

YOUR WALK TALKS

Good morning Life Fellowship. It is good to see you today. My name is Dan and I am one of the pastors here. We are really glad to have you be part of our worship today.

Most of you know, if you have heard me teach at all, it usually leaks out that I am a recovering hillbilly. I grew up in the hills of Missouri and life there was just simpler. It was just different. I grew up on a farm. The church we went to had about a hundred people on a good Sunday, and it was just a different mentality back then. Some of you are from small town Americana so you get it. And of course this was also forty years ago so it was different as well. Not that I am forty, but I can remember forty years ago.

Forty years ago things were different and people thought a little differently. I want to give you that context before I tell you this story because I just know a few people are going to be really upset. However, we lived out on a farm and we had barns. One of the things that city people thought, and I am talking about the people that lived in the big metropolis of Moberly, population 12,000, was they thought we just couldn't have enough cats or dogs. So when they got tired of their cat or their dog or if their dog got in the family way (we weren't allowed to say pregnant when I was growing up), they would put the dog or the cat in a box, drive outside of town and drop them off at a friendly farmer's house.

And we were always getting new cats and new dogs at our house. We didn't have indoor pets, but everybody had a dog or two because what else would chase the cars when they went by twice a day. And we had cats because there were lots of mice in the barns and outbuildings. Now our cats weren't something we would pet, but they were to serve a purpose. And at times the cat or dog population would become overwhelming and we would have too many. I won't tell you what a lot of the farmers did because then you would really be upset, but in my family usually, not always, we were a little gentler.

So this one particular Sunday when I was about 18 or 19 years old I had been asked to preach at a country church way over in another county about 45 minutes away. My dad decided he wanted to go with me to hear me preach. And this was not that uncommon because in small rural areas when a pastor needed to go on vacation or whatever, and you only had about 40 or 50 people in your church, it would be hard to find someone to come in and speak. So many times they would use the young aspiring preachers to come in.

So my dad and I got in the pickup truck ready to head out and then my dad popped back out of the truck and came back a few minutes later with a cardboard box that he sat right between us. Then he put the truck in drive and we took off. About that time that box started rumbling and there in that box was a big, big tomcat. This was a cat that had just mysteriously appeared a couple of weeks before and dad felt like this would be a good opportunity to cull out one of the excess cats that we had because we would be

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going on a long drive. He figured this cat could find a new barn for himself so that we would have one less cat at our house.

Now again, I know that sounds horrible and shocking to you today but forty years ago that was just how life was in the country. So about fifteen minutes into that drive, that cat decided it had had enough of that box. And the howls that were emanating from it were tantamount to a Tasmanian devil on speed. I mean it was wailing, it was howling, it was running around in that box and I am getting a little nervous because I was supposed to be preaching the word of God in just a little bit.

Then all of a sudden - boom - that cat popped out the top of that box and started doing laps around the truck. Well, I am very allergic to cats. I mean just being around them a few minutes and I will be sneezing for hours afterward. And there was fur flying all over that truck as that cat flew around inside that truck. And of course I immediately started sneezing. Snot is flying, water is running out of my eyes and my dad is freaking out. He is telling me to get that cat back in the box. About that time that cat decides to take a breather on my dad's lap and he takes all ten of his claws and digs them right through dad's tan slacks and into his leg. And you know what happens when a cat does that - right?

I heard my dad got owwww long and loud. And my dad was not what you would call a fruit of the spirit guy when it came to patience, so he slams on the brakes on this road in the middle of nowhere, he rolls the window down, picks up that cat by the scruff of his neck and drops it out the window. Now I know, I know what you are thinking. But this is the 70s, okay? It was a different time and a different world. Then my dad looks at me and says, *'Well, that's that.'* Now he is bleeding from one leg, I am sneezing all over the place and there is cat hair floating all over the truck.

But we get to the church, I preach in spite of the wasps that are swarming around everyone's heads because this was a country church with all the windows open and no air conditioning. So it was kind of a wild day all around. And we go back home, forget about the cat and forget about the wild ride and the allergies and the injuries. Except that about three weeks later, guess who shows up at her back door? Exactly. Mr. yellow tomcat. And I will tell you at this point, he died a very old cat on our farm because we figured if that cat could find his way back to us from thirty miles away, he was welcome to stay.

