

Read

Galatians 5:19-26

John 15:1-17

Consider

This passage focuses on the Life by the Spirit, with an emphasis on the fruit of the Holy Spirit and freedom of believers.

Newly transformed people produce something special with their lives. Paul calls the new work of the Spirit fruit. The Holy Spirit spontaneously and creatively produces this kind of fruit in us. The Fruit of the Holy Spirit as described in v.22-23 relates to the Christian character as we grow spiritually and are becoming more like Jesus who perfectly modeled them. When Christ controls us, they grow and flow from us naturally. Jesus taught his disciples about Fruit in People's Lives, and he stressed that "By their fruit you will recognize them." (Matt.7:15). We must live in close union with Jesus, submit to him, know him, love him, remember him, and imitate him. In this way, we will fulfill the intended purpose of the law: to love God and our neighbors. "Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself: it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me." (John 15:4-5)

"We are led by the Spirit, and not under the law" (v.18). A person who exhibits the fruit of the Spirit fulfills the law far better than a person who observes the rules but has little love in his or her heart. Being led by the Holy Spirit creates the desire to hear and the readiness to obey God's Word. The Holy Spirit gives us the sensitivity to discern between our feelings and the promptings. The **words** of Christ will be in our minds, the **love** of Christ will be behind our actions, and the **power** of Christ will help us control our selfish desires which Paul advises us to deal with decisively by crucifying them (v. 5:24) and "keeping in step with the Spirit" (v.5:25). We submit every aspect of our lives to God: emotional, physical, social, intellectual, vocational. The Holy Spirit is the source of our new life and provides the energy and direction for it, and so we should keep in step with his leading.

Paul describes also in the passage the difference between freedom to sin and freedom to serve. Christians should not be slaves to sin, because we are free to do what God wants and to glorify Him by demonstrating loving service to others. This may relate to what we face constantly: the tension between the Spirit and our sinful nature (see Romans 8:5,9; Eph.4:23-24; Col.3:3-8). In Christ, we have a victorious and new resurrection life following the Spirit's leading. We should listen to his dependable guidance, and ask for his power to help us experience the joy and freedom that come from letting him rule in our heart (Rom.8:5,9).

Deacon Samuel Chan

Pray

Gracious God,

Thank you for leading us to meditate on the topic of obedience to God for fruitfulness as a sign of spiritual maturity in Christian character formation. It is essential to follow and imitate Christ on the pathways to fruit bearing. We pray therefore that the Holy Spirit would continue to guide us to walk closely with our Lord Jesus so that our words and action would fully magnify him for his glory. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Diving Deeper

What kind of fruit does God expect from us (see John 15:1-17)?

- Following Christ ought to yield fruitful results.
- God expects many different kinds of fruit (fruit is not limited to winning souls. John 15:7, 11, 12 hint answered prayer, joy and love; Galatians 5:22-24 and 2 Peter 1:5-8 describe additional fruit: qualities of Christian character.)
- Apart from Christ, there is no real fruitfulness. Discuss the point of staying close to Jesus as a branch attached to the vine; receiving the nourishment and the life offered by Christ, the vine.

Spiritual fruit is a natural by-product of God's presence. Share your view and experience.

Active obedience to God produces spiritual fruit. Meditate on how productive you are for God, and share.

How can we live closer **WITH GOD** in our lives?

How are we being **TRANSFORMED** to be more like Christ?

How is the Holy Spirit empowering us to imitate Christ in what we **DO** this week?