

***WALKING IN
THE SPIRIT
Bible Studies on
Galatians 5.16 - 6.18***

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WALKING IN THE SPIRIT

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1. INTRODUCTION

In his *Letter to the Galatians* Paul has been teaching about the wonders of justification by faith:

- the truth of sinners graciously delivered from the condemnation of God's law that they had broken;
- the truth of being presented perfect before God the Father through the very righteousness of Christ; and
- the truth of not being under the bondage of works, traditions, ceremonies, circumcision and legalism.

Believers now had a Christ-centred liberty to love, honour, and obey the ways of God willingly with a new heart. Paul's burden for the Church at Galatia was for them to understand these benefits and to enjoy their Christian liberty. Paul therefore teaches against heretical teachers who were intent on taking away this freedom.

These false teachers were creating confusion about the true nature of justification and its fruits. Faith and so-called religious works of merit were being mixed up together, liberty with legalism.

False teachers were saying justification with God by faith alone in Christ alone was insufficient. These heretics taught that to ensure reconciliation to God they needed extra works of merit, eg. circumcision. Believers must live as though they were still slaves in bondage to the law, ceremonies and tradition. This teaching Paul vehemently opposed as an affront to the saving work of Christ on the cross.

But now, in the final section of his letter, Paul moves on to the living reality of Christian living, what it really means to walk in the Spirit. This will be our theme for this series of studies.

2. WALKING IN THE SPIRIT

Galatians 5.16-21

‘This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

‘Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.’

Now Christian living in Christ does not come without a fight – there is a warfare! We have to battle with the old nature and flesh, but how we do battle with the flesh is so important.

Paul teaches that to live the Christian life, doing battle with the flesh, we must walk in the Spirit. To walk in the Spirit means to live according to our new nature under the Holy Spirit’s influence. It means your mind and heart is uniquely open to the promptings and influence of the Holy Spirit. It means your decisions and actions, words and thoughts are directed by God’s truth and wisdom.

Hendriksen comments:

‘It is that constant, effective and beneficent influence which the Holy Spirit exercises within the hearts of God’s children whereby they are being directed and enabled more and more to crush the power of indwelling sin, to walk in the way of God’s commandments freely and cheerfully.’

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The person who walks in the Spirit with a new nature is in constant warfare with the old nature. The two natures are totally incompatible. One represents the light, the other the darkness. The flesh sets its desire to do constant battle with the new nature. There is an enemy within us whose chief objective is to hold us back from doing what is right and leave us prone to evil deeds.

So a person who walks in the Spirit will not be in the business of fulfilling the lust of the flesh. The new nature, under the indwelt Spirit of God, sets its desire to oppose the old nature. Its chief objective is to please God and serve Him and bear fruit for His glory. Practically it means you have to constantly decide on the side of the new nature, where your loyalties are. A Christian life is one of choices between darkness and light. Walking in the Spirit means choosing light.

Before conversion there are no choices to be made for your spiritual walk – old nature reigned.

'And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience' Ephesians 2.1-2.

But now your Holy Spirit-indwelt new nature reigns as the managing director of the mind, resulting in battle. In this warfare you now know your Christian liberty can only be enjoyed walking in the Spirit.

Sadly because of the conflict we cannot do all the things that we would do rightly for the Lord.

'For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would' Galatians 5.17.

The apostle Paul, in his *Letter to the Romans*, gives the best explanation of this conflict – see *Romans 7*.

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Despite the conflict, remember as you are being led of the Spirit you are not under the Law's condemnation.

'But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law' v18.

Even though we have to confess we are unworthy servants, we are still nevertheless servants.

Paul then moves on to remind us of the hideous nature of sin and the works of the flesh for which we should have great hatred. Why does Paul warn believers of so many characteristics of sin? To avoid the excuse of compromise. Without the Spirit we are weak and prone to being led by the old nature, so he warns us: this is the old way, the way of darkness – there is nothing good about it. There is a similar list and warning in Paul's *Letter to the Corinthians*:

'Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God... What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?' 1 Corinthians 6.9-11, 19.

The first group of sins mentioned – adultery, fornication, uncleanness, and lasciviousness – are all types of immorality. The second group of sins – idolatry and witchcraft – are all types of anti-God, worldly worship and practice. The third group – hatred, variance (contentions), emulations (jealousies), wrath, strife, seditions (divisions), heresies (sects), envyings and murders – are all types of rivalry and contention. The fourth group – drunkenness and revellings – are all types of excesses under the influence of alcohol.

All these vices are characterised by a lack of self-control in actions

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and attitudes. We live in a world where such behaviour has become accepted practice. It is the diet of the media. As Christians, if we are not careful, we embrace such in what we read, watch and hear. The Lord Jesus teaches us of how seriously we should take this:

'Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell' Matthew 5.27-30.

This means choosing our relaxation activities according to the new nature standards.

So Paul is bringing our attention here to the importance of sanctification as a fruit of justification. If you claim to be saved, yet constantly live in ungodliness, you are not in the Kingdom of God.

'...of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God' v21b.

These verses are Paul's call to godliness, which is only possible by walking in the Spirit.

Conclusion

Our theme 'Walking in the Spirit' is the true secret to finding the right pathway of Christ-centred living.

Martin Luther said: 'We in Christ = Justification. Christ in us = Sanctification.'

This is an element of the Christian life which has been somewhat

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neglected in Reformed circles. Stuart Olyott has recently written a book called *Something Must Be Known and Felt* which recognises this problem.

When Samuel taught the Israelites he showed them how this problem was caused by ingratitude to the Lord. The remedy was to serve the Lord in truth, with all the heart, considering the great things God has done for them. Let us take this to heart today.

3. BEARING FRUIT: LOVE

Galatians 5.22-26

‘But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.’

Under the direction of a new nature indwelt by the Holy Spirit there is a separation to godliness. But this separation is not to live as a Christian in a bubble, but rather to bear very precious fruit.

The new nature’s positive chief objective is to please God and to serve Him, bearing fruit for His glory. So, in total contrast to the sinful works of the flesh, Paul presents to us the fruits of the Spirit. Walking in the Spirit is living in the Spirit.

Everything about these fruits is good; everything about their motive and purpose is positive. Here is God’s standard for the Christian that can only be exercised by those walking in the Spirit.

The fruit of love

From love springs forth all the other fruits. Therefore without love we are, in effect, fruitless.

The first point I would like to make is that Christian love has God as its primary object. The inspiration, motive and power behind love is God. God is love and He by example has provided the true meaning of love.

‘Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren... And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the

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name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment' 1 John 3.16, 23.

'In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another' 1 John 4.9-11.

Love, then, is best expressed by obedience to His Word. Christian love manifests itself in an intense desire to please God. From this follows a desire to do good to mankind, being the very soul and spirit of all true religion. Love, we are told, is the fulfilling of the law, and the thing that gives energy to faith itself.

This active Christian love is expressed more fully for us in Paul's letter to the Church at Corinth, especially *1 Corinthians 13*. Here Paul again makes the vital point that love is the key, the heart of Christian living. He lists the various characteristics of this love, and it would be helpful to go through them.

v4b: Love is kind, which means to be helpful to one another in a gentle, mild and gracious manner. This is a love which affects the manner of your communication, speaking kindly, avoiding curt questions and answers, and communicating the truth in love.

v4c: Love does not envy but seeks each other's best interests, not bearing any ill will to each other. It means to appreciate one another, and to remain loyal to one another. It is the absence of jealousy, rejoicing in the progress of another.

v4d: Love is not self-promoting. This love does not allow a person to brag about themselves and constantly seek the limelight, always wanting to be first, number one.

v4e: Love is not proud, or puffed up. This love does not inflate itself in an arrogant, self-confident and self-important manner.

