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The Fruit of the Spirit Is...Jesus

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Series: The Fruit of the Spirit



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THE WORLD'S GREATEST MYSTERY

Who would you say is the best known author of mysteries in history? Agatha Christie? Erle Stanley Gardner? Rex Stout? Well, no matter *which one you chose*, you're wrong. There was, even before the foundation of the world, a story written by the hand of the only One whose words are perfect; and it was to become the greatest mystery of all time.

In Scripture, a mystery is a secret which has been revealed; a puzzle that has been solved; an unknown that is now known. Paul did a book review on the world's greatest mystery in I Timothy 3:16. He wrote:

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness:
God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of
angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world,
received up into glory. (I Timothy 3:16)

God has come in the flesh.

The angels saw Him. Man heard Him. Man believed Him. Man received Him. Man watched Him swept back up into the heavens to be with his Father. It was a spiritual reality with physical witnesses. God became a man so that man might become a child of God. If this were the extent of the Gospel, it would indeed be the mystery of the ages solved, but it is not all there is to the story.

Paul, in Colossians, describes in detail that this one who became a man was indeed God Himself. He said,

In whom (Christ) we have redemption, through his blood,
even the forgiveness of sins;

Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every
creature:

For by him were all things created, that are in heaven,
and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they
be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all

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things were created by him, and for him.

And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

And He is the head of the Body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell. (Colossians 1:14-19)

Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints;

To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: (Colossians 1:26,27)

For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the godhead bodily.

And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: (Colossians 2:9,10)

Not only has God come in the flesh, *paid the price for man's salvation*, been caught up into the heavens, and returned to the Father, the final reality is this: *through His Spirit He lives, even this moment*, in the life of every believer. The question to be answered: how would Christ reveal Himself in this church age? Would He teach men to teach other men what He was like, so they could, *doing the best they knew how*, imitate His righteousness by attempting to obey his laws? No. No. No.

The ultimate mystery has been solved. It is *Christ living in you...that's your hope of bringing Him Glory*. (Colossians 1:27) *Your only hope*. In Him dwells all of the fulness of the Godhead bodily (Colossians 2:9). Everything God is, Christ was, and you are complete in Him. Everything Christ was, you can be. How? That's the mystery. But the mystery has been solved. It is Christ in you. God through His Spirit living in your body reproducing *through your life* that very same supernatural character that was evidenced when He walked this earth 2,000 years ago.

This is not what the flesh wanted. Man wanted to reproduce God through good works. God wanted to produce the good works Himself. So man has, through the ages, tried to manufacture a gospel that is part God—part man, God saving—man living, God revealing—man producing. It has been, in varying degrees, a mixture of the supernatural with the natural. It has been man doing all he can, and God filling in where man falls short. All of the cults, and all of the “isms” and all of the once-great

denominations which have run off course, *have this one thing in common. They leave it up to man to live this life.* But man never quite succeeds in making it happen.

They will often give at least token allegiance to mystery number one. They may *to some degree* admit that Christ came in the flesh, lived a sinless life, and some will even admit that He died an atoning death on the Cross. None will even allude to mystery number two...*that Christ living in you is your only hope of glory.* That's because the flesh cannot tolerate being totally useless.

The flesh *is* useless. "The flesh profiteth *nothing.*" Man apart from Christ can do *no more than Christ could do apart from the Father*, which is...*nothing.* Now the word nothing comes from a Greek word which means *nothing.* Nothing means "no thing". Zilch. So apart from a living, indwelling Christ, *living His life through you, in your body*, you can do...*nothing.* Man hates that. So mystery number two has become an unaccepted truth throughout most of religious history, *even in Christendom itself.* It is the truth that makes all other truth fall into place. It is the reality that makes the life we live an adventure. It is the exclamation mark that releases the power of God in the trenches of life where the world has no answers, and the flesh has no strength. *Christ in us...our only hope of glory.* Indeed.

