

Walking in the Spirit

Lesson Text: Galatians 5:22-6:10

Time: A.D. 48 **Place:** from Syrian Antioch

Introduction

How befitting that this unit's cluster on being "Set Free" should end with "Walking in the Spirit!" After all, Christians are seen long before they are heard. So, what does "walking in the Spirit" mean? And, why is this so important for Christians to "walk" (or live) a certain way? How does one go about "walking in the Spirit" anyway? These questions will be answered in this lesson study.

In the book Don Quixote, author Miguel de Cervantes wrote, "The proof of the pudding is in the eating." The same thing is true with the Christian life. We might claim to have the Holy Spirit and even declare that we are filled with the Spirit, but the final test of the Comforter's presence is the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23).

Looking at the Golden Text, "The law of Christ" referred to here is probably the summation of the law: "Love your neighbor" (see Gal. 5:14; Matt. 22:39; and John 13:34, 35). The term "fulfill" suggests that choosing to "bear" another Christian's "burdens" (or restore another Christian from burdensome sin, v. 1) is precisely what "Christ" expects of all believers. The Greek word for burdens refers to something beyond the normal capacity to carry, as opposed to a "load" (v. 5), which is what a person could be expected to carry.

The importance of producing the "fruits of righteousness" (Phil. 1:11) is seen throughout the Bible. John the Baptist told the people, "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance" (Matt. 3:8). Jesus warned His disciples concerning false prophets and said, "By their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. 7:20). He also declared that good trees bring forth good fruit and evil trees bring forth evil fruit, "for the tree is known by his fruit" (Matt. 12:33).

If we are to walk in the Spirit, we must also produce His fruit. That is the true test of genuine spirituality.

Galatians 5:22-25

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. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

Galatians 6:1-10

Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. ² Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. ³ If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves. ⁴ Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else, ⁵ for each one should carry their own load. ⁶ Nevertheless, the one who receives instruction in the word should share all good things with their instructor.

⁷ Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. ⁸ Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. ⁹ Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. ¹⁰ Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

Fruit of the Spirit - Gal. 5:22-26

To revisit, the "fruit" of the Spirit as listed in Galatians 5:22-23 are: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness,

goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. These are the virtuous qualities that the Spirit produces in the lives of Christians. While He plants the seed that produces the fruit, we must cultivate the Christian graces by adding to our faith (see II Pet. 1:5-10). We also note that the singular "fruit" is used versus the plural "fruits." This is because these nine qualities form a corporate harvest of the Holy Spirit.

1: Why did Paul refer to "fruit," rather than "fruits" of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22?

While this was already answered in Question 1, it is important to know what each of these characteristics entail.

Love is the defining character of Christ's followers. This is not just a superficial kind of love, but, the "agape" or self-sacrificing love that mimics Christ's love for us.

Joy is that which comes from within us and is not the same thing as happiness-which is dependent upon what's happening at the time. With the joy of Jesus within us, we can experience joyfulness even while going through unpleasant situations.

Peace is another quality in a Christian's life that can only come from God. Have you seen the bumper sticker that reads, "No Jesus, No Peace; Know Jesus, Know Peace?" This is a play on words, but it serves as a simple but true reminder that we cannot have peace aside from having Christ in our lives.

Forbearance is another word for patience. If you are short on patience and have been praying for help in this area of your Christian walk, be prepared for God to allow you to encounter circumstances that will exercise your patience.

Kindness is a Christian characteristic that displays kindness to others; it's the opposite of anger. If this is not one of your strong points, again, prayer and practice are the beginning to developing this twin to love.

Goodness is the disposition to do good to others (see Gal. 6:10). This is not something that comes naturally to us. In fact, our nature leans towards our doing just the opposite of good to others; which is why we need the help of the Holy Spirit in this area of our lives.

Faithfulness is applicable to us as children of God as well as in our relationships with others. How faithful we are to God is directly related to our faithfulness to our fellow man.

Gentleness should not be mistaken for weakness. The Bible tells us that both Moses and Jesus were "meek" (see Num. 12:3 and Matt. 11:29), however, neither of them were weak. The Greek word used in Galatians 5:23 was used of wild horse that had been taught to obey. Meekness is strength under control.

Self-control, or temperance can be applied to all areas of our lives.

2: What characteristics define the fruit of the Spirit?

There is no law that forbids people from displaying the aforementioned qualities of a Christian. Not only are these qualities generally recognized as being commendable, but they also constitute the will of God for all true believers. The law is not "against" those who walk by the Spirit because in principle they are fulfilling the law.

3: Why is there no law against the fruit of the Spirit? (Gal. 5:23b)

Fulfilling the Law of Love - Gal. 6:1-5

The "spiritual" in this verse (i.e., "*you who live by the Spirit*") might refer to those abounding in the fruit of the Spirit, the spiritually gifted, or church leaders, who should be known for spirituality (see I Pet. 5:1-3). However, all children of God are called out to be spiritual in the sense of being eager to obey the promptings of the Holy Spirit who lives inside each of us. So, the next time someone accuses you of being "spiritual" or "holy," don't

take the accusation as an offense, but take it as a compliment. Prayerfully, you are exhibiting other characteristics of a true Christian.

