

WALKING IN THE SPIRIT

Galatians 5:16

Intro: In our service this morning as I sought to explain our Lord's words in John 4:14, that if the Samaritan woman would drink of the living water, that it would become in her "a well of water springing up into everlasting life." To do so I asked you to turn to John 7:37-39 where the Lord said, speaking to those who had gathered for the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles,

37b If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.

38 He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water (John 7:37b-38).

And then in the next verse the Apostle John explained what the Lord had in mind:

(But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Spirit was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified) (John 7:39).

If we follow this truth on to John 14, we read that when the Lord had met with His disciples in the Upper Room, He said this to them about the Holy Spirit:

16 And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

17 Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you (John 14:16-17).

This was to be a permanent change that the people of God were to experience following the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, just as the Lord had indicated earlier. He was speaking of the permanent indwelling of the Holy Spirit for every believer.

We find that this change took place gradually as the Gospel spread to the Gentile world. But it has now become true of all believers so that "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom. 8:9b). So all who now believe are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Even to the Corinthian church which was in such a deplorable state spiritually, the Apostle Paul, calling them back, wrote to them saying,

19 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?

20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

So it is the clear teaching of Scripture that if you are saved, you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and that, as our Lord said, He has come to live in us forever!

But now let me go back for just a moment to John 14:16 where the Lord called the Holy Spirit, "another Comforter." In Greek they had a word for "another" which meant *another of a different kind*, but they also had a second word for "another" which meant *another of the same kind*. And this is the word that the Lord Jesus used when He spoke of the coming of "another Comforter." He meant that the Holy Spirit was just like He was, another Person, but the same as He. From this we can say that the Holy Spirit is a Person with the same characteristics as the Lord, which would mean that the Holy Spirit is also Deity.

So, when the Lord said, "And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever," He was declaring that the Holy Spirit is a Person, a Member of the Godhead!

We can understand why the disciples were grieved when the Lord spoke of leaving them. We probably would have been grieved too, grieved deeply at even thought that we would not have the Lord with us. But that is why we need to go on to John 16:7 where we read these words:

Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you (John 16:7).

In this verse let me call your attention to the word, "expedient." "It is expedient for you that I go away." He meant that it was going to be profitable for them if He went away. It would be to their advantage. And if we think of what the coming of the Holy Spirit would mean to them, we can better understand the Lord's words.

When the Lord was here on earth, He had become a Man. For the purpose of our redemption He limited Himself to being one place at a time. He laid aside His ability to be omnipresent. But the Holy Spirit, Who would not be in a body of His own, would come to dwell in the bodies of all believers, and this would mean that you and I would have the Holy Spirit with us always. We can leave this building tonight, and go our

separate ways, but each of us will have the Holy Spirit with us just like He did not dwell anyplace else. I know that the Lord Jesus promised that He would be with us. And I know that the Father is with us. But the place of the Holy Spirit is unique in our lives. He remains in us as the seal of our inheritance.

So the Holy Spirit, being like the Lord Jesus, is a Person, and He is God. No Name is joined with the Father and with the Lord Jesus like the Holy Spirit is. The Holy Spirit in His Deity is identical with the Father and the Son, even though all Three are separate Persons. And because of this special relationship that we have with the Holy Spirit, it is very important that we learn as much about Him as we can.

To understand this truth means that it will have a profound effect upon the way we live. That is what the Members of the Godhead intended that it should do to us. It will have a restraining influence on us when we are tempted to sin. It will also have a strengthening influence on us when we face temptation because we know that we have One with us Who can keep us from sinning when we are tempted. He guides us into the truth of the Word of God. He is our Teacher. He gives us the power to do the will of God in order that we might live for the glory of the Lord. It was the Holy Spirit Who convicted us of our sins, and it was the Holy Spirit Who brought us to Christ. It is by the work of the Holy Spirit that we have been born again, "born of the Spirit" as the Lord explained the new birth to Nicodemus. And our Lord summarized all of the work of the Holy Spirit for us when He used the word, "Comforter."

I. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS OUR COMFORTER.

The Greek word translated "Comforter" has been transliterated in English as the word Paraclete. Literally it is one who is called to our side with the idea of helping us, leading us, teaching us, strengthening us, protecting us. And when the Lord Jesus said that the coming of the Holy Spirit was "expedient" for us, He meant not only that the Holy Spirit would be for our advantage, *but He meant that the Holy Spirit was absolutely necessary for us. We will not be the kind of people that we need to be, we will not be able to do what the Lord wants us to do, it certainly will be impossible for us to learn and to know what the Lord wants us to know, unless we have the Holy Spirit.* I hope we all understand this. Looking to the Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary in every detail of our lives.

How thankful we should be every day that we live that we have a personal Counselor with us, our Paraclete, our Helper, twenty-four hours of every day.

Now I haven't forgotten that I announced Galatians 5:16 as my text, and I want to turn to that right now. This is what it says: "Walk in the Spirit." I just want to take that part of the verse to begin with

II. "WALK IN THE SPIRIT" (Gal. 5:16a). THIS IS BASIC CHRISTIAN LIVING

Anybody who knows the Lord, and who reads the Bible, will need to get acquainted with the word, "walk." From a Scriptural standpoint, we can say that it has come into the New Testament from the Old Testament.

In the passages in the OT that will help us with our text, the word is not used for a stroll that a person might take, but it has to do with *the way a person lives!* And so we read in Genesis 5, two times, in verses 22 and 24, that "Enoch walked with God." It does not mean that occasionally they got together, but that they were together all of the time, and that Enoch just had one purpose in his life, and that was *to please God*. The meaning would have been very different if these verses had said, "God walked with Enoch." That would have meant that Enoch was doing the leading, and that God was following him. But it says that "Enoch walked with God." God was doing the leading. God determined how Enoch should live, and Enoch gladly agreed to do what God wanted him to do. AND IT IS STEP BY STEP

In our lives today we are not to determine how we should live as the people of God. That is God's place. We walk with Him. Every detail of our lives is to be brought into agreement with the Word of God. Unfortunately none of us lives that way all of the time, but that should be our objective. And as we grow in our fellowship with the Lord, and in our knowledge of His Word, the way that He wants us to live becomes clearer and clearer. We are to walk with God, as Enoch did.

You will find that verb "walk" used with different prepositions, such as "before Him," and "after Him," but I won't go into those tonight. But I do want to take you to a NT passage which uses the same preposition with regard to the Lord that Paul used in Gal. 5:16. I am speaking of the preposition *in*. And the verse is Colossians 2:6, reading verse 7 with it:

6 As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye

in him:

7 Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving (Col. 2:6-7).

You will often find the same expressions of truth applied to all of the Members of the Godhead, but these make them even more important. To walk in Christ is to recognize that spiritually that is where we are, in Christ, joined eternally to Him, so that our resources for the life we live are all to be found in Christ. What we need, we receive from Him. And what do we need? We need everything – the desire, the ability, the perseverance, the humility, the joy. What we need, we can find in the Lord.

Now the same applies to the Holy Spirit. Paul told the Galatians, “Walk in the Spirit.” He meant that we are to walk in union with Him. We are to look to Him for all that we need to live daily to please Him.

But it also means that we are to walk *in dependence upon Him!* We are to walk by faith, aren't we? And the more we grow in the Lord, the greater will be our dependence upon Him. Spiritual growth means constant and an ever-increasing sense of our dependence upon the Lord. We will be looking more carefully into the Word. We will be praying more. We will make our decisions only after we have the guidance that we need.

However, walking in the Spirit means that we are following Him, not that we are expecting Him to follow us. And as we follow Him we find that what we need after we are saved is a complete change in ourselves, and in our way of living. Remember 2 Cor. 5:17.

So our walk is our life, the way we live. It affects what we are first, and then what we do, what we say, all of the details of our lives. We wouldn't be in Christ if we didn't have a constant need of Christ. And the Holy Spirit would not be in us if we did not stand daily in constant need of Him.

Finally, for tonight, let me point out one more important point.

III. “WALK IN THE SPIRIT” IS A COMMAND FROM GOD.

The order in the Greek is like this, “But I say, in the Spirit walk.” And

the word “walk” is a second person plural, meaning *all of us*. It is a present imperative, which means that it is a command. We have no choice in this matter. And the present tense means *walk, and keep on walking, don't ever stop walking in the Spirit*.

This is a big, big order. We all have failed, and we will probably fail again in the future, the near future. But this is to be our goal. Sin has made all of us independent. You can see this when we see people on TV or read about them in the newspapers who are demanding their rights. Even as little children we didn't like our parents telling us what to do. But as we have gotten older we have wished that we had listened more to them, and perhaps then we wouldn't have made so many mistakes.

Yes, this is a big order, but it is the way of blessing. It is the safest way to go. It is the only way we can be pleasing to the Lord. And what pleases the Lord always brings the greatest and truest joy to our own hearts.

Concl: In the early days of the church, the Apostle Paul went to Ephesus where he asked them, “Have ye received the Holy Spirit since ye believed? Remember those were in the days when the gift of the Holy Spirit was experienced as the Gospel spread to new places. But their answer is one I have often thought of, and I have been thinking of it this week. This was their answer: “We ave not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Spirit: (Acts 19:2).

Now you and I know that we have heard about the Holy Spirit. We have read in the Bible about the Holy Spirit. Perhaps we have read books about the Holy Spirit. But I pose this question for you tonight: Are you living each day, today, for example, so that people know, and you know, and most important of all, that the Lord knows, that you are walking in the Spirit? Did you seek His guidance as you began this day? As you came to the service tonight, did you ask Him to help you as we considered the Word together? Do you have any decisions facing you this week? Have you sought His wisdom in what you are going to decide?

This is a very practical truth, walking in the Spirit. It lies at the heart of what the Christian life is. May the Lord give us a deeper understanding of our own needs, and then give thanks that He has made such a marvelous provision for us by giving us the Holy Spirit as our Comforter, our Helper and Encourager, the One Who is always with us to meet our

Helper and Encourager, the One Who is always with us to meet our needs.

I want to go to with this subject to help us to understand the ways in which the Holy Spirit can and will help us, but it is important that we all know that we have Him, and that we truly know what it is to walk with Him and in Him. May the Lord give us all a great understanding of how much we need the Holy Spirit every day, so we will really look to Him and trust Him as we should.

WHY WE NEED TO WALK IN THE SPIRIT

Galatians 5:16-17

Intro: It was two weeks ago tonight that I began this series on the Holy Spirit. At that time I sought to show that the Holy Spirit is a divine Person, equal in Deity with the Father and the Son. I also sought to show that the Holy Spirit permanently indwells every true believer. We do not pray for the Holy Spirit to come; He immediately comes when we are saved, and He comes to be with us forever. It was probably true of most of us that we were saved a long time, possibly years, before we were aware that the Holy Spirit was in us. He often works in us even though we are not aware of His presence. We are sealed in Christ by the Spirit to secure our salvation. According to 1 Cor. 12:13 we have been baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ, the Church. There is confusion in the Church today about many doctrines, but nowhere is there more confusion than concerning the work of the Holy Spirit.

Although we are all indwelt by the Holy Spirit, yet Paul in his letter to the church at Ephesus exhorted believers to be filled with the Spirit (see Eph. 5:18). And even before that, in Eph. 4:30 Paul told the believers not to grieve the Holy Spirit. Earlier in his first letter to the church at Thessalonica Paul warned the people of God not to quench the Spirit (see 1 Th. 5:19). What a profound difference it will make in our lives when we begin to live knowing that the Spirit of God is in us, day and night, and that He will never leave us.

But Paul could not have been more practical in his teaching than he was when he said, “Walk in the Spirit” (Gal. 5:16). This means that we are not only to walk in dependence upon Him, but to walk under His control and authority. To walk in the Spirit means that there will be things that we will not do as well as things that we will do. To walk in the Spirit is a very personal matter. Paul’s words in our text were addressed to every member in all of the churches of Galatia. This is what Christian living is. It is important for every Christian to learn to walk in the Spirit, and it is essential for true Christian fellowship in the churches.

Those of us who are parents know what an exciting time it is when our children begin to walk. But if there is anything even more exciting, it is when we see a young Christian, not necessarily young in years, but young in the faith, beginning to walk. The Apostle John said in his third epistle,

“I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth” (v. 4). If it gave him joy just to “hear” that they were walking in the truth, what must have been his joy when he *saw* them walking in the truth. He, of course, was talking about walking in obedience to the Word of God, both in a positive way as well as in a negative way.

The word “walk” is an excellent word to describe daily living. Walking is putting one foot in front of the other. It is moving step by step. It requires strength to walk, and it is the Holy Spirit Who gives us that strength.

But how do we know what He wants us to do, or not to do? That is an easy question to answer. The Holy Spirit is the Author of Scripture, and it is by that Word of God that He guides us. He will never lead us to walk contrary to Scripture. He teaches us what it in the Word. But we have a responsibility to read the Word, to pray for understanding, and then to do what the Word tells us to do. Before we were saved we all sought to live the way we wanted to live. But when we were saved, we needed to learn to live in a manner pleasing to God. And that is one reason why the Holy Spirit has been given to us.

So, let me turn to our text and the subject I have chosen from Paul’s words to the Galatian churches here in Galatians 5. He was explaining to those churches **WHY WE NEED TO WALK IN THE SPIRIT.**

The first reason that he gave was:

I. BECAUSE WE STILL HAVE OUR OLD SINFUL NATURE.

See the last part of verse 16. Our “flesh” is not our physical body (although our bodies are involved). No, when Paul spoke of ~~the~~ flesh here he was talking about our sinful natures which are only capable of sin.

Now this leads me to say just a word about why Paul wrote to the Galatian churches. When a person is saved, he soon learns that he can still sin! And this is often an alarming discovery. He is so happy to be saved, to have his sins forgiven, to be a child of God, that he probably feels that the sins which the Holy Spirit used to make him see his need of a Savior, would all be a thing of the past. But then he found out that they were not past. His sinful nature was still with him. He could still be

tempted, and he could still sin. And it is probably true that after we are saved we are more aware of the power of temptation.

So false teachers who are everywhere had come into the churches and they were teaching that the way to be victorious over sin was by putting yourself under the Law. It was as though the Lord in dying for us had taken care of the penalty of sin, but not the power of sin. And so these teachers were claiming that what the Gospel lacked, the Law could make up.

Look at Paul's words in Gal. 1:6-9. (Read.)

