

Life in the Spirit — Part Two

Galatians 5:13–26

Today is the 2nd sermon of 3 centered in Galatians 5 where Paul points us to see and rejoice in the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. We have not spent any significant time in our 3 year journey focusing on the 3rd Person of the Trinity, so I've taken an opportunity to linger here an extra sermon or two and parse some things out. Next week we will get to the highlight of the passage: The Fruit of Spirit. Today we make strides in that direction and consider the assignment of the Spirit in nurturing and tending our souls, if you will, in order that they do bear fruit in keeping with repentance from sin.

¹³ For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. ¹⁴ For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” ¹⁵ But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. ¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

PRAY — Holy Spirit, come and make

Faith in Christ frees us from the Law the brings guilt and condemnation and releases us to obey the law of love. “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another,” spoke Jesus in John 13:34. Last week we moved completely into the last section of the Galatian letter that addresses how we are to live in freedom.

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In chapters 1 & 2, Paul corrected their departure from the Gospel by simply exercising his apostolic authority. Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone from beginning to end. There is no mixture of self-effort that will ever accomplish what Christ has finished on the cross.

In chapters 3 & 4 he puts down the theological arguments — the doctrine of justification by faith alone and its implications in freedom from the law.

Now in the last lap, he moves to how being justified by God produces godly fruit. The most prominent theme in this last section is the work and empowering of the Holy Spirit enabling believers to live out the law of love. Lest we think that all we need is a good finger wagging and talking to, as in chapters 1 & 2, or that we just need to get our minds right and think a little better, as in chapters 3 & 4, now we learn that it is going to take more than a drill sergeant or life coach, more than a tutor, more than an advanced seminar to enlighten our minds to grasp the fullness of the atonement — as important and essential as those things are, they are not enough on their own. We were reminded last week how truly bad things are apart from the new nature in Christ, and we saw our utter need, then, of the Holy Spirit. As we were necessarily born from above by the Spirit, we must now walk and live by the Spirit.

Picking up where we left off last time, let's consider the ongoing work of the Spirit and our obligation to submit to him in this passage.

v. 16 — But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

Walk — *peripatéō* in Greek. We have an English word that comes directly out of Greek = *peripatetic*. In Greek and in English it means the same thing: to walk around. Perhaps you've heard Jesus described as a peripatetic teacher. There was no fixed classroom where he met with his disciples for training each morning. Class was always in session, if you will, and conducted as Jesus walked from town to town. (**Luke 13:22** — He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem.) There is a close communion, an intimacy about how Jesus taught and guided and corrected, that is as close as I am to Joe Mercer.

- He was not the college professor with limited office hours that were always inconvenient, but if you wanted to see her, you had to pick a time and make an appointment to get help.
- He was not the high school principal in the office who would be called if you got out of hand. He was there to make micro-corrections before the punishment or detention was needed.
- He was not a General or CEO who oversaw a master strategy, but there are too many links in the chain of command for you to ever see him... so you simply do what you are told.

3

Jesus is right there shepherding, feeding, nurturing, restoring, instructing, correcting — all one step at a time, one foot in front of the other. That is Jesus and his peripatetic tending, teaching relationship.

- The disciples, who did not know quite as much as they thought they knew, needed this immediate instructive and corrective teaching in their lives in **John 9**: As Jesus passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. And his disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.” (John 9:1–3)
- James and John, in **Luke 9**, needed this: “Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?” But Jesus turned — [he turned! He’s right there!] — and rebuked them. And they went on to another village. (Luke 9:54–56)
- Thomas needed Jesus in the room to show him truth and build his faith; **John 20** — “Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.” Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.”
- Peter definitely needed this, after his folly in Mark. “Lord, don’t talk about a cross; you’re bringing the room down.” Jesus: “Get behind me, Satan. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”

These are the things Jesus did as he was with his disciples, often just walking around in daily activities and responsibilities. That’s all fine, pastor, but have you forgotten we are talking about the Holy Spirit? As Jesus was within touching distance as he walked with the disciples, so we are to walk in, with, and by the Spirit, who is the Spirit of Christ (Gal. 4:6; Phil. 1:19). A couple of weeks ago I suggested some homework in John 14 thru 16, and Romans 7 and 8, as we focus on the work and assignment of the Spirit. We’ll just look at a few of these truths, but I want us to see that as Jesus walked with his disciples, helping them, leading them into truth, teaching them, showing them their sin, correcting them, he has sent his Spirit to do for us and *in* us what he did for them. Jesus described the coming of the Spirit as an increase in spiritual resource, not a reduction. In **John 16:7**, Jesus said, “it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you.” He has not left us as orphans. The Spirit dwells with us and in us, empowering us. If there was an enabling arm’s-length-nearness of Jesus while he walked the earth, we now internal resurrection power of the Holy Spirit! This is present state of every believer who has come to Christ in faith. The

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Holy Spirit is in you. Forever. That's a miracle. It is supernatural. And it is what we must have and appropriate if we are to walk as Christ walked and experience his resurrection living. Now a few highlights of what walking in the Spirit looks like.

