

## Not My Accomplishments, But the Spirit's

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*

Galatians 5:22-23

Have you heard this verse before? Does it sound like a daunting task – all of these nice things like gentleness, self-control, and such? How can one accomplish all of these?

This verse is written specifically to believers and tells us the virtues, or visible traits of a Spirit filled life. It describes these as fruits of the spirit, bringing the idea to mind of a tree producing fruits. Many Christians work hard all their lives to exhibit these fruits and feel defeated by this verse as it just serves to remind them of our lack of fruit. It tells them all of the things they *should* be, and reminds them of their failures. They pray that God would help them to be more loving, or to have more joy, but they feel defeated because they do not have it already.

I want to be very clear here - this verse is **not** telling you how you should live. This verse is **not** in the text to remind you of all of your failures. This verse it **not** here to show you how inadequate you are. It is here to show you, the believer in Jesus, the traits of the life of the Spirit in you and to tell you that this is the likeness of the life of Christ **already in you**.

To understand this difference we need to trace some of these terms and analogies. First, let us look at the context of this verse in Galatians. It is customarily accepted that the apostle Paul is the author of Galatians, and as the name would imply, he is writing it to the church at Galatia (Galatians 1:1-2). In chapter 5, Paul is contrasting the Spirit filled life to a worldly life. He tells the church in verse 19-21 all of the fruits of a worldly life or a life that is ruled by the works of the flesh, then in verse 22 – 26 Paul contrasts the works of the flesh with the works (or the fruit) of the Spirit. This contrast is to show to the Galatians that a life that has been transformed by Christ is fundamentally different and exhibits different characteristics than a life still in the flesh. The purpose of this verse is not to command these characteristics, but to show the evidences of a Spirit filled life.

To understand this further I want to look at John 15:1-8 when Jesus himself talks about the fruit of a believer.

*I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. <sup>2</sup> Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. <sup>3</sup> Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup> Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. <sup>5</sup> I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup> If anyone does not*



*abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. <sup>8</sup> By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.*

In this passage Jesus is telling his disciples that He is the vine, and His followers are the branches. If they abide in Him they will bear much fruit. The secret according to Jesus is that we abide in Him to bear fruit. If we think of a real vine, the fruit is not a product of the branches, but a product of the vine and the roots itself. Jesus is telling His disciples that if they abide in Him, they will bear much fruit. Jesus is **promising** to them that **they will bear fruit**, not telling them that if they are to abide in Him, they must bear this fruit. It is a promise, not a command.

So the real question from this passage then is how does a Christian abide in Christ? How does a Christian live a Christ (Spirit) filled life? The answer to that question is in many places within Scripture. First, let us look at 1 John 2:24-27:

*Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father. <sup>25</sup>And this is the promise that he made to us—eternal life*

*<sup>26</sup>I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. <sup>27</sup>But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie—just as it has taught you, abide in him.*

In these verses, the secret to abiding in Christ is to let what you have heard from the beginning abide in you. This is referring to Scripture. If we let God's word abide in us by reading, studying, and memorizing, then we will be abiding in Christ. Look again at John 15:7, "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you." Jesus is saying that the secret is for His words to abide in you. The secret is God's word. Read Colossians 3:12-17:

*Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, <sup>13</sup> bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. <sup>14</sup> And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. <sup>15</sup> And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup> Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. <sup>17</sup> And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

Here in this passage are characteristics of Christians; they sound familiar, right? Almost all of the fruit of the spirit show up in this verse. And verse 16 tells us how to accomplish these characteristics – by letting the word of Christ dwell in you richly! The secret to abiding in Christ, the secret to living a spirit filled life, the secret to living a life that produces this fruit is to abide in Christ through his word! These are not commands that we must accomplish, but results of a life spent immersed in God's word.

Joshua 1:8-9 tells us that God's word is essential to a Godly life.

*This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. <sup>9</sup> Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.*



The secret to a Godly life – one that bears much fruit – is to hide God's word in your heart, and to meditate on it day and night. Abiding in God's word is the only way to transform a life. Abiding in God's word is the only way to bear fruit. Abiding in God's word is the only way to change our actions and behaviors from ones that are controlled by the flesh to ones that are controlled by the Spirit.

Psalms 119:11 is the inspiration for Bible Memory for All, and further tells us of the importance of God's word in our lives. "I have stored up your word in my heart that I might not sin against you." It is only when we spend time in God's word, and in fellowship with Him that He will transform our lives into the likeness of His Son. When we abide in Him, then He will produce in us a life that bears much fruit - fruit that is exhibited in the Galatians 5:22-23 characteristics:

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*

## References

- **English Standard Version (ESV)**  
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