

## ‘Evidence of a Spirit filled life’ (16)

We all know children who have been or still are more than a handful when it comes to their behaviour. I remember speaking with one family who were trying to figure out ways to help their child with some serious behaviour issues. Little Johnny was twelve years old and misbehaved wherever he went. His birthday was coming up soon, so his mother suggested they buy him a bike! Well, the father went nuts and asked her, ‘do you really believe that’ll help improve his behaviour?’ his wife said, ‘well, no, but it’ll spread it over a wider area.’

The apostle Paul has been dealing a lot with the bad behaviour of these legalists because their teaching was beginning to spread throughout the church. Now false teachers don’t come to us with a name tag on them which says, ‘hi my name is Tom and I’m a false teacher.’ So, what Paul is going to do today is share with us some of the signs of a false teacher and later he will show us some of the signs of a true, grace centred Christian.

Galatians 5:19-21 “The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

Now I don’t know about you but there is hardly a time when I switch my TV on a night where they aren’t showing some of these sins as if it’s acceptable. There’s hardly a time when I read a newspaper and I don’t read about some of these sins being promoted as acceptable and fun. No wonder Paul says these acts are obvious, they are no longer hidden from society but encouraged in society.

The internet is filled with this stuff, Facebook and Twitter are filled with people just ready to help you get involved with this stuff. People tell me that society had moved on over the years but the truth is society hasn’t moved on that much. All that’s happened through modern technology and social acceptance is that people are more aware of them and encouraged to partake.

Society now tell us that that **sexual immorality** is acceptable. People having sex before they’re married, homosexuality, lesbianism, and prostitution are all ok according to society now. But the Bible says in **1 Thessalonians 4:3-5** “It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honourable, not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God.”

Society now tell us that that **impurity** is acceptable. They tell us that ‘its ok’ to have a filthy mind and filthy thoughts, it’s just the way some people are. But the Bible says in **Titus 1:15** “To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted.”

Society now tell us that that **debauchery** is acceptable. Society knows no shame now, we see it every day where people are actively involved in indecent conduct and dressed to seduce. But the Bible says in **Romans 13:13** “Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy.”

Society now tell us that that **idolatry** is acceptable. All over the world people are filling their lives with gambling, sex, drugs and alcohol, to avoid putting their attention on God. But the Bible says in **Colossians 3:15** “Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.”

Society now tell us that that **witchcraft** is acceptable. In ancient times witchcraft was practiced by using drugs to stimulate people’s minds into a semiconscious state. It later came to refer to witches, sorcerers, wizards and witchdoctors who falsely attempted to exercise spiritual power in order to control people by fear. But the Bible says in **Leviticus 20:6** “I will set my face against anyone who turns to mediums and spiritists to prostitute themselves by following them, and I will cut them off from their people.”

Society now tell us that that **hatred** is acceptable. We hear people talk about how much they have been hurt by someone and so they take matters into their own hands and want to physical harm them. But the Bible says in **Titus 3:3** “At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.”

Society now tell us that that **discord** is acceptable.

A situation which could have been easily avoided has escalated, to quarrels and disputes. The neighbour's kids kicked their ball over the garden by mistake and the owner of the garden just goes nuts because it crushed his prize-winning roses. And from nothing, comes years of disputes and arguing. But the Bible says in **Titus 3:9-11** "But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless. Warn a divisive person once, and then warn them a second time. After that, have nothing to do with them. You may be sure that such people are warped and sinful; they are self-condemned."

Society now tell us that that **jealousy** is acceptable. You find out your friend has got the latest I-Phone but you've got an old one, so you will do anything to get your hands on the new one. Someone has just past their driving test but you can't bring yourself to rejoice with them because you've failed three times already. Someone did a good deed for someone and instead of giving them the honour due to them, you simply ignore them and try to outdo them with another good deed. But the Bible says in **1 Corinthians 3:3** "You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarrelling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans?"

Society now tell us that that **fits of rage** are acceptable. People who don't get their own way often go nuts to the point where they can't even control themselves. But the Bible says in **Proverbs 29:11** "Fools give full vent to their rage, but the wise bring calm in the end."

Society now tell us that that **selfish ambition** is acceptable. Some people will go to almost any lengths to get what they want, no matter who they hurt in the process. They want all the recognition for themselves, just like these legalisers Paul has been speaking about. **Galatians 6:12** "Those who want to impress people by means of the flesh are trying to compel you to be circumcised."

Society now tell us that that **dissensions** are acceptable. It's ok to have your opinion but it better agree with mine, otherwise I'll make sure it becomes a huge issue for you! But the Bible says in **Proverbs 18:2** "Fools find no pleasure in understanding but delight in airing their own opinions."