But the Law never made anybody perfect. No person was ever saved by keeping the Law of God; the Law only aggravated an already bad situation. "By the law is the knowledge of sin" Paul wrote in Rom. 3:20. And Paul's words in Galatians 1 were very strong because those false teachers were saying, in effect, that the death of Christ on the Cross was not completely sufficient to deal with our problem of sin.

Furthermore, when a person puts himself or herself under certain rules to conquer sin, he is always on the defensive. This temptation comes up, and he tries to deal with that. Then another one comes up, and he tries to deal with that. But Paul's approach is that when we walk in the Spirit, a positive approach, we will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. And notice those words form a very wonderful promise, a promise from God, a promise which is realized as we *walk in the Spirit*, with our dependence upon Him rather than upon ourselves. "The lusts of the flesh" are far too strong for us to handle in our own strength. Besides, there still remains a certain attraction about sin to a believer in Christ.

God never made us to be self-sufficient. It is sin that has made us feel that we can take care of ourselves, that we have no need for God, or Christ, or the Holy Spirit, of the Bible, or the fellowship of the Lord's people! So to get the full answer to our problem with sin, we must go to our Bibles, and there we will see what our need is. We have the Holy Spirit, we must depend upon Him. We must look to Him to strengthen us through the Word. If we are walking in dependence and in submission to the Holy Spirit, the sure promise is, "and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." God hasn't overlooked a single thing in our salvation, and the truth is all in the Word.

But I want you to notice something that may have escaped your notice.

Often a person feels that he or she loves the Lord so much that they would never sin again. I can understand that. But do you remember that Peter felt that way about himself.

Please turn with me in your Bibles to the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 26, and verse 31. Before I read what is here, notice that the disciples had been with the Lord in the Upper Room where they had observed the very first Lord's Supper. What a blessing it must have been to be there, and to conclude that time with the singing of a hymn, a psalm. And it was as they went toward the mount of Olives and the Garden of Gethsemane, that the Lord continued to talk to them. Now notice the reading from verse 31 down to verse 35. (Read.)

Now move on to verse 69 in this same twenty-sixth chapter of Matthew, and follow the text as I read. (Read Matt. 26:69-75.)

You see, Peter didn't know his own heart. And he didn't know how really weak he was, or how strong his fleshly nature was. Matthew tells us at the end concerning Peter, "And he went out, and wept bitterly."

Now the part about our passage in Galatians 5 that I want you to notice in particular, is where does the conflict start – with the Holy Spirit, or with the flesh? *It starts with the flesh! Until the Holy Spirit came into us at salvation, the flesh had its way. We may have restrained ourselves in some ways because of our pride, but even that is the flesh. But when the Holy Spirit comes to abide in us, the flesh opposes Him, and the child of God becomes very conscious of a conflict raging within himself. The Holy Spirit is there to enable us to please God; the flesh remains to fight fiercely against the Spirit. And the conflict between the two can never be resolved. The flesh is not changed, but when we submit to the Holy Spirit as a way of life, victory over sin can be ours!*

So we soon learn that we are engaged in spiritual warfare – the flesh within us, the world around us, and Satan using both of them. And so the flesh strongly seeks to keep us from doing that which is pleasing to God. Paul, in Romans 7, elaborated on this.

And so the second reason that we need to walk in the Spirit is because:

II. ONLY THE HOLY SPIRIT CAN GIVE US VICTORY OVER OUR FLESH (Gal. 5:16 – the promise in the second part of the verse).

Notice that in verse 18 we have a second statement which is the equivalent of walking in the Spirit. It is to be led by the Spirit. The power to overcome sin does not come from the Law, but from the Holy Spirit.

Going on down to verse 25 (I will come back at another time to the verses I am passing over), Paul said, “If,” or *since*, “we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” There is no question but that we have life in the Spirit of God. The big question is, Are we walking in the Spirit? And that is not a question that we can answer once for all time, but it is a question that needs to be in our minds and hearts constantly.

Concl: When plans were made to establish a theological school in Dallas, Texas back in the early 1920's, Lewis Sperry Chafer, the founder and first president had asked Dr. W. H. Griffith Thomas to teach theology. But before the school opened that year, Dr. Griffith Thomas was called to glory. But he was well known for his works on Genesis, John, Romans, and a book he called, “The Holy Spirit of God.” At one place in that book, he summarized the work of the Holy Spirit as taught in Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians. I don't have the time to give you all that he said about Galatians, but this will give you an idea of the value of his work.

In Gal. 3:2 we have the Holy Spirit received. And he added to that Gal. 4:6. Those verses had to do with the past in their experience. The verses we have been considering in Gal. 5 have to do with the present – vv. 16, 17, 18, and 25. And then with regard to the future he pointed to Gal. 5:5.

And a solemn warning along with a glorious promise is issued in Gal. 6:7-9. You and I can get along without a lot of things in this pilgrimage of our here on earth, but we cannot get along without the Holy Spirit as our Comforter and Power, nor can we get along without the Word He has given us as a lamp to our feet and a light to our pathway. Cf. Psalms 119:105). Let us walk in the Spirit that we may live to the glory of God.

AN ENEMY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Galatians 5:16-21

Intro: It was through the ministry of the Holy Spirit that you and I have been saved. We have been “born of the Spirit” (John 3:5-6). The Holy Spirit is the Member of the Godhead Who has given us the Word of God. “Men of God spake as they were moved,” or *carried along*, “by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21). The Holy Spirit came to indwell us when we were saved. Our bodies are “the temple of the Spirit” (1 Cor. 6:19). He has been given to us by God to dwell with us forever (cf. John 14:16). And it is He Who teaches us the Word that He has given to us. He guides us into all of the truth of the Word. And in particular He delights to take the things of Christ, and show them to us (cf. John 14:26; 15:26; 16:14). And what He teaches us is what the Lord Jesus has told Him to teach us (John 16:12-13). And it is the Holy Spirit who enables us to live lives that are pleasing to God. We are to be continually filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18). And it is the Holy Spirit Who unites us together in a fellowship that is both pleasing to God and a constant blessing to all of us. It is very proper to speak of God our Father as also our Friend. And the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior, is certainly our Friend. And could we say less than that about the Holy Spirit Who has been instrumental in our salvation, and Who has taught us all that we know about the Word of God? Surely such a Person as the Holy Spirit is must be called One of our greatest friends. Then it also must be true that whatever is His enemy must be our enemy too.

Our text tells us that if we walk in the Spirit, we will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. And it also tells us that “the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, . . . so that ye cannot do the things that ye would,” that is, that you otherwise would do. The flesh is not the only enemy of the Holy Spirit, but it is certainly a major enemy. And we cannot afford to ignore the flesh and its influence in our lives if we are learn to walk in the Spirit.

What is an enemy? It is one who is hostile toward us, and who is intent on injuring us. Prov. 14:1.

There is a certain tendency in all of us that is evident even before we are saved, and it also shows itself after we are saved. That tendency concerning salvation is to want to do something is to want to do something. Luke tells us about two men who came to the Lord, and asked him the same question. One was a lawyer; the other was a rich man. Their question was, “Master,” or “Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”

(Luke 10:25 and 18:18). When Paul and Silas were in that Philippian jail, and the Lord shook the doors of the prison open with an earthquake, after the jailor was assured that all the prisoners were still there, he fell down trembling before Paul and Silas, and asked them, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" The answer in all three cases was different, but they all amounted to what Paul and Silas gave as the answer: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (Acts 16:31). Believing in Christ is not doing anything for Christ, or God, but believing in Christ is trusting Him to do for you what you cannot do for yourself.

When it comes to living as a Christian, we are inclined to think that we need to do something, and then perhaps call upon the Lord in case we fall short of what we are trying to do. But Paul said, "Walk in the Spirit," that is, *depend upon the Spirit*, "and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." But we still may try to put ourselves under some kind of a law which we are supposed to fulfill. The early Christians thought that the Mosaic Law was the answer to sin. It certainly told them what to do, and what not to do (primarily the latter), but sin is never conquered by the Law.

We see this tendency on the part of city, state, and national government. Our politicians think that the answer to crime is law, and more law. But we just have to pick up our newspaper or turn on the TV and listen to a newscast to see plenty of evidence that the law, whatever that law might be, does not solve the problem of crime.

The writer of the book of Hebrews wrote:

For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God (Heb. 7:19).

Paul wrote in Romans 7 that "the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just and good" (v. 12). There is nothing wrong with the Law of God. But Paul found that the Law condemned him; it did not save him. And so he asked, "Was then that which is good made death unto me?"

And his answer was this, in the same verse:

God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful (Rom. 7:13).

And then as we go on into chapter 8 of Romans, we read these words which tie the problem of sin with our text in Gal. 5:16:

3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and

for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit (Rom. 8:3-4).

So sin is not conquered by the Law, but by walking, living “after the Spirit.” We are not perfected by what we do in obeying any law, even the Law of God. But we are perfected by trusting in the Holy Spirit to give us deliverance.

By way of defining “the lust of the flesh,” the Apostle Paul gives a list of the sins of the flesh in verses 19, 20 and 21. And he said that they are “manifest,” by which he meant that what they are, is *apparent*, or *obvious*. We are all acquainted with these. The Bible calls them *sins*; it seems now that the favorite term for sin is *an alternate lifestyle*. That helps people get rid of the idea of sin, and ultimately the idea of God. *So you can see that one of the greatest enemies of the Holy Spirit is right inside of you and me!* The flesh is what we are without Christ. Paul did not mean that every person is guilty of all of these sins, nor did he mean that everybody is as bad as he can be. But what he did mean is that the capability of committing any or all of these sins is in every one of us!

— And to whatever extent we are not guilty, the glory goes to God, and not to us.

Let us spend a few minutes looking at:

I. THE WORKS OF THE FLESH (Gal. 5:19-21).

It may be that the Apostle Paul was seeking to classify four general areas in which the works, or sins, of the flesh fall. First, immorality. Second, false religions. Third, social sins – that is, sins which affect other people and are directed at them. Fourth, sins of excess.

In the first there are four. In the second there are two. In the third there are nine. In the fourth there are two. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list, but a representative list which any reasonable person would admit are great problems generation after generation.

— Let us consider the first:

A. Immorality – Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lascivi-

ousness.

— The word “adultery” is not in some MSS, and so it may be missing in some of the translations that you are using. But it is in the Received Text, meaning that some MSS have it. If the word were not in the best texts, it is included in the word “fornication.” It is often difficult to distinguish between the two words anyway – adultery and fornication. But a general distinction between the two often says that adultery is an illicit relationship between married people, and that fornication has to do with people who are not married.

I was talking to a lady the other day about a woman who was living with a man to whom she was not married while she was married to another man. And this lady’s response was, “Well, if it is what they both wanted to do, I guess it is alright!” And that is the way many people feel about such relationships. They don’t call it sin, but it is sin in God’s sight. It doesn’t make any difference if there is agreement between the parties involved, *it is wrong! It is sin! And it will bring the judgment of God.* Such a relationship between a man and a woman is reserved for marriage, and any violation, heterosexual or homosexual, is positively forbidden by God!

— And have you noticed how “uncleanness” has become so common on TV that you can hardly listen even to a commercial without running into some dirty remark, or profanity. How many times have you heard the warning on TV that “parental guidance is recommended.” My question is, if it is not fit for children, what makes us think it is OK for adults? The word “uncleanness” covers all impurity.

“Lasciviousness” is unbridled, uncontrolled lust. There is a progression in these words. And they show that sin becomes a tyrant, and people who give themselves to such are enslaved by their passions.

Now one group of sins is not exclusive of the other groups. Sins often go in many forms. People think that they can stop whenever they want, but experience proves that they cannot.

— Now for the second group:

B. Religious sins.

Here the Apostle Paul mentioned “idolatry” and “witchcraft.”

When Paul was giving his final charge to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4, he said this in the first four verses:

- 1 I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;
- 2 Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.
- 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;
- 4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables (2 Tim. 4:1-4).

Isn't it amazing when you read the OT to see how constantly the people of Israel were guilty of worshiping idols and heathen gods? We have idolatry in our country today on a large scale. And you see the Muslim religion building their Mosques in America as well as all over the world. Within just a few block of our building here I know of at least three Buddhist temples, or other Oriental religions. And think of the false cults that are growing by leaps and bounds all over our country. And add to this the occult, people consulting with fortune tellers and soothsayers. And it is getting harder and harder to hear the Word of God. Churches where the Word of God used to be taught with great blessing, have turned aside from the Word to the sensational and entertaining. Truth really doesn't mean much in our country today, especially the truth of God.

All of this comes from the flesh, and it appeals to the flesh. So the flesh can be religious, but it always corrupts the true worship of God, and turns away from it.

For want of a better word I have called this third group:

C. Social sins – hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders.

There are a few of these where we might need some help in understanding just what the Apostle Paul meant. We understand “hatred..” It can arise suddenly toward people who don't even know each other. It is a compan-

ion of “wrath.” We are getting acquainted with some new words, such as “road rage.” This is a spirit of hostility which is so prevalent today in our society. Two people who disagree may resort to the use of weapons to settle their dispute.

“Variance” speaks of the way people argue with each other. A discussion can easily turn into a quarrel, and a quarrel into a full-fledge dispute.

“Emulations” are jealousies, that which often happens in a home where a husband or wife becomes suspicious of another. There is always the tendency to think the worst. It is often seen when friends become enemies.

The Greeks had more than one word for anger, or wrath. This word, translated here as “wrath,” speaks of a person who can fly off suddenly in a fit of anger, and then just as quickly cool off. But the problem is that he or she will do something during that time that they will regret for the rest of their lives, like killing a child, or injuring a loved one.

“Strife” speaks of the very thing that we are going to be facing from now until November. Not all of politics is strife, but much of it is. This is when a person seeks to put himself ahead, but usually by deceitful and other unfair measures. The purpose is to divide people where they may at the present time be no division. Often these social injuries are never healed.

Paul put “strife” alongside of “seditions.” By “seditions” he meant a deliberate attempt to divide people. The history of Israel revealed much of that, people who were jealous of the position that Moses had. The Spirit of God unites, but always in the truth. The flesh divides, and injures.

“Heresies” are divisions, such as developed, for example, in the Corinthian church where some were saying they were of Paul, others of Apollos, and so on.

And finally in this category we have “envyings.” This is jealousy, and was the sin of the Jews in their relationship with Christ, and it is not by chance that Paul mentioned “murders” next because the two are often related. The envy of the Jews led them to the murder of Christ.

So we can see in these a picture of the very problems that we are facing in our society today. Where the Spirit does not control the hearts of men, the flesh does. And that is what makes the rejection of the truth and the Gospel such a disastrous thing with dire consequences. We are reaping the harvest in our country today of deliberately turning away from the Lord.

