective will be to look intently through the lens of the Scriptures at the nine-fold fruit of the Spirit that God tells us is a perfect reflection of His life as it flows through the believer...and we will then, by His grace, attempt to meditate day and night on that essence of His nature that produces that fruit, quietly yielding our wills to His as we do. We pray that the long-range result will be the kind of decidedly different men and women that turned Century Number One upside down.

Today’s title, the third in the series, the first to deal specifically with Galatians five, is The Fruit of The Spirit Is...

It will be introductory in nature, an overview if you will, of the nine rays of God’s “Son-shine” that ought to be pouring through our lives minute by minute, day by day. Then for the next nine weeks, we will take those beams of Gracious Light and examine them one by one. The outline, then:

- I- The Need of the Hour
- II- The Secret of Power
- III- The Fruit of the Spirit Is...
- II- THE SECRET OF POWER

For the last two lessons, we have occupied ourselves with that all-consuming Scriptural exercise that seems so lacking in our day...*the concept of meditation*. We have determined, from listening to God address Joshua, and to the words of the Psalmist as well,

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that meditating day and night (that is, chewing on the Word of God, talking to ourselves in Scriptures), is one of the keys to the victorious Christian life. According to Joshua 1:8,9, it is through this process that we “observe to do what is written”, and thus become “prosperous” (that is, do God’s will) and have “success” (that is, demonstrate God’s life). According to the Psalmist in Psalm, chapter one, it is this process of meditation that allows us to become like “trees planted by the rivers of water” that *never cease yielding fruit*. We are told that we can become like that. We need not be “anxious in the year of drought” (that is, fearful when the brook dries up), and we need not “fear when heat cometh” (or be afraid of the fires of testing). Why? Because the Word of God will have so infused our lives that every thought we think, passing through the grid of Scripture, begins to reflect the Mind of Christ.

The secret is, *once that happens*, the nature of God, which the Mind of Christ represents, will begin to pour through our lives unhindered, and we will be naturally supernatural in our behavior. It won’t be because of anything we did, but because we have let God be God in us. And that is what the world is looking for. They want to see God. Jesus said to Philip, “Have I been so long time with you Philip, and yet still you ask, ‘show us the Father?’” (John 14:9). Jesus said, “I can of mine own self do nothing” (John 5:30). All Jesus did was let the Father be Himself in Him. And thus, transparently, when they saw Jesus live His life, they saw God. Jesus added, as branches that get their power from the vine, we, too, apart from Him can do as much as He could do without the Father...nothing. But, in the same manner, when we let go and let God, men will not see us, they will see God living in us, and “the life we now live,” as Paul said, “we will live by the faith of the Son of God who loved us and gave Himself for us” (Galatians 2:20).

Learn to meditate on the Word of God. Learn to pass it from your heart to your head and back to your heart every waking moment of the day. Learn to love it “more than your necessary food” (Job 23:12). That’s the plan of God for victorious living.

We will, of course, be looking more at this vital principle as we progress. I pray that it is already becoming a natural part of your every waking moment. We will be, in the next few weeks, asking you to meditate day and night on “threads” of Scriptures that are tied together by one thought...the particular fruit of the Spirit we are looking at that week. I did, however, think it important that we learn to search out verses to meditate on that deal with particular

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needs in our daily lives as well. So before we go on, let me just give you an illustration of what some of those might be.

Have you been wondering (like Job) if God has forgotten you? Why not try meditating then on Isaiah 49:15. It says this:

Can a woman forget her nursing child, And not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, Yet I will not forget you.

See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands;
(Isaiah 49:15,16a NKJV)

Do you see the power in that verse? Every time you open your hands to wash the dishes, or write a letter, or reach for something, stop and think about it. God can't forget you. He has inscribed you; He has delicately woven your name in the fabric of His own hands. He can't forget you. It's unlikely a mother could forget her child, but it is possible. But it's not possible for a God who has you inscribed on His hands to forget. Don't you forget that. One way is to meditate on Isaiah 49:15 until it's a natural part of your subconscious mind.

Do you ever wonder just what it is God is looking for in a man? Then why not meditate on this:

“For all those things My hand has made, And all those things exist,” says the Lord. “But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, And who trembles at My word.”
(Isaiah 66:2 NKJV)

Yes, God is the author of it all. He made you, and all this world you live in. He delights when you delight in His creation, but that's secondary. What He wants is this: 1) A man or woman who is “poor in spirit,” that is, totally dependent; 2) a man or woman who has a “contrite heart”, one who is totally sensitive to sin; 3) and a man or woman who “*trembles at His word*”, that is, one who actually falls down before God in His spirit the moment the Scriptures are read or seen or heard. In our “over-Scriptured” generation, we often yawn at the reading of the Word. We use Bibles for bookends. We leave them in the trunk of the car for weeks; leave them at church and forget them, because we have so many more. We no longer are a generation in awe of the Scriptures. If that's true of you, as it is of me, let's *meditate day and night* on Isaiah 66:2. Here are just a few more suggestions:

Are you wondering *how to pray when the sky is falling*? Meditate on this Scripture from John. It has this amazing message:

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“Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father save me from this hour?’ But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, Glorify Your Name.” (John 12:27 NKJV)

Do you wonder *how to pray when your health fails*? Meditate on Psalm 73:26, especially in the Living Bible. It says

My health fails; my spirits droop, yet God remains! He is the strength of my heart; he is mine forever!

