

“A Few Fruits of the Spirit”

By Chris Ulrich

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Thank you, you may be seated. It's good to see everybody out this morning. I want to just read our theme Scripture for the month, something that Pastor Lee had shared from last week. From the Book of Galatians—by the way, I enjoyed that, “Get Right, Church, and Let's Go Home,” that's a good introduction, and kind of a fun up, upbeat, for sure—so, from the book of Galatians, chapter five, verses twenty to twenty-three:

Galatians 5:22-23 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.*

So, there's certain type of traits that we can possess, and sometimes those traits that we esteem highly, they can start to get kind of a tarnished reputation. So, one that comes to mind is being decisive when it comes to every-day decisions. The obstacle is when we start to think of somebody that has that, is being a little overly confident, and then that could be misinterpreted as being arrogant. Another is a willingness to be zealously responsive. Especially when they are in the company of others who are not quite so engaged, like, “I know the answer!” “I know the answer!” “I know the answer!” And, after a while, you start to think the downside of that is they get to be thought of as a know-it-all. Nobody wants to be that guy or girl. But, meekness is one of those traits that the definition can sometimes get lost in translation. But, I read a definition, recently, that I think will give us all good, godly understanding, and, the definition read like this: “Meekness is strength under control; it does not mean weakness, and it means someone who is humble, teachable, and patient. It also means being modest, and respectful.” I'd like to ask if you could bow your heads for a word of prayer; as we have a prayer for the sermon, this morning.

God, we just thank you, God, for our time, so far, God. We thank you for the music, God. We thank you for the encouragement, and the unity, God, and everybody that's here today, Lord God. And, we just thank you, God, for the prayer time that we had the other night, and the fasting and prayer time that we've had, and the people that have shared: Sister Corrine, and Brother Jonathan and others, Lord God. We just ask right now for the time for the message today, Lord God, that You'd speak through me, Lord God, and that that You'd speak through all of us, and we hear Your Word, and we'd understand the importance and the significance of what we have, and what we face in this world, Lord God. We just ask for understanding, we ask for peace, God, we ask to have that meekness, Lord God. We just want to ask these things in your name, Jesus. Amen.

You don't have to turn with me, but it's from the book of Numbers, chapter twelve, verse three. It's a very short passage. But, it says a lot. It says:

Numbers 12:3 *(Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.)*

Some of you have read this verse before. And, others maybe hearing it for the first time. I Suppose, even if you've never read this verse, you're aware of who the man Moses was. How he led the children of Israel out of Egypt, out of the bondage, through the Red Sea, into the wilderness, and led them for forty years. Those of you that have read the Bible extensively, you know about him, that whenever a matter arose, among the children of Israel, that it always says that Moses fell upon his face in prayer. And, that is an important understanding to have, because, it teaches us, in this day and age, that whenever any kind of significant, or insignificant, for that

matter, arises, to fall on our face in prayer. To see God in prayer. But, those of you who have read about him, know about him, have learned about him, none of us ever met him. We're talking thousands of years ago. But, we have an understanding through the spirit of God that got teaches us at these things are real. But, we also know that Moses was not a pushover, and he was a man of great strength and power. He did not back down.

Part one of the message today is, "We Bring the Meekness."

Part 1 We Bring the Meekness

Now, that might sound a little bit strange, because, you're thinking, or some of us may be thinking, well, doesn't God give us everything? Doesn't He give us meekness, too?" The answer is, God does give us everything, but he also gives us freedom of choice and it's up to us to decide whether we want to have that trait in our life, or not. We can choose not to have it. The word is there as an offering from God to teach us, and give us guidance, but it's not forced upon anybody. It's a choice to be a certain way, and it's going to be a benefit to us, spiritually. And, don't get me wrong, God shows us how it's done, but it's still up to us to do it. So, do we think having meekness is worthy of possession? I think so, after all, it's a fruit of the spirit. I'd like to just revisit a few things from last week. How many were here last week for the message that Pastor Lee gave? Well, I thought it was kind of interesting what he talked about trees. So, for those who weren't here, he shared some different things about the Bible tells us that you shall know them by their fruits (Matthew 7:16). It talks about a good tree and an evil tree (Matthew 7:17). So, he went into some details—I'm not going to try to re-preach that, but I want to share some things.

