

## The Fruit of the Spirit, Part 1

Scripture: Galatians 5:16–26

Code: 48-36

We want to come back to Galatians chapter 5, Galatians chapter 5 for another look at walking by the Spirit, walking by the Spirit. We've slowed down a little bit here, and that's justified, because this is so very foundational to our Christian lives. Chapter 5 and verse 16 – we'll read down through verse 25 – begins and ends with the command to walk by the Spirit.

Verse 16 says, “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're not under the law. Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery,” – can relate to drugs as well, *pharmakeia* is the word – “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.”

Now we're fairly deeply into this portion of Scripture, but I wanted to read it to all just to set it in your mind. There's a command in verse 16 that's repeated in verse 25; so it brackets this section: “Walk by the Spirit.” That is a command. We're commanded to walk by the Spirit, walk in the Spirit, or – in Ephesians – be filled with the Spirit. That is to say we are to yield the control of our lives to the Holy Spirit.

This is not easy. The command is followed by recognition of a conflict back in verse 17: “The flesh” – which still remains because we haven't been glorified; we're still human. So we have remaining flesh even after our conversion and transformation. “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.” That's the conflict; we talked about that.

We are simultaneously righteous and sinful. We have a new nature, a new creation, created in Christ Jesus unto good works; but it is incarcerated in our remaining humanness. And so there's a battle going on. We desire to walk in the Spirit, but the flesh fights against that; and the Spirit fights against the flesh, verse 17 says. “Because the Spirit is opposed to the flesh, we don't do the things that we please.” He means by that that our fleshly desires are restrained by the Holy Spirit. So we have a command to walk by the Spirit. In fulfilling that command, we have a conflict, which is a formidable conflict between our remaining sinful flesh and the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Now, how do we know what's what? How do we know when the flesh is in control or when the Spirit is in control? It's nothing mystical, it's flatly clear. It has to do with the attitudes and actions of our lives. When the flesh is in control you get what's in verses 19 to 21. These are the deeds of the flesh.

And they're evident, they're obvious, they're manifest, they're clear: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, hatred, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing." And that's not an exhaustive list, and so he adds, "and things like these," which is kind of an et cetera.

These are the kind of things that mark people who don't inherit the kingdom of God. These are nonbelievers behaviors. These are unregenerate sinners' behaviors. But we still have the propensity to those things in our unredeemed flesh. And our flesh will not be redeemed until we receive our heavenly home and a glorified body. Then we'll have no dealings with the flesh forever. But we are then faced with fulfilling this command and running right into a war, which is in us. Paul talks about it a lot in Romans 7, as we already said.

Now we had looked at the contrast between the deeds of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit last time. Two weeks ago we talked about the deeds of the flesh; we kind of went through them detail by detail. It's an ugly disastrous listing of the things that destroy life and relationships in a very devastating way. Those are the things that essentially dominate the life of an unsaved person; that's where they live. There may be glimpses of light in the middle of it, there may be some human good done, but basically the flesh can only produce these kinds of things. It produces them, if not in reality, it produces them in thought; and there are many more that could added to that. That's the stuff that the flesh produces.

But on the other hand, looking at the other side of the contrast, I want us to come to the fruit of the Spirit in verses 22 and 23: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law." Now here we have the fruit that the Spirit produces in your life. So if you look at a believer you might see sin on some occasion; but you will inevitably see these virtues as well. And as sanctification takes place, and as you grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ and become more like Christ, you see more the fruit of the Spirit than you do the deeds of the flesh. The whole idea of sanctification is the decreasing frequency of the list in verses 19 to 21, and the increasing frequency of the list in verses 22 and 23.

Life lived in the flesh even under the law, life lived in the flesh under the law produces the vices of verses 19 to 21. Life lived in the Spirit produces the virtues of verses 22 and 23; and we have come to the virtue side. Walking by the Spirit has then a negative and a positive impact. Negatively, it restrains the flesh. That is what it says in verse 17, that the Spirit who is in us stops us from doing the things that we please, the things that the flesh naturally desires. So when you walk in the Spirit there's restraint against the things of the flesh.

Not only a negative, but a positive impact as well. Walking by the Spirit has the positive effect of producing the fruit listed in verses 22 and 23. This is so essential, because these are the things that mark a true Christian. You may be familiar with these things – I'm quite confident you are – but I want to take a little time to unpack them because I want to embed them deeply in your conscious thought.

