

The Fruit of the Spirit, Part 3

Scripture: Galatians 5:16–26

Code: 48-38

Now we have been going through the book of Galatians, so I would invite you to turn in your Bible to Galatians chapter 5. We are in chapter 5 in a section from verse 16 through 25 that we titled, for obvious reasons, “Walking by the Spirit.” Walking by the Spirit. We’re talking about the Holy Spirit who lives in every believer and who directs our steps. He directs our steps both by way of biblical truth and by way of internal power.

The Bible sets the course, and the Spirit in us provides the power for us to walk obediently in that course. Walking is the picture because it’s one step at a time, putting sort of one spiritual foot in front of another, as we walk in the path of obedience to Scripture, empowered by the Holy Spirit. We have been told in verse 16 to walk by the Spirit, and so let’s begin there. I’ll read that passage down to verse 25, and then we’ll catch up to where we left off last time.

“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.”

So in the beginning, “Walk by the Spirit.” In the end, “Walk by the Spirit.” This is about walking by the Spirit. That is a command, as we have noted. It is not an easy command to fulfill because there is an immediate conflict, as we saw in verse 17. Our remaining human flesh, our remaining human nature that is still with us until we’re glorified, sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. Therein lies the conflict. These are in opposition to one another. And the Holy Spirit works to prevent us from doing the things that we please in the flesh.

So we acknowledge that walking by the Spirit is not easy, it is a battleground. In order for us to be faithful to walk by the Spirit we must apply the means of grace which the Lord has given to us: His Word, prayer, Christian fellowship – all of those kinds of things that strengthen us against the flesh.

Now we looked and saw the contrast between what the flesh produces in verses 19 to 21 and what the Spirit produces in verses 22 and 23. The things that the flesh produces mark people who have only human nature, who only operate in the flesh, who are driven by, as we read earlier, lusts and corruption. The list in verses 19 to 21 defines life in the fallen world.

Now in verses 22 and 23, we have a new life in Christ, we have the Holy Spirit in us – we’ve been

going through all of this in the last number of weeks – and the Spirit produces something very contrary to what the flesh produces: the nine virtues that constitute the fruit of the Spirit. And as I said last time, fruit is a singular word, and this is a singular complex, or combination, of virtues. If you are walking in the Spirit you get them all; they come as a group. This is a bouquet, and it's a bouquet that may start out in your Christian life as kind of a bud; and as you mature in Christ the bouquet gets larger and larger as the flowers of these virtues expand to full bloom.

This is what sanctification is. It is the presence of these virtues in ever-increasing dimensions. They are there when you walk in the Spirit as a new believer. They are there when you walk in the Spirit as a long-time believer. But the beauty of the virtues will be more rich and more manifest toward the end of the sanctifying process that it might have been at the beginning because there is so much more spiritual depth and life flooding into the beauty of these virtues.

These are things that should mark every Christian from the moment of salvation on, but they would be most lovely in those who have walked with the Lord for the longest time. They are, however, not something that you have to be mature to express. It's only the extent of that expression that goes along with your maturity. Even as a new believer, these must mark your Christian life, and will if you walk by the Spirit. If you walk in the power of the Spirit, which is essentially let the Word of Christ, the Word of God, the Scripture, dwell in you richly; and thus being filled with the Spirit, the Spirit is moving you in the path of divine revelation to the glory of God and to your own fruitfulness.

Now we said last time that these are attitudes. They're attitudes, they're not actions; and if the attitudes are there, if these attitudes are present in your life, the actions take care of themselves. Actions without attitudes, that's just a form of hypocrisy. You want to see the attitudes manifesting the action. If your life is filled with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, your actions will reflect that, because the Bible is clear about the fact that, "As a man thinks in his heart, so he is." Whatever's going on on the inside is going to show up on the outside.