That means that it isn't up to us to live the Christian life; it's up to God. The choice, minute-by-minute is ours. The task, minute-by-minute, is God's. What a relief. What a load that takes off these tired minds and bodies. Of course, we can't love. God knew that. *God is love.* So the only hope we have of experiencing and releasing *true agape love* is for God to supernaturally release that love through us. The only hope we have of being joyful in the midst of life's cloudbursts is for God to release His joy in us. The only hope we have of experiencing a peace that passes understanding is for the Prince of Peace, who lives in us, to pour through us that dramatic quality of His nature. We can't be supernaturally patient. It's not in us, but God is in us, and He in us *will be that patient*, if we'll let Him. On and on it goes. Godly kindness, godly goodness, godly faithfulness, godly gentleness, self *under control...these are not possible apart from God.* We live in a world filled with frustrated Christians trying to live a life they were never intended to live. They are as frustrated as the world they are witnessing to, because they are proclaiming

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supernatural lives while struggling to live them in the natural realm.

No wonder the world is confused. We've told them one thing and shown them another, and they can tell that *we're confused*. We pretend to be living joyful lives, but they can't see it. We tell them we're filled with peace, but they see agitation and worry. We tell them we're patient, but we can't wait on God or man. We tell them we're faithful, but we flit from thing to thing like lightning bugs, and they *don't understand*.

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The Christian life is simply this: *Christ in you, the hope of Glory*. There is no other Christian life. Any attempt on your part or mine to live this life in our own energy is an affront to God, a joke to the world, and a source of endless frustration for us. That's why we've been studying the fruit of the Spirit. Galatians 5:22,23 is an X-ray of the Christian life when God is allowed to live it. It was never meant to be a formula for us to struggle to achieve. It is, rather, a picture of the human heart when inhabited by Christ. It is the "new you" set free. These qualities, adequately understood, serve as a measuring stick to demonstrate whether or not we are living this life or God is. The Fruit of the Spirit is nothing more, nothing less, than the life of God revealed. Therefore, the bottom line is this: *the fruit of the Spirit is Jesus*.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

(Galatians 5:22,23)

Whenever you see the love of God, you are seeing Jesus. Whenever you see the joy of the Lord, you are seeing Jesus. Whenever you see the peace of God, you are seeing Jesus. Whenever you see the patience of God, you are seeing Jesus. These are actual attributes of the nature of God that are nothing less than the person of Jesus Christ as He is seen in human form. That is why, when men and women see those attributes in your life, they *want what you have...because what you have is God, alive in your heart*.

The question many ask, then, is, "How can I know how the fruit of the Spirit looks when it is being released in my life?" What does "real peace" look like? What does "real joy" look like? What does "real goodness" look like? That is why we have been studying

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these words and what the Scripture says about them, but there is one more thing we can do. I am suggesting that we make it a life-long project, beginning today, and that project is simply this:

Take a look at Jesus in Scripture. Whenever you see Him exhibiting any one of those qualities, you are seeing what that quality will look like when God is having His way in your life.

If the fruit of the Spirit is Jesus, then look at Jesus, and you will see how Jesus looks when He is demonstrating love, joy, peace, patience, etc. through a human body. That's *exactly* how it will look when He releases that part of His nature through you. Jesus lives in you...and if the fruit of the Spirit is Jesus, you will have seen a photograph of what your life *will be like with Jesus in control.*

LIVING FRUIT IN THE LIFE OF GOD

The rest of this message, then, will be a life-size view of the human heart when Christ lives the life. We will see God's nature as it is in us, by seeing it as it was in Christ. Then, when those qualities begin flowing through our lives, and the world is amazed, we can do nothing but humbly bow before God and worship. For we will recognize the One who is doing the living.

The Love of God is Jesus

Suppose someone were to say to you: "I appreciate what you have to say about the love of God, but *I can't see it.* The Christians I know are just as self-centered and uncaring as the rest of the world. What does God's love look like?" Tell them to look at the Cross.

Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation (gave Himself a sacrifice) for our sins. (I John 4:10)

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. (John 15:13)

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)

No longer must you grasp for definitions. No longer must you clamor for examples. The fruit of the Spirit is love. *Love is God on*

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a Cross. He said so. He described the cost of love (everything), the object of love (those who did not deserve it) and the source of love (the nature of God). So if you lack love in your life, spend the next two or three months of your life *simply meditating on Calvary*. Go back to that hill, morning by morning, and worship. See Him before Pilate. Watch Him climb Golgotha for you. Weep as the blood of the only begotten Son of God, the Sinless One, is shed on your behalf. Hear His haunting cry, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Listen to Him reach out in agony, “Why hast thou forsaken Me?” Shout triumphantly with the angels as He thunders, “It is finished” . Then follow Mary and the others to the empty tomb. Spend those nights in agony waiting. Watch the angel as He announces, “He is not here; He is risen.”