The final two: “drunkenness” and “revellings.” I have chosen to call these:

D. Sins of excess.

We all know what “drunkenness” is. “Revellings” is related to it. Thayer in his lexicon gives this description of “revellings”:

A nocturnal and riotous procession of half-drunken and frolicsome fellows who after supper parade through the streets with torches and music in honor of Bacchus or some other deity, and sing and play before houses of male and female friends; hence, used generally of feasts and drinking parties that are protracted until late at night and indulge in revelry

I can't understand why our government gets so upset about smoking, but does little or nothing about drinking. Drinking is usually involved in deadly traffic accidents, in murders, and this often includes innocent wives or children, or both. It has ruined the health of countless numbers of people, and yet the plague continues with its destruction and death.

Paul's conclusion regarding these works of the flesh:

II. A TWOFOLD SUMMARY.

One of these is at the end of verse 16, and the other is at the end of verse 21.

A. The gracious promise (Gal. 5:16b).

B. A solemn warning (Gal. 5:21b).

Concl: There are really only two ways for people to live: in the flesh, or in the Spirit. The flesh leads to death, eternal death. The Spirit

leads to life everlasting. Sometimes people who know the Lord, and are truly born again, try to cross over the line, and that is why Paul's words to the Galatians are of continuing importance for us today. I repeat: when we are saved, we are delivered from the power of the flesh. But it is possible for us to step over the line and get ourselves into trouble. If a person lives on the wrong side of the line, it is evidence that they are not saved, even though they profess to be. But the message is clear for all of us who know the Lord: only the Holy Spirit can keep us from sin, and therefore we need to learn to walk in the Spirit that we might not become victims of the flesh.

Let us make sure that our professed faith in Christ is real.

HOW TO WALK IN THE SPIRIT

Galatians 5:16

Intro: I don't know who first thought of graduation from school at any level as *a commencement*, but whoever it was, he ought to be rewarded with a half a dozen of doctor's degrees. It indicates, and commencement speakers have recognized this for many years, that graduation is not an end in itself, but it only brings us to a new beginning. It is a starting point for greater things, new achievements, higher goals. From a human standpoint, the word *commencement* indicates that we must never stop learning, never stop growing mentally, never stop making progress as human beings nor in the particular field for which we have been trained. The person who graduates thinking that he has arrived, has usually failed before he goes any farther.

This same principle applies in the Christian life. Salvation is wonderful. Salvation is a transforming work of God in the soul. Salvation not only means that our sins are forgiven, but also that we have received a new life, eternal life, the very life of God Himself. Salvation means that we have become the children of God. We have been born from above, born again. As Paul told the Corinthians, "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). *But this is only a beginning.* When the Apostle Paul spoke of walking in the Spirit, he was speaking of the great truth of edification. Salvation is our entrance into a new life, a life with God and with Christ and with the Holy Spirit. Peter expressed this truth in the second chapter of his first epistle when he said this:

1 Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings,

2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

3 If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious (1 Peter 2:1-3).

He was not addressing them as newborn babies in the family of God, but he was saying that they should continue to have the same desire for the Word of God that a newborn baby has for milk. We must always be growing spiritually. When Paul wrote to the Philippians he had known the Lord for many years, but he did not believe that he had arrived at the goal for which he had been saved, and he knew that he would not arrive until he was finally with the Lord.

All through the Word of God the life of the people of God is presented in

many different ways, and the one in Galatians 5:16 is one of the most important, and one of the most descriptive: “Walk in the Spirit.”

— In other passages Paul has told us to “walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4). In 1 Cor. 5:7 he said, “For we walk by faith, not by sight.” And in Eph. 4:17 he said, “That ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles, in the vanity of their mind.” But they were to “walk worthy of the vocation” by which they had been called (Eph. 4:1). Paul prayed for the Colossians that they would “walk worthy of the Lord” seeking to please Him in every part of their lives. And he said the same thing to the Thessalonians in 1 Thessalonians 4:1. Look for that word “walk” in the New Testament. You will see how extremely important it is. It always speaks of the way we live, but it also speaks of what we are because what we are determines how we are going to live. The Law, to which many of the Galatians had turned, could tell them how to live, but it did not help them. It did not empower them in any way. And that is why the Galatians needed to understand that they needed to “walk in the Spirit.”

— When you think of walking in the Spirit, notice those passages of Scripture that speak of our relationship with the Spirit. We know that if we are truly saved, we have the Spirit, but do we know that we are to “be filled with the Spirit”? See Eph. 5:18. And do we know that we are not to grieve the Spirit? See Eph. 4:30. And have you noticed that single verse in 1 Thess. 5 which tells us not to quench the Spirit? See verse 19. We all should know that the more we understand of the Word of God, the more we will be able to understand what it means to “walk in the Spirit.” But tonight I want to make some suggestions which I trust will be helpful to you as they have been to me in seeking to walk in the Spirit. And let me encourage you to meditate much on the Word because it is in thinking about the Scriptures that the Spirit of God will open the truth to us, and then guide us in obeying it.

Taking the book of Galatians as the basis of my message tonight I would suggest that first you and I have:

I. A PROBLEM THAT WE CANNOT HANDLE.

— Paul was speaking of “the lusts of the flesh” with which we were born. And, as we have seen, he has given us a list of some of them in verses 19, 20, and 21.

James Buchanan, a Scot who was born early in the nineteenth century, wrote a very helpful book on the Holy Spirit. And among other good things, he said this:

Regeneration does not destroy sin in the soul; it dethrones sin; it breaks its power; but it does not extirpate or expel it from the heart; it is still there; not as a tyrant, but as a traitor, ever ready to deceive and seduce, and then most likely to succeed when we are least sensible of its presence, and least watchful against its wiles (p. 240).

One of the things that you notice when you read the Puritans who preceded Mr. Buchanan's day, was that they were very conscious that they were sinners, saved sinners, but still capable of sin. And they hated sin, and sought the blessing of God constantly that He would keep them from sin. The Apostle Paul said what we all need to tell ourselves every day that we live, and perhaps many times a day. He said, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. 7:18). We live in a world where we constantly hear how good we are, and that there is nothing that we are not able to do it we set out to do it. We hear people talk about some product, and then said, "I am worth it."

You and I are like Jacob; we are not worthy of the least of the Lord's blessing. See Gen. 32:10. But it took him about twenty years to learn how unworthy he was. The only reason we haven't done a lot worse than we have in life is only because of the restraining power of the Holy Spirit. I am still a sinner, and so are you. And we need to keep this in mind. When the Galatians turned to the law for their edification and sanctification it was as though they were saying, "I can live for God if He will just tell me what He wants me to do. But they couldn't! And neither can we! We need to know what to do and what not to do, but we need a great amount of help to get it done. We can't do it alone.

The second point I would mention is this:

II. WE NEED TO MEDITATE ON THE TRUTH THAT WE ARE INDWELT BY THE HOLY SPIRIT.

I doubt if there is any truth that we can really appreciate and understand just by reading it over a few times in our Bibles. Reading it is important. We need to know about our relationship to the Holy Spirit. But only by a

prayerful and thoughtful consideration of this truth will it really be impressed upon us as the truth. “We walk by faith,” not by feeling. If we believe the truth, the feeling of enjoyment and peace will come, but first we must believe, and believing itself is a gift from God to really understand that we have a Member of the Godhead actually living in us.

I am appreciating more and more the need to meditating on the Word of God. The saints of past days made this a part of their lives. I read this past week of a man who lived long ago, dying when he was only 19 years old, but he often spent an hour a day meditating on a single verse of Scripture.

And then let us notice a third point.

III. NOTICE THAT “WALK IN THE SPIRIT” IS NOT JUST A GOOD IDEA, BUT A COMMAND.

And who was it who told Paul to write this? I am sure that he believed in the importance of this command, and that he was obeying it in his own life, but did he just come up with this idea by himself?

Well, if you know how we got the Scriptures, you know that Paul wrote, according to Peter, as he was carried along by the Holy Spirit to do so. In one of our memory verses for Sunday School we have learned that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God”! This is the Word of God. God is telling us by the Holy Spirit and the Apostle Paul what is absolutely necessary if we are to have victory over our sins. We must be what God wants us to be, and we must do what God wants us to do.

And since this is a command for all of us, *not to be walking by the Spirit and in dependence upon Him, is sin!*

It is so easy to read our Bibles thinking of what the people in days past needed, but we fail to apply it to ourselves. And one of the greatest of all sins is self-confidence because that is nothing but pride. One of the best and most comforting signs of progress in the Christian life is a sense of our dependence upon the Members of the Godhead. This command is not just for the crisis times in our lives, but Paul was talking about the way we are to live every day. And perhaps if we are learning to live this way, then when the crises come, they won’t be as devastating to us as they

would otherwise be.

Now where do we get this information.

IV. HOW DOES THE SPIRIT TEACH US HOW TO LIVE?

If we are going to walk in the Spirit, in dependence upon Him, we must realize that the will of God for our lives is in the Book! So we have the Author of Scripture with us twenty-four hours of every day. And He is the One Who will guide us into all of the Word of God. Every time you and I sit down to read the Word, we need to pause for just a moment or two and ask the Lord for the guidance and blessing of the Spirit of God as we read. It is in the Word of God that our life, the life of the people of God, is described. We say that we believe in the sufficiency of Scripture. Do we believe, as Peter said, that God has given us all things that pertain unto life and godliness? Let me read to you what he wrote in 2 Peter 1:2-4:

2 Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,

3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:

4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust (2 Peter 1:2-4).

In the light of what Peter said here, do you think that any situation could possibly arise in any of our lives, but what we would find the answer to our needs in the Bible. I am not saying that the Bible will tell us in so many words where we should live, or what job we should seek, or who we should marry, or where we ought to go to school. But it tells us to be yielded to the Lord, and to wait upon Him, and He will in His own time show us what we should do. "All things that pertain unto life and godliness."

So to walk in the Spirit means to walk according to the Word of God. So we need to read it, and meditate on it, and pray for understanding, and then trust the Spirit of God to enable us to live according to the Word. He is in us to teach us, and then to empower us to do the will of God. You and I have things that we do every day. We get up, those of us who are

men need to shave, we get dressed, we have breakfast, then off to work for many, or housework is to be done. Our lives are full. There are many things that take up our time. But I have found, and I am sure you have too, that if you don't make time for Bible reading and prayer, there just won't be time to do it. The days somehow are full.

But reading the Word and spending time in prayer, even though it may sometimes have to be brief – these are the most important things that we have to do! And if it is important that we have food for our bodies every day, it is equally important that we have food for our souls every day – not in books written about the Bible, but the Bible itself!!!

Let me give you an added word about the influence that the Bible is to have upon our lives. It is brought out by the Apostle Paul in Romans 8, verses 5 and 6. This is what Paul had to say, again directed by the Holy Spirit:

5 For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.

6 For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace (Rom. 8:5-6).

Could you, could I, be described as a spiritually minded person? Do we think about the Lord constantly? Or are we so occupied with the world and the things of the world that the Lord has a very small place in our thoughts and plans and aspirations? When problems arise, what do we think about first? Do we ask, "What does the Lord have for me in this?" A spiritually minded believer wrote in a book that I read as a young Christian which said, "Never allow anything in your life, or even in your thoughts, which makes it difficult for you to get back to the Word of God." Think on those words, "To be spiritually minded is life and peace." The promise is that God will keep us in perfect peace when our minds are "stayed" upon Him. Our first thoughts in the day should be of the Lord, and the same can be said about the last thoughts that we have before we go to sleep. This is all a part of walking in the Spirit.

Let me add another word which I hope will help us.

VI. THE LESSON TO BE LEARNED FROM GALATIANS 5:22-23.

The Holy Spirit had Paul put these words here. I am sure that at some time most of you have memorized them. What do they have to do with walking in the Spirit, and not fulfilling the lusts of the flesh?

I believe it is simply this: If we are walking in the Spirit, we are going to be primarily concerned about what the Holy Spirit is doing *in us*, and not in just what He is doing *for us*.

The Lord has to remind me of this quite often. We face a problem. Or we are concerned about someone who is very dear to us. It seems that something is always coming up that is not to our liking. What would the Holy Spirit have us realize in such times which come to all of us? The fruit of the Spirit (and notice that it is singular) has to do with *character*, not developing what we have, but working in us that which He has for us. “The fruit of the Spirit” is the life of God in us. The Holy Spirit is preparing us for heaven and for glory. And so actually the greatest work that He can do for us is to make us like our Savior. When you read about these nine characteristics, the fruit of the Spirit, think about the Lord Jesus, and then compare yourself with Him. The trials we face are designed by God for our good. And so walking in the Spirit means that we submit to God’s dealings with us, and look for ways in which He is changing us to be more like our dear Lord and Savior.

Concl: There is so much for all of us to learn about walking in the Spirit.

But it is important for all of us to know that this is the will of God for all of us. And remember that spiritual growth is measured in terms, not of our self-sufficiency or independence, but upon our humility and dependence upon the Holy Spirit to make us like our Lord, and to enable us to live for His glory.

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Part 1

Galatians 5:22-23

Intro: For the past four Sunday nights we have been considering together what it means to *walk in the Spirit*. We have all been reminded again, or possibly some have learned for the first time, that the Bible word *walk* has to do with *the way we live*. We noticed that the first time this word is used in the Bible was in connection with that remarkable man in the Old Testament, Enoch – the man who never died, but was translated from earth to heaven. The way it is stated in Gen. 5:24 is that “he was not, for God took him.” In connection with all of the others it is said, “And he died.” But not so with Enoch. Twice in that chapter, in verses 22 and 24 it is stated that “Enoch walked with God.” He lived the way God wanted all of his people to live. He did what God wanted him to do. And while it is true that God walked with Enoch, it is important to note that it is specifically said twice, that “Enoch walked with God.” God was the One Who determined how and where they would walk. The Lord set the direction, and Enoch walked with God.

The same is stated of Noah in Gen. 6:9: “Noah walked with God.” He “found grace in the eyes of the Lord,” and he “was a just man and perfect in his generations,” and he manifested all of these traits by the way he lived. Both of these men stood out in their generations as being different from most people, and the difference is stated in those words, that they “walked with God.”

