



Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, ² in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began ³ and at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior;

⁴ To Titus, my true child in a common faith:

Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

⁵ This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you— ⁶ if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. ⁷ For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, ⁸ but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. ⁹ He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

Six months a guy called me out of the blue and told me God is telling him that he is supposed to preach and he wants to preach at Grace. Obviously I'm not going to let a total stranger bring us the Word of God so I suggested that he come to church and we could meet together, Then he could get involved in service at our church and maybe years down the road there might be an opportunity to preach. I can only hope is sincere but I have my doubts.

But too often we go too far in the other direction and don't get involved in service at all. We wait for others to do the work or we say that we don't know our gifts or whatever other excuse we use to not be involved. Thankfully we understand what we should be aiming at.

1. These fruits are obtainable by every man, woman and child.

Titus 1 (elders)	Titus 2 (all believers)
Not arrogant or quick tempered	Not slanderers, dignified
Not a drunkard, violent or greedy for gain	Not a slave to wine
Lover of good	Model of good works
self-controlled, holy, and disciplined	Self-controlled, reverent, steadfast
teach sound doctrine	Teach what is good
hospitable	Rom. 12:13, 1 Peter 4:9, Heb 13:2
Husband of one wife	

Can a teenager be a lover of good? Can a teenager avoid being arrogant, quick-tempered? Can a fifteen year-old be self-controlled, holy and disciplined? It might be a little more challenging for a young person but even these are obtainable at some level. And do not forget that fruits are supposed to grow each year. So self-control should look different and more complete in a believe who is thirty than in someone who is fifteen. There should be more progress and more development of these fruits. At the same time though, we can also say that some fifteen year olds are much further along spiritually than some 30 year olds.

2. These are fruits of a vibrant spiritual life, but not the means of obtaining the fruit.

What happens so often in sermons and Bible studies is that we tend to aim at outward behavior rather than at the heart. And lists like this tend to make us focus on outward behavior alone. And that can bring a lot of guilt and shame but no actual forward progress. Why do I struggle with my temper? Why can't I have more self-control and more discipline? It's not bad to evaluate where you are at. That's necessary even, but don't look at a list like this and think you can get there through self-effort. But we have to remember that we are seeing the goal, but not the process. We have a list of spiritual fruit but at least in this passage, we are not told the means to grow this fruit. We are told *what* we are supposed to do but not *how* to do it. I will cover that next, but please don't allow lists like this to discourage you. That is the opposite of why they are in the Bible. They are not here to discourage you. They are here to help you have more of them in your life.

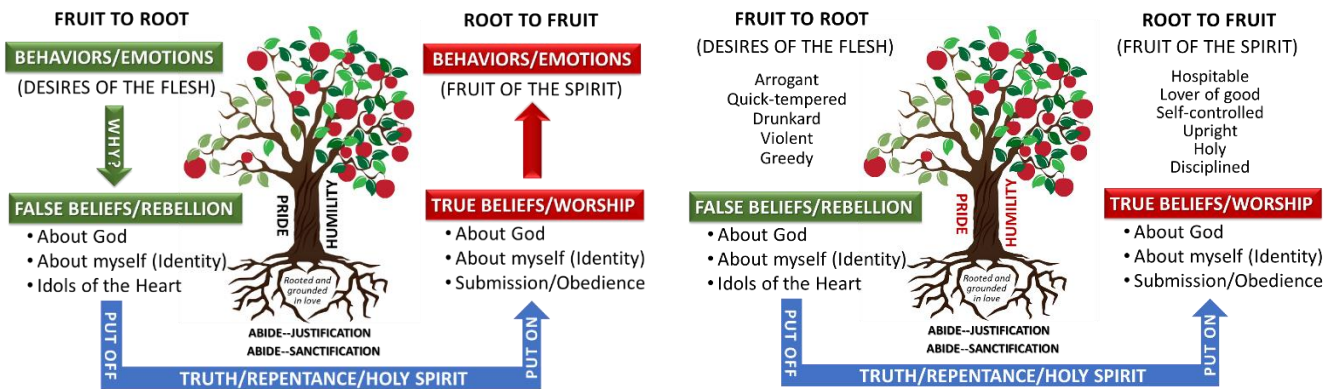
3. Properly understood, fruits actually draw out the inner heart and become a means to obtaining them.

