

The Spirit as the Fulfillment of Prophecy

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Date: 13 September 2015

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[0:00] Well, we are in our third week of a five-week series on the fruit of the Spirit. And last week we talked about what the Bible's picture of what it looks like to follow the Spirit, to live by the Spirit, to keep in step with the Spirit.

And I tried to show you, and I hope I succeeded to some extent, in showing you that Paul didn't just come up with that idea out of thin air. Instead, he was drawing on one main Old Testament event. So he's pulling on this idea, this one event, and he's saying, this is sort of like what you need to live like. What was that one event? The Exodus.

Exodus. In the Exodus, God put his Spirit among Israel and then led them out of slavery in Egypt and led them into freedom in the Promised Land.

And so in order to get from slavery to freedom, in order to go through the desert and make it home, they had to follow the Holy Spirit. They followed the Spirit, and he provided for them along the way.

[1:12] And it's that idea from slavery to freedom that is so dominant in the book of Galatians. Paul talks about freedom again and again and again in the book of Galatians.

And so when he says live by the Spirit or keep in step with the Spirit, he's not talking about something totally different from what he has been talking about.

He's merely seeking to apply it. Right? So how now, why should you walk this way? Why should you live this way in the way that I've been talking to you about?

And it's because when you do, you will bear the fruit of the Spirit. And so the Spirit brings us to the freedom of two main things. Justification by faith alone, which is the one, the first and the most important theme of Galatians.

And then the second, which is related to it, it's the freedom of being the children of God, of living in our adoption and no longer as slaves, but as sons.

[2:17] And that's the other major doctrinal theme of Galatians. And in both cases, it's a move from slavery to freedom. So to live by the Spirit and to walk by the Spirit is to live in the goodness and in the belief and the faith of justification by faith alone and then adoption.

And so how are we forgiven? How are we justified and put right before God and the law? Well, it's through faith alone and Christ alone. And so the Spirit, so to speak, is connected to this realm of faith, not works, not naked human effort, not by adding something that I can do already to what Christ has done.

And so Paul says, no, how did you receive the Spirit in the first place? You received Him not by the works of the law, not by adding up a bunch of your obedience to God's law.

You received the Holy Spirit. You received Him when you believed, when you put your faith in Jesus Christ. And so he says, after beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?

Are you going back to just relying on your own effort, your own strength, your own obedience? Are you turning away from Jesus and now putting your faith into something else?

[3:44] Well, when our focus is on our human effort, and I'm not saying there's no place for effort. That's not my point. The point is, when we put our faith, when we are paying most attention to what I have to do and less attention to what Christ has done or what God is doing for me, then we become enslaved all over again.

Our faith in human effort is our slavery. And so what Paul is saying is, if you go back to that, if you go back to that, you're going back to slavery.

You're not living by the Spirit. That's living by the flesh. So Paul, in the book of Philippians, says, for it's we who are the circumcision. We who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.

So we don't boast in who we are. Remember that right after Paul got done saying this, it's we who are the circumcision and worship by the Spirit of God.

He says, if anyone has a reason to boast, I surely do. You remember all the things that he listed off. I was a Jew. I was a Benjamin.

[5:03] I was of keeping the law. I was perfect. I was a Pharisee. And so if anyone had a reason to have confidence in themselves, it was me. But now that I've seen Jesus Christ, all that stuff is worthless.

It's garbage. And so I don't put any confidence in that. It's we who worship by the Spirit and glory in Jesus Christ. So walking in the flesh is trusting in those things and who we are and what we've done and our status.

So for Paul, it was being a Pharisee for maybe for us. It's well, I go to church or I'm a reformed Baptist or I believe the right things or I do the right things.

And so therefore, God should be pleased with me. You can fill in the blank of the things that you put confidence in that says, I'm a good person because of this.

And it's who I am. It's what I've done. That's that's putting confidence in the flesh. That's walking in the flesh. It's trusting that something in your humanity, something in your effort.

