

## THE ENABLING SPIRIT OF THE LIVING GOD

Open your Bibles this morning to Galatians 5:16-26.

I want to speak to you this morning on the Enabling Spirit of the Living God.

Let's bow for prayer!

In the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter of Galatians, Paul tells us that there are three ministries of the Spirit that enable the believer to enjoy liberty in Christ.

The key to the book of Galatians is the word freedom or liberty, specifically, liberty in Christ.

Galatians 5:1 says, *"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."*

But we are oftentimes so bound up that we cannot enjoy these liberties.

We are like Lazarus bound in the grave clothes of death until Jesus came along and broke the bonds of sin and death.

Remember when Lazarus came forth from the grave?

He was alive. The hold of death had been broken but he was still bound by the grave clothes of death – which are a symbol of the old fleshly nature and they need to be removed.

Lazarus had to be loosed from the grave clothes before he could live *"in the liberty wherewith Christ had made 'him' free."*

He had to have help to get out of them. By himself, he could do nothing.

Likewise, oftentimes we are bound by the old grave clothes of the flesh and "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary one to the other so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."

Sounds a lot like the last part of Romans 7, doesn't it?

So when we walk, and live, and operate in the realm of the Spirit, the Spirit enables us to "shuck" off those old fleshly robes of death.

Those things are listed for us in verses 19-21.

“Adultery, fornication (which, by the way is any kind of sexual immorality), uncleanness, lasciviousness (which is any kind of lewdness), idolatry, witchcraft (which is anything pertaining to demonism and the occult), hatred, variance (that’s the Greek word for strife),” and the list goes on.

We need help; we need the Holy Spirit to enable us to rid ourselves of these old grave clothes, so to speak.

I want you to see three things this morning that the Holy Spirit enables us to do.

First, the Holy Spirit enables us to fulfill the Law of Love, verses 13-15.

Secondly, the Holy Spirit enables us to overcome the flesh, verses 16-21, and verse 24. (This would be that from which we need to be loosed).

Thirdly, the Holy Spirit enables us to produce what the Scriptures, the Bible calls “The Fruit of the Spirit”, verses 22-23, 25-26.

While we are, of course, very interested in number 1 and number 2, we are most interested in number 3 – How to produce the Fruit of the Spirit.

Quite frankly, the Fruit of the Spirit won’t be produced in us, in a believer, until the flesh is put in its proper place and perspective.

Now I want to say this: No one will ever completely put away the “lust of the flesh,” v. 16.

In other words, no one will ever become sinless or perfect.

But we can make progress!

We can become “mature” believers in Christ.

And we can keep from fulfilling the lust of the flesh by walking in the Spirit, again, verse 16.

The characteristics that God wants in our lives are seen clearly in the nine-fold “Fruit of the Spirit.”

These are the characteristics God wants us to display! So that’s the goal! That’s the will of God! That’s the direction in which we should head.

This is what God wants our Christian character to look like.

Now Paul began with love because all of the other fruit is really outgrowth of love.

Everything actually begins and ends with love.

Whenever a person lives in the state of “divine love,” (and that is what the word “agape” means here, “divine love) then that person experiences the joy that only “divine love” can bring.

Joy is that inward peace and sufficiency that is not affected by outward circumstances.

This “joy” leads us to a “holy optimism” that keeps us going in spite of the difficulties that life throws our way.

Love and joy together produce a peace – a peace that “passeth all understanding” – and a stability, a steadfastness that makes us unmovable in times of difficulty and distress.

It makes us a “rock” solid Christian, “unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.”

These first three qualities – love, joy, and peace – express the “*Godward*” aspect of the Christian life.

The next three – longsuffering, gentleness, and goodness – express the “*manward*” aspect of the Christian life.

Longsuffering allows us to display a “courageous endurance without quitting.”

Did you ever wonder why so many people begin to run the Christian race but lack endurance? This is at least part of the answer.

Gentleness simply means “kindness,” that is a quality, a fruit of the Spirit that is definitely missing in many believers today.

Goodness is simply “love in action.”

The believer, the Christian who is longsuffering will not avenge himself or wish difficulties on those who oppose him.

He will not adhere to the earthly adage, “I don’t get mad, I get even!” That’s not the way a believer should be!

