

The Fruit of the Spirit - Intro (2): The Fruit of God

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[0 : 0 0] Well as I said we began our study on the fruit of the Spirit last week and we can meet again in Galatians chapter 5 verse 22 and 23. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no love. Now we're going to look at these each in turn over the winter months together but last week we began just really introducing the topic in general terms and we're going to complete that introduction today because it's worth just taking time to introduce ourselves to this topic before we start looking at each one individually.

So we're just going to recap very quickly what we said last week before just raising a couple of key points that we need to bear in mind as we study the fruit of the Spirit.

Last week we saw the fact that the great problem for the Galatians was the issue of the law and in particular there was the issue of circumcision and the question was is that essential for salvation. The Galatians had heard the Gospel, they had believed the Gospel but then other people had come and they had said yes believe in Jesus Christ but if you want to be saved you have also got to keep the law and in particular you have got to be circumcised. It's not enough just to believe you've got to be circumcised if you're going to be saved and so they were adding to the Gospel and they were distorting the Gospel but it left the Galatians in a very perplexed situation because what Paul had said to them was now being contradicted by others and so Paul wrote this letter really in a sense of distress and urgency to correct this mistake and when Paul had heard that this message of essential circumcision had come to the Galatians he writes this letter to say no we are not saved by works of the law, we are not saved by what we do, we are saved by faith in Jesus Christ. Paul is saying we are not under the law, we were saying this last week Paul is saying that without Christ we are under the law and if you're under the law then you're going to be crushed by it because you can't reach its standards but Paul is saying Christ has set you free from being under the law, you have been liberated, you are no longer under the law's condemnation and that's really the main message of chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4 of Galatians, you are no longer under the law but you are free in Christ but as we said last week that freedom raises a question, if we are not under the law and if we are free can we do what we like, can we just live as we please, can we say yeah I believe in Jesus and now I'll just do whatever

I like because I'm free from the law. Well Paul's answer again is no and he explains why that is the case, he says that without Christ we are under the law slaves to the law but Christ has redeemed us, he has changed our status, we're no longer slaves, we are now sons and as sons of God the spirit of Jesus Christ, the Son of God himself now dwells in us and we become like him and it's summed up quite well in chapter 3 and I'll read these verses just because this is summing up what we're saying, Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law so that's again saying taking us out from under the law and the way he did that was by becoming a curse for us for it is written cursed as everyone who's hanged on a tree so Christ takes us out from under the law by going under there himself, he's our substitute so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the

Gentiles that basically means that the Gentiles, the non-Jews can also be part of God's family, they can be adopted in as those who are also descendants of Abraham and ultimately the sons and daughters of God, that's his goal that we would be in his family so that we might receive the promised spirit through faith, that's what confirms our adoption, that's what confirms our sonship, the fact that the Holy Spirit dwells in us so there's a kind of a journey being described in those two verses, Christ has taken us out from under the law, Christ has taken away our slavery, Christ has made us sons and in doing that and in confirming that the Holy Spirit now dwells in us and the great point that Paul is making is that as a Christian the Holy Spirit dwells in you, every single believer has the Holy Spirit dwelling in their heart and Paul goes on to say that that indwelling spirit will have an effect and as we said last week Paul describes that effect as fruit, the fruit of the spirit and as I said we're going to study these one by one over the coming weeks but today I want us just to take a moment or two to highlight two very very important points that I want us to bear in mind as we look at them, they're very simple points in many ways but they're very important, the first is this, the fruit of the spirit tells us about God, now this is really important to think about because it's very easy to think that when we're talking about the fruit of the spirit it's very easy to think that we are completely in the realm of practical religion and that's understandable because this teaching is immensely practical and we'll come to that shortly but first and foremost the fruit of the spirit is teaching us a theological lesson, teaching us something about God because when we see that word spirit with a capital S, I know this is very simple but it's worth remembering that is talking about the Holy Spirit which means it is talking about God, God is three in one, Father, Son and Holy Spirit what we call the Trinity and it's important to remember that because when you read that phrase the fruit of the spirit you are basically saying the fruit of God, the fruit of God is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness and so on, when you read about the fruit of the spirit you're not just learning what Christians should be like you're also learning what God is like and that is worth meditating on for a minute or two, the fruit of the spirit is the fruit of God and that reminds us that God is the