[6:11] So Paul says we live by the Spirit. So we need to keep in step with the Spirit. Where day in and day out, we functionally don't put our confidence in what I've done and who I am.

But I functionally put my confidence and my hope in who Jesus Christ is, who Jesus Christ is. Now, that's living by the Spirit when we're functionally putting our faith in Jesus.

So what does that look like? And I kind of want to draw this out before we move on. What does it look like in our lives to live by the flesh or to live by the Spirit?

What does walking in the Spirit look like? And so I want to work it out a bit. And as we do, you can bring your life into focus and test yourself and to see, do I spend?

Well, if you're a Christian, you are no longer in the flesh. You are no longer dominated and controlled by the flesh. But there is a sense that we can go back and start living that way to at least some degree.

[7:19] We can slip back into it. So are you slipping back into walking by the flesh or are you still walking by the Spirit? Well, test yourself as we kind of go through some of these things.

Ask yourself, why will God do me good? Why will God do me good? Because I'm trying hard?

That's living by the flesh. Because he promised me in Jesus Christ. That's keeping in step with the Spirit. The first is slavery because you can never do enough. You can never do enough.

And if that's what your confidence is, you have to keep doing and keep doing and keep doing. It can never end. It's a slavery. And the second is freedom. How do I read my trials?

We all have trials. How do you think about those? How do you read them? How do you measure them? How do you put them into perspective? Is God against me because of my sin?

[8:22] Is it questionable whether he cares for me? That's living by the flesh. That's living in my own human effort. When I see my trials as part of God's discipline.

So God does discipline me in trials. He is dealing with my sin. Because he loves me. And he's committed to making me holy. That in the discipline, his heart is still for me.

He's still after my good. Because I'm in Christ. That's living by the Spirit. So where does your heart run when you're put into a difficult trial?

Do you think, oh, God is against me? Or do you think, you know what? God is for me in this. I'm not sure how he is. I'm not sure what he's trying to do in my life.

But I know that he is. That's living in by the Spirit. After I've fallen, do I stay away? Do I diminish my sin?

[9:20] Do I grovel and torment myself hoping that God will see how miserable I'm making myself? To show how sorry I am. And if I'm sorry enough, hopefully he'll forgive me.

And I can get right with him again. Well, that's a human way of dealing with your sin. Living by the flesh. Or do you admit your sin? If you're living in the Spirit, it's not that sin is not a big deal.

It becomes a bigger deal. You're able to say, you know what? This is worse than I thought. And I admit all of it. I'm not afraid to go before God and say, you know what? I can't say, I can't speak low enough of myself.

I can't tell you how much I hate myself. Because I hate myself so much for what I'm doing and what I've done. When you're living that way, that confidence in your Father lets you show how sinful you

really are.

Do you admit your sin? Do you really repent to God and trust him to forgive even though you are a great sinner? Because Jesus Christ is a great Savior. That's keeping in step with the Spirit.

[10 : 34] Or this, a more practical thing. Do you stay away? Do you avoid new things or hard things? Say, because I'm not good at them. And I'm afraid that it will just be one more area that I mess up in and I don't measure in.

And so it's better to stay safe. It's better to stick with the things that I know I can do. The things where I don't get myself into trouble. Where there's no problems. Do I measure my ministry opportunities?

Whether in my family or my church or my neighborhood. Or wherever my work. Whatever the context is. Do I measure my ministry opportunities by what I can do?

By how much I have or my abilities. Or do you quickly say, well, I can't do that because I'm afraid. Because I measure my potential by myself. That's putting your trust in yourself. When you look at your potential and you say, well, I can't do it because I don't have it.

[11 : 35] Well, you're measuring things by yourself. Or do you say with Paul, I can do everything through Christ who strengthens me. I can do this. Not because I'm something great.

Not because I have this potential. I'm a broken vessel. I'm a clay pot. I'm a mess. But because Jesus Christ, I can do this. That's living by the spirit.

Because God did not give us a spirit of timidity. But a spirit of power. Of love. And of self-control. Do I look at my future and just see how hard it's going to be?

