

## *“Live by the Spirit” Pt 3*

### **Christian Liberty**

Galatians 5:16-26

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**Bruce:** Good morning, men.

**Men:** Good morning.

**Bruce:** Always good to be with you. Thank you for coming to be a part of my life, for which I'm most grateful. As we remember that we're in the presence of the Lord, let's be quiet and know that He is God. *(Music)*

Gracious heavenly Father, it's with a great sense of joy, a great sense of peace, a great sense of gratitude that we assemble here today to sit at Your feet, trusting that Your Holy Spirit once again will open our eyes, that we might see You behind the pages of these words of Scripture. You give us Your word, Father, as the primary means by which You open Yourself to us to reveal Yourself to us. And may it be so this day that the Holy Spirit will be our Teacher. And we pray this humbly for Jesus' sake and for His glory. Amen and Amen.

**Men:** Amen.

**Bruce:** I invite you men to turn in your Bibles to the fifth chapter in the book of Galatians. In my mind this is one of the most comprehensive, most challenging, most convicting and most comforting passages of the Scripture that tell us what a true disciple of Christ should look like, what a true disciple of Christ should be. And that is our study on the fruit of the Spirit. So I invite you to turn in your Bibles. And the words for consideration that we'll be looking at today will be found in verses 16-26 of Galatians chapter five.

*“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh. For these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.*

*Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

*“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and its desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.”* This is the word of the Lord.

**Men:** Thanks be to God.

**Bruce:** Amen and Amen. Paul has given us a command. It's found in verse 16. And the command is quite simple. *“Walk in the Spirit.”* Now this is not a suggestion, men. It's not a good idea. It's not a principle of life. It's a direct command from the Lord Himself, saying that if you want to be a follower of Christ, you need to walk in the Spirit.

### *“Live by the Spirit” Pt 3*

But we also need to realize that Paul gave us some instruction about the conflict that will arise when you and I try to walk by the Spirit. That conflict is found for us in verses 17 and 18. *“For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh. For these are opposed to each other.”*

And then we’ve learned that Paul taught us about the contrast, the contrast being the works of the flesh versus the fruit of the Spirit. Now we just read the works of the flesh. *“Now the works of the flesh are evident”*: sexual immorality and all that kind of thing. The contrast is going to be works of the flesh versus the fruit of the Spirit.

What Paul is basically doing is that he is describing for us what I would call an impossible standard. God’s standard is so high that it is impossible for a Christian to attain it in his own strength. In other words, you don’t have the resources naturally, internally and humanly to meet the standard that God has for us. Consequently, he says, *“Walk by the Spirit.”*

God never requires of us something He doesn’t equip us to do beforehand. And what does He do beforehand to have us walk in the Spirit? He gives us the Spirit, the indwelling Holy Spirit when we are in union with Christ.

Now Jesus expressed this impossible standard this way in Matthew chapter 5 verse 48. *“Ye therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”*

Because of the impossible requirements of God’s standard, it can only be fulfilled when we are led by and walk in the Spirit. John says it this way in John 13:34. *“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.”*

Now doesn’t that sound impossible? Can you really love somebody as Christ has loved you? Is that really possible in your own human strength? Absolutely not. That’s the impossible standard that the Scripture gives us. Be perfect because your heavenly Father is perfect. Can you and I be perfect? Absolutely not.

But that is the standard which Paul is writing to us and saying that we must live by. And so the contrast is understanding the difference between the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit.

Paul describes it this way in Ephesians chapter 4, verses 30-32. *“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”*

Men, that’s the standard that you and I are called to live. And don’t you feel somewhat frustrated? I do, at least as I read these passages and I come to this portion of Galatians chapter five about the fruit of the Spirit. I began to realize the impossibility, that I cannot live that standard according to my own strength and my own capabilities. I do not have the resources in my own human nature to live up to that standard. Yet that is what is required. *“Be perfect because your heavenly Father is perfect.”*

Do you have to be perfect to get to heaven?