And I have always wondered how did a cat who had been in a box inside of a Ford F100 pickup truck for better than thirty minutes, who was dropped unceremoniously out of a window, would know how to find his way back to our house? I have been told that God has given some animals an inner honing device, an inner voice so to speak, that

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when they find a place that is safe, and they are taken care of, that in many cases in a bizarre way they can find their way back to where they want to be.

Now I wouldn't have believed it if you had told me that story before that happened. I wouldn't have believed it if I had seen it on some corny kids movie like we have seen a hundred times over the years. I wouldn't have believed it but then I saw it happen. Whatever it was, that cat had in its head a homing device that God had put there that told him to go back to where he had been. Go home. Go where it is safe. Walk this way.

Now we have been studying Romans Chapters 5 through 8 for the last several weeks. We have been looking at the law, we have been looking at metamorphosis, we have been looking at transformation. And we have been looking at how the believer should be interacting with the hard fast rules that were the law that said thou shalt and thou shalt not and do this and don't do that. And at times how it can become almost depressive to us, and yet we know the law is good because God is good. We know that holiness is good because God is holy. And we know that we are called to, and aspire to be like Christ, but how in the world do we get there? And when we get there, what is it supposed to look like?

Now next week we are going to start a new series. I know many of you are going to be going on vacation over the next several months, but I hope you will catch them up on podcast if you miss a week. I hope you will try to be here as much as you can because we are going to talk about being 'poured out.'

Now what does it mean to be poured out? After you have been transformed, after the metamorphosis occurs, after you are walking in the Spirit, what does it look like to apply that in our lives? We are going to talk about that in the context of Life Fellowship Church which has part of our mission to pursue at all costs a passionate God-centered life. So what does that look like for us? We are going to help you understand, and be reminded of, and maybe have a fresh view of what it means to be walking in a defined life.

So today we are bridging those two. We are bridging the transformation to how we apply it at this church. And today I want us to talk about the idea of how we walk. My mom used to use epigrams to teach us things. She would make us memorize Scripture and she would use little pithy sayings that would help us. I have mentioned this one before from here but in case you missed out it is worthy of repeating. She would say to me, '*Dan, your walk talks and your talk talks, but your walk talks louder than your talk talks.*' I will slow it down and say it one more time so you can grab it. '*Your walk talks and your talk talks, but your walk talks louder than your talk talks.*'

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In this phrase we have this challenge that we should examine ourselves and ask what does my walk say about who I follow? And does it align with my talk? I have been reading some research recently for a project I am working on for one of the college classes I teach, and I have been looking at the research that shows the dichotomy that exists between the average person who identifies themselves as an evangelical Christian and what they actually believe. And what we are finding in this generation of Christianity, and this generation in America, and this generation of evangelicals is that we can talk a good game. We love Jesus, we believe the Bible is the word of God, we know that we are secure in heaven because of what Christ did on the cross. We know the facts. We know the applications of the facts.

But when it comes to the actual knowledge of doctrine and the living them out there is not a whole lot of difference between us and those who make no claim whatsoever to be Christ followers. And it is frankly very discouraging. When we see the results done in blind surveys, many of us who are here in this room today have not yet mastered that inner voice that God puts in our hearts and minds when the Holy Spirit comes to live within us that says, *'This is where you need to go, walk this way. Make your talk match your walk.'*

And that's what I want us to look at this morning. Turn with me if you will to the book of Galatians Chapter 5 and we are going to read a passage of Scripture that I think is familiar to those who have any background in church. If you don't, if this is one of your first times in church, or if you just didn't grow up in a church, this may not be as familiar. But what we are going to talk about is the fruit of the Spirit. And when we talk about the fruit of the Spirit this is where our walk should be leading us. Our walk should be exemplifying certain spiritual graces that Christ Himself embodied and that He would desire that we also would demonstrate, and not just with our mouths, but with our lives.