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v5a: Love is discreet. It does not engage in an indiscreet manner or in conversation with immoral innuendoes. It avoids indecent behaviour which causes shame and embarrassment. It is a discreet love, inspiring behaviour that harmonises with God's good order.

v5b: Love is not selfish. It is concerned for the interests of another, not always insisting on its own way.

v5c: Love is stable, not easily roused to anger. It does not get upset over little things, or lose its temper. It motivates a measured response to opposition.

v5d: Love is gracious and does not accuse or suspect. It is a positive, protecting love, not revealing the faults and failings of others. It is a love that avoids gossip.

v6a: Love is grieved by sin and does not rejoice in another's downfall. Love applies discretion without compromise. It does not rejoice in success that is devoid of truth.

v6b: Love rejoices in the truth. In its fullest sense this means not only to follow integrity and truth, but to rejoice in Christ Who is the Truth. It is to trust in Him, believe in Him and follow Him as members together of the grace of life.

v7: Love endures. It demonstrates longsuffering forbearance. It also believes all things in God's Word. This love believes graciously in the good observed in others and only in the bad when evidence and discreet love permits. It hopes in all God's promises and hopes for the conversion of the lost and restoration of the backslidden. Love endures to the end.

v8: Love never fails. Christian love is courageous, committed, sacrificial and unique. Love is the engine of Christian living. It is enduring for better or for worse. It is a love which cares compassionately. The waters of adversity cannot quench this longsuffering love. It is a love that conquers adversity, a longsuffering love that covers rather than

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magnifies failure, and a love that helps each other through failures. This love does all it can to receive, not reject. It is the heart of walking in the Spirit. Love never fails: it always prevails for the good of our never-dying souls.

The following quotes about love were provided with permission on the *Grace Gems Website* recently:

Love is:

...being willing to have your life complicated by the needs and struggles of others without impatience or anger;

...actively fighting the temptation to be critical and judgmental toward another, while looking for ways to encourage and praise;

...making a daily commitment to resist the needless moments of conflict that come from pointing out and responding to minor offences;

...being lovingly honest and humbly approachable in times of misunderstanding;

...being more committed to unity and understanding than you are to winning, accusing, or being right;

...making a daily commitment to admit your sin, weakness, and failure and to resist the temptation to offer an excuse or shift the blame;

...being willing, when confronted by another, to examine your heart rather than rising to your defence or shifting the focus;

...making a daily commitment to grow in love so that the love you offer to another is increasingly selfless, mature, and patient;

...being unwilling to do what is wrong when you have been wronged, but looking for concrete and specific ways to overcome evil with good;

...speaking kindly and gently, even in moments of disagreement, refusing to attack the other person's character or assault their intelligence;

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...being unwilling to flatter, lie, manipulate, or deceive in any way in order to coerce the other person into giving you what you want or doing something your way;

...the willingness to have less free time, less sleep, and a busier schedule in order to be faithful to what God has called you to be and to do as a spouse, parent, neighbour, etc;

...a commitment to say no to selfish instincts and to do everything that is within your ability to promote real unity, functional understanding, and active love in your relationships;

...staying faithful to your commitment to treat another with appreciation, respect, and grace, even in moments when the other person doesn't seem deserving or is unwilling to reciprocate;

...the willingness to make regular and costly sacrifices for the sake of a relationship without asking for anything in return or using your sacrifices to place the other person in your debt;

...being unwilling to make any personal decision or choice that would harm a relationship, hurt the other person, or weaken the bond of trust between you;

...refusing to be self-focused or demanding, but instead looking for specific ways to serve, support, and encourage, even when you are busy or tired;

...daily admitting to yourself, the other person, and God that you are unable to be driven by a Calvary-guided love without God's protecting, providing, forgiving, rescuing, and delivering grace.

Conclusion

God is love and He, by the gift of His Son as Saviour, has provided the true meaning of love. Love is best expressed by obedience to His Word. Christian love manifests itself in an intense desire to please God. From this follows a desire to do good to mankind, being the very soul and spirit of all true religion.

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We are told that love is the fulfilling of the Law and the fruit that gives energy to faith itself. From love springs forth all the other fruits.

4. BEARING FRUIT: JOY

Galatians 5.22

‘But the fruit of the Spirit is...joy.’

Joy here is the fruit of a Christ-centred love, a joy that holds firm even in the deepest trial.

Assurance: *‘Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead’ 1 Peter 1.3.*

Promise: *‘Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy’ 1 Peter 4.12-13.*

Paul describes his daily experience to the Church at Corinth as being *‘sorrowful, yet always rejoicing’* (2 Corinthians 6.10). Also in his *Letter to the Philippians* Paul reminds us of the secret to this constant joy whatever the circumstances (see *Philippians 4*). We are to rejoice in Who Christ is, in His attributes, His saving work, His intercession, and His intentions.

‘Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God’ Romans 5.1-2.

When Philip went to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them, there was great joy in that city. We are to rejoice in the truth, the revelation of God’s wonderful love, His great promises, and His great provisions.

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'These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full' John 15.11.

'And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full' 1 John 1.4.

It is good for us to remind ourselves that joy for the Christian, through His Word and Spirit, is God's will for us. The Psalmist testifies that he delights in the Law of the Lord and will delight himself in God's commandments. He writes that God's testimonies and His statutes are his delight.

'I will delight myself in thy statutes... Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors' Psalm 119.16, 24.

Paul, writing to the Church at Thessalonica, testifies of joy in the Word received in power of the Holy Spirit, even in a time of affliction.

'And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost' 1 Thessalonians 1.6.

Joy is not only inspired by the truth of God's Word but also by the prospect of eternal joy to come.

'By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God' Romans 5.2.

Joy is also inspired by the news of salvation in Jesus Christ.

'And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people' Luke 2.10.

Salvation is often linked to joy in Scripture:

'Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation' Isaiah 12.3.

- Zacchaeus received Jesus joyfully into his house and Jesus clearly linked this joy with his salvation (*Luke 19.6*).

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- When the prodigal son returned home his father had a joyful party to celebrate God's grace and goodness (*Luke 15.22-24*).
- We are told there is joy in Heaven over one sinner that repents (*Luke 15.7, 10*).

Reasons for spiritual joy

Believing in Jesus is a great source of spiritual joy in the heart with the enabling of the Holy Spirit.

'Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost'
Romans 15.13

'Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory' *1 Peter 1.8.*

Trials, tribulations, temptations, persecution, suffering, and rejection are all reasons for us to rejoice. Why?

'My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers[e] temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing' *James 1.2-3.*

'But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy' *1 Peter 4.13.*

When believers are experiencing trial they are encouraged to rejoice for what God accomplishes over it. As Job said,

'But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold' *Job 23.10.*

Joy is one of the elements of the kingdom of God reigning in the heart.

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'For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost' Romans 14.17.

The resurrection of Jesus inspired reverent fear and great joy – He is alive!

Joy is one of the great experiences of Heaven. Jesus Himself is described as the joy of the Lord.

'Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore' Psalm 16.11.

Conclusion

Joy can only be a reality with the enabling of the Holy Spirit as we exercise our minds to:

- God's Holy Spirit-inspired Word
- God's character
- God's promises
- Christ our Saviour
- God our Father

'There can be joy in God when there is little joy from God'
Stephen Charnock.

'Joy in God is the happiest of all joys' C H Spurgeon.

'The secret of joy for believers lies in the fine art of Christian thinking' J I Packer.

5. BEARING FRUIT: PEACE

Galatians 5.22

‘But the fruit of the Spirit is...peace.’

The fruit of peace is freedom from anxiety and inner turmoil. It means to ‘sit down in the heart’, to be quiet in one’s inner self. The source of this peace is a faith which leans wholly upon Christ.

‘Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee’ Isaiah 26.3.

‘And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body’ Colossians 3.15.

This peace, as a fruit of the Holy Spirit, must be allowed to rule in our hearts. It is a quiet confidence, whatever life has in store for us. We have peace with God through the blood of Jesus Christ.