[8 : 01] God of love, the God of joy, the God of peace, the God of patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control and I don't think I've ever thought of God in all of these terms before but it's an amazing thing to think about, God is the God of love, that's a basic biblical truth that I'm sure we're all familiar with, John reminds us in 1 John 4 16 we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us, God is love and whoever abides in love abides in God and God abides in him, God is the God of love and that means that love is what lies at the core of God's being, that's part of the reason why God is described as love because as a Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit they dwell in this relationship of perfect love, there is not one fraction of God's being that is not totally and holy ingrained with love, you think about God, if you could search God you are going to find love, perfect love in every area and so love is at the core of God's being but love is also what shapes God's actions, God is not just a love, the God of love in theory, he is the God of love in his actions, God's actions towards you and towards me are always loving, loving actions and we must remember that God acts towards us in love when he encourages us, when he blesses us, when he warns us, when he corrects us, all of that is done in love, everything that God does is shaped by the fact that he is the God of love, love is God's motivation for helping you, love is God's motivation for engaging with you, love is the starting point of your relationship with God, not your love for God but his love for you, that's why you have the gospel because God loves you, so love is the starting point of God's relationship but you know that love is also the end point as well because God's great intention for me and for you is that he will love you forever as his child and so from start to end, from eternity past to eternity to come, God is the God of love but God is also the God of joy, now this is really interesting, we often think of God as the God of love and I'm sure that you've heard many good good sermons on that but what about the God of joy and I ask that because I don't think I had ever thought of that,

I don't think I had ever thought of God as the God of joy before but God is a rejoicing God, God is a God of joy and so we kind of ask ourselves well what does God join, well there's various things the Bible tells us, he joys in his son, in Jesus Christ, you are my beloved son with you I am well pleased and you can imagine God the Father looking at God the son and overflowing with joy but the joy of God is not confined to his son, God also joys in his church which means you, Isaiah 62.5 for as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your sons marry you and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you, God is a God of joy and you give him joy as his people and not only that, God joys when sinners repent, just so I tell you Luke 15.7 there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents and over 99 persons who need no repentance now that is something that you must just allow yourself to think about for a moment, do you think of that fact, it's so easy to sit here and think to yourself well I give God no reason to joy at all, I'm just a let down to God, it's so easy to feel like that but do you know if you bow your head and you say to God I'm so sorry, then he will joy over you, God is the God of joy and he rejoices when sinners repent, God is also the God of peace and that's something that we see throughout scripture, God turns chaos into peace, that's what we see in Genesis 1, everything is put in order bit by bit by bit throughout the creation process until ultimately there is rest and everything is very good and 1 Corinthians 13 tells us God is not a God of confusion but of peace, again that's our wonderful thought because peace is something that we need for so many different reasons, ask yourself a question here's our interesting question, what is the opposite of peace, what's the opposite of peace, well there's loads of things we could say isn't there, fighting, war, hatred, anger, worry, stress, division, chaos and many many more, they are all the opposite of peace aren't they and God is the God who can turn all of these things into peace, so if you face opposition, if you face people who are hostile to you, God can turn that into peace, if you face people who are angry, God can turn that to peace, if you are worried,

God can turn that to peace, if you are burdened by stress, God can turn that to peace, God is the God of peace and for so many reasons that's why we should run to him, so God is the God of peace, God is the God of patience and again this is another wonderful characteristic of God, God is patient, now the word patient has the idea of being long suffering, it's the idea of having a long term view of things and it's often mentioned in the Old Testament, we sang it in Psalm 103, the Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abounding instead fast love, it's emphasising the fact that God is patient, now we live in the age of the instantaneous don't we, we want things just like that and we also drift from one thing to the next thing to the next thing so quickly and the things that one year everybody wants, a year later nobody wants, we can be so short term in our views, when I was thinking about this I stopped to think back, it was Christmas time, I think back to things, what did I really want when I was weak for Christmas, what was it that everybody was desperate for, now I'm looking for anybody right here in their 30s because if you're older than in your 30s you're probably too old to remember these things and if you're younger than your 30s then you're too young but when I was weak everybody wanted a Sega Mega Drive, now that was just the thing to have, a Sega Mega Drive was just awesome, that was what everyone wanted, remember I was smiling when I was, remember can anybody remember Popper, these trousers