See, talk is cheap and it is easy to recite the Scripture, but it is another thing altogether to live the Scripture. And that transition is important for all of us as we recall the fact that we have been baptized into the body of Christ by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit lives within us when we accept Christ as our Savior, and it is all the Holy Spirit that you will ever get. You don't need a second blessing; you don't have to do anything else in order to show that you are saved from that point forward in terms of some demonstration of some spiritual onset of some kind. But rather at the moment of salvation we get all the Holy Spirit we are ever going to need.

The question from there is - how much of you do you give the Holy Spirit? How much of Him do you pay attention to? How much of Him do you listen to? And that is the battle of the transformed life - is the Spirit going to be in charge or am I going to be in charge - is my old nature going to be in charge?

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Remember when we were studying Romans Paul was writing to the church at Rome. Rome was comprised with people from all over the world. Now in today's message Paul is writing to the church at Galatia. The church at Galatia was prominently and predominately composed of Gentiles who were formerly very, very pagan. And there was some church conflict going on in Galatia between people who wanted to say you have to keep the law, focus on the law, live the law, and they were called Judaizers. This was their very rigid way as they were trying to take these pagans and get them to walk the right way. And the easy thing to do was to give them a list.

And Paul is saying no, no, no. He is telling them you don't have to go back to that, your focus is on the wrong thing, it is not on a list, it is from the Holy Spirit that lives within you. That is what Paul's whole letter to Galatia is about. He is explaining this to the Galatians and telling them he wants them to get beyond the list, to get beyond rules, to get beyond man made religious practices. And he wants them to realize God lives in them, the Holy Spirit is that voice that will help them to walk the right way.

So let's look at Galatians Chapter 5 and we will begin at verse 16. ***“But I say, walk by the Spirit.”*** And again I want to challenge you to remember whatever the Holy Spirit inspired the writers to repeat is important. So when you see certain phrases in here make note of them. ***“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 Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.”

Now this is an important passage. It is an important passage for us today in this generation and in this culture. This week I was out with my son having a bite to eat and as we were getting ready to go home he said, ‘Dad, I am going to need some steel toed boots.’ He works a job that requires that, so he asked me if we could stop by Walmart, and he picked up a pair of steel toed boots. Frankly, I have never owned a pair of steel toed boots, but I got to looking at them and trying to see if they really were steel toed, and I should have bought a pair for myself as I prepared for this sermon.

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And maybe we should have had complimentary ones sitting out here because when we look at this passage carefully, I just kind of want to give you a heads up, the Holy Spirit may do some toe stomping this morning because there are some things in here that every time I read it the Holy Spirit has that little voice that says to me, *'You know what, you are heading the wrong way, Dan. You are taking the wrong path.'* And here are some things to think about.'

So as we go through this passage I want you to be prepared for what the Holy Spirit may be saying to you, and that you will listen to His voice. By the way I have to love this passage because you know I like lists, and there are two big lists in here, and the lists have sub-lists. I mean I am just happy as can be in a passage like this. So we are going to look at these two lists.

Look at verse 19 and we will see the first list. ***"Now the works of the flesh are evident,"*** and that word 'evident' means 'kind of obvious.' All right? Paul says this one you are going to be able to see everywhere you turn. And I would suggest to you that today in our culture, and because of the way we have media communication, with all the stuff around us we can see this kind of stuff anywhere we turn. This is not a surprise to any of us. This is stuff that is absolutely obvious if you understand the battle that we face today.

And so Paul starts giving his list. He says, ***"Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality."*** Let's pause right here because in the first part we have a category, and that category is sexual sins and sensual sins. In fact the Greek word here is *pornea*, from which we derive our term - pornography. And lest you think that pornography is originally explained in the etymology of the word and just simply talks about pictures or videos or something like that you need to understand that it is far deeper than that. The whole idea of *pornea* is fornication, all forms of the illicit sexual relationships.

And today, seriously, it is impossible to have a television and not get bombarded with that. It is impossible to drive down the street and not get bombarded with that. It is impossible to walk through a mall, or to turn on your radio, anything you do you are going to be bombarded with messages that say, *'sex is easy, sex is fun, sex is free, free love, free sex, go for it. There are no standards as long as no one gets hurt and if it is comfortable with you, just do it.'*

We have had a huge sexual revolution back in the 60s whereupon the standards of morality that were accepted by society began to be dismissed. Maybe you want to ask, were people not immoral back in the 1600s, 1700s and 1800s? Oh yes, they were, they were absolutely immoral. But they knew they were immoral because they knew it was sinful. It was hidden, it was done in secret, it was shameful. Today we aren't ashamed of

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our sexual sins. We march in the streets with it, and surround ourselves with others like it, and we carry signs and wrap ourselves in flags, and we march up and down saying, ‘*This is who I am.*’ And sometimes we even go so far as to blame it on God.

And yet God’s word very clearly says this is a problem. And understand that this is a work of the flesh. You and I have to understand that there are two battles that are predominant in the world. Are you going to walk in the flesh or are you going to walk in the Spirit? Are you going to walk according to your instincts, your desires, that fallen part of you that was marred with original sin, or are you going to rise to a higher standard, a standard that comes from listening carefully to He who created you, and He who lives within you?

So sexual immorality is the first thing Paul hits. Then he goes on and makes it broader with “*impurity.*” The word impurity is a really broad term if you look at the original language, and it simply means ‘moral uncleanness.’ But it has an extra addition to it in its connotation that means ‘in thought, and in word, and in deed.’ So in other words you don’t even have to act on it, you just have to think about it. And then you talk of it. And this progression leads us to this giving in to the flesh.

The next word that is listed here is “*sensuality.*” Now sometimes when we think of sensuality we think of something that maybe brings about sexual thoughts, but it is more than that. The word here that we have translated actually means ‘debauchery.’ Debauchery as in the idea of just being openly shameless, brazen, this display of what God has called evil, and yet you would condemn those who would call it evil.

Now is that not our culture today? I mean I talk to teenagers, I talk to college kids all the time and they talk about their struggles and their desires to remain morally pure until they are married. They know that it is God’s design for the human sexual expression to be a good thing, a wonderful thing, but it is for a purpose. And that purpose exists within the bonds of a covenant relationship called marriage. And within that bond of marriage between a man and a woman whereupon a promise is made to stay faithful to each other throughout their entire life until death parts them, during that time God wants us to be able to enjoy all the privileges and rights therein. He wants us to enjoy the pleasures and the expressions therein. But outside of that, for our protection and for His glory, He does not want us to go there. Just don’t go there.

And so in our culture today your kids and mine are constantly being told that if you believe in a Biblical sense of morality, if you believe in a Biblical sense of sexual expression, that somehow somehow you are archaic, or out of touch, or repressed, or puritanical, or a prude. And in fact today you will be more harshly condemned for believing in moral standards that you will be for living like a farm animal. It is the culture. And if we don’t acknowledge that, and if we don’t ourselves look at this and

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thoughtfully ask what is God's way, what is God's response, how shall I be thinking Biblically, what happens is we are going to find ourselves like the frog in the proverbial kettle where we just kind of think, *'Well, what are we going to do? It is the culture. I mean you can't really expect a teenager to stay pure until marriage, can you? You can't expect them to abstain from sex?'* We can't even teach abstinence in a lot of schools because that is considered religious, rather than just moral.

And by the way this just irks me to death because I have a life group of college students, and some of the things that are said to them, not by their peers, but by their professors in regard to this is absolutely stupefying. They are being told constantly that it is natural, they shouldn't even try to control it. If they have a desire they should act on it as long as everybody agrees. And the assumption is you can't do it, you can't stay pure, and if you could you wouldn't want to anyway.

I am sick and tired of a culture that says to all of young people that they can be whatever they want to be, they can aspire to whatever it is they want. If they want to be an astronaut, be an astronaut. If they want to be a brain surgeon, they can do that. They can go to Harvard, they can go to this school or that school and they can achieve this or that. They tell them all of this and then they tell them, *'Oh but by the way, you are not going to be able to control your biological urges.'* That doesn't even make sense. In fact the discipline that is required to live when we are listening to the Holy Spirit, under the truth of the word of God, will help us in every other area of our life as well. We have to be remindful of that.

