

Foundational Teachings



The Fruit of the Spirit

—by Charles P. Schmitt,
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Love

The fruit of the Spirit is love," Paul writes. Weymouth translates this statement—"The Spirit brings a harvest of love." The Amplified Bible translates this wonderful statement in this fashion: "The work which the Spirit's presence within accomplishes is love." Kenneth Wuest underscores the fact that this kind of love is only possible as "the product of a new and divine life implanted in the saint." This is a supernatural, replaced life!

The Message translates the word love as "affection for others." Bill Gothard defines love as "giving to others basic needs without having personal reward as my motive." The Greek word for love is *agape*, that "sacrifice of oneself for the benefit of the one loved." "The fruit of the Spirit is love!"

"God is love," John writes, and "the person whose life is lived in love does, in fact, live in God, and God does, in fact, live in him" (1 John 4:16). And this amazing "love of God is flooding throughout our hearts by the Holy Spirit given to us" (Romans 5:5, J.B. Phillips).

This is a love, according to Paul in 1 Corinthians 13, that "is slow to lose patience—it looks for a way of being constructive. It is not possessive: it is neither anxious to impress nor does it cherish inflated ideas of its own importance. [This] love has good manners and does not pursue selfish advantage. It is not touchy. It does not keep account of evil or gloat over the wickedness of other people. On the contrary, it is glad with all good men when truth prevails. [This] love knows no limit to its endurance, no end to its trust, no fading of its hope; it can outlast anything. *It is, in fact, the one thing that still stands when all else has fallen*" (1 Corinthians 13:4–8, J.B. Phillips).

It is this kind of *agape* love that is the distinguishing earmark of all true Christians (John 13:34–35), and it is this love that is to characterize all our actions and reactions and interactions! We are called to "walk in love" (Ephesians 5:2)!

Heavenly Father, You are the fountainhead of love within my life. Your love alone is pure and holy, genuine and selfless; and so I take Your love, poured out into my heart by Your Holy Spirit, as the very source of my own love this day. Help me to love the unlovely, to love those who are difficult and needy; help me to love all in my life with Your love. In Jesus Name! Amen.

Joy

The grammar of Galatians 5:22–23 captures our attention. The passage, to be grammatically correct, should read: "The *fruits* of the Spirit are..." followed by these nine qualities of character—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control. But the Greek text (correctly translated into English) reads: "The *fruit* [singular] of the Spirit is [singular] love..." The Greek word for fruit, *karpos*, is *singular*, for *there really is only one fruit* of the Holy Spirit in our lives—the amazing *love* of our awesome God! The multiple graces that follow—joy, peace, patience, kindness, etc.—as we learn from 1 Corinthians 13:4–8, are *how* love behaves, *how* love expresses itself, *how* love is revealed in and through our lives.

Joy is a wonderful expression of love's grace. We learn from 1 Corinthians 13:6 that "love rejoices." Love is joyful! The Amplified translates joy as "gladness." The Message translates joy as "exuberance about life." The Greek word for joy is *chara*, from which we get the word *charismatic*. Spirit-filled believers have a fountain of joy deep within them; they have a wellspring of exuberant joy; they delight in our Lord, and they delight in people. And their joy is infectious. Joy fills a room with light. Joy dispels the dark clouds of despair and discouragement. Joy is a magnet drawing those to the Savior whose lives have been broken on the wheel of sin.

Peter speaks of believers being "filled with an *inexpressible and glorious joy*" (1 Peter 1:8), a joy *unspeakable and full of glory!*" And even in the midst of weeping, "joy comes in the morning" (Psalm 30:5, KJV). Paul testifies in 2 Corinthians 7:4—"In all our troubles *my joy knows no bounds.*"

Our God is a God full of joy (Zephaniah 3:17, KJV). The heavens are full of joy (Luke 15:10, KJV). Consequently, in God's presence there is "fullness of joy" (Psalm 16:11, KJV). Thus our salvation opens up for us a wellspring of joy, "the joy of [God's] salvation" (Psalm 51:12). Isaiah the prophet was a prophet of joy; he prophesied frequently about joy and rejoicing (35:1–2, 6, 10; 51:3, 11, etc.). He wrote: you "will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands.... *This will be for the Lord's renown*" (55:12–13). Our joy is a credit to our God. His joyful people reflect well on Him. "This will be for the Lord's renown!"

Jesus bids us take up His yoke (Matthew 11:29). This is a yoke for two oxen. In this word-picture Jesus is signifying His willingness to enter into our life's experiences with us—

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Martha Fricker

September 20, 1912–
June 22, 2005

—by Dotty E. Schmitt

When word came to us early Wednesday morning, June 22, saying that my mom was having a heart attack, part of me went numb. The family and I prayed and made immediate plans to be with Mom in Naples, Florida. But, in route as we changed planes in Charlotte, word came that Mom was "gone." Painfully and shockingly gone from us, but joyfully present with our Lord! Mom left her "earthly tent" behind as she always desired—quickly and fully alert, to her last breath. And as I later looked upon that precious "collapsed tent" (2 Corinthians 5), my heart broke, and once again I was feeling the deep loss of my vivacious, loving, and funny mom. Yes, indeed, as that meaningful song says, "...one season following another filled with happiness and tears!"

It has been wisely said that in the journey of life maturing believers must experience higher heights of love and joy, and deeper depths of love and sorrow. And it is amazing how the precious promises of God take on new and deeper meaning when read through the veil of tears. Surely His anointing is still very present and active to *heal the brokenhearted, and to comfort all who mourn*. And, our Father is still the "God of All Comfort." *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God* (2 Corinthians 1:3–4). †

Lord Jesus Christ, You were “full of joy through the Holy Spirit” (Luke 10:21). Lord, come and fill my heart with Your joy. Even in the midst of sorrow and disappointment, this day, I believe You to spring up within my heart with Your “inexpressible and glorious joy!” I receive Your joy, the fruit of Your Spirit, in my life. Thank You! In Your dear Name. Amen.