Popper, they had like pops all the way down the side and you could undo the buttons down the side and you could just pull them off and have your shorts underneath, they were the coolest thing ever, nobody wears them now of course and of course only, unless you're between like 25 and 35 you're not going to know what I'm talking about but if you grew up in the 90s then definitely you'll remember Popper, all these things, music, all sorts of things, everything is so short term, it's here for a spell, everyone wants it for a spell and then it's gone, we go through life living in the world of instantaneousness and God is different because God is a long term thinker, God is patient and God thinks of you in terms of the long term, that's why God's plans are perfectly laid out from beginning to end, God is patient, God thinks long term and that is why God has not given up on you, now I've said that many times and I'll say it again, God has not given up on you and your journey to faith in Jesus Christ might be a long, long journey, you know for many of us it's a long, long journey but God is patient and he doesn't mind long journeys to faith as long as you get there, so even if it has been many, many years of thinking about things, don't worry, just press on because God is the God of patience, he does not give up on us, God is the God of kindness, isn't that a great thought, Jesus said which of you if his son asks for bread will give him a stone or if he asks for a fish will give him a serpent, if you then who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him, God is a kind God, now the word kindness reflects the attitude that wants to give and this is incredibly important because far too many people think that God is a taker, people think that God is a taker, if I put my trust in Jesus, if I become a Christian God is going to take, he's going to take away from my life, he's going to take away my fun, he's going to take away my hobbies, he's going to take away my freedom, he's going to take away my joy and that's a lie that the devil has told to so many people and it's the same lie that he told to Eve back at the very beginning because he said to her God does not have your best interests at heart but if you go back to the Garden of Eden look at what God gave Adam and Eve, you think of the Garden of Eden, you think of the most perfect summer day here in Carlyway, it's stunning and I think that's a glimpse of Eden and God said to Adam and Eve this is what I want for you, this is what I want you to have, God is a kind God, God is a God who wants to give and the times when God does take things away from us it is only for our good and every single parent in here has taken things from their children for their good at times and God is no different, in fact the only difference with God is that he's just a better example of a father, of a parent, God wants to give

to us, now it will not be until eternity that we get the full measure of what God wants to give us but do you know what the Bible tells us that God wants to show us immeasurable kindness? Has anybody ever shown you kindness that is immeasurable? That's the kind of kindness God wants to show to you, in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness towards us, in Christ Jesus, Ephesians 2-7, God is the God of kindness and that kindness is at an immeasurable level and that also reminds us that God will never be unkind to you, now I'm sure lots of people have been unkind to you in life and it's such a horrible thing but God will never ever be unkind to you, God is also the God of goodness,

[21 : 33] God is the God of goodness, in fact God is the God of abundant goodness, Psalm 145 verse 7, they shall pour forth the fame of your abundant goodness to his very, very core, God is good, that's why Psalm 34 says if you taste God and see you are going to find that he is good, so God is good and again that's the kind of word that we've heard so many times but it's worth asking what exactly does goodness mean, well again we could say many things but sometimes it's helpful to think in terms of opposites and the basic fact of God's goodness means that God will never be bad to you, God will never ever be bad to you, now that is worth thinking about as well, it's a very simple statement but it is an amazing thought because how many people have been bad to you and how many lives have been ruined because people have been bad to one another, God will never be bad to you, ever, ever, it is impossible for God to be bad to you, he's the God of goodness, God is also the God of faithfulness, verse