I had a trip this past week, I was in South—kind of around Madison—Wisconsin, so, driving through, up by Lake Geneva, then, over into Beloit, and then up until this little town called Jupiter, Wisconsin. It was a cheese plant, by the way, so... Very appropriate, I thought. Anyway, I just looking around, and I was like, "Look at all these trees!" I mean, it's just so green and you just keep going through, and it's like for miles and miles, in this direction, miles and miles, in that direction, but, it comes down to the point of this message that he gave; he was talking about the significance of trees and he shared a passage where Christ, He gave a blind man his sight, and He said, "What do you see?" he said, "I see men is trees walking." (Mark 8:22-25) And, that translates to us in this day and age, what kind of fruit are we bearing? Are we bearing good fruit? Or not? But, the point about having meekness is it requires a behavioral change on our part and that's not always easy. It's like Sister Corrine had shared about, that fasting's not easy. It's no fun. I can't think of anything I'd rather not do in the flesh. But, the Bible says to walk in the spirit and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh (Galatians 5:16). So, what's actually in control? Is the flesh, or is the spirit? Yeah, we still have the needs of the body; we still have to meet those things. We still have a life to live here on this earth. But, it's not always an easy thing to take the metaphorical high road. And, now, we're talking about meekness. But, having this trait will come in handy. I'd like to ask if you could turn with me to the Book of Galatians, chapter six, verse one. Again, this may be a verse that many of you are familiar with, and, if you're not, and you're hearing it for the first time, it says:

Galatians 6:1 *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.*

So, it's funny how God's ways work, sometimes, and this passage is no exception. What I mean by that is if we go to talk to somebody that's overtaken in a fault, and we don't have that spirit of meekness, do you think they're going to listen to us? They're not going to receive it one bit. They're going to think, "Pffft, I don't have to listen to you. I don't care what you have to say." It doesn't matter to me one bit, because we're not paid. This is something that is optional.

Christianity is optional. But, it's also worthwhile. So, whenever we're able to share with people, it's always a matter of, "Would you like to come? Would you like to come out? Would you like to go to picnic? Would you like to come to service? Would you like to come to a Bible study?" "Oh, yeah," "Oh, sure," "Oh, okay," you know, you get varying reactions. But, it ultimately comes down to, you're not hiring them. You're not, "Hey, how would you like to work here?" or, you're not holding a gun to anybody's head. And, then, then, things would be different. But, it's never going to be that way, and it's not supposed to be like that. But, the meekness is what makes the difference in the effectiveness. Because, having that trait, is going to be what's going to get through to people. It's going to be what's going to make the difference. Because, if we're human, we understand we're susceptible ourselves to failure, to fault, to sin, to coming short of the glory of God, chances are much better that they're going to receive what's been shared. Trivia time: how many likes trivia? A few, okay, not too many. Here we go. Here we go. It is Bible trivia. Anybody care to guess how many times the word peace appears in the Bible? Just say, somebody. I was going to say one at a time, but that's impossible. Okay, 420 times. What? Since some may be wondering about the word piece, p i e c e—see, threw a curveball—that appears 145 times, so that's 565 times, but we're talking about a fruit, the peace, a fruit of the spirit, not a piece of fruit. I'd like to ask brother Jim Bailey to come up; he's going to read for us from the book of Philippians. So, has anybody here ever, ever seen the bumper sticker that says, "No God, no peace..." this is another, this is, "...k n o w God, k n o w peace." It says, "No God, no peace; know God, know peace." I'd have to say that's probably my favorite of the bumper stickers, but the truth is, the piece of God goes beyond just expressions on bumper stickers. It's much deeper than that. But, before Jim Reads, I'd like to just mention about how Jim is—for those of you that don't know, Jim is from our church down in Virginia. He was here for many years, been a great brother, I've known him personally for about thirty years now.

Jim: at least thirty.

I think it's thirty years.

Jim: I think I met you when you were like seven, or something like that.

That's possible. That's possible. For those though don't know, this is sort of an interesting thing, so, the first time I met Jim, I go, "Where you from?" he goes, "It's hard to say." I said, "Well, where you from?" he goes, "It's hard to say because it's a very long word" I said, "No." and he goes, "I'm from Dover, Delaware." I'm like, "You're kidding me." So, my mom grew up in Dover Delaware. She actually went to high school—I grew up in Western Mass., so, it's a possibility that I did see you somewhere...

