

The Fruit of the Spirit: Longsuffering
(Galatians 5:22-23)

Introduction:

1. The fruit of the Spirit consists of the 9 special characteristics listed in Galatians 5:22-23.
2. As we study the fruit of the Spirit we must keep in mind the principles revealed in Galatians 6:7-8.
 - a. We will reap on the basis of how we sow.
 - b. To reap everlasting life we must sow to the Spirit.
3. The degree to which we possess these 9 characteristics is an indication of how we are sowing.
4. In this lesson we are concentrating on the 4th characteristic: "longsuffering."

Discussion:

- I. LET US FIRST DEFINE "LONGSUFFERING"
 - A. "Longsuffering" sometimes refers to patience, endurance, steadfastness, or perseverance that a Christian is to demonstrate when he faces affliction (see James 5:10).
 - B. "Longsuffering" also refers to patience or forbearance that a Christian is to demonstrate toward those who wrong him.
 - C. The type of "longsuffering" included in the fruit of the Spirit is the latter.
- II. THE BIBLE TEACHES CHRISTIANS TO BE LONGSUFFERING
 - A. (1 Corinthians 13:4) The first characteristic of charity [love] is that it *"suffereth long."*
 - B. Ephesians 4:1-3
 - C. Colossians 3:12-14
- III. THE BIBLE ALSO CONDEMNS THE OPPOSITE OF LONGSUFFERING (VENGEANCE)
 - A. Romans 12:17-21
 - B. 1 Thessalonians 5:15
- IV. THE BIBLE TEACHES US HOW TO BE LONGSUFFERING
 - A. James 1:19-20
 - B. Matthew 5:44
 - C. Look to and follow the example of Jesus (Matthew 26:59-68).

Conclusion:

1. The inspired writings of the New Testament teach us to be longsuffering, and they teach us how to be longsuffering.
2. In closing let us make several additional observations that relate to longsuffering.
 - a. Longsuffering does not mean that we cannot stand against evil.
 - 1) Jesus is our great example of longsuffering, but He did not hesitate to cleanse the temple (John 2:13-17; Matthew 21:12-13).
 - 2) We learn from Ephesians 6:11-13 that we are to put on the whole armor of God so we can stand against wickedness.
 - b. Longsuffering does not mean that we cannot rebuke others when their actions are wrong.
 - 1) (Galatians 2:11) Paul withstood Peter to the face.
 - 2) (Galatians 2:12) Paul did so because Peter did something that was wrong.
 - c. We must do our part to help others be longsuffering.
 - 1) We must put away the works of the flesh that are obstacles to being longsuffering (Galatians 5:19-21).
 - 2) (Galatians 5:26) We must avoid provoking others.
3. God wants His children to be different from other people in the world.
4. If we are longsuffering and if we will help other people to be longsuffering, we will be different, and we will be able to influence others for good.