God’s Calvary Peace Agreement is the foundation of the attitude of peace given by Holy Spirit. Christ intends us to focus on this peace and to be assured because of it.

‘These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world’ John 16.33.

‘Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you...Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you...And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you’ John 20.19, 21, 26.

This peace is assured and strengthened by a love for God’s Word.

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'Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them' Psalm 119.165.

The Holy Spirit's fruit of peace is not only an assurance and an attitude, it is peace in action. It is peace in practice within relationships, motivated by a love and confidence in God.

'Be still and know that I am God' Psalm 46.10.

Paul's teaching on peace

There is very helpful teaching on this issue of peace from the Apostle Paul in his *Letter to the Philippians*.

'Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God' Philippians 4.6.

Here Paul exhorts us not to be unduly concerned about a problem so as to be filled with anxiety. In the context of *'the Lord is at hand'*, he is telling the Philippians to be comforted by the words of Jesus in *John 14.1-4*:

'Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.'

Paul teaches that cure for anxiety is not sitting back expecting everything will turn out alright in the end. No. Paul teaches that the cure for worry is not inaction, but prayer action. There is wonderful therapy in prayer.

'Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved' Psalm 55.22.

'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me;

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for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light' Matthew 11.28-30.

Paul's exhortation means learning to live your whole life subject to prayer and dependence upon God. Notice the contrast Paul makes between nothing and everything. Paul's cure for worry is be anxious about nothing but pray about everything. The Lord is at hand to hear.

I read recently of a family in USA who were being evicted from their home having lived there for over fifty years. Before the eviction date they were sorting out the clutter in the basement when they came across a set of full colour children's books stacked away which dated back to 1938. The next day they took them to an antique book valuer. Evidently the books were so rare they were valued as a collection item at \$250,000. The answer to their problem was hidden away in the basement unused.

Sometimes, in our anxiety, prayer is like a hidden treasure in the basement of our mind – of great value but unused.

In *Philippians 4.6* it means to seriously reflect on your whole situation however challenging it may be. Then, in a reverent manner, make your requests unto the Lord in prayer. It means to make known to God your heartfelt requests based on your real needs by faith.

'Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you'
1 Peter 5.7.

Notice how Paul uses two words – prayer and supplication – meaning in your prayers be very specific. Jesus spoke of a man who, in the middle of the night, asked his friend to lend him three loaves. He was persistent. He had a need and he was very specific (*Luke 11.5-13*).

The support in anxiety is known by specific prayer. In times of crisis and need our prayers take on fresh intensity. God knows we need to pray, but always pray in a spirit of thanksgiving, remembering God's

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unfailing mercy and kindness towards you. As a believer let there be humble, grateful acknowledgement of the goodness of God towards you. Hendriksen said: 'Prayer without thanksgiving is like a bird without wings. Such a prayer cannot rise to God.'

Notice here how Paul speaks about requests. We are not demanding of God in prayer but requesting God. And the requesting is done with real faith and thanksgiving, trusting the wise and gracious character of God. We are to pray always with thanksgiving in our heart for His grace, mercy, love, promises and blessings.

'And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus' Philippians 4.7.

The peace of God is a gift of His grace merited by Christ for us and known both positionally and experientially.

Positionally

This peace is an assured confidence that I am right with God by faith in Christ: I am a child in His family. This wonderful privilege comes to us by faith in the Person, work and merits of Christ. This peace of God is centred for us upon a right relationship through Christ Jesus. The promises that appear both in *Isaiah* and *Philippians* are amazing – they speak of a complete peace from God.

Experientially

The peace as a felt experience affecting the heart comes through the power and gift of the Holy Spirit. This peace actually passes all understanding. It is beyond man's wisdom and is infinite in power and effect. It has the power to lift anxiety and is an antidote to it. The heart and mind are under the control and influence of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit! '*The peace of God, which passeth all understanding*' means a peace bestowed by the Holy Spirit as fruit of faith and prayer. This is a felt peace from God, the experience of which surpasses human understanding!

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This experience can be an amazing testimony for God's glory when true peace reigns in the heart and mind through prayer and faith in Christ, both at times of adversity and prosperity. It is good for us to remember the powerful witness of serenity in trial.

It is beyond human comprehension or reason.

'Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid' John 14.27.

This peace will stand like a guard at the door of the heart and mind to withstand anxiety and in adversity.

The Puritan William Gurnall, in his book *The Christian in Complete Armour*, wrote of this peace as being 'the garrison of the believer's mind.'

This peace also stands like a guard against an anxious spirit about material possessions taking us over. It is a gift from God as a reward of faith and an answer to prayerful dependence.

Hendriksen said: 'It is founded on grace being the smile of God reflected in the soul of the believer.'

Conclusion

The peace of God is not only:

- provided from Himself through Christ for us to be reconciled with Him;
- a precious attribute of God given to us in our minds by His grace in Christ;
- felt in our hearts and minds personally under the same power of the Holy Spirit;

but the peace of God is also a fruit, which is to be evident in our Christian service and relationships. Peace is one of the most important motivations for the Christian walk and its worth must be respected.

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It is a blessing in Christ through the Holy Spirit to our whole being, heart and mind, affecting our will.

6. BEARING FRUIT: LONGSUFFERING

Galatians 5.22

‘But the fruit of the Spirit is...longsuffering.’

Longsuffering is one of the pure characteristics of God and recognised as an aspect of His glory.

‘And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth’ Exodus 34.6.

‘But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth’ Psalm 86.15.

We see God’s longsuffering in the days before the flood:

‘Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water’ 1 Peter 3.20.

Longsuffering is described as one of the aspects of the riches of God’s saving gracious goodness.

‘Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?’ Romans 2.4.

‘The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance’ 2 Peter 3.9.

‘And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you’ 2 Peter 3.15.

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'Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting'
1 Timothy 1.16.

There would be no salvation at all if it were not for the longsuffering of God towards unworthy sinners.

As we follow the example of the Lord, longsuffering is an aspect of the Christian calling. Longsuffering;

- enables humility and meekness;

'With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love' Ephesians 4.2.

- is an exercise of the heart and mind;

'Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering'
Colossians 3.12.

- is an essential evidence of being strengthened by the Holy Spirit;

'Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness' Colossians 1.11.

- is an essential aspect of pastoral ministry.

'Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine' 2 Timothy 4.2.

Longsuffering in practice

Longsuffering is:

- a refusing to yield to outbursts of anger. It is long- not short-tempered;
- a patience that prevails in the interests of peace and harmony;
- constantly willing to suffer in the interests of another's well being;

Bearing Fruit: Longsuffering

- a little reflection of God's divine, constant longsuffering attribute towards us;
- going each day to our slow-to-anger God, asking His forgiveness in Christ;
- inspired by trust in the fulfilment of God's promises.

Longsuffering is like a good quality elastic band. Although it is constantly being stretched, it does not snap.

Judging by the amount longsuffering is mentioned in Scripture, it must be a significant aspect of Christianity. Its importance is confirmed by its being set forth as a fruit of the Holy Spirit of God. It is an aspect of God's pure character, and as we follow God we bring glory to Him as we exercise it.

An accurate understanding of our own dependence upon God's longsuffering towards ourselves will motivate a spirit of longsuffering towards others.

7. BEARING FRUIT: GENTLENESS

Galatians 5.22

‘But the fruit of the Spirit is...gentleness.’

The root of this word has to do with kindness, politeness, and a gentle manner. The motive of this attitude is for God’s honour and glory; it is selfless and humble.

‘Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies [compassionate mercies], kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering’ Colossians 3.12.

The question of our motive helps us to discern which behaviour is of the Spirit and which is of a natural disposition. For example, people differ naturally in disposition: some have a quieter temperament than others. I have worked with unbelievers who are naturally kind, generous, polite, friendly and ready to help in trouble. All these, while good in themselves, are not to be mistaken for the fruits of the Spirit. It is the motive and attitude within that can honestly determine whether it is a fruit of the Spirit, for it is possible to be gently unkind in a quiet way or with a quiet voice. The motive of the heart is all-important. Are we behaving as we are for the glory of God in a spirit of Christian love?