You will have witnessed love—God dying for men and women who were not worth dying for, because He *loved them*. Now, go out into *your world*, and ask God in you to do the same. Be careful. It will cost you the way it cost Him, but it will be worth it. Because this is why He came to earth, and this is why He saved you, not to give you a new club to join or a new campaign to participate in. The Gospel is not an activity. It is a life. A life that gains by giving; a life that has to die to self to live.

The Joy of God is Jesus

Would you like to experience the joy of the Lord? Then read Matthew 5, 6, and 7 over and over for the next few months. Memorize it; meditate on it; commit yourself to it. It is God comparing the two kingdoms, teaching us how to lift our sights from man’s perspective to God’s.

“It has been said to you...” here Jesus would explain man’s perspective...but “I say unto you...” and then He would explain God’s perspective. The Living God was trying to communicate joy, a heart attitude that reflects excitement over things eternal because it is unaffected by circumstances. That’s joy...and Jesus, in the classroom of eternity on that hillside, *demonstrated it by explaining how utterly different it was*. Joy is man mourning. Joy is man persecuted. Joy is man clothed in meekness, wearing the robes of a peacemaker. Joy is everything happiness isn’t. Capture that, and you are beginning to live. Then go to Gethsemane. There you will see that what He explained, He lived out. Stay there long enough, and you will begin to experience the joy of the Lord. Once you have, go to the quiet place and ask God to fill you

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with that same joy. Caution: it may lead you to Gethsemane, too, but it is in life's Gethsemanes that the glistening diamond of joy is unearthed. Only then are the artificial, man-made stones of circumstances seen as the counterfeits they really are.

The Peace of God is Jesus

Are you struggling to understand the peace of God? Then climb with the disciples into that little boat in Matthew 8:23-27. Listen as the thunder rolls. Watch as the lightning flashes from one end of the sky to the other. Feel the ship as it reels under the impact of life's storms. And watch Jesus. Listen as the disciples cry out in fear. And hear Jesus. You just saw the peace of God. You just witnessed how God in you will behave in the storms of life, *if you'll let Him*. Now ask Him to do that. As the horizon blackens, and the circumstances of life begin to cloud out the "Son", quietly ask God in you to *be the peace He is*. Only then will you experience what Paul described in Philippians 4:6,7. But when you do, *you will recognize* it, because you will have seen it in Jesus. He is the peace of God, and He is the peace of God in you.

The Patience of God is Jesus

How would you like to see God's patience? Take a walk through the Gospels and watch the Living God with His disciples. See Him as they argued among themselves as to who was the greatest. Watch them beg for first place in the kingdom. Look as they tell the hurting to get out of the way. See them in the garden asleep. See them flee as the Cross appears on the horizon. Listen to their confusion as they try to rationalize the parables, and all the while, *watch Jesus*. You and I would have sent these twelve guys back to the employment agency and asked for *some real men*. Not Jesus. See His patience, even as Peter boastfully, arrogantly says, "Maybe those guys, Lord, but not me. I'm your man!" See Him forgive Peter. Oh, Beloved, we don't even understand patience... not with God, not with man. Now watch Jesus wait, patiently wait, as the church loses its sense of mission, the world laughs, and the heavens quake as man sinks to all-time lows in behavior. Yet, He will not come back until *that last one who will come, has come*. Oh, Beloved, watch Jesus. You will have seen the patience of God. Then hang your head in shame at your childish anxiety over time. Ask the God of patience to be Himself in you.

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The Kindness of God is Jesus

It is, of course, the same with the kindness of God. To see it, simply see Jesus. Watch him with the widow's son in Luke 7. Watch him at the Pharisee's house in Luke 7. Watch him feed the 5,000 in Mark 6. Watch Him in Mark 2 and 3 as he ignores His own danger and sets aside His own reputation to heal those who are hurting. Watch Jesus minister to an aching world. Watch Him touch those who are dying and dry the tears of those who are crying. You will have seen the kindness of God. Then go out into that weeping, weary world you live in and ask God to be Himself. You will know when he does...because the fruit of the Spirit is Jesus, and Jesus is kindness personified.

