

The Fruit of the Spirit, Part 4

Scripture: Galatians 5:16–26

Code: 48-39

We're looking at Galatians 5 and verses 16 to 25. Let me read that passage to you again. Paul is writing to believers, obviously to those in Galatia, and to all believers and to us. "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," – or drugs – "enmities," – or hatred – "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." Called to walk by the Spirit in verse 16, is repeated at the end in verse 25, and what is in-between explains to us the importance and urgency of obeying the command to walk by the Spirit.

As I was thinking about the message this morning and meditating on what I might say, for some reason my mind went back to a trip a number of years ago to India, one of the most amazing trips of my life, to see life in that massive country, which has been so strongly influenced by Hinduism. Millions of people I found, when I was there with our family, were living in the street, and I mean actually living in the street, by the millions. They were living in the gutters essentially; and down the gutters was flowing on a daily basis open sewage.

You can't reproduce in any picture of India the smell. It is probably the most memorable part of a trip to that land. The stench is enough to create a gagging reflex. It was the worst desperate human condition of filth and corruption in the streets that I had ever experienced, unforgettable. Even to this day the slums of India, which we also saw, are buried in filth and garbage.

As I was thinking about that I honestly began to see our own culture that way, our own society that way, not in a physical sense, not in a material sense, but in a moral sense, in a spiritual sense. Life in our society is the worst that I have ever seen. It is morally like the flowing sewage of India. Sewage of open sin runs freely through the streets of our society through every level of discourse and life. We're up to our knees in the filth of sin and corruption. Moral sewage once contained underground now has broken out and runs openly everywhere.

I can remember a time in my life when moral sewage was piped underground. It was less likely to be seen, the odor less likely to be experienced. Sinners had a certain kind of humility about their transgressions. But that's all gone, and the moral sewage once contained underground in a kind of a moral cover, superficial at best, but still a moral cover, has now broken out everywhere. Proud sinners revel in their transgression, they revel in their depravity.

In fact, it may be the most defining thing about them to celebrate their wretchedness. The lust of the flesh, the desires of the flesh identified in our passage in verses 19 to 21 are everywhere: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities or hatred, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. All of this is what the flesh produces.

And admittedly at certain times and places in history there's a kind of civility. There's a kind of expectation of a quality of life that pushes those things down a little bit underground that has long since gone away, and now the open sewage of the sins of our culture runs in the streets. We see it; we experience it; we can't avoid it.

And it's not just that our society is defined by that, there's a compounding reality, and that is explained in Romans chapter 1, because in Romans chapter 1 we read about the judgment of God, and it's the judgment of God on nations, on people that reject Him. Those who know God but don't glorify Him as God, those who turn their back on the knowledge of God will experience the judgment of God, the wrath of God. It says, "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against the ungodliness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness."

And what does that look like? What does it look like when God unleashes that judgment? Well, verse 24 uses legal language. It says, "God gave them over." That's a legal term to hand over a guilty criminal to his sentence. That's literally a legal expression. God in an act of judgment legally turns over a culture to, it says in verse 24, "the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them."

When God judges a nation that rejects the knowledge of Him, that knows God and glorifies Him not as God – as is true in our Western culture – when God unleashes judgment the first thing that will happen is the lusts of the heart to impurity will begin to dominate, and then the bodies will follow and be dishonored. You will have a sexual revolution.

The second thing that happens in verse 26, "God gave them over," – again the legal term; God turns the guilty over as an act of sentencing them, turns them over to the punishment – "gave them over to degrading passion;" – not just passion, but degrading passion, and it's described – "women exchange the natural function for that which is unnatural, in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error." This is homosexuality. After the sexual revolution comes the homosexual revolution: women with women in an unnatural way; men with men, their desire burning toward one another committing indecent acts.

But the third expression of this text with regard to the judgment of God is that "God gave them over to a depraved mind," and we've talked about that, that the third step, not only a sexual revolution, a homosexual revolution, but a depraved mind. That means the mind doesn't function. That's when a kind of insanity prevails, which is demonstrated clearly in the fact that now we're not allowed to say a man is a man and a woman is a woman. That is insanity; that is a depraved mind.