Peace

The fruit of the Spirit is nothing other than the nature and character of Jesus lived within us and lived through us. In His parting words to His disciples Jesus said “remain in My love” (John 15:9–10). The love we are speaking about is Jesus’ love! In John 15:11, Jesus said to them: “I have told you this so that My joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.” The joy we are speaking of is His joy! Today we are focusing on *peace*. Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you; My *peace* I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives” (John 14:27). The world knows peace only when the circumstances of life are going well. Jesus knew peace when He was plunged into the deepest valley of sorrow a man had ever known. In the midst of that valley Jesus not only knew a *deep inner peace*, He had enough of it to give it away to His troubled followers! “My *peace* I give you.” And Jesus comes to give us His peace this very day. The Message translates the word peace as “serenity.” The Greek word for peace, *eirene*, literally means “to bind together.” This is a peace—a peace with God—that binds our hearts to Him. This is a peace—the peace of God—that ties our hearts one to another.

A cruise ship was recently nearly swamped by seventy foot waves in the Caribbean. The amazing fact is that miles below the surface of the turbulent ocean water, the sea floor remained as calm and as placid as a mirror—totally undisturbed by the surface turmoil above. So it is in our lives. Turmoil and disturbance may break out on the surface of our lives at any time, but deep within our hearts we can know a peace from God “which transcends all understanding [which] will guard [as a fortress, as a garrison] our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus.” This is why we can live life not being “anxious about *anything*, but in *everything* by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present our requests to God” (Philippians 4:6–7).

Two sparrows were overheard talking on a tree limb. The one sparrow wondered why humans were so full of anxiety and unrest—rushing here and there, worrying over the smallest cares of this life. The other sparrow suggested that perhaps it was because humans had no Heavenly Father to take care of them as sparrows do! “Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your Heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? So do not worry” (Matthew 6:26, 31).

Blessed Spirit of Christ, You are the giver of peace deep within my heart. I receive from Your hand this day the peace of God that goes way beyond all human understanding. By your grace I choose this day to “let the peace of Christ rule in [my] heart.” Thank You that I am “called to peace” (Colossians 3:15)! In Jesus’ precious Name I claim peace from You. Amen.

Patience

One of the characteristics of love is patience. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 13:4 that “love is patient.” The Greek word for patience is *makrothumia*, best translated as “the steadfastness of the soul under provocation.” Weymouth translates this word as “forbearance.” The KJV uses “long-suffering.” The Amplified speaks of “an even temper.” Bill Gothard defines patience as “accepting a difficult situation from God without giving Him a deadline to remove it.”

Paul describes his sufferings for Christ in 2 Corinthians 6:3–10 in the NIV in these words: “in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger.” Paul then speaks of the overcoming grace in his life in these words: “in purity, understanding, *patience* and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love.”

The Greek word for patience in Galatians 5:22 is the same as the one Paul uses in 2 Corinthians 6:6. This word speaks of grace under fire and of steadfastness in the midst of provocation. In our Christian surroundings (even if only nominally Christian), we may not experience beatings, imprisonments and riots, but more than likely in our service to Christ, we will experience the need for great endurance; we will have troubles; we will suffer hardships and distresses. We may also experience hard work and sleepless nights—all requiring patient endurance and steadfastness under provocation. The replaced life of Christ within us alone can enable us to “bear patiently our cross of grief and pain.”

The sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ are a study of grace under fire. Isaiah 53:3 uses words that carry strong and painful emotions with them—“He was *despised* and *rejected* by men . . . and *we esteemed Him not*.” To be despised is a very painful emotion; and rejection pierces the soul with pain; to suffer the complete loss of esteem is a shattering emotion. But Peter tells us that “when they hurled their insults at Him, *He did not retaliate*; when He suffered, *He made no threats*” (1 Peter 2:23). Here was patience, long-suffering, forbearance and steadfastness under provocation. Peter then gives us the key to Jesus’ victory—instead of retaliation and threats, “*He entrusted Himself to Him who*

judges justly.” Jesus trusted His Father. He committed Himself, His hurt, His pain, His grief, His suffering, His rejection into the loving hands of His Father who judges justly. And the Father’s greatest vindication of His Son was when He raised Him from the dead and exalted Him far above all!

Lord Jesus Christ, I thank You for Your victorious life—patient and steadfast and enduring in the fires of affliction. You overcame! And praise God, You are now my indwelling life! The fruit of Your Spirit within me is patience, long-suffering, and forbearance! I thank You! In Your blest Name. Amen.

Kindness

The Greek word for kindness is *chrestotes*, meaning “a kindness *mellowing in us all that would be harsh*.” The Message translates kindness as “a *sense of compassion in the heart*”; the KJV translates this word as “gentleness.” Bill Gothard speaks of kindness as “seeing the needs in the lives of others as opportunities to demonstrate my love for Christ.” In 1 Corinthians 13:4, Paul thus describes love: “Love is *kind*.” He admonishes the Ephesians: “*Be kind* and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God”

(Ephesians 4:32, 5:2, NIV). To the Philippians Paul wrote: “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Philippians 2:3–4, NIV). This is the law of kindness.

To the Colossians, Paul wrote, “Clothe yourselves with compassion, *kindness*, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each

other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave You” (Colossians 3:12–13).

