



## ***The Flesh vs. The Spirit (by Ray Reynolds)***

WEDNESDAY NIGHT AUDITORIUM BIBLE CLASS

**Text: Galatians 5:19-23**

Introduction: In the book of Galatians, the apostle Paul expresses the need for true, genuine faith in Christ. He also encourages the church to see the conflict between the works of the flesh (**Galatians 5:19-21**) and the fruit of the Spirit (**Galatians 5:22-23**). The world abhors the wholesome fruit of the spirit and the pure ideals of truth because they reject God and desire works of the flesh. The world seeks after "*adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like*" which lead them further away from God (**Galatians 5:19-21**). Those inside the kingdom of God refuse to follow the path of wickedness. We seek the straight and narrow road that leads to eternal life (**Matthew 7:13-14**). In this summer series, we will be studying the importance of choosing spirit over flesh. Paul provides a list of nine great characteristics of the Holy Spirit: "*love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.*" The fruit of the Spirit can be divided into three main groups. Let's consider these three groups...

Discussion:

### **1) BEARING FRUIT FOR GOD - "LOVE, JOY, PEACE"**

- Love should be natural because God is love (**I John 4:8**). It was His love that compelled Him to send Jesus to the cross (**John 3:16, Romans 5:8, I John 3:16, 4:16**). God wants His children to have the spirit of love (**John 13:34-35**). Paul defines love to the Corinthians (**I Corinthians 13:1-13**). *Are you bearing the fruit of love?*
- Joy should be natural because God is joy (**I Timothy 1:11**). God has always been full of joy (**Genesis 1-2, Isaiah 62:5**). Jesus came to help His disciples fill their cups to overflowing (**John 15:11**). Paul loved to talk about joy (**Romans 15:13, Philippians 1:2,7; 4:4**). *Are you bearing the fruit of joy?*
- Peace should be natural because God is peace (**Romans 15:33**). In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus encouraged the people to be "peacemakers" (**Matthew 5:9**). Satan loves to cause division but God is not the author of confusion (**I Corinthians 14:33**). He wants us to have the same mind and judgment (**I Corinthians 1:10**). We should seek to reconcile ourselves and others to God. Paul teaches on this subject elsewhere in his writings because he thought it was important (**Romans 16:20, I Thessalonians 5:23-24, II Timothy 2:22**). *Are you bearing the fruit of peace?*

## 2) BEARING FRUIT FOR OTHERS - "LONGSUFFERING, KINDNESS, GOODNESS"

- Long-suffering should be natural because God is long-suffering (**Romans 2:4**). As we strive for maturity we need to let patience work in us (**James 1:2-4**). We must stand fast in the Lord and learn to suffer for Christ (**Colossians 1:9-12, I Timothy 1:17**). *Are you bearing the fruit of longsuffering?*
- Kindness should be natural because God is kind (**Ephesians 2:4-7**). We are made in the likeness, kindness, of God (**Genesis 1:27**). To be "kind" to others around us means to be humane, sympathetic, and understanding (**Romans 2:3-4, 11:22, 12:10, Colossians 3:12-17**). We should practice the golden rule and treat others like we want to be treated (**Matthew 7:12**). *Are you bearing the fruit of kindness?*
- Goodness should be natural because God is good (**James 1:17**). Paul teaches that if we want to experience the goodness of God we have to walk with Him (**Romans 15:14**). God will teach us how to be good, to walk in righteousness, and guide others to the path of life (**Psalms 25:8, 136, II Thessalonians 1:11-12, Titus 3:4-5**). *Are you bearing the fruit of goodness?*

## 3) BEARING FRUIT FOR OURSELVES - "FAITHFULNESS, GENTLENESS, SELF-CONTROL"

- Faithfulness should be natural because God is faithful (**Romans 3:3**). God is faithful to keep His promises (**Psalms 145:13**). God will never leave us or forsake us (**Hebrews 13:5**) and He will be with us always (**Matthew 28:20**). We must take the steps of faith that are necessary for salvation because these promises are for His children (**Acts 2:37-39**). Paul truly understood the need for faithfulness in the church (**I Corinthians 4:14-17; II Timothy 2:2**). *Are you bearing the fruit of faithfulness?*
- Gentleness should be natural because God is gentle (**II Corinthians 10:1**). Later in his writings, specifically in **Philippians 4:5-7**, Paul encourages us to make gentleness known to all of mankind. To be gentle means to practice humility (**Romans 12:16**). We cannot allow pride or jealousy to overwhelm us. Those are the ways of the world. Instead, we need to seek the mind of Christ (**Philippians 2:5**). Jesus was meek, lowly, and humble (**Matthew 11:18-20**). *Are you bearing the fruit of gentleness?*
- Self-control should be natural because God has self-control (**Ephesians 1:11-12**). He is not tempted by evil (**James 1:13**). Paul was not afraid to speak about the need to control yourself (**Acts 24:15, Romans 6:20-23, I Corinthians 7:5,9, Titus 2:1-6**). *Are you bearing the fruit of self-control?*

Conclusion: The natural work of God's Holy Spirit is to help us to bear similar characteristics to God, our Heavenly Father. We are His children and we should be conforming to His image. When we are connected to the Jesus the True Vine (**John 15:1-8**) it will produce natural fruit in our lives. Jesus is the source of all spiritual life (**John 14:6**). As we grow in Christ we begin to bear fruit for God, for others, and for ourselves. This will be the evidence of a changed life. Jesus encouraged His disciples to be the salt of the earth, the light of the world, and a city on a hill (**Matthew 5:13-15**). God chooses to use us, and our example, to bring glory to Himself (**Matthew 5:16, Philippians 2:15**). Will you choose the works of the flesh or will you bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit?