

Living By the Spirit

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[0:00] Please turn in your Bibles to Galatians chapter 5. Galatians chapter 5. Last week we started a short series on the fruit of the Spirit.

! And this morning I mean to do a little review and then we'll get down to business. So Galatians chapter 5, verse 22 and 23, has the fruit of the Spirit.

And it says this, But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

And against such things there is no law. Now, as a way of review, remember we need to see, is this verse an indicative or an imperative?

Is it telling us a truth or giving us a command? It's indicative. It's telling us something that is true. It's a gospel truth.

[1:08] Paul is not so much giving us nine character traits to work on here, although that is in part true. That's by implication.

But he's telling us what the Spirit produces in us. And so it's not so much a to-do list as a good news list. And then we said that you can't divide these things up and say, Well, I'm pretty good on this one and I just need to work harder on that one.

I'm going to work on patience or I'm going to work on gentleness. We said you really can't do that. I mean, we can divide it up in our minds. And in a way, we can work on one in particular.

But in the broader sense, really, they hang together, don't they? One depends on the other. So joy and peace are related.

If you have no peace in your heart, it's not very likely that you're going to be a very joyful person. If you're always agitated, that's sort of not being joyful. And in the same way, joy produces patience.

[2:15] If you're a joyful person, you're going to have patience when something comes along. And patience shows itself in gentleness. Patience and being harsh, they don't go together.

And they all show themselves in love. And love shows itself in patience and gentleness and kindness and all the rest. And the opposite is true as well.

That our sin hangs together. Our sin hangs together. And so that's why Paul says it's the fruit of the Spirit and not the fruits of the Spirit.

Because they're really looking at godliness from different perspectives. They're looking at Christ-likeness from different perspectives. And now, just in saying all that, and saying that this is what the Spirit produces in us, that is not to say that we don't have anything to do.

Instead, what is the imperative? What is the duty that Paul puts us on in Galatians 5, 16 through 26? We're to live by the Spirit.

[3:32] We're to keep in step with the Spirit. And those two things, I believe, are synonymous.

Those are not different things. Paul begins with live by the Spirit, and he ends with keep in step with the Spirit.

And interpretive... That's a very common way that the Bible puts together packages.

It's called an inclusio. An inclusio is where you start with something, and you say a whole bunch of stuff, and then you come back to it. It's sort of like tying the whole bow. And the first and the last are not different things.

They're the same thing. And that's what Paul is doing here. So he says, So I say live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. And then at the end, he says, Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

And let's not become conceited, provoking and envying each other, which is what it means to gratify the flesh. That's what we do when we become conceited. So that's the command.

[4:32] Live by the Spirit. Keep in step with the Spirit. Those are synonymous. Now, what Paul is saying is, as we keep in step with the Spirit, the Spirit produces in us love, and joy, and peace, and patience, and kindness, and goodness, and faithfulness, and gentleness, and self-control.

And so what we want to talk about today is really the all-important question of, what does it mean then to live by the Spirit? Or keep in step with the Spirit?

What does that mean? Because the good news of, if you live this way, it will produce, the Spirit will produce in you these things, then we want to know, what are we called to do?

Not just what the Spirit will do, but what are we called to do? And I think, so it's very important to understand what it means to keep in step with the Spirit, and live by the Spirit. Now, the first thing we have to realize is that Paul didn't just come up with this idea.

He didn't just come up with this idea. It's an idea that he found, and he understood, as he studied the Old Testament, as he read the Old Testament.

[5:46] And it shouldn't surprise us that Paul goes to the Old Testament to understand, to explain what we are called to do, because Paul goes there again, and again, and again, in the book of Galatians.

In the book of Galatians, he's in the Old Testament a lot. And so when he wants to talk about justification by faith alone, he goes to Abraham, the father of the faithful, of the believing.

And when he wants to compare the Old Covenant and the New Covenant, he talks about Hagar and Ishmael, he talks about Sarah and Isaac, and he says, he goes to Mount Sinai, and he uses the Old Testament to explain the difference.

Now, so his whole thinking is steeped in the Old Testament. And I think we totally miss what he's talking about here if we are not thinking along those same lines.

If we're bringing our own meaning into what it means to stay and keep in step with the Spirit, instead of taking the meaning of what the Old Testament gives us and what Paul is showing us here.

[6:56] And so what we're going to do here at the beginning, and I want to show you the Old Testament background. And when you understand the Old Testament background of what it means to keep in step with the Spirit and live by the Spirit, you're going to understand what Paul is telling you to do.

Because they're very much one and the same. And so we're going to look at three Old Testament passages. And the first one is Haggai, chapter 2, and verse 4 and 5.

Haggai. Haggai, it's right before Zechariah, which is one of the longest minor prophets.

So if you can find Zechariah, you'll be able to find Haggai, which comes right before it. Haggai, chapter 2, verse 4 and 5. And Haggai was a prophet that came to Israel from God after the exile.

So the people are back from Babylon. They are now back in the promised land. God wants them to build a house for his name, a temple. But they are discouraged.

[8:06] They're discouraged. And he needs to encourage them. And so God says, be strong. All you people of the land, declares the Lord, and work for I am with you, declares the Lord Almighty.

This is what I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt. And my spirit remains among you. Do not fear. It's interesting.

A lot of times, when God wants to encourage his people to be strong and to work, he gives them this promise of, I am with you. So Joshua is standing on the edge of the promised land, and he is a little bit timid, not sure what to do.

And God comes to Joshua and says, be strong, take heart, go into the land, because I'm going to be with you. And you can think of the Great Commission. Jesus says, go out into the whole world, and I'm going to be with you to the very end of the age.

That's the same thing here that's going on in Haggai. Why should we build this temple? Because I am going to be with you. And my spirit remains among you.

[9:10] I promised, when I brought you out of Egypt, when you came out of Egypt, he's saying, I promised to be with you. I came and I lived with you.

And my spirit was there. And he is still here. So don't be afraid. My spirit remains among you. Now, this is just what I want you to pick up on here.

That there is this connection between God the Holy Spirit and when Israel came out of Egypt. Between what God the Holy Spirit and the Exodus.

There's this connection. You remember when they came out of Egypt, there was a theophany. There was a cloud.

A fiery cloud, a pillar, or a fiery pillar, and a cloud that led them. And we're going to see in a moment from Isaiah that that was the Holy Spirit.

[10:14] It was a theophany of the Holy Spirit leading them out of Egypt. So, I want you to turn again over to Isaiah chapter 63. Isaiah chapter 63. How about we back up to verse 9.

And the context here is or what God is referring to here is the time of the Exodus of the people of God down in Egypt.

And it says this, In all their distress, he too was distressed. And the angel of his presence saved them. In his love and mercy, he redeemed them.

He lifted them up and carried them all the days of old. Yet, they rebelled and grieved his Holy Spirit. And so, he turned and became their enemy and he himself fought against them.

Then his people recalled the days of old, the days of Moses and his people where he is, where, where is he who brought them through the sea with the shepherd of his flock?

[11:20] Where is he who set his Holy Spirit among them, who sent his glorious arm of power to be at Moses' right hand, who divided the waters before them to gain for himself everlasting renown, who led them through the depths like a horse in open country.

They did not stumble like cattle. They go down to the plain. They were given rest by the Spirit of the Lord. This is how you guided your people to make for yourself a glorious name.

So, the Lord led Israel like a shepherd with his sheep and he was strong and he split open the Red Sea and he led Israel out of slavery in Egypt into freedom, into the promised land and he led them like cattle down into the plain and then there he gave them rest.

This is how you guided your people. That was, and he's saying, this is what the Spirit did in your midst. This is what the Holy Spirit did. His Holy Spirit was among them.

It was rest by the Spirit of the Lord. And so, the Spirit was the one who led Israel out of Egypt, out of slavery, out of bondage and he led them and he brought them through the Red Sea.

[12:31] He took them into the desert. He provided for them and then eventually he brought them in to Canaan and he gave them rest. So, what did Israel have to do in order to get to the promised land?

In order to live? To break free? They had to follow the Spirit. And then turn over to Nehemiah. Nehemiah.

Nehemiah chapter 9. Nehemiah chapter 9 and verse 19. We're going to read 19 through 21.

Because of your great compassion, you did not abandon them in the desert.

By day, the pillar of cloud did not cease to guide them on their path nor the pillar of fire by night to shine on the way they were to take. You gave your good spirit to instruct them.

You did not withhold your manna from their mouths and you gave them water for their thirst. For 40 years, you sustained them in the desert. They lacked nothing. Their clothes did not wear out nor did their feet become swollen.

[13:38] again, you see the connection between the Holy Spirit's ministry and walking out of Egypt and into the promised land.

And that whole time in the desert being provided for by God. It was the Holy Spirit that instructed them, that led them. The Spirit guided them. He gave light to the path.

He instructed them. And so, what does it mean to live by the Spirit? What does it mean to keep in step with the Spirit?

Well, in the Old Testament, keeping in step with the Spirit, it referred to Israel walking out of Egypt and into them. Walking out of slavery and into freedom.

To live our freedom. So what does it mean to follow the Spirit? It means to live in our freedom, to leave our Egypt, to leave our sin, to leave our slavery, and to walk in the freedom of our salvation.

[14:41] And that's what you see over and over again in the book of Galatians. Paul is talking about freedom a lot in the book of Galatians.

And so there's this connection between what he's saying now and live by the Spirit and what he has been saying about you need, watch out, stand firm in your freedom.

It was for freedom that you were set free. Make sure you don't go back into bondage. And so the imperative, the command to live in the Spirit and keep in step with the Spirit isn't disconnected from all the rest of Galatians.

This is not out there all by itself. It's the outcome of everything that Paul has been saying and talking about in the book of Galatians.

And so when Paul says if you walk in the Spirit you will bear the fruit of the Spirit, he's saying if you believe and you take hold of and you live in the things that I have been talking about, then you will produce the fruit of the Spirit.

[15:46] You will bear the fruit of the Spirit. And so what we need to do is look through the book of Galatians and see what he's been talking about. What freedom has he specifically been talking about?

So let's turn back to Galatians. Galatians. And we want to see what does it say about freedom and the Spirit. And the question we want to answer then is what does it mean specifically to live by the Spirit?

To keep in step with the Spirit. And the first thing, it means you rest in the freedom of justification by faith alone.

You rest in the freedom of justification by faith alone. Look at Galatians chapter 3 and verse 1.

Galatians 3 and verse 1. You foolish Galatians. Who has bewitched you?

[16:51] Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you. Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law or by believing what you heard?

Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? Have you suffered so much for nothing if it really was for nothing?

Does God give you His Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law or because you believe what you heard? Verse 6.

Consider Abraham. He believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness. Understand then that those who believe are the children of Abraham.

The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith and announce the gospel in advance to Abraham. All nations will be blessed through you so those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham the man of faith.

[17:57] Now, what was Abraham promised? Well, look down at verse 14. He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

So how do we ever receive the gift of the Holy Spirit in the first place? Is it observing the law or by believing by faith in Jesus Christ in the gospel?

Well, we read it. It's by faith in Jesus Christ. So how did you ever get your start with the Holy Spirit? It was through faith.

It wasn't through obeying the law. It wasn't through your obedience. See, the whole realm of the Spirit, the whole way we begin with the Spirit is by faith in God's goodness in Jesus Christ.

So the gospel comes to us and we believe it and we receive the Holy Spirit. and He comes into our lives and His entrance into our lives is not by our obedience.

[19:10] Instead, it's through faith. And so you don't start with the Spirit by saying, I've got to get my life into shape. I've got to start doing what I'm supposed to.

I've got to start pleasing God with my life. No, you start with the Spirit by putting all your hope in Jesus Christ and saying, it can't be me.

It's Him. And when you do that, you enter into freedom. That's freedom. Trying to obey the law and get your life into shape, trying to justify yourself, trying to make yourself right with God through the law is slavery.

It's not freedom. And that's how you experience it. If God, if you're saying, okay, I've got to live and obey God or I'll never be justified, I'll never be right with Him.

Trying to be right with God through the law is slavery. Look at chapter 2 or chapter 3 in verse 23.

Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed.

[20:17] So do you get the picture? Here we are. We're locked up. We're imprisoned by the law. We're guilty before it and unable to keep it.

And the law won't let us go until it's got its due. The law won't free us until we have paid every last cent until its curse is completely worked out.

And so here we are. We're trapped. We're enslaved to the law. We can't escape it because we owe it. We owe such a great debt. And that's why Martin Luther in 1518 wrote for one of his debates, the

law of God, the most salutary doctrine of life cannot advance man on his way to righteousness but rather hinders him.

Salutary doctrine of life. Salutary means promoting health. So here's the law. It promotes health. It's supposed to be good. It's supposed to be the perfect good promoting health law, but it doesn't actually help us to God when we're unconverted.

It actually hinders them. It doesn't bring them to life. It actually brings them to death. Well, why? Well, because men put their confidence in it.

[21 : 38] It's the natural thing to do for man to when he hears something that he should do, he just thinks automatically, oh, I can do that or oh, I'll need to start doing that.

And two, we think it will actually justify us when in reality it condemns us. So, so we think it will justify us when actually it will condemn us.

And so here we are, we're enslaved to law, thinking that the law is going to help me. But it's a false hope. And we're enslaved. we are addicted to the hope that we think the law will give up, that the law gives us.

But we're also enslaved because we're condemned. And it won't let us go. But Jesus was born under the law and bore the curse of the law so that we might become the sons of God. And he set us free from the law.

Set us free in both senses. So, what does the spirit do when he comes into our lives? When we are converted? Well, he comes to lead us away from slavery to the law and to the freedom of Jesus Christ in both of those senses.

[22 : 52] He sets us free from the false hope that we think the law is giving us and from our condemnation. And so the first thing the spirit does is he shows us our helplessness and our inability to keep the law.

The very first step in salvation is God destroying our self-reliance. Destroying our confidence. And for the first time our self-reliance is broken and we start to see that we haven't kept the law at all. Not in its fullest, deepest spiritual sense. The spirit shows us our sinfulness and our inability to keep the law. And so finally, like at long last, we see that the law is not good news for us.

And it actually doesn't feel like good news because all the other times it felt like, oh, this is what I'm supposed to do and if I do it, I'll live. But finally, it's not good news. It's bad news for me as a sinner. And so the spirit comes and he sets us free from this delusion from our confidence in the law, from our slavery to the idea that I can save myself from my self-reliance.

And then he sets me free from the curse of the law. And he does that by taking me to Jesus Christ. So now I don't have any confidence in myself and now the spirit leads me to a place where I can rest.

[24 : 19] He leads me to Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit shows me the righteousness of Jesus Christ and the death of Jesus Christ. And through faith, we are set free from the curse of the law.

That's what the spirit does. He gives us the freedom of justification by faith alone. And so now we say, praise God. It's not up to me.

It's not all on my shoulders. I don't have to do it. I don't have to do anything. I don't have to obey a single law to be right with God. All I need to do is believe in Jesus Christ.

And so all my confidence is Him and there's now no condemnation for me and I'm not cursed anymore. I'm free. The burden's gone. That's what the Holy Spirit does.

He gives us that freedom. He takes us. He leads us from slavery to freedom. From the slavery to the law to freedom in Jesus Christ.

[25 : 16] So what does it mean to walk keeping stuck with the Spirit and live by the Spirit? It means to live in that reality. It means to not go back to the old slavery again of thinking, you know what?