God our Father, Himself, is our great example of *kindness* in extending His saving grace towards us—“But when the *kindness* and love of God our Savior appeared, He saved us” (Titus 3:4–5, NIV). Jesus Himself is likewise our role-model in this area—“Learn from Me, for I am *gentle and humble* in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matthew 11:24–30, NIV). We praise God that the Christian life is not only one of imitating Jesus Christ, but a life of Jesus living His wonderful life in us and through us!

On Galatians 2:20, Watchman Nee makes a most stunning observation: “At the begin-

*The fruit of the Spirit
is love, joy, peace, patience,
kindness, goodness,
faithfulness, gentleness
and self-control.
—Galatians 5:22–23*

ning of our Christian life, we saw how the Lord Jesus bore our sins on the cross so that by His death we were delivered from death, our sins were forgiven, and we were condemned no more. Today Paul tells me that because Christ lives in me, *I am delivered from living*. The meaning is simple: since He lives in me, I no longer need to live. As He died on the cross for me, so now He lives in me in my place. This is the secret of victory. It is neither a life of imitating Christ nor a life of having power given; rather, it is a *substitutionary life*.”

John Gladstone, likewise, wrote: “The greatest secret of victorious living is not to flog the will in a heroic struggle to live like Christ, but to surrender the will and *let Christ live in us and through us*.”

Charles Trumball testified: “At last I realized that Jesus Christ was actually and literally within; and even more than that: that *He had constituted Himself my very life, taking me into union with Himself*—my body, mind and spirit—while I still had my own identity and free will and full moral responsibility. Was this not better than having Him as a helper, or even than having Him as an external Savior: to have Him, Jesus Christ, God the Son, as my very own life?”

Lord Jesus Christ, I take You as my Replaced Life this very day. The fruit of the Spirit, I see, is nothing more than You, Your life! And now You are my life. Your life is my very own. Thank You, Lord Jesus! Thank You! Amen!

Goodness

The English word goodness is derived from *God-ness*. To be good is to be godly, to be like God! The Greek word that Paul uses here is *agathosune*, which means “to be ruled by the quality of moral worth.” J.B. Phillips translates this word as “generosity.” The Message translates goodness as “a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people.”

Goodness respects and honors people—even if they do not yet know the Lord. Goodness sees unbelievers through the eyes of faith, calling them “pre-Christians,” declaring their destiny in God. Goodness is indeed “a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people.”

The Greek word for goodness, *agathosune*, is used four times in our New Testament, all by Paul in his letters—in Romans 15:14, Galatians 5:22, Ephesians 5:9 and 2 Thessalonians 1:11. In Romans 15:14, Paul commends the Romans: “I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are *full of goodness*.” Paul had not yet met the Romans, but he had this awesome conviction about them, that they were “full of goodness.” Paul was an encourager! To the Ephesians (5:9–10) Paul writes: “Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in *all goodness, righteousness and truth*) and find out what pleases the Lord.” What a wonderful lifestyle we are called to live—a life of *all goodness!*

Goodness is a primary characteristic of God Himself. “He is good!” (2 Chronicles 5:13). And when Solomon celebrated the goodness of God, the glory fell! Moses, in Exodus 33:19, quotes God’s promise: “I will cause *all My goodness* to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim My name, Jehovah, in your presence.” What a wonderful revelation that was! In Psalm 23:6 the psalmist David declares: “Surely *goodness and love* will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” What a wonderful life we Christians are called to live—surrounded by the goodness of God, pursued by that goodness and walking in that goodness, expressing that goodness to everyone we meet along the pathway of life! Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit and power and “He went around *doing good*” (Acts 10:38). May I be that way this very day!

Heavenly Father, You are such a good God! You are full of goodness, and I ask You to reveal that goodness in and through my life! Like Jesus, by Your grace, I will go around simply “doing good”—with words of encouragement and with deeds of kindness. I will pass this way but once, and I would leave behind the fragrance of Your goodness on all that I touch. In Jesus’ Name. Amen.

Faithfulness

The Greek word for faithful is *pistis*, translated often in our New Testament as *faith*. A faithful person is a person *full of faith—faith-full!* When one is full of faith, one is able to be “dependable, trustworthy, steady, constant, loyal, responsible, and conscientious.” These are the words used in *Webster’s* to describe a person who is *faithful*.

“The fruit of the Spirit is . . . faithfulness.” The Message translates this statement: “We find ourselves involved in *loyal commitments*.”

Those chosen to be the first deacons in Acts 6 were all “full of the Spirit”; they were also “*full of faith* and of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 6:3, 5, 8). Because they were “full of the Spirit” and “full of God’s grace and power,” they could be “full of faith”; they could be *faithful*, and that is why they were chosen to serve.

The Scriptures speak of being faithful in two primary areas of our lives—faithful to God and faithful to those people who surround us. “*Moses was faithful* as a servant in all God’s house” (Hebrews 3:5). Paul thanks “Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that *He considered me faithful*, appointing me to His service” (1 Timothy 1:12). Paul wrote to the Corinthians that “it is required that those who have been given a trust must *prove faithful*.” (1 Corinthians 4:2). This very day we are called to be dependable, trustworthy, steady, constant, loyal, responsible, and conscientious servants of our God!

We are also called to be faithful in our human relationships—in friendships, in marriage, in the Body of Christ. Solomon mourns in Proverbs 20:6—“Many a man *claims* to have unfaithful love, but a *faithful* man who can find?” Paul found a few good faithful

men— he deemed Timothy as one who was “*faithful* in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 4:17), and Tychicus, a “dear brother and *faithful* servant in the Lord” (Ephesians 6:21), and Onesimus a “*faithful* and dear brother” (Colossians 4:9). These were saints who were personally “dependable, trustworthy, steady, constant, loyal, responsible, and conscientious.” These brothers walked in the power of the love of 1 Corinthians 13:7–8—which “*always* protects, *always* trusts, *always* hopes, *always* perseveres, and *never* fails.” O, to have faithful friends such as these!