Society now tell us that that **factions** are acceptable. Everyone loves a party, **don't they?** In the business world, the executives love to throw parties in order to influence people and get them on side with their wonderful new ideas. And this again is what these legalisers were practicing during Paul's time. **Galatians 4:17** "Those people are zealous to win you over, but for no good. What they want is to alienate you from us, so that you may have zeal for them." Paul says these legalisers were dividing the church by making circumcision a condition for salvation.

Society now tell us that that **envy** is acceptable. People feel uncomfortable with what someone else has or is and its eating away inside of them. But the Bible says in **Proverbs 14:30** "A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones."

Society now tell us that that **drunkenness** is acceptable. Most people don't know what it means to have a glass of wine these days, the buzz word is **'binge drinking.'** The police and NHS are overwhelmed at the weekends with alcohol related incidents. People are wrecking or have wrecked their lives through alcohol and lost everything in the process. But the Bible says in **Proverbs 23:20+21** "Do not join those who drink too much wine or gorge themselves on meat, for drunkards and gluttons become poor, and drowsiness clothes them in rags."

Society now tell us that **orgies** are acceptable. There are websites and newspaper ads inviting people to come along and get involved. But again, the Bible says in **1 Peter 4:3** "For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do—living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry."

And because Paul uses the phrase, **'and the like'**, he's simply giving us a few examples out of many he could have given, to remind us what the sinful acts of flesh are. You see society says these things acceptable until it happens to them personally.

It's ok to have sex with someone else as long as it's not with my woman! It's ok to have filthy thoughts, as long as they are not about my children! It's ok to go out, dressed to seduce, as long as they don't try and seduce my partner! It's ok to take drugs and alcohol as long as they don't come into my house! And we could go on but the point is, most of society actually agrees with the Bible if and when it suits them.

Paul's point is that when you live your life driven by your fleshly desires you will sin. And because of that sin, you will have no chance of getting to heaven, in other words, you can't have your cake and eat, so to speak.

And loved ones, I hear a lot of talk about what is and what isn't a salvation issue within some churches. But Paul here has given a few examples of what salvation issues looks like. And if you're a Christian this morning and your struggling with any of these sins or any other sin, then please speak to someone about it today.

Because not only Paul but Jesus Himself says, your salvation is at stake. **Revelation 21:6-8** "To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children. But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death."

And so, to contrast the acts of the flesh, Paul goes on to speak about the fruit of the Spirit. **Galatians 5:22-24** "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."

Now notice that Paul speaks about the 'fruit' of the Spirit, not the 'fruits'. In other words, there is one fruit which produces nine attributes in the Christians life. And the reason we have nine attributes is because during the miraculous age in the New Testament, there were nine miraculous gifts as **1 Corinthians 12:8-10** tells us. But the nine miraculous gifts were temporary, while these nine attributes of the Spirit are permanent.

Paul is saying that those who have turned from depending on themselves for salvation, have turned to depend on the direction of God. In other words, the fruit of the Spirit is brought forth in the lives of those who seek direction from God for moral attitudes and behaviour. Paul's list of the fruit of the Spirit is the proof that we are Christians. We have all kinds of people claiming to be Christians today, but the real proof is seen in a Spirit filled life.

And notice the first characteristic of the Christian who is living the Christian life, it's **love**. Love is the foundation upon which all the qualities of the fruit are built. If we love our neighbour as we love ourselves, we will demonstrate in our lives these characteristics of godly behaviour. In other words, one leads to another, we begin with love and the result of love is joy, then peace with our neighbour, then longsuffering.

You see loved ones, God reached out to humanity with 'agape' love, the kind of love which is built upon grace and is unconditional. **Romans 5:8** "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." We didn't earn it but when we receive it, when we truly understand God's love for us, we can't help but want to extend that love to others. And so, love becomes the foundation upon which we establish relationships with others.

Paul says that love, when it's fully understood by the Christian goes on to produce **joy**. Let me ask you, **how do you feel when you share God's love with others?** It gives us joy, **doesn't it?** That's why when Jesus showed His love for mankind by dying for us all, He was filled with joy. **Hebrews 12:2** "For the joy set before him he endured the cross." You see, when we share God's love with others it produces joy in our hearts.

And so, love produces joy and joy goes on to produce **peace**. Now please don't think the word 'peace' means no more wars no more terrorism etc. It's speaking about the kind of peace we have in our hearts from knowing we're right with God. I've met too many Christians over the years who aren't quite sure if their saved or not.

**Philippians 4:4-7** "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." In other words, when the Christian begins to doubt their salvation, God gives us a peace in our hearts that we can't understand.