Jim: I graduated with your mom, yeah.

Yeah. Twenty-three years apart, twenty-three years apart. So, go ahead, Jim, if you could read from the Book of Philippians, chapter one, verse—

Jim: we were in the same class, class of '70.

Philippians 4:1-7 *Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved. I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord. And, I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life. Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in every thing*

by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And, the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Thanks, Jim. So, did you ever see anybody that clearly didn't have the peace in their life? Maybe you've even been that person at some point in your life, yourself. And, maybe you've even been that person without peace, at some point after becoming a Christian. Anyone here ever been in that boat? You don't have to raise your hand, although, Bob. Yes, I agree, other people are. I know I have, but it's not a fun place to be.

Part 2 of The Sermon is "God Brings the Peace."

Part 2 God Brings the Peace

And God is the only one that can bring the peace to its fullness. And, don't get me wrong, we have a stake in it, but, as far as behavior, so we're not completely off the hook on this. So, what's it like to not have peace, and what causes that.? Isaiah, fifty-seven, twenty-one clearly states:

Isaiah 57:21 *There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked.*

So, that sounds like a pretty bold proclamation. So, am I saying if we don't have peace, it's because of our wickedness? Because, that's what it sounds like it could be. The Bible also says that all unrighteousness is sin, and that we've all sinned and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). But, here is the big question: Is your lack of peace short lived? Or, is it dragging on for days, weeks, months, years? If God restores us to peace quickly, then that's a true indicator of where we stand. If that peace is going for extended periods, then we really need to examine ourselves, and ask God for restoration.

So, there was a song that was back in the '70s, and I wasn't really into this type of music, but I remember hearing it, and I'm not going to sing it, but I am going to just tell you what the lyrics said, it went something like, "Hey, can you play another somebody done somebody wrong song." Anybody here never heard that? So, some people have never heard that. I know you have, Joe. It really wasn't my type of music. But, I remember hearing it, and I'm thinking, sometimes God brings things back into remembrance many years later, and you think, "Somebody done somebody wrong." So, you ever heard the expression, "They did me wrong?" Very common. ever hear anybody use that expression over, and over, and over, and over until it was just like beating a dead horse? Do you think that person is dwelling in peace? Or do you think they've got revenge on their mind? So, ultimately, there's three ways of responding to that. But, I want to ask that in the first person, so that nobody's really taking it personally. Because, when you hear that statement, usually, whoever they're telling it to, tries to get on the sympathy board, "Oh, that's terrible. Oh, they did you wrong. Oh, that's so unfortunate." And, I'm not saying that there aren't slights, or things that happened to people that are honest, that are truthful, that are genuine. But, then I'd have to ask, do I ever do anyone wrong, myself? So, for the person that's saying, "They did me wrong," ask them, "Well, did you ever do anybody else wrong, yourself?" Then, the second would be: "Does anybody else ever do me right?" It did get kind of quiet. Because, that's the flip of the coin. Because, if we're constantly thinking, "Oh they did me wrong. I'm always mistreated. And, doubted, and second guessed," and ultimately, it's like, "Okay, did anybody in your life at some point, maybe even for just a few seconds, ever do you right? Did they ever do me right?" The answer is yes! And, the next question would be, "Well, do I ever do anybody else right?" and it goes right along with that, "Get Right Church and Let's Go Home," because, a lot of this is like doing wrong, doing right. It's a simple thing. So, where am I going with this? What good are we