This word means gentleness and kindness. It is the same word used for both, for example in *1 Corinthians 13.4*:

‘Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up.’

It is rightly understood, as all the fruits are, as the outworking of love. This fruit will demonstrate heartfelt, sincere, well-meaning kindness to one another. See the example of God:

‘But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the

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children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil' Luke 6.35.

His kindness is described in the Word as great, merciful and marvellous. See the channel and effect of His kindness:

'That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus' Ephesians 2.7.

'But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared...' Titus 3.4.

This fruit will demonstrate a polite manner to one another. It will also demonstrate a gentle manner to one another. See:

a. The description of Christ

'Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you' 2 Corinthians 10.1.

'He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young' Isaiah 40.11.

b. The description of Paul

'But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children' 1 Thessalonians 2.7.

c. The instruction given to Timothy

'And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient' 2 Timothy 2.24.

d. The instruction given to believers

'To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men' Titus 3.2.

Gentleness is described as the way of wisdom.

Bearing Fruit: Gentleness

'But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy'
James 3.17.

Kindness is part of God's nature. The fruit of the Spirit enables us to be gentle even to the ungrateful. It will demonstrate itself in gentleness in the home, at work, at church, towards friends, neighbours and enemies. The fruit of the Spirit of gentleness is working by love for God's honour.

Conclusion

This fruit manifests itself in a spirit of kindness, which is heartfelt. Note *Mark 10.13-16*.

It is the courage to be kind. It has to do with our manner of speech, and the way we deal with people. Everything about the manner of speech and action of the Good Samaritan shows this kindness.

It is a Christ-like attitude of mind wherein our behaviour attracts rather than repels.

Paul, when being attacked by false teachers, pleads with the Church at Corinth not to join with them. In his appeal Paul aligns himself to the testimony and example of Christ.

From this we can see that meekness and gentleness are actually to be viewed as strengths. They are a mildness of temper, absence of irritability, and a politeness in dealing with people on whatever level.

To be gentle is to have a sensitivity to someone's feelings, to approach a person with a genuine desire to understand and help. It makes our relationships with people meaningful and sincere.

This fruit is the opposite from society networking where conversations are held with people for personal gain.

8. BEARING FRUIT: GOODNESS

Galatians 5.22

‘But the fruit of the Spirit is...goodness.’

The word ‘goodness’ means righteousness with love, or in the original benefice or being of benefit to others.

Where does goodness come from? William Tyndale said:

‘God’s goodness is the root of goodness; and our goodness, if we have any, springs out of his goodness.’

So we follow our normal pattern of first finding our standard in the example of God.

1. God’s testimony of Himself

‘And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth’ Exodus 34.6.

2. God’s testimony of His providential dealings

‘And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy’ Exodus 33.19.

3. God’s testimony of His spiritual dealings

‘Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?’ Romans 2.4.

‘Good and upright is the Lord: therefore will he teach sinners in the way’ Psalm 25.8.

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4. God's testimony of His faithfulness

'The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him' Nahum 1.7.

5. God's source of spiritual satisfaction

'Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple' Psalm 65.4.

6. The heart of God's goodness in Christ Jesus

'Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power: that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ' 2 Thessalonians 1.11-12.

Jesus of Nazareth went about doing good.

How do we define morality and goodness apart from a pure God? Christ-centred goodness in its fullest sense is an outcome of a life transformed by the Holy Spirit. This fruit of goodness has to do with having a generous attitude which manifests itself in giving, and being ready and proactive; 'What can I do?' generosity, rather than a begrudging, 'What do I have to do?'

The word 'goodness' here viewed as a fruit of the Spirit means you are intent on being useful. The goodness here is unselfish; it means to be prepared to adjust your schedule to help. We see it in all its awesomeness in our Saviour setting His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem.

Remember the word goodness has to do with benefice or benefit, meaning that God's Holy Spirit within us bears fruit and we will

Bearing Fruit: Goodness

benefit others. Here is the right source and enabling for the good works of a Christian.

Why are good works for a Christian, as a fruit of the Holy Spirit, so vital in our lives?

1. They glorify God

'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven' Matthew 5.16.

'Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation' 1 Peter 2.12.

2. They enrich life

'That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate' 1 Timothy 6.18.

3. They are an example

'In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity' Titus 2.7.

'Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did' Acts 9.36.

'A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always' Acts 10.2.

4. They encourage others

'And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works' Hebrews 10.24.

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5. They are commanded of God

Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it' Psalm 34.14.

'Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed' Psalm 37.3.

'But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased' Hebrews 13.16.

'Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin' James 4.17.

6. Good works are an outworking of the love of God in our hearts

'But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil' Luke 6.35.

Living life with the objective of doing good

'And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not' Galatians 6.9.

'Well doing' has the meaning of doing something good which is beautiful, well pleasing to God. It means to continually show good words and actions of kindness and love for Christ's sake. Well doing covers Christian care for the whole person, practically and spiritually. It is beautifully revealed in the ministry of Christ, our perfect example.

'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised' Luke 4.18.

Well doing requires constant effort and engagement. It requires

Bearing Fruit: Goodness

staying power to press on. There will be rebuffs, discouragements, weaknesses, and disappointments mixed with blessing.

In all these varying experiences while doing good we are prone to weariness.

Some of the reasons for weariness in doing good

- it does not seem to be appreciated;
- there seems no end to the commitment;
- it seems to bear so little fruit;
- we do not do it as unto the Lord;
- we view it as a duty, not a privilege;
- there are limitations to what we can cope with physically and mentally;
- we get tired of doing the same thing;
- we work with the wrong attitude and become impatient;
- we forget the benefit of good works.

‘This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men’ Titus 3.8.

The medicine for weariness in doing good

- Remember the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

‘And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him’ Colossians 3.17.

‘Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works’ Titus 2.14.

‘And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me’ Matthew 25.40.

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- Remember there is a gracious reward to those doing good for Christ's sake.

'To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life' Romans 2.7.

- Remember your work for the Lord is not in vain.

'Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord' 1 Corinthians 15.58.

- Remember it is better to continue steadfastly in well doing than in evil doing.

'For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing' 1 Peter 3.17.

- Remember to keep your eye on the crown. This is Paul's medicine for weariness. Keep your eye on the crown and you will reap in God's time. So often in the New Testament we are exhorted to press on with eternity in view. Inheritance is our inspiration.
- Remember the power to persevere in doing good comes from God, as we walk in the Spirit.

'As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith' Galatians 6.10.

God calls us to take seriously and look out for opportunities to do good unto all men. These opportunities to serve are comprehensive in their nature and purpose, and are multi-racial. However, in this ministry there is to be a priority: the family of God.

'For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe' 1 Timothy 4.10.

9. BEARING FRUIT: FAITH

Galatians 5.22

‘But the fruit of the Spirit is...faith’ Galatians 5.22.

Most commentaries refer to this word as ‘faithfulness’. Other translations also refer to this word as ‘faithfulness’. The reason for this is because of the word’s position between goodness and meekness. It seems to demand just this interpretation.

However, in the original the word used is the same as that used elsewhere for saving faith. The *Authorised Version* translates the word as ‘faith’. From this I believe we can remind ourselves, first, of the fruit of saving faith; then the effect of saving faith, manifest in our witness and testimony of faithfulness. The two renderings of this word – faith and faithfulness – can work in harmony together, for faithfulness is the outworking of faith within.

When God works in our lives by the power of the Holy Spirit we are given the gift of saving faith. This means complete dependence upon God’s Word; upon Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord; upon the Holy Spirit working within us in our new nature; a complete dependence and reliance upon the promises of God; and upon His perfect character and purposes towards His people.