Father, In Jesus’ Name, so fill my heart this day with Your Holy Spirit and with faith that I shall be faith-full to You in serving You, and faith-full in all my human relationships. In Jesus’ Name. Amen.

Gentleness

Jesus bids us: “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me. For I am *gentle and humble in heart*, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Matthew 11:29–30).

The fruit of the Spirit’s life within us in gentleness—Jesus’ gentleness and humility. The KJV translates this word as “meekness.” The Message says: “not needing to force our way in life.” The Greek word used here is *prautes*, meaning “that quality of mildness, gentleness, and meekness in dealing with others.” Bill Gothard defines gentleness as “showing personal care and concern in meeting the needs of others.” How foreign to our own human condition this is, but how much like our Lord Jesus Christ!

In Colossians 3:12–15, when Paul describes the Christian community, he describes it in these words—“As God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourself with compassion, kindness, humility, *gentleness*, and patience. Bear with each other and forgive *whatever* grievance you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.”

Men have long sought for a Shangri-la—a place “where never is heard a discouraging word, and the skies are not cloudy all day.” The Body of Christ is called to be that Shangri-la! As gentleness prevails in our lives and is found among us, this kind of community can be attained.

Jesus bids us take up His yoke (Matthew 11:29). This is a yoke for two oxen. In this word-picture Jesus is signifying His willingness to enter into our life’s experiences with us—pulling the load with us, shouldering our burdens with us! And in this relationship we learn of Him, that He is *gentle* and humble in heart. Jesus’ gentleness is His “harnessed strength.” One translation describes gentleness as “quiet strength.”

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Why We Bring Our Tithes into God's Storehouse

—by Charles and Dotty Schmitt

Scripture says: “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house. Test Me in this, says the LORD Almighty, and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it” (Malachi 3:10).

We can see in this word: God's *command* and God's *purpose* and God's *promised blessing*. First, God's *command*—God commanded His people: “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse.” The tithe is the first 10 percent of our income. These firstfruits were actually built into our income by the Lord Himself and necessary for sustaining His work. And God commands His people to bring that tithe to Him. “A tithe of everything ... belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD... The entire tithe ... will be holy to the LORD” (Leviticus 27:30, 32)! In Malachi's day people were not tithing their income to the Lord. Because they apparently were living beyond their means, they were using the Lord's 10 percent to pay their own bills! Consequently, the Lord told them: “You are robbing Me” (Malachi 3:8–9)—a very serious matter!

The Lord's word continues: “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse...” The tithe is *not ours to disperse*, for the tithe belongs in *the house of God*. God calls His house “the storehouse.” Jacob uncovered this truth hundreds of years before the Law was given. As soon as Jacob raised up a house for God, he began tithing (see Genesis 28:22). But besides our tithes, we are also privileged to give *special offerings*. Exodus 35:29 and 36:3 call these special offerings “*freewill offerings*.” Because this money, above and beyond the tithe, is “freewill,” we are “free” to distribute whatever we wish, wherever we wish. But we cannot do that with our tithes, because the tithe belongs to the Lord and is to be placed in His “storehouse.”

God's Word is clear: “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse ...” and His *purpose* in this is also plain: “That there may be food in My house” (Malachi 3:10). The house of God, which is for us the local church, has always been a *community distribution center* for God's blessings. That's why it is called the “storehouse,” and that is why it is essential to “bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house...” In the Scriptures we see that many people were fed from God's storehouse—the *poor and the needy* were given food out of God's tithe (“so that ... the aliens, the fatherless and the widows ... may come and eat and be satisfied, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands,” Deuteronomy 14:29). The ministers of God were also given food from God's storehouse. (“The priests, who are Levites—indeed the whole tribe of Levi ... shall live on the [tithe] offerings made to the LORD ... for that is their inheritance... The LORD is their inheritance, as He promised them,” Deuteronomy 18:1–2). And even the tithing people themselves were blessed with blessings that overflowed back upon them from God's storehouse (see Deuteronomy 12:5–7). The tithe made possible all of these blessings.

Consequently, when churches have to turn down the needs of poor and needy people because there is not enough in “the storehouse” to help them, we know that some of their people must have been withholding from God, creating the shortfall. When churches have to cut back on ministry support—whether their own ministers or their supported missionaries to foreign lands—because there is not enough in God's storehouse to sustain them, we know that some of their people have probably been robbing God, helping to create this shortfall. And when churches have not had enough money to adequately undergird their own children's or youth ministries—which provide blessings back upon their own families—we know that some in their midst must have been using God's money elsewhere, having failed to obey Him in bringing their tithes into God's storehouse, when there has not been enough in the storehouse to meet these needs.

When Moses gave these original instructions to God's people concerning bringing their tithes into God's storehouse, He spoke this relevant word: “You are *not* to do ... *everyone as he sees fit*...,” for His people were an *interdependent* community. When we fail to bring our tithes into God's storehouse, or even when we seek to dispense our tithes on our own, separate from God's storehouse, we undermine the heart of true community. “Everyone [doing] as he sees fit” undermines God's vision for community, for the “storehouse” is a *community* venture; it undergirds what we collectively support together!

So God's *command* is clear—“bring the whole tithe into the storehouse...” and God's *reason* is clear, “that there may be food in My house.” And finally, God's *promised blessing* is also so very wonderfully clear—“Test Me in this, says the LORD Almighty, and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it” (Malachi 3:10).