We’ll be giving you more as we progress. But seek to memorize and categorize these and other passages so that *as the enemy attacks you in a given area*, you will have stored up in your heart the ammunition needed to yield the reigns of your life, *through the Scriptures*, back to Him.

III- THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS...

Which brings us back to the primary issue of this study and the source of our meditation for the next nine lessons. Turn to Galatians, chapter five, and look with me for a few minutes at God’s amazing promise to fruit-bearing Christians. The passage begins by outlining in verses 16-21, the fruit of a life that is not under the control of the Holy Spirit. Some of the things Paul outlines seem almost superfluous; we would shout, “amen, brother”. But sandwiched in are other qualities that often dominate our thinking, attitudes we hardly put in the category as being “satanically designed”. The passage doesn’t make any bones about one primary fact: that when you are under the control of the Spirit, *at that time*, you won’t do those things. Look at a few of them:

immorality: the engaging in conduct that violates God’s holiness.

impurity: harboring in the mind thoughts that could lead to immorality.

indecenty: the process of approving or witnessing immorality in others, or allowing your own appearance or behavior to draw attention to the flesh rather than the spirit.

idolatry: the setting up of anything or anyone other than God on the throne of your life.

jealousy: the absence of contentment based on circumstantial comparisons.

anger: an ill-tempered spirit.

selfishness: the absence of love caused by preoccupation with self.

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divisiveness: a spirit that seeks to bring disharmony to Christ's body.

carousing: sensual partying

drunkenness: yielding your spirit's control to Satan through the intake of foreign substances.

Paul says that each of these acts and attitudes directly reflects the nature of Satan, and when they are released in your life, at that moment, Satan's character is being revealed in you. But that is not the norm for the believer. It is abnormal. So he goes on and explains what God looks like when He is free to be Himself in you:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering (patience), kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

(Galatians 5:22,23 NKJV)

Here is a checklist of what the Spirit produces when He is in control of your life. You can tell if you are growing as a Christian. You will be becoming progressively more and more filled with love. *Love is the supernatural expression of God's unselfishness that can't help but give itself away no matter how undeserving the recipient might be.* Measure that up against John 3:16, and you'll see that the definition fits. But what about you? Do you think less and less about yourself with every day that passes? Is your burden increasingly to please God by serving others, no matter what it costs you? You say, "Nobody lives like that." Wrong. Jesus did. Jesus does. And Jesus lives in you right now so that through you He can love like that.

If you are growing, you are becoming increasingly filled with joy, as well. *Joy is being so aware of God's sovereignty that you rejoice no matter what; in fact, the tougher things are, the more joyful you become.* You say, "But that's not natural!" Right. That's supernatural. It's a fruit of God's Spirit.

You will be becoming increasingly characterized by peace, as well. Peace is that supernatural tranquility that defies human understanding, because it is always at rest, even in the midst of a storm. In fact, the harder the winds blow, the more tense the atmosphere becomes around you, the greater your peace ought to be. You say, "No one can live like that." Right. No one but Christ. But He lives in you, and when He is free to flow through you, you will have *that kind of peace*. That kind of peace flows like a river, glows like the sun, blows like the wind on a gentle spring day. It is

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unruffled by life's petty details, because it sees them all through the grid of eternity, and in eternity, who's in a hurry? How filled with God's peace are you? If you are growing as you ought to be growing, you are progressively revealing the peace of God.

In like manner, your life will day by day increasingly be marked by a spirit of patience. *Patience, the result of peace, is that supernatural response that stops crowding life into our timetable, because it knows that the clock of eternity belongs to God.* Patience lets others grow at their pace, move at their speed, work at their level. Patience lets God take His wonderful time answering prayers, knowing that the process is more important than the progress. Are you growing incredibly patient in Christ? If not, you're not growing as you ought, for the patience of God lives in you. His Name is Jesus.

