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The Character of Christ Developed in Us

Today, we're coming closer to my series on spirituality, which includes practical examples of how to become more like Christ. Last week, we looked at patience before joy and then love. Today, we will look at how the Lord defines these characteristics. Sometimes, we look in the Old Testament for that as well because Jesus was the great "I am," and before Abraham, he was. So very often, what is described in these characteristics about God the Father is also with God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

There are specific ways in which Jesus demonstrated these qualities, and when we look at examples of him displaying his character, we marvel at them. He wants it developed in us. And so we're going to look at that as well.

I want to take us now again to Galatians chapter 5:22, 23. Because it's just two verses in one way, I also had an opportunity to look at it and learn it in Greek, and it's nice. It really is. We have good English translations. A thumbs up for the New King James and a New American Standard because both of them try to give us what the actual Greek is saying. Some translations are trying to give thought to thought, like the NIV. They don't often get that specific word for word.

A long time ago, when the King James Version was translated, the translators worked very hard to get the translation right so that you had the correct words and how it was written to interpret it correctly. They didn't try to interpret the Bible. They just wanted to give it a faithful translation. They followed a great principle. And these other translations have done the same thing. There are a few more that have done it. You need a Bible for a study that actually tries to do that. Sometimes, you have an "and" in it, those connectives. Sometimes, you wouldn't have that connective in English sometimes because it's not good English, but if the Greek has it. You want to see it in your English translation. Some other things indicate that word-for-word thing because you're smart enough to figure out, "Okay, it's got these connectives. It's got other things that the Greek has given it." Even though it's a little harder to read, I can work through that because I want to get it accurate.

There are also other translations that are easier to read, and sometimes, that's great for paragraph reading and other things, so that's good, too. These translations that read more easily are good for our comprehension.

So anyway, with our Bibles 5:22, 23,

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

So, we see Christ-like characteristics that God wants to see in our lives. We see the character; all of it reflects love. All of these fruits are love. But the balance of God’s character is love and holiness. Well, in verse 23, we have some evidence where I can deduce that it refers to holiness. So follow me, and you can decide whether or not my deduction is okay. It says here in verse 23, “Against such there is no law.” Doing these characteristics, being like Christ, fulfills the law, and it’s holy. Holiness isn’t mentioned here, but doing these things actually acts out not just love but holiness. There’s no law against these things because they’re all holy. I deduced that. I extrapolated from what I saw in the text to do that. Now, I can go to other places where it talks about love and holiness, but at least I see that here. I see the whole idea that if you do love and have a spirit-filled Christ-like joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control if that’s going on in your life, you will have a holy life.

Christ Character

Now, the proof and the pudding for that is let’s look at the Lord Jesus as He did these things himself. He elevated righteousness to the highest levels by doing these things. And so again, and we’ll look at some specifics, but that’s the logic of it and what I see with it. I believe that that would be very congruent with what Pastor has taught over the years. I think it’s great. All right, well, we’ve looked at joy, peace, patience.

When it comes to love, turn to John chapter 13:1.

“Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come, that he should depart from this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.”

A couple of things about that love: it will go into one of the areas we’re discussing today. Jesus loved them to the end. That’s called faithful love. And you can see why being loyal is a characteristic of love and how it operates; it will continue until I move on to be with the Lord. That’s what the Lord did perfectly. He loved them to the end. Now, he defines love and how it’s to be operated in our life in the same chapter, verse 13:34.

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.”

Here's the interplay that you can apply to all of these fruit characteristics Paul gives in Galatians. "Love as I have loved." Be at peace as I have been at peace. Be patient as I have been patient. Be kind as I have been kind. Be good as I have been good. Be faithful as I have been faithful. Be gentle as I have been gentle. And while you won't find self-control as a word in the Gospels, you can look at every situation the Lord was in where he demonstrated self-control. If he was upset at the temple, he was in control of his anger, which moved him to protest about how they were using the temple. Jesus didn't go berserk. He was under control. If He went to the grave site and experienced the pain of that death and wept, he was in control of his weeping. He was not a hysterical personality. He was a very balanced person. Everything he did, he did so with perfect response in his character and emotion. We see it all the way. It's something for us to model ourselves.