Because of the sober words: “You are *under a curse* ... because you are robbing Me” (Malachi 3:9), saints have asked if they also were under a curse because they were not tithing. Our answer to that question is: No, you are *not* under a curse for not tithing, for “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us...” (Galatians 3:13–14)! But out of faithfulness to God's Word, we must also add, *neither are you being blessed the way God intended to bless you*, because the blessing of Malachi 3:10 is for those who are faithful in bringing their tithes into God's storehouse. God says, “Test Me in this...” As we make sure there is food in God's house, He makes sure there is food in our house! He promises to open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing upon us that we will not have room enough to contain it! †

In the Lord's Own Time

—by Charles P. Schmitt

I was recently impressed with the following statement by George Mueller, that great man of faith—“However great our difficulties, and though to all appearance help is impossible, yet our business is to *hope in God*, and it will be found that such hope is not in vain. *In the Lord's own time, help will come.*” This is actually the story of Joseph.

On the same day as I read the above quote, I was also reading Psalm 37 (in *The Book*), and I was impressed with that very emphasis in this psalm of David on “the Lord's own time.” “Don't envy those who do wrong. For like grass they will *soon* (‘in the Lord's own time’) fade away. Like springtime flowers, they will *soon* (‘in the Lord's own time’) wither” (vs. 1–2). Be still in the presence of the LORD, and *wait patiently* (‘in the Lord's own time’) *for Him to act*. Don't worry about evil people who prosper or fret about their wicked schemes” (v. 7). “*In a little while* (‘in the Lord's own time’) the wicked will disappear. Though you look for them, they will be gone” (v. 10). “The steps of the godly are directed by the LORD. He delights in *every detail* of their lives. Though they stumble, they will *not* fall, for the LORD holds them by the hand... Don't be impatient for the LORD to act! (wait for ‘the

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Lord's own time’) ... Travel steadily along His path. He *will* honor you (‘in the Lord's own time’) ... the LORD saves the godly; He is their fortress in times of trouble. The LORD helps them, rescuing them from the wicked. He saves them, and they find shelter in Him” (‘in the Lord's own time’) (vs. 23, 34, 39).

As with Joseph, difficulties of all kinds do surround us—unyielding circumstances, adversaries with their opposition, inner struggles and uncertainties—but the promise remains: “Hope in God and ... *in the Lord's own time, help will come.*” “*Wait patiently for Him to act...*” God's delays are not His denials. The Lord waits that He might be gracious to us. Our patience in waiting only matures our confidence, refines our motives, and forges our assurance in God on the anvil of hope. This is exactly what Joseph uncovered in his walk with God. “*In the Lord's own time, help will come.*” “*Wait patiently for Him to act!*” Amen. †

Lord Jesus, We take Your yoke; we would learn of You, and we look to Your Spirit within our lives to bear this precious fruit in us and through us—gentleness. In Your dear Name! Amen.

Self-control

Paul concludes this inspired list of graces with an almost odd statement: “Against such things there is no law” (5:23). When Paul lists the acts of the sinful nature—“sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery, idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy, drunkenness, orgies, and the like”—it becomes clear that *the law of God is against such things*, for, Paul warns: “Those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.” There is a law against sin—forbidding us to enter that unholy realm. But when it comes to the kingdom of heavenly fruit—“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control”—“against such things there is no law.” No commandment will ever come from God telling us to stop loving, to cease being joyful, to not have so much peace, to not be so patient and kind and good and faithful and gentle, to not be so self-disciplined. We are rather encouraged to continue on and on and on bearing this fruit and growing (Colossians 1:5–6), for “against such things there is no law.”

Today we conclude our study with this one remaining grace: “self-control.” Weymouth translates this word as “self-restraint.” The KJV speaks of “temperance.” The Message states: “able to marshal and direct our energies wisely.” The Greek word that Paul uses is *egkrateia*—“being strong; having mastery over our desires and impulses.”

In 1 Corinthians 9:24–27, Paul tells us that we are all in God’s spiritual Olympics. The natural Olympics, as we know them today, had their beginnings at Corinth. So these were concepts that the Corinthians could well identify with—“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize! Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore, I do not run like a man running aimlessly. I do not fight like a man beating the air. [“I am no shadow boxer,” J.B. Phillips]. No I beat my body and make it my slave [“I am my body’s sternest master,” J.B. Phillips] so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.” “The fruit of the Spirit is ... self control.”

Lord Jesus Christ, You won Your race; You finished Your course! Come now, and so fill my heart and my life with self-discipline that I shall win my race and finish my course! (2 Timothy 4:7–8). For Your sake and in Your Name I pray. Amen. †

A Glorious Inner Strength

—by Charles P. Schmitt

Recently, I was meditating on Paul’s great prayer for the Ephesians: “I ask [the Father] to strengthen you by His Spirit—not a brute strength *but a glorious inner strength*—that Christ will live in you...” (Ephesians 3:16–17, The Message). As I pondered the thought, “not a brute strength *but a glorious inner strength*,” I thought of how the world faces the same kinds of difficulties as we do, and they, at times, do muster “a brute strength,” and get through them. But we, as believers in Jesus, have a different and a better resource—God’s Spirit, Christ living in our lives, a resulting “*glorious inner strength*” that *supernaturally* enables us to walk through the unexpected, the painful, the shattering. *Streams in the Desert* comments on the phrase, “strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man”: “the strength is *continuous*; reserves of power come to us which we *cannot exhaust*.” Little did I realize that this would become God’s Word to our hearts on that very day, for some very special challenges that would come our way.