doing ourselves, if we're walking around with a chip on our shoulder all the time? Do we really think God's pleased with that? Or, do we think that's a good testimony to have? The reason I mention that is because it's becoming a very prevalent behavior these days. More and More, you go on the internet, and "Aw, he did me wrong." "Well, they mistreated me." "Aw, they threw shade at me." They come up with every expression under the sun of just, it's just kind of ridiculous after a while, but, then it comes down to, where do we fit into that equation? Where are we, as Christians, what's our testimony with that? I'm going to ask Ed Howes if he could come up. Ed's going to read from a passage, here. Now, I believe we have to have some kind of motivation that gets us through. And, I'm not saying that you know, you've got plenty of people out there that feel like they've they were done wrong, and so they use that as a motivator to become the best boxer, or the best baseball player, or the best football player. or the best accountant, or the best airline pilot, or whatever, and you just keep hearing these stories rehashed over, and over, and over again and then it becomes commonplace to think, "Well, what's your motivator?" "Oh, the time that I was in the 8th grade where they said I would amount to nothing." And, then it's like, "Well, did you believe them?" because, that shouldn't be the case. If we have the power of God to overcome that stuff, then we have the power to overcome that stuff. So, in other words, we need to let Jesus Christ be our motivation, not some slight or some mistreatment. But, Ed's going to read with us from the Book of Jeremiah, seventeen, verses five through eight:

Jeremiah 17:5-8 *Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.*

Thank you, Ed. So, the verse I'd like to highlight, it's where it says, "... and shall not see when good cometh..." and, Ed Howes and I were talking, maybe month and a half ago, and we were just talking about how, as Christians, God will show us when there are good times. God will show us when there is peace, because it's not always that way. Don't get me wrong. The Bible says for a reason that, that there is no discharge in that war (Ecclesiastes 8:8). That we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities (Ephesians 6:12). To endure hardness as a good soldier of Christ (2 Timothy 2:3. So, there is a warfare but there's also times when we have peace. Where we're able to savor those victories, where we're able to relish that time of contentment and satisfaction. And, it's important for us to see when we are in those times of peace. And, it's important to know that there is good that's coming, and has already come. And, I'm not talking about peace globally, or nationally, or even locally, I'm talking about internally. And, that is a difference maker. Because, that's how God reaches us, and that's how God brings us peace. I know this has been a little more of interactive, me asking a lot of questions, but I've got a few more. But, have you ever seen someone, or know someone that seemingly had nothing, or very little, and yet were very thankful for what they had, and, in the back of your mind, you're thinking, "How could that be? Why would they be like that?" And, it's almost like, at times, where you're thinking, "No, you shouldn't be—you shouldn't be peaceful. You shouldn't be thankful. You should be up in arms! You should be protesting! You should be fighting! You should be blaming somebody else!" Now, it might have been somebody that was in the aftermath of a loved one, or a valued possession, and yet they still held their head high and thanked God for what remained. That might sound somewhat strange, when we think about what we're thankful for. It's going to be always about something that either already happened, or something that's currently happening. Because, if we think about thankfulness, and, we think about, "Well, I'm thankful for tomorrow." Well, tomorrow's not here yet. "I'm thankful for what's going to come." Well, that may

not happen yet. I'm not saying we can't be thankful for what God's promised, but it's still, until that check clears, because, I think a lot of us think that way, "Okay, they promised to mail the check." "The check's in the mail." Well, I don't believe you until I see it in my account. That's just an honest to God fact. That's called "Don't count your chickens until they hatch." Farmer term.

So, this is a bonus section: because, even though thankfulness is definitely a fruit of the spirit, it's not one that's listed in Galatians 5:23, but it's going to tie it together. And, nevertheless, part three, and the last part of the sermon, today, is, "Thankfulness to God Brings It All Together."

Part 3 Thankfulness to God Brings It All Together

So, I was talking to a guy that many of us have known at our church conference last month, and we were reminiscing a little bit, and catching up a little bit, and just kind of walking around on the property in the back of the church building, and Jim Ottoson is a guy that's been around for quite a long time. I think, 1973, so, forty-five years, and, basically since the beginning of the ministry. You know, I can't recall every detail about the conversation, we were kind of reminiscing a little bit, and sharing about what's been going on here, but, we were talking a little bit about, "Well, what is it that keeps us in the faith?" What is it that—I mean, it just sort of built to that sort of climactic point. And, we just kind of looked at each other, and at the same time, said, "Thankfulness." and, I'm not going to sit here and tell you that "Oh, well, then, what happened next?" I mean, is this a really powerful story?" It is to me. because it's something that you realize you've got somebody who's been around that long a time that still goes back to the well of thankfulness. Thankfulness to God. I remember, Ken Avellino, a couple of years ago, we were talking about out in the hallway, and I think Pastor Paine may have already been here, recently, you know, prior to that, and, one thing you just mentioned was, "You know, one thing about Pastor Paine is, just, he's thankful." And, it's an example. It's an example to us, young and old, doesn't really matter, about what it takes to stay in the faith. That was another thing, even Pastor Ulyse, our associate general pastor, had shared a couple of months back, and he just said, "When I got baptized, when I came into this ministry, I knew, it was a plan to stay. I knew this was going to be for life. This wasn't just, come into it by accident."