The Spirit is our Helper — John 14:16. We don't have a weekly meeting with Jesus, during which we receive an assignment to go and accomplish something on our own. The Spirit helps us accomplish the work of God. He is conforming us to the image of Christ. He is producing his fruit in our lives. We can do none of this on our own. We need the Spirit of Christ to help us, else we fail. Hence John 15:5 — I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. The perfect unity of the Trinity is on display in this passage. Abiding in the Son fills us with the Spirit who produces fruit that glorifies the Father. We cannot do this without the help of the Spirit in this way and a dozen more.

He is the Spirit of Truth — John 16:13. He teaches me all things and brings to remembrance what Jesus has said. When we wander off toward error or sin, as we are prone to, the Spirit reminds us of the word of God. This is why we memorize Scripture. It is a tool that Holy Spirit brings to mind when we need it. Or as Psalms 119:11 says, I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. If we have not stored up the Word of God, we having nothing with which to fight, to correct, to be instructed, to be encouraged, to have our faith built up.

He convicts of sin, and righteousness — John 16:8. Where the Lord identified sin face-to-face while he walked the earth, he has given the Holy Spirit to reveal our sin heart-to-heart, if you will, while we walk step by step through life. The locus of sanctification is has moved inside, into the heart, transforming the affections rather than external rule keeping of the Law. That's the thrust of v. 18 — if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. The law fenced in sinful behavior, restraining it, keeping you from sinning against God and sinning against your neighbor. The Spirit produces new desires through the new heart that loves God and loves neighbor. That's a massive, miraculous shift. No wonder the old nature and new nature are at war with each other. To win the war, the Spirit works 24/7, never taking a day off — because that is how much we need the Spirit. If we don't, every day, every hour, every minute, walk by, submit to, be filled with the Spirit with every step, we *will* gratify the desires of the flesh that lead to death.

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He reiterates that in **v. 25** — If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. We are called to prosecute and win this war, killing the sinful nature. We see it in the verse just above, **v. 24** — those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Walking by the Spirit will be done by putting the old man to death — and the old man dies hard. But as John Stott puts it, Paul borrows the imagery from Christ when he said we are to take up our cross and follow him. But “Paul takes the metaphor to its logical conclusion. We must not only take up our cross and walk with it, but actually see that the execution takes place. We are actually to take the flesh, our willful and wayward self, and metaphorically nail it to the cross.” That’s even more graphic war imagery than we saw last week. Though it will be painful, the killing of the sinful nature is to be decisive. Crucifixion was in some ways a slow-motion death, but it was a certain death. So it is to be with us through the sin-defeating, life-giving power of the Spirit. Do not be discouraged by the battle. Walk in the power of the Spirit and determine to kill sin, else it kill you. There can only be one winner. You ... are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. (Romans 8:9) Therefore you are equipped to win!

We could take 2 or 3 more sermons and deal with how the Scripture describes the work of the Spirit. That is an excellent study which will help you, but I will leave it to you, and will provide resources if you need me to. The Holy Spirit will illumine your mind and help you as you study God’s word.

Last week we saw negatively how thoroughly saturated with sin is our old sinful nature. Paul thereby convinces us that we need the Holy Spirit to keep us from sin. The fruit, or character of Christ, listed here shows us positively how much we require the Spirit, who leads us into truth, helps us, brings to mind the word of God, and empowers us supernaturally so that we ultimately look like the Lord Jesus. That is the goal, as you recall from Galatians 4:19 — that Christ be formed in us.

vv. 22–23 — ²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control...

Let’s start with 4 truths about the Spirit and what he produces before we get to the specifics:

1. The fruit of the Spirit is a metaphor for moral and ethical behavior that matches the moral and ethical behavior of Jesus — that’s the goal: that we look like Jesus. So when we talk about the fruit of the Spirit, we are talking about the character of Christ formed in us.

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2. Outward fruit is the natural result of inward character. Put another way, apple trees produce apples; they don't produce papayas.