How difficult it's going to be? Do I look in the future and see no hope? No future grace? Do I just see myself in the midst of a sea of troubles?

But I don't see God anywhere in that. I just see me and my sin and my problems. But God is missing as I look into the future. That's putting your trust in yourself.

[12 : 35] But when I look into the future and I say, you know what? God has been with me in the past. He has walked with me in the past. He's going to walk with me in the future.

Isn't that what Israel needed to do? When God provided for them at the Red Sea and saved them from their enemies, they should have looked back now that they have no food and said, you know what?

God can care for me. God can provide. God can protect. God can keep me. He's not going to bring me out here to destroy me. No, he did that for me. And so past mercies should encourage future hope.

But do your past mercies just sort of get buried in the past and you don't think about them anymore and they have no connection to what God will do in the future? Or do you say with David, goodness and love will follow me, will pursue me all the days of my life.

You know what? I don't know what tomorrow is going to hold. Except to this. I know that goodness and love will meet me that tomorrow. You know, we don't know what's going to happen tomorrow.

[13 : 44] But goodness and love will follow me and find me out tomorrow because God is for me. God is my shepherd. That's living by the spirit. Do you say with Hebrews, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.

That's living by the spirit. When you're saying my confidence is because of Jesus Christ, he's the same. Same yesterday, today and forever. So are you living in fear or are you living in freedom? Are you living trusting in yourself or are you living trusting functionally in Jesus Christ and enjoying that? Do you think of yourself as a slave or do you think of yourself as a son?

A slave lives in the house but feels no comfort from the master. But a son lives in the house. They both have things to do.

They both have to obey. But the son feels warmth and comfort because he's with his father. It's not just a purely economic master-slave relationship.

[14 : 49] There's a familial, a father-son relationship. And you experience that. A slave always feels constrained and confined, held down and held back. But a son is free. A slave doesn't have any future things to look forward to but a son has an inheritance to look forward to.

So how do you see yourself? As a slave? As just this purely economic relationship with God? He tells you what to do and you do it and hopefully he'll reward you in some way?

Or do you see yourself as a son where you love your father and so you want to obey him? Living in the flesh, Paul says, is living like a slave.

Living by the spirit is living as a son. So how do you know if you're walking in the flesh or walking by the spirit? Well, do you see yourself as a slave or do you see yourself as a son?

While Israel was down in Egypt, they were enslaved. And then God redeemed them and he made them his son. So, how does it go with you?

[15:52] If you live... And here's the good news. If you live by the spirit and if you keep in step with the spirit, then you're going to bear the fruit of the spirit as well. But if you spend a lot of time dwelling and living in the flesh, well, you can't be surprised if you commit the acts of the flesh.

Maybe not to the extent that Galatians puts them. They're pretty extreme in Galatians. But there's other acts of the flesh of anger and impatience and joylessness that all marks living by the flesh. Of, I'm just a slave. And the result is not righteousness. The result is sinfulness. In one form or another.

Well, today I want to ask, how did that work itself out? And we're starting to see how this bears itself in the fruit of the spirit. How did it work itself out in Israel?

And then what has God planned for us? So let me ask you. I just got done saying that they were enslaved in Egypt and God redeemed them and took them and made them a son.

[17:11] Did Israel live like a son? What do you say? In the desert. Did they really think of themselves as God's son? No.

How do you know? They complained. They complained. They worried. They didn't think they didn't think God would care for them.

They said, I think they said more than once, did you just bring us out here to destroy us? I mean, that's not, a son doesn't talk about his father like that.

Not when he's seen his father for how he really is. So, they even went so far as to say, let's go back to Egypt. Because at least we could get stuff there.

We could have food there. But, there's no hope here. It's better to be a slave than to do what we're doing. And so, they didn't keep in step with the spirit. And, they didn't bear the fruit of the spirit.

[18:18] They didn't live in obedience. And, it wasn't because they didn't know the law. They had just received the law. And, it wasn't because they disagreed with the law. They had said, oh, we'll obey it.