But, I want to go back to the opening statement about if we've ever known somebody that appeared to have nothing, or seemingly little, and yet were thankful. Or, experience some kind of misfortune, or tragedy. When I was a teenager, I was fourteen, and this is one of those things that I can say, "Well, we can laugh about it now." But, when that fire in our house happened, and there was \$50,000 worth of damage, and that's 1982, and we had to move out for five months, and live in kind of a crammed in apartment, and it was a family of four of us; it's not something I was laughing about that day, I could tell you for sure. And, I'd like to tell you that I had nothing to do with it, and I have an older brother—now, his take on it was, because he was sort of mischievous; he was in trouble, not with the law, but, but he was in trouble a lot with our parents, you know, it's not like we were that strict, but they had their rules, they had their rules. But, he told me that when he first heard about it, he said, "Well, I'm glad it wasn't me." I'm thinking, "Nice guy." Now, he tells me that now. He tells me that now. But, again, it's understandable, because he got blamed, and justifiably, for a lot of the nonsense and shenanigans that he pulled. But, you know, our mood of the family changed a lot that day. We weren't worried about what's for dinner, or what's going to be on TV tonight, are we going to be able to catch the football game, or whatever the case may be. We were just thankful nobody died.

And, I want to talk now about a lady that I've known for many years, and myself and Tom Hanson were out visiting, a couple of years back, And, this lady had lost her son, and she spoke fondly about him. Had a lot of good memories to share. Reminiscend, and she was thankful that he had gotten to know God. But her son predeceased her in death. Her son died about a year prior to that, and, I can't think of anything worse than for a parent to lose a child. I don't have

children, but I can't think of anything that's worse than for a parent to lose their own children. But, we had a memorial service, and part of that service was just to remember and—but, what really struck me was—the real key here is—that she said, “I'm just thankful for, for his life. For what he became.” And, a lot of us remember Tony Mattia. And, some of us, here, were pretty close to him too. I know that that Laygoze Laine, Jim Bailey, Tom Hanson, we made trips out to Arizona and Kirk Orelup, I believe, is Kirk here? He's been out there. Jeff Lynch has been out there. Has anybody else been ever been out there and visited with Tony when he was out there? Okay. But, don't get me wrong, there was a lot of tears that were shed that visit. And, not only that visit, but, but I know for a fact before we got there, this was—Tom Hanson and I were visiting with Tony's mom, and his family, we were having, like, just a memorial service, on the remembrance of, of his life. This was about 2015, so about a year after he had passed. And, you know, I'm sure there was some bitterness and just asking, “Why? Why did this happen?” And, I wouldn't say Tony was a real young man, he was fifty-five when he passed, but that's still young. His mom just turned 80, last year. You know, I'm sure there was some bitterness, and who knows what other emotions somebody's going to feel in the aftermath of that. But, you know, it's easy to be thankful to God when things go our way, when our team wins the Super Bowl, we won a million dollars, you know, we get the promotion, or whatever the case might be, but, there's nothing wrong with that either. There really isn't. God's not trying to get us to be, live as hardship as possible, or as difficult a life, or that every day is just absolute misery, and that we're just supposed to fight through the tears, constantly. There's going to be times of real enjoyment. There's really is. But, when somebody's able to express that gratitude and thankfulness in the aftermath of something like that, in the aftermath of a tragedy or misfortune, the victory is that only God can bring that to a mother that's lost her child, to be thankful and not bitter. And, only God can—only in God can a person see the light at the end of the tunnel when it seems to be just darkness. And, only in God can we get through this life and be thankful despite all the heartache and sadness that's around us that seems to just get worse. I'm closing in a moment, here. I'm going to read from our last Scripture, which is going to be from the Book of Colossians, chapter three. It says:

Colossians 3:12-15 *Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And, above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And, let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.*