So we're not so much concerned about action, although the Bible does talk a lot about behavior. But the assumption is that those behaviors can only occur in the highest and best sense when they are the product of these attitudes. So as a Christian, you must be more concerned about these attitudes than actions in themselves. That is what, in reality, delivers us from legalism. Legalism is concerned about the actions, the prescriptions, the externals, whether or not the attitudes are there. True spirituality is concerned about the attitudes, and the actions take care of themselves. A person who is exhibiting and enjoying these virtues by way of the power of the Holy Spirit will produce actions that will give glory and honor to God. The law cannot do this; you cannot do it in your own human strength, it comes by way of the Spirit and in the new nature, empowered by God.

So we looked at the start of the fruit of the Spirit. The first three: love, joy, peace. Those belong at the beginning, I think. They are sort of the pinnacle. Love is the first and foremost, the greatest of things, says Paul in 1 Corinthians, and then joy, and then peace.

And we talked last time about peace. This is the peace that we enjoy. We have peace with God, therefore we have the peace of God. We have made peace with God, the war is over. We're no longer His enemies, He's no longer our enemy. We're no longer under His wrath and judgment. We have peace with God, and therefore we enjoy the peace of God.

Philippians 4:7 you'll remember from last week: "The peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension," – it is a subjective peace that we experience and we enjoy that is incomprehensible to the world, and even in some measure to us – "will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." This peace guards us. It guards us in our most vulnerable times. It guards us when everything seems to be going wrong. It guards us when we have lost the ones we love the most, guards us when we have massive disappointment. It guards us when we have been told of terminal illness. It guards us at the loss of a life partner. It's the peace that God grants us that floods our heart through the Holy Spirit. That peace which cannot be explained becomes the guardian, becomes the security of our lives in the midst of the most profound chaos and difficulty.

Isaiah 26:3 says, "The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace, because he trusts in You." This is the peace that comes from complete trust in God, complete trust in God.

Now as we've looked at these virtues – and that's just a little bit of a recap on the third one, peace; we've looked at love, joy, and peace – as we've looked at those, we have noticed something of the nature of these virtues. And then we've looked at the example of these virtues who is always Christ, and then the command to us to exercise and to cultivate these virtues, and then finally the source of these virtues: obviously, the Holy Spirit. They come down to us from heaven.

These are divinely-granted virtues. They are defined in very unique and special ways, and yet they are not isolated from each other, and there's a lot of overlap. And that is why you have a statement at the end which is kind of an et cetera, "against such things there is no law." The "such things" idea means these are only representative of a greater list, that could be brought together, of virtues that come to the Spirit-filled believer.

If you are a Spirit-filled believer you will have no doubt about your salvation, because when, as we read in 2 Peter 1, you see these virtues manifest, that makes your calling and election sure, and you don't stumble in doubt. Furthermore, as these are manifest in your life, the people around you have to have an explanation for why you are so other-worldly. These are not things that are characteristic of our culture, particularly the culture in which we now live. When these things are characteristic of an individual, when they dominate an individual, when this beautiful bouquet of virtues manifests itself in a life, the question is, "What has brought this about?" And that is a platform on which to proclaim the gospel. If we are going to claim that Christ transforms lives, then this bouquet of virtues is the transformation on display that speaks to the powerful work of the Gospel of Christ in us.

So as we walk in the Spirit, we will manifest love and joy and peace. Number four in our list – and we'll look at the next three so we can move a little more rapidly: patience, patience. I want to stop and say a little bit about this, I don't want to just go past it, because I think the Scripture intends for us to understand what it meant by this.

There are a couple of words in Greek that could be translated "patience." One is *hupomonē*. There's a verb *menō* which means "to remain," and *hupo* means "under." The kind of patience that is exhibited when you remain under a trial. It's talking about circumstances, life circumstances. The ability to be patient in the middle of some circumstance that's very challenging and very difficult. It's kind of being able to take what comes and maintain your joy and your hope, and patiently wait for the Lord to deliver you. That's *hupomoné*.

That is not the word that is used here. The word that is used here speaks not so much of being patient in a trial, but being patient with people, being patient with people. And it's the word *makrothumia*. *Makro* in the Greek means "large," as opposed to *mikro*; or even better, "distant," "far away." *Thumia* is related to *thumos*, which is "anger." This is a person who pushes his anger far away. That's the kind of patience we're talking about, patience with people who would otherwise make you angry.

