



LESSON THIRTEEN - GOING ON TO PERFECTION

TEXT: Hebrews 6: 1-3
Galatians 5: 22-25
2 Peter 1:5-10

— by Thomas Aquinas: *“Lord in my zeal for the love of truth, let me not forget the truth about love”*

Lesson Thirteen is a summary and the last of the first section of lessons which encompasses the “laying the foundation” of our Apostolic Christian Truth Series. The next group of lessons will be the practical application of teaching that is aimed primarily at the Christian in order to reach a place of “perfection”, that is completeness in the Lord. This lesson however is meant to take a look at **what the end result should look like**. Our first twelve lessons have covered the six foundational truths that make up salvation. These have included repentance, faith, the doctrines of baptisms, laying on of hands, the resurrection, and eternal judgment. In addition we covered the rapture of the church. But we read in Hebrews that we are to “go on to perfection”, not laying again that foundation.

Salvation is a process, but there are some things that need not be repeated. We do not need to be baptized in water again, once we are baptized correctly. We do not need to get the baptism of the Holy Spirit again. We will get refreshing, but we are not “born again - again”. We will not be repenting for some things again, because some things will be taken immediately out of our lives. The resurrection will be once, and we will have one judgment day. That is why these are included in the foundation. You must get them right.

The church is built upon the foundation of the Apostles and the Prophets with Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20) If the foundation is not laid correctly the building is going to be unsteady and can easily deteriorate. The rea-

son we are Apostolic is because we believe and teach the “apostles doctrine”. (Acts 2:42)

Going On To Perfection

What does the perfect Christian look like? First of all, there has only been one perfect Christian, Jesus Christ himself. He is the model. He is the end result. Everything we have learned about truth in the first 12 lessons brings us to Him. Everything we are going to learn about living the Christian life – brings us to be like Him.

Ephesians 4:11-13

*And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a **perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ**: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, **may grow up into him** in all things, which is the head, even Christ:*

The goal is to become like Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was perfect in righteousness – he never sinned. Jesus Christ was perfect in power. Jesus Christ was perfect in his life and in his death. He was perfect in attitude, wisdom, his ability to love, his behavior and in his humanity, he was perfect in submission to his father even unto death.



We as humanity are not perfect in any of these things in our sinful nature – and we can only develop these things in our spiritual man by two methods. The first is called “adding” and the second is called “growing”. Our spiritual man comes as the gift of the Holy Ghost, but the growth of our spiritual man depends on us yielding ourselves to the spirit as it works in our lives. It works in our life through this adding and growing process.

Adding What We Need in order to Grow What we Need (2 Peter 1:3-10)

We are going to study about the fruit of the Spirit which is the essence of a spiritual person that is perfect in the Lord. The fruit of the Spirit is the end result. Fruit is what you get if (a) the tree is a fruit tree and not a wild vine, (b) the tree is healthy, (c) the ground is healthy, (d) the environment has been conducive to proper growth, (e) you have proper water, light, and soil. It is possible, however to have an apple tree that is not bearing apples or a fig tree that is not bearing figs, and the reason is because the proper water, light, and soil are not there. If not, you may be like the fig tree that had no fruit (see Luke 13: 6-9)

When Christians do not grow fruit it is because they are not *adding* to their spiritual lives. They are *passive spiritualist*. They expect to sit back and do nothing and expect the Lord and the ministry, and all the brethren to *tend to their spiritual needs*. Here is the character of a “fruitless” Christian:

- The Passive Christian – this is the largest majority of church goers who go to church out of duty or who go to simply “receive”. They tend to be spectator Christians, do not actively participate in ministry, soul winning, or spiritual activities that increase their spirituality (i.e. don’t pray, study, witness, or seek to improve their spiritual condition)
- The Carnal Christian – (I Corinthians 3: 1-6). The carnal Christian is similar to a

baby that does not grow. One is characterized by:

- Unable to receive or bear some solid preaching. This means that they are easily offended and they only want preaching that tickles their ears.
- For this reason they are given to preacher religion – I am of Paul, Peter, Apollos. I call this the Peter, Paul, Apollos syndrome which was the case with the Corinthian church
- They are often church hoppers and window shoppers – remember my sermon, “The Rootless and the Fruitless”?
- Strife and division are characteristics of carnal Christianity. Some have asked and you may have often wondered why there are so many denominations – this is your answer. Most churches are started by some person who “divided” from another group. The Lord intended for there to be one body and one church – and there really is only one body and one church. But Christianity is really made up of over 20,000 splinter organizations. (*In a 1980 study by David Barrett, he identified 20,800 Christian denominations worldwide according to the Oxford World Christian Encyclopedia. This was among 238 countries. However, the United Nations in 1989, gave the total at 23,000 in its World Census of Religious Activities. In the US country table, there were 6,222 different denominations including Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant*)



- The truth and light are difficult for them because it is constantly exposing their carnality

In order to overcome carnality, and fruit to grow and develop, it is essential that we “add” to our lives certain things that act as the water, light, soil, or mineral stuff that brings about the fruit. These are not the result of having fruit, but they are behaviors and characteristics that are the “seeds” that become the fruit (2 Peter 1: 5-10). The reason why we are told to “add” these things means that there must be an active, conscious decision to do what it takes to make these a part of our lives:

2 Peter 1:5-10

- V5 – “giving all diligence” – Spiritual addition can not be a hit and miss, once in a while proposition. It requires effort, desire, concern, and one must pay attention to the spiritual work of life
- “Add to your faith virtue”- this is defined as, *the quality of what is doing right and avoiding what is wrong. From the Latin “virtus” it also means manliness or courage. It is a synonym to “morality” and “merit”*
- Add to your virtue, knowledge – most carnal Christians are like the babies that are tossed about with every wind of doctrine (Ephesians 4:14). There is a falsehood that now exists in many churches that is very concerning. Someone somewhere began to teach “doctrine divides” and therefore we should have no doctrine. The Bible says that the early Christians continued in the Apostles Doctrine. The word doctrine simply means “teaching”. ***Consider this scripture: Hosea 4:6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.***