And out of that and as a result of all of this, the text of Romans 1 says, "God gave them over to a depraved mind" – or a reprobate mind, a nonfunctioning mind – "to do the things which are not proper, being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder strife,

deceit, malice; they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.”

So you can add to the corruption of the society the judgment of God, which then escalates the corruption. God turns us over to a sexual revolution, a homosexual revolution, and then to a nonfunctioning mind; and in that situation all kinds of filth breaks loose in society. And we know because of our Christian heritage, we know what the Bible says the result of it is going to be; and in spite of what we know, we applaud the people who behave in these ways. We are a corrupt society. We are doubly corrupt by God pulling back and letting us plunge deeper into that corruption.

Sensible people – and I know that would include you – sensible people fear for the future of their children. They fear for the future of their grandchildren. The desires of the flesh now have a kind of power never before seen because of the development of electronic media that spreads evil like it's never been possible to spread it across the globe. And inherent in that evil is destruction: self-destruction and the destruction of others. There has never been in my lifetime a culture so bent on destruction, destroying themselves and along the way, destroying everybody around them who doesn't give them the due they think they deserve.

Living in a destructive society is self-destructive, and mutually destructive society is a tough place to survive. So we can ask the question, “How do we as Christians, how do we as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, how do we as slaves of our Lord and Master, how do we as saints – holy ones, as we saw earlier in our study here – how do we escape the pollution? Can we escape the pollution? We are actually knee-deep in corruption. Can we escape? Can we live above the moral sewage that's all around us?” And, of course, the answer is yes. This isn't the first society that went through this kind of cycle, this kind of judgment.

But the question then follows, “If we can, how can we? How is it possible for us to live holy lives in an unholy world? How can we be light shining in the darkness? How can we escape the corruption that is in the world?” to borrow biblical language.

Religion comes along, and religion recognizes some of this, and religion says, “Be a better person. Be a better person. Be a better person and you'll make a better world.” As you heard from the guy who gave the speech at the royal wedding, “Fill the world with love. That's the answer to everything; go love everybody.” It's a nice sentiment, it's just impossible. That's a human work that can't rise above a fallen human heart that by nature is filled with hate and selfishness and pride. It's a nice sentiment, it's just not possible.

But religion says, “Live a better life, be a better person, and God will accept you.” This religion, or any other religion, depends on a certain degree of human achievement, a certain degree of religious activity, and a certain degree of self-styled morality to sort of escape the morass of evil that engulfs us. The problem is false religion is false religion, and it can't change the hearts of any of its people, either its leaders or its followers. And so they're even finding it impossible to be the person that they think they need to be to please God.

Jesus unmasked that with the Pharisees, didn't He? They thought they were white and pure before

God, but Jesus said, "You're whitewashed tombs. On the outside you're painted white, on the inside you're wretched with dead men's bones."

But religion, false religion, always offers the simple answer: "Be better people." This is, of course, what defined New Testament Judaism. The Jews believed they needed to be better people, and that meant adhering to the law of God. Now they couldn't be better people on the inside on their own, so they were sort of left with trying to please God based on the outside. Those things that were ceremonial duties like circumcision and adherence to certain rituals and ceremonies in Judaism, those are the things they could do on the outside; and by doing those things they believed that they were making themselves better people and God would accept them.

The problem is the hearts aren't changed by any form of religious legalism, including Judaism. So in their hearts was nothing but the flesh, and out of their flesh came the same things: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. And where all of that resided there were folks who had no part in the kingdom of God.

But these Jews were clinging to the law with a tenacity that didn't let them let go. Some of these Jews had come to believe that Jesus was the Messiah, but they still couldn't let go of the law. They couldn't accept that salvation was by faith alone, they believed that it was by faith in Jesus plus keeping the ordinances, plus keeping the ceremonies, keeping the rituals, including circumcision and the other things prescribed in the Old Testament law of Moses.

These false teachers dogged the steps of the gospel preachers in the New Testament, particularly the apostle Paul. Paul went to a Gentile area like Galatia, preached the gospel to Gentiles and, of course, Jews as well, and he told them salvation, forgiveness of sin, eternal life, a place in the kingdom is by faith alone, not by works. They believed, they were forgiven, they were saved, they were given new life, they were born again, they were justified, they were in the process of being sanctified, and they were headed for eternal glory.