They didn't obey it. And, they didn't trust because they were living as slaves in their minds. And, they didn't believe in God's fatherly love for them. And, they were, they were sons. But, they were living as orphans.

And, that's very much their history. Now, obviously not all the time. But, a lot of the time, they weren't bearing fruit because they were living in functional unbelief.

God wanted Israel to be fruitful. But, they lived trusting in themselves, what they could pull off. They were always going and worshiping idols. Or, they were going and having, making deals with other nations.

Because, that was their way of dealing with their problems. It was never, let's go tell our father about this. It was, let's go over to Assyria and we'll get in good with him and we'll make an agreement with them and they'll protect us.

[19:30] Or, these gods will protect us. So, they didn't live by faith in God and so they didn't bear the fruit of the spirit. and, actually, the result was bad fruit.

It was bad. So, this is what I want to do. I want to trace the history of Israel's fruitlessness and then what God has promised to do and now what God is doing. So, would you turn in your Bibles to Isaiah chapter 5?

Just like, the theme of living by the spirit and keeping in step with the spirit is an Old Testament theme, the fruit of the spirit has its roots in the Old Testament.

Paul didn't just come up with this out of thin air. This was something that he saw, this theme, he saw in the Old Testament. And, if we're going to understand Galatians and our place and our place in the story, then we need to understand that it goes back a long way.

So, turn to Isaiah chapter 5 and we're going to read the first two verses and then we'll skip down to verse 7. I will sing for the one I love a song about his vineyard.

[20:46] My loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside. He dug it up and cleared it of stones and planted it with the choicest vines. He built a watchtower in it and he cut out a winepress as well.

Then he looked for a crop of good grapes, but it yielded only bad fruit. Then verse 7, the vineyard of the Lord Almighty is the house of Israel and the men of Judah are the garden of his delight and he

looked for justice but he saw bloodshed.

He looked for righteousness but he heard cries of distress instead. And so, instead of righteousness and justice there was just bloodshed and people crying out save me from these evil men and the evil men were Israel.

So, in the parable who's the vineyard? In the song who's the vineyard? It's Israel. And in the parable what is the fruit that God comes looking for?

Righteousness and justice. This is the fruit that God wanted to see Israel bear but they didn't. and so, God sent them away into judgment and he shook them out of the land and he drove them far away.

[22 : 07] It was the garden of Eden all over again. Leaving the land, leaving God's place. But was that the end? So, here's Israel.

Their whole history was this history of God giving to them and providing for them and then looking for good fruit and them not bearing it. And the question is, was that the end?

Was all of God's plans spoiled? Would they just be this stump in the ground, this dead, lifeless, no fruit stump? Well, turn over to Isaiah chapter 11.

Isaiah chapter 11. And we'll read the first five verses. A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse. From his roots a branch will bear fruit.

The spirit of the Lord will rest on him. Do you see the connection? The spirit of the Lord will rest on him. The spirit of wisdom and of understanding. The spirit of counsel and of power. The spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.

[23 : 14] And he will delight in the fear of the Lord. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes or decide by what he hears with his ears, but with righteousness he will judge the needy.

With justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth. With the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness will be the sash around his waist.

So, it starts with this dead stump and out of it comes this branch and what does the branch do? He bears fruit.

He bears fruit. And how will he bear the fruit? What does verse 2 say? What is the power, the resource that this branch has that makes him to bear fruit where Israel didn't bear fruit?

The spirit of the Lord is upon him. Spirit of counsel and wisdom and understanding of power and the rest. And he will do exactly what Israel didn't do.

[24 : 25] Do you notice the two things that first come up as this is his fruit? It was righteousness and justice. The very things Israel didn't do the Lord Jesus will do.

Righteousness and justice and faithfulness will be the sash. it's the fruit of the spirit. And it's not in Israel but now it's found in this branch.

And so the Lord Jesus, the picture is the Lord Jesus is going to be the beginning of a new Israel. Of a new plant. And so the Lord Jesus would be a son who bore fruit, who lived by the spirit, who kept in step with the spirit, who put no confidence in himself but lived as a child of God from the beginning.