Thumos, by the way, is a word related to "anger," and there are several words in Greek for "anger." This is the one that is related to "an outburst of anger." If you are a Spirit-filled person, any outburst of anger is far, far away. It is put out of distance. Some people have called this "long-suffering" to illustrate the distance notion. It really is the idea of Scripture saying, "slow to anger," slow to anger.

Perhaps even a clearer definition would be this: Patience is restraint that does not retaliate. Patience is restraint that does not retaliate. Whatever was said to you, whatever was done to you, whatever was not done that should have been done; whatever offense was rendered against you, no matter how severe or how serious, if you're walking in the Spirit your anger is far away, it is at an almost infinite distance. You are restrained in your anger, restrained from any retaliation. Tolerant might be way to express it; but that's a little too benign. It means "to keep your anger far away."

Now this is, first of all, defined for us, and we're going to talk about a definition. It's defined for us by God Himself. There is a verse in Numbers and I'm going to read it to you, it's chapter 14 if you're taking notes, chapter 14 and verse 18. Listen to this: "The Lord is slow to anger." There is the patience being talked about here. "The Lord is slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness," – and that's the Old Testament word for "grace" – "forgiving iniquity and transgression."

So if you want to know what this patience is, it is that kind of response to an offense that is slow to anger, full of grace, forgiving the sin and the transgression. This is the one virtue in the list most closely related to forgiveness. We could talk a lot about forgiveness.

We are called to forgive. We are called to forgive seventy times seven, seventy times a day. We are called to forgive our enemies. "We are never more like God than when we forgive and love our enemies," Jesus said. If we don't forgive we won't be forgiven; He said that as well. So this is the closest expression to the virtue of forgiveness. We ought to be marked by the same kind of slowness to anger. That is, essentially, the character of one who is marked by lovingkindness and grace and an eager forgiveness.

This is true of God, we know that. There are many indications of it in the Old Testament. One other verse would suffice, to give you a location on it, and it's the Psalm 86, I think it's verse 15. Yes. "But You, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness and truth." There "slow to anger" again is connected with graciousness, mercy, and forgiveness.

So that's what we're talking about here. We're not talking about patience in a trial. We're not talking about being able to hang in there through a trial. That is a virtue, but that's a different virtue. This one is to be patient with those who have offended us; and it is most clearly demonstrated by God Himself.

Listen to Romans chapter 2, verse 4: “Do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?” We’re going to see kindness next. Here, kindness is connected to patience; and it is the patience of God that tolerates us, until we come to repentance.

So again, the assumption with this word is that there’s sin, there’s an offense, something’s wrong, somebody did something, something’s not right; and the human nature is obviously to fight back, to retaliate, to be judgmental, to be abusive, to seek harm, vengeance. That is not what the Holy Spirit produces; that is not the fruit of the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is the opposite of the deeds of the flesh, which are hatred, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, et cetera.

This is the virtue of patience that brings about forgiveness. “This is the patience of God” – Peter says in 1 Peter 3:20 – “that was exhibited in the days of Noah.” God was so patient in the days of Noah, patient with the sinful world. How patient was He? It took Noah one hundred and twenty years to build the ark; and for those hundred and twenty years he was a preacher of righteousness; and God was patient over a hundred and twenty years before He brought the judgment.

James writes in chapter 5, verse 7, “Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord.” Verse 8, “You be patient; strengthen your hearts, the coming of the Lord is near. Don’t complain against one another. Be an example of suffering and patience.” We are to be patient like God is patient. So what it means is basically to endure offenses with a heart of forgiveness, compassion, and mercy. The example, of course, is God. We’ve seen that. But certainly our Lord Jesus Christ manifested that.

Listen to the testimony of Paul in 1 Timothy 1, verse 15, “It’s a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all,” says Paul. “Yet for this reason I found mercy,” this is very definitive. “For this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost sinner, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience.” What an amazing statement. Here was not just a Pharisee, not just a legalistic Jew that God was patient with, but here was a killer of Christians God was patient with. So he, in his conversion, is a demonstration of the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ demonstrating His perfect patience.

