

The Spirit-Filled Temperament

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" Galatians 5:22-23

The Holy Spirit-filled temperament does not have weaknesses; instead it has nine all-encompassing strengths. This is man as God intends him to be. It does not matter what one's natural temperament is; any man filled with the Holy Spirit, whether Sanguine, Choleric, Melancholy or Phlegmatic, is going to manifest these nine spiritual characteristics. He will have his own natural strengths, maintaining his individuality, but he will not be dominated by his weaknesses. The nine characteristics of the Spirit will transform his weaknesses.

All of these characteristics are found illustrated in the life of Jesus Christ. He is the supreme example of the Spirit-controlled man. A fascinating study of the life of Christ would be to catalog the illustrations of these nine characteristics as they appear in the Gospels. We shall mention some as we study each characteristic.

These nine characteristics represent what God wants each one of His children to be. We shall examine each in detail that you might compare them with your present behavior. Now that you have a better and more objective look at both your strengths and weaknesses, you should be able to look to the Holy Spirit for His filling that you may become the kind of person God wants you to be. Needless to say, any individual manifesting these characteristics is going to be a happy, well-adjusted, mature and very fruitful human being. It is my conviction that there is a longing in the heart of every child of

God to live this kind of life. This life is not the result of man's effort, but the supernatural result of the Holy Spirit controlling every area of a Christian.

The first characteristic in God's catalog of Spirit-filled temperament traits is *love*. It is revealed as love both for God and for our fellowmen. The Lord Jesus said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind," and "... thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."



LOVE

Very honestly, this kind of love is supernatural! A love for God that causes a man to be more interested in the Kingdom of God than in the material kingdom in which he lives is supernatural, for man by nature is a greedy creature. Love for his fellowman, which has always been a hallmark of the devout Christian, is not limited by temperament. True, Mr. Choleric as a Christian may need to go to the

Holy Spirit for love more frequently than does Mr. Sanguine, but if the Spirit controls his life, he too will be a compassionate, tenderhearted, loving individual.

There are some people with strong humanitarian tendencies by nature who have expressed love in exemplary acts. But the love described here is not just for those who stir admiration or compassion in us, but for all men. The Lord Jesus said, "Love your enemies . . . and do good to them that despitefully use you." This kind of love is never generated by man but can only be effected by God. In fact, one of the thrilling evidences of the supernatural in the Christian experience is to see two people who have "personality conflicts," which is another expression for temperament conflicts, grow to genuinely and easily love one another. The twelve apostles represented all four of the temperament types previously studied, and yet the Lord Jesus said to them, "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one for another." Many a church heartache could have been avoided had the filling of the Holy Spirit been sought for this first characteristic of the Spirit-filled temperament.

If you would like to test your love for God, try this simple method given by the Lord Jesus. He said, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." Just ask yourself, "Am I obedient to His commandments as revealed in His Word?" If not, you are not filled with the Holy Spirit.



JOY

The second temperament characteristic of the Spirit-filled man is *joy*. R. C. H. Lenski, a great Lutheran theologian, gave this comment concerning the gracious emotion of joy. "Yes, joy is one of the cardinal Christian virtues; it deserves a place next to love. Pessimism is a grave fault. This is not fatuous joy such as the world accepts; it is the enduring joy that bubbles up from all the grace of God in our possession, from the blessedness that is ours, that is undimmed by tribulation. . . ."

The joy provided by the Holy Spirit is not limited by circumstances. Many have the mistaken idea that they can be happy if their circumstances work out properly. Really, they are confused about the difference between happiness and joy. As John Hunter of Capernwray, England, said, "Happiness is something that just happens because of the arrangement of circumstances, but joy endures in spite of circumstances."

No Christian can have joy if he depends upon the circumstances of life. The Spirit-filled life is characterized by a "looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith," which causes us to know that "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28)

In the Scripture "joy" and "rejoicing" are frequently presented as expected forms of Christian behavior. They are not the result of self-effort but are the work of the Holy Spirit in your life, which causes you to "commit your way unto the Lord, and trust also in Him." The Psalmist said in referring to the spiritual man's experience, "Thou hast put gladness in my heart more than they have when their grain and their new wine is increased." (Psalm 4:7)

The Apostle Paul, writing from a prison dungeon, said, "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say rejoice." (Philippians

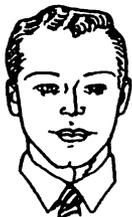
1:4) The reason he could say that is because he had learned to experience the Spirit-filled life. For it was from the same prison cell the Apostle had said, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content." Any man that can rejoice and be content while in prison has to have a supernatural source of power! The Philippian jailer saw the genuine but supernatural joy reflected in the lives of Paul and Silas when thrown into jail for preaching the Gospel. He heard their singing and praising the Lord and must have been deeply impressed.