So do you have the picture? Israel, they have the law, they're living under the law, they're living as slaves but they don't live as a son and they live as an orphan, they're putting their confidence in who they are but, and they bore only bad fruit.

And then Jesus comes and the life of Jesus is the life of a son with his father of living in day-to-day submission to his father, trusting in what his father has for him, talking with his father.

[25 : 45] Remember all these big decisions that Jesus had to do and all the big trials of his life and even the littlest things, what was he doing? He was praying. He was seeking the Lord's help.

He wasn't trusting in himself, he wasn't thinking oh I've got this, I've got, I can just do whatever. No, he was living in, he was living by faith and he bore fruit.

Now the question is, did that fruitfulness just stay within him? No, God's plan was for the fruitfulness to spread. And this is where we start entering in the picture.

Because as we are grafted into Jesus Christ, we bear much fruit. So, this is all part of God's plan. Turn to Isaiah chapter 27.

Isaiah chapter 27. And here we have another song about a vineyard.

[26 : 45] We just heard one. And it was the song of the vineyard and it doesn't bear fruit. But now things are different. Look at verse 2. In that day, sing about a fruitful vineyard.

I the Lord watch over it. I water it continually. I guard it day and night so that no one may harm it. I am not angry. If only there were briars and thorns confronting me, I would march against them in battle.

I would set them all on fire or else let them come to me for refuge. Let them make peace with me. Yes, it will make, let them make peace with me. In days to come, Jacob will take root.

Israel will bud and blossom and fill all the world with fruit. fruit. And again, God is not talking about mangoes and bananas.

He's talking about righteousness and justice. And it's that righteousness and justice and faithfulness that would spread through the whole world.

[27 : 49] And so the picture is after the branch comes, then Israel is going to be, there's going to be a new Israel and they're going to be transformed. Instead of sing a song about a vineyard that doesn't bear fruit, it's now sing a song of a fruitful vineyard.

So the song is totally changed. And then that fruitfulness is going to spread. The whole world will see that fruit.

Then go over to Isaiah chapter 32. 32. The question is, is who's going to make the difference? It's not only the branch, it's not only Jesus Christ, but how is this fruitfulness going to spread?

In Isaiah 32, in this passage, he's been talking about how destruction is going to come upon Israel and how the fields are going to be abandoned and they're going to, the land's going to be overgrown with thorns until, until something happens.

And look at verse 15. Till the spirit is poured upon us from on high. We're going to, in the morning worship, you're going to read about how this came true or we're going to hear about it.

[29 : 05] Till the spirit is poured upon us from on high and the desert becomes a fertile field and the fertile field seems like a forest and justice will dwell in the desert and righteousness live in the fertile field.

The fruit of righteousness will be peace. The effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever. The spirit is going to come and when he comes, at long last, God's people are going to bear fruit.

And by him, the fruitfulness of the branch is going to come to them, is going to spread to them. So let's bring this all back to Galatians.

What Paul is saying, Paul has very much two time periods in his mind as he's going through the book of Galatians. He has before Christ comes and now after Christ comes.

And he is, and now Paul is saying, now is the time of the spirit. The spirit has come. The spirit has been poured out. He's come to us through Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ has the fullness of the spirit.

[30 : 19] And as we dwell and we live and we abide in Jesus Christ, we experience and we are filled with the Holy Spirit. We are baptized into the Holy Spirit.

And all of this has been a lot of theology. A lot of show you this is the pattern of what God is doing and what God has planned and what wasn't and now what is.

It's a lot of theology. It's a lot of Bible, but I think it helps us. It puts some things into perspective and it encourages us. If you have this picture of Israel's fruitlessness and then the spirit comes in our fruitfulness.

And the first bit of perspective and encouragement is this. Let me ask you, how long has God been planning your fruitfulness? All the way back in Isaiah, he was looking forward to the day when the fruit of righteousness would fill the earth.