- V 6: Add to your knowledge temperance. You will note that temperance is also listed as a part of the fruit of the spirit. It is defined as: *The trait of avoiding excess; habitual moderation, restraining the emotions, passions, or appetites.* Both drunkenness and gluttony are considered sins according to scripture – and each of these is a result of being intemperate. However, this also includes wrath, anger, and variance. We have to add to our lives the quality of temperance
- V6: Adding Patience – *The quality of being patient; the ability of longsuffering, tolerance of delay or incompetence, the ability to endure annoyance.* Don’t get the idea that you can get patience in a hurry. “I want to be patient right now”. I’m not suggesting that you should go get annoyed on purpose so you can work on your patience. Don’t worry – you will have plenty of opportunities to add to your patience. ***Patience is generally evident in the middle of a trying time***
 - Romans 5:3 – and tribulation worketh patience
 - Hebrews 10:36 – for ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise
 - Hebrews 12:1 – let us run with patience the race that is set before us
 - James 1:3 – knowing this that the trying of your faith worketh patience
 - James 5:11 – ye have heard of the patience of Job
- V6 Adding godliness – the word comes from the Greek word *Eusebia* which literally means “to worship well”, or the quality of living a loving life toward God. It also means “devout” or “pious” in conduct or character. It is the “what would Jesus do”



kind of thinking, where one considers their behavior in the light of what pleases God. A Christian should not merely call themselves a Christian – they should live the life.

- V7 Adding brotherly kindness – brotherly kindness is not only a hug of the neck on Sunday. We are not saved by works, but God intended works to be a part of your Christian life. Kindness effects how you act toward one another, the things you say to one another, do you help one another as if you are family.
- V7 Adding charity – and of course the word Charity here is love. “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35). Love is something that must grow (as being a part of the fruit of the spirit), but it is also something that you must add. Love is a commandment and all commandments are something that requires the will. I often have reminded husbands that when the Bible commands a man to love his wife – it is something he has to “do on purpose”.
Love is as much a matter of the will, as it is of the feel.

Perfection is Having the Fruit of the Spirit

There are gifts of the spirit which are the manifestations of God’s power working in you for and toward the body of Christ. This is the outward evidence of the Spirit filled Christian. Even the gift of faith is not talking about inward faith, but an outward action of faith. Notice that each gift is manifested outwardly in some way – faith, the word of wisdom, a world of knowledge, healing, miracles, discerning of spirits, prophesy, tongues, and interpretation of tongues. There are 9 gifts of the spirit listed in 1 Corinthians 12. And there are 9 parts of the Fruit of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5: 22-23. These are the inward evidences of the

Spirit filled Christian. Let me contrast the difference between the 9 Gifts of the Spirit, and the 9 parts of the Fruit of the Spirit:

- The gifts of the spirit are the outward evidences of the spirit while the fruit of the spirit is the inward evidences of the spirit
- The gifts of the spirit are distributed severely “as he will”. In other words, a person may have one or more of the gifts, but generally not all of them. God shares the gifts throughout the body. As I have said many times – “it takes the whole body to make one Jesus” when it comes to the gifts of the spirit which are really all gifts of power
- The fruit of the spirit is really all ONE fruit – with nine characteristics. The Christian should expect to develop and have ALL nine of these inward evidences of the Spirit.
- The gifts of the spirit are “given” while the fruit of the spirit is “grown”. Even carnal people have been used in the gifts of the spirit (that was the problem in Corinth – they were carnal tongue talkers) – but the fruit of the spirit only grows as carnality is reduced. The more carnality that a Christian has – the less spiritual fruit is evident or able to grow.
- When Jesus comes, he will be more interested in fruit bearing than gift giving.
- The gifts are supposed to be used to edify or build up the church – the fruit is evidence that you are being built up as a child of God.

What Is Perfection? What is the Fruit of the Spirit?

Galatians 5:22-23 list the fruit of the Spirit and these things are what must become evident in the life of a mature growing Christian. It won’t happen without doing the “adding” part that we discussed above. We won’t be perfect without it. The fruit of the Spirit is as follows:



- Love – we are not talking about “sloppy agape”. We are talking about “Agape” however, which is godly love. Love is defined very beautifully in 1 Corinthians 13.
- Joy – the Bible says that the kingdom of God is not “meat and drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost”. It is defined as a sense of well being and contentment. The joyous Christian is not a complainer, whiner, negative, doubter. It is the ability to live in the realm of difficulty with a smile.
- Peace – a lack of conflict. A person is not at odds with others or himself or with God. It is a state of harmony. Some people are never happy unless there is a conflict – and if there isn’t one, they will create one. A peaceful person doesn’t necessarily avoid conflict but is skillful in bringing peace out of conflict. That is maturity.
- Longsuffering – the ability to suffer without immediate reprisal. The ability to endure disappointment, pain, or suffering without causing pain to others.
- Gentleness – a quiet, gentle, sensitive and caring attitude and demeanor. Easily managed or handled. Not harsh, but mild and tender.
- Goodness – Something that brings pleasure, has value, or is useful. Think of that in terms of the Christian character.
- Faith – this is not the gift of faith, but the faith which has become a part of our character.
- Meekness – submission, humility, a lack of false pride, lowly, or modest
- Temperance – and we covered this earlier, the avoidance of excess, the restraining of the passions, the avoidance of vices.