Morning devotions were over and the phone rang and we were told that Dotty’s mom, dear Oma, had just suffered a massive heart attack and was being rushed to the hospital in Naples, Florida. As we were reeling from that news, we received a second call that one of our beloved pastors had been diagnosed with an inoperable tumor. As the other pastors rushed to the hospital to pray for him, Dotty and I rushed to the airport to be with Oma. During our change of planes in Charlotte, the news caught up with us that our dear Oma had just died. There in the airport Dotty just crumpled in my arms, heartbroken by the report. We were not even going to get to say goodbye to Oma!

As I stood in the Charlotte airport, all I could think about was the anguish our pastors and the surrounding saints were undoubtedly experiencing now in the hospital in Silver Spring, and the present grief that was surging over Dotty, myself, and the rest of our family in the unexpected loss of Oma. But I also remembered the promise from God’s Word for us that day, that, as believers, we would be strengthened by God’s Holy Spirit with “*a glorious inner strength*” right in the middle of these very crises—an inner strength that would enable us all to walk through these deep waters with peace and with grace!

Then, while we were down in Naples, attending to Oma’s funeral, we were called with the report of one of our church vans full of camp counselors rolling over on I-95 in Maryland—with one of the counselors thrown through the window, counselors being taken to shock trauma in Baltimore, etc. Needless to say, we were devastated! But then later that evening to get the report of the “Miracle on I-95”—with all of our counselors being released from the hospital that very evening—Dotty and I just cried for joy! And for ourselves, as well as for all those involved, we again believed for “*glorious inner strength*” that the Lord promised would be the portion for us all in trying times! We are able to continue on through life’s difficulties, not with “a brute strength, *but a glorious inner strength*” because Jesus Christ lives in us!

We all face challenges, trials and afflictions, some on a daily basis, but the promise of God remains—because Jesus lives in our lives, because His Spirit is resident within us, we have a *supernatural resource*—a strength, “a glorious inner strength” from Him that will enable us to walk through the deepest valley, even “the valley of the shadow of death,” and come out triumphant. Thank You, Father! Thank You, Lord Jesus! Thank You, blest Spirit of God! Thank You for Your strength! †

Jehovah Witnesses Ask “Is Jesus Christ God?”— What Does the Inspired Word of God Say?

—by Charles P. Schmitt

In a recent edition of *Awake!*, Jehovah’s Witnesses asked the question, “Is Jesus Christ God?” It is evident they do not believe He is. In the lead article, “Who is Jesus Christ?,” the Watchtower declared Jesus Christ to be *the Son of God*. This is true. But in their follow-up article, “Who is ‘the Only True God?’” the Watchtower became emphatic in attacking the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, declaring Him “lesser than God.” They quote Jesus’ words, “My Father is greater than I,” and this is true, for Jesus is a *true man, one hundred percent human* and, as a *real, bonafide man*, God is, therefore, His Father and His God (John 20:17).

The Watchtower, in their article, however failed to bring out the other side of the equation. John comments in John 5:18 that when Jesus was “calling God His own Father,” he was “*making himself equal with God*.” And this also is true, for Jesus is likewise *truly God, fully God!* He is God in human flesh. The early believers called Him the God-Man! The Greek word translated in John 5:18 as “equal”—in the phrase “equal with God”—is *isos* and means “equal to, the same as.” This is the same word used by Paul in the great *kenosis* passage, Philippians 2:6-7, where the apostle declares of Jesus: “*Who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped [clutched onto], but made Himself nothing...being made in human likeness...*” Thus we see God became man, and Jesus is that God-Man; He is fully God and He is fully man. This may not be easy to understand, but it is not impossible to believe. In the incarnation, our Lord took upon Himself human flesh (1 John 4:2). He humbled Himself and He became man. The invisible God took on a body in which to suffer and bleed and die for us and for our salvation. Consequently, when we look at the Cross, we see more than a man dying on that Cross; we see that “*God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself*” (2 Corinthians 5:19, KJV). And when we look at Jesus we see more than a man, we see that He is “*God with us*” (*Immanuel*, Matthew 1:23).

In the next article in *Awake!*, the Watchtower became extreme, for they were hard pressed to explain the “Jesus is God” passages in John—passages such as: “The Word [Jesus] was God” (John 1:1); “Before Abraham was born, I AM!” (John 8:58)—a clear reference to Jehovah’s words to Moses in Exodus 3:14, “This

is what you are to say to the Israelites: “I AM has sent me to you.” Jesus is that “I AM!” Also, when Jesus further declared to the Jews in John 10:30, “I and the Father are one,” they had no problem understanding what He was saying—“You, a mere man, claim to be God” (vs. 33). But perhaps the passage that is the most wonderful in John’s Gospel is Thomas’ statement to Jesus: “Thomas said to Him [to Jesus], “My Lord and my God” (John 21:20). The Greek is very clear in this verse—”Thomas said to Him: *THE LORD OF ME; THE GOD OF ME.*” Jesus was clearly Thomas’ Lord and his God! And the Greek says that Jesus was “*the God*” of Thomas (not just “*a god*,” as the Jehovah Witnesses tell us).

In an attempt to explain away these powerful statements, the Watchtower has come up with a *polytheism* (the belief that there is more than one God)—a polytheism that is clearly unscriptural. They quote Scriptures concerning the pagans having many gods; they quote Paul, in Corinthians 8:4-6, who states that among the pagans there are “so-called gods,”—“many ‘gods’ and many ‘lords.’” The *Awake!* magazine called our attention to human judges being called “gods” (Psalm 82:6-7), and of Herod Agrippa being called “a god” by the mesmerized crowd in Acts 12:22. *Awake!* spoke of satan being the “god” of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4), and the pagan crowd at Lystra calling Paul and Barnabas “gods” in Acts 14:16. These statements were then used to show how Jesus is “not God, but ‘a god’” along with these others. The great difference is that no true Christian ever worshipped Herod, or human judges, or satan, or Paul, or Barnabas—but Jesus’ followers “worshipped Him” (Matthew 28:17). Angels “worshipped Him” (Hebrews 1:6)! And *only God alone* is to be so worshipped!