My salvation is really dependent on me. It's for freedom that Christ set you free. Stand firm then and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

It's for freedom. It's for the experience. That's a subjective word. It's for the experience of freedom that Christ set you free. That's an objective sense. He set you free so that you can know and experience freedom.

And so stand firm then and don't let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. See, the Galatians were duped into going back to what they had been before, what they were relying on, trusting in themselves before, trusting in their law keeping.

They thought they were taking a big step forward. They thought they were taking a big step forward with this whole circumcision thing and saying, oh, okay, we'll keep the law in order to justify ourselves.

[26 : 27] We'll add that and that's a big step forward. But in reality, Paul is saying, you are going back to Egypt. You're going back to slavery. So don't let that happen.

And the same thing can happen again and again in our lives where instead of looking to Jesus for our righteousness and our security, for our secure standing before God, we look to ourselves. We look to our record. We put our confidence there. And so we start looking at our performance and we start thinking, it's up to me. And so we wake up and we don't have our devotions and then we yell at the kids and then instead of praying in the car, we listen to the ESPN on our way to work and we go to work and we're grumpy and we're miserable and we're impatient and we're short with people.

And then at five o'clock, we're saying to ourselves, how could God love me? God couldn't love me. God's against me. God's not for me. He couldn't be for me because of my sin.

I'll never get this right. And I'm a loser and God's holding a grudge against me. These are all the things that we're saying. And so we sulk and we feel bad and we think that what failures we are and we get scared that something is surely going to happen, right?

[27 : 49] But that's not walking according to the Spirit. It's not that you don't take your sin seriously. It's not that at all. It's that you take the gospel seriously and you get right out of your sin and you go to Christ and you repent with tears, with sorrow, with grieving, but you repent, but you do it with hope.

You do it rejoicing that though, through it all, through all that sin, God loves me and my standing is secure and despite it all, God's for me and I'm loved.

So walking in the Spirit is walking in the freedom of salvation by grace alone through faith alone.

Walking in the Spirit is rejoicing in the righteousness of Jesus Christ for me.

So keeping in step with the Spirit is not going, it's not going back to our slavery. It's going to Christ and finding in Him my all in all.

That's what Paul is saying when he's talking about keeping in step with the Spirit, he's saying walk in that freedom.

[29 : 05] The Israelites had to walk out of Egypt, they had to follow the Spirit out of their slavery into their freedom and they had to count on the Holy Spirit to provide for them all along the way and so they looked to God and He gave them everything they needed in the desert and so the promise is still for us that He's going to provide everything we need and so the temptation in the desert was always to go back to Egypt, wasn't it?

It was to always go back and they thought it would be better back there and God again and again and again had to say you don't want to go back there. You can't go back there. Don't go back there. Well, Galatians has another major theme and it's the theme of adoption and living by the Spirit is living in the freedom of your adoption.

It's living in the freedom of your security as a child of God and so he compares two different states in the book of Galatians. He talks about being slaves and he talks about being children and how do we experience the goodness of being a child of God?

Well, he says it's by the Holy Spirit. So, when we were prisoners of the law we were slaves. Slaves in our mind and we were slaves in the sense of we weren't children but look at Galatians chapter 3 verse 26 and he says you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus for all who are baptized into Christ have clothed themselves you have clothed yourselves with Christ.

So, to clothe yourself with Christ is to put on Jesus Christ it's to put on who he is and so that's your new identity and so now by faith you are standing in Jesus Christ.

[31 : 03] Christ is wrapped around you you are in his shoes and that means that just like Jesus Christ is the son of God you too are a son of God you are a child of God and so this introduces the next stage of what he's talking about this freedom that we enjoy and he says look at chapter 4 and verse 3 so also when we were children we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world but when the time had fully come God sent his son born of a woman born under the law to redeem those under the law redeem that means to buy out of slavery that's the word that God uses all the time for what he did for Israel and buying them out of Egypt to redeem those under the law that we might receive the full rights of sons because you are sons God sent his spirit the spirit his spirit of his son into our hearts the spirit who calls out Abba Father so then you are no longer a slave but a