**Men:** Yes.

### *“Live by the Spirit” Pt 3*

**Bruce:** Absolutely you do. God doesn't grade on a curve. He doesn't give us a break just because we're Americans. *(Laughter)* In fact, He may hold it against us. Be perfect, because your Father in heaven is perfect.

Now this standard is so high. The standard is to be like Jesus and to forgive as God has forgiven us. When you and I have a tough time forgiving somebody, it's really an indication that you and I do not understand how much Christ has forgiven us. When you have a tough time forgiving somebody, you've got to go back and realize how much you have been forgiven when you can't forgive easily. One of the quickest things that a Christian ought to do is forgive. That ought to be instantaneous because you're so aware of the cross of Jesus Christ. And you're so aware of the penalty that Christ paid for you to forgive you of my sin and me of my sin. Forgiveness ought to be the easiest thing that a Christian does because we're always focused on this fact. "Forgive as My heavenly Father has forgiven you." That's the standard which we're called to live.

Even that one thing is an impossible standard from the standpoint of our own human capabilities and human resources. 1 John 2:6 says this. *"Whoever says he abides in Him ought to walk in the same way in which He walked."* In other words, our standard is to be like Christ.

Can you do that with all the resources you have in your own strength and your own capabilities that you have? Absolutely not. That's why the command is not a suggestion, men. It's a command; it's an order! It says, "Walk in the Spirit." That's the only way we can accomplish this impossible standard. That's the way that John describes the impossible standard. Being in Christ is an impossible standard. That's why we must walk by the Spirit. God never requires of us something He doesn't equip us to do beforehand.

Look at 2 Corinthians chapter 6 verse 16. Here's the equipment that God gives us. *"What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God said, 'I will make My dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.'"*

It's a wonderful statement about the New Covenant as a result of the Person and work of Christ at the cross. The Old Covenant was essentially this. If you obey I will be your God. Now what does that mean? It means that if you don't obey, He won't be your God. That's the old arrangement.

There's a new arrangement. God dwells in us through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. When you and I are regenerated, the Holy Spirit takes up residence in our lives and we become the temple of God.

And He says this. *"I will make My dwelling among them."* Do you realize that one of the best definitions of the Christian life is a shared life experience? God shares His life with us. He makes us the dwelling place where He resides. *"I will make My dwelling among them and walk among them."*

Why do you think He says, "Walk in the Spirit?" It's because He's walking with you and me. He's made His dwelling in us through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. And He's walking with us. Therefore we are to walk with Him. And how are we to walk? We are to walk with the Spirit. *"And I will walk among them. And I will be their God, and they shall be My people."*

### *“Live by the Spirit” Pt 3*

What great encouragement! Men, God never requires of us something He doesn't equip us to do beforehand. And He gives us His personal dwelling. It is God who dwells in the believer, compelling us to accomplish the task of walking by the Spirit. When we are walking by the Spirit God's high standard is being fulfilled in us. The only way that you and I can fulfill the high standard of being perfect, for my heavenly Father is perfect, is that the Holy Spirit walks with us in the process of our walking with the Spirit, being obedient to His command. God's perfection will be fulfilled in us, not because we have the ability to do that ourselves, but because that's the natural consequence of our walking in the Spirit.

Now that's the contrast that we have compared against the works of the flesh. So let's examine in verses 22-23 the fruit of the Spirit.

Now Paul encourages the Galatian Christians and us to live their new life in Christ, their union with Christ, to the fullest degree. Their old life was lived in the selfishness with which they were born. The new life is based upon the selflessness of the Holy Spirit. But the old and the new will always fight against each other because they are opposed to one another.

And so Paul describes the old life. Here's a brief description of the old life. This is what life was like before you came to Christ, before you had the presence of the indwelling God through the Holy Spirit, before you became the temple of the holy living God.