Now let me make some observations just on the broad level. The deeds of the flesh are plural – "deeds," plural. There's a list, as you saw, in verses 19 to 21. Not everybody does all of those things all the time. That's a list of sins you can choose from. We often say that, that sinners are not free, they're bound. They're bound by their sin, but they do have the freedom to choose their sin. They can pick their poison – let's put it that way.

And not everybody does all of those things all of the time, that would be virtually impossible. And there are some people who never do any of those things. There are some people who never get drunk, who never carouse; that's just not part of their sinful agenda. So these are sins that you can choose from, and there are many, many more that could be added to the list.

However on the other hand, the fruit of the Spirit is singular. The fruit of the Spirit is singular, because while you choose, you pick and choose sins when you're operating in the flesh. When you're operating in the Spirit, you don't pick and choose fruit, it all comes, it's a package deal. When you walk by the Spirit the fruit of the Spirit is multiple, as it's listed here. The fruit of the Spirit is put in the singular because virtue – listen carefully – virtue is not a list from which you pick. You don't say, "Well today I'm going to show joy. Next Tuesday I may show gentleness. Couple days after that I may try to love somebody." Doesn't work like that. This is not a list.

You can do that in your sin. You can say, "Tomorrow I'm going to be impure, and then I'm going to go to a wild party, and then I'm going to get drunk." I mean, you can plan your sin; it comes in bits and pieces. But when you walk in the Spirit, it comes as a package. The fruit of the Spirit is the combination of all these virtues, and more, because it also says at the end of verse 23, "such things, against such things, thinks like these," which means there are more. These are a very, very important sampling of the most important virtues.

So sin is a list to choose from, but virtue is produced collectively. And by the way, it's not that these are laid out in some sequence that love, joy, peace kind of follow each other. People have tried to outline these a lot of ways. I find that not very productive. It's really impossible to make a sensible outline out of it. And I think the reason for that is it's not intended to be presented as if it's some line of things that you sort of work your way through or choose from; but rather, the way to see these nine virtues here is like a bouquet of the most beautiful flowers. It's a collective bouquet and its beauty is composite beauty. It comes as a bouquet, it doesn't come as isolated things side-by-side in a row. Fruit is a beautiful bouquet of virtues. That's what the Holy Spirit produces in someone who walks by the Spirit. And you will see them all. You will see them all on display.

Now I need to talk a little bit about this idea of fruit because it's very important, and it's referred to much in the New Testament, even in the Old Testament as well. In fact, in Hosea, back in the prophet Hosea chapter 14, verse 8. God says, "From Me comes your fruit. From Me comes your fruit." So God is the source of all virtue; fruit is seen as a metaphor for virtue, like "a tree produces fruit," or "a vine produces fruit," or "a plant produces fruit." The life of God in the believer produces spiritual fruit. So that's the word picture here.

In Psalm 1 we have another picture of fruit, I think a memorable one: "How blessed is the man who doesn't walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. He will be like a tree planted firmly by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season." That's spiritual fruit being produced in a righteous life. So that is not just a New Testament concept, it's an Old Testament one. You find it a couple of times in Proverbs: Proverbs 11, Proverbs 12.

When we talk about fruit then we're talking about righteous virtue, righteous virtue. There's kind of a general look at it in Matthew 13 where our Lord says, "The word of God is like seed that's planted;

and when it finds good soil it brings forth fruit, some thirtyfold, sixtyfold, a hundredfold.” And by that He means spiritual virtue, spiritual results.

In Romans chapter 7 and verse 4 it says, “Christ was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God.” Again a very general reference to the fact that Christ died and rose again to empower His people to bring forth fruit unto God. Ephesians 5:9, “The fruit of Light” – that is spiritual light – “is all goodness and righteousness and truth.” So fruit is that which is good and righteous and truthful.

Philippians 1:11, “The fruit of righteousness comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.” Colossians 1:10, “Walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work.” So these are just general statements about fruit being good work, being righteous behavior. And then James 3:17, “The wisdom from above is full of good fruits. The wisdom from above is full of good fruits.”

So the idea is that God desires us to bear fruit. And go back with me to John 15, let’s look at a very seminal portion of Scripture because of the words of our Lord here. John 15, He talks about Himself being the vine, and His Father the vine keeper. He says, “Every branch in Me that doesn’t bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, he prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.” I think He has Judas in mind here. Judas has a superficial connection to Him but it fruitless, and he will be cut off and burned because of it.