Christ is patient with sinners. God is patient with sinners. Again, we turn to the words of Peter, 2 Peter 3:9, “The Lord is not slow about His promise.” Sometimes people think, “Well, wait a minute. The Lord promised to come. He promised to bring His kingdom. He promised to intervene in the world. Where is He? Where is He?”

Peter says, “The Lord is not slow about His promise, but is patient, not wishing for any to perish.” The reason the Lord delays His coming is not because His promise is slow, it’s because His anger is slow. It’s because He is by nature patient; and that is because He is gracious, merciful, and eager to forgive. We see that in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Peter also writes in that same chapter, 2 Peter 3, verse 15, “Regard the patience of our Lord as salvation. Regard the patience of our Lord as salvation.” If God was not patient, none of us would be alive to be saved. If God had no patience for sin, we’d all die in the womb because we were born, conceived as sinners. If God had no patience, certainly after we committed our first overt act of sin, God would be just in destroying us. But the fact that sinners live long enough to believe and be

saved is testimony to the patience of God. The patience of our Lord Jesus Christ is exhibited in our conversion, as it was in Paul.

So the Bible commands us as believers who walk in the Spirit to manifest these same virtues that belong to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Listen to Ephesians 4, verse 1: “Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience,” – and here that patience is defined – “showing tolerance for one another in love, showing tolerance for one another in love.” That’s the meaning of that patience. You are to be patient in the sense that you show tolerance to others in love.

Colossians chapter 3, we go back to this with the number of these virtues. Colossians chapter 3, verse 12: “So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience;” – and then it says regarding patience – “bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against you; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.” And then, by the way, “Put on love.” So patience is the kind of patience that offers forgiveness.

This is the kind of people we are to be. This is how you will live if you’re walking in the Spirit. You’re not vengeful, you’re not bitter, you’re not trying to get back at people, you’re not hostile, you’re not angry, you don’t have an outburst because somebody offended you. Your anger is far, far away; and your response to even the offenses of life that are sinful is gracious, merciful, loving, tolerant patience. That’s what we’re commanded to exhibit.

Even as a preacher who preaches the Word of God, I am called to exhibit patience on behalf of those to whom I speak. “Preach the word,” 2 Timothy 4:2 – “with great patience, with great patience.” That means the ability to endure the people who don’t make appropriate application of the Word of God. It takes time; we must exhibit patience.

Here’s, perhaps, the simplest command. This is 1 Thessalonians 5:14. You ready for this? “Be patient with everyone.” That’s it; be patient with everyone, everyone. Nothing else need be said. “Be patient with everyone” – except we could add – “all the time, under all circumstances.”

In Colossians 1, “Walk in a manner worthy,” – very much like Ephesians 4 – “bearing fruit in every good work, increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power,” – by the Holy Spirit, of course – “according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience.” I don’t know if you think of patience as a primary work of the Spirit of God in your life; but it is. If you don’t have patience with those who offend you and those who disrupt your direction, those who invade your life, create havoc and chaos for you, if you don’t have patience with them, you are not Christlike, and you are not manifesting the fruit of the Spirit. Your lives should be patience personified.

Where does this come from? Well, obviously it comes from the Holy Spirit. And we just read Colossians chapter 1. Paul says, “Since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and ask that you may be filled with” – and go down the list – “all patience; giving thanks to the Father.” God is the source of this patience; Christ is the example of this patience; the Holy Spirit is the dispenser of this patience.

Now I’ve said this many times and have it in a book on forgiveness, *The Freedom and Power of*

Forgiveness, that in the end all relationships that are destroyed are destroyed by a lack of forgiveness, because we can't get to the place where we forgive. The fruit of the Spirit is forgiveness that leads not to retaliation, but to patience that is gracious and merciful.

The next word that I want you to notice in Galatians, and they are very close in character, is "kindness," kindness. Patience, kindness, *chrēstotēs*. Interesting word, sometimes translated "gentleness." And you'll see that another word later is translated "gentleness," and that's because these words are so close their shades of meaning. It's not that they're hard and fast; they overlap a lot. But they're just looking at facets of virtue.

