

Galatians 5:22-26

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The Spirit produces those things that are in direct opposition to what the flesh produces. Instead of following sinful desires, believers should walk by the Spirit.

Paul ends this section by clarifying that the Spirit is not against the law. The law is not against the actions produced in the Spirit. *Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control*; where would anyone find a law against these things? Certainly not in Rome, during Paul's time, as he says "*against such things there is no law.*" Paul says in Galatians 6:2 that bearing one another's burdens fulfills the law of Christ.

When we choose the Spirit living within us rather than the flesh, we get a completely different set of behaviors. Rather than a set of behaviors centered on "Me" we get a set of behaviors seeking the best for others. The law of God can be summarized in two statements, loving God and loving others. When we choose the Spirit over the flesh to power our lives, we get the Spirit working out the law of God. The first of the fruits of the Spirit, "*love*," can be said to summarize the rest.

The next fruit is *joy*. The Spirit is glad to serve others and to serve God. This same word "chara" is used to describe the joy of a woman after the travails of child birth in John 16:21. The result of service to others and obedience to Christ creates a satisfaction akin to bringing a new child into the world. It is difficult, but worth it.

Peace and *patience* seem to go together. *Patience*, by definition, means there is something irritating we are putting up with. When we bear with the faults or quirks of others, we sow peace. Enmity comes about when we engage in a battle to coerce them to change in a way that does not irritate us. The best way to accomplish change in others is often through exercising patience ourselves.

Kindness can be thought of as doing good for others when they can't pay us back. We are not said to be *kind* when we pay the price for something we purchased. We are paying what we owed. Kindness is giving someone something they are not owed. Again, this is others-centered behavior.

Goodness is a translation of a word that is used in the Bible to describe things that are useful, desirable, and productive. Good fruit as opposed to bad. Good servant as opposed to lazy and wicked. When we choose to *walk by the Spirit*, we are useful, productive and beneficial to those around us. We are good team members, contributing our gifts to benefit the team.

Faithfulness emphasizes walking in accordance to believing what God says is true. We have an external rather than internal focus. We look to God to see how we should live, and live in that manner to benefit others, rather than seeking to satisfy our appetites by our circumstances.

In Titus 3:2 the word translated “gentle” is contrasted with brawling and speaking evil of others. It is also used in 2 Timothy 2:25, “with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition.” When confronting, there is an attitude of seeking the best for the other person rather than an insistence they must agree with us. Again, the focus is on serving rather than controlling.

Self-control is a particularly interesting word to end a list of other-centered behavior. When we choose the *Spirit*, we control the self. Instead of being controlled by our appetites, we live out our values.

Paul states that all who *belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh*. When believers are born again, the flesh is *crucified* with Christ, meaning its power over us has been broken. Believers are no longer slaves of their *passions and desires* residing in their flesh. They now have the resurrection power of Jesus residing within: the Spirit of God. So when believers walk in the flesh, they are choosing to once again come under the control of the flesh, whose power has been broken. The believers’ true identity is one who *lives in the Spirit*.

However, believers have a choice how they walk. Although each believer *lives by the Spirit*, they are still free to choose how to *walk*. Believers can *walk by the Spirit*, or walk in the flesh. The most logical thing to do is to use our freedom to love, and *walk by the Spirit*. That is the thing most consistent for us, since we live by *the Spirit*. Paul exhorts the Galatians to reject the path of sinful, selfish desires. Instead, they should walk by the Spirit, not the *passions and desires* of the flesh.

Paul warns the Galatians not to become *boastful* or envious (which is a direct result of the law—just ask the Pharisees in Jesus’ time). When we live a Me-centered life, it is natural to compare ourselves to others. The natural result is to either pronounce ourselves as superior (boast) or to envy. This is fleshly behavior. Paul exhorts the Galatians to *walk by the Spirit* rather than the flesh.

Biblical Text

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.