In the NT we find the same emphasis although different words are used with the word *walk*. And sometimes a different preposition is used. The one we have been thinking about is the exhortation which the Apostle Paul gave to the Galatian churches: “Walk in the Spirit.” “In” we know from many NT passages means *in union with*, but it can also mean, *in dependence upon*. Before the Lord Jesus died, He told His disciples that the Holy Spirit Who had been “with” them, would soon be “in” them, and *in them forever*. And that was true following the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2. So since then, and up to the present hour, every person who has been saved has been indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

Now the Holy Spirit makes His presence known in our lives in several outstanding ways. Probably the first that we experience before we even

know what is going on, is by the hunger that He gives us to know the Word of God, and by the understanding that we are given little by little.

— A second way that we experience the presence of the Holy Spirit is in the way He makes us uncomfortable about sin, and actually delivers us from sins to which we used to be in bondage. But the deliverance becomes even more obvious in our lives when we learn and obey the truth of Gal. 5:16 and 17 which we have been considering. We learn that the Holy Spirit is in us, and that when we walk “in the Spirit,” trusting Him, and doing what He wants us to do, experience even greater deliverance from the sins which used to hold us as slaves. And the way we know what the Holy Spirit wants us to do, and what He does not want us to do, is by reading the book of which He is the Author. And of course I am referring to the Bible. We have everything in Scripture that is necessary for us to know if we would be pleasing to God.

But a third way that we experience the presence of the Holy Spirit is in connection with the text I want to consider with you in several Sunday evening services. And it is very significant that it comes in this same fifth chapter of Galatians. Now we are going to be thinking about “the fruit of the Spirit.” And this is what Paul wrote in Gal. 5:22-23:

— 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

Genesis 1 tells us that when God came to the creation of the man and the woman on the sixth day, this is what He said, and this is what He did:

26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them (Gen. 1:26-27).

— Books have been written on what it means that man was created in the image and likeness of God, but perhaps in a few words we can give the gist of what God meant. He did not mean that God has a physical body like we do, but it means that man received some of the characteristics of God. And we see a resemblance of those characteristics today even in people who do not know the Lord. People can be very loving, and joyful,

— and peaceful, longsuffering, gentle, and what we would have to call good. And you could go on through what we read in Gal. 5:22 and 23 and say that we know people who demonstrate this or that characteristic. But we never see them perfectly in any unregenerate person, and always they are defiled by other things, such as, selfish ambition, or pride, or an attempt to get even with someone. Sometimes greed enters in because people will be kind expecting something in return.

But when we are saved, it is God's purpose for all of us that once again the image of God in us might be restored. We are predestined to be conformed to the image of God's Son. We are saved to become like Christ. You find all of these characteristics *in their perfection* in Christ. And so the more we become like Christ, the greater these characteristics will be seen in us.

But it is beyond our ability to produce them. That is one of the major reasons that the Holy Spirit has been given to us. *They are "the fruit of the Spirit" in us!*

— So the Holy Spirit, according to Galatians 5, has been given to keep us from fulfilling the lusts of the flesh (because we all are still capable of sin), but in more positive ways He has been given to produce "fruit" in our lives which are found in their perfection in Christ. And these are love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. And all of these add up to *holiness* – a holy character which, in turn, produces holy living.

The other day I was reading a book on this text, written by a man of God back in the early 1800's, and he made a comment which could just as easily have been made in the year 2000. This is what he said:

In the care of the church to establish and defend sound doctrine, the ethical part of Christianity is sometimes neglected. It is, therefore, necessary that definitions which have become obscured, should be re-impressed, and the detail of a Christi life state in so simple a manner, that "the wayfaring man, though a fool, may not err therein" (). The author has long believed that the teaching of truth is the best way to refute error, and that there is no argument so convincing of the divinity of religion, *as the life of a good man* [italics mine]. He pass no censure upon his brethren who have girded on their armor, and are fighting lustily in the area

— of controversy; but he thinks he has made no error in keeping aloof from the such conflict, which he endeavors to teach those whom the Head of the Church has placed under his care, “to do justice, to love mercy, and walk humbly with God (), learning of Him Who was “meek and lowly in heart” (), to be “holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners” () (Bethune, George W., *The Fruit of the Spirit*, p. x).

— The state of the church generally today shows that there is no great interest in a holy life. The professing church has taken on more and more of the ways of the world, so that it is difficult to find people who really are interested in walking with God, and in walking in the Spirit. God’s Word is just as true today as it ever has been, and just as necessary for us today as ever. And when we read about “the fruit of the Spirit,” it is important for us to realize that such holiness of life is only possible by the Spirit. We cannot live such a life without the teaching and guidance and strengthening of the Holy Spirit. It is extremely important that we understand the work of the Father. It is equally important that we understand the work of the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. But it is just as important that we understand the work of the Spirit, not only as it relates to our lives as believers, but as the work of the Spirit relates to our ministry in the world. A reading of the Bible confirms the statement in the quotation that I read to you to the effect, that the most powerful and convincing testimony that we have in the church and even in the world, is the testimony of a holy life.

But let me add another word.

Just because the characteristics that we are going to be considering in the coming weeks, are called “the fruit of the Spirit,” this does not mean that we have no responsibility in this.

— The Galatian churches were in trouble, in trouble spiritually. Paul did not express his thankfulness for them as he usually would do in beginning of this epistle. In fact, he expressed alarm. In his introduction you can see (in chapter 1, verses 3, 4, and 5) that false teachers had been amazing successful in turning the people of God away from even the simple Gospel of the grace of God. (Read Gal. 1:3-5.)

And then note the judgment that he pronounced on the false teachers in

verses 8 and 9. (Read.)

What was their error? Why did the Apostle Paul consider those churches throughout Galatia to be in such trouble? Because they had allowed certain teachers of the Law to turn them away from Christ, and from the Gospel, to seek their perfection by obedience to the Law.

Now there are two things that the Law cannot do. The Law cannot save. Neither can the Law sanctify. The Law shows us our sin, but it cannot take away our sin. Instead we stand condemned before the Law of God. And I think that you will always find that when people think either that they are saved, or that they are sanctified by the Law, *they have very little or nothing to say about the Holy Spirit!* Here in Galatians Paul has a lot to say about the Holy Spirit. I hope that some day soon you will read through this epistle and mark every reference to the Spirit. For example, note Gal. 3:1-5. And then read Gal. 3:13-14. Then read Gal. 4:1-7.

I was talking a moment ago about our responsibility in our lives as Christians. The first responsibility that we have is to get acquainted with the Word of God. There is a lot of weird teaching in churches today just because believers listen to what some preachers tell them who seem to be having a lot of success, but they don't take the time to search the Scriptures for themselves. We need to know that we have been given the Holy Spirit because we need Him, and we need to depend upon Him to enable us to do what God tells us to do. I repeat, it is just as impossible for us to sanctify ourselves, as it was for us to save ourselves. Sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit. Christian character is out of reach for us until we learn to walk in the Spirit. And the Holy Spirit produces that character in us as "fruit."

What the Lord Jesus said about fruit when He was with His disciples just before the Cross, applies to what we are learning from Galatians. He said that He was the Vine, we are the branches, but a branch cannot bear fruit by itself. It has to be vitally linked to the Vine. And it is the work of the Holy Spirit to keep our relationship with the Lord free from all obstructions. The Holy Spirit was given to us to show us the things of Christ, and a major point in the things of Christ has to do with "the fruit of the Spirit."

So we read the Word. And we pray. And we look to others for help who

are straight as far as the Gospel is concerned. As I have said before, salvation is the big word which encompasses all of the work of God in us. It includes our coming to Christ, our transformation into the people of God. It includes our growth in holiness, our sanctification. And salvation finally leads to our ultimate glorification. And it is all under the work and control and blessing of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

If we desire to be holy, it is because the Holy Spirit has put that desire in our hearts. And so we need to seek what God has provided for us. In the words of the Apostle Paul, we need to be doing exactly what he said he was doing in the words we find in his great epistle to the Philippians, chapter 3. Here we see how greatly Paul felt his own responsibility in seeking the goal for which he had been saved.

Read Phil. 3.

Concl: As we learn about the fruit of the Spirit, we are going to be learning about Christ. Let us approach this subject humbly, prayerfully, and with real submission to the Holy Spirit. I truly believe that we, like many who have gone this way before us, can profit immensely in our own relationship with the Lord as we confidently trust the Spirit not only to show us the things of Christ, but to make them a part of our own lives as the Lord intends that they should be.

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS LOVE

Galatians 5:22-23 - #2

Intro: It was on the thirteenth of August that I last spoke on this theme of “walking in the Spirit,” and so a few words of review are probably in order as we look at the steps which have led us to these two very important verses in Galatians 5.

Most of us know that the book of Galatians was written to a group of churches in the Roman province of Galatia, which was located in what is now the country of Turkey. It had been a church where the Lord had blessed the preaching of the Gospel, but soon after people were saved the churches became corrupted by Judaizing teachers who brought in their emphasis on the Mosaic law. This had a devastating effect on the churches because it not only affected the preaching of the Gospel, but also the teaching of holiness. There was a subtle moving away from the teaching of the Cross of Christ, and also of the ministry of the Spirit. As I mentioned before in this series, the Law never saved anyone, nor has the Law sanctified anyone. You can usually tell where a church stands, or where an individual believer stands, by finding out the place that the teaching of the Cross has in their lives, as well as the ministry of the Spirit. And it is important to know what the Bible teaches on these two great truths so as to tell if one or both of these truths is being presented in a way that is different from the Scriptures.

People are not delivered from the power of sin in their lives by putting themselves under the Law. The Law helps us to understand what sin is, but it is powerless to deliver us from sin. We can only be delivered from the power of sin in our lives by learning to walk in the Spirit! That is what the Apostle Paul was teaching in Gal. 5:16. To walk in the Spirit means to walk in dependence upon the Spirit, trusting Him to empower us against the sin that is in our hearts.

When we are saved we are delivered from the penalty of our sins, which is eternal judgment in hell. But provision was also made in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ for our deliverance from the power of sin in our lives. Being saved does not mean that we are no longer capable of sin. We will have our sin nature until we are finally with the Lord. But we live by faith, trusting the Holy Spirit to keep us from sinning. So the most mature believer is not a Christian who depends upon himself to keep

from sinning, but he is the one who is most dependent upon the Holy Spirit to deliver him from the lusts of his old fleshly nature.

In Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus he spoke of how all of us lived before we were saved. His words are in the first three words of Eph. 3. Let me read his words to you.

1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in ~~t~~trespasses and sins;

2 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:

3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others (Eph. 2:1-3).

Before we were saved we walked according to this world in which we lived, and we were in bondage to "the lusts of our flesh." Both the world and our flesh are powerful masters. This does not mean that we were all as bad as we could be, but it does mean that sin had made slaves out of us. Christ has set us free. But we need to learn to walk all over again.

We need to read the Bible and to attend a church where the Word of God is taught so we can learn how to live to please God. But we also need to learn that God works in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. We are not to live to please ourselves, but we live to please the Lord.

But now only do we seek to get acquainted with the Bible, but we learn to pray. We call upon God to help us, to protect us, to strengthen us through His Word so we will not live in sin. And this is what Paul was talking about when He said that we are to "walk in the Spirit." And the promise is that then we will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. The Holy Spirit comes to live in us the moment we are saved, and we can never get along without Him.

So here in Galatians 5 we learn about "the works of the flesh," but Paul went on in verses 22 and 23 to talk about "the fruit of the Spirit." And this is all a part of what it means to "walk in the Spirit."

Notice that the word "works" in "the works of the flesh" is plural; the word "fruit" in "the fruit of the Spirit" is singular. One reason for the difference is that you never, or hardly ever, find all of the sins of the flesh

in one person. Some are bothered by certain sins, but others are bothered by other sins. God is gracious even with unbelievers in that no one is as bad as it is possible to be. But when we come to “the fruit of the Spirit,” the word “fruit” is singular because if the Spirit of God is working in our lives, if we are really seeking to walk in the Spirit, not just one or two of these will be present in our lives, but all of them will be present.

But let me emphasize that none will be there in perfection. They have to do with Christian character. They have to do with holiness of life. They have to do with our conformity to the Lord Jesus Christ. So to some extent you will find all of these qualities in every Christian, and cultivating these must be one of our main concerns every day that we live.

I mentioned in one of my past messages that you may find some of these qualities even in unbeliever because we all have been made in the likeness of God, but in unbelievers there are always other things that spoil moral virtues, such as selfishness, or pride, or selfish ambition, or the like. What Paul was speaking about are found in their perfection only in the Lord Jesus Christ, and can only be produced in us by the Holy Spirit.

So we learn about them from the Word. We pray that they will become a part of us. By God’s grace we keep ourselves from situations and from people where we will be tempted to sin, and we seek to strengthen ourselves in the Spirit.

Let me read these two verses, 22 and 23, as we begin tonight with “love.” (Read.)

Some feel that these nine characteristics can be divided into three groups of three each. But there are differences as to what the three groups are. The first three could have to do with our relationship to God. The second to our relationship with people, especially our fellow Christians. And the last three to ourselves. And yet there are ways in which these traits cannot be limited within such divisions. But it might help us in understanding each one to think of these relationships and areas of life.

And I want to begin tonight by seeking to define what the Bible means, what God means, by “love.”

I. A DEFINITION OF LOVE.

Here Paul used the word ἀγάπη. Among Christians who have not studied Greek there is a certain familiarity with this word.

We all know what it is to love. It is an affection that we feel in our heart. If we are talking about loving people, it means that the people we love are the people that we like to be with. We want to do anything that we can to help them, or to make them happy. People we love are people we may try to take as a pattern for our lives. That is, if we really love a person, we may want to be like they are. But we can love, and often do love, people who are not what we want to be, and we wish that they were different from what they are.

One definition of love that I like is that it is **self-giving**, or **self-sacrificing**. That would certainly apply to a verse like John 3:16 and Rom. 5:8

The Apostle Paul seems to have mentioned “love” first because it is the foundation of all of the other characteristics that he mentions afterwards. The best description of what love is, godly love, the love that the Spirit puts in our hearts, is found in 1 Corinthians 13. This is divine love, the kind of love that our Lord spoke about in John 3:16. Paul began 1 Cor. 13 by saying that we can have all kinds of gifts, and can do all kinds of good deeds, but if love is lacking, we are nothing, and what we do amounts to nothing. There is no question but that love was one of the greatest needs of the people in the church at Corinth.

How important is love for the child of God? It is this important: *There is not a book in all of the NT where love is not mentioned.*

II. HOW DOES LOVE HELP US TO IDENTIFY ONE WHO IS TRULY A CHILD OF GOD?

By this I mean, what does a Christian love?