This "fruit" of the Spirit is woefully lacking in many Christians today, which keeps them from being fruitful in the matter of winning people to Christ, because the world must see some evidence of what Jesus Christ can do in the life of the believer today in order to be attracted to Him. This supernatural joy is available for any Christian regardless of his basic or natural temperament. Jesus said, "These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." (John 15:11) He also stated in John 10:10b, "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." That abundant life will reveal itself in the Christian through joy, but it is only possible as he is filled with the Holy Spirit.

Martin Luther said, "God does not like doubt and dejection. He hates dreary doctrine, gloomy and melancholy thought. God likes cheerful hearts. He did not send His Son to fill us with sadness, but to gladden our hearts. Christ says: 'Rejoice, for your names are written in heaven.'"

The third temperament trait of the Spirit-filled man is peace. Since the Bible should always be interpreted in the light of its context, it behooves us to examine the context. The verses just preceding this in Galatians 5 describe not only the works of the natural man without the Spirit, but also his emotions. His emotional turbulence is described by ". . . hatred, variance (strivings), jealousies, wrath, divisions and envyings."

We readily see that the further man gets from God, the less he knows of peace.



PEACE

The "peace" spoken of here is really two-fold. Someone has described it as "peace with God" and the "peace of God." The Lord Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you. . . ." (John 14:27) The peace He leaves us is likened to "peace with God." "My peace I give unto you" is likened to "the peace of God," for in the same verse He defines it as the peace of an untroubled heart: "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." The preceding verse, John 14:26, describes the coming of the Holy Spirit to believers as "the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit." Thus we see that our Lord predicted the Holy Spirit would be the source of the "peace of God."

Peace with God, which is the "peace I leave with you," is the result of our salvation experience by faith. Man outside of Jesus Christ knows nothing of peace in relationship with God because his sin is ever before him and he knows he is accountable before God at the Judgment. This nagging fear robs man of peace with God all through his life. However, when this individual takes Jesus Christ at His word and invites Him into his life as Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ not only comes in as He promised to do (Revelation 3:20), but He immediately cleanses all his sin (1 John 1:7,9). When the realization of God's forgiveness of his sin really grips his heart, man has peace with God. Romans 5:1 states it, "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

The peace of God, which is the antidote to worry, is not so automatically possessed by Christians as the peace with God. The "peace of God," which is untroubled in the face of difficult circumstances, is illustrated by the Lord Jesus who was sound asleep in the lower part of the ship while the twelve disciples were frightened beyond rationality. That ratio of twelve to one is very clearly evident among Christians today. It seems that when life's sea becomes turbulent through the raging winds of circumstance, twelve Christians will fret and fume and worry, while only one will have enough peace in his heart to trust God to take care of him in those circumstances. The twelve will be prone to worry all night, which further complicates their emotional, physical and spiritual life, while the one who "believes God" will get a good night's

next day. Circumstances should never produce our peace. We should look to God for peace; only He is consistent.

Just becoming a Christian does not spare us from the difficult circumstances of life. However, the Holy Spirit's presence in our lives can supply us with one of life's greatest treasures: "the peace of God," in spite of any circumstances. The Apostle Paul had this in mind when he wrote the words, "Be careful (worried or anxious) for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6-7) An untroubled, unworried, peaceful individual facing the circumstances of life possesses a peace "which passeth all understanding." That is the "peace of God" which the Holy Spirit longs to give every believer.

These first three characteristics, *love*, *joy* and *peace* are emotions which very definitely counteract the most common weaknesses of temperament such as cruelty, anger, indifference, pessimism, gloom and criticism. They stand as adequate reasons for living the Spirit-filled life, but this is only the beginning.

The fourth temperament trait of the Spirit-filled man is *longsuffering*. Patience and endurance are the most prominent synonyms which have been suggested by Bible commentators for this spiritual characteristic. A very simple suggestion is, "Longsuffering means suffering long." It would be characterized by an ability to bear injuries or suffer reproof or affliction without answering in kind — as the Apos-

le Peter said about the Lord Jesus: "... who, when reviled, reviles not again." This is the kind of dependability that Dr. Bob Jones must often have had in mind when using his classic statement, "The greatest ability is dependability." A longsuffering person is one who can do the menial, forgotten and difficult tasks of life without complaining or seething, but graciously, as into the Lord. He finishes his task or suffers affronts while manifesting the loving Spirit of Christ.