He describes it this way. It is a self-absorbed life of greed, superstition and jealousy. It is marked by wrong sexual relationships, misguided religion, constant strife and destructive habits. These attributes are so alien to Jesus that they bar us from the kingdom of God. Do you realize that? They are so alien to Jesus that they keep us out of the kingdom of God.

But there is a new life for all those who want it. This is the life that the Holy Spirit requires of us and that God gives us when we walk by the Spirit. Paul calls these qualities of life that the Spirit inspires “the fruit of the Spirit.”

I want you to observe one thing, men. And notice that the word *fruit* is what?

**Men:** Singular.

**Bruce:** It's singular, in contrast with the *works* plural of the flesh in verse 19. You've got a singular fruit versus the works of the flesh.

Now he's describing this single fruit. These nine attributes describe the fruit. They are not nine different attributes. They are nine attributes that make up one issue, and that is the fruit of the Spirit. Paul calls these lovely qualities, these nine qualities, the fruit of the Spirit.

This is not several fruits. Each one is not an individual fruit, as though our task is to collect all of them. It is the single fruit of a Christian life.

In other words, that's why I said that this may be one of the most comprehensive, most challenging, most convicting and most comforting passages in all of Scripture that tells us that the singularity of the Christian life is described in one word—*fruit*.

You see, men, a fruitless Christian is not a failed Christian. He's a false Christian. In other words, he's not a Christian at all, because he doesn't have the fruit that is the

### *“Live by the Spirit” Pt 3*

evidence of the indwelling Holy spirit, where God takes up His residence within us. If you don't have this fruit as evidence of your conversion, you've got to take serious examination as to whether or not you do have a saving relationship in your union with Christ. A fruitless Christian, men, is not a failed Christian. He's a false one. He's not a Christian at all, because you don't have the evidence of the fruit of the dwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Now the works of the flesh, the plural works of the flesh, move in and out in many directions, with all of their evil activities. And they're all bad. The Spirit follows one direction and produces a single fruit that signifies the unity of the spiritual qualities mentioned by Paul as a description of the life that we live as followers of Christ. The works of the flesh go in all sorts of directions. The fruit of the Spirit goes in one direction. That is the direction of the singularity of our commonality of our union with Christ.

And when we walk by the Spirit, men, we will see not just a few, but all of these qualities of the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. We either have all of them, or we don't have any of them. You've got them all, or you don't have any, because the evidence of the indwelling Holy Spirit is fruit. And the fruit is described in nine different attitudes which we'll take a look at.

But you don't go collecting them. It's an evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit in your life that manifests itself in the attitudes that you have. We just need to walk by the Spirit, and He will produce in all of us this fruit. That's what the Holy Spirit does. He produces fruit.

Now this ought to be a sense of relief—at least it is for me. So you and I don't have to run around, making sure that we collect all of these different fruits. We don't collect them. They are the evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit. And it manifests itself in nine different ways. But it is one single fruit. Yes, Sig?

**Sig:** Can you distinguish between fruit and gifts? When you say that we have all of the fruit, yet an individual wouldn't have all the gifts of the Holy spirit that Paul talks about, right?

**Bruce:** They're totally different.

**Sig:** That's what I thought.

**Bruce:** The word *fruit* is universal for all people, for all followers of Christ. Any believer who does not have fruit is a false believer. He's not a believer at all. That's universal.

Gifts are individual to the individual person, as God works it out through the manifestation in his life for the kingdom of God. And the gifts of the Spirit are not for the individual person. They're for what?

**Participant:** The body of Christ.

**Bruce:** The body of Christ. The gifts are for the body of Christ. The fruit describes the body of Christ. That's how you know it's the body of Christ. It describes it. Yes?

**Participant:** If you look at all of this fruit, it's all who we are. It's all being; it's one' it's good, goodness. So it's be loving, be patient, be kind. But there's only one doing,

### *“Live by the Spirit” Pt 3*

which is good. I think from that we manifest our gifts and we do good through our giftedness, loving our neighbors.