He will be kind and gentle, even with the most offensive, and will sow goodness where others sow evil and strife.

We have a lot to learn, don't we?

Human nature cannot do this on its own. We need help loosing ourselves from the "grave clothes of the old nature," so to speak.

The Spirit of God can do this and He is our "Helper, our Comforter, the One-who-comes-along-side" to enable, to actually produce this fruit in us.

The flesh cannot "produce" these qualities; only the Spirit can!

The final three qualities – faith, meekness, and temperance – listed in verses 22 and 23 are "*selfward*" qualities.

In this case, faith means "faithfulness, or dependability." It's not a reference to our faith or one who has faith, but one who is faithful and dependable.

The word meekness literally means "power under control." It has to do with the right use of power and authority.

In the little Book of Third John, we meet three people: a Godly man named Gaius, a domineering man named Diotrephes, and a meek and faithful man named Demetrius.

Here is what John had to say about Demetrius in Third John, verse 12:

*"Demetrius hath a good report of all men and of the truth itself: yea, and we also bear record; and ye know that our record is true."*

That leads me to a couple of conclusions concerning the man named Demetrius.

One is that he was a probably an "elder" in the church at Ephesus. I'm led to believe that because of what John said in Third John 12 compared with what Paul wrote in 1st Timothy 3:7:

*"Moreover, he (that is an overseer or bishop) must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and snare of the devil."*

That was Demetrius in a nutshell: "*Demetrius hath a good report of all men...*"

The second thing or conclusion that I can draw about Demetrius is that he was filled with the Spirit and that the Fruit of the Spirit was being produced within him by the Holy Spirit.

This was not something that Demetrius could produce in and of himself: It had to come from the Spirit of God: The Holy Spirit!

Meekness is not weakness. We need to get that through our heads. Meekness is not weakness.

Jesus said, *"I am meek and lowly in heart,"* Matthew 11:29 and Moses was very "meek" according to Numbers 12:3, yet no one could accuse either one of them of being weak.

Moses was the most dynamic leader Israel ever had. He was meek but he was anything but weak and Christ, of course, was even more.

The meek Christian does not through his weight or power or authority around but when he speaks, men listen.

Now a couple of warnings about the Fruit of the Spirit are in order here.

One is that it may be possible for the old nature to counterfeit some of the Fruit of the Spirit, but the flesh can never produce the true Fruit of the Spirit.

Secondly, according to verses 25-26, there must be a right atmosphere before this Fruit of the Spirit will cultivate and grow.

I don't have time to tell you what this means in detail, so let me just tell you what it means in summary.

Just as fruit will not grow in every climate, so the Fruit of the Spirit cannot grow in every individual's life or in every church.

The Fruit of the Spirit grows in a climate blessed with an abundance of the Spirit and the Word.

*"Walk in the Spirit,"* verse 25, means "to keep in step with the Spirit" – not to run ahead and not to lag behind.

This involves the Word of God, prayer, worship, praise, and fellowship with God's people.

It also means "pulling out the weeds," so to speak so that the seed of the Word can take root and bear fruit.

Some folks, according to verse 26, are anxious or “desirous” of praise and “vain-glory” and this led and can only lead to competition and division.

The Fruit of the Spirit can never grow in that kind of atmosphere.

Finally, we need to remember that “fruit” is meant to be eaten, not admired and put on display.

People all around us are starving for love, joy, peace, and all the other “graces” or Fruit of the Spirit.

When they see them at work in our lives it stands as a testimony to the Grace of God and the work of the Holy Spirit and they realize that this is something they want and need and lack in their own lives.

We do not bear the Fruit of the Spirit for our own consumption; we bear this Fruit so that others might be fed and helped and that Christ may be glorified.

The flesh may manufacture “results” that bring praise to us but the flesh can never bear the fruit that brings glory to God.

That’s the job of the Holy Spirit – to bring glory to God and His Son, Jesus Christ.

So when I look at my life, what do I see?

Do I see an atmosphere of the Spirit, of walking in the light as He is in the light?

Do I see love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and temperance?

Do I see the enabling of the Holy Spirit to fulfill the law of love, to overcome the flesh, and to bear the Fruit of the Spirit?

This is the kind of life that pleases God!

Let’s bow for prayer!