So Paul tells us that the first thing to watch out for is the works of the flesh which are the sexual, sensual sins. The brazen display of evil that is indicative of people who live it in thought, in word, and in deed whose focus is on sexual relationships outside of that which God ordained within the marriage.

Now let's go to the next things in the list. ***"Idolatry and sorcery."*** When you look at these two, these are the spiritual sins. Again we need to understand the context. In Galatia there were temples to Deborah, to Bacchus and to others. And these temples were places where they would go and offer sacrifices and they would bring gifts. And in fact in some of the temples there were people that were called temple prostitutes. And the prostitutes would help fund the temple. Sometimes they were slaves, and sometimes they were people paying off their debts, but the idea was that they would go in and have carnal relationships with these prostitutes, and the money would be given as an offering to the gods.

And whether we are talking about Bacchus, the god of wine, or Deborah, the fertility goddess, this was everywhere. It was just part of their culture. It would be like people at work talking about going to a strip club, or talking about who was having an

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affair with whom. This was just an out in the open practice at that time. And Paul is telling them to watch out for this because directly related to the sexual sins are the sorcery sins and vice versa. When we don't see God as who He is and His word for what it is, all the other sins start falling into place. They become easy to rationalize if there is no such thing as absolute truth.

Now the word sorcery is kind of interesting because it is the word in the Greek *pharmakeia*, and *pharmakeia* is where we get our word 'pharmacy.' And pharmacy has to do with drugs. And drugs have to do with altered states of consciousness. And this is exactly what took place in a lot of the temple worship. They were filled with drugs and scents that would create a sense of euphoria and would create a sense of altered consciousness. Part of the evil of witchcraft, the evil of sorcery, the evil of a sexual malpractice is this idea that we leave our senses.

And folks, we need to be really, really careful of anything that would dull our senses to the voice of the Holy Spirit in our lives. You and I have known people who will come back to work on Monday and say that they woke up on Sunday morning with someone in their bed and they did not even remember their name. How did they get into that position? It would be because they lost their senses. They gave in to alcohol, they gave into pot, or they gave into Ecstasy or other drugs, and for that moment of time they were driven by passions, and not by sense, not by truth, not by reality. So in our culture today more than ever we need to be paying attention.

Next we have a third category of sins and this is a long one because there are eight listed here in this one. And these are the social sins, or maybe a better term would be the selfish sins. The first one is "**enmity.**" Enmity is hatred. And by the way the word enmity or hatred here is not to do with one person; rather it has to do with groups. And do we see that in our culture today. Republicans versus Democrats, conservatives versus liberals, Americans versus North Koreans, Jews versus non-Jews, Russians versus everyone, I mean it is just everywhere, isn't it?

And by the way I need to add this. Sometimes it's Baptists versus Presbyterians or non-denoms versus Lutherans. So we add to that. We start to think in tribes rather than in our identity with Jesus Christ. Now understand this, and I think this is really important for us to know - I am a flag waving American. I love the 4th of July. I want to shoot off a serious amount of fireworks. I enjoy our country and all its freedoms. But I am a citizen first of the kingdom of God. And when we start thinking of ourselves as Americans first, or Democrats first, or alumni from a certain school first, we are going to miss the opportunity of having an influence on others who need to hear the truth. That doesn't mean we should just stand for everything, it doesn't mean that we can't belong to a group, it does mean that when we are involved in a tribal situation we need to be

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thinking first and foremost about the Holy Spirit that lives within us and how is He going to use our association during this moment of time in a way that will glorify God.

Next in the list is “*strife.*” Strife is discord, and when you have hatred you are going to have strife and discord. And again, have you ever seen a country so divided as ours in our lifetime? And it is quite amazing. We saw it played out on a baseball field this week and I think it is real easy for conservatives to get self-righteous, but conservatives have done the same thing. And there is racial crime on both sides. The bottom line should not be pointing fingers, but rather asking what is wrong with us? I will tell you what is wrong, and it is that we have abandoned the truth of the word of God and we are not walking in the Spirit. And when we get into that position the natural outgrowth is going to be strife and conflicts.