**Bruce:** That’s a good point. We’re going to go through these individual expressions of fruit, manifestations of fruit. But this is a description of the entire body of Christ. If you don’t have the fruit, you’re a false believer. You’re not a believer at all. Yes, sir?

**Participant:** I think there’s a big difference. The way I’ve always understood it is that fruit is kind of like that because a tree is nourished, it gives the fruit forward. And so if your life is that you’re following the rules by the things that God wants us to follow, then these are basically the gifts or the blessings from the tree and from our lives. So it’s not that we kind of –they just kind of come out of us, right?

**Bruce:** Absolutely. It’s a byproduct of the indwelling Holy Spirit. If you don’t have the fruit, men, you don’t have the Spirit! Do you understand that? It’s simple! It’s really very, very simple. You either have the fruit or you don’t. You’ve got them all, or you don’t have any of them. It’s an evidence of the indwelling Holy Spirit. It’s an evidence of your regeneration, men. It’s evidence of the fact that you’re a follower of Christ.

Two things ought to be very, very evident when you understand and you see the fruit in your life. First of all, it’s going to identify to the world who a Christian really is. And secondly, it ought to confirm to you the presence of your salvation and the assurance of your salvation, because I see fruit coming out of me. That’s an evidence of what? Not the greatest human achievement. It’s the evidence of your regeneration. Fruit is the expression of your regeneration. Yes, sir?

**Participant:** Even if it is given as a command, isn’t the implication that we are not always being filled?

**Bruce:** Well, if you go to Ephesians 5, the Scripture says, “be being kept filled.” That’s something where we are always being filled every day. That’s a process. When we are regenerated by the Person and work of Christ through the Holy Spirit, to be filled with the Spirit does not mean getting a second blessing. It means be being kept filled. This is Someone that we’re always being filled by.

The question is, when we walk by the Spirit, how do we do that? If you go to Colossians three, the way you do that is to let the word of God dwell in you richly. When you let the word of God dwell in you richly, you will be nourished. And when you’re nourished, what’s going to happen? (*Sound effect.*) Fruit! Fruit is the evidence. The means of that is letting the word of God dwell in you richly. Feed yourself through the Scripture. That’s how the Holy Spirit calls our attention to the Person and work of Christ. He develops fruit.

Fruit is the most natural thing that a believer ought to have. Now I know this is a very trite example and I’ve done this before, and you always make fun of me. But I can’t come up with a better one. (*Laughter*) But did you ever see an apple tree grunt? (*Laughter.*) Did you ever see an apple tree go like this? (*Gestures; grunts*) (*Laughter*) Apple trees don’t grunt! What does an apple tree do? It’s nourished. And this is what an apple tree does. (*Gestures; sound effects.*)

**Blind Participant:** Could you describe that? (*Prolonged laughter*)

**Bruce:** Okay, Don, here you go. (*Laughter*)

### *“Live by the Spirit” Pt 3*

**Don:** Thank you. *(Laughter)* Big help. *(Laughter.)*

**Bruce:** You see, men, fruit is the obvious evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit.

**Participant:** Amen.

**Bruce:** Without the Holy Spirit you’re not in Christ. You either have all of the fruit or you don’t have any of it. That’s the significance of the contrast between the works—plural—of the flesh, and the singularity of the word *fruit*. You either have them all or you don’t have any of them.

Let’s take a look at the product—this fruit as the product. Paul tells us that walking in the Spirit produces fruit. Our Christian character is determined by the Spirit-led qualities that flow from our hearts. Spiritual fruit is extremely important because it gives evidence of the fact that God is at work in your life. It is an indication that we are saved. If there is no evidence, something is amiss; something is wrong.

The other thing that ought to give us is this: the assurance that God is present in my life and that I truly am saved, because I see the work of the Holy Spirit in my life through fruit.