This is kindness. It essentially is "goodness of heart," goodness of heart. It's just that high level of noble virtue that seeks always to do good.

You remember the words, familiar words of Romans chapter 3, where Paul says in verse 12, "There is none who does good, there's not even one." Actually in the Greek, "There is none *chrēstotēs*. There is none doing kindness." This isn't moral good as opposed to moral evil, this is kindness. Where is kindness? Where is kindness in our culture? Where is kindness among fallen people? It's the opposite of the deeds of the flesh that we saw in the earlier verses.

There's no one doing kindness. Contrast that with Titus 3, the kindness of God our Savior: "Because of the kindness of God our Savior and His love for us, He saved us." Kindness, the goodness of heart that intends the very best for others.

Ephesians 2:7 uses this word. It tells us that God saves us by grace, raised us with Christ," – verse 6 of Ephesians 2 – "seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that" – this is the purpose – "in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." That says we were saved so that God could lavish us out of the riches of His grace with deeds of kindness forever and ever and ever and ever. This is the goodness of God. This is the kindness of God.

Again, in Colossians we see this virtue, chapter 3, verse 12: "We are the chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience." Again, the same complex of virtues. This is sometimes even translated not only "gentleness," but sometimes translated "tenderness."

It does not exclude righteous indignation over sin, it does not exclude that. That can never ever be excluded; and it isn't excluded back in Numbers 14 either, because the second half of that verse says that, "God will by no means clear the guilty." And that ultimately leads to the cross because God is kind, God is loving, God is gracious, God is merciful, God will forgive; but at the same time, He will not overlook iniquity. That then leads to the cross, where His Son is punished to satisfy His justice, so that His goodness and mercy can be extended to sinners such as we are.

Now the example of kindness is our Lord Jesus Christ. Second Corinthians 10:1 speaks of the meekness and kindness of Christ using this word. So many incidents in His life show just basic divine goodness: feeding hungry people, picking up little children into His arms and blessing them, saying to the crowd in Matthew chapter 11 those beautiful words that seems almost, I'm sure, inconsistent to one who is so utterly holy as our Lord. But these are the words: "Come to Me, all who are weary

and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon, learn from Me; I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” The Lord says, “I am gentle. I am gentle.” He is the model of this goodness, this gentleness, this tenderness.

And we then are also commanded to exhibit it. We are to be gentle as well as believers; we just saw that in Colossians 3, I won't read it again. But there's another interesting verse in Romans 11. It's verse 22: “Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness,” – listen – “if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you will also be cut off.” Whoa. If kindness doesn't mark your life you're not a believer. If kindness isn't sustained in your life you're not a believer. Believers are marked by kindness.

Titus 3:2 says, “We are to be gentle, and we are to show consideration for all men.” Gentle, showing consideration for all men. Second Timothy 2:24, “The Lord's slave must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition.”

There will always be a manifest kindness in a Spirit-filled believer. The source and power for that, as we've seen in all of these things, basically comes from heaven. But there's an interesting comment down that line in 2 Corinthians 6:6. This is just a beautiful little nugget. Paul's talking about his own life, “in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness in the Holy Spirit, in kindness in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love.” This is kindness that comes from the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gives us this, grants us this.

James defines it as part and parcel of the wisdom that is from above, that is pure, peaceable, kind, reasonable, full of mercy, good fruits, et cetera. As a believer who walks in the Spirit people should know you for your kindness, for your endearing quality, for your non-retaliatory spirit, for your willingness to push anger far, far away, no matter how you've been offended, and offer people grace and mercy and forgiveness.

There's a third virtue in this little trio – and we'll close with that one. “Goodness” is it, goodness, verse 22: *agathōsunē*. Goodness was a deep-down virtue of moral sweetness, moral excellence; and we can't even find the word in secular Greek sources. It sort of was coined by believers as a way to express a kind of goodness that was deeper than anything the world experienced. It usually is compared with righteousness; and that's really helpful to kind of get the meaning of it.