True Christians are not polytheists. We do *not* have two Gods—“Jehovah the great God and Jesus the lesser god.” That would be polytheism! We have *only one God*. And we worship only one God. The Lord Jehovah commanded, “You shall have *no other gods besides me*” (Exodus 20:3). If Jesus were “a god” besides Jehovah (as *per* the Watchtower translation of John 1:1), this would be a very serious departure from the rest of Holy Scripture! In Isaiah 45:21 Jehovah declares, “There is *no God* apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is *none* but me...*I am God* and there is *no other*... before *me* every knee will bow; by *me*, every tongue will swear. They will say of *me*, ‘In Jehovah *alone* are righteousness and strength.’” Therefore, if Jesus is God, *in any sense of the word*, He must be *this God*, for there is *no other God besides this one!* If Jesus, in any sense of the word, is our Savior, He must be *this one*, for there is *no other Savior—none!* “I, even I, am Jehovah, and *apart from Me there is no Savior*” (Isaiah 43:11). If Jesus, in any sense of the word, is our

righteousness, He must be Jehovah for apart from Him there is *no other* righteousness—“in Jehovah *alone* are righteousness and strength.”

Even Jehovah’s statement, “before *me* every knee will bow; by *me* every tongue will swear” is quoted by Paul in Philippians 2:10 and applied directly to Jesus! The “Me” in Isaiah 45:21 is obviously the Jesus of Philippians 2:10! In Philippians 2:9 (NIV, as in the Greek) we are told that God has given to Jesus, “*the Name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow...*” If Jesus is *the name* above *all names*, we may wonder where does the name *Jehovah* come in—unless we see Jehovah *in* the very Name of Jesus, (Jesus actually means *Jehovah Savior!*)

In Isaiah 44:6, Jehovah likewise says, “I am... the first and the last; apart from me there is *no God*.” So, when Isaiah calls the Messiah the “*mighty God*,” in Isaiah 9:6, Jesus the Messiah must be *that God*, for Isaiah 44:6 declares that apart from Him there is *none other*. And when Jesus says in Revelation 1:17, “I am the First and the Last,” and then repeats Himself again in Revelation 22:13, “I am... the First and the Last,” Jesus, according to Isaiah 44:6, is declaring Himself to be *Jehovah*, for you cannot have two firsts and you cannot have two lasts. If Jehovah is “the first and the last” and if Jesus is “the first and the last,” the obvious is clear. Jesus, *Jehovah Savior*, is Jehovah come down in human flesh to be our Savior!

Consequently Jude calls “Jesus Christ our *only Sovereign and Lord*” (Jude v.4). If Jesus is our *only Sovereign and Lord*, where, in this, do we see Jehovah, except it be that we see Him in Christ, for Jesus really is “Jehovah Savior,” for “*God was in Christ*.”

No, we cannot and we will not worship any god other than Jehovah! So, when the disciples “worshipped” Jesus in Matthew 28:17, they were worshipping the one true God for Jesus was “in the Father and the Father [was] in [Him]” (John 14:8-11). If Jesus Christ is God—in any sense of the word—He must be the *one true God*, for this is the way John defines Jesus Christ in 1 John 5:20. John had already declared in 1 John 1:2 that Jesus Christ is “*the eternal life*, which was with the Father and [who] has appeared to us.” Then in 1 John 5:20, John writes of “Jesus Christ [that] He is *the true God and eternal life*.” No two statements could be clearer. The eternal life of 1 John 1:2 is the true God and the eternal life of 1 John 5:20.

Paul likewise declared of Jesus that “God was pleased to have *all His fullness dwell in Him*” (Colossians 1:19) and that “*in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form*” (Colossians 2:9). Jesus is the God-Man, God dwelling in bodily form! When Paul writes to Titus he declares God Himself to be our Savior (Titus 2:10) and then in verse 13 speaks of “our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ” (NIV, as in the Greek); and in Titus 3:4, Paul refers to “God our Savior,” only to turn around in verse 6

to call “Jesus Christ our Savior”! We do not have two gods nor two Saviors. We have only one God and one Savior, revealed in Jesus Christ!

This Jesus is God in human flesh—*subject to the Father and different from Him in His humanity, but equal to the Father and one with Him in His Deity!* Let us reiterate that again: This Jesus is God in human flesh—*subject to the Father and different from Him in His humanity, but equal to the Father and one with Him in His Deity!*

Passages such as John 17:3 and 1 Corinthians 8:6 and 1 Timothy 2:5 emphasize the *difference* between the Father and “the man Christ Jesus,” while passages such as John 14:8-11; 17:21 and Romans 9:5, NIV (where Paul speaks of “*Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.*”) emphasize the *equality and oneness* of the Father with Jesus, who is “God the only Son” (John 1:18, NIV).

In Colossians 1:15 Paul, therefore, calls Jesus “the image [the visible expression] of the invisible God”; and in Hebrews 1:3 we are told that “the Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation [literally, the exact impress] of His being. . . .” When you see Jesus, you see the Father! Finally, Peter calls Him “*our God and Savior Jesus Christ*” (2 Peter 1:1, NIV, as in the Greek).