A. A true Christian loves God first.

Cf. Matt. 22:34-37. In Mark 12:30 the word “strength” is added to “heart” and “soul” and “mind.” It means that we love God with our whole being.

And the second commandment is that we are to love our neighbors as

ourselves. So knowing Christ makes a great difference in our relationships with people. However, the epistles place a special emphasis on this part of loving people. And we find it emphasized in 1 John.

B. We love the people of God.

Cf. 1 John 3:14; 4:7, 11-12. And we need to be sure that it is genuine. See also John 13:34, 35. Also 1 Pet. 1:22

Who are our best friends? If our best friends, the people we enjoy being with the most, are not Christians, there is something very wrong which needs our immediate attention. A true Christian loves to go to church.

C. We love the Word of God.

Cf. Psa. 119:97; Jer. 15:16. And obeying the Word of God brings special delight to us. Cf. John 14:21 and 23.

But there is one negative teaching in Scripture about love, and that is found in 1 John.

III. WE ARE NOT TO LOVE THE WORLD, NOR THE THINGS THAT ARE IN THE WORLD (1 John 2:15-17; Rom. 12:1-2).

Concl: We need to evaluate our lives by these passages of Scripture.

This is what Peter had in mind when he exhorted the believers in his day to make their calling and election sure. There is much in the professing church today which is not of God. We need to be sure that we are not blinded by what appears to be successful when what impresses us may not be in harmony with the Word of God at all. Let us always be careful to judge ourselves and what claims to be of God by that which we are taught in the Word of God.

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS JOY

Galatians 5:22-23 - #3

Intro: We all were born with a desire to be happy. But, since we were also born in sin, we are often deceived as to what will bring us real happiness. People can spend their whole lives looking for happiness, and die without finding it. When you see thousands and thousands of people at football games, knowing that they have paid plenty to see the game, you can see how important it is for them to be happy. People feel that possessions will bring them happiness. And so they look for happiness in the home they live in, or in the automobile that they buy, or in any number of things that they purchase in their pursuit of happiness. There were many people we talked to on the cruise you have us to Alaska who have gone on cruise after cruise. That is what they like to do, and that is what brings them happiness.

So it ought to be of interest to everybody to see that an important part of the fruit of the Spirit is “joy.” And when we trace this back to our key text for this series, Galatians 5:16, we see that the fruit of the Spirit is related to walking in the Spirit. But it is significant that the Apostle Paul separates “joy” and every other part of the fruit of the Spirit from the lusts of our flesh. “Walk,” he said, “and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” And yet that is where some people, and many who profess to be Christians, seek for their joy – in having what they want to have, or in being able to do what they want to do, or go where they want to go. It is not wrong to possess things. It is not wrong to play football, or to go to football games (unless it keeps you from being with the Lord’s people where you can sit under the teaching of the Word of God). But these things become wrong when they are what it takes to keep us happy.

The Bible has a lot to say about happiness, about joy. It is very clear from Scripture that God wants us to be happy, but He has given us His Word so that we will seek for *real* happiness, *lasting* happiness, the kind of joy that does not leave us with a lot of regrets. There are many people, but not usually Christians, who think that some of “the works of the flesh” mentioned in Gal. 5:19-21 bring happiness, e.g., adultery, fornication, drunkenness, revellings, and things like that. Many Americans are jubilant over the release of the abortion pill because it enables them to sin (although they don’t call it sin) without having to be concerned about the consequences.

Twice in the book of Proverbs, in 14:12, and again in 16:25, Solomon wrote,

There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

The big problem with going your own way, and doing your own thing, just guided by the desires of a sinful heart, is that you can't see the end of the way, you can see the outcome, until you get well along the road. By that time it is often too late to turn back. More and more we hear of tragic circumstances because people have taken drugs. It makes them feel good, but the end is not what they are counting on.

The joy that is a part of the fruit of the Spirit is the joy that God gives. It is true joy, godly joy, and so what I want to do tonight is to look at several passages that tell us what true joy is. The subject is so vast in Scripture that we cannot see it all in the time it takes to bring one message, but perhaps we can get a glimpse of what the Bible tells us on this subject so we can be on the lookout for other things that it tells us as we read our Bibles from day to day. Now only Christians will be inclined to believe what the Bible teaches about joy or anything else, but perhaps as we learn more about joy we can pass the word along to other people who are not taking the time to read what God has given us in His Word.

One way you can quickly identify verses that have to do with joy is by noticing a sign which the Lord has placed in many of them, and I am thinking now about the word,

I. "BLESSED."

Please turn with me to Psalm 32:1.

Unhappiness was introduced into the human family when Adam and Eve ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And when that old serpent, the Devil, tempted her, what did she see in the forbidden fruit? She saw three things:

- 1) It was good for food.
- 2) It was beautiful. It was good to look at.
- 3) It would make her wise.

You read all of this in Gen. 3:6.

Now what do you notice about those three things. Eve felt that they all

would make her better. At least she would enjoy what God had told her not to do. So she ate the fruit, and gave some to Adam, and he did the same foolish and disastrous thing. And this brought death – physical death, but what was worse, spiritual death. At that moment they were separated from God and the happy fellowship that they had known with Him up to that time, and troubles followed on that road that they had not counted on. One of the most tragic was they had two sons, and one of them murdered the other.

Now, at the basis of unhappiness in the world is S-I-N! People don't like to talk about sin, or to call anything sin, because, if they do, that brings God into the picture. Sin is very, very deceptive. That is its nature, to make us think it can make us happy, when all it can produce is sorrow and regret.

Now what did David tell us as the Holy Spirit guided him to write the thirty-second Psalm. Look at it there in your Bible:

1 Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

2 Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile (Psa. 32:1-2).

Both of these verses begin with the same word in the Hebrew text, and it means not only "happy," but we could translate it, "Oh, how happy."

The Bible describes for us what sin is. And it also tells us that sin brings death. Read Rom. 6:23. And because we are sinners, all of us, we are under the judgment of God – which means eternal punishment in hell. We can't undo our sins. What we have done, has been done. But the good news for sinners is that God has done something about our sins. He has provided for our forgiveness. He has promised that when our sins are forgiven they are not charged against us any longer. How can He forgive us when we deserve to die? Because His Son the Lord Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, came into the world to die for sinners. And it is through His sacrifice, the shedding of His blood, that we are forgiven. And a person's first taste of real joy is when he or she comes to Christ to believe in Him for the forgiveness of sins. This is the starting point for a life of true joy.

But let me take you now to another verse which follows the forgiveness of sins, and where God has erected that sign carrying the word, "Blessed"

again. And now I am thinking of Psalm 1. Please turn to that passage in your Bible.

The word “blessed” at the beginning of the Psalm is the same word that we had in Psalm 32, but here it is the plural form. So we would want to translate this, “Oh, the happinesses of the man,” or the woman, or the young person, or the boy, or the girl, who doesn’t do certain things, but does one other thing instead.

Joy is not found in:

- 1) Walking in the counsel of the ungodly,
- 2) Nor in standing in the way of sinners.
- 3) Nor in sitting in the seat of the scornful.

Are there sinful things that we have done because somebody else talked us into it. Today is the first day of October and I suppose that there are many of us who started reading the book of Proverbs again. Right there in chapter 1 is a warning about the man who tries to get us to join his evil companions because of the way we can fill our houses with a lot of good things *that really belong to someone else!* That is an example of “the counsel of the ungodly.”

It all may sound good, but it is that path that leads to death. Sometimes the Bible tells us what we are not to do so that we will see the importance of what we are to do.

What are we to do? Look at verses 2 and 3.

If a person doesn’t know the Lord, this sounds like the most boring thing that anybody could do. But if you know the Lord, you know that what the Psalmist was saying here is the truth. Read the Bible. And meditate on what you have read throughout the day. And if there is something that you have read, then ask the Lord to help you to do it. And the results are tremendous – in verse 3.

Let me say it very emphatically tonight. ***Nobody can experience true and lasting joy who does not spend a lot of time in the Bible!***

Listen to what Jeremiah said in Jer. 15:16:

Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy

name, O LORD God of hosts.

And listen to what the Lord Jesus said on this same subject:

These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full (John 15:11).

We could go on and on looking at the various times God has said, “Blessed,” in His Word. But let me leave that word for the present because I want to mention two other points before I close.

The first has to do with:

II. JOY IN PRAYER (John 16:24).

Many times in John 14, 15, and 16 the Lord referred to prayer. Now the people of the world don’t really know what prayer is. If someone gets seriously sick, they will think about God, and call upon Him for help. But that is not really praying. Praying with a Christian is a part of his way of living. He prays every day, and usually many times a day. If a person only prays when he is in trouble of some kind, it is very doubtful if he knows the Lord.

But listen to what the Lord said in John 16:24:

Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my Name: ask, and ye shall receive that your joy may be full.

One of the greatest joys that a Christian has is in praying, and having his prayers answered because he has asked in the Lord’s Name. Again the Lord speaks *fulness of joy*. And it even brings joy to our hearts to come to the Lord just to commune with Him, to worship Him, and to have fellowship with Him. Long ago David wrote for all of us:

Thou wilt show me the path of life: in Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore (Psa. 16:11).

And this leads me to the last point that I want to make tonight.

III. “REJOICE IN THE LORD” (Phil. 3:1; 4:4).

If I were asked what is the best book on joy in the OT, I would say *the Psalms*. If I were to name the best book in the NT on joy, I would say

Paul's letter to the Philippians. I really don't like saying either because I don't want anybody to neglect any book of the Bible who is thinking about "joy" as a part of what the Spirit does in our hearts. And let me emphasize that none of what we have been talking about can be realized apart from the Holy Spirit.

But as we have seen tonight there is much in the Psalms about "joy." And there is much about "joy" in Philippians, and when you know where Paul was, and why he was where he was, and what the prospect was for his future, you will be even more amazed at the letter he wrote to the church at Philippi!

(Explain Paul's situation in Rome.)

And so these two verses, Phil. 3:1 and 4:4, are really the keynote of his letter to the Philippian believers. Not just "rejoice," but "rejoice in the Lord." Rejoice in Who He is. Rejoice in being able to serve Him. Rejoice in His loving care. Rejoice in His will even when we may not understand all that the Lord is doing with us. Rejoice in the hope that we have in Him.

Concl: (Tell about George Sheffer - Young Life - who is now with the Lord.)

We all want joy. And it is wonderful to know that the Lord not only wants us to be happy, but He has made full provision for our happiness both now and hereafter. But we need to seek joy the way we are told in Scripture that we can find it, and not be like the majority of people today who think that they know how to get true joy, but they are going down that path without God which ultimately leads to death. May God give us the grace to read the Word, and to believe it, and to seek the joy that only the Holy Spirit can bring to us day by day.

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS PEACE

Galatians 5:22-23 - #4

Intro: As we go through these two verses which describe for us the fruit of the Spirit, we need to keep in mind that the Apostle Paul had in mind personal love, joy, peace, and so on. He had in mind how these traits of character are seen in individuals. The Holy Spirit dwells in us individually, and that is where His fruit is produced. “Love” may be predominant in a church, but it is only because of what the Spirit of God is doing in the people within that church. God always deals primarily with individual people. The goal in a church, or in a family, or even in a nation, or among nations in their relationships with each other, has to come down to what is going on in individual lives.

When Paul wrote to the churches of Galatia, of course he was concerned about all of the churches, but we have to break it down even more and say that he was concerned about every person in every church. That is the way we should be. There evidently was not much love, nor joy, nor peace in the Galatian churches at this time because that which started Paul writing about walking the Spirit, was his statement about what was going on in some of the churches. See Gal. 5:15. This is what the Law does to people. Instead of concentrating on themselves, they keep a close eye on everyone else to make sure that they are doing what they ought to be doing. Do you remember how the Lord rebuked the hypocrites in His day? This is what He said to them:

- 1 Judge not, that ye be not judged.
- 2 For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.
- 3 And why beholdest thou the mote [speck] that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam [plank] that is in thine own eye?
- 4 Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?
- 5 Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye (Matt. 7:1-5).

And if we give attention to ourselves and our needs first, then when it comes to helping someone else we will do so with compassion, and not with harsh judgment. Paul was strong in what he said to the Galatians in this epistle because he had preached the Gospel to them, and they knew better than to turn against each other like they were doing.

All of us have a full time job keeping watch over our own lives, and that will help to keep us humble if and when we are in a position where we can help someone else.

As I indicated a moment ago, Galatians 5:15 indicates that there was a serious lack of evidence of the fruit of the Spirit in the Galatian churches. All of them needed to re-learn what they had been taught about the grace of God, and then to get back to walking in the Spirit. The Spirit produces the fruit in our lives, but in connection with each one of these nine words it is important for everyone of us to search our Bibles to see what God has to say about each of these characteristics of a true Christian.

Tonight we are thinking about “peace.”

Paul did not mean that the Holy Spirit would always make our circumstances peaceful. Sometimes they are. At other times they are not. We live in a wicked world. And we are subject to trials of various kinds just like anyone else. But the difference is that a Christian can be in the middle of trouble, and yet have his heart at rest, at peace. We are not to be plagued with doubts and fears. We are not to be filled with worries of different kinds. There can be turmoil all around us, but we need to have peace in our hearts. We need to have quiet hearts. And how we are to find this peace, and how to experience this peace, takes time to learn.

Illus: Years ago we had Mr. Oswald Sanders in our home, and he was speaking at Central Bible Church on a Sunday night. Our children were young, and he could see that I was having trouble getting them ready for church and out the door and into the car. Finally he said to me very lovingly, “Brother, let your heart down.” As you can see I have not forgotten that experience, and there have been many times since that I have told myself, “Dwight, you need to let your heart down.”

So although we know the Lord, there are times in all of our lives when we need a fresh supply of peace, and that always comes from God through the Holy Spirit.

But let me begin tonight at the beginning by point out that:

I. PEACE BEGINS IN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.

The Bible speaks of God as “the God of peace,” and it speaks of “the peace of God,” but I am thinking now about “peace with God.”

You know, the Devil has a counterfeit for all of these characteristics. And you see this in the world. But people who do not know the Lord in salvation, may love each other, and may experience a form of joy, and feel that they have peace, but all of that is on the human level. When Paul wrote about love and joy and peace, he was writing about divine love, divine joy, and divine peace. The prophet spoke of his people saying, “Peace, peace, when there is no peace” (Jer. 6:14). And Isaiah before him said, “There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked” (Isa. 57:21). The wicked are people who do not know the Lord, and when the Lord told Isaiah that “there is no peace . . . to the wicked,” he meant no *real* peace! The Apostle Paul speaking of people who do not know the Lord, said in Romans, “And the way of peace have they not known” (Rom. 3:17).