But along came these Jewish false teachers called Judaizers because they wanted to declare that no one could go from paganism to Christianity. You had to go from paganism to Judaism to Christianity. You couldn't go from worshiping a rock or worshiping Caesar to worshiping God in Christ. You couldn't go that way, you had to go through Judaism; and they were called Judaizers because they were saying the only salvation comes through going the way of the law. And what they meant by that is you must obey the law. It's specifically circumcision, which was the symbol of adherence to external legal prescriptions, and the other externals.

They got into the Gentile churches, they confused these Gentile churches. They said salvation by faith is not salvation at all, it's faith plus keeping the law. Paul has to attack that, he has to address that. They also said, "Look, if you say you're a Christian, all the more reason you need to keep the law. The law is necessary not only for salvation, but it's necessary for sanctification." So they were pushing these Gentiles into an external form of Judaism as necessary for their salvation and their sanctification.

Paul writes his letter to the Galatians to undo that. And in the opening four chapters he talks about salvation being by faith alone, and he says in chapter 1 that if you add works to it, chapter 1, verse 6, you have basically invented a different gospel, "which is not really another;" – verse 7 – "only there

are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.”

He then pronounces judgment on them, double judgment: “If we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed!” Paul goes on to say, “Salvation is by faith and faith alone. Anybody who preaches anything other than that is damned.” So he uses the first four chapters basically to answer the idea of works added to faith and salvation.

And then in chapter 5 he addresses the issue of the role of works, deeds of the flesh in regard to sanctification. He asks the question back in chapter 3, verse 3, “Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?” The idea again, the Judaizers were saying, “Look, you’ve got to do all these external things in order not only to be saved, but to be sanctified as well. You have to keep the external laws of Moses.”

But Paul’s message was that you’ve been set free from all of that. Chapter 5, verse 1, “It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm, do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. Don’t go back to the law, don’t go back. You are free. You are free in Christ.” Verse 13 of chapter 5, “You were called to freedom, brothers. You were called to freedom.”

Now the Jews had a very difficult time with this. And the Judaizers are described this way in Galatians 2:4, “False brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our freedom which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage.” “Freedom” was the word that Judaizers couldn’t tolerate. But in Christ you are free from the external rites and rituals of the Mosaic Law. In Christ you are free also from an accusing conscience, free from the tyranny of a legal system, free from condemnation, free from pressure and frustration in trying to do the impossible. This is true freedom. It’s freedom to do what is right. Paul makes that clear in chapter 5, verse 13: “You were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh.” It’s not freedom to do what is wrong, it is freedom to do what is right through love to serve one another.

So here’s the issue. These Jewish teachers came holding tenaciously to Old Testament ritual regulations, particularly circumcision, which is mentioned four times in chapter 5 by the time you get to verse 11. They were so deeply concerned with the need to obey the law. They themselves had not escaped the bondage of the law, they were enslaved by it. They couldn’t tolerate a message of freedom. They had spent their whole life trying to earn their way with God by keeping the law, and now freedom in Christ was a stumbling block to them. They believed that the law was the divine means to restrain sin, to produce righteousness, to honor God, and to escape judgment. To them Paul was a heretic. To them he was a lawless libertine.

And so Paul answers all these accusations, and as I said, in the first four chapters, he speaks to the issue of salvation by faith alone apart from works of the law. And in chapter 5 he addresses the issue of sanctification apart from the law. Verse 5 sums up his view: “We through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness.” As we pursue righteousness we do it through the Spirit by faith not by the law. So salvation is by faith alone, and sanctification is by faith alone, not some external rules and rituals.

Now as we come to our passage, that gets us right there. The Jews are going to say, “How are you

then going to do what honors God? How are you then going to please God? How are you going to escape judgment if you don't adhere to the law?" Answer, verse 16: "Walk by the Spirit. Walk by the Spirit." Verse 18: "If you're led by the Spirit, you're not under the law." Verse 25: "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit." This is Paul's answer. This is how you live your life as a Christian. This is the path of sanctification: walk by the Spirit.