*‘That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast’
Ephesians 2.7-9.*

It is this faith within our hearts which encourages and motivates a true spirit of faithfulness in our lives. Faith in God is a gift from God, and the ongoing fruit of the Holy Spirit of God working within our hearts, resulting in faithfulness in our walk towards God, His Word, His people and His cause.

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As faith is in exercise daily in our lives it will bring an increasing faithfulness in our walk. The word 'faithfulness' has to do here with steadfastness, loyalty, security, reliability, and consistency. To be outwardly faithful we must first have living faith in God. To be consistently faithful we have to keep looking to the source. If we want to be faithful, steadfast, loyal and reliable then we must keep looking by faith first upon God.

'Behold your God' Isaiah 40.9.

Faithfulness

Once again we follow the pattern of governing our thinking about the fruit by considering God Himself. Great is His faithfulness, steadfastness, reliability, loyalty, and trustworthiness – His faithfulness towards His people. We see God's faithfulness:

a. To His Word in mercy

'Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations' Deuteronomy 7.9.

b. In His creative mercies

'They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness' Lamentations 3.23.

c. In His keeping power

'And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith. But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil' 2 Thessalonians 3.2-3.

d. In the keeping of His promises

'Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised)' Hebrews 10.23.

e. To His character

'If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself' 2 Timothy 2.13.

It is as we look by faith to the faithful, unchangeable God that we demonstrate the fruit of faithfulness in our lives. To be steadfast, reliable, trustworthy, loyal, and a pillar of the Church, we must first take our motive and inspiration from God.

In the Scriptures we are given many examples of faithful people.

a. Faithful and loyal to their Master

Moses was commended for his faithfulness:

'My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house' Numbers 12.7.

'Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house' Hebrews 3.2.

b. Pointing to Christ

Moses was commended in *Hebrews 11* for his faith – note the inspiration for his faithfulness.

c. Faithful and loyal to God's Word

'And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers' Acts 2.42.

'Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers' Titus 1.9.

d. Faithful and loyal to God's people

Ruth:

'And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and

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thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore. The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust' Ruth 2.11-12.

Onesimus:

'With Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They shall make known unto you all things which are done here' Colossians 4.9.

e. The faithful are answerable to God

'His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord' Matthew 25.21.

f. Steadfast and strong in faithfulness

'They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever' Psalm 125.1.

The fruit of the Spirit is faith leading to faithfulness. Faith in God gives stability, strength, spiritually, and steadfastness.

10. BEARING FRUIT: MEEKNESS

Galatians 5.23

'But the fruit of the Spirit is...meekness' Galatians 5.22-23.

The word 'meek' in our verse has the meaning of a mild, stable, gentle, humble attitude. John Calvin described it like this:

'Meekness is a defining grace, produced by the Holy Spirit in the life of a Christian, which characterises that person's response to God.'

Meekness:

- is concerned first for the honour of the Lord, and then for the well-being of one another;
- in action provides something of the fragrance of Christ, the King of meekness;
- is a sign of a man who has been mastered by God;
- is the divine grace that has discipline to control self, having a true knowledge of self;
- is described as the ornament of the Christian life;
- endures hurt rather than inflicting it.

The man that knows himself and his weaknesses will be meek toward God and man. A W Tozer said:

'A meek man has stopped being fooled about himself. He has accepted God's estimate of his own life. He knows he is as weak and helpless as God declared him to be, but paradoxically, he knows at the same time that he is in the sight of God of more importance than angels. In himself, nothing; in God, everything. That is his motto.'

In the Beatitudes Jesus also speaks about the inner work of the Holy Spirit in the believer.

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'Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth'
Matthew 5.5.

The meekness which is mentioned here is also taught as a fruit of the inner work of the Spirit. It is essential that we see this meekness as a spiritual fruit and not as something genetic! The point that Jesus makes is that meekness should be seen in every believer regardless of natural temperament.

Meekness is a conquering, sanctifying grace. It means a quiet and humble submission first and foremost before Almighty God. It means resting and believing in what the Word of God says and is first the right attitude of mind before God. Meekness is a sign of inner spiritual strength, a quiet, submissive, gentle spirit not to be confused at all with weakness, or 'having no backbone'. It actually has the opposite meaning, having an inner spiritual power.

'In quietness and confidence shall be your strength' Isaiah 30.15.

The example of Jesus

How does Jesus speak of Himself?

a. In life

'Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls' Matthew 11.29.

b. In persecution

'For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds' Hebrews 12.3.

'Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously' 1 Peter 2.23.

Bearing Fruit: Meekness

c. In suffering

‘He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth’ Isaiah 53.7.

‘...saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done’ Luke 22.42.

Meekness means that we are not totally occupied or taken up with self. The reason why we are sometimes elated and sometimes depressed can be because we are focusing all our thoughts upon self. A meek person is not self-centred. Meekness means to be resolute for God’s honour, not our own.

Moses, we are told, was the meekest man that lived upon this earth apart from Jesus.

‘Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth’ Numbers 12.3.

This meekness was demonstrated so often as he led the children of Israel. When they grumbled, he prayed for them; when they quarrelled with him, again he prayed for them.

A more recent example of a meek man was Matthew Henry, of whom it was said: ‘He was bold as a lion in the cause of God, but mild as a lamb in his own.’ This is one of the evidences of meekness!

Meekness means to die to self daily. George Muller said,

‘There was a day when I died utterly. I died to George Muller, his opinions, preferences, tastes and will. I died to the world, its approval or censure. I died even to the approval or blame of my brethren and friends. Since then I have studied only to show myself approved unto God.’

The Bible teaches us that for a believer, as for George Muller, this is a daily exercise.

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How does the Word of God relate this exercise to our lives; how do we live it out?

a. In our walk

'I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love' Ephesians 4.1-2.

b. In our talk

'But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear' 1 Peter 3.15.

c. In our hearing

'Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls' James 1.21.

d. In correction

'Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted' Galatians 6.1.

e. In ministry

'And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth' 2 Timothy 2.24-25.

f. Looking to the great Example

'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls' Matthew 11.28-29.

11. BEARING FRUIT: TEMPERANCE

Galatians 5.23

'But the fruit of the Spirit is...temperance' Galatians 5.22-23.

The meaning of 'temperance' is the power of the will being controlled under the operation of the Spirit of God. One of the greatest weaknesses in fallen nature is excess. It is the Spirit of God, the new nature, which can create self-control and stability, self-government or moderation, principally with regard to emotional, mental and physical appetites.

Temperance:

- involves moderation in all aspects of our walk and testimony of life;
- is the inner power to keep oneself in check;
- is thought and action surrendered to Christ;
- is the mastery over our own selfish self-interest, an exercising of self-control;
- is described elsewhere as mortifying the flesh;
- is the positive maturing of self through discipline;
- is self-restraint, prudence, stability, not giving oneself to excess;
- is a spiritual and moral strength.

The response to God's claim to holiness

In *Acts 24.25* we see temperance mentioned in Paul's discourse with Felix, and Felix's response to that teaching as an unbeliever:

'And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.'

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The background to this event is that Drusilla was previously married to Azizus, King of Emessa. Felix fell in love with her and persuaded her, through a Jewish friend of his, to leave her husband and join him.

a. The response of a believer to knowledge imparted

‘...and [add] to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness’ 2 Peter 1.6.

b. The discipline required of the believer

‘And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible’ 1 Corinthians 9.25.

Paul is here referring to the training programme for the Olympic Games.

c. The discipline required of those in office

‘For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers’ Titus 1.7-9.

d. The discipline required over our spirit

‘He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city’ Proverbs 16.32.

e. The discipline required over our lust

‘Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof’ Romans 6.12.

f. The discipline required over our tongue

‘For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body’ James 3.2.

Bearing Fruit: Temperance

Examples

The Lord, when faced with the temptation to indulge Himself in all the world has to offer:

‘Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve’ Matthew 4.10.

Moses was meek and self-controlled during his ministry and leadership, but on one occasion we read otherwise. He struck the rock indulging his temper as though he with Aaron must bring water out of the rock.