Now turn over here while we're in John. Look at chapter 14:27. This is a wonderful verse.

"Peace, I leave with you. The peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

We can have fear, obviously. Sometimes, it's scary to drive on the road now where there's snow and ice. It can be scary. But Jesus gives us peace between us and our Lord. He assures us, "Don't let your heart be troubled, neither be afraid. I'm in control. I love you. I can protect you." By the way, here comes a red light. Make sure you stop. But that's what the Lord does. He helps us, even our fears.

Now, let's go to kindness because this is a new area we want to discuss. I laid this down before, but now I'm more specifically into it. Kindness. One of you would please, this is a wonderful passage that Paul gives in Titus chapter 3:3-5. Go ahead. One could spend a while on this particular passage.

"For we ourselves were deceived once, foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another."

We were really all about taking care of number one at every cost. That's what we were doing.

But when the kindness and the love of God, our Savior, toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us through the washing and regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.

Becoming Christ-like

In these graces that we're talking about in Galatians, many others are mentioned in the Bible, but in these things, we're talking about the "renewing of the mind," how the mind is changed. As you think about how the Lord operated and try to do what He wants you to do, you try to do it in the way He prescribes in the word of God. There's a transformation that takes place in your spirit. Sometimes, it takes a couple of months to change a bad habit, but eventually, we can, over time, learn a new habit, and that becomes a way of life for us. We don't have to put a lot of thought into it. It's just that now we're doing it completely different. In our thought life, as we look at these characteristics, it may go against the very thing we're the weakest at in our flesh. God can rebuild that in the Spirit, where our minds are transformed and renewed.

For me, nothing more clearly evident of that than the whole idea of self-control. If there was ever somebody that needed self-control, it was me. God's been working with me on this one for 40 years, but whatever success I've attained in it, it's been His working in me.

Here, we're returning to kindness, and it's being renewed. Here's a great example I saw in the book of Acts about kindness: Acts chapter 28:2. It's right here in these pages. They went to a place called Malta. The natives—don't you just love the natives? Oh yeah, I love the natives.

"The natives showed us usual kindness for they kindled a fire and made us all welcome because of the rain was falling and because of the cold."

Think of the Lord Jesus when he said, "Did you feed me? Did you clothe me? Did you help me?" Well, when we do this, Lord, when you've done it for them, you've done it for me. You know, kindness. How kind is a warm fire and a bit of a shelter when the rain has fallen on you? Pretty kind.

I remember a fellow. I didn't even know him from Adam, but he loaned me a chair when I needed a chair, and he sat on his cooler. His cooler was probably full of beer, but he sat on that cooler and gave me his chair. He gave me an act of kindness, and I could experience what my family was doing then. I was very grateful for that chair. It was nice. I gave it back to him, and I thanked him. We didn't even speak the same language. I don't know why I knew beer was in that cooler, but I've seen beer in many coolers. That act of kindness. And Paul must have really been warmed by that fire.

Now, kindness is doing something useful and helping somebody. It's a wonderful thing. Kindness is getting the ground ready so that when you give out the word, there's good soil for the word to take place. The opposite of kindness, whatever it is, leaves a bad taste in the mouth, and people don't want to hear it because all they can hear is the unkindness that was expressed. But when they have kindness expressed, it's one of those things that build a gap for witnessing,

as well, in our relationships. Did Jesus ever show kindness? What did he tell the Baptist when the Baptist was wondering, “Is this the Messiah, or do I need to look for somebody else?” And he says,¹ “Go tell the Baptist that I healed the blind, that I healed the deaf, that I helped people in need. Tell them what I did.” When you look at every one of those actions, specifically in the Bible, you will see some extension of Jesus reaching out in kindness to do it.

I’m going to go to Luke 4.22.

“So all bore witness to him and marveled at his gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth.”

They were surprised because this was not Joseph’s son. He comes from around here, but he sure doesn’t sound like it. He’s got gracious words. I like that—kindness.

Classic Example

Now, when I look at John 8, I am bouncing around it, but eventually, I want to cover it because it illustrates several of these words. John 8 verses 1-11 is really impossible for any person who is legalistic, any person who is pharisaical, or any person who’s trying to elevate themselves by good works for self-promotion. This section of Scripture is very difficult for them to hone in on. They’re going to be found in the other group that’s here. So they’re not going to be like the Lord here.