“Every branch in Me that doesn’t bear fruit, He takes away; every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.” So when you’re fruit-bearing, the Lord will bring into your life those kinds of pruning experiences that make you more fruitful. “You’re already clean because of the word which I’ve spoken to you.” Now He says, “Abide in Me, and I in you.” We talked about that, right? We’re in Christ, Christ is in us, and in that union the branch begins to bear fruit.

“As a branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you’re the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.” If you’re connected to Christ there’s going to be much fruit, much fruit.

“If anyone does not abide in Me, he’s thrown away as a branch, dries up; gathered, thrown into the fire and burned,” like Judas. “If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, it’ll be done for you.” And then this, “My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.”

How do you know when someone is a follower of Christ? They have much fruit, much fruit. That fruit may be a hundredfold, it may be sixtyfold, it may be thirtyfold. It will be much fruit, because Christ was raised from the dead so that we might receive life, and that that life would produce fruit for God. And the fruit is all goodness, all righteousness, all truth, all good works. We are to walk in a manner to bear fruit and put that fruit on display, and that’s the proof that we are disciples of Christ.

Now specifically there are some behaviors that are indicated in Scripture to be fruit. Hebrews 13 is one that I find very helpful: “The sacrifice of praise to God, the fruit of your lips giving thanks to His name.” Worship is fruit. That is an activity that is fruit. When you worship, when you praise the Lord,

when you give honor to His name, you are bearing fruit.

In Romans 15:28 Paul thanked people for the gift that they sent him. They sent him a gift, financial gift, to support him; and the gift he said was “fruit that abounds to your account.” So giving is fruit, worship is fruit.

Matthew 3:8, Jesus said, “Bring forth fruit connected to repentance.” Repenting of sin is fruit. Romans 1:13, Paul said, “I want to come to you that I may have some fruit among you.” Leading someone to Christ is fruit. And there are more illustrations of a singular fruit. Worship is fruit, giving is fruit, repentance is fruit, bringing someone to Christ is fruit.

The Lord says, “I want you to bring forth much fruit; and if you’re connected to Me you will bear much fruit.” It’ll be the distinguishing mark of your life. It isn’t that you’ll be free from sin, that’s not true. “If any man says he doesn’t sin, he makes God a liar, and the truth is not in him,” 1 John 1. So we are both righteous and sinful at the same time until we’re glorified. But we will be characterized by much fruit. That fruit will be there because that’s what the Holy Spirit is doing in us. The fruit is the evidence that the Holy Spirit is in us. The fruit is the proof of our salvation.

Listen to the words of our Lord in Matthew chapter 7, they are very specific: “You will know them by their fruits.” Verse 17: “Every good tree bears good fruit, bad tree bears bad fruit. Good tree cannot produce bad fruit, bad tree cannot produce good fruit. Every tree that doesn’t bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire,” very much like we read in John 15. “So then, you will know them by their fruits.”

So this is the evidence of salvation. It’s not a past event. It’s, “What does your life look like? Is it manifestly radiating virtue as defined as fruit?”

Now one more important insight: all of these nine that are mentioned in Galatians – you can go back to that, Galatians 5:22 and 23; there are nine that are mentioned here, nine that make up this bouquet of fruit – they’re all produced by the Holy Spirit. They are the fruit of the Spirit. They’re not produced by the flesh; and yet paradoxically, all nine of them are repeatedly commanded of us. Throughout Scripture we are commanded to love, commanded to be joyful, commanded to experience peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. They are commands to us, but they are works of the Spirit.

If that causes you to pause for a moment, keep in mind that that’s true of every aspect of our salvation. The fact that you are regenerated, born again, is a work of God; and yet you are commanded to be born again. The fact that you believe is a work of God, but you’re commanded to believe. The fact that you confess Christ is a work of God, but you’re commanded to confess Jesus as Lord. The fact that you’re being sanctified is a work of the Spirit of God, but you’re commanded to be obedient. We live in the reality of these two things. We are commanded to do what only the Spirit can do in us.

Summing it up, we are commanded to walk in the Spirit, to get in line with what the Spirit is doing. And as we saw last week, the model for this is the Lord Jesus, right? He was the illustration. His life on earth of the perfect Spirit-controlled, Spirit-filled, Spirit-empowered, fruitful person.

Now, as I said, there's no real order here, with the exception that love comes first, as it should, because love is the greatest thing, 1 Corinthians 13 says. Let me say a further word.

Fruit falls into two categories. What I've been describing to you has been righteous deeds, good deeds, worship, giving, those kinds of things, leading someone to Christ; that's all fruit. You don't have any of those behaviors here in Galatians, all you have here is attitudes. Love is an attitude, joy is an attitude, peace is an attitude, patience is an attitude; all these are attitudes. So we can say this is attitude fruit, right? This is attitude fruit.