‘And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also’ Numbers 20.10-11.

Daniel used self-control and restraint:

‘But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself’ Daniel 1.8.

This word ‘temperance’ has very much to do with a controlled will. It is the fruit of the Spirit to have our will influenced by something pure.

By way of illustration, there was a study made on how people chose between eating chocolate cake or an apple. This study indicated that those who focused on long-term goals were better able to resist unhealthy choices. The researchers studied how individuals reacted when their self-control was tested. They found that people had less self-control if they were focused on the present and more self-control if they were focused on the future.

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As Christians, we have the ultimate long-term goal to look forward to – Heaven. When temptation looks us in the face, we can walk away knowing that we have greater things waiting for us. Our long-term rewards outweigh anything that we will find on Earth.

12. THE CHRISTIAN LIFESTYLE

Galatians 5.24-26

‘And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.’

The fruits of the Spirit which we have considered characterise what God wills for our Christian lifestyle.

‘...against such there is no law’ Galatians 5.23.

Being justified by faith there is no condemnation from God’s law, but more is meant here. The fruit of justification by faith is to be walking in the Spirit, living a lifestyle according with the law. This is borne out by the first fruit of the Spirit – love. Paul describes it as the fulfilling of the law. To those living such a lifestyle in Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, the law is a friend not an accuser.

Crucifying the flesh means that the dominating influence of the flesh has been dealt a deathblow. Calvin said:

‘While the flesh is not yet indeed entirely destroyed, it has no more right to exercise dominion.’

What is crucified is the dominion of the old man: a new managing director has taken over our life! In our battle with sinful desires, the flesh is now an enemy. It is no longer a friend or a leader.

What is vital to remember here is our union and identification with Christ: *‘they that are Christ’s’*. We cannot crucify the flesh without Christ. There is no dominion over sinful nature apart from the cross of Christ.

‘Live in the Spirit’ v 25. If the source of our spiritual lives is the Spirit, then let us walk by the Spirit. Hendriksen said:

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‘If the source of our life is the Spirit, the Spirit must also be allowed to direct our steps so that we make progress, advancing step by step toward the goal of consecration to the Lord.’

‘Let us not be desirous of vain glory’ v 26. Vain glory is a self-consuming, attention-seeking pride which constantly unsettles and hurts others. This is a spirit we need to be so careful of today in this media- and communication-motivated world: a vanity of spirit which is constantly provoking and envious of another’s gifts. The spirit of the Christian is to be as Christ Who was meek and lowly in heart.

Conclusion

We know the standard set, but how to walk according to the standard? There is often such a battle to walk as we should. Here for encouragement Paul gives us the secret: walk in the Spirit, not fulfilling the lust of the flesh.

13. PRACTICAL EVIDENCES OF WALKING IN THE SPIRIT: RESTORATION

Galatians 6.1-5

We have seen God's standard for the Christian which can be exercised by those who walk in the Spirit. Here is the great test of true conversion, the test of justification by faith opposed to legalism. A true Christian is a new creature in Christ.

'But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. Galatians 6.14-16.

It is clear, as we move into chapter six of *Galatians*, that Paul still has the theme of walking in the Spirit in mind.

'For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting' Galatians 6.8.

We will now look at some practical evidences of walking in the Spirit as shown in *Galatians 6*.

Restoring in a spirit of meekness

'Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone,

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and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden'
Galatians 6.1-5.

Here Paul uses the word 'brethren' in an endearing way to exhort all the Church members, but in the restoration process Paul would also have in mind the male leadership role of the Church. Ultimately they would have responsibility to ensure restoration steps are taken in the right spirit. So the word 'brethren' is used interchangeably. This is also seen in the final verse of the letter.

'Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.
Amen' Galatians 6.18.

'If a man be overtaken in a fault' v1a. Paul is not teaching here about a backslidden lifestyle of premeditated sin, requiring Church discipline. Here he is writing about the situation of a brother who has succumbed to a sudden temptation.

The word 'overtaken' means he has committed the sin quickly without due care and consideration. The example is of a brother going about his Christian life when suddenly he is taken off guard. In that unguarded, unspiritual moment he has brought shame on the name of Christ and His Church. He had not set out to sin but his sinning was caused by a temporary lapse in spiritual concentration. This brother would be repentant, grieved at the fault, and in humility acknowledge his lapse.

'Ye which are spiritual' v1b. To avoid hypocrisy in the Church Paul gives a qualification for helpers. Only those who are walking in the Spirit are qualified to be involved in the ministry of restoration. This qualification is extremely important for the following reasons:

- Unspiritual brethren would attempt restoration with a very lax view towards repentance. They would downplay the fault to make themselves feel better about a fault in their own lives. Their spirit of tolerance about sin is totally opposite to a spirit of meekness that Paul commends. Unspiritual leaders are like this. Their type of

Practical Evidences: Restoration

restoration is by overlooking the fault casually. An unspoken deal is struck between such leaders and the Church members: 'Let's just live and let live.'

- Paul also warns against an unspiritual, proud, self-righteous brother getting involved in the matter. The characteristics of an unspiritual brother manifest themselves in the sin of either laxity or legalism.

'Restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted' v1c. The attitude Paul is exhorting us to is a meekness which manifests itself in humility and love. It has the very best, wholesome and unselfish interests of the brother at heart. It is intent on restoring.

William Hendriksen said:

'Follow a positive, not negative, course with respect to the fallen brother. Do not hurt him but help him. Treat him as you yourselves would wish to be treated if you were in his place.'

The word 'restore' means to mend, to bring a person back to their former position of soundness. There are four steps to take in this kind of restoration.

1. The first meeting place is Calvary. True restoration is only in Christ.
2. Focus on the promises of God and prayer.
3. Encourage the use of the means of grace.
4. Encourage a dependent mindset upon God.

Restoration help must be given in a spirit of meekness, reflecting a spiritual maturity and understanding.

'Considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted' v1d. There is no place for self-righteousness in this ministry – 'I would never let this happen to me' syndrome. Elsewhere in his first letter to the Church at Corinth Paul has a very similar warning.

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'Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall' 1 Corinthians 10.12.

The word 'considering' is in the continuing sense, a constant exercise of self-warning and humility: 'How would I withstand such an arrow of temptation, when sin is presented suddenly and powerfully?'

'Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ' v2. The law of Christ is the law of love: love which motivates our lives to live like Christ. Bearing one another's burdens means to support the brother in trouble in a prayerful manner.

We have the perfect example of this in Christ in the manner in which He supported Peter. Christ knew that Peter would fall under one of Satan's arrows of temptation, so He prayed for Peter.

'And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren' Luke 22.31-32.

Primarily His supporting ministry to Peter in his time of failure was that of intercessory prayer. Remarkably Christ prayed for Peter at a time of great distress and tension in His own personal life. This reminds us that our own trials and tribulations do not preclude us from intercessory prayer.

Here Paul particularly encourages every endeavour to help the brother overcome through Christ. The principle is always to have a helping, bearing mindset, to help lighten the load, to do what we can to consistently help suffering brothers and sisters in Christ and so fulfil His law. This means in prayer, practically, sympathetically, sacrificially, and spiritually with a restoring, helping mentality.

'For if a man thinketh himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself' v3. Paul is attacking the problem of over-confidence in oneself. This was the problem with Peter before he fell.

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He compared himself with the other disciples. Even if they forsook the Lord, he would never do such a thing. Peter considered himself strong. He thought himself to be beyond the weakness of ever denying his Lord, yet this was just the area of attack. What a different Peter who writes later:

‘Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you’ 1 Peter 5.6-7.

What makes us tenderhearted to others is the realisation of our own vulnerability in and of ourselves. But this reality does not stop us serving the Lord because we *‘can do all things through Christ’* (Philippians 4.13). The answer to thinking ourselves to be ‘something’ is to remember the words of our Lord:

‘I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing’ John 15.5.