We have looked at this now, we saw that as a command: "Walk by the Spirit." It's a command in verse 16, it's a command in verse 25. We saw the fact that there is a conflict; it's not easy, because our remaining human flesh fights against the Holy Spirit. The Spirit fights against the flesh to keep us from doing what our flesh wants. There is a stark contrast however between what the flesh wants and does, and what the Spirit wants and does; and we're looking at that in verses 19 to 23. The flesh can only produce what's listed here.

This is what human effort does. This is what human effort does. Romans 3, "There's none righteous, no not one; there's none that does good." There's none that can escape the corruption in the world. They're not all as bad as they could be. They're not all as bad as the worst of them. But this is where they live because this is what the flesh produces. That's why the world is the way it is. That's why society is the way it is. And then you double up on that by God judging us and pulling back restraint; and you understand that what we're living in is a world that is acting exactly like fallen sinners should act, without restraint.

But on the other hand, we as believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and verse 22 and 23 says, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness actually, and self-control." This is very different than the world, very different.

This is how the church is to display gospel power in the world. We're to be the people who show the stark contrast. While all the world is living out the deeds of the flesh because that's all they're capable of, we are to be the living, shining, bright lights of the glorious reality that God the Spirit is in us manifesting divine attributes through us. This is challenging for us, very challenging. First of all, it's challenging because as the world looks at Christianity it can't tell a true Christian from a fake one, it can't tell a true institution of Christianity from a fake one. It's horribly confusing for the world looking at so-called Christians because they see everything.

And you would never get a collection of nonbelievers together and say, "Would you please describe Christians as you see them in the world?" and they would give you this list of nine virtues. I don't think so. They would pull out all the ugly stuff, all the stuff that's in the other list that characteristic of so-called Christians, to justify their unbelief. So it's very challenging, because the church, the true church, has to be found; and it's not immediately visible, because there are so many false Christians mucking up the system.

I was thinking the other day and I mentioned this to someone: one of the most damaging things that's going on in Christianity today is surveys, whether it's a Pew survey, or Barna survey, or any other survey. You know, you read those surveys and you read fifty-one percent of Christians don't think Jesus is the only way, seventy percent of Christians don't believe in hell, sixty-some percent, or whatever the number is, don't believe that the Bible is without error, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

And you might say, "Well, isn't that kind of helpful to find out that there are people who call themselves Christians who don't believe that?" My answer is, "Absolutely not, that's not helpful." In the first place, I don't know who they're talking to, I don't know what the questions are, but I do know what the affect is. Here's the affect: they are creating a new kind of Christianity that tolerates everything.

"Oh, half Christians don't believe Jesus is the only way; I can be a Christian. If forty-five percent of the Christians believe a homosexual lifestyle is fine and same-sex marriage is fine, then I can be a Christian. If Christians don't believe the Bible is without error, I can be a Christian. If most Christian don't believe there's an eternal lake of fire, I can be a Christian." So the default position, the stupid outcome of their efforts is to create a kind of Christianity that is fake. They need to stop doing that, because now we have a Christianity into which anybody can fit.

So the challenge is how do you even find the real Christians? But I would say to you, when you do find them they'd better look like this. When you do find them, they'd better look like this. They ought to be known by the manifestation of these fruit. You can't see attitudes other than in words and deeds; but those ought to be the words and deeds that Christians manifest.

Now notice it's singular; it's one fruit, but it has many qualities. You could say it's one bouquet with many beautiful colors, or one flower with many petals. This is the fruit. If you're walking in the Spirit, if you're walking faithfully in the Spirit, being filled with the Spirit and controlled by the Spirit, which means you're walking under His power in obedience to the Word of God, this is what your life is like. And this isn't a list that you can choose from, this is the full picture. When you're walking in the Spirit this is the picture. It's not that this week you work on one and next week you'll try out another. They're all there when the Spirit is filling you and you're walking in the Spirit.