son and since you are a son

God has made you also an heir so why has the spirit come to live in each one of us brothers and sisters what does he want to do for us well he wants where does he want to lead us well he wants us to lead not further into slavery but further into our adoption and so he comes into our hearts to teach us to think of God as our father and so when we think of him we naturally begin to pray Abba Father just like Jesus prayed Abba Father we start to pray that and that's the spirit's work in our lives to take us out of the sense of slavery to God of he's my master and he's not really he doesn't really love me he just gives me commands that very truncated that very small view of God and the spirit has come to give us a bigger view of God that God is not just my master but he is my loving father and all this is related to the exodus motif in Hosea

God says out of Egypt I took my son what was what was God taking what was the exodus it was God adopting Israel and making him his son taking his son for himself Paul in Romans 9 says theirs Israel's is the adoption as sons so when did God adopt Israel it was in the exodus and so what does it mean to be led by the spirit well in the first place it means living by justification by faith alone or through faith alone and in the second place it means living in our freedom as the children of God with the sense of God is my father and he loves me he's committed to me and so not slaves but children and so it's to walk further away from our status as an orphan and walk further into your status as a child of God that's what the spirit is doing he's taking us from our orphan status and he's making us experience more and more our status as the child of God so God is for me he's loving you he's providing for you he's caring for you yes he's even chastising you but all along the way the same heart is there that heart of love of fatherly love and so to live by the spirit and keep in step with the spirit is to trust

God to care for you that you don't have to care for yourself orphans think it's all up to them because it is but a child knows that they can count on their father so what does it mean to keep in step with the spirit it means instead of thinking it's all up to me and I've got to take care of this problem and I have to control the situation and I have to take care of these people and if I don't do it it's not going to get done walking away from that slavery and walking into the freedom of you know what God will take care of what is most important God can take care of me he loves me and so I'm going to trust him because he's my father it means to trust God to be for you to be committed to your good because he's your father and so when you look in the future as an orphan you know what you see you see nothing but poverty and destitution and nothing but problems and things that you can't overcome that's why 25% of people that

I think it's 25% of 18 year olds that age out of the system they end up committing suicide the next huge chunk of the year the next 10 years I think because when they look at the future all they see is problems all they see is their inability all they see is this hopelessness but as a child of God it is it's to look and see I have a future and I have a hope and I don't know what's going to happen in 10 years but my God my father is in charge and he's responsible for me and so he's going to take care of me and so you don't live like it's all up to you you don't live in that hopelessness the Holy Spirit takes you and you follow him and he says you have a future and a hope and I have a plan for you and you start living that way and so you don't live as poor but as rich you don't live as a nobody where no you just think well I'm nobody no one loves me no one cares for me but I'm somebody in Christ and you don't always think you have to perform or else but as a child you can be messy with your father and you don't have to put on a show one of the things that you one of the things that happens when children are adopted into families is for a long time they can maintain the sense of I have to perform and so one of the things that is very frightening is that child that is now adopted can be extremely compliant and they hide what they're doing wrong and they're always so eager to please but none of it is done out of a sense of love it's all done out of a sense of they might send me back if I don't behave and what the Holy

[37 : 29] Spirit is doing is taking us out of that slavery and bringing us into the freedom where we can say to God I am a sinner I don't even know what to do and I'm thankful that you are committed to me so what does it mean to live by the Spirit it's to count on Jesus Christ for your righteousness daily functionally it's to live with God as your father it's to leave Egypt and it's to rejoice in your freedom that is now yours in Jesus Christ and it's as you live by the Spirit as you keep in step with the Spirit and you keep believing those things and you keep applying those things that what the Spirit does is he begins to produce in you love joy peace patience gentleness kindness goodness faithfulness and self control he produces those things in you as you follow him and so the thing that

we need to do is keep preaching the gospel to ourselves keep believing it day to day hour by hour
situation by situation committed our trusting that because

I am united to Jesus Christ God is for me and he has given me his righteousness well we are
dismissed