In Ephesians chapter 5 we read in verse 9, “The fruit of the Light” – the Light, capital “L,” the divine Light, the heavenly presence our Lord. “The fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth.” So there “goodness” is connected to “righteousness.” And I think that's very helpful, because righteousness can tend to be the hard edge. Righteousness can tend to be the stern aspect of Christian character, right? You are righteous: you have righteous standards, you have righteous convictions, you know what is right, you expect people to do what is right, you uphold the standard of what is right, you defend what is right. That is the sterner aspect of Christian character.

But the backside of that – and that's what Light produces, according to Ephesians 5:9 – the backside of that righteousness is goodness. That's the soft side of your convictions. That's the kindlier expression of your convictions. It's right to have those convictions, it's right to hold those convictions,

it's right not to compromise those convictions, but it's also right to be full of goodness so those convictions don't wind up bashing people.

Listen to Romans 15:14; this is one of the sweetest commendations of any congregation in the New Testament: "Concerning you, my brethren, I myself also am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness." I think that's something I can say it to you as a congregation. "I am convinced that you yourselves are full of goodness."

You have strong convictions, very strong convictions. You know what's right, you believe what's right, you hold those convictions, you live those convictions, you battle for those convictions, you proclaim those convictions. But there's a kindly side of your convictions, "that you are filled with all goodness." That is that your convictions have a tenderness connected to them.

The Greek in that verse in Romans 15, "you yourselves are full of goodness," it's just as rich as it can get. "You yourselves," kind of doubling down on, "This is really you not only have goodness, you're full of this kind of goodness." Very strong. And the reason, he goes on to say, is also very strong language, "having already been filled with all knowledge." When you have the full knowledge, the full understanding of the Word of God, when you have the full picture, it doesn't just make hard-nosed convictions, it produces strong, immovable convictions that have a soft side of goodness. Look, you don't have convictions stronger than God, right? And yet the goodness of the Lord extends to the highest heavens.

Nehemiah 9 talks about His great goodness. David said in Psalm 23, "Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." His goodness will go on forever and ever and ever. And again David says in Psalm 27, verse 13, "I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Life would have been too much for me if I didn't believe the goodness of the Lord would be dispensed."

God is both righteous and good; and this goodness is what brings mercy to bear. This is the kind of goodness that Joseph had. Joseph was a good man, Matthew 1:19, he was a righteous man, and he found out that his wife was pregnant with a child, and he was devastated because he knew her character. He couldn't figure out how this could have happened, not yet understanding that it was done by the Holy Spirit. He didn't know what to do. He was a righteous man, so he had to do what was righteous.

He could have stoned her; that would have had Old Testament support. He could have publicly shamed her; that would have had Old Testament support. But instead, he planned to put her away to cancel the contract of engagement, even though they hadn't ever come together in marriage, cancel the engagement contract privately. This is because his righteousness was tempered with his goodness. And this is how it is with God. You can be thankful for that, right, that He is perfectly righteous, but His righteousness is tempered with His goodness.

This is the example that Christ gives to us. They said of Christ in John 7:12, "He's a good man. He's a good man." He was the man who came into the temple and threw them out at the beginning and end of His ministry. His message was severe regarding judgment. But there was a goodness in Him, and they could see, and said so: "He is a good man."

I love the passage in Isaiah 42 that our Lord quotes in Matthew 12: “Behold, My Servant whom I have chosen; My Beloved in whom My soul is well-pleased; I will put My Spirit upon Him,” the messianic prophecy. Christ will, of course, be led by, empowered by the Holy Spirit. “He’ll proclaim justice to the Gentiles. He will not quarrel, nor cry out; nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets.” And then I love this verse 20: “A battered reed He will not break off, and a smoldering wick He will not put out.” He’s coming as a conqueror. He’s coming to lead justice to victory. He’s coming to take over the world. He is the Lord of lords, the King of kings, the Conqueror of conquerors.