These spiritual excellencies mark true Christians. The bouquet of precious virtues are the distinguishing characteristics of those who have been regenerated, reborn, and in whom the Holy Spirit lives. We looked at these and we considered, first of all, their nature. The simple way to express their nature is they're all attributes of God, they're all characteristic of God: they all have a heavenly quality, they're all godlike virtues. Now you might argue that, perhaps, meekness or humility is not a godlike virtue; but the word that is used for "meekness" here has the idea of gentleness that's heavily-weighted in that. And certainly gentleness is characteristic of God; shows up in His mercy and His grace toward us.

So the first thing we saw is these things are all characteristics of God. They are all God attributes. Now that the Holy Spirit of God lives in us, the Spirit of God manifests then these attributes through us.

Now I would agree that these are familiar words in the world. If you go into the Hallmark store you're going to find love, joy, peace, and kindness, and goodness, and all of that. But those are very, very superficial facsimiles of the real virtue. There is a kind of love that people in the world have. There is a kind of joy and a kind of peace and a kind of patience and so forth, but they are sort of meager, weak imitations of the real thing. The kind of love, joy, peace, et cetera, that we have is inexplicable. It's the virtue that passes understanding. And our lives as we walk in the Spirit, that is as obeying the Word of God, our lives will show these things.

And we've looked at love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness; now let me wrap up with just the last three, three final graces. Like the others, they are winsome, lovely virtues. The first one for this morning is the last one in verse 22: faithfulness. It's the Greek word for "faith," or "faithfulness," and here it means "faithfulness." If you're walking in the Spirit you're going to manifest faithfulness. What does that mean? Loyalty or fidelity to your word. Truthfulness, trustworthiness, honesty – that's what we're talking about.

Romans 3:3 speaks of the faithfulness of God. Lamentations 3:22 and 23, "It is of the Lord's mercies that we're not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Thy faithfulness." God is faithful, 1 Corinthians 1:9, 1 Corinthians 10:13, God is faithful. Psalm 36:5, "The faithfulness of God reaches to the clouds." Psalm 89:33, "Nevertheless My lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor allow My faithfulness to fail." That is truthfulness, trustworthiness, honesty, integrity. It's translated "proof" in Acts 17:31, "God made a promise and He offered proof in that He raised Jesus from the dead."

This is essential as a virtue in a Spirit-filled life that you speak the truth, that you are true to your word, true to your promise. This is basic integrity. A Spirit-filled believer speaks the truth, lives the truth, can be trusted, is honest, steadfast, unwavering in loyalty to that which is true and right and good. What about your words? What about your promises? What about your confessions and testimonies? Are they true? Are you someone marked by the truth? If you're walking in the Spirit you are.

It is an attribute of God, God who is truth and God who cannot lie, God who is the truth. And the example, a second point we made in each of these, is Christ: "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Second Thessalonians 3:3 says, "The Lord is faithful." In Revelation 1:5, 3:14 and 19:11, the Lord Jesus Christ presented as the faithful and true One, the faithful and true One. It is an attribute of God who is true and cannot lie. It is manifest in Christ who is the faithful and true One.

It is commanded of us, 1 Corinthians 4:2, "It's required of stewards that a man be found faithful." All of us are stewards of the truth of God, stewards of the gospel; and faithfulness is required of us. It is required of a man of God, 1 Timothy 6, that he be faithful, that he be faithful. We speak truth, we live truth, we uphold truth, it says in Titus 2:10, "showing all good faithfulness so that they will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect." You want people to adorn the doctrine of God, you want people to think well of God, be faithful to truth, His truth, the truth which He has declared and revealed in Scripture. And the truth that comes out of your own mouth. Speak the truth; live the truth; tell the truth.

Listen to 2 Timothy 2:22, "Flee youthful lusts, pursue righteousness, faithfulness, love and peace, with all those who call upon the Lord from a pure heart. Again, love and peace are there, along with faithfulness. We're commanded to be faithful. That means loyal to the truth: the truth of God, the truth of those very things that we declare in our own lives.

Where does the power come for this? It's the Holy Spirit. It says about Stephen in Acts 6:5 that he was full of faith and the Holy Spirit. And it's really full of faithfulness and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the source of faithfulness. Faithfulness and the Holy Spirit go together, that's why faithfulness is a fruit of the Spirit.