Over the decades, the Watchtower has continuously attacked the doctrine of the Trinity. We admit that no finite human explanation of our infinite God, nor any human creed, could ever flawlessly express our infinite God. Even Tertullian, in the third century, one of the first to describe God as “one God in three persons,” expressed his own personal concerns lest the “three persons” he spoke of would be construed as “three gods” by the simple believer. (See *Against Praxeas*, Chapter III.) But as inadequate an explanation as these definitions may be, they are *infinitely better* than the Watchtower’s unbiblical “polytheism”!

True Christians *cannot* be polytheists. We are *not* as the pagans who worship multiple “gods”; we worship *one* God, who has been pleased to reveal Himself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). He is the God who is pleased to reveal Himself in the Person of Jesus. And while God may not always be easy to understand (for He is incomprehensible), He is easy to trust and easy to love and easy to serve!

We close with the words of the Nicene Creed, written at Nicea in 325 AD by sincere Christian leaders to refute the error of Arius, the “Jehovah’s Witness” of *that* day. In the words of the Nicene Creed, we do confess “one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father. . . . God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man. . . .” This is the truth and, as Jesus has promised us, “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free! (John 8:31-32). †

The Perseverance of Job

—by Charles P. Schmitt

“Take the prophets of old as your mentors. They put up with *anything*, went through *everything*, and *never once quit*, all the time honoring God. What a gift life is to those who stay the course! You’ve heard, of course, of Job’s staying power, and you know *how God brought it all together for him at the end*. That’s because *God cares, cares right down to the last detail*” (James 5:10–11, The Message).

The book of Job is one of the most valuable books in Holy Scripture. Job’s perseverance (The Message translates this as “Job’s staying power.”) is the reason for the honor given to Job by James in his remarks in James 5:10–11. Job, in his afflictions, thereby becomes one of our “mentors.” God “brought it all together” for Job at the end, as Job became a demonstration of how “God cares, cares right down to the last detail.”

Eugene Peterson, the translator of The Message, makes this powerful observation in his introduction to Job: “The ironic fact of the matter is that more often than not, people do not suffer *less* when they are committed to following God, but *more*. When these people go through suffering, their lives are often transformed, deepened, marked with beauty and holiness, in remarkable ways that could never have been anticipated before the suffering.”

God did not *inflict* the sufferings of Job, though He did *permit* them. God could have *prevented* the afflictions of Job, but *He chose not to*. Thus, in Job 42:11, the Lord makes Himself personally responsible for Job’s afflictions—“the trouble *the LORD* had brought upon him.” And God’s primary purpose in permitting Job’s sufferings simply seems to be to demonstrate His glory before “the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 3:10). Satan had slandered Job in God’s ears (Job 1:9–11); but even more so, satan had slandered God, by insisting that Job was only serving God because of the blessing God gave him and not because of the excellence of God Himself. And so, through Job’s perseverance, God would demonstrate to “the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms,” to satan and to his demon-cronies, not only Job’s utter faithfulness to God, but the utter beauty and worth of God Himself, for which reason His servants gladly serve Him (blessings or not!).

In spite of his admitted fears (Job 3:25), Job truly was a *man of faith*. Deep into his trials, he confessed, “Though He slay me, yet will I *trust* Him” (Job 13:15). Job also knew what his trials were producing in him, as he testified—“When He has tested me, *I will come forth as gold*” (Job 23:10). In the whole book of Job, the only grievous element to be found, apart from the conniving of satan, was the accusation of Job’s three “friends.” Job’s “friends,” with their superspiritual evaluations and hasty judgments (“bad things only happen to bad people”), were not much more than an added affliction to Job, but in the end the Lord shut them down rather quickly and, to save themselves, they came humbly to Job asking for his forgiveness (Job 42:7–9)! Interestingly, it was Job’s ability to *forgive* his hurtful detractors that then opened God’s hands of blessing on Job himself—“After Job had prayed for his ‘friends,’ the Lord made him prosperous again and gave him twice as much as he had before” (Job 42:10)!

In all that Job walked through there were two elements in his sufferings that are the most problematic to me personally—the *premature death* of some of the players, and the *physical suffering* Job had to endure. We do believe in healing and we do believe that healing is in the atonement (Matthew 8:16–17) and we do believe that the “prayer of faith will make the sick person well” (James 5:15; note: this is the same James who just got done praising the afflicted, suffering Job three verses before!). Because these truths regarding the prayer of faith for healing and life are so clear and pronounced in Holy Scripture, we struggle with these two issues in Job—the issue of 10 *premature deaths*, seven young men and three young women (Job 1:2, 18–19) and the issue of Job’s *physical affliction and suffering* (Job 2:7–8). Both fly in the face of God’s promises for life and health. And yet they are there—on the pages of Job.

And so what do we do? Where do we stand? How do we respond to challenges such as people needing healing and people facing premature death? Even if our faith has been disappointed in the past, we will now pray! We will now offer the prayer of faith in Jesus’ name, assured that “the prayer offered in faith *will* make the sick person well; the Lord *will* raise him up”! But what do we do *if* heaven is silent and *if* our prayers of faith should seemingly go unanswered? Well, in the face of such a seeming contradiction, we will do exactly what Job did—“He fell to the ground in *worship* and said . . . may the name of the LORD be *praised*” (Job 1:20–21). We will worship! And we will praise His name! And though we do not understand God’s actions, we *will* declare that “God cares, cares right down to the last detail,” and though we do not understand His ways, we *will* fully trust His heart! And we will reckon on the fact that we have not yet seen “the end” of the matter. That is why James exhorts us to consider “the end” (KJV) of Job—“What the Lord *finally* brought about” (NIV) for Job. The Lord restored to Job double what he lost! †