Now Jesus went to the Mount of Olives and it’s early in the morning. And he came to the temple and all the people came to him and sat down and taught them. And the scribes and Pharisees brought to him a woman caught in adultery. And when they set her in the midst, they said to him, “Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery in the very act.” Now Moses in the law commanded us that such should be stoned. What do you say?”

Verse 6 gives us their motivation.

“This they said, testing him that they might have something which to accuse him.”

They didn’t care about the Woman. They were just trying to trap Jesus.

“But Jesus stooped down. He wrote on the ground with his finger as though he did not hear.”

¹ Matt. 11:4-6

He's in control. I mean, everywhere around this scene, they're out of control. The Woman is caught in adultery. She's afraid for her life. The husband has to be in Seattle by now. I mean, he's not even around. You know, he left. I don't know where the husband is, but the whole group is out of control. And there Jesus is as though he didn't hear.

“And when they continued asking him, he raised up and said to them, “He who is without sin among you, let him throw the first stone or throw the stone at her first.” And then he stooped down again and he wrote on the ground.

God worked in Jesus's words. The Spirit spoke to these people in power.

“And those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest.

Without the oldest, the younger was trying to impress the oldest. So when the oldest left, the younger said, “Well, I don't know why I'm here. I was here to get approval from that old guy. Well, he left. What am I supposed to do?” He left.

“And Jesus was left alone, and the Woman was standing in the mist. And Jesus himself saw no one but the Woman. And he said to her, “Woman, where are those accusers of you? Has no one condemned you?” And she said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said to her, “Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more.”

So we're looking at kindness. We're looking at goodness. We're looking here also at gentleness. It's in verse Gal. 5:23. But we see the character of Christ. What He's like. And he's extending mercy to this Woman for her to be forgiven and then cleansed. He does this over and over and over and over again. I wonder why he did it with so many women. So many women, he forgave their sins. I think it's because in that culture, in that time, no different than today, there's a pecking order of humans. Sometimes, women are easy to pick on and attack. But Jesus never does that. He shows gentleness, kindness, and forgiveness. Pretty impressive.

Learning from our Hymnal

Now, let's move over to goodness. In your hymnal, there's a song by Al Smith and John Peterson, “Surely Goodness and Mercy.” Smith was one of the writers, and Peterson was too. They combined for this wonderful song. In their research, they were researching the songwriter and singer Philip Bliss, who worked with the Moody and evangelistic teams in the 19th century. Bliss went to Sunday school, and his teacher was Miss Murphy. And he learned Psalm 23 this way, “Surely good Miss Murphy shall follow me all the days of my life.” And

Smith and Peterson got a big laugh out of that. But out of that laugh and out of Miss Murphy showing goodness and mercy, they came up with the song, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all my life.” Now, we could learn Psalm 23 this way. We could say,

“Surely, surely and mercy,” whoever mercy is, “shall follow me all the days of my life.”

But anyway, kids sometimes will say the silliest things or the darnedest things, even about spiritual things. And Philip Bliss remembered that. And that brings up the idea of faithfulness again. But that’s the way God is.

What Job Needed

Now, goodness is doing something beneficial that helps somebody, and God is good to us. Turn with me to Matthew 11. I love this verse, and I’m not the only one. Okay, Matthew 11. Towards the end of the chapter, last week, we sort of touched on Job. What did Job really need? Well, Job really needed the Lord. He really did. And here’s what Job needed in verse 28:11.

“Come unto me, or come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I’ll give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, learn of me, for I’m gentle and lowly of heart, and you will find rest for your soul. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Job’s counselors were trying to burden Job, but Jesus would have come by with Job and said, “Listen, Job, you need to rest. You need to rest.” Now we know Jesus would also have because He used the story of the Good Samaritan. He would have attended to Job’s physical needs and care to allow that body to begin to recover. Sometimes, we are injured or sick, which takes time to recover. It won’t happen all at once, but the Lord will come, and He starts with rest. Boy, Job needed that. And that’s goodness working. What does somebody really need that I can help them with? That’s goodness. Goodness.