In your flesh you're not going to be faithful. In your flesh you're not going to be trustworthy, you're not going to be loyal, you're not going to be truthful, you're not going to have a deep honesty, a pervasive honesty. But in the power of the Spirit He produces that in you and through you, and it's manifest.

The second one I want you to notice begins verse 23. It's translated in the NAS as "gentleness." It's actually better translated "meekness." Meekness, *prautēs* is the Greek word. It's humility with kind of a gentle edge. And sometimes it's elsewhere also translated "gentleness," sometimes "meekness." But here is the virtue: the virtue is humility. It appears with lowliness and being humble as well as being gentle.

You see this same word in verse 1 of chapter 6 when it says, "If anyone's caught in a trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of *prautēs*," humility or gentleness. It's humility that is gentle. And humility by its nature is gentle. Humility doesn't ride over people, it doesn't run roughshod over people, even people who are struggling with sin; it treats them with a kind of meek, gentle character. So we are to be marked with humility.

Obviously we know what humility is. But from a biblical standpoint – I'm not talking psychologically about it, this is how it shows up in the Bible – this word is used to refer to being submissive to the will of God, being submissive to the will of God. That's humility: "Humble yourselves, and God will lift you up."

It also is used, biblically speaking, to refer to submission to the Word of God, not just the will of God, like the meek in Matthew 5:5, but the Word of God. In James chapter 1, verse 21, it says, "Putting aside all filthiness, all that remains of wickedness, in humility, *prautēs*, receive the word implanted, receive the word." So this is a humility that allows us to submit to the will of God and the Word of God.

But it even goes beyond that to the people around us, because in Titus 3:2 it is translated this way: "showing consideration to all men," and it's translated "consideration." And that's where its gentleness aspect comes out. The example is Christ who said, "Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly, and you will find rest for your souls."

Second Corinthians 10:1 speaks of the meekness and gentleness of Christ. He is the model. He is the model of one who humbled Himself. He said in Matthew 11, "I am meek and lowly in heart." Ephesians 4, that very familiar and wonderful text of Scripture that talks about walking worthy, says, "Walk in a manner worthy of the calling which you've been called," – verse 2 – "with all humility and gentleness." It pulls those two together, as well as other virtues.

So God is the one who defines this. It is an attribute of His nature, as He as God humbled Himself to become man. Christ is the example of that. Philippians 2, He took on the form of a slave, went all the way to the cross; that was His humbling. It's commanded of us to be humble.

First Peter chapter 3, and this is an important verse, verse 15: "Sanctify Christ" – set Christ apart – "as Lord in your hearts, always be ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness" – the same word – "and reverence." We even proclaim the gospel with a meekness and a gentleness.

This is the work of the blessed Holy Spirit in us; God is the source, God is the definer of it, Christ is the model. We're commanded to be meek and gentle. And the Holy Spirit empowers us, producing that in us as part of His fruit.

One last one: self-control, self-control. We could talk a lot about that obviously, *egkrateia*, very rare in the New Testament. It means "the power to keep your sin in check," the power to keep your sin in check, "the power to restrain your sin in thought, in word, in deed." God has perfect self-control, He's the definition of self-control.

Malachi 3:6, "I am the Lord, I change not." He never sins, He cannot sin. He is absolute eternal holy perfection, and we are not. That is why when Paul was evangelizing Felix in Acts 24 he spoke to him of righteousness, giving the gospel, righteousness, that God had a righteous standard, self-control. And at that point he talked about how obviously Felix could not control himself to live according to God's righteousness. And then he talked to him about judgment.

That's how you present the gospel. You start with righteousness, you expose sin in the category of the lack of self-control, and then you talk about judgment. And when the sinner knows the weight of his sin because he has no self-control, and how far short he falls of the righteous standard of God, you have him hanging over hell; and at that point you bring the gospel of grace and forgiveness.

Self-control is an attribute of God. Again, it's a very rare word, even in the New Testament just a couple of places it's used. Second Peter 1 says, "As believers add to your faith moral excellence, knowledge; add to your knowledge self-control, self-control." Get ahold of yourself. Get a grip on yourself.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians, "I've beat my body into submission, lest in ministering to others I've become a castaway." It's the power to be consistent. It's the power to be virtuous. It's the power over your corruption that still remains even in us. The example is Christ: holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, pure, sinless. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, forever. We are commanded to this.

