This morning, I am finishing up the sermon series that I've entitled "The Spirit-Formed Life." I will be giving a brief summary, followed by a time for testimonies. During this sermon series, we looked at what is known as the fruit of the Spirit, a phrase Paul uses in Galatians 5:22 to describe the kind of character that is formed in the person who lives under the influence of the Holy Spirit, walking not according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit of God. In case you're unfamiliar with the concept of the fruit of the Spirit, it comes from Paul's words in Galatians 5; let's read it in its fuller context:

Galatians 5:13–25 - You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. 14 For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." 15 If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other. 16 So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. 19 The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

The picture of the fruit of the Spirit tells us that these characteristics – love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control – are not primarily qualities that we have to produce by our own effort, but that they are produced in us when we are "led by the Spirit," when we are walking in step with God's Spirit, when we are trusting God and living in communion with Him and obedience to Him. Seek Him, prioritize Him, know and obey His Word, and you will gradually be changed more and more into a person of love, not hatred, hostility or indifference. Joy, not despair or cheap thrill-seeking. Peace, not anxiety or conflict. Forbearance or patience, not anger, irritability, or impatience. Kindness instead of meanness, callousness or cruelty. Goodness instead of selfishness, corruption, or perpetrating evil. Faithfulness instead of faithlessness, unreliability, or a lack of integrity. Gentleness instead of harshness, abusiveness, or aggression. And self-control instead of living a chaotic, out of control life enslaved to desires.

How badly does the world need people like this? How desperately does your family need you to be like this?

The Spirit-formed life begins by repenting of your sins and trusting in Jesus for your salvation.

Romans 10:9–10 - If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. [10] For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.

Acts 2:37–38 - When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" [38] Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

When you are saved, you are justified, adopted, and regenerated.

Ezekiel 36:26–27 - I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. [27] And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

When the Spirit is in you, there is a change in motivation, a change in desires, a change in perspective. As I said in the first sermon, if I am free, why would I use my freedom to serve one another humbly in love instead of indulging the flesh? If I know I am already forgiven and going to heaven, then what is my motivation to pursue love and service to others instead of indulging the flesh and doing whatever I want? Or – if I know I have a guaranteed A in my class, why would I bother to study for the final? It's the difference between taking music appreciation in school and listening to Bach because I want to. It's the difference between taking Japanese in school to get a good grade and taking it because I fell in love with a Japanese girl and I want to be able to communicate with her. One is a chore; the other is a delight. One is something I have to do; the other is something I want to do.

You know that you are saved and are a new creation and have the Holy Spirit in you when you find your desires and motivations changing. Not because someone told you to, but because you have been born again; you have the Holy Spirit in

you, and as the words of Ezekiel say, His Spirit is moving you to follow His decrees and to keep His laws. To be sure, the flesh is still there, battling against the Spirit. Read Romans 7 if you want to understand more about that. But the underlying motivation and desires are changing. The truly saved person will begin to live the Spirit-formed life. They will begin to look more and more like Jesus.

Listen: what is the evidence that you are saved? Is it that you prayed a prayer of salvation when you were 10 or 50? No. The evidence is that you are growing in the fruit of the Spirit. The evidence is the work of the Spirit in you. An increasing hatred of sin and love for God. An increasing desire to know and honor and please Him. And an increasing holiness, Christlikeness.

Seek the Lord. Spend time with Him. Learn His Word and obey it. His Spirit will bring out of you character that you never could form on your own. The death of Jesus has set you free from the penalty of sin. Now use that freedom to serve God and serve others. Like an athlete or musician submitting themselves to a coach because they know that coach can bring out of them something they can not do on their own, submit yourself to God and see what He can do in and through your life. Amen.