My neighbors have a nice above ground pool on the back southwest corner of their property. I have a large, mature cottonwood tree on the back northwest corner of my property, just feet away from their nice pool. My tree has produced dump truck loads of cotton this season and dropped most of it in their pool. They seem to appreciate my tree less and less each time they have to clean the pool, unclog the filter, etc. Do you know why the tree is producing and dumping all that seed in their pool? It produces and dumps all that cottonwood seed because it's a cottonwood tree. It is its nature. It would be nice, perhaps, if it were to make lemons or apples that just hung right there at arm's length while in the pool. You could reach out and pull a lemon fresh and squeeze it in your ice tea. I can urge it to repent and amend its way. I can explain the logical reason why it would be better if it didn't annoy the neighbors. Anyone think that will change its production of cotton? No, it's gonna put cotton on the limbs because that's what is natural in the roots. It doesn't have to work to do it — it can't help but do it. So it is with the fruit of the Spirit.

When the Spirit takes up residence in you, He will produce his fruit. That doesn't mean there isn't a battle, as we've seen. But the outward fruit of Christ's character will work its way out. The person outside of faith in Christ may appreciate the fruit of the Spirit and find some aspects attractive, the natural person will not produce the life and character of Christ springing out of love for God. The natural man cannot produce supernatural change.

For the believer, we certainly cooperate with the Spirit. We do not quench the Spirit. We are filled with the Spirit. We are led by the Spirit... those require active obedience on our part. But Christians produce Christ-like character as a cottonwood tree produces cotton. Do you see Christ's character being formed in you? Are you loving the unlovely? Are you kind to those who are unkind to you? Is there joy in the midst of difficulty and disappointment? Are you noticing you are becoming increasingly gentle with difficult, abrasive people? Then you have a song of praise to sing. God is producing his character in your life and this is evidence of the new birth, not your effort.

3. Paul uses the singular *fruit*, not plural *fruits*. In other words, we don't look at this list and identify one item that we would like, as though it's a grocery list. "Honey, I'm in the produce section and they have some lovely bananas." "No, dear, we already have those. But I do need 2 cantaloupes."

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“Lord, I feel like I could use a little more joy today. But no patience or gentleness. I don’t care for the way that you produce those.” No buffet, no smorgasbord, no ala carte. The Spirit is actively loving you by working to form all the character of Christ in you all the time.

4. The Spirit is a distinct person, who is the Spirit of Christ. As Christ loved us and gave himself for us, the Spirit expresses that love by defeating what kills us, and producing what causes us to flourish. He actively loves you by conforming you to Christ. Let that sink in. When we do not walk with the Spirit, when we resist his work, we are resisting the fullness of the love God to produce in us the character of God.

Parents, it’s a hard day, isn’t it, when out of your love and wisdom and knowledge of your child, you work to point them in that direction, or make it possible for them to do whatever it is you see is best... maybe a college that would be a perfect fit, or opportunity of some sort. But they resist and choose against you. Do you feel, as a parent, what it is like to provide for, or direct your child out of love and then have that rejected? It’s not merely that they rejected you, but that the child you love is diminished, or harmed in some way by resisting your instruction or provision.

When we resist the Holy Spirit who loves us, we grieve the Holy Spirit.

Isaiah 63:7–10a — I will recount the steadfast love of the Lord, the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord has granted us, and the great goodness to the house of Israel that he has granted them according to his compassion,
according to the abundance of his steadfast love.

⁸ For he said, “Surely they are my people, children who will not deal falsely.”

And he became their Savior.

⁹ In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them;

in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.

¹⁰ But they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit...

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not resist the Spirit.

Do you need to re-think that battle with the old nature? The battle cry of the flesh may be, “Don’t listen to God! Ignore the prompting of the Spirit! You deserve to be satisfied. You are free to do what you want! God is trying to take something from you that will bring you happiness or satisfaction.”

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That's a lie. All of it. Consider that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ, who loves you. Be reminded of truth in the midst of the battle. Believe that God is acting in love toward you and look away to the cross to see proof of it there. God demonstrated his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

When the Spirit convicts, corrects, teaches, re-orientes, calls you to something you didn't plan to do — or maybe even don't want to do, will you now hear that as the God expressing his love and kindness toward you, leading you from death to life?

Holy Spirit, living breath of God,
Breathe new life into my willing soul.
Bring the presence of the risen Lord,
To renew my heart and make me whole.
Cause Your Word to come alive in me;
Give me faith for what I cannot see,
Give me passion for Your purity;
Holy Spirit, breathe new life in me.

PRAY