Add to your faith – I already it, 2 Peter 1 – self-control Elders are to be self-controlled, Titus 1. Mature Christian men who teach younger men, Titus 2, are to be self-controlled. Where's the power for this? The power comes from the Holy Spirit, it's a fruit of the Spirit.

So what does your life look like if you're walking by the Spirit? It is a life manifestly faithful, truthful, trustworthy. It is a life where meekness, humility, and gentleness are manifest, and a life where self – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life – self-will and sin is under control, as well as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness. They all come together.

Verse 23 closes with this statement: "against such things there is no law." Maybe there's a little sarcasm in that for the legalists. There's no law against such virtue. You that are so worried about law, there's no law against that. Furthermore, the law is not able to produce that kind of virtue. The law can't produce that kind of virtue. The law can't restrain the deeds of the flesh. Virtue can't be produced by the law. And certainly the Lord would never forbid these things.

So there's no law against them, and there's no way a law could enable them. The only way these become reality is by walking by the Spirit. And the Spirit, God in us, produces these attributes through us. So we see here this dramatic contrast; and this is how we are to shine as lights in the world in this dark, dark, polluted world. Those of us who are the true church, true believers, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, need to be manifest, visible by these graces.

Final word. We have seen the command to walk, we've seen the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit, we've seen the contrast between the deeds of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit. The final conclusion comes then in the final two verse. This is the conclusion.

First, a summary of God's part, great news: "Now those who belong to Christ Jesus" – that would be all true believers – "those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." Is that good news?

I don't want to hear, "I tried, but I can't do it. This is who I am. I can't do it, you're going to have to accept me, this is who I am." If you're not a believer, that's right. But if you are a believer, that's not right. That is not who you are, that is who you were: "Such were some of you." But you're not.

"If you belong to Christ Jesus you have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." That is a very strong statement of a past act. It's already happened, once for all action in the aorist tense. You were crucified with Christ, you died in Him, and with that death was the execution of the affections and the lusts and passions and longings that totally dominated your life. A deathblow has been delivered to passion and desire. Yes, it's still present until our salvation is complete, but it's not sovereign, it's not in charge, it's not an excuse, because your passions and desires have been crucified when the flesh was crucified.

When did that happen? At your salvation. Christ died for you on the cross. The application of that death came to you at your salvation. "You are now a new creation; old things have passed away, and all things new have come." That's God's part; He's done His part.

You can walk by the Spirit now. You can overcome the flesh. You can live a truly righteous life. You can, and you must, verse 25: "Since we live by the Spirit," – since the Spirit is in us – "let us also walk by the Spirit." God did His part. He killed the sovereignty of your flesh. Now you do your part and walk by the Spirit consistent with His will and power as revealed in Scripture.

I close with Colossians 1, verse 10, "so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light." That's a lot to unpack.

Walk worthy of the Lord. You can; you must. Please Him in all respects. Bear fruit in every good work. Increase in the knowledge of God, and you will be strengthened with all heavenly power according to His glorious might, and you will attain steadfastness and endurance, and joyously live a life of gratitude to God who brought you out of darkness into light.

Walk. The final word: "Walk by the Spirit," the end of verse 25. Different word for "walk." *Peripateō*

was used in verse 16; just a word for “walk.” This is *stoicheō*. It’s a military word: “march,” march, one thing after another, one thing after another. March in step with the Holy Spirit and you will see this fruit in your life, and you will be a shining light in a dark, polluted world.

Father, thank You for giving us the time this morning and opportunity, and pouring into our minds and hearts this divine truth in this most important portion of Holy Scripture. Thank You for the lives that You’ve transformed here, for the miracles; they are everywhere, the miracle of regeneration that has been wrought. We rejoice, we rejoice with overwhelming thanksgiving. We are to be marked by thankfulness, and certainly we understand why. We who deserve nothing have been given everything. Now may we walk in this world so that our testimony can be seen, so that men will see our lives and glorify You our Father in heaven, we pray in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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