Take the prohibition against being a drunkard. Unless you are an alcoholic, this one is an easy standard to meet. You either struggle with alcohol or you don't. Personally, this has never been a problem for me. Not once. But I have struggled with being arrogant, quick-tempered, greedy and not having enough self-control. I may never 100% get rid of all angry responses. I am quite confident I will never have enough self-control. So most of these character qualities are not a matter of whether or not you have them but are you progressively growing in these attributes.

More than that, these spiritual fruits are supposed to draw out your inner heart. In other words, they are not just surface behaviors. Let me explain using the drunkard prohibition again. If you struggle with alcohol, what is controlling you? Alcohol, right? If you struggle with being quick-tempered, what is controlling you right then? Anger, right? What about greed? When you are greedy, the love of money is controlling you. What about violence? Rage is controlling you. So in every prohibition, something else is fundamentally in control of your life and behavior. So these are not just sins to avoid. They are way for all believers to engage in self-reflection with

the purpose of uncovering your inner heart. When you see the spiritual fruit of self-controlled, rather than just say, “Well I need more self-control,” instead ask yourself, “What is controlling me? What tends to rule my heart and mind other than Christ?”

The idea of self-control is sort of a misnomer. In the original language, the word “self” is not even there. The word does carry the idea of self-control but only in the sense that you are not out of control and running wild. To be drunk is to be the opposite of this word because, once again, something else is controlling you at that moment. In proper context, it’s not self-control that we are after. Anyone can have self-control to some degree but what we seek is for Christ to control us.



I showed this diagram to you a few weeks ago but it matches perfectly with lists like we have in this passage. The “negative” list fits in the left column under desires of the flesh and the “positive” list fits into the right column under fruits of the Spirit.

So here’s how this works. When we read a list like the one in this chapter, we can get discouraged. And of course there are many such lists like this in the Bible, standards by which we are supposed to live. They are everywhere and I said, they can become discouraging to us. We wish we had more self-control. We wish we had more personal holiness. We wish we had—fill in the blank—whatever it is we see that we lack, from this list or any other list of spiritual fruit and standards of holiness. Let’s stick with self-control and quick-tempered. Once we see that we fall short, we have a few options from which to choose.

First, you could give up. You’ve tried to change, tried to get rid of your anger but it doesn’t seem to get better so you just give up. It’s who you are and you’re not likely to change at this point.

Second, some people try harder. They resolve to do better and often they do. You can make a lot of progress through self-effort. You might be able to control the outbursts, but you don’t have a handle on what causes them in the first place.

The third and best option is to examine the source of the problem. You have an anger problem. You lack self-control. That’s good to admit that and see it for what it is, but the desire to have self-control can uncover your inner heart. In other words, seeing what you don’t have can help uncover why you don’t have more of it. Therefore, instead of being discouraged because you don’t have self-control turns into an opportunity to understand why you don’t have self-control.

That's what happens on the left side of this diagram. You start to ask yourself the simple question WHY? What is controlling me and why is it controlling me? Then you can uncover possible false beliefs that may have led to this. If you don't do this rigorous step, you will probably end up masking the behavior and trying to cover it up.

I was so glad to see this article on Gospel Coalition. 4 Ministry Lessons I Learned as a Car Salesman. Over the years I told Karen that if I wasn't a pastor I might like to try my hand at selling used cars. I think I would rather do that than return to the lab where I used to work. In the past 3 weeks I practically was a used car salesman as I bought and sold four cars. I'll let you in on my secret selling techniques. Ethan's old Camry was listed at \$1400. I put that much into it in the past year, so I was hoping to get that much out of it. One older lady drove all the way from Eau Claire with her son to look at the car. After driving it she asked if I would take \$1300. Negotiation is the key to selling cars, so I went right to work. I said, "Here's what I'm going to do." I explained an issue with the rack and pinion that was undetectable by driving it. I told her that since I wasn't confident with that part, I would only take \$1100. Yeah, we would starve to death if I had to sell cars.