LONGSUFFERING



GENTLENESS

The fifth characteristic of the Spirit-filled temperament is described in the King James Version as gentleness. Most of the modern translators of the Greek New Testament seem to change this to kindness or goodness, which make it almost synonymous with the next characteristic of the Spirit. In so doing, they tend to lessen the importance of this almost-forgotten form of behavior. It is a thoughtful, polite, gracious, considerate, understanding act of kindness which stems from a very tender heart. The world in which we live knows little of such tenderheartedness. It is the result of the compassion of the Holy Spirit for a lost and dying humanity.

The hurrying, bustling and pressurized life we live tends to make even some of the finest of Christians annoyed at the interruptions of "the little people." The Lord Jesus' gentle spirit serves as an illustration when contrasted with the disciples' cruel attitude toward the children who had been brought by their parents to be blessed by Him. The Scripture tells us that the disciples rebuked those who brought them, but Jesus said, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me and forbid them not." (Mark 10:13-14)

This gentle characteristic of the Holy Spirit never asks such questions as, "How often must I forgive my brother when he sins against me?" or, "Should I forgive a brother who does not ask for forgiveness?" or, "Isn't there a limit to how much a person can stand?" The Holy Spirit is able to give gentleness in the face of all kinds of pressures.

Jesus, who possessed the Holy Spirit "without measure," pictured Himself as a shepherd gently caring for easily injured sheep, and He, through His followers, tenderly cares today.

The sixth characteristic of the Spirit-filled man is called goodness, which is defined as "generous of self and possessions." It is benevolence in its purest sense. It includes hospitality and all acts of goodness that flow from the unselfish heart that is more interested in giving than receiving. Paul told Titus, the young preacher, that he should so preach that "they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works." (Titus 3:8) Man is so selfish by nature that he needs to be re-



GOODNESS

minged by the Word of God and the indwelling Holy Spirit to occupy himself with goodness. It is obviously, then, a person who is more interested in doing for others than for himself.

All four of the natural temperaments are prone to be selfish and inconsiderate; thus all need this trait of goodness. It is particularly needed by those with melancholy tendencies as a cure for depression

and gloom, caused by an over-indulgence in self-centered thought patterns. There is something therapeutic about doing for others that lifts a man out of the rut of self-thought. As the Lord Jesus said, "It is better to give than to receive."

Many a Christian has cheated himself out of the blessing of the Holy Spirit's inspired impulse to do something good or kind for someone else by not obeying that urge. Instead of bringing joy to someone else's life by that act of kindness, the self-centered person stifles the impulse and sinks deeper and deeper in the slough of despondency and gloom. It is one thing to get good impulses; it is quite another to transmit them into acts of goodness. D. L. Moody once stated that it was his custom, after presenting himself to the Holy Spirit and asking to be led of the Spirit, to act upon those impulses which came to his mind, provided they did not violate any known truth of Scripture. Generally speaking, that is a very good rule to follow, for it pays rich dividends in mental health in the life of the giver.

The seventh trait of the Holy Spirit-filled man is faith. It involves a complete abandonment to God and an absolute dependence upon Him. It is a perfect antidote to fear, which causes worry, anxiety and pessimism.

Some commentators suggest more than faith's being involved — namely faithfulness or dependability. But actually, a man who has Spirit-inspired faith will be faithful and dependable. The late Dr. William G. Coltman, former pastor of the Highland Park Baptist Church of Highland Park, Michigan, used to say, "When the Spirit is in control, life goes forward under the full conviction of God's ability and power."

In a vital way faith is the key to many other Christian graces. If we really believe God is able to supply all our needs, it is



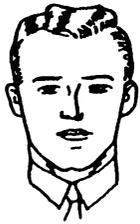
FAITH

going to cause us to have peace and joy and will eliminate doubt, fear, striving and many other works of the flesh. Many of God's people, like the nation of Israel, waste 40 years out in the desert of life because they do not believe God. Far too many Christians have "grasshopper vision." They are like the ten faithless spies who saw the giants in the land of Canaan and came home to cry, "We are as grasshoppers in their sight." How could they possibly know what the giants thought of them? You can be sure they did not get close enough to ask! They did just what we often do — jumped to a faithless conclusion. Unbelief, which is fear, will be considered later.