Now where does this fruit come from? Well God, speaking through Hosea the prophet, said this in Hosea chapter 14 verse 8. *“From Me comes your fruit.”* Fruit is not something that you and I go out and collect. It’s not something that you and I work to get. It comes from the indwelling Holy Spirit who has taken up residence in our lives. We are the temple of the living God. And the evidence of that is fruit. What we do that is godly is from God. Walking in the Spirit produces fruit.

Now there are two kinds of fruit, men. We need to understand this. Biblically, there is *action fruit* and there is *attitude fruit*. Let me give you an example of some action fruit.

*Praise* is the fruit of our lips. Hebrews 13:15.

**Transcriber’s Note:** Hebrews 13:15, NKJV. *“Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.”*

**Bruce:** Do you realize that when you are praising God that is the fruit of your lips? Now that makes perfect sense, because *“out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.”* When you and I are praising God, it is the fruit of our lips. It’s an evidence of our character, that something in our heart has changed. So when we praise God it’s the fruit of our lips. It’s an action that you do.

*Financial assistance to those in need* is also a fruit. Philippians chapter 4 verse 17.

**Transcriber’s Note:** Philippians 4:17, NKJV. *“Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account.”*

**Bruce:** When you are taking care of people’s basic needs, that is a fruit that God has given you to take care of somebody else. It’s an action that you’re doing. It’s called a fruit.

*Praying with understanding* is another example of fruit, an action fruit. 1 Corinthians 14:14.

**Transcriber’s Note:** 1 Corinthians 14:14-15, NKJV. *“For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is the conclusion then? I will pray*

### *“Live by the Spirit” Pt 3*

*with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding.”*

Praying is another action fruit. Colossians 1:10 says that godly deeds will be fruitful in the lives of those who walk worthy of the Lord.

**Transcriber’s Note:** Colossians 1:10, NKJV. *“that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.”*

**Bruce:** Godly deeds will be classified as fruit, as evidence that we’re walking worthy of the Lord.

And people who come to saving faith *will be fruitful unto eternal life.* John 4:36.

**Transcriber’s Note:** John 4:36, ESV. *“Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together.”*

**Bruce:** Coming to saving faith is a fruit unto eternal life. Those are actions that occur in a person’s life. Those are things that we do. The Bible refers to certain actions as being fruitful.

But behind these actions are the necessary fruitful attitudes. What is an attitude fruit?

Before we can see any fruit, there must be the right attitude, because attitudes produce actions. If you don’t have the right attitude, then you don’t produce the right actions. It’s like we taught before—think, act, feel. If you don’t think right, you’re not going to act right. If you don’t act right, you’re not going to feel right. If you don’t have the right attitude about these attitude fruits, you’re not going to have the action fruits, because attitude fruits lead to action fruits that are visible.

Whatever is going to go on in the inside of a person, how he thinks or what he thinks about, will be manifested externally. Men, what you think about, what is in your hearts, is going to be visible externally. What you think about you’re going to show demonstrably, externally.

The Christian life can be summarized by the attitudes listed as the fruit of the Spirit in verses 22 and 23 of Galatians 5. You see, these nine products, these descriptions of fruit, are attitudes. And if you don’t have these attitudes, you don’t have the right actions. If these attitudes are present, Paul tells us that they are going to produce the appropriate actions.

An example would be this. A Christian can’t experience love or joy by himself. You can’t experience love or joy by yourself, as these are to be shared with other people. Love is something that is to be shared. You don’t just express it by yourself. You can have the attitude of love. But you have an action behind it that is shared with somebody else. The attitude develops an action. Spirit produced fruit is not self-centered.

So let’s take a look at some of these particulars. Let’s see how far we can get today.

First of all, *love*. Now the way I’m going to approach this, men, will be somewhat consistent with our examination. I’ll define what the attitude is. Then I will give you some examples. Then I will give you some commands of how we are to do it ourselves and give you some examples of Christ. So we’re going to do this, following that sequence—a definition, some examples, our command, as we need to be demonstrating and having

### *“Live by the Spirit” Pt 3*

this attitude, and examples in the life of Christ. We'll look at all four of these aspects of each of these individual expressions of fruit.