This exhortation of Paul does not mean we should deny the gifts God has given with false humility. Morbid self-contempt dishonours the Giver of all good gifts. Every member has a gift of some sort, but it does mean to be very careful so as not to claim to be what we are not, deceiving ourselves.

‘But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another’ v4. How does a man prove his own work? Some people say, By making comparison with others! But by this a person can go gently on themselves by ensuring their comparison is not too challenging.

However, a person should prove or test his own work by God’s standards in the example of Christ. Our work is proved in the sight of God first and foremost, and this realisation will keep us humble. The answer of a good conscience before the Lord is of far greater value than the approval of man.

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A person proving their own work is not seeking the 'well done' of man, but seeking the 'well done' of the Lord. It means personal, private rejoicing in humble recognition of what the Lord is doing through their work. It is to rejoice and marvel at the wonderful grace of God in using us as an unworthy servant. It means to be liberated from the snare of seeking the praise of man knowing that *'we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us'* (2 Corinthians 4.7).

'For every man shall bear his own burden' v5. The word 'burden' here is referring to the responsibility of a Christian in his walk before the Lord. Every born-again Christian is personally responsible for his own work before the Lord. On the great Day of Judgment responsibility for this work cannot be shared or transferred. Each person will be judged according to his own deeds; a professing Christian will be judged according to their personal faith and works.

'Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works' Matthew 16.24-27.

'I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings' Jeremiah 17.10.

As a Christian the burden of our sin is carried by Christ and in that respect we are eternally saved for glory; we are eternally secure in the righteousness of Christ as our Saviour. But nevertheless Christ as our Lord will make an assessment of our works that have been a fruit of

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faith. There will be differing rewards of grace in Heaven according to God's perfect justice and wisdom. The burden of accountability for how we used the talent of grace in serving the Lord is a very real issue. Paul reminds us that in this we are each personally accountable to the Lord. Keeping this constantly in view will keep us humble and ever concerned to live useful lives. Hendriksen comments:

‘Works do not save anyone – this truth has been emphasised time and time again in this epistle. Nevertheless the reward will be measured out in harmony with each man's works. These will show the degree in which each man has been true to his trust, the extent to which grace has been operative in his life.’

These first five verses of *Galatians 6* come within the context of restoring in a spirit of meekness. When we have such a spirit to a fallen brother it will bear the fruit of personal examination of our own heart for spiritual profit and growth. So what Satan had meant for evil God turns around for the spiritual growth and sanctification of the Church.

14. PRACTICAL EVIDENCES OF WALKING IN THE SPIRIT: DOING GOOD

Galatians 6.6-10

Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.'

Living life with the objective of doing good

Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things' v6. Here Paul is exhorting to the ministry of giving good things for encouragement and support. Paul has in mind a pastor who has given up his secular employment to serve the Lord in ministry. The flock over which he has been placed are being blessed through this brother's ministry. The Galatians recognise that their pastor is hard working, committed and has a sincere love and care for them. There is then to be a response in the good things of prayer, support, encouragement and provision.

'Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel' 1 Corinthians 9.14.

'Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting' v7-8.

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The letter now moves to a most solemn warning against being deceived in our lives. *'God is not mocked.'* This word 'mocked' here means we cannot impose upon God any cover-up; God is absolutely aware of the thoughts and intents of the heart. We cannot play with God. How we live our life determines how we end our life: everyone reaps the fruit of what they sow!

If we live our lives according to the flesh, living according to the old nature, we will reap corruption. Corruption here relates to destruction, shame and everlasting contempt, where the worm of corruption continues eternally.

'Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched'
Mark 9.48.

'And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh' Matthew 25.10-13.

But if we live our lives in Christ according to the new nature, sowing to the Spirit, we will reap life everlasting, an everlasting life in glory perfectly conformed to Christ, shining as the stars in Heaven.

'And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever' Daniel 12.3.

'And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.' 1Corinthians 15.49.

'Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is' 1 John 3.2.

Practical Evidences: Doing Good

'Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself' Philippians 3.21

'And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not' v9.

'Well doing' has the meaning of doing something which is beautiful, well pleasing to God. It means to continually show words and actions of kindness and love for Christ's sake. Well doing covers Christian care for the whole person, practically and spiritually. It is beautifully revealed in the ministry of Christ, our perfect example.

'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised' Luke 4.18.

Well doing requires constant effort and engagement. It requires staying power to press on. There will be rebuffs, discouragements, weaknesses and disappointments, mixed with blessing.

In all these varying experiences in doing good we are prone to weariness.

Some of the reasons for weariness in doing good

- it does not seem to be appreciated;
- there seems no end to the commitment;
- it seems to bear so little fruit;
- we do not do it as unto the Lord;
- we view it as a duty not a privilege;
- the limitations of what we can cope with physically and mentally;
- we get tired of doing the same thing;

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- we work with the wrong attitude and become impatient;
- we forget the benefit of good works.

‘This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men’ Titus 3.8.

The medicine for weariness in doing good

- Remember the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

‘And whatsoever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father through Him’ Colossians 3.17.

‘...who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar [special] people, zealous of good works’ Titus 2.14.

‘And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me’ Matthew 25.40.

- Remember there is a gracious reward to those doing good for Christ’s sake.

‘...to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life’ Romans 2.7.

- Remember your work for the Lord is not in vain

‘Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord’ 1 Corinthians 15.58.

- Remember it is better to continue steadfastly in well doing than in evil doing.

‘For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing’ 1 Peter 3.17.

Practical Evidences: Doing Good

- Remember to keep your eye on the crown. This is Paul's medicine for weariness. Keep your eye on the crown you will reap in God's time. So often in the New Testament we are exhorted to press on with eternity in view, our inheritance being our inspiration.
- Remember the power to persevere in doing good comes from God, as we walk in the Spirit.
- Remember you will reap the reward of grace in glory for your doing good according to the new nature.

'As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith' v10.

God calls us to take seriously and look out for opportunities to do good unto all men. These opportunities to serve are comprehensive in their nature and purpose and are multi-racial. However, in this ministry there is a priority – the family of God. Note also:

'For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe' 1 Timothy 4.10.

15. PAUL'S PASTORAL APPEAL

Galatians 6.11-18

'Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand. As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh. But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.'

Paul expresses his personal, heartfelt concern in his letter, which is sent with his apostolic authority and for the sake of the New Testament Church. He teaches justification by faith alone in Christ alone, with sanctification as an inseparable fruit.

Paul is greatly concerned about those who would spoil the God-given liberty of the Christian, trying to mould them into their own way of thinking. These people were intent on manufacturing religious clones, resisting the real work of the Spirit that encourages a Christ-like obedience motivated by love.

The danger of outward show

'As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ' v12.

Walking in the Spirit

The fear of man always brings a snare. Here it is the snare of outward appearance – conformity. The false teachers could not bear to be rejected by the Jewish religious leaders in Jerusalem. Their religious credentials were wrapped up in keeping the power, the control of ceremony and rites. To keep their approval ratings they were attempting to entrap the Galatian Christians by saying, ‘You can have your faith in Christ, but in addition you must be circumcised and conform to a rite.’ They went as far as to say, ‘Your salvation depends upon it’, like the Roman Catholic Church states.

Their traditions meant more to them than Christ alone. They were the ecumenical advocates of Paul’s day. To avoid persecution they compromised, being more afraid of offending man than God. They themselves, in reality, were part of the anti-Christ movement in denying His all-sufficiency.

In these end times the world is moving towards a uniting of many religions under one banner. To avoid persecution, liberal, worldly Christians will fall into line under a so-called banner of love. They declare that you must conform or adapt to other religions, joining together in a church of which Christ is not head. In reality the reason for insisting on this is lest they should suffer persecution for Christ’s sake. It is a rejection of Christ.

The true Church must remain separate. This will involve persecution; it will mean taking a stand.

