

~ BE DESIROUS OF VAIN GLORY....

## GALATIANS 5:22 – 26

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~ Our Spiritual Safari is going to get down to the nitty-gritty of life in this report, friends. Our feet are going to touch the ground of reality, where the sole of our shoe leather meets the concrete sidewalk. We're going to learn precisely what it means to walk in the Spirit of God. The Christian life is not some hot-air balloon ride ascension where we have some overwhelming experience that makes us soar to the heights as our heads get dizzy in the clouds. No, a Christian life is exactly what Paul labels it here – a *walk*. It's important that we learn to walk; and walking is possibly the most monotonous and mundane thing we do as human beings – besides breathing. So, let us put one foot in front of the other, pray for wisdom, judgment and discernment, and consider the Word of God sincerely.

In our last report, we examined the ugliest brood of worldly lusts and fleshy desires by listing sensual, religious, social, and personal sins. It wasn't an attractive lesson; but if you have not read that report, I suggest you go back and do so now. If you read the list and discover there is enmity in your heart today – perhaps there is hatred towards another believer, for example – then you are living in the flesh, my friends. There's no sense beating around the bush now; you can know if you are living a fleshy life. You know if you are running with a clique of small-minded individuals who believe they are perfect — and negatively judge everyone outside of their infantile circle. Just be honest with yourself. Maybe you envy what someone else has? Well, that's also works of the flesh. When man "*does what comes naturally,*" man does all of the things on that list....

***22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,***

***23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.***

~ There is quite a contrast between works of the flesh and fruits of the Spirit. Works of the flesh are those things we physically do. The Ten

Commandments were given as a control for the flesh. The fruits of the Spirit are the things the Lord does through us when we allow Him to live in us and produce a Christian life by the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus spoke of the fruit of the Spirit in the Gospel of John chapter fifteen. Specifically, Jesus said, *“without Me ye can do NOTHING.”* Well, producing fruit is something God wants in your life; fruit, more fruit and *MUCH* fruit — is His desire. God also wants us to sow seed so we can produce thirty-fold, sixty-fold and one hundred-fold. Our Father in Heaven wants to lift us up to be fruitful branches in the True and Living Vine — the Lord Jesus Christ!

There are nine types of fruit listed in the first two verses of this report. Fruit is produced by the tree, of course; which means it's not of its own efforts. Sure, we may plant a tree and water the tree — but it may or may not grow and mature. Further, and interestingly, a physical avocado tree doesn't produce lemons or oranges — it only produces avocados. But the Greek says *“... love IS the fruit”* — singular. So, in the spiritual realm, love is the hybrid by which all other fruit stems; allowing all nine to grow on one tree. That's remarkable, friends. All spiritual fruit stems from love. Love never seeks its own. Love always does something for others. Any fruitful gift we have is only given to be exercised in the church for the benefit of the body of believers — in love.

Alright, our old nature cannot produce good fruit. The old nature can produce dastardly evil fruit, though. Specifically, Paul said, *“... the will is present with me, but how to perform it, I know not.”* Well, trust me, that is the biggest problem in a whole bunch of so-called Christian lives today. See, Paul has also already made it clear, in the seventh chapter of Romans, that our new nature has no power in and of itself. This is not a do-it-yourself project. The only Grower is the Spirit of God — not us — period. And He's only growing it in those who come to Christ His way.

We must abide in and yield to the sweet influences of worshipping in Spirit and in Truth — which means in Christ — which means sound doctrine from Holy Writ — if we are ever going to have one unit of fruit produced in us, friends. Some produce thirty, some sixty, some a hundred-fold. It is God Himself Who determines that; and He does so according to our willful

obedience. Don't miss that, friends. The world is not a sweet influence, either, by the way; it's the Holy Spirit which indwells us – and nothing else.

Alright, here is the Trinity of fruit: the first three fruits are inward – love, joy and peace. The next three are outwards toward other men – longsuffering, gentleness and goodness. The last three are upwards towards God – faith, meekness and temperance. That makes a spiritual triangle. You are at one corner of the triangle at the bottom and your fellow man is at the other bottom corner; and, of course, God is at the pinnacle. It is critical for us to visualize this concept.

Now, if you have continuing sensual sins in your life, you can never know the full experience of true love. Many people know all about sex, but nothing about love. No two people can love as two Christians can love each other when God produces the fruit of love in their lives. If we had more love, we would also have a lot more fun and joy in the church. We'd have a lot more fruit. I have to confess: what I need is patience – longsuffering. Meekness does not mean mildness, though; the two meek men of the Bible were Moses and Jesus. Moses came down from the mountain and had some very harsh words for Aaron, when Aaron made the golden calf. Jesus ran the money changers out of the temple with whips and cords. That doesn't sound like meekness – but it is. Meekness means we will to do God's will; and yield our will to His. Temperance or self-control means a Christian poise. That poise is desperately lacking in so many people today....

***24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.***

***25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.***

***26 Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.***

~ So, this leg of our Spiritual Safari ends with basic elemental steps of order. Now, we're learning to walk spiritually; just as we learn to walk physically. Physical walking is a trial-and-error method; it is a learning curve; and walking means putting one foot in front of the other. When my

children learned to walk, I didn't lecture them on the physical mechanisms of the foot and corresponding connections to the ankle and leg; I didn't give them the psychology of walking or the sociological implications of upward mobility — and I didn't send them to walking school. No, it was practice all the way. My son fell and hit the coffee table many times and ended up with a knot the size of a walnut on his forehead more than once. All I could do is pick him up and have him try again. One day, he walked right out the door.

That's the only way we learn to walk in the Spirit of God. You'll fall down many, many times while learning – and it's going to hurt sometimes, too. God will then pick you up, comfort the wound, and help you try again. I know people who have been to Bible school, Bible College, Bible conferences, and seminary; and they have books literally filled with notes on how to live a Christian life – but they don't live a Christian life. They never seem to get around to it. The problem is that they have never learned to walk properly, correctly and completely in the Spirit of God. They don't depend on the Holy Spirit to produce fruit in their life. They're busy trying to produce it themselves. Tragic, indeed. May God help each of us in this solemn endeavor ~

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