So love, OI would suggest, is the supreme fruit. 1 Corinthians chapter thirteen is Paul's own definition of love, a description of love, the most essential product of faith. It is the mother of all Christian virtues. Therefore it comes first in the list.

Here's what the word *love* means: a strong nonsexual affection and regard for a person and his good, as understood by God's moral character, especially characterized by a willing forfeiture of rights or privileges on another person's behalf. In other words, love is defined by the cross.

Love is not defined by your feelings. Love is not defined by your emotions. Love is not defined by our culture. Love is not defined by our traditions. Love is not defined by anything in us. It is defined by the cross.

And that means this. Love is expressed to the unworthy. And who is the unworthy?

**Participant:** Me.

**Bruce:** Me. Exactly right. That's what love is. That's why it cannot be expressed by oneself. It's to be given away. We need to understand this. Love is for the unworthy.

That's what you see at the cross. Men, the cross defines love. It's self-sacrificial. That's the kind of love we have. It's always for the benefit of other people. The fruit of the Spirit of love is not self-centered. It is others directed because you realize this. God has given me something in my unworthiness that I can now give to somebody else. It's to be given away. If you don't have that attitude of loving somebody in spite of their unworthiness, you don't have the right action behind it.

Love is meeting the basic needs of others without motive or personal reward. You don't love somebody to get a reward. You don't love somebody because you have a certain motive. You love somebody because in your unworthiness God gave you that love and you now give it away. It's the attitude you have.

Do I have that attitude towards people? Then you're going to have the right action towards people. Yes, Brian?

**Brian:** One thing to really keep in mind is that sometimes we won't have the right attitude. And I think you've given a good illustration that you act intentionally anyway and have peace through it.

**Bruce:** I'm going to cover that in a moment. There are times. Love is not a feeling; it's an action. Yes, Jim?

**Jim:** Bruce, I think I've heard that it's choosing to do the highest good for the other.

**Bruce:** That's a good definition—choosing to do the highest good for the other. That's a good definition.

Love is doing the right thing. And what defines the right thing? Scripture does. Love is doing the right thing. Yes, Don?

**Don:** We hear this a lot in our culture today. Well, what could be wrong with same sex marriage? They love each other. Well, the problem with that is that it's God who gets to define love.

**Bruce:** Amen.

**Don:** This is not love. This is rebellion.

### *“Live by the Spirit” Pt 3*

**Bruce:** Love is defined by the cross, men. That’s it. If you don’t understand the cross, you don’t understand love. And when you do understand the cross, you understand love. It is for the unworthy. I’m the unworthy one and God loved me—not because of anything I did, but He saw my unworthiness and He had mercy and compassion on me and granted me saving faith. It’s doing something for the highest good of the person.

We’re told that love is the fulfillment of the law in Romans chapter 13, verse 10. *“Love does no wrong to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.”* We’re set free in Christ, men, because of the attitude of love. It’s not keeping rules and regulations by a code of conduct. You have the attitude of understanding how God has loved you and you give that away, and that fulfills the law.

Love is the epitome of self-sacrifice. Love is not an emotion. It is an act of self-sacrifice. It is not necessarily feeling love toward a person. It may not have any emotion connected with it at all. Romans 5:8 says it this way. Turn there and look at Romans 5:8.

He didn’t say this. *“Christ has a warm feeling toward you.”* (Laughter) It doesn’t say that. Here’s what Romans 5:8 says. *“But God shows His love for us, that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*

**Participant:** Amen.

**Bruce:** He may not have had a strong feeling for us at the time. I don’t know that. And you may not have strong feelings for a person. But that does not negate your responsibility to love them. God always defines love in terms of self-sacrifice.

