

Galatians 5:22-26

Gal 5:22 (NKJV) **But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,** ²³ **gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.** ²⁴ **And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.** ²⁵ **If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.** ²⁶ **Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.**

Last week we made two observations relative to these [Galatians 5:22-26](#). The first was that **the Christian life has very clear and evident characteristics and attributes to it**. Our conclusion was that there should never be any question about whether someone is actually a Christian or not. The kind of fruit that a tree produces reveals what kind of tree it is. The second observation was that **believers do not have the power to crucify the flesh in their own power**. At the moment of salvation, the power of the flesh over the believer's life was broken so that it can no longer had the power to rule and reign over the believer's life. This was accomplished through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life.

The third observation is that there is a difference between “living in the Spirit” and “walking in the Spirit” that must be understood. The command is to “walk in the Spirit” (v16, 25), but the exhortation is to “live in the Spirit”. At first glance, the two words “walk” and “live” appear to be virtually synonymous, but they are not. The word “walk” that was studied in v16 is the Greek word “*peripateo*” and it refers to how someone conducts themselves, and specifically to their manner of life and actual behavior. It is the idea that they are to continually be ordering their behavior under the direction of the Holy Spirit and His Word. Doing so is to become the believer's way of life, his lifestyle, and something that simply becomes the habit and norm of their life. It is the idea of imitating Christ, or imitating what the Holy Spirit would do in any situation. [1 John 2:6](#) says,

1Jn 2:6 (NKJV) **He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.**

That is it right there – as much as is humanly possible, walk just like Christ walked, live just like Christ lived. The word “live” is a very common New Testament Greek word – “*zao*”. This word has a very special meaning and nuance in the context of [Galatians 5:25](#) because it refers to the idea of being devoted to following and obey the Holy Spirit. It is the idea of having a willingness, a readiness, a disposition, and an inclination to conform our life to the will, purposes, and precepts of the Holy Spirit.¹ In a kind of negative sense, it means that the believer is willing to separate himself from those things that are going to be in conflict with the Holy Spirit's will for his life. So, the word “walk” refers to the actual kind of biblical or unbiblical lifestyle that the believer has developed (casual, indifferent, dedicated, committed). It is what someone else is going to say actually characterizes his life. When someone else may be asked to evaluate your life, they are going to do so on the basis of what they can outwardly observe about your life, your “walk”, your lifestyle, your decisions.

However, the word “live” refers much more to the believer's devotion to both understand and then implement and commit himself to what that kind of lifestyle should be. This is much more of a mental comprehension, an intellectual endeavor, a thinking about and pondering what it really means to be

¹ Zodhiates, 697.

called a follower of Christ. It is the believer constantly reflecting on their life, always evaluating and appraising and gauging where they really are in their life. This word is used to help the believer understand that this kind of personal evaluation and assessment is an ongoing activity. It is a kind of continual self-assessment that pushes them toward excellence in the Christian life. Just as a very obvious example, every believer, as much as is humanly possible, should have a mindset that they are going to spend some meaningful time in the Word of God every day. They devote themselves to that kind of lifestyle, and eventually it becomes their walk, their lifestyle, their manner of life. So, the idea of “**living in the Spirit**” is referring to an attitude where the believer is always searching, always probing, always listening to what would be God’s best for their life. As they refine and implement those things into their life, those leadings and promptings eventually become their lifestyle that is visible for all to see. It leads to them “**walking in the Spirit**”.

One final observation from v26 is that apparently Paul recognized that within the Galatian church that there was some kind of tension and conflict between some of the believers where they had become “**conceited**” and were “**provoking one another**” and becoming envious of other believers. Obviously, the idea of living and walking in the Spirit was the antidote to those kinds of issues. However, the other side of that coin is that Paul did not want those believers who were legitimately living out their life the way that God wanted them to live to begin to become conceited about the level of spirituality that they may have achieved. I am convinced that the more spiritual a person really is, the less inclined they will ever be to parade their spirituality. That would be completely contradictory to the very meaning of spirituality, of living and walking in the Spirit. There is not one ounce of pride within the Holy Spirit, and so whatever any believer ever achieves should actually humble them rather than lift them up in pride simply because they know that it was completely due to the work of the Holy Spirit in their life and not some innate personal spirituality in themselves.

Now, what we want to begin to do is to evaluate these nine characteristics defined as the fruit of the Spirit. I doubt there is any listing in Scripture that has been studied more than these nine characteristics. They are foundational to a proper understanding of the Christian life and cannot be just casually dismissed. They are the defining attributes of character, of integrity, and of spiritual uprightness in a person’s life. These ongoing development of these attributes are the outward, visible evidences that genuine salvation has actually occurred in a person’s life. People can make all the salvific claims that they want to make – “*I joined the church, I tithe, I teach a Sunday School class, I grew up in a Christian family, I was baptized, my daddy’s a preacher*”, or “*I read my Bible every morning*”. As important as any and all of those may actually be, they simply are not a substitute for these nine qualities. These attributes are the measuring stick against which we quantify the spiritual substance of our lives. These are inward qualities that will always manifest themselves outwardly in a person’s life. I meet people all the time who claim to be a Christian, but they simply lack genuine evidence of that in their life. They are moody, independent, groveling in self-pity, always doubting God, always having time for everything other than God, making excuses for their spiritual indifference – the list is utterly endless. The problem is that these qualities are rarely if ever even evident. Each one of these qualities has a specific antonym – something that is the exact opposite of what these qualities produce. For instance, the opposite of “**kindness**” is to be callous, hard, and difficult with people. Someone who is not kind makes

relationships very difficult at best. The opposite of “**longsuffering**” is to become intolerant, impatient, and ultimately indignant with someone.

I say this with as much grace as possible, but if these attributes are not being developed in a person’s life, I doubt that person is even saved – no matter what kind of spiritual claims they may make. These spiritual qualities are the target of the Holy Spirit and they are what He is seeking to develop in every believer’s life. They are the evidence of His work – what we might call His imprint, His watermark, His DNA being imparted to the believer’s life. This is where the work of sanctification will ultimately lead the believer. In lieu of that reality, every believer needs to be performing a continual self-assessment of their life to help ensure that they are genuinely focused on allowing God to develop these qualities in their life.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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