4: Who are the "spiritual?" (Gal. 6:1)

A question that might precede this one is, "should we restore the fallen?" The answer, of course, is absolutely we should attempt to. Why? Romans 3:23 reminds us that, "...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." None of us is exempt from being in the category of "fallen." It's another brother or sister's turn now, but ours could be tomorrow. Unlike the Pharisees who brought the adulteress to Jesus (John 8:1-11), restoration should be done in a "spirit of meekness (gentleness)," knowing that none of us is immune to temptation and sin (I Cor. 10:12-13).

5: Why should we restore the fallen in a "spirit of meekness (gentleness)?" (Gal. 6:1b)

Lifting a fallen brother is one of many ways we can help bear the burdens of others. In doing so, we are fulfilling the law of Christ-which is the law of love (see James 2:8). Of course, there are many ways we can help others with the burdens they bear in life. Giving actual physical aid and spiritual support are vital when our fellow believers are grieving, ill, jobless, or in some other kind of difficulty.

6: What do we do when we "carry each other's burdens?" (Gal. 6:2)

Verse 5 seems to contradict verse 2, when actually, the word for "burden" in verse 5 is different from the one used in verse 2. The word in verse 2 means a heavy load, whereas the word used in verse 5 means a lighter load and was used to describe a soldier's backpack. Ultimately, we are responsible for our individual actions. Some burdens must be borne personally; others can be shared (see Rom. 15:1).

7: Do verses 2 and 5 contradict each other? (Gal 6)

Faithful Teachers - Gal. 6:6

This verse encourages the support of those who labor as preachers and teachers. While most Christian workers serve as volunteers, others have devoted themselves to a full-time career in ministry. These should be compensated by other members of the flock, who should "communicate," or share with those who preach and teach "all good things."

In the book "Your Money Counts" by Howard Dayton (available through Crown Financial Ministries), Dayton says that he and his wife regularly and exclusively give to Christian non-profit organizations, and not to non-Christian ones because Christian non-profit organizations are only supported by Christians, whereas non-Christian non-profit organizations are not. This makes so much sense! Those who love the Lord and His commission are expected to financially support the same. If we don't, then who else will?

8: Why is it so important to support those who serve as ministers and missionaries?

Final Harvest-Gal. 6:7-10

The law of sowing and reaping applies not only to farming but also to life itself. It is the law of cause and effect (see Job 4:8 and Hos. 10:13). What you put in is what you get. Where you put it in, is where your return will come from.

If one sows to the flesh by producing the works of the flesh, "corruption" will be the resulting harvest. Those sowing to the Spirit by allowing Him to produce the fruit of the Spirit in them will "*reap eternal life.*" To think that things work otherwise is to make a mockery of God's Word, and, we know that "*God cannot be mocked*" or sneered/made fun at (Gal. 6:7).

9: What is the law of "sowing and reaping," and how does this relate to what Paul was saying? (Gal. 6:8)

"Nevertheless" indicates that this verse speaks of an important application of the spiritual sowing and reaping process (v. 7-9). Christians are not only to serve one another in love (see v. 2; 5:13), they also should "do good to" non-Christians.

"All people" indicates that our obligation to help others extends to any and all people. Obviously, helping those we do not know and will probably never see again is likely to spring from a pure heart. On the other hand, helping those who may have the opportunity to repay us for a kind deed may also spring from impure motives.

While the Christian faith does not prevent us from helping anyone in need, believers must have a special concern for the *"family of believers,"* that is, our fellow believers. Since we cannot help everyone in the world, our first priority is to help fellow believers, especially those who are members of our own local church.

10: To whom should we do good, and to whom do we have a special obligation to? (Gal. 6:10)

Conclusion

The Holy Spirit, who lives in the believer, produces fruit in the life of the believer. We should yield to the Spirit and allow that fruit to develop in us. Walking in the Spirit involves humble service to one another, including the ministries of restoring erring brothers and sisters, and generously supporting the Lord's work. The journey may be difficult, but the rewards are everlasting! You are encouraged today to walk in the power of the Holy Spirit!

Prayer

Thank you, Lord, that You have provided us with a holy example of what it means to "walk in the Spirit." Please help us to exhibit more in our daily lives those characteristics of a true Christian as outlined in today's lesson. We know that alone, we can do nothing; but, with the divine help of the Holy Spirit, we can do all things to Your glory. Thank you for Your written Word. May we continue to have a sincere desire to study and show ourselves worthy of our calling into Christ's Body of Believers. Bless those who labor in Your Name within Jesus Is All Ministries. And, thank you for those who You have already predestined to accept You as Saviour as a result of this study. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Thought For the Week

"Fruit that is hung on the branches is artificial. True fruit is produced by the Holy Spirit in the lives of those who are yielded to Christ."