A peace that says, 'it's ok, if your faithful, your still right with God, no matter what your going through in life'. And just knowing we have that peace in our hearts will lead us to be at peace with everyone else around us. **Romans 12:18** "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone."

And so, love produces joy and joy produces peace and peace goes on to produce **patience**. Now I don't know about you but there are times, that I want God to be so patient with me, but I'm not so patient with others around me.

And maybe you're like me, maybe you need to keep reminding yourself of how patient God is with you. **Colossians 3:12+13** "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you." Maybe we all need to learn to patiently endure with the 'faults' of others.

And so, love produces joy and joy produces peace and peace produces patience and patience goes on to produce **kindness**. Kindness is the inner gentle nature of the Christian that is produced as a result of dependence on the grace of God. **1 Corinthians 13:4** "Love is patient, love is kind." You see, when we love our neighbour, we will seek to be kind in attitude toward our neighbour in order to guard the peace that exists between our self and our neighbour. In other words kindness will lead us to doing good to our neighbour.

And so, love produces joy and joy produces peace and peace produces patience and patience produces kindness and kindness goes on to produce **goodness**. Paul is going to speak about this further in **Galatians 6:10** where he commands us to "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers." This is the outward expression of inner kindness, it's doing good toward others.

And so, love produces joy and joy produces peace and peace produces patience and patience produces kindness and kindness produces goodness and goodness goes on to produce **faithfulness**. **1 Corinthians 13:7** "It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres." When we understand that God was faithful in saving us by His grace, this should help us to be faithful to those around us. In other words, we'll be more committed to our neighbour because we have developed a relationship that is based on loving one another.

And so, love produces joy and joy produces peace and peace produces patience and patience produces kindness and kindness produces goodness and goodness produces faithfulness and faithfulness goes on to produce **gentleness**. You see the spiritual nature of the saved is characterised by a gentle attitude toward others. **Galatians 6:1** "Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently." The gentle, are courteous and considerate of their neighbours and their brothers and sisters in Christ.

And so, love produces joy and joy produces peace and peace produces patience and patience produces kindness and kindness produces goodness and goodness produces faithfulness and faithfulness produces gentleness and gentleness goes on to produce **self-control**. You see gentleness refers to our ability to control outburst of emotion in order to guard the relationship of peace that we have with our neighbour. **1 Corinthians 9:25** "Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever." The natural result of the gentle person is self-control and self-discipline when it comes to maintaining the loving relationship we have established with others.

You see loved ones, all these characteristics are evidence of a Spirit filled life. In **Acts 2:38** Peter tells us that when we're baptised we receive not only the forgiveness of our sins but also the gift of the Holy Spirit. People go around today claiming they have the Holy Spirit and try to prove it through so-called speaking in tongues or performing some kind of miracle. But Paul says no, if you want to prove you're a Christian, then let the characteristics of the Holy Spirit be visible in your life.

You see Paul says, "against such things there is no law", in other words, if we live our lives displaying the fruit of the Spirit, we don't need any law to tell us how we should behave towards anyone. Because we're motivated by love which leads to be considerate in all things in our relationship with others. The legalist is more interested in keeping the law because they have to, whilst the free Christians keep the law because they want to.

The legalist is depending on himself, and the outward keeping of law but the true Christian has allowed the law to affect their heart. The true Christian understands that God's grace first starts with the heart. You see, law can help change our outward behaviour, but it can't help change the heart, in other words, if you change people hearts, they'll happily be obedient to the law.

That's why Paul goes on to say in **Galatians 5:24** "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." Those who belong to Christ have put to death any efforts to work themselves to heaven by perfect law-keeping and meritorious deeds. In other words, anyone who is trying to be right with God through law keeping only, don't belong to Christ. **Romans 8:9** "You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ."

Christians should be trusting in God's grace, not trusting in how well they keep the law. And notice that Paul reminds us that the Christian has crucified the desires and passions of the flesh. **Why are we to crucify those desires and passions?** Because those desires and passions actually encourage us to try and live right through our own abilities, rather than depending on God's grace.

**Galatians 5:25+26** "Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other." The Christian life is within the realm of the Spirit's direction through the word of God and so when we live according to the direction of God's word, we are living in the Spirit. Paul is calling on the Galatians to bring their lives into harmony with the direction of the Spirit.

You see loved ones, when we try to please God through our outward efforts, we become big headed. Look at how well I'm doing! I keep this law better than you do! I'm more spiritual and religious than you are! We become irritating towards those who are struggling around us and they become jealous because they can't keep up with the so-called high standards.

Loved ones, may we be aware of the dangers of legalism. May we provoke one another to love and good works as **Hebrews 10:24** reminds us. May we encourage one another to express our love of one another through our good works as **Galatians 6:10** tells us.