Before we can have “the peace of God,” we have to have “peace with God.” And the Apostle Paul told us in Romans 5:1 how we have peace with God. Listen to what he wrote in that verse:

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

To be justified by faith means that you are saved. It means that you are trusting in Christ’s death on the Cross for your salvation. Until a person by faith trusts in the saving work of Christ, he, or she, is under the judgment of God. But when a person turns to Christ, and believes in what He did as being enough to remove the judgment of God, he can have no peace with God.

So there is no point in trying to get peace from God until you have peace with God. That is where true peace begins. Then God becomes your heavenly Father, and He bestows upon you His love, and His joy, and His peace – just to mention the first three words in our text. Then you can say, “Peace, peace,” and there will be true peace, “peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

At that moment we start out on the Christian life. We start learning more about God from the Word. We learn to pray. We find that we not comfortable doing some of the things we have done before, and so our lives start to change. And it may surprise us that we still have troubles just like we did before we were saved. But the Bible teaches us what to do about

our troubles.

— The concordance in my computer tells me that there are 429 references to peace in the Bible. Obviously we don't have time even to read all of them during this service, and so I must be selective. But let us turn now to think about:

II. HOW WE CAN ENJOY THE PEACE OF GOD.

Let me mention just three ways tonight that we can enjoy the peace of God, but I think that what the three passages say which I am about to mention, will be a good reminder for all of us, and will get someone who is just starting out as a Christian a good foundation.

The first verse is Psalm 119:165.

A. **“Great peace have they which love Thy law: and nothing shall offend them.”**

— Now let me say just a word or two about this verse. When the Psalmist spoke of God's law, they only had a small part of what we have now. And the prominent part of what they had was called *the Law*. But now we can make the application to all of God's Word, all of the Bible. So the child of God who loves God's Word will enjoy, not just peace, but “great peace”!

But let me take you a step farther. If you love the Word of God, what are you going to do with it? You are going to read it. And you will find that the more you read it, the more you will love it. The man who wrote this Psalm, Psalm 119, said in verse 97, “O how love I Thy law! It is my meditation all the day.” He loved it so much that he not only read it, but he kept thinking about it all day long! Read it, and believe every word that you read, and you, too, will enjoy the peace of God – “great peace.”

— We can't leave this verse until we look at the promise. God gives us promises to encourage us to do what He wants us to do. And He helps us in other ways, too. The promise is that “nothing shall offend them.” The word “stumble” means *to be a stumbling block* to them. If we stumble over something, it affects our walking, doesn't it? Sometimes our trials cause us to stumble, but if we are learning what God tells us in His Word,

we will know that we can expect to have our trials, but we will have learned from the Word that God takes all of the circumstances, all of the events in our lives, and works them together for His glory.

And that leads me to the second verse that I want to mention to you. It is in the prophecy of Isaiah, chapter 26, verses 3 and 4. Please turn to those verses in your Bible with me.

B. Isaiah 26:3-4.

This is what these verses teach us:

3 Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.

4 Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength

The Lord will give lit., *peace, peace*, “perfect peace,” a complete and lasting peace because God is guarding it as with a garrison of soldiers. Perhaps angels are meant here. But it is a promise for the one who is *firmly established in the Lord God*. It is a permanent and lasting peace regardless of the nature of the assault, for the one who has so nurtured his soul on God in the Word that his faith is not shaken. We might falter, but by the grace of God, peace will prevail.

So, as we read the Word, what should be our primary objective. It should be *to know God*, to be so firmly established in the knowledge of God that our trust in Him will carry us through.

The people of the world have no such resources to strengthen them in their times of need. We can't afford to wait until some trial comes along before we seek to know the Lord, but should be our objective each day as we read the Word. We cannot know the Lord apart from the Word.

Thus far we have “great peace,” and “perfect peace.” What else could there be to describe for us the peace of God? It was given to the Apostle Paul to tell us about “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding.” And the text, as you probably know is:

C. Philippians 4:6-7.

Listen to the words which were given to the Apostle Paul by the Holy

Spirit:

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

7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:6-7).

One thing that makes these verses so amazing is that when the Apostle Paul wrote them in the home of some wealthy Christian, like Philemon, *but he was confined as a prisoner of Rome*. What was the charge against him? He had been arrested for preaching the Gospel.

He never had any trouble with the authorities of his day until he became a Christian, and started preaching that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God, and that the only way of salvation was through faith in Him. It would not have been unusual to learn that Paul was discouraged and depressed, wondering why God had permitted this to happen. But instead he was an encourager, telling them that they should never worry about anything, but instead to pray! They were to let their requests be known unto God. But he didn't say, "If you do pray, the Lord will send angels down to set you free." No, instead he said, "Let your requests be made known unto God." And he told them to do this even though our Father knows what we have need of even before we bring our requests to Him. Trials are a call to prayer. But this is what will happen, according to the Apostle Paul, writing as he was under the direction of the Holy Spirit. Nothing may happen immediately to change the situation. But what will happen is this:

And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:7).

The word translated "keep" in this verse is from a Greek word, not a Hebrew word like we had in Isaiah 26:3, *but the meaning is the same*. God is so concerned that we have peace at all times under all circumstances, that he sets up a military garrison around our hearts so that nobody can take our peace from us. The situation is the same, but the believer is at peace. And that is why Paul called it, "the peace that passeth all understanding."

That is not human. The world doesn't have anything like this. I have visited, I suppose, hundreds of the Lord's people in various hospitals during the years of my ministry. My record is nine different people in nine different hospitals in one day. Many times it has been with people

who had little or no hope that they would ever leave the hospital. Many facing surgery. But I wish I had kept a record of how many times I have found the Lord's people enjoying that "peace that passeth all understanding," with the future all unknown, expressing their confidence that whatever happened, the Lord's will would be the best, and they were at rest. I had gone to comfort them, and they comforted me instead.

Concl: When I was in Seminary, as I have told many of you before, Dr. Chafer, the Founder and President of the Seminary would take the Chapel service every two or three weeks to teach us some of the old hymns of the church. But before we got to the music he would talk to us about the words. And one of the hymns that he taught us was, "Peace, Perfect Peace." He point out to us that the first line of the first six verses, was a question. The second line was the answer. He had us sing the first line of each verse quietly and soberly, and then we were to raise our voices as an expression of our joy as we sang the second part. Then the last verse was a triumphant expression of the "perfect peace" which is to come, and we were to turn up the volume on that verse.

I want to read the hymn to you as I close. You can look at the words if you want to. It is #590 in our Hymnal, but I want you to listen carefully to the words because it expresses the things that we usually worry about. And then notice the answer in each case.

Peace, perfect peace, in this dark world of sin?
The blood of Jesus whispers peace within.

Peace, perfect peace, by thronging duties pressed?
To do the will of Jesus, this is rest.

Peace, perfect peace, with sorrows surging round?
On Jesus' bosom naught but calm is found.

Peace, perfect peace, with loved ones far away?
In Jesus' keeping we are safe and they.

Peace, perfect peace, our future all unknown?
Jesus we know, and He is on the throne.

Peace, perfect peace, death shad'wing us and ours?

Jesus has vanquished death and all its powers.

And then the last verse:

It is enough: earth's struggles soon shall cease,
And Jesus calls us to heav'n's perfect peace.

"The fruit of the Spirit is . . . peace" – "great peace," "perfect peace," and "the peace that passeth all understanding." And it is our because, by God's grace, "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." And this is just a part of all that we remember tonight as we observe the Lord's Supper.

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS LONGSUFFERING

Galatians 5:22-23 - #5

Intro: Tonight before we begin looking at this word “longsuffering,” let me emphasize what the Holy Spirit is doing when He bears this fruit in us. The nine characteristics that are mentioned here are divine characteristics, characteristics that have always been distinctive in God’s dealings with people, and which are also to be seen in Christ. And so this is further evidence that God’s purpose in saving us is to make us like our Lord Jesus Christ. As the Spirit works in us, He is transforming us into the likeness of Christ. It doesn’t take place in a moment of time, but is the result of *walking in the Spirit!* As we walk in submission to the Spirit, this is what He is doing in our lives – making us less and less like we are by nature, and more and more like Christ. And we have no greater illustration of this transformation than the Apostle Paul himself. It is important for us to keep this in mind.

Tonight we come to the fourth word in Galatians 5:22, the word “**long-suffering**.” It is the Greek word, μακροθυμία. “Longsuffering” is actually a good translation. It speaks of God’s self-restraint. On the one hand it can mean that He is slow to anger; on the other, that He patiently wait to accomplish His purposes, persevering all of the time that His will might be done. It is one of the most amazing of God’s attributes. It does not mean that there is no limit to God’s patience, but it does mean that God is longsuffering in dealing with men and nations until we, His people, are amazed that God can be so longsuffering.

Archbishop Trench defines “longsuffering” as “a long holding out of the mind before it gives room to action or passion” (p. 196). Thayer in his lexicon said that it “is the self-restraint which does not hastily retaliate against a wrong” (p. 387). And sometimes in thinking about God, He does not retaliate at all, but leaves the person concerned to suffer the eternal consequences of his sin and rebellion against God.

Trench suggested that in Ephesians 4:2 Paul gave his definition of long-suffering. Reading verses 1 and 3 with it, this is what Paul had to say as he began the practical section of the Ephesians epistle:

- 1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,
- 2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing

one another in love;

3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:1-3).

In our relationships with each other as believers, “longsuffering” means “forbearing one another with love.” So the first mentioned fruit of the Spirit is called into play here.

What does “forbearing” mean? It means *to show restraint, putting up with others and what they are doing*. And Paul’s words, “with love,” means that what we do is to be done graciously as we would treat a person whom we really love. Some writers use the word *longanimity* which is the disposition to bear injuries patiently (according to *Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, Fifth Edition*, p. 591).

Although in Rom. 12:19-21 Paul did not use the word “longsuffering,” yet that is exactly what he was talking about. Let me read those three verses to you:

19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.

21 Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

The other day when I was reading Colossians, I came upon this word twice in that epistle we are studying on Tuesdays. It comes first in Paul’s prayer at the beginning of the epistle. We will be looking into this prayer this coming Tuesday. But let me read the first three verses of the prayer. This is how Paul was praying for the Colossian believers:

9 For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;
10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

11 Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness (Col. 1:9-11).

So it is something that we are to pray for – for ourselves, and for each other. It is not a natural gift that we have. Some people are more long-

suffering than others. But we as Christians run into situations where only the Spirit can empower us to be longsuffering toward others.

Then you will find it also in Col. 3:12 where we have a passage much like the one we are considering here in Galatians. In Col. 3:12 and 13 this is what we read:

12 Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;

13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye (Col. 3:12-13).

So, in addition to praying for each other that we will be longsuffering, we need to talk about it, and to exhort each other to be more longsuffering when we are in situations which require it. We need to see this need in our lives, and take definite steps to exercise longsuffering when the need arises – and it is liable to come up at any time.

To show how these characteristics in Gal. 5:22 and 23 are linked together, when Paul was describing divine love in 1 Cor. 13, this is what he said love does:

Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things (1 Cor. 13:7).

This is really a definition of “longsuffering.” “Longsuffering” is “love” in action!

But now let us take some Biblical examples of the longsuffering of God, and of Christ.

I. GOD’S LONGSUFFERING IN THE DAYS OF NOAH.

This is used by the Apostle Peter as an example of God’s longsuffering. Look with me at 1 Peter 3:20 where Peter said, “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.”

In 2 Peter 2:5 Peter called Noah “a preacher of righteousness.” And we learn in Gen. 6:3 that from the time that God called Noah until the flood came, was 120 years! And during that time he was not only building the

ark, but he was preaching righteousness. This means that he was preaching the Gospel. But what were people doing, preparing for the judgment that Noah was announcing? No, they were marrying and giving in marriage, living in pleasure and sin, and thinking that Noah was some kind of a nut doing what he was doing and preaching what he was preaching.

God suffered long with that generation, but when the flood came, only Noah and his family entered the ark. *Every other person on the face of the earth died! Could any of them possibly say that God was not long-suffering with them?*

Let us take another example from Scripture:

II. GOD'S DEALING WITH PHARAOH AND EGYPT IN THE DAYS OF MOSES.

You all remember how Moses went repeatedly to Pharaoh telling him that the Lord wanted him to let His people go. But Pharaoh steadfastly resisted, even after God brought ten terrible plagues upon the land until even Pharaoh's men asked him, "Don't you know that Egypt is ruined?"

Finally, after the Lord killed the firstborn in Egypt the Israelites were driven out of the land, but then Pharaoh and his army went after them to bring them back, and so the Lord drowned the whole army in the Red Sea.

God is amazingly patient, but the time comes when He takes action, and that action is never pleasant.

But let us take a third example:

III. THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL ON THEIR JOURNEY FROM EGYPT TO CANAAN.

They were constantly complaining. They made a golden calf and were worshiping it when Moses came down from Mt. Sinai after receiving the Law. They continually complained because they were going to die of starvation, or of thirst. They wanted to go back to Egypt. Finally, then they got to Kadesh Barnea, the Lord was prepared to take them into the

land, but ten out of twelve spies which Moses sent into the land came back with a discouraging report.

— It wears you out to read the story, and yet we need to ask ourselves as we read it if our spiritual history sounds like the Israelites' history. How amazing is the longsuffering of God. But after forty years in the desert, the Lord finally took His people into the land under Joshua. It never would have happened if God had not been longsuffering again and again.

Follow through the history of the judges and the prophets and the kings and one thing you can't escape is evidence upon evidence of God's long-suffering with His people.

But let us go now into the NT and see some examples there.

IV. THE SALVATION OF SAUL OF TARSUS WHO BECAME THE APOSTLE PAUL.

Let's hear what the Apostle Paul himself had to say about it. You will find his words in 1 Tim. 1:15-16:

— 15 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.

16 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.

Think of all the havoc Paul caused before he was saved. He was the Church's Public Enemy #1. He was out to destroy the Christians. There is no indication in the NT that any of the people of God were even considering that Saul of Tarsus might be saved. There is no indication that anyone was praying about it. Maybe there were some, but it is not mentioned in Scripture. *So God intervened when Saul was on his way to Damascus with papers to bring the Christians back to Jerusalem, and they would have done with them what they did to the Lord.* When the Lord called Ananias to go to Saul after he arrived in Damascus, Ananias did not want to go because he felt that he knew why Saul was there! But he went, and found him, and learned in person that Saul had been saved. — And so the man who had been the Church's greatest enemy became the Church's greatest teacher and the Church's greatest missionary. And Paul

said that people should write grace and mercy and longsuffering over him as a child of God.

