

# Spiritual Life in Everyday Bodies

Thomas Robinson, *The Ways of the Holy Spirit 4*, May 21, 2017

## Galatians 5:22-26

<sup>22</sup> Now the **fruit** that **the Spirit** bears is **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,** <sup>23</sup> **gentleness, self-control.** The law is not against such things.

<sup>24</sup> But **those who are part of the Messiah, Jesus, crucified** the **flesh** with its **passions** and **desires.** <sup>25</sup> So if **we are alive by the Spirit,** let us also **keep in step with the Spirit.**

<sup>26</sup> Let's not be focused on empty glory, competing with one another, envying each other.

## Colossians 3:12-17

<sup>12</sup> Since **God** has **chosen** all of you, **set you apart,** and **loved you,** then dress the part with **hearts full of tenderness,** with **kindness, humility, gentleness,** and **patience,**

<sup>13</sup> **putting up with** one another and **giving grace** to each other, if anyone has a complaint against another. Just as **the Lord has given grace to you,** so must **you too.**

<sup>14</sup> And over all these, **clothe yourselves with love,** which ties everything together for real **maturity.**

<sup>15</sup> And let the Messiah's **peace** set the standard in the way your hearts think, since you were **called into that peace in his one body.**

And **be thankful** (well graced): <sup>16</sup> Let the **message of the Messiah** dwell in and among you in all its richness, as you **teach** and **exhort** each other with real **wisdom,** by his **grace singing Spirit-empowered psalms,** hymns, and songs, singing with your whole being to God. <sup>17</sup> And **whatever you do,** by word or action, do everything as **a person who belongs to the Lord, Jesus, giving gracious thanks** through him to God the Father.

---

## Galatians 3:27-28

<sup>27</sup> For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. <sup>28</sup> There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

## Galatians 2:20

<sup>20</sup> I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in flesh I live in the faithfulness of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

## John 15:4-5, 12, 15-17, 26

<sup>4</sup> "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. <sup>5</sup> I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ...

<sup>12</sup> This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ...

<sup>15</sup> No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. <sup>16</sup> You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.

<sup>17</sup> These things I command you, so that you will love one another. ...

<sup>26</sup> But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me."

## Everyday Bodies – “Flesh” and “Spirit”

Jesus taught his disciples about the Spirit/Paraklete/Helper sent from God – both himself and the Father. Paul teaches about the Spirit in many ways, helping people who had no frame of reference to participate in the Spirit’s work in their lives. Often religious people have set Spiritual life over against bodily, this-world life, as disembodied, heavenly life.

God created our bodies. He loves the physical. Spiritual life now and ultimately is life in body: now bodies and resurrection bodies. When Paul speaks of flesh, he means our ways of making our present selves the center of everything, our little gods, defining our idols of wealth, power, success, beauty, etc., defined by our limited passions and desires.

Spiritual life is everyday bodily life with God at center: a whole person of body, mind, spirit, everything, as a whole creature of God. It’s life in relationship with others. It’s life that undermines idols: no limited thing or status or person or circumstance determines the worth of my life. It’s life that sees God and God’s self-giving love at the center of all.

## Images for Thinking about Spiritual Life

When Jesus or Paul talk about this life, it’s almost always in terms of images. The work of God’s Spirit within us is as varied as the people he creates. No formula limits the Spirit. But Paul and Jesus give us images from deep experience that help us recognize and grasp what God / Jesus / Spirit do in us: Fruit on a vine or tree. Clothing that expresses identity. Keeping in step. Being part of a single body. Crucifying the flesh, linking our experience of newness to being part of Jesus’ death and resurrection. Abiding in Jesus, having his message dwell among us. Peace as an umpire setting the standard for ways of thinking.

The images carry a depth of meaning. “Fruit”: What the Spirit does is not to give orders but to work organically in our lives to let the reality of God and his love become embodied. Jesus emphasizes that this fruit comes from his own life, it creates a love of intimate friendship. It has ancient echoes from the Tree of Life to God’s vineyard of Israel in Isaiah. Fruit involves our active participation but always more as we open our lives to God’s work.

The image of clothing is receiving the gift of a new status: Clothed with Christ. Paul describes the work of Grace as God’s choice and love (like Israel). The process of Spiritual growth is responding to and imitating the Grace of God we’ve received. He speaks of forgiveness as “giving grace” to each other. Being thankful is “well-graced.” It is “in grace” that our teaching and exhortation are turned into poetry and song empowered by the Spirit. But the language is very bodily: “guts” (hearts) of tenderness, thinking hearts set a standard, “patience” is having expansive passions. We see the layers of life and growth in deep, generous, honest relationships, learning ourselves as we learn to give to others the same grace we have received. All is bound together with genuine love the heart of maturity.

## Grace and Thanksgiving

Paul calls us off paths of seek personal glory, competition with each other (You can’t really compete with God’s work), and envy. These are part of flesh’s passions and desires.

He comes to being “well-graced”– Thankful. The good news lives among us. We help each other in our common, shared struggles, but it takes the form of poetry and song. That way it goes deep into us remaking us so that no word or deed is untouched. Jesus’ identity and lordship shapes our relationships, aspirations, politics, vision of society, parenting, relationships in work, creativity, love of the physical world, care for all in need.