You get the picture. Filled with God, growing in Christ, your spirit will be a portrait of *kindness* (meeting other's needs at your expense). You will be the essence of *goodness* (you will be aglow with that supernatural moral attractiveness that so reflects the Holiness of God). You will be the epitome of *faithfulness* (remaining in place without recognition, just because God told you to). You will not be harsh or retaliatory. Your life will rather be a portrait of *gentleness* (that supernatural ability to quietly respond to life's injustices as Jesus did). No longer will you flit from thing to thing, or react in anger or jealousy or fear as once you did, for you will be known by your *self-control* (that supernatural harnessing of the appetites and emotions that makes choices by the will in conformity to the Word).

I know; I know...you think we're talking about unnatural lives. No, God is talking about *supernatural lives*; but because they are not the norm, even in the church, is not only not reason to dismiss it, it is *all the more reason for us to be alarmed*. Remember these principles, as you think about this passage:

1- This is the normal Christian life. Galatians 5 says:

But I say, walk and live habitually in the (Holy) Spirit—responsive to and controlled and guided by the Spirit; then you will certainly not gratify the cravings and desires of the flesh—of human nature without God.

For the desires of the flesh are opposed to the (Holy) Spirit, and the [desires of the] Spirit are opposed to the flesh (godless human nature) for these are antagonistic to each other.

(Galatians 5:16,17 Amp Bible)

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The flesh and the Spirit are at war with each other. The normal Christian knows that, yields to God's Spirit, and lives above life's circumstances, and above the desires that dominate the flesh. Normal Christianity is not measured by what you see in the church, but by what you see in the Word; and the Word says that, *in Christ*, normalcy generates those nine attributes of God.

2- It doesn't just *happen*. Unless the Word of God is constantly being breathed through our lives, we won't have the Sword of the Spirit to withstand the natural forces that reflect Satan's personality, and we will live our lives in a prison-house of pretense. We must meditate day and night if we are to let God release through us continually all that He is in us.

3- Be careful not to dismiss Satanic behavior in you as "normal" because you have a certain personality or spiritual gift. As for your personality, God made you, and designed in His unique plan for His strength to be made perfect in weakness. So the less joyful you are, Mr. Melancholic, outside of Christ, the more potential you have to be filled with joy, *for when you are, the world will be amazed*. The less patient you are with people, Mrs. Choleric, the more potential you have for God's patience to shine through you, for the more you will glorify Him when you do. Beloved, *never blame the absence of those things on your spiritual gift*. That's blasphemy. Your spiritual gift is a divine enablement from God to allow His nature to be reflected in you. To attribute a quality that is clearly defined as a work of Satan as having come from God is dangerous, and it's heresy.

4- It is not something *you can do* but it is something you must let God do, or you will not be reflecting His Image as you ought. Only as you quietly lay up His Word and rest in His Sovereignty, can He do the work and thus receive the Glory. All He wants to do is be Himself. Let Him.

5- Finally, remember the very circumstances in life that we so abhor are often the tools God uses to refine our spirits so that these qualities can shine through. If we spend our time resisting these trials, or praying for their removal, we may in essence miss the reason for them.

For example, it is often through a difficult marriage that God develops love. It is often through unjust persecution that God produces joy. It is often through spiritual warfare in the ministry that God develops peace; through the absence of visible answers

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to prayer that He produces patience. It is not uncommon for God to let you struggle with keeping what you're supposed to give away, so you can release His kindness. Often you are tempted to conform, so God can reveal His goodness. Often you are tempted to give up, so God can magnify His faithfulness in you. Even the misunderstandings that often take place in the Church can be God's way of developing and revealing a spirit of gentleness. And oh, so often those pesky irritations in the details of life come your way so God can test you and purify you and develop in you godly self-control. These are the things we fight against. But these are the very things Scripture teaches that God allows to remove the dross of the old man and replace it with the pure gold of the nature of God. How we react to those situations may well either impede or encourage the release of His character in us.

So we are off and running. We have looked in general at what God expects us to become. He has not indicated that it is an optional lifestyle that a few choice "supersaints" enjoy. It is to be the natural life of the man or woman who lets a supernatural God have His way.

The world we live in is looking for that supernatural God. We think if God would just dry up a few rivers, or bring water from a few rocks, or perform some other physical miracles, the world would come to Him. Nonsense. The world isn't lastingly impressed with physical miracles; they soon forget or dismiss them as coincidence. They *cannot dismiss a transformed life*; nor can they forget it, because it just gets better and better right before their eyes.

Let's meditate this week on those nine qualities of God's nature and cross-reference them, looking for Scriptural examples of how God looks when He is allowed to be Himself. You'll see God's patience in Job; His love in John; His gentleness in Moses; His faithfulness in Abraham; His peace in Paul.

And if you look carefully, you'll see all nine qualities blossom into full bloom in the Life of Christ. That's the life of God in human form; the nature of God revealed in man. And that is the "normal" Christian life we're supposed to live. When we do, they will say of us, as they did of Peter and John, "Look: They have been with Jesus." *"Dear God, may it be so. Amen."*

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