What we also have seen is there is action fruit, that's the fruit of behavior: good deeds, righteous action. Let me help you to understand that. The acceptable action is the result of the acceptable attitude. The action without the attitude is hypocrisy. The action without the attitude is legalism. The action without the attitude would be something that a hypocrite could do, some hypocrites like the legalists who, from Judaism, tried to impose their legalism on the believers in Galatia. You don't want to be a legalist. You don't want to do the action without the attitude. That's a fraud.

So attitude fruit comes first; and where these attitudes dominate, through these attitudes come actions related to these attitudes. You can't love without acts of love. You can't have joy without expressions of joy. And all the rest would be the same. All of these are basically powered in us by the Holy Spirit collectively. So if you're walking by the Spirit, the whole bouquet is yours. This is the best, clearest, most comprehensive description of you as a believer.

Somebody says to you, "How do I know you're a Christian?" your answer would be, "Well, apart from the fact that I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, that tells you that I believe in Him, but it doesn't show you that I'm a Christian. So if you want to know that I'm a Christian stick around me for a while, and what you will see is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. That is the evidence that I'm not operating in my flesh, because all that the flesh produces is iniquity." This is how we put our salvation on display.

So at least for this morning let's start with love and joy. Love is first in the list because love is the greatest, according to 1 Corinthians 13. It's the word *agapē*, familiar word from the verb *agapaō*. It is love, "to love," and "love at the highest level." This is the supreme word for the noblest of loves. There are other words for love that speak of friendship, and marital love, and even an *erōs* kind of love. But this is the word that speaks of the noblest kind of love, and this is the kind of love that is characteristic of God.

So I want to follow a four-fold pattern in looking at these words, okay? First, the nature of each one, then the example, then the command, and then the power. So we'll kind of work through that.

So let's look at love, *agapé* love, the highest, noblest kind of love. What is its nature? How do we define it? Most love in our culture is defined by some kind of emotional stimulation. Not this. If you want the full definition of love, this love, you have it for yourself and for all of us in 1 Corinthians 13. So let's go back to 1 Corinthians 13, often called the love chapter.

A more excellent way to live in the life of the church. Paul's been confronting the Corinthian church with all their issues. And let me show you a more excellent way; you need to live in love. So he says in verse 1 of chapter 13, "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, don't have love, I'm a

noisy gong and a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift the prophecy, know all mysteries, all knowledge; have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I'm nothing." That is an extremely interesting statement.

"If you can speak every language, if you can speak the language of men and angels, you don't have love, you're just noise. And if you have the gift of prophecy, and you know all mysteries, and all knowledge; and have all faith, and can move mountains, but don't have love, you're zero, zero; not halfway there, zero. And if you give your possessions to feed the poor, and surrender your body to be burned, don't have love, it profits me nothing." That is why love is the greatest.

What is love like? "Love is patient," – verse 4 – "love is kind, is not jealous; love doesn't brag, is not arrogant, doesn't act unbecomingly; it doesn't seek its own, is not provoked, doesn't take into account a wrong suffered, doesn't rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth;" – and then – "love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails." That's the nature of love. That's the nature of love.

And Jesus said, "Greater love has no one than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." This is the love that is the noblest love of all loves. It means you seek only the best for everyone around you. You endure anything and everything. You believe the best about everyone. You speak the best about everyone. You sacrifice yourself even to point of giving up your life for others. This is the essence of *agapé* love.

Turn to 1 John, 1 John 3 and ever to verse 14: "We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. He who doesn't love abides in death." Do you love the brothers? Do you love the believers? Then you know you've passed out of death into life. "If you don't love the brothers you abide in death." I mean, it's that basic.

And it's the same love: "Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. Whoever has the world's goods, sees his brother in need, closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him." You want to know you're a Christian? Look at whether there is magnanimous, generous, sacrificial outpouring love in your heart for others.

"It was characteristic of God, even while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, "You're never more like God than when you love your enemies." Is your life characteristically love? Is that how people speak about you? Is that what defines you? That's the nature of this love: high ground, high-level, self-sacrificing care for anyone and everyone who comes in and out of your life. When there's a need, you meet it. When it requires a sacrifice, you give it. And even if it causes you to take your life and offer it up, you do it willingly. If you're not willing to make that love the driving force in your life, there's every question whether you're a Christian, whatever you may believe.

