

Powerful Christian Living

Chapter Eighteen

The Fruit of the Spirit and being Strong in the Lord

I began this book by telling you that there is a world wide famine. It is a famine not of food and water, but of an accurate knowledge of God. We learned that the Bible is the Word of God and that the Word of God is the will of God. And when we read the Bible and understand it and apply it in our lives, then all the deep desires of our hearts can be fully met. I want to speak about those needs in this last chapter.

In Paul's letter to the Galatians we have contrasted two types of life. There is the life of the flesh, which is the life of the unsaved person or the immature Christian who has not been transformed by the Spirit and the Word. And then there is the life of the believer in Christ who is faithfully living life in obedience to Scripture. By the revelation that came from Jesus Christ the apostle wrote,

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.
(Galatians 5:16)

To walk, indicates going somewhere, having a destination and purpose in life. You and I as Christians are to live our lives with the goal of pleasing God.¹ It is when we live a life that pleases God that we find our own lives to be most satisfying.

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. 17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.
(Galatians 5:16-18)

The "lusts of the flesh" are not just sexual lusts, they include all that we desire and serve and fear as fallen, unredeemed human beings. To live for the lusts of the flesh means that we live for the supposed pleasure of the moment, for our own self-interests, interests that are put into our minds by a sinful world. When we walk by the Spirit we will not fulfill these lusts.

¹ Colossians 1:9, 10

So how are we led to walk by the Spirit? It is not as mystical as someone might think. We do not have to wait for some vague inner feeling or prompting to walk by the Spirit. On the contrary, it is as easy as setting the thoughts of your mind on God's Word.

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those *who live* according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. 6 For to be carnally minded *is* death, but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace.
(Romans 8:5, 6)

We are led by the Spirit when we set our mind on spiritual things; that is biblical truth. In John 6:63 our Lord Jesus Christ said,

It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and *they* are life.

Let's us read Romans 12 verses 1 and 2 again where we learn about being transformed by the renewing of our minds.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

When we read the Word of God and allow it to saturate our thinking, then you and I can be transformed into the person God wants us to be. Our renewed mind will work in harmony with the Spirit of God within us and we will joyfully obey the will of the Lord. We need to surrender all that we are to God. And we need to let Him meet our needs through the Lord Jesus Christ. Scripture says,

And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. 20 Now to our God and Father *be* glory forever and ever. Amen.
(Philippians 4:19, 20)

All of us have genuine needs. We all need to be loved, to feel secure, to have our physical needs met like food and shelter. But when we try to meet these needs without reliance upon God, we can all too easily fall prey to sin. And suffer sins terrible consequences which are the works of the flesh.

Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred,

contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told *you* in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.
(Galatians 5:19-21)

To this list I could add arrogance, cruelty, emotional misery, loneliness, economic ruin and on and on. These are the tragic results of living life according to the flesh, according to the standards of the world. But look at the power and beauty of the next few verses of Scripture.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. 24 And those *who are* Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.
(Galatians 5:22-25)

All of these wonderful blessings, the fruit of the Spirit, can be a part of who we are. They can constitute our new character in Christ; our transformed life. Love is the very essence of our heavenly Father's nature. This love will comfort us, energize us and motivate us to serve. This love will compel us to godly living which will produce joy. Joy is a deep seated happiness that is independent of circumstances. In Nehemiah 8:10 the Word of God declares, "the joy of the LORD is your strength."

Peace is the profound quietness of heart that assures us that ultimately all will be well for God is for us.² Isaiah 26:3 proclaims, "You will keep *him* in perfect peace, *whose* mind is stayed *on You*, because he trusts in You." Longsuffering is the ability to endure difficult people or situations with patience and hope. Kindness and goodness are the gracious qualities of the heart that seeks to be a blessing to other people. Faithfulness is our determined resolve to be reliable to God and others. Gentleness is meekness, a humble openness of mind that allows us to learn. And self-control is mastery over ourselves, it is the strength to discipline our lives to achieve godly goals.³

These nine fruit of the Spirit are the supernatural characteristics that filled the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. They are seen in our lives as we walk by the Spirit in obedience to the will of God. Finally, be strong and stay strong in the Lord.

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be

² Romans 8:31

³ 1 Corinthians 9:26, 27

able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

14 Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; 16 above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. 17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; 18 praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints— (Ephesians 6:10-18)

It is my prayer that you stand faithfully for God and the Lord Jesus Christ for their glory and your own good. God bless you. Amen.