These are truly amazing stories, and in a way, they have been duplicated over and over again from that day until this.

But let me give you two more examples out of many that we could cite, and this is the greatest example of the longsuffering of God to be found in Scripture.

V. THE EXAMPLE OF OUR LORD ON THE CROSS.

The longsuffering of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ is to be seen repeatedly as we read through the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

But when we get to the Cross, we see that in the providence of God the Jews had been able to do what they had sought to do so long, and they did it with the full agreement of the Roman government. They put the Lord through what were mock trials, treated Him as the worst kind of a criminal, humiliating Him and practically killing Him even before they crucified Him. But hanging on that Cross while the crowd jeered at Him, saying, "If you are the Son of God, come down from the Cross, and we will believe in you." And they were saying scornfully, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save."

But how did the Lord respond?

You remember the words that He spoke from the cross. One of His sayings was this, a perfect example of the longsuffering of the Lord and of God: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Many expositors of those words believe that it was because of those words that many of those people who were ridiculing the Lord at the Cross were drawn into the kingdom of God on the Day of Pentecost, not only trophies of grace, but trophies of the longsuffering of Christ and of God.

The last example that I will give tonight has to do with you and me.

VI. THE SALVATION OF EVERY SINNER WHO HAS EVER BEEN SAVED IS DUE TO THE LONGSUFFERING OF GOD.

In 1 Peter 3 Peter was answering those who were scorning the promise of the Lord's return, saying that everything has continued as it was since the beginning. What was Peter's answer to them? You will find it in 2 Peter 3:8-9:

8 But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

9 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.

And then he added farther down in the same chapter:

14 Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

15 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 3:14-15).

And let me add to Peter's words, the words of the Apostle Paul in Rom. 2:4 where he asked this question:

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

Concl: I remind all of us tonight as I close that if it were not for the goodness and forbearance **and longsuffering** of God, there is not a single one of us who would be saved.

Therefore, we need to be longsuffering with each other, and even cultivate this divine grace in our dealings with all people, saved and unsaved. It is a characteristic that will identify us as belonging to our longsuffering Savior and to our heavenly Father.

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS GENTLENESS

Galatians 5:22-23 - #6

Intro: This word which is translated “gentleness” in the KJV, is translated “kindness” in the NKJ, in the NASB, and in the NIV. And although it appears a total of ten times in the NT, all in Paul’s epistles, yet even in the KJV this is the only time it is translated “gentleness.” Four times it is translated “goodness” (Rom. 2:4, the first “goodness”; 11:22, where it is found three times), “good” one time (Rom. 3:12), and “kindness” four times (2 Cor. 6:6; Eph. 2:7; Col. 3:12; Titus 3:4).

It is uniquely a divine characteristic because Paul said in Rom. 3:12 that “there is none that doeth good, no not one.” That is why we are reading in Gal. 5:22 that it, among other graces, is a part of the fruit of the Spirit. But it is more than just a characteristic, or a quality of someone’s personality; it is “goodness in action, goodness expressing itself in deeds” (Vine, II, p. 165). It combines the ideas of “gentleness” and “sweetness,” says Trench (p. 233). But he continued by pointing out that instead of “being” a “mere grace of word and countenance, it is one pervading and penetrating the whole nature, mellowing there all which would have been harsh and austere” (*Ibid.*). In fact, even with God this word, χρηστότης, is contrasted with His severity. When the Lord drove the moneychangers out of the temple, He was manifesting severity. But when he showed mercy to the harlot who came to the Pharisees home and anointed the Lord’s feet with her tears and with the ointment which she brought with her, the Lord’s response to her was His kindness in action.

Perhaps one reason that there are so many words in the NT to express God’s love, His gentleness, His kindness, His grace, His mercy, His tenderness and compassion, is because there are so many facets to His mercy upon us that it takes a lot of different words to help us to understand the glory of God’s love for us.

Now tonight let us begin by looking at our text, and then going to the other verses in which this word is used, and then conclude with a couple of examples from the life of our Lord.

I. ONLY A DIVINE CHARACTERISTIC (Gal. 5:22).

We have already established this from Rom. 3:12 where the Apostle Paul

wrote, “There is none that doeth good, no, not one.”

— Now we know that there are often outstanding examples of human kindness, thinking in terms of our definition, like, for example, when a soldier in battle will risk his life to save a fellow soldier who before had been anything but his friend – in fact, his personal enemy. Or when one person who doesn’t even know another who needs a kidney, and he will donate his kidney to save the other person’s life. A fireman may rush into a burning building to save a person who is inside, risking his own life to do so. There are many illustrations that we could all think about as illustrations of kindness. But when Paul said, using our word, that “there is none that doeth good, no, not one,” he meant that if you were to compile all of the illustrations we have of human kindness, there is not one that can even begin to compare with the kindness of God. And the reason we don’t have more of an appreciation for what Paul was saying is because we don’t fully understand the great gap that there is between a holy God and even man at his best. There is no act of human kindness that can begin to compare with the kindness of God and the kindness of Christ in their relationships with sinful men and women, boys and girls.

— So to exercise the kind of goodness that the Apostle Paul was referring to in Gal. 5:22, it has to be the fruit of the Spirit, and such fruit can only be found in the life of a believer. So if we have trouble exercising kindness toward anyone, we need to look to the Holy Spirit to provide this for us and in us – not just to make us look good, but to make us put our goodness into action.

And to emphasize this, let us look at Rom. 11:22. People today had better pay attention to the goodness of God, otherwise they will experience His severity. We see especially in the OT how God sent His prophets, not only to Israel and Judah, but also to the nations surrounding Israel. But when they had exhausted the patience of the Lord, and had ignored His goodness longer than we would have put up with them, then judgment fell! And that is the worst thing that can happen to anyone.

But now let us talk for a few minutes about:

— II. THE GOODNESS OF GOD IN OUR SALVATION.

And there are three verses that we need to look at here.

A. Romans 2:4.

In our English Bible the word “goodness” is used twice. But only the first one is the word we are thinking about tonight. However, the second “goodness” is a word from the same root. So the same idea carries through the whole verse.

I had to learn about the goodness of the Lord as I got older because as far as I know, I was saved as a child. I heard the Gospel from the time that I heard anything. Both of my parents were saved, but my Dad in particular had only been saved a short time before I came along. But as I have grown older, I have realized that I was just as dependent upon the goodness of God for my salvation as anyone else. And I have seen many times how perverse I would have been if the Lord had not saved me when He did. Regardless of when we were saved, we all have reasons, many reasons, for being thankful for the goodness, the kindness, the gentleness, of the Lord.

The other passage that refers to God’s kindness in our salvation is:

B. Titus 3:4.

This verse is in the passage that Ron Bystrom spoke to us from last Sunday night. I am not going to go into the whole passage, but I want you to look at it again in the light of the word “kindness” in verse 4. It means much more when we approach it from the first three verses. (Read vv. 1-3.)

The Apostle called upon us to obey what he said in verse 2. That has to do with us now that we are saved. But verse 3 applies in various ways to all of us. We can all look back and marvel at what we were before we were saved, and if we have not sinned as much as others, yet our capacity for any and every sin was there. So it is ridiculous to talk about the good things that we have done to explain why the Lord saved us. We had no merits; our lives were full of demerits, reasons why the Lord would have been perfectly righteous if He had not saved us. No, it was not our goodness that caused the Lord to save us, but His kindness and His love. His kindness in action. He refused to leave us in our sins. He rescued all of us from more sinning than we had done. And look on down into verse 7 to see what the Lord had done for us. *According to this passage it all was*

primarily the result of God's goodness! And verse 8 makes it very clear that we don't work up to salvation, but from salvation – after we are saved!

But I have to add one more verse here, a verse we had this morning.

C. Ephesians 2:7.

We first were aware of God's kindness when He saved us. But this verse tells us that God will never cease to show His kindness to us all through "the ages to come." This is one way of saying *forever*, or *for all eternity!*

Every day since we have been saved we have experienced the goodness of God in many ways. And this not going to stop when we die, or when the Lord comes. It is going to go on and on and on and on forever!

What an amazing verse this is!

But I have yet to deal with three verses where our word is found. They tell us:

III. WE NEED TO BE KIND (2 Cor. 6:6; Col. 3:12; and back to our text, Gal. 5:22-23).

It is wonderful to talk about the kindness of God, but it is clear from these Scriptures that the Lord wants His kindness to be seen in us.

Look first with me at 2 Cor. 6, and I want to start reading from verse 1. But the verse I am concerned about is:

A. 2 Corinthians 6:6.

Paul was addressing all of the Corinthian believers as "workers together with Him." One of the biggest mistakes we have made in dealing with the Word of God is to say that this applies to my pastor, or to those who are serving the Lord in some leadership way, but it doesn't apply to all of us. Even the qualifications for elders and deacons which we have in the Pastoral Epistles are so the elders and deacons can be examples to all of the people of God. They describe what we are all to be! And so it is here. And in verse 6 we find our word, "kindness."

We in our dealings with each other, and with people in the world who are without Christ, are going to have to show the same kindness that the Lord showed to us when He saved us.

Next,

B. Colossians 3:12.

In this passage Paul was speaking about what we have to “put off,” and what we need to “put on.” What we need to “put on” we don’t have, but all of these are to be found in Christ. And among these is “kindness” (v. 12). And so since “Christ is all, and in all” (v. 11), we have no excuse for not being kind to each other and to all people. Oh, that the Lord would bring us back to those old days long ago when the people of God were concerned about holiness, not just happiness. Only when we “put on” what we have in Christ, will the world again have an ear for the message of the church.

Finally, we are back where we started:

C. Galatians 5:22-23.

We need to take these nine words, one by one, and see what evidence there is in our lives that we are manifesting “the fruit of the Spirit.” And think tonight especially of kindness, not the human product, but that which we see in God, and in Christ, and in the Holy Spirit.

Before I quit, let me give you an example of kindness from the life of our Lord Jesus Christ.

IV. THE KINDNESS OF CHRIST (Luke 7:36-50).

I am indebted to Archbishop Trench and his book, *Synonyms of the New Testament*, for pointing out this illustration of the kindness of the Lord. Actually there are many illustrations in Scripture, both in the OT and in the NT, but we will confine ourselves to this one tonight. Please turn to Luke 7:36 where we find a very interesting story which illustrates *the infinite kindness of the Lord*.

(Explain the passage – Luke 7:36-50.)

Concl: I trust that you and I will see the need for more of the kindness of the Lord in our hearts, but remember that the Lord's kindness is *kindness in action*. And we need it in our relationships with each other, and we need it in our relationships with the people of the world. People usually have a strange idea about what Christians are. If we abide by the Word of God there will probably be more people asking us for a reason for the hope that is in us, as the Apostle Peter said in his first epistle,

15 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:

16 Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ (1 Peter 3:15-16).

Let us pray that it will be so.

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS GOODNESS

Galatians 5:22-23 - #7

Intro: There are just four verses in the NT where this word for “goodness,” is used: Rom. 15:14; Gal. 5:22; Eph. 5:9; 2 Thess. 1:11. The Greek word is ἀγαθωσύνη.

Romans 15:14 says this:

And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.

Eph. 5:9:

For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth.

2 Thess. 1:11, reading verse 12 with it:

11 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:

12 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.

It is often hard to distinguish between such words as we considered last Sunday night, in the KJV, “gentleness,” and the word which we are considering tonight, “goodness.” There seems to be some agreement among Greek scholars to the effect that they both convey the idea of “goodness,” but that the word translated “gentleness” in the KJV emphasizes *goodness as a characteristic of a person*, while our word for tonight, “goodness,” speaks of *goodness in action*. And yet there are times when both words mean both things. Again, as with all of these characteristics, we are speaking of *divine goodness*, that which comes from God and which, therefore, is pleasing to God.

One of the surest evidences that any person is saved, is that he or she manifests these divine attributes. Theologians call them “communicable attributes,” as compared with “incommunicable attributes.” God does not communicate to us His eternity, for example, but He does communicate to us His love, His joy, His peace, and so on through the list that we have in Gal. 5:22-23.

Another thing that we need to remember in dealing with these characteristics that there are human characteristics that are very similar to them. After all, we were all made in the likeness of God, and even after man fell into sin, some of these characteristics remains, although in a very limited and imperfect way. People who don't know that Lord often do good things, but the good that men do often is corrupted by the desire for special recognition, or personal gain of some kind. So it falls far short of divine goodness. God does good things for people all of the time without expecting anything in return.

But one difference between the goodness of man as compared with the goodness of God, man's goodness is focused upon this life – cancer research, or feeding and clothing the poor, or helping the handicap, but man of and on his own can do nothing that has eternal benefits. I am not being critical of social work or of scientific research. We are all thankful for anything that makes life on this easier in any way. But I am just pointing out that man's goodness has severe limitations. It can follow a person up to death's door, but there is nothing that mere human goodness that can help us after death. The Apostle Paul was reminding Timothy of this when he wrote the words we find in 1 Tim. 4:8:

For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

Americans have a tremendous love affair right now with physical exercise. Athletic clubs are everywhere, and parents want to be sure that their children are getting plenty of the right kind of exercise. All of this is good within certain limits. I try to swim three times a week. I don't always make it, but that is my goal. But as long as I have been a member of an athletic club, I have never had any of the leaders say a word to me about God, or what happens after death. Supposedly they think that they can put off that day of death, but they have nothing to say about what happens then. Getting my body into good shape does nothing for my soul.

It is good to save money and to prepare for the future, but no one can give you a guarantee that you will ever be able to use it. And when you finally die, you can't take a cent of it with you. People will spend their lives working long and hard to lay up treasure on earth, but they will do nothing about what is infinitely more important, and that is laying up treasure in heaven.

I have a calendar attached to my computer, and on each page for each month there is a verse of Scripture. The verse for this month is Mark 8:36. And this is what that verse says:

For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

Questions in the Bible are to be answered. What is the answer to that question? It profits a man nothing if he had all of the wealth in the whole world, but lost his soul! And he will know it the moment he dies – but it will be too late to do anything about it then.

When Peter went to preach in the house of Cornelius to that group of Gentiles, this is how he summarized the ministry of the Lord Jesus:

How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him (Acts 10:38).