The danger of outward conformity

‘For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh’ v13.

Paul continues with another argument against those who deny the glorious Gospel of Christ. He shows their teaching was not a spiritual exercise with a heartfelt desire to keep the law in Christ. They were not really interested in the weightier matters of the law, but only in

an outward show. The physical rite of circumcision, required to be considered a proselyte Jew, was all that really mattered. It was really about promoting the Jewish traditions and ceremonies as being equal to the Gospel. As each Galatian Christian bowed to their legalistic influence, they could boast another proselyte

We see this problem today in the danger of emphasising conformity as being as important as Christ. Satan not only attacks through worldly, liberal Christianity, but also through this snare of legalism. What Satan does is to present conformity as being of equal validity to Christ as conviction. In other words, conformity itself becomes the chief end above the need of a renewed heart.

Satan is quite happy to have Reformed doctrine and reverent worship in form alone without the heart. In this way the inner heart of the person in the congregation can remain secretly in the world. No one need know the reality because everything looks fine on the outside.

For example, there are denominations where tradition and form have become as important as truth itself. Everybody conforms but very few people actually seem to be active in serving the Lord. They are just attending and being there, dressed in the right attire, using the right Bible version and hymnbook. In this way the Spirit is quenched by a conformity which is not motivated by a renewed heart.

Here Paul vehemently opposes such an approach that relies only upon outward works and image. He argues for circumcision of the heart that glories in Christ and serves Him. This is vital!

Paul's medicine for heartless legalism that despises the Gospel is to focus upon the Lord Jesus Christ. To a renewed, Christ-centred heart obedient to the law, Reformed and reverent worship is a delight.

Solemn consecration to Christ crucified

'But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world' v14.

Walking in the Spirit

‘God forbid’ is the greatest warning Paul can give. He brings himself in total submission to God. What God desires from us is all-important to Paul, not what man dictates. Here is the heart of it.

God the Father intends us to focus and glory in His only Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. Here God’s love to sinners shines in all its glory – Jesus in the sinner’s place.

*On such love my soul still ponder,
Love so great so rich so free,
Say whilst lost in holy wonder
Why my soul such love to me?*

John Kent, 1766-1843

Hendriksen says:

‘By God’s marvellous grace Paul had come to view that Cross as: The Mirror, the Means of Redemption, the Magnet, and the Model.

The Mirror – The realisation of our own utter unworthiness, sin and guilt that has put Christ there.

The Means of Redemption – In its most glorious sense – justification, sanctification, and glorification.

The Magnet – By which men and women, boys and girls, are drawn to trust in Christ crucified.

The Model – For believers to imitate in terms of a spirit of sacrificial love to others.’

‘God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.’

- It is here we can glory in the condescension of Jesus Christ. Surely this was a place of shame, grief, sorrow, suffering, humiliation and death? True. Yet it was to such a place that the Son of God stooped for you and me!

‘For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he

Paul's Pastoral Appeal

was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich' 2 Corinthians 8.9.

- It is here we can glory in the great love of God found at the cross of Christ. Here the greatness of God's love is seen, as Jesus is hanging upon the cross. God is demonstrating His great love to the world by the gift of His only begotten Son. We see our unworthiness but His glorious love.

'In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him' 1 John 4.9.

- It is here we can glory in the power of forgiveness found at the cross of Christ.

'This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief' 1 Timothy 1.15.

'But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound' Romans 5.20.

*O wonder of all wonders,
That through Thy death for me
My open sins, my secret sins
Can all forgiven be.*

Katherine A M Kelly, 1869-1942

- It is here we can glory in the power of the peace and reconciliation at the cross of Christ.

'And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled' Colossians 1.21.

- It is here we can glory in the great mercy of God to sinners found at the cross of Christ.

Walking in the Spirit

'For thy mercy is great above the heavens: and thy truth reacheth unto the clouds' Psalm 108.4.

'The earth, O Lord, is full of thy mercy: teach me thy statutes' Psalm 119.64.

- It here we can glory in the all-sufficiency found at the cross of Christ.

'But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord' 1 Corinthians 1.30-31.

- It is here we can glory at the access obtained by the cross of Christ.

Imagine the protocol arrangements involved to get an audience with the Queen of the United Kingdom. But in Christ believers have access to the Throne of Grace, God's heavenly throne!

'...in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him' Ephesians 3.12.

- It is here we can glory in the security found at the cross of Christ. We are fully justified. The debt is fully paid and we are protected from God's wrath.
- It is here we can glory at the inheritance obtained through the cross of Christ. We overcome the power and effect of sin and are finally victorious by the blood of the Lamb.

'He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son' Revelation 21.7.

'...by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world' v14.

It is here at the cross that the world and sin lose their power. We die with Christ. That means the world and all its attractions no longer have the chief power over us. We have to live in this world, but we now hold things in this world with a loose hand. Sin loses its dominion

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over us. Our total identification is with Christ and our dependence upon Him is the message of the cross.

We die to the world. Here we lose our worldly reputation, and the admiration of man. The cross is '*unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness (1 Corinthians 1.23)*. At the cross we part company with the world as God divided the light from darkness in Creation. The world thinks we are mad, or looks on us with scorn, or patronising pity, or even persecutes us. It was here Paul lost his reputation with the Jews. This is difficult to cope with. Note: *Philippians 2.7*:

'...but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.'

What are we glorying in?

The Apostle Paul used to glory in his great knowledge of the Jewish tradition and ceremonial law. He described himself as a Pharisee of the Pharisees. After his conversion he said, 'I count all this waste compared to Christ!'

Even after his call by grace Paul, left to himself, could have gloried in the manner of his conversion, the miracles accomplished through his ministry, his doctrinal knowledge, his apostolic authority, his teaching ministry and his evangelism. To all the past, and even the blessed present, Paul says, '*God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross...*'

Paul is an example to us in the way he gloried in the cross as a believer by:

- submitting himself to Christ crucified as his own Lord and Saviour;
- praying that the power of the crucified and risen Saviour might rest upon him;
- proclaiming the crucified and risen Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and
- defending the Gospel of the crucified and risen Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Walking in the Spirit

In Christ a new creature

'For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature' v15.

As far as salvation is concerned physical circumcision has no bearing whatsoever. This completely overrules any teaching that supports a works-based salvation.

'For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love' Galatians 5.6.

What really matters is what God has wrought in the regenerating power of His Holy Spirit within us. We should ask these questions:

- Have we been given a new nature that loves God, that is attracted to and depends upon Christ?

'Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new' 2 Corinthians 5.17.

- Has our life been transformed into living for Christ and serving for the glory of God?
- Are we living in the Spirit and bearing the fruit of the Spirit?

'For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them' Ephesians 2.10.

The pathway of spiritual blessing

'And as many as walk according to this rule...' v16a.

This is the rule of depending upon Christ crucified as your only hope of forgiveness and reconciliation, the rule of living a life of gratitude and love to your Saviour for all He has done in His great grace.

'...peace be on them, and mercy' v16b.

Being justified by faith in Christ we have peace with God. A fruit of

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this is an inner peace, a serenity. No longer are we under God's wrath but now fall into His wonderful arms of mercy to sinners.

'...and upon the Israel of God' v16c.

This is the rule and the blessing for the whole Church, the Israel of God, of which Christ is Head.

My peace and assurance is in identification with Christ

'From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus' v17.

This is the end of Paul's argument: Christ is mine and I am His. My suffering is for Christ's sake. Jesus is Lord of the Church – I have nothing to do with those wishing to dethrone Christ. I separate, I distance myself, I reject all those who deny the all-sufficiency of Christ.

Praying for the best for the brethren

'Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen' v18.

Paul concludes on the basis of grace – the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. This marvellous grace to the unworthy has called, saved, justified and kept them. Once again Paul refers to Jesus Christ as Lord. He governs, leads, protects, secures, and provides. May this grace affect your personality within. Do not focus on the outside but on the inside.