All right, finally, faithfulness. Faithfulness. Lamentations 3.23 says, **“Great is thy faithfulness.”** Somebody made a song about that. Great is thy faithfulness. It belongs to God. And if it belongs to God, it belongs to Jesus. We have already seen where Jesus says, **“I give my love to the end.”** He was faithful. Look at the examples, if you would, for this wonderful truth. Acts chapter 20.

Learn from Paul and Timothy

And here, we understand how God works through Christians and the body. And here he’s working through Paul. Paul’s workers. Acts 20:20.

“And now I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you and taught you publicly from house to house.”

He was looking to teach the scriptures that would help them to grow. He was showing goodness. That’s good teaching. When you can show people and help people to do something, that’s helpful. 1 Corinthians 4.17. Paul writes,

“For this reason I’ve said Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who remind you of my ways in Christ as I teach everywhere in every church.”

Paul is teaching in Christ the things that belong to the Lord and how they’ve worked in his life. He’s sending his son, Timothy, who he loved, and his son, Timothy, his fellow worker, has been faithful. Paul and Timothy are people who are filled with the Spirit and exhibit the fruit of the Spirit. That’s what God wants with us.

We are Created to Feel good

So, as you think about this fruit, it’s all about love. That love will always be holy, and it will be just like the way Jesus did it. So we’re going to do these things as He has done. As we walk with the Lord, we depend on the Spirit, and we allow the Spirit’s fruit to be developed in us as we do whatever it is we do, his Spirit, his fruit will be seen in us. So you want to be known as a kind person? Do you want to be known as a good person? Faithful? Yeah. You know you feel good when you do that. God creates you to experience that good feeling.

I remember that as a child, I didn’t know the Lord, and I didn’t believe. I’m confused about what I was like between the ages of three and six or seven. But I was eight years old, and I went to a camp for disabled children. It was the first time I was ever with other handicapped² kids. When I went there, a lot of kids walked and had the same kind of scissor walk that I have. They didn’t walk as well as I did then. I walk a lot more like that now. But back then, I was walking a little bit differently. But I remember being one of the strongest kids at eight years old, and I could swim. I learned how to swim when I was three years old. I’ve been swimming ever since. I actually was swimming before I was walking. I learned to walk late in life. I was a little bit after three when I was walking. I was a cute little baby, though. I do remember walking, I mean swimming.

² I am one of them. I have cerebral palsy. It seems like way that we try to describe our physical condition. Will eventually get outdated, and people will look down on the term. But I am using the words with respect. I know what it was like the face the challenges that I have had. But I am painfully aware, others have faced greater difficulties. As we care for those in need, may we be able to understand the difficulties and improve the care.

At that camp, the counselor asked, "Would you like to help us with these people? Would you like to push a wheelchair for us?" "Yeah, I'd like to do that." I helped push a wheelchair. Then I helped somebody in the pool so they could be in it. I was holding them where they were able to enjoy the water. This girl was about seventeen years old and had to be about this big. (Small for her age) She was really, really stiff, real stiff. I didn't know how to articulate that then. I can tell you what it means now, but I didn't know back then. I was holding her in the water and felt, "Man, that's great." I really felt good about that. Now, the thing I learned about that is that when a child is that stiff, they are in pain. She couldn't express it, but she was in pain. When I get stiff, I have to take a drug for it sometimes. About every three or four months, I take it. It helps relax me a little bit. But then I do a lot of stretching because I immediately reduce my pain. Now, you guys are starting to get your own aches and pains. You've begun to enter into my world.

I'm going to be kind. Stretch. Don't overstretch. I don't want anybody pulling muscles, but stretching may help you reduce your pain. Do a little moving and check with your doctor on how to help you. Well let's close.

Lord, I want these qualities to be seen in my life. Lord, I'm glad that every time we look at you in any particular interaction that you had with people, we see these qualities and more. You were and are the most wonderful. And how you are patient with us. How good and kind you are to us, and how faithful you are to us, Lord. Thank you. Let's ask me, Lord, help me to be like you in these things. Help me to keep looking at the Bible and you, how you want us to live, and how you do it in our lives so it can be real in me. And I pray it might be real with everyone here as they walk with you. In Jesus' name, Amen.