But here's one thing I did learn—how to completely get rid of cigarette smoke odor. Ethan's latest car had a combination of cigarette smoke and body odor. I researched every cleaner and deodorizer there is and arrived at what seemed to be the best solution—an ozone generator. We ran the thing for an hour and aired it out and a few days later we did the same thing and the smell is 100% gone. The little machine is quite amazing. Ozone works by destroying odor causing chemicals by oxidation. The smell is not just masked. The smell literally ceases to exist.

This is a good lesson for spiritual growth. If you have an anger problem, it is possible to mask and cover over the problem. You can freshen the air so to speak. You can make your anger smell a little better, but you have not addressed the actual cause. Anger is the fruit of some sort of unbelief or idol of the heart. What needs to happen is that the fruit needs to be worked down to the root. Anger is not your problem. Something deeper than your anger is your problem. Here are some possible idols of the heart that drives your anger.

You get angry when...

Idol of Comfort—someone or something blocks your goal

Idol of Respect—people disrespect you

Idol Entitlement—you don't get what you think you deserve

Idol of Control—something is keeping you from being in control

Idol of Approval—you feel rejected

Can you see how this begin to uncover deeper matters of your heart? Instead of just trying to stop being angry, you go deeper. Anger—or to use Paul's term here, quick-tempered—is merely a symptom. Not all, but most anger is sinful anger. There is such a thing as righteous anger, but I think that most of the time when we think we are righteously angry, we are most likely sinfully angry. But being quick-tempered clearly implies sinful anger. So even in the phrase quick-tempered, there is the implication of a trigger. Something triggered your anger and it went from

zero to sixty in just a few seconds. That trigger is most likely an idol of the heart and quite likely is on this list.

An idol of the heart is anything that means more to me than God. That tells us that it's not enough to identify the idols of our hearts. Our journey is not yet complete because then we need to understand why we have these idols in the first place. As the diagram shows, the next step involves identifying any false beliefs that I have about myself or about God, and usually those two false beliefs hang together.



Let's take the idol of approval for example. Start from the top. You are quick-tempered. That's the triggering emotion that tells you something deeper is happening. So eventually you trace it down to an idol of approval. If you don't feel like you are accepted, it can create anger within you. Now here's a really important question. Is it OK to want to be accepted? It's not only right, it how God has created us to be. We need to feel accepted and significant. That's not wrong. We need this like we need air to breathe. So the only question is where we will seek this acceptance from. If we fundamentally seek it in Christ, then we won't be looking for it from others. If our identity is rooted in Christ and we feel accepted, our idol of approval will begin to dissipate. It will never go away completely but you will begin to shift your desire for acceptance from other people and circumstances to Jesus.

But if it's really that simple, why don't we do it more often? We don't seek our acceptance in Christ most likely because we have a false belief about God. We don't believe that we are accepted and secure in Christ. And we probably have this false belief because we have a false belief about who God is and what he has done for us.



ABIDE--JUSTIFICATION

If you zoom in on the roots of the tree you see this quote from Ephesians 3—"rooted and grounded in love." If you know that because of the atoning work of Christ on the cross and the victory of his resurrection that you are rooted and grounded in love, then that becomes the foundation of your acceptance and approval. This truth is called justification. By faith, Christ has covered our sins and declared us to be righteous in his sight. If you believe this truth, then your idol of approval begins to melt away. But if you don't fully accept

what Christ has done for you, then you will seek to justify yourself through your own efforts. So your two options are Christ-justification or self-justification; seeking acceptance in Christ or seeking it from others. So the difference between these two options comes down to what you believe about God and what you believe about yourself.

As you hold to right beliefs about God you will inevitably come to hold right beliefs about yourself in relation to God. As you realign yourself with God's truth about himself and yourself. You have now worked your way from the fruit of your life down to it's root. The fruit was anger which was caused by some idol of the heart which in turn was caused by false beliefs. You didn't feel loved and accepted by God. You forgot that the atoning work of Christ roots you and grounds you in love. When you bathe yourself in truth, what happens is that you start to put off

or put away these false beliefs. You replace your false beliefs with true ones. You put on this new truth. You believe it for the first time or you believe it once again.

This is what can lead to genuine self-control. Now that the root—the foundation is right again, this can produce true spiritual fruit. If you are truly a quick-tempered person, you can't just jump from anger to self-control in one easy step. Titus 2:11-12 describes this process.

Titus 2:11-12

¹¹ For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ¹² training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age.

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