What about the example? That's the nature of this love. What about the example? Do we have an example of this? Yes, I mentioned it. I'll look at it specifically: John 15:12, "This is My commandment, that you love one another," – said Jesus – "just as I have loved you. I want you to love the way I have

just loved you.” How had He just loved them? By washing their dirty feet.

He came into the upper room, they were arguing about who was the greatest in the kingdom, nobody wanted to stoop and wash anybody else’s feet; so they are reclining at a table with filthy feet. The roads, of course, were dusty, dirty roads, muddy roads. All the dirty feet were around the table, no one would take the low road; they were all arguing about who was the greatest. Jesus, in chapter 13, steps up, takes off His outer garment, puts a towel around His waist, goes around the table and washes the filthy feet of the proud disciples. And Jesus is saying, “I want you to love one another just as I have loved you.” How had He just loved them? By stooping to the lowest level to serve them.

But it even went beyond that. There was something He was about to do. “Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.” Washing their feet, sure; but I would even go further than that. Love in a way that makes you willing to lay down your life for your friends. That the pattern, our Lord’s pattern: humble, self-sacrificing.

Now the New Testament, as I’ve been saying, calls us to love. It does more than that, it commands us to love. The same Upper Room Discourse, John 13, after Jesus had washed the feet of the disciples and confronted them, He said this, verse 34, John 13, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another,” – here it is – “even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. Love in the way that I loved you. Love sacrificially. Love humbly.”

And then verse 35, “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” That’s how you are to love: “A new commandment, love one another, *agapé* love one another.”

In Ephesians chapter 5, verse 1, Paul writes, “Be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God.” You’re to love in the way that He loved; He’s the example. You are to walk in that same sacrificial love.

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; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.” There’s not any mystery about this, that’s for sure, none whatsoever. We are to be marked by love.

Where does this love come from? We saw the nature of love; we saw the example of love, who is Christ; the command of love – a number of them that I read, and there are more. But what about the power? Where do we get this kind of love?

Listen to Romans 5:5, “The love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.” If you’re walking in the Spirit you will love. You will love everyone. You will love the people in your most intimate circle, you will love strangers, you will love enemies. You will love.

Colossians 1:8 tells us again that this is a work of the Holy Spirit. He says, “I” – back in verse 6 of Colossians 1 – “I know you’re bearing fruit, constantly bearing fruit; you’re increasing.” And then in verse 8, he says, “Epaphras has informed us of your love in the Spirit, your love in the Spirit.” Yes,

the only way we can love this way is in the Spirit, by the power of the Spirit.

At the end of his prayer in John 17 our Lord says, “O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known You that You sent Me; and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”

The reason you have divine love in you is because you have Christ in you, you have the Spirit in you. And if you are walking in the Spirit, walking in obedience to Christ, you will radiate love everywhere. Is that what you're known for? Is that what people would say when they talk about you: “Full of love.” “He loves greatly.” “She loves much.” Should be. It should be. If it isn't, you're not walking by the Spirit. And by the way, love will be there, but not alone; all the others will be there as well, but love will be manifestly visible when you're walking by the Spirit.

Just a couple of comments about the second word there in Galatians 5, which is “joy.” Very common word. What about its nature? What is its nature? It's not superficial. It's not related to circumstances. It's not the kind of joy that you feel when something good comes along in your life, it's not that kind of joy. It's joy unrelated to shifting circumstances. It's joy that has nothing to do with whether you're healthy or sick, nothing to do with whether you're alone or in a crowd, nothing to do with whether you are paid enough or not enough, nothing to do with whether you have enough food or not enough food; not related whatsoever to whether your circumstances are positive or negative; not related at all to whether you have trouble in your life, or for a little bit you're trouble-free. No, this word is not related to that.

The word related to that is “happy,” happy. Happy is related to the word “happen,” which is related to “happenstance.” Happy means you like the circumstance you're in. We understand that. This is not that, this is *chara*. This is deep down, settled joy. This is miles below the surface of the troubled sea. This is in the dead calm of the depth of your soul. It doesn't move, it's unassailable, it's immovable. It's the deep-seated joy that provides for you constant – listen to these words – constant satisfaction and contentment, constant satisfaction and contentment.

Nehemiah 8:10 says, “The joy of the Lord is your strength.” The joy that belongs to the Lord is dispensed to you, just like the love of the Lord is dispensed to you. So your joy doesn't rise and fall on circumstances, it is immovable, it is unchangeable, it is as immovable and unchangeable as your Lord is. It always refers, *kara* does, to that joy that is based on divine realities.