“*Jealousy.*” Our entire economy is built on this by the way. Have you ever thought about that? Our economy is built on a desire to make you less than satisfied with what you have, how you look, where you live, and what you drive. If you were really successful you would have this number of bedrooms. If you were really successful you would have this kind of clothing in your closet. If you were really successful you would be wearing this much gold jewelry. If you were really successful you would go here on your vacation. And so this constant turmoil of dissatisfaction drives us into the bondage of debt, and drags us into a spirit of competition, and motivates us to compare ourselves with others. As a result all of this jealousy just kind of comes up and we start feeling like we are not blessed even though we are absolutely blessed.

The Bible says in I Timothy Chapter 6 and verse 6, “*Godliness with contentment is great gain.*” And folks, there are people in this world who this morning are sitting in a jail cell who understand contentment in Christ Jesus better than those of us who live in one of the wealthiest parts of the state, the country and the world. So maybe we should be listening more to the Holy Spirit voice that is in us that tells us to walk this way.

Next Paul lists, “*fits of anger.*” Fits of anger are outbursts of temper. Often by the way these are results of jealousy or entitlement because they kind of build on each other. And this is one I really need to start getting my boots out because this is where I live. I was in Ikea the other day, and God help me from ever going back to Ikea for any reason. I was there on church business and I still had a bad attitude about it. I think they had 28 checkout lines but only four on them were open. Who do they think they are - Walmart? Sorry to all of you Walmart and Ikea employees.

But the rage that I felt because they were keeping me waiting from buying these wonderful cheap pieces of you know what’s that were made in Scandinavia. I am busy, and I have to prepare the rest of my sermon, and here I am waiting in this long line. Oh - chocolate bars for a dollar. I’ll take one of those. Don’t we get that way? We get so

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frustrated and angry because of a sense of entitlement and our desire to have more that we work ourselves up into a tizzy. And the next thing you know we are saying things, doing things and being cranky about things that are absolutely ridiculous. And then we take it home and share our bad attitudes with our families. We kick the cat and yell at the kids. We slam doors. Why? Because we had to wait in line five extra minutes. We forget how it tempers us.

Next in the list is “*rivalries.*” That is selfish ambition by the way. And it speaks kind of a self-grandiose attitude that gets ahead at the cost of others. So when we see the term of rivalry it means we will do whatever it takes to get what we want. Politics - anyone? “*Dissensions and divisions,*” are products of quarreling. “*Envy,*” is an evil feeling or desire to possess what belongs to someone else. ‘*If I only had their car or their job or their house or their wife then my life would be complete.*’ No, it won’t because that is not what gives us long term fruit of the Spirit. “*Drunkness,*” is the excessive use of alcohol. “*Orgies,*” are the drunken parties that are often associated in those days with the worship of Bacchus, who was the god of wine. They would lose their sense of right and wrong, their sense of self-control, and as a result they would be involved in these horrific sexual orgies.

And here is what Paul says when he got right down to the end of it. “*I warn you, as I have warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*” Now I want to put this in context so that it doesn’t rattle some of you because I have to tell you that there have been times when I have pretty well checked off a lot of the things on this list. And so does that mean I am not going to heaven? Does that mean I need to get saved again?

No, no, here is what it means. Actually the phraseology here is to ‘continue in a pattern of.’ You see Satan wants you to think that because you mess up once, or you forget once, or you don’t listen to the Holy Spirit once that you are toast spiritually. That’s not the case. But as a loving father God restores and calls us back to where we should be and to what we should be doing.

Now let’s talk about verses 22 and 23 where we have the fruit of the spirit list. “*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 Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passion and desires.*”

I want you to notice the fundamental difference between what the flesh produces and what the Spirit produces. And I also want you to notice that when we talk about the flesh Paul used the word ‘works’ of the flesh, but when he talks about those things from the Spirit he speaks of the ‘fruit’ of the Spirit. Not fruits but fruit.