Love is a confirmation of our salvation. Look at 1 John 3:14. *“We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love our brothers. For whoever does not love abides in death.”*

How can you be a Christian and not love someone? You see, when you take a look at the body of Christ, in the epistle of 1 John, he gives us the object of our love. We’re to love God. We’re to love our brothers and sisters in Christ, the body of Christ. And we are not to love the world. Two are positive; one is negative. Love God, love your brothers and sisters in the body of Christ, and do not love the world.

And that means this. Because of your love for God,—and I am next to love my brothers and sisters in Christ,—you and I do not have the right not to love somebody in the church of Jesus Christ, regardless of how they treat you or what they think about you. You don’t have the right not to love them, because our commands are these. Love God and love your brothers and sisters. And if you don’t love like that, you are walking in darkness. You’ve got to take a serious look at your salvation, men.

Let me read that again. *“We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers!”* You don’t have the right not to love them! *“Whoever does not love abides in death.”*

How about 1 John 3:17? *“But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, and closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him?”* If you see somebody who has a need, and you don’t meet that need if you have the capability and possessions to do that, how does the love of God abide in you? If you don’t see that kind of love in your life, you may have to question your own salvation, men.

### *“Live by the Spirit” Pt 3*

Another reason for questioning your salvation is that you may have what the Scripture calls *misdirected love*. It may be misdirected love. 1 John 2:15. *“Do not love the world.”* That means the system of this world which is evil and opposed to God. *“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world,”* as a system, *“the love of the Father is not in him.”*

Do you love the things of the world more than you love Christ? You’ve got to be careful about that, men. You’ve got to take a quick examination. If you’re a new creature, as a result of your union with Christ, and the Spirit dwells within you, men, He will be producing fruit. And love will become the pattern of your life because it is an attitude that bears action fruit.

We’re commanded to love like this. This is not just a nice suggestion. It’s not a principle for living. It’s a command. Look at Ephesians 5:1-2. *“Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, a fragrant offering and a sacrifice to God.”*

Men, if you want to live like this, you’ve got to let the Spirit of God produce that in you. He will bear that fruit.

Romans 5:5. *“And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”* Where does this love come from? It’s not the greatest human achievement that we can muster up for ourselves. It’s a production and a result of the Holy Spirit dwelling within us. Because His love has been poured into your heart, you’ve got something to give away, an action fruit, because God has given you His love. *“Love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”*

Men, that is the only way you and I will ever see this kind of love. It is generated by the Holy Spirit as the source and power of our spiritual lives. Only the Holy Spirit can produce that. That’s the first attitude of fruit that we see expressed in action.

Let me give you a couple of thoughts here, from some of my research. I got up early this morning and did some more of my reading. Let me give you some thoughts about love from some of my reading and my research. This is from my great Puritan friends.

*“Without the Holy Spirit we can do nothing but add sin to sin.”—John Wesley*

*“Brothers, the only thing in which we can retaliate with God is that we must not give Him word for word, but we must give Him love for love.”—Thomas Brooks. You can’t take Him on word for word. But we need to offer Him love for love.*

*“Duty makes us do things well. But love makes us do them beautifully.”—Thomas Brooks*

*“It is possible to give without loving. But it is impossible to love without giving.”—Obadiah Sedgwick*

*“We are as we love, not as we know.”—Richard Sibbs*

*“No man can love a saint as a saint but a saint.”—Richard Sibbs*

Men, these are great thoughts for us to ponder about this attitude of love that the Holy Spirit implants within us as the first expression of an attitude fruit that will bear appropriate action for God’s glory and the benefit of the Kingdom.

### *“Live by the Spirit” Pt 3*

Let’s take a look at the next one. How about the word *joy*? Love and joy. With this love goes joy. Joy is one of the cardinal virtues. It deserves a place next to love.