Corinthians 9:19, God is faithful by whom you are called into the fellowship of his son Jesus Christ our Lord, this tells us that God is never a let down, God is never inconsistent, God is never half hearted, God is never careless when it comes to you, God is never like oh those people in Carlisle way oh yeah I know something about them, God never treats people like that, ever, God is faithful, absolutely faithful that means that God's head will never be turned away, God I won't be drawn to a more attractive congregation or to a more faithful Christian or to a more zealous believer, God will not be drawn to somebody who seems more capable, nobody, nobody can take your place in God's eyes, nobody can take your place because he is faithful to you, he'll never be a let down if you trust in him, God is the God of gentleness, Jesus said take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls, now that's another very, very precious truth that God is a gentle God, now when we think of God we tend to think of his power and his strength, God's power is immeasurable, God's strength is absolutely phenomenal, God is the God of infinite might in every single way but all of that power is combined with the most perfect gentleness and that's why it is such an amazing thing to be in God's hands and to put your life in God's hands because in God's hands you are being held by the most powerful, the most strong, the most safe hands, that means that nothing can fit in you, nothing can leave you exposed, the devil and sin and nothing else can get you, these hands are incredibly powerful but they are also incredibly gentle and that means that if you are bruised, God will not break you, if you are hurting, God will not hurt you anymore, if you are stumbling, God will not knock you over, God will be gentle with you and he will heal you and he will help you, now that's something that's so important to remember, if you become a Christian or if you are a Christian, God is not saying to you right come on get on with it, get on with it, don't make any mistakes, do it, that is not how God treats his people, God is gentle and God is saying come with me and I will do you good, I will look after you, I will gently hold you, I will look after you, so always remember that God is the God of gentleness and lastly God is the God of self control, again have you ever thought of that before, we think of God as righteous, as holy, as

loving, all these things yes but God is also self controlled, Sam 18 verse 30 we read it at the beginning, this God his way is perfect, the word of the Lord proves true, he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him, for who is God but the Lord and who is a rock except our God, God is always perfectly self controlled and what does that mean, well it means that God is not fickle, it means that God is not short tempered, it means that God is not indulgent, God is not rash, it means that God never does anything silly, God is always always always a rock, a rock of truth, a rock of righteousness, a rock of purity, a rock of wisdom, God is a rock, now how often are people hurt because other people lose their self control, how often have you been hurt because other people have lost their self control, maybe you have been at work and a colleague or a supervisor has just flown off the handle at you and you are left stunned, you think where did that come from and they have lost their self control and they have hammered you in the process or how often do we see people that we love dearly getting their cells into a mess in their lives because they are losing their self control and they fall into the grip of addiction or into bad habits or into ways that are only going to lead to a mess and we see people and it breaks their heart and their self control is letting them down or how often have we found ourselves the victims of gossip because we have shared something in confidence and the person we spoke to has had no self control and they have talked about us behind our back and people's words can hurt us so much, so often we are hurt because people lose their self control,

God never does that, ever, God is self controlled, that means if he makes you a promise he will never break it, that means if he says he will be with you he will never leave you and that means no matter how weak you are or how much you are struggling or how difficult things are for you, God will not be pushed beyond his limits, God will always be able to say I can handle it, isn't that why we lose our self control, we lose our self control because we can't handle it, sometimes we are too tired or too busy or too stressed and we lose our self control either by getting angry or by indulging in something or by just behaving badly, we can't handle it so we lose our self control, there is nothing that God can't handle, there is nothing in your life that God can't handle and he is always, always able to help you and so we see that first and foremost the fruit of the Spirit is teaching us a theological lesson, it's teaching us what God is like and that is why the perfect place to see the fruit of the Spirit is in Jesus Christ and this is something that we will look at in more detail as we go through our study, if you look at Jesus you are going to see the fruit of the Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit is the fruit of God and that is why at the heart of being fruitful for God is having a knowledge of God and I am going to close looking at this verse in Colossians 10, walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God,

Paul is making a really important connection there between bearing fruit and knowing God and it makes perfect sense because the fruit is the fruit of God and if we want to bear that fruit in our lives we have to get to know God more and more through studying his word and it tells us that if the fruit of the Spirit is not really very important to us, if these things of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, if they don't mean much to us then we have to ask ourselves do we really know God at all because that is what God is like.

[32 : 54] God is an amazing God and I hope that we all, all follow him. Now those of you who can remember all the way back to the beginning of the sermon will remember that I said I was going to say two things and I've only said one but I'll just say the other one next week.