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You know I grew up in Sunday school, and there was always a teacher who would put up a big poster on the wall, and it would have like a cornucopia on it with all these different kinds of fruit with words on them. Like there would be a banana with the word 'Joy' on it and there might be an orange with 'Patience.' But that is not what this means. The fruit is the by product, and not just one, but the believer who is walking in the Spirit should be producing all of these. It is like all the ingredients in a cake need to be in it for it to be good.

And so when you look at this list we need to understand this is what we should be doing if we are healthy in Christ, if we are listening to Him. This is about keeping a list, like today I did really good on joy and peace, but not so good for patience. We can't do that, but rather we need to ask ourselves if we are listening to that inner voice of the Holy Spirit that lives within us.

Notice the first fruits are God focused - "**Love, joy, peace.**" The Greek word love here is *agape*, and *agape* love is the love that is extended regardless of circumstances. It is a love that exists because you need to be loved. There are about six different words in the Greek for the word 'love,' and *agape* love is the love Jesus showed for us on the cross when He said, "**Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.**" This is the kind of love that says I am going to love you because you need loving.

We have a different kind of idea of love. For many of us we have adopted the *philia* type of love which is a brotherly love or a reciprocal love. I call it 'Barney love.' My kids grew up in the 80s and they loved Barney, the big purple dinosaur. He would sing, 'I love you, you love me, we're as happy as can be.' Well, sometimes that feeling of love means I am going to love you because you love me, and as long as you love me I will love you, but if you get out of my expectations then the wrath of Dan is going to come down on you. And that is not a Biblical love. The Biblical love is when God sees us His first response is love, care, compassion.

Next we have "**Joy,**" and joy is the Greek word *chara*, and it is deep abiding rejoicing in spite of circumstances. It is an inner thing that's not related to what you have, or where you are at, or what you possess, or what you are wearing, or what you just had to eat. That is happiness. Joy is something that you cannot give away based on circumstances. Joy is something that comes because you know Christ, and you know your future, and you know your hope.

"**Peace,**" is so important. It is this inner repose in quietness in spite of circumstances. When life is rattling your cage, when things are going wrong, when conflict is all around you, the spiritual man can listen to the Holy Spirit and realize this - this is but a temporary affliction. In 50 or 100 years none of this is going to matter, because you know Christ, you know your destiny, you know He can be glorified in this

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and you know there is a purpose even in suffering. And so in that, we can live in the midst of a world turned upside down with joy, with peace, and with a love that we have in the example of Christ.

After the have the God focused list we have the man focused list. Again there are three things - "***Patience, kindness and goodness.***" Patience is forbearance under provocation - ouch. So this literally means when someone cuts us off in traffic, if we listen to the Holy Spirit, it is going to mean that we do not get to respond to them the way they responded to us. Now if I could cut a verse of Scripture out, this would probably be the one I would cut out. I have been looking because I think there may be a special dispensation for those who live along I-77 somewhere in here. I try to convince myself all the time that God will understand. But no, actually God is trying to strengthen me through the resistance that I have to give my flesh in order for my Spirit to take control. And I have to put aside my anger, and my frustration, and my entitlement, and ask the Holy Spirit how I am supposed to respond in this.

And you see it is that level of self-awareness that will allow us to live in spite of circumstances with a quiet peace and joy and love, that doesn't cause all the stress that conflict does. "***Kindness***" is benevolence in action, like God toward sinners. "***Goodness***" is a condition, and it is also a reaching out to others. It is an action.

I love my wife because she shows these fruits more than I do. She is like my Holy Spirit sometimes because I can watch her. When we were living in Florida one time she was taking the kids to school, and she passed a guy on a bus stop bench who was lying down. There was a McDonald's right behind him and she hated to see him like that, probably sleeping on the bench all night long. So she pulled into McDonald's and got him a big breakfast, and then she got out of the car and walked over to the man.

She asked him if he would like to have some breakfast. The man stood up and said, '*Mam, I am just waiting for my bus. I have a job downtown.*' But I love the fact that she saw that man and her first response was not that here was another lazy bum, he is probably just a druggie. No, her response was thinking there was someone who needed a little bit of joy in their life today and offering them food. We should aspire to that in a world that is so cynical, even though sometimes we have a right to be cynical because the world is messed up.