Notice this, men. Pessimism is a grave fault. The joy that we are experiencing and talking about now is not the silly joy such as the world accepts. It is the enduring joy that bubbles up from the grace of God in our possession, from the blessedness that is ours—Matthew chapter 5 verse 3.

**Transcriber’s Note:** Matthew 5:3, NKJV. *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”*

**Bruce:** It is undimmed by tribulation. It merges into the joy of heaven. This joy is the sunshine that ever beams out of the heart of a believer. It is not the silliness that the world accepts. It’s a deep-rooted confidence in the understanding that God loves us. It can be defined as the emotion of great happiness and pleasure regardless of outside circumstances.

The word *joy* in the Scripture always refers to joy that is based on spiritual factors, not personal feelings or circumstances. It is not the slap happy silliness that is the result of positive circumstances. But it’s the deep-seated joy of knowing God, and that my right relationship with Him is secure.

1 Peter says it this way in chapter 1 verse 8. *“Though you have not seen Him, you love Him. Though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory.”*

You see, men, spiritual joy transcends circumstances. Joy is not a function of circumstances, positive or negative. Jesus told His disciples that they would mourn, that they would be sorrowful, but that their sorrow would be turned into joy. Look at John 16 verse 20.

*“Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and mourn, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy.”*

This type of spiritual joy, men, is not contingent upon pleasant circumstances. It’s based upon the present reality that my relationship with God is right and secure.

We need to understand this: that divine joy is full joy. You don’t add to it. You don’t add to your joy. It’s not something you fill up, because it’s not produced by our human efforts. 1 John 1:4 says it this way. *“And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.”* It’s a complete joy, it’s a full joy. You don’t add to it.

And Jesus made a similar promise in John 16:24. *“Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask and you will receive, that your joy may be full”*—complete.

Now I think that the greatest example of joy is found in the life of Christ. And even though we’re told in Isaiah chapter 53 verse 3 that He was *“a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,”* Hebrews 12:2 says this about the joy of the Lord. *“Looking to Jesus, the Founder and Perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross.”* He had joy before He went to the cross. Spiritual joy is not a function of circumstances.

*“Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of God on the throne of God.”* You see, men, Jesus had so

### *“Live by the Spirit” Pt 3*

much joy that it did not deter Him from paying for your sins at the cross. He never lost the overriding joy of His life while anticipating the cross.

Men, you can't create that type of joy. That is not something you can manufacture. Either you have it by the work of the Spirit or you don't. And it's not contingent upon circumstances. And Jesus can offer that kind of joy to His followers. For He said in John 15:11, *“These things I have spoken to you.”* Now notice this. *“That My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.”*

This is a full joy. It's the joy that Christ had Himself. He now gives it to us by the work of the Holy Spirit.

And Paul says it this way in Romans 14:17. *“For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”*

Men, the joy that we're talking about is quite contrary to what the world offers. The world says that your joy, your happiness, is a function of your circumstances and your situation in life. The joy that you and I have, men, as followers of Christ when we walk by the Spirit is this. I know that my relationship with God is sound, and it's right. That's what produces the spiritual joy that we have under the work of the Holy Spirit.

The attitude of love and the attitude of joy will lead to actions on our part that the Scriptures say will be action fruit. It demonstrates two things. It demonstrates the presence and the fact that God is working in your life, and it gives you and me the assurance of our salvation, that we are truly saved, because we see fruit in our lives. We see that happening. May God be pleased to do both—to produce the assurance in our own lives and to give evidence to the fact that God is working in our lives.

We'll pick this up next week. Bring your outlines again. We'll finish the rest of these.

Let's pray. Father, joy is the flag that is flown from the citadel of the heart when the King is in residence. Holy joy is the oil to the wheels of obedience. The seeming joy of a sinner is not from the knowledge of his happiness, but from the ignorance of his danger. May God be pleased to help us understand that joy is the function of a relationship, not a result of circumstances. May it be so for Jesus' sake. And all the Brave Men said, *“Amen.” (Applause)*