First Peter chapter 1, verse 8, says this: “Though you have not seen Christ Jesus, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.” What's this joy connected to? Ultimate salvation. No matter what happens in my life, you can't touch the eternal salvation that I have been given. There is an inheritance laid up for me undefiled, unfading, settled in heaven, waiting my arrival; nothing can change that. It's a settled joy based upon the unchanging promises and power of God.

Jesus, talking to the disciples again back in the upper room, John 16, said, verse 20, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You know, when I go to the cross, you're going to cry, you're going to weep, and the world's going to celebrate. You will grieve, but your

grief will be turned to joy. You'll have a lot of grief on Friday, but you'll have joy by Sunday night."

And it's illustrated by, "Whenever a woman is in labor she has pain, because her hour has come; and when she gives birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy that a child has been born into the world. Therefore you too have grief now; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take you away from you." Did you read that last line? "No one will take your joy away from you," because Christ is risen, and He is alive, and He ever lives. That's what gives everlasting joy. Christ is alive, and He has purchased our redemption and an inheritance undefiled, fading not, reserved in heaven for us.

Jesus actually said in John 15:11, "My joy I give you; you have My joy." The very joy that the Son possesses in the promise of the Father, we possess in the promise of the Son.

In Isaiah 53:3 we find our example, the Lord Jesus. He's the example of this kind of joy. It says, "He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." You say, "Well that's not talking about joy." No, but I just want to make a contrast. "He's the man of sorrows acquainted with grief." But Hebrews 12:2 says, "But He endured the cross," – which is what's being described in Isaiah 53 – "for the joy that was set before Him, enduring the shame."

Christ is the model of joy. He went to the cross full of joy because the suffering could never overpower the promise of God, but it could only accomplish the promise of God. So joy – this is joy that's deep, and it's connected to our eternal salvation. The example of this joy is Christ who went through the depths of the wrath of God and held on to the promise of joy. He's our example.

We'll never go through anything like He did. "We haven't suffered yet unto blood," says the writer of Hebrews. We've never endured anything like He endured; and He did it for the joy of the outcome. That's how we have to face life.

And then, like love, we're commanded to do it. Philippians 3:1, Philippians 4:4, "Rejoice in the Lord. Rejoice in the Lord; and again I say, rejoice!" We're commanded to do what only the Spirit can do, which is like saying, "Walk in the Spirit. Keep in step with the Spirit."

Where do we get the power for this? Again, the power comes from the Holy Spirit. In Romans 14 and verse 17, "The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." I love that. The joy is the work of the Holy Spirit. If you walk in the Spirit you're full of joy.

Is that what people would say about you? Is that how you would be characterized, a person who is just manifestly full of love and full of joy, love for everyone who gets in your path and joy that is never ever diminished? If that's not you, you're either not a Christian, or you're not walking by the Spirit. If you're walking in step with the Spirit, your life will radiate love and deep-seated joy. That's what marks Christians.

You know, you wonder sometimes, "Is so-and-so a Christian? Is so-and-so a real believer? What about my spouse?" or, "What about my kids?" or, "What about this friend or that?" Don't look at the past, look now and see if you see love, I mean, dominating, extensive, sacrificial, humble, unselfish love, and joy.

We're not victims. We don't need to go around moping and groaning because things aren't going the way we think they ought to go. Christians are not victims, we are victors. We are *hyper-nikē*, hyper-conquerors in Christ. We don't need to change the world, we don't need to change our circumstances; we just need to live out of love and joy in whatever state we're in, to be content. That should be you and me all the time; and when it is, we're walking in the Spirit.

Again, Lord, thank You for our time this morning; very practical, helpful, convicting. Thank You for giving us Your Word, and more importantly, thank You for giving us Your Spirit, otherwise Your Word would be meaningless to us. Can't understand it without the Spirit to interpret it. So we thank You for Your Word and Your Spirit.

Lord, help us to walk in the Spirit, to walk faithfully in the Spirit, so that our lives are just relentlessly full of love and joy. Why should it not be that way, when we are loved eternally, and when we have been promised an incomprehensible eternal inheritance that can never ever be taken away. We would celebrate if we won the lottery; that's sawdust compared to winning heaven. We have no reason to be anything less than loving and joyful. So fill us with that, that the world may know that we belong to You. Put the gospel, the power of the gospel, on display. May our transformed lives be witness to the one who transformed us, the Lord Jesus Christ, we pray in His name. Amen.

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