Then the last ones in the list are self-focused. "***Faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.***" That is trustworthy and reliable and service. That is submission to Scripture, considering what others may need. Self-control is self-mastery that comes with saying no. '*No, I'm not going to say that. I am not going to use that hand motion. I am not going to go out with this group. I am not going to go to that web site. I am not*

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going to put that in a glass. I am not going to mediate on that image. I am not going to show that anger. That's the self-control.

And, folks, one of the things that Paul was warning about was that grace does not exist so that we can do anything we want, but rather that we would listen to an inner voice. So here are some points that I want you to consider as we close. Number one - don't forget the grace of the Spirit as you exercise your gifts of the Spirit. We have gifts that God has given us. Some of you are teachers, some of you are administrators, some of you are mercy showers. There are all kinds of spiritual gifts.

By the way we are going to have a course this fall that we would urge you to take, where you will be able to do a profile and find out where your gifts are. And understand that all of us are called to have the fruits of the Spirit. We are all called to joy and peace and love. We are all called to gentleness and long suffering. We are all called to these things.

Number two - focus on your spiritual health more than your spiritual performance. When you get into a stage where your life has become like a list, understand God never intended you to serve the list. He wants you to serve the Master. And when you are serving the Master the list is secondary. These are the natural products, this is the fruit. I have 20 different fruit trees in my yard. I don't go to the peach tree and expect to find kumquats. I don't go to the plum tree and expect to find apples. No, each fruit is a product of a healthy tree that was designed to produce it. And we are as well. We are designed to produce these spiritual fruits if we are healthy.

Number three - beware of today's cultural cynicism toward spiritual fruit and Godly character. Don't get beat down by the messages of our culture that says you can't live distinctly for Christ, you might as well give in, capitulate, think of the flesh and not of the Spirit. We have to be careful because we are truly aliens in a culture, and if we are to have any impact, any salt and any light, we must listen to the Spirit, so that others can see that fruit, and God will use that to draw others to Him. If we are going to live like the world there is no reason to know Christ. In fact if we continue in that and there is never conviction, and there is never a desire for change, and there is never a yielding to the Holy Spirit the question may be - are we really Christ followers, or are we just Christ talkers and not walkers?

Number four - treat fleshly impulses as the offense they are to Christ. Understand our sin, our flippancy, our wrong thoughts, our attitudes, our temper, our greediness, our envy, our jealousy are what drove the nails into Christ. The crucifixion became necessary because of those things. They are offensive and we ought to treat them as the offense that they are to the holiness of God.

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Finally, walking in the Spirit requires knowledge, reflection and yes, submission. We need to know, we need to reckon and we need to yield. In other words, thoughtful living, just thoughtful living. And here's my question - would you be willing tomorrow morning when you wake up to take a few extra moments and ask the Holy Spirit to help you to walk in Him today, to help you hear Him today, to help you to know the way to go? Would you ask Him to help your walk match your talk? Would you ask for His guidance when you are lost and confused and far away from where you should be? Would you ask Him to speak to you? Would you ask Him to show you the person who needs love and not anger? Would you ask Him to give you the character to identify a path that might lead to immorality and help you to nip it at the very beginning? Would you ask Him to help you to show agape love to people, a love for people not because of what they do, or what is in it for you, but because they simply need love? Would you ask Him to help you to bear the fruit of a healthy walk with Him?

I promise you this, if you will pray this tomorrow morning things will unfold before you in a way you have never experienced before, because you will be walking in the Spirit. It's not mystical, it's truth driven, and it is very, very real. May we all walk better than we talk. Let's pray.

Father, thank you so much for your word. Thank you, Father, for reminding us what we need in you. How we just need to quit trying to produce works and Father, help us to realize that we need to be healthy so we can bear fruit. Fruit that remains, fruit that points to you, fruit that comes only because we walk in truth. Help us to do that for it is in Christ's name I pray. Amen.

The preceding transcript was completed using raw audio recordings. As much as possible, it includes the actual words of the message with minor grammatical changes and editorial clarifications to provide context. Hebrew and Greek words are spelled using Google Translator and the actual spelling may be different in some cases.