The Heart of God is Jesus

So it is down through the rest. The goodness of God can be seen in the cleansing of the temple, on the Mount of Transfiguration, and as Jesus withdrew to be alone with His Father. He hated evil, He cleaved to Holiness, He longed for His Father's Presence. The goodness of God is Jesus. Focus on Him, and your heart will beat as His heart does. And the faithfulness of God is Jesus. Watch Him heal the centurion's servant; watch Him share the Kingdom parables; watch Him as they came to take Him when His time had not yet come. Watch Him teach day after day, *even when they mocked Him*. You will see the faithfulness of God in Jesus.

And, oh, you will see the meekness of God in Jesus. Watch Him wash the disciples' feet; watch Him gather the little children; watch Him on that donkey entering Jerusalem; watch Him before Pilate. Meek before His Father, humble in His own sight, gentle before His accusers. The meekness of God is Jesus.

Self-control begins and ends with Jesus. Do you long to have self under control? Then go back to the wilderness with Jesus and watch His encounter with Satan. You will visually see how God behaves when choices have to be made. Watch Satan appeal to the Master's emotions. Then watch him appeal to the Master's appetites. Watch the Master respond, not react. Watch Him clothe Himself in the Word of God as His will responds in obedience. Watch Jesus in Matthew 4, and you will have seen self under control.

The Fruit of the Spirit in Scripture

Oh, Beloved, once you have thoroughly witnessed the life of

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God in the Son of God, take some time to look at other godly illustrations of those qualities. Want to see more of God's love? Look at the life of the apostle John. More of God's joy? Look at Paul in prison. More of God's peace? Look at Joshua. More of God's patience? Take God's Word, and look at Job. More of God's kindness? Watch Elijah. More of God's goodness? Study Joseph. More of God's meekness? Moses is your picture book. Self-control? You'll see it in action in Daniel. The Word of God is a portrait catalog of the character of God as it appears in man. By watching Jesus, you see how God behaves when He is allowed to be Himself in us.

By watching the heroes of the faith you see the reflection that glows through God's people when God is free to do so. It is all there, so you and I can *know what to expect when Christ is Lord in our lives*.

There is the crux of it all. The fruit of the Spirit is nothing more than Lordship released. It is how God looks when He is Lord. It is the mystery of the ages, *Christ in us, our only hope of Glory*. It is so personal, so real, so intense, that taking the Christian life *apart from Lordship living*, is like taking a new Mercedes without an engine. You can look good, impress your neighbors for a while, feed your ego, and calm your insecurities, *but you won't get anywhere*. You'll be sitting in your driveway, hands on the steering wheel, pretending to be something you aren't.

The engine that drives the Christian life is Jesus Himself. Nothing more; nothing less. When He is allowed to *be* Lord, He flows through your life with a supernatural power that demonstrates itself to a lost world with such love, such joy, such peace, such patience, such kindness, such goodness, such faithfulness, such gentleness, such self-control, that they will no longer *even see you*. You will be less and less aware of yourself, as well. Both you and they will be caught up together in the theater of eternity watching the God of eternity behave in the confines of time. You will be witnessing Christ in you, the hope of glory. With Paul, you will shout, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Until then, *you aren't living; you're playing a role on the stage of life you were never intended to play*. You weren't called to imitate Jesus. You were called to die...so Jesus could live out His life in your body.

If you've never "buried" yourself, held a funeral for the flesh,

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and asked God once and for all to be Lord of your life, this may well be the time for you to do that. It is not some emotional experience designed to overcome your rational understanding of God. It is not some external manifestation of the Spirit's presence. It is a quiet, prayer-closet yielding of the reins of your life to Jesus. It is an acknowledgement that *you can't live the Christian life—only He can*. It is a conscious request on your part, that He become in you the Lord He already is.

Don't ask for signs. You'll only worship the signs. Don't ask to be taken to some Mount of Transfiguration. Like the disciples, you'll only want to stay there. Don't ask for some kind of sinless perfection; John says if you do, "you'll make God a liar, and the truth is not in you." Don't *ask for anything*. It isn't what God can do that matters, *it's who God is that matters*, and who God is, is Jesus. What God wants, is Jesus in control of your life.

It isn't a once-for-all decision. It is a moment-by-moment decision. But it has to begin sometime. At some point in time, you need to ask God to be in you all that He already is. At some point in time, you have to relinquish the reins of your life and stop trying to imitate His righteousness. At some point in time, you *need to surrender*. That point in time, for you, *might be now*.

Peace like a river will flow at last.
Joy overflowing will conquer the past.
Love overwhelming will finally be free;
And you will become what God meant you to be.

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