



Walking by the Spirit

The Fruit of the Spirit

August 30, 2020

Galatians 5:16 — 6:2

Most spiritual traditions have corresponding physical disciplines: Hinduism has yoga; Taoism has tai chi; Buddhism has kung fu. But what does Christianity have? It has walking. We are a pilgrim people. We are “followers of the Way.” Ours is a pedestrian faith. There’s no “Gnosticism” or esoteric higher knowledge to attain. You don’t have to be a monk or guru. To be a mature Christian, you don’t have to learn to slow-motion fight an army of invisible ninjas. You just have to walk.

The fruit of the Spirit is born by people who *live by* and *walk by* and *keep in step with* the Holy Spirit.

And if we walk with him, where will he lead? Well, first *to church*. Not for the religious services, but for the fellowship of messy people. The Spirit desires a walking *community*, and he wants everyone to join it. So how do we walk *there*, with *those people*?

1. We walk in a way that is relationally unitive.

Galatians 6:1 begins, “brothers.” There’s a whole theology in that word. The gospel gives us liberty as sons, but also responsibility as brothers and sisters. If a person is a brother, then we are his keeper. Or put another way: all our brothers and sisters are *keepers*. We do everything to be relationally unitive with them. The whole idea of “keeping in step” with the Spirit—the meaning of the Greek word—is a body of people walking forward in a row. Shoulder to shoulder, elbows locked.

2. We walk in a way that is spiritually restorative.

Sin is a trap, and we all stumble into it often (James 3:2). So when one of us falls, we don’t condemn. No, the gospel teaches that mercy triumphs over judgment, so we mend, repair, and restore. We’re doctors who heal no matter what. Doctors don’t judge the sins of their patients before rendering aid. They don’t determine whether the patient is righteous, whether the wound or disease is foolishly self-inflicted, whether the person really deserves attention. The humanity of the person is reason enough—let alone if that person is a brother or sister in Christ! So we bring all our Spirit-born gentleness, all our “strength under control,” to humbly heal—knowing that we ourselves are susceptible to the same sins.

3. We walk in a way that is faithfully cooperative.

Sometimes no amount of restorative work fully heals in this life. Some of us carry chronic infirmity of body and soul. Some of us bear burdens we cannot bear. That’s when we need some brothers and sisters to “bear one another’s burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.” Now, you probably know that the law of Christ is love, and that love summarizes the entire the law of God. But did you know that burden-bearing summarizes love? It’s love *par excellence*.

In Galatia, the Judaizers tied heavy burdens on people to try to get them to fulfill the law of Moses. But Paul told the Spirit-people to lighten others’ loads so that they themselves would fulfill the law of Christ! How radically and refreshingly different is true Christianity?

Discussion Questions

1. Read today's Scripture text.
2. What do you think about the idea that Christianity's basic physical "art form" is *walking*? Not yoga or tai chi. Walking. It's so *pedestrian*. How is that helpful?
3. How do you react to the idea that the first place the Spirit wants to lead us is to "church," to fellowship with other messy Christians? What would you say to someone who said that doesn't sound appealing or "spiritual" enough?
4. Let's talk through the main points of the sermon:

Walking in a way that is relationally unitive. (6:1: "Brethren")

- Have you ever had an experience of being elbow-locked with a team? What was it like?



- What would it take to make the church more like this?
- It was noted that, inevitably, some of "the most annoying people in the world" are in this line. Why is that not a deal-breaker for relational unity?

Walk in a way that is spiritual restorative. (Gal. 6:1)

- When others are caught in a sin, most of us have a fleshy tendency toward something other than gentle restoration. We condemn, condone, turn a blind eye ... what's your less-than-Spirit-led inclination?
- Have you ever successfully helped to restore another person, or been successfully restored yourself? How did it work?

Walk in a way that is faithfully cooperative. (Gal. 6:2)

- Bearing others' burdens is hard. What strength or motivation can you tap to make it easier?
- Reading just a little further, Galatians 6:5 says that "each one must bear their own load." How do you reconcile the paradox: "bear one another's burdens" and "bear your own"?

5. What is one key take-away for you from this passage? Do you sense the Holy Spirit nudging you toward another individual, or deeper into the "messy fellowship" of the church? What is your next step of obedience?