The Bible teaches that there are two sources of faith. The first source is the Word of God in the life of the believer. Romans 10:17 states, "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." The second is the Holy Spirit. Our text, Galatians 5:22-23, lists faith as a fruit of the Spirit. If you find that you have a temperament that is conducive to doubts, indecision and fear, then as a believer you can look to the filling of the Holy Spirit to give you a heart of faith which will dispel the emotions and actions of your natural nature, including fear, doubt, anxiety, etc. It will take time, however; habits are binding chains, but God gives us the victory in Christ Jesus. "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord." (Psalm 27:14)

The eighth temperament trait of the Holy Spirit-filled man is meekness. The natural man is proud, haughty, arrogant, egotistical and self-centered, but when the Holy Spirit fills the life of an individual he will be humble, mild, submissive and easily entreated.

The greatest example in the world of meekness is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He was the Creator of the universe, and yet was willing to humble Himself, take on the form of a servant and become subject to the whims of humanity, even to the point of death, that He might purchase our redemption by His blood. Here we see the Creator of man buffeted, ridiculed, abused and spat upon by His own creation. Yet he left us an example of not



MEEKNESS

reviling again.

This is particularly fortified when we recognize that all power and authority were given unto Him, even in the hours of His suffering. As He stated to Peter when He told him to put up his sword, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus

it must be?" (Matthew 26:53-54) For our sakes He was meek that we might have everlasting life. He said of Himself, "I am meek and lowly in heart."

Such meekness is not natural! Only the supernatural indwelling Spirit of God could cause any of us to react to physical or emotional persecution in meekness. It is a natural tendency to assert one's self, but even the most angry temperament can be controlled by the filling of the Holy Spirit and made to manifest this admirable trait of meekness.

The final temperament trait characteristic of the Spirit-filled believer is self-control. The King James Version translates it "temperance," but really it is self-control or self-discipline. Someone has defined it as "self-controlled by the Holy Spirit."

Man's natural inclination is to follow the path of least resistance. Mr. Sanguine probably has more temptation along this line than any of the other temperament types, though who of us can say he has not given in to this very common temptation? "Self-control" will solve the Christian's problem of emotional outbursts such as rage, anger, fear, jealousy, etc., and cause him to avoid emotional excesses of any kind. The Spirit-controlled temperament will be one that is consistent, dependable and well ordered.

It has occurred to me that all four of the basic temperament types have a common difficulty that will be overcome by the Spirit-filled trait of self-control. That weakness is an inconsistent or ineffective devotional life. No Christian can be mature in Christ, steadily filled with the Holy Spirit and usable in the hand of God, who does not regularly feed on the Word of God. Evangelical Christians would overwhelmingly confirm this fact, even though a very small percentage of Christians have a



SELF-CONTROL

quiet time with any degree of regularity.

Mr. Sanguine is too restless and weak-willed by nature to be consistent in anything, much less in getting up a few minutes early to have a regular time of Bible reading and prayer.

Mr. Choleric has the strong will power to be consistent in anything he sets his mind to, but his problem is in seeing the need for such a practice. He is by nature

such a self-confident individual that even after he is converted it takes some time for him to realize personally what the Lord Jesus meant when He said, "Without Me, ye can do nothing." Even when he sees the need and begins to have a regular devotional life, he has to fight the temptation to keep his practical, active mind from flitting off into many other directions or planning his day's activities when he is supposed to be reading the Word, praying or listening to the Sunday sermon.

Mr. Melancholy is perhaps most likely of the four to be regular in his devotional life, except that his analytical ability often sends him off in the quest of some abstract, theologically hairsplitting truth rather than letting God speak to him concerning his personal needs from the mirror of His truth. His regular prayer life can become a time of complaining and mourning to God about what he considers his unhappy state of affairs as he nurses his grudges and reviews his difficulties. Thus his devotional life can conceivably thrust him into greater periods of despair than he was in before. However, when controlled by the Holy Spirit, his prayer life will be characterized by "giving thanks" (1 Thessalonians 5:18) and compliance with "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice." (Philippians 4:4)

Mr. Phlegmatic is prone to recommend a regular quiet time as a necessary part of the Christian life, but if his slow, indolent and often indifferent inclination is not disciplined by the Holy Spirit, he will never quite get around to a regular feeding on God's Word.

As you look at these nine admirable traits of the Spirit-filled man, you not only get a picture of what God wants you to be, but what He is willing to make you in spite of your

natural temperament. It should, however, be borne in mind that no amount of self-improvement or self-effort can bring any of these traits into our lives without the power of the Holy Spirit. From this we conclude that the most important single thing in the life of any Christian is to be filled with the Holy Spirit. The supreme question, then, comes to mind: How can I be filled with the Holy Spirit?