

Walk by the Spirit

As children of God who believe the gospel of salvation, the Holy Spirit dwells in us. Therefore, from God's perspective, we are not in the flesh but in the Spirit regardless of how we actually live. Consequently, God considers us as those who walk according to the spirit because we are no longer in the flesh. This is all God's work in us and are God-given blessings of our salvation in Christ.

For what the Law [of Moses] could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement [righteousness] of the Law might be fulfilled in us [believers], who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. (Romans 8:3-4)

However, you [brethren] are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him [God] who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. (Romans 8:9-11)

In the context of the above passages, walking according to the Spirit is a statement of fact. It is our position in Christ that is not based on what we are doing but on what God did for us, just as we are sealed for eternal life because we are children of God (Ephesians 1:13-14). That is, if we are saved then the Holy Spirit is in us and we, therefore, walk according to the Spirit and are no longer dead in sin (Ephesians 2:1-6). However, we are also exhorted to walk experientially—day by day—according to the Spirit. Just as we are to walk worthy of our salvation because we are saved, we are to walk by, or in, the Holy Spirit because He is in us. In fact, we cannot walk worthy without walking by the Spirit.

But I [Paul] say, walk by [in] the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. (Galatians 5:16)

If [Because] we live by [in] the Spirit, let us also walk by [in] the Spirit. (Galatians 5:25)

If, as believers, we do not experientially walk according to the Spirit, then we are walking according to the flesh. We are living according to the sinful nature that we were born with and disregarding the new nature of Christ that we receive when we believe the gospel of salvation. In Galatians 5:17-21, we see that walking according to the flesh is evident by the sinful deeds we exhibit; such deeds (and the desire to do them) are impediments to our daily walk.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. (Galatians 5:22-24)

In this passage, the fruit of the Spirit is provided in contrast to the deeds of the flesh. Please note that it does not say *fruits* of the Spirit, as if many kinds of fruit can be derived from one tree from which we can pick and choose as we wish. Instead, the fruit of the Spirit is the outward expression, through attitude and actions, of the working of the Spirit of God within us. Just as a fruit tree produces fruit if it has a good root system *and* is properly nourished (and is regularly pruned to promote new healthy and productive growth), we will exhibit the fruit of the Spirit if we properly nourish our God-given

foundation in Christ (and regularly examine ourselves and endeavor to not live according to the deeds of the flesh).

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience (long-suffering), kindness (gentleness), goodness, faithfulness (faith), gentleness (meekness), and self-control (temperance).¹ God wants us to walk, or conduct ourselves on a daily basis, according to the Spirit. We must realize, however, that we are not in competition with our fellow brethren to see who is walking better than others (Galatians 5:26). We cannot boast in our salvation because it was by the grace of God, nor are we to boast in our works because any good that we do is by the power and will of God (I Corinthians 1:26-31; Ephesians 2:8-10; Philippians 2:12-13).

Each aspect of the fruit of the Spirit will be *briefly* described in following postings. Each one could easily be a study in itself. I encourage you to read the listed Scripture references and associated context, check cross references if provided in your Bible, and look up these words in your concordance or other reference material.

¹ These words describing the fruit of the Spirit are listed as such in modern Bible versions including the *New American Standard Bible*, the *New International Version*, and the *English Standard Version*. The words in parenthesis are equivalent words in the *King James Version* and *New King James Version*.