But it says, “A battered reed He will not break off.” People used to play tunes on reeds. They could play a reed. Shepherds are well-known to be playing little flutes made out of reeds. Eventually saliva or just time would make the reed useless. It would get soft and it couldn’t be played. And so, you might break the reed and break the little flute and throw it away. And wicks would eventually run down and be useless, and when they were still just barely flickering get thrown away.

Messiah, when He comes, will not take that bruised reed and break it and discard it. He will not take that flickering light and extinguish it and throw it away. There’s a goodness about Him, and Jesus was speaking of Himself. Goodness comes along with righteousness and softens the convictions.

I’ve said this many times through the years that there are people I know who think that because they only hear me preach; they don’t come to this church, they haven’t been here. This is particularly true often with the Shepherds’ Conference. They hear me preach, and it’s a lot of convictions and a lot of strong Bible teaching, and they’re shocked when they come and spend a week and find out there’s so much goodness here. They actually find out that you’re living out Romans 15:14, you’re full; you yourselves are full of goodness, and it spills over on them. And it’s a new experience for many people to see the strength of those convictions backed up by the love of that goodness. But that’s how it has to be, and that’s what the Holy Spirit produces.

And we’re commanded to this goodness. It’s not as if it’s optional, we’re commanded to demonstrate this. Galatians 6:10, “So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people. Do good to all people, especially to those who are of the household of the faith,” especially to fellow believers. Do good to everyone, but especially fellow believers.

Listen to 1 Thessalonians 5:15, “See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always, always seek after that which is good for one another and for all people.” There it is again, “for one another and for all people.” For us as the church and for all people outside, we are to be known by our goodness, our goodness, our large-heartedness, our tenderness, our kindness, our patience. Beautiful virtues, wonderful virtues.

Second Thessalonians, one final passage, chapter 1. Here’s the prayer of Paul in verse 11: “To this end also we pray for you always, this is what I pray, that our God will count you worthy of your calling,” – that’s your calling to salvation – “and fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power.” So that’s the source, that’s the power source: God.

Paul says, “I pray always for you, that our God will fulfill every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power.” Here is the apostle praying to God for your goodness, for my goodness, for the goodness of the people of God. It’s supplied by heaven through the presence of the Holy Spirit.

And what's the end of all this? Where's this all going? Verse 12 of 2 Thessalonians 1, "so that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ will be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ."

What's this all about? Why are we to manifest love, joy, peace? Why? Why are we to be characterized by these virtues of patience, kindness, and goodness? "So that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you." You're putting Christ on display, that's what you're doing. You're showing a transformed life.

This is not how people live in the world. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness – that's not our culture. Our culture has been defined already: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, strife, jealousy, anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and a lot others. That's the society.

Lives like this are a demonstration of the power of the gospel; they bring glory to our Lord. And that's the reason He calls on us to live walking in the Spirit. Let me read it to you again: "so that the name of our Lord Jesus will be glorified in you and you in Him." We'll look at the final ones next time.

Father, we thank You for meeting with us this morning, as You always do when Your people gather. Thank You for being present and powerfully revealing Yourself through Your Word. Thank You for the fellowship. Thank You for the encouragement, the joy, the blessing, the conviction, the reminders.

We go back to what we read from Peter: "As long as I'm in this body I will continue to remind you of these things, so that even when I am not around you will remember them." How important it is for us to manifest these virtuous lives for our own usefulness, for our own fruitfulness, and for the sake of Your glory. Your glory is at stake; it's bound up in us. And as we live lives manifesting the beauty of the fruit of the Spirit, You are glorified. That's our desire in all that we do: to bring you glory. Enable us to do that.

And, Lord, for those who are here who do not know Christ as Savior, who do not believe in Him, who have not come to the end of themselves, have not felt the full weight of their sin and the full dread of eternal hell, we pray, Lord, that even this hour You would open their hearts to the gospel, to the Savior, to the cross and the resurrection, to the forgiveness of sin and the hope of eternal life. And may they bow the knee to the Savior.

Thank You that You are righteous; and that is why there had to be a punishment. But You are good; and that is why there was a Savior to be punished in our place. May we be marked by these virtues, and thus demonstrate that we are Your children because we bear Your marks. That's our prayer in Christ's name. Amen.

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