He healed the sick, He made the blind to see, He cured the crippled, He even raised the dead. But you will remember that when he was in the synagogue in Nazareth, and the leader gave him the prophecy of Isaiah to read, He turned to the sixty-first chapter of Isaiah and read the first two verses. This is what the Jews in the synagogue heard from His lips:

16 And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.

17 And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,

18 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,

19 To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

20 And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.

21 And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears (Luke 4:16-21).

It is not just an accident that the Gospel can be preached from many, probably most, of the miracles that the Lord Jesus performed while He

was here on earth. And over and over again we read that He was teaching the people who had come to be healed. You see, the Lord went far beyond what man can do when He instantaneously healed people of their infirmities, but He could also heal their souls. *This is supreme goodness! This is the goodness of God in action. This is divine ἀγαθωσύνη.*

Now when the Spirit of God produces this fruit of “goodness” in our hearts, it makes us “good” after the likeness of our Savior. And it will make us want to do anything that we can to help people. But whatever we do our objective will always be to help them in their walk with the Lord if they are believers, and if they are not believers, we will do the good that we need in the hope that we will be able to tell them about our Lord and His saving grace.

Those of us who are Christians should be good people. We were saved to become good like our Lord is. And it is the work of the Holy Spirit to make us good in our character, and desirous of putting our goodness into action by helping people with their needs – physically and spiritually. This was Paul’s prayer for the believers in Thessalonica as I read to you at the beginning of my message from 2 Thess. 1:11-12. Let me read it to you again:

11 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:

12 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.

We can’t perform miracles like the Lord did, but we can help people, and we can talk to people about the Lord. And we can pray for them. As the Apostle Paul was bringing his epistle to the Galatian churches to a conclusion, this is what he said to them:

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

10 As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith (Gal. 6:9-10).

We must define “goodness” as that which is God-like and therefore pleasing to God. And God is moved with His goodness toward us. His object is to make us happy by making us holy. There can be no true joy

apart from the goodness of God.

When we turn to the OT the words “good” and “goodness” are found five hundred and fourteen times. When God created the earth over and over again He saw that what He had made was “good.” He promised Abraham in Gen. 15:15 that he would have “a good old age.” Exodus 3:8 says that the land that the Lord would give to Israel was “a good land.” David closed that wonderful twenty-third Psalm by saying,

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever (Psa. 23:6).

And to show how important the goodness of the Lord was to him, he said this in Psa. 27:13:

I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.

Psalm 107 begins with what we might call the golden text of God’s people in Israel:

O give thanks unto the lord, for He is good: for His mercy endureth for ever (Psalm 107:1).

And then over and over again in Psalm 107 we read verses like this:

Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men (Psa. 107:8).

And then he would add something like this:

For He satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness (Psa. 107:9).

In Psalm 33:5 we learn that “the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.”

And who could overlook those comforting words of the prophet Nahum who said, “The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knoweth them that trust in Him” (Nahum 1:7).

Some of our most loved verses in the NT have to do with the goodness of God. Paul called salvation “a good work” in Phil. 1:6. And it is “good” for many reasons. It is the only way our sins can be forgiven. By our salvation we are made the sons of God. We become an heir of God, and joint heirs with Christ. And we can claim the precious promises that God has given us in His Word.

He works all things together for good, according to Rom. 8:28. And what we are saved for in this life, Paul stated in Eph. 2:10, “For we are His

workmanship . . .” And what about the encouragement that Paul gives us in Rom. 12:2 to present our bodies as living sacrifices to God. (Quote Rom. 12:1-2.)

James tells us that:

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning (James 1:17).

And Peter could not refrain from speaking of the goodness of the Lord, but he did it from quoting from Psalm 34. This is what he said:

10 For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile:

11 Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.

12 For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil (1 Peter 3:10-12).

Concl: The Bible is full of the goodness of God, and it is equally full of verses which tell us to be “good,” *good like the goodness of our God, and like His beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. And this is exactly the purpose that the Holy Spirit has for bearing His fruit in our lives.*

I close with the words of a hymn. I have used it before, but it forms such a fitting conclusion to a message on the goodness of God, that I want to give it to you again. Here are the words:

How good is the God we adore,
Our faithful unchangeable Friend;
His love is as great as His power,
And knows neither measure nor end.

‘Tis Jesus the first and the last,
Whose Spirit shall guide me safe home;
We’ll praise Him for all that is past,
We’ll trust Him for all that’s to come.

Let us continually thank the Lord for His goodness, and pray that the Spirit of God will make us good so that others may see Christ in us.

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS FAITH

Galatians 5:22-23 - #8

Intro: In seeking to understand these words which make up “the fruit of the Spirit,” we need to remember that since every believer is permanently indwelt by the Holy Spirit, therefore there will be some evidence of these characteristics in all believers. As we “walk in the Spirit,” the evidence will increase. Where there has been love, there will be more love. Where there is joy, there will be more joy. And we can say the same thing about peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance. To grow in the Lord, to grow in grace, is to grow in all of “the fruit of the Spirit.” These qualities are found perfectly in Christ, but imperfectly in us. But as we grow, as we become more mature, these evidences that we are truly saved will become more prominent in each of our lives. But we will not reach the highest perfection that it is possible for a child of God to reach until we see the Lord. And so all through our lives we need to continue growing.

But let us take this a step farther. In all of these we are to be concerned about the practical manifestation of these qualities in our lives. We not only have God’s love in our hearts, but we will want to manifest that love. We not only have the joy of the Lord in our hearts, but we want to show that joy – not the giddiness that is so characteristic of the world, but a deep, abiding joy in the Lord that carries us through even the trials of our lives.

Now the same is true of “faith” which we are considering tonight. We all know that our faith is a gift from God. Ephesians 2:8-9 makes that very clear. Everything about our salvation is a gift from God, and this includes our faith. Paul said in Romans 10:17 that “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” And Hebrews 12:2 teaches us that we look “unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.” As the “author” He is the First Cause, the One Who takes the lead in providing us with our faith. As the “finisher,” He is the Consummator of our faith. He is the One Who will perfect our faith. So from first to last, our faith comes from our Lord, but we are learning from Gal. 5:22 and 23 that all of these graces are ministered to us by the Holy Spirit. That is why we need to “walk in the Spirit,” in dependence upon Him, and in union with Him.

Faith is not an attempt on our part to get what we want from God. Faith

is our confidence in God, our trust in Him in the experiences of life, and, as we are prone to say today, “the bottom line is” that faith is our belief in the revealed and written Word of God. And, oh, how that needs to grow in every single one of us. And what ultimately does a strong faith produce? It produces a faithful people of God. That is why many expositors prefer to say that Paul was talking here about faithfulness. I am sure that he was, but if we don’t start with “faith” we will never really understand what it is to be faithful.

Let us take some examples from Scripture. And let us start with:

I. ABRAHAM AND SARAH.

But I want to go to a New Testament passage instead of the book of Genesis. However, I want to review for a moment God’s dealings with Abraham.

You will remember that Abraham, or Abram as he was named originally, was called by God to step out “by faith” to go to a land that the Lord would give to him, and there the Lord would make him a mighty nation which would result in blessing world-wide! We know now that the blessing that the Lord had in mind, was the blessing of salvation, and that this blessing would ultimately come through Abraham’s greatest descendant, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The writer of the book of Hebrews, in referring to this, wrote,

By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went (Heb. 11:8).

Notice that this verse says that “by faith Abraham . . . obeyed.” He left Ur of the Chaldees, and evidently followed the Lord day by day until he and Sarah came to the land of Canaan. God ministered to people in those days differently from the way He speaks to us today. So he left home, and all that he had to go on was the Word of God, the promise of God.

He went westward to Haran, and remained there until his father died (cf. Acts 7:4), and Genesis 12:4 tells us that he was seventy-five years old when he left Haran and entered Canaan.

Abraham and Sarah waited, and waited, and waited, but no child was born

to them. But after twenty-five more years, when Abraham was 100 years old, and Sarah was 90, Isaac was born. I won't deal tonight with what happened during those years, but in reading Genesis we can all see that those were difficult years. Humanly speaking, it looked at times like Abraham and Sarah had misread the call of God for them. But eventually a son, Isaac, was given to them, from whom the nation developed, and it was from that nation that Christ was born.

But now I want to ask you to turn with me to Romans 4, verses 20 and 21, where we read these words:

20 He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;

21 And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform (Rom. 4:20-21).

This is God's summary of the life of Abraham. In reading Genesis it seems to us like Abraham did a lot of *staggering*. But what the Holy Spirit meant in what he caused Paul to write was that Abraham never fully gave up on the promise of God. His faith wavered at times, but it never completely failed *because God kept ministering to his faith*.

Hebrews 11 also tells this about Sarah:

Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised (Heb. 11:11).

We have a great definition of faith in this verse: "She judged Him faithful that promised"!

Now if we go back to Rom. 4:11. Speaking of Abraham, Paul wrote in the verse just before the two verses I have already read to you:

And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb (Rom. 4:19).

There are those who believe that the verse indicates that he did consider his own body, and Sarah's body, knowing that they were too old to have children, but that did not deter them. They knew that what God had promised to do, He was capable of doing even though it looked like God had waited too long. But God did this intentionally to teach them, and us, that His promises depend upon His faithfulness, not on our faith. It is important that we learn to trust the Lord even when it seems like it is foolish and hopeless to do so. And God sustains our faith, so that we

continue to trust Him.

Let me take you to a second example.

II. THE APOSTLE PETER.

And the passage that I have in mind is in Luke 22, verses 31 and 32:

31 And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:

32 But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren (Luke 22:31-32).

We all should know what the Lord was talking about. Satan was out to ruin the Apostle Peter. That Satanic attack came after the Lord had been arrested, and while Peter was waiting to see what was going to happen. Peter had told the Lord that he was ready to go to prison with Him, or to die with Him. But the Lord told Peter that before the cock would crow, that is, before morning, Peter would deny three times that he knew the Lord.

In between this conversation between Peter and the Lord, they went to the Garden of Gethsemane. Peter and James and John were taken by the Lord to the inner part of the Garden where He told them to wait, saying, "Pray that ye enter not into temptation" (Luke 22:40). You know the story, instead of watching in prayer with the Lord, the three of them fell asleep.

The Lord came back two more times, and he found them asleep each time. It is very clear that Peter in particular did not know his own weakness, nor the power of Satan, nor the need he had for the Lord's prayers for him.

You remember what happened. People came up to him saying that he was one of the disciples, and each time Peter denied it. Mark in his Gospel (14:71) said that the last time was with curses and oaths. Then the rooster crowed. Peter immediately remembered what the Lord had said to him only hours before, and then he "went out, and wept bitterly" (Luke 22:62).

Let me ask you a question. Did Peter's faith fail? What would that have meant if it had? It would have meant that Peter would have done what

those disciples in John 6 where it is said in verse 66, "From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him." Or Peter could have done what Judas did: he could have gone out and committed suicide! But he did neither. Why? Because the Lord prayed for him!

Doesn't this help us to understand a little better that most important verse in Hebrews, chapter 7, verse 25?

Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them (Heb. 7:25).

How many times do you suppose that you and I have been spared the loss of our faith, when we were under attack by Satan, perhaps facing the temptation to commit some serious sin, just because the Lord Jesus was praying for us. If the Lord were praying about Peter's faith, this would mean that his faith would come from God.

Let me give you one more example. This comes from the life of the Apostle Paul.

III. THE APOSTLE PAUL.

You and I would have to read the whole of Acts 27 to fully appreciate Paul's faith. Again let me emphasize that God deals with us in ways that are different from those He employed before the Scriptures were completed.

On the trip by ship the Roman soldiers and the crew of the ship were facing a decision as to whether they ought to stay where they were, or try to go farther. Beginning at the end of Acts 27:9 and reading down through verse 11, we read this:

9b Paul admonished them,

10 And said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives.

11 Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul (Acts 27:9b-11).

Paul was not a sailor; he was a tentmaker. And probably that was one reason the centurion paid no attention to him.

But you know what happened. They got caught in a terrific storm, and we read in Acts 27:20,

And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away.

But beginning with the very next verse we see that Paul spoke to all of them again, and this is what he said:

21 But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss.

22 And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship.

23 For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve,

24 Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.

25 Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.

26 Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island (Acts 27:21-26).

How did this story end? Well, some of the soldiers on board wanted to kill the prisoners to keep them from escaping. But the centurion intervened because he wanted to save Paul. And so we read in the last two verses of the chapter,

43 But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from their purpose; and commanded that they which could swim should cast themselves first into the sea, and get to land:

44 And the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land (Acts 27:43-44).

What is the important lesson of this chapter? It is not that Paul had such great knowledge, nor that his faith was so strong because of anything in him. No, it was that God sent His angel to that ship with His Word. And this was the Lord's message to Paul:

Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee (Acts 27:24).

Now remember that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." So it was by the Word of God that Paul's faith was strengthened, and he believed what God told him would happen.

Concl: I wish all of you had read the story of J. Hudson Taylor, the Founder of the China Inland Mission, now called the Overseas Missionary Fellowship. He went to China with a burden to reach the people of inland China with the Gospel, and he went there trusting the Lord to supply his needs. And the story of how the Lord did that, gradually leading others to join him, and the miracles of grace that they saw in the lives of Chinese people who heard and believed the Gospel, is a most thrilling account. I don't know of anything like it unless it is the story of George Mueller in Bristol, England.

One of the verses which was instrumental in Hudson Taylor's life to step out by faith to reach Chinese people with the Gospel, was Mark 11:22 where we learn that the Lord told the disciples, "Have faith in God." Hudson Taylor paraphrased that verse to show what it means to have faith in God. His paraphrase was this: "Hold the faithfulness of God."

To have faith in God is to depend upon His faithfulness. He cannot deny Himself even when we do not believe. He will stand by His Word. And when we are enabled by His grace to believe His Word, that is what makes us faithful, strong, able to stand, when we have nothing to rest upon but the Word of God.

This morning as Tom Matthews concluded the Sunday School lesson, he referred to 2 Thess. 2:13-15, and in verse 15 Paul wrote, "Therefore, brethren, stand fast." This is what the Holy Spirit does for us when He works in us "the fruit of . . . faith." True faith makes us faithful to God even when we are in circumstances where things are out of our control. It doesn't come overnight, but is one of the great results of a daily walk "in the Spirit." May the Lord enable us to be faithful to Him in these days by strengthening our faith as we "walk in the Spirit." The temptations of the flesh are very, very strong, but by God's grace we can be even stronger.