And we are about as far away from Israel as you can get. And the fruit of righteousness is here because the Jesus Christ is here. The Holy Spirit is here. So how long has God been planning your fruitfulness?

[31 : 30] It's been a part of the plan from the very beginning. Your fruitfulness is not a personal, just a personal, private battle for holiness.

Your fruitfulness has its roots all the way back in ancient Israel and God's plan with God. With God planning to make his people fruitful in all the ways that Israel failed.

And so your fruitfulness is a part of God's great plan for the whole world. Now how does that help you? How does that encourage us? Well, it tells us that we're not alone. It's not just me thinking about these things.

It's not just me striving for these things. God is for us. God has been planning our fruitfulness. He's written about it. He saw how Israel failed and he said we need to change in this plan.

And so eventually as when Christ came, things changed. So you've been swept up into God's plan. It's more than just you.

[32 : 36] So when you read the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, you shouldn't just see yourself and say, oh, this is all about me and what I have to do.

You have to see. No, it was God's plan for us to walk in these things. It was his intention and he has given us the Holy Spirit that we might do it.

The second bit of perspective is this. Our fruitfulness is a sign of the last days. Our fruitfulness is a sign of the last days.

And the Bible, the Bible's way of dividing history is before Christ and after Christ. Before Christ, it's fruitless. Generally fruitlessness.

And after Christ, it's the pouring out of the Holy Spirit and then fruitfulness spreading to the whole world. And if we are fruitful, it's because we've begun to taste of the powers of the age to come, is how Hebrews puts it.

[33 : 46] We've begun to experience the last days. Now, sometimes there's this push and this pull to do something amazing, something radical, something extreme for God.

As if the only way to really live the Christian life is to sell everything you own, move to Mozambique or something like that. And let me tell you, there's nothing wrong with people doing things like that.

The problem is when we say that's what it always looks like to live a radical life.

The problem is that with that way of thinking is that if we go too far in thinking that we're in jeopardy of missing how radical and extreme and amazing love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, how radical those things are.

So, long patience in a trial. It doesn't look extreme. People don't say, wow, that's amazing.

They don't write biographies. They don't plan conferences around things like that. It can seem like small potatoes. But is it?

[35 : 07] Is your love, joy, peace, patience, and all the rest, are those small potatoes? No. It's the fulfillment of God's long promise that people would bear fruit.

God had planned that. God had promised these things. And so, when we are patient with our neighbor and we are patient in suffering and we are loving our children, when we are witnessing to them, even though we're confronted again and we're exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit, that's something that God promised thousands of years ago.

That is something that God said, you know what, something amazing is going to happen later.

Instead of being fruitless, people are going to be fruitful. And so, it's, all of that is the fulfillment of the long promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

And so, living a normal, holy, fruitful, Christian life is not small potatoes. It's not minor league. It's not second-rate Christianity.

Christianity. It's the fruit of righteousness that God says, let's sing a song of a fruitful vineyard. This is something that's worth singing about. And so, when you see your neighbor in trouble and instead of turning away, you move toward them and you watch their pet for them and you lend them your car and you sit and listen to them and talk to them and share Jesus with them and you love on them, no one is ever going to put that in a sermon illustration.

[36 : 38] No one is going to write that up. No one is going to have a conference about that or anything like that. But it is the fulfillment of the long-promised last days outpouring of the Spirit.

So those small things that we think of as small and minor are really quite big, quite extraordinary.

So, how does seeing the Old Testament background actually help us?

Well, it tells us, you know what? It's not just us. God's been planning this. We aren't alone. God is for us. The fruit of the Spirit is not our private battle for holiness.

It is a part of God's plan from the very beginning. And secondly, it teaches us not to despise ordinary holiness because it turns out ordinary holiness done in the strength of Jesus Christ is a sign that the last days are upon us.

We are living in the last days. The next big thing is for Christ to come back for judgment and heaven and hell. And so the last days are upon us.

[37 : 49] And so we need to press on and grow in every virtue. And we do that as we walk in the Spirit. Well, we are dismissed.

Thank you.