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Walking And Living in the Spirit. (2013)

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Walking and Living in the Spirit.

Topics.

- Let your righteousness exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees.
- Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.
- If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.
- Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh.
- May God establish your hearts in every good word and work.
- Jesus is able to guard the word of God.
- The Lord stood by me.
- Show no partiality as you hold the faith of the Lord.
- Walking in the Spirit in the Old Testament.

INTRODUCTION: the first section of this study looks at what walking and living in the Spirit means to God and to the faithful in the New Testament and what it embraces, while the second section looks at what walking and living in the Spirit meant to God and the faithful in the Old Testament.

Matthew

Let Your Righteousness Exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees.

Matthew 5:20 ----- 20 Jesus said: I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

The religious leaders of Jesus generation (the chief priests, Pharisees and scribes) were religious legalistic, prideful hypocrites (pretenders) they taught the law but did not practise it. Added to this they considered themselves religiously superior to others and lacked love, compassion, mercy and grace toward those seeking God and especially toward those who could not attain to the Law of Moses and all the other religious and trivial laws they had added.

The people were deceived into thinking they were holy and religious not because of their good spirit before God, but because they were keepers of God's temple and did all the outward priestly things, they wore religious garments, they had the scrolls and taught them every Sabbath, they performed all the religious outward works such as strictly adhering to ceremonial rites and keeping holy days and religious customs and traditions, but on the inside they were full of pride, hypocrisy, self-importance and harshly judgmental and condemning toward those who did not strictly adhere to the laws of Moses and all the extra laws they had added as they kept them. Jesus is telling his disciple that they must: -

- Not be religious hypocrites (pretenders).
- Not outwardly put on the appearance of righteousness and falsely claim to be and act holier than others.
- Not impose onto others high principles that they themselves are not practising or keeping.
- Not judge and condemn others when they are doing the same things themselves.

Exceeding the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees is about being humble and living a life of honesty and integrity before God and man and showing compassion, mercy and grace toward others. Walking in the Spirit in this context is walking in honesty and integrity of heart and mind and walking in love, compassion, kindness, mercy, grace, forgiveness and such like things. One of the greatest things that turns the secular word against Christianity and offends God is religious hypocrisy.

Be Perfect as your Heavenly Father is Perfect.

Matthew 5:43-48 ----- ⁴³You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. ⁴⁶For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? ⁴⁸You therefore must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Jesus in these verses is saying everyone in the world loves their friends that is easy whether a person is a Christian or not, but to be perfect as the heavenly Father is about Loving our enemies and praying for those who persecute us.

Loving your enemies: during Christ's generation the Jews saw themselves as the holy race with God and the Gentiles as an unclean race without God because of this the Jews considered the Gentiles to be an inferior race and from fear of becoming unclean generally did not mix with them. Jesus is saying do not treat others as enemies as the Jews were doing. Sadly even today some in Christian churches develop a "them and us" attitude to such an extent that they (consciously or unconsciously) view those outside the church as enemies.

Christ is saying don't do this, don't show only those who are your friends kindness, treat everyone the same as you would treat those who are your friends. Loving your enemies in practical terms means, be friendly and do-good even to those you dislike or who dislike you, it is basically doing-good to all humans contrasted to just doing-good for our friends, when we can do this Jesus says, "We are perfect as his heavenly Father is perfect." This is why Christianity is a high calling and one that self, ego and pride enormously struggle with and one of the reasons Jesus said, "For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few" (Matt. 7:14).

Jesus is not asking us to do anything that he himself did not do, not only did he show compassion and heal all the sick amongst the crowds regardless of their belief or lifestyle (there was no questioning or test anyone had to pass) Jesus from compassion healed them all. The only people Jesus spoke harshly against were the prideful, hypocritical, self-serving, legalistic and dogmatic religious leaders the chief priests, Pharisees and scribes (who plotted his murder), because they were making it almost impossible for those with a humble heart who were honestly seeking God to find him because of their legalistic attitude and their lack of love, mercy and grace.

The following words of Jesus should be engraved upon our minds and never forgotten, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16), this is the perfect example of loving your enemies, "God so loved the world." Some might be wondering, "What about the murderer the rapist the thief etc., how are we to love them? Loving your enemies is not about feeling some warm and fuzzy feeling it is about doing good and not harm to others nor does it mean forsake justice; justice is one of the great pillars of God's throne.

Bringing justice upon the guilty is the loving thing to do because it protects the innocent. The underlying spirit of the Ten Commandments is love, because each law protects the innocent from some form of physical or emotional hurt or harm. Jesus words, Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect," could be summed in in the following way, uphold honest justice toward those who justice is due and treat people with respect and decency regardless of their belief or lack of it.

Walking in the Spirit: in this context is about doing-good to others whether we like them or not, whether they are Christians or not and whether they like us or not it is about showing love toward people regardless of their birth, nationality and race etc., and treating all humankind with respect and decency and upholding honest justice because true justice is the loving thing to do, because justice does what is right and fair for the innocent victim and protects others from harm. Love will uphold justice upon the criminal to protect the innocent and where possible right the wrong (i.e. justice will demand the thief pays back what he has stolen).

Galatians

If we Live by the Spirit, Let us also Walk by the Spirit.

Galatians 5:22-25 – ²²The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

The fruit or works of the Spirit embraces every action and deed that stems from love which means the works of the Spirit are everything we do that benefits or enhances another person's life in some manner this is the reason that there is no law against love and the fruits of the Spirit because not one of them will ever bring harm to another human. The character of the Spirit is humble, modest, respectful, giving, kind, gracious, polite, courteous and well-mannered so living in the Spirit means living in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Setting the mind on the Spirit is to focus the mind on the things of God and on Christ, it means when we plan our lives and what we do our minds are always conscious that what we do can either honour God or be an offence to God. It means we are always consciously aware that our behaviour, speech and lifestyle will either bring honour or dishonour the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is about being mentally conscious that we are a reflection of the Lord on earth and being alertly aware that we can be a good or bad reflection, setting the mind on the Spirit is about being determined to be a good reflection of Christ in whatever career path we take and in all that we do and say. Simply put, setting the mind on the Spirit is being determined to live in the Spirit (as explained above).

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh.

Paul's statement, "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (Gal. 5:24) does not refer to the natural physical body, nor does it mean we should starve or afflict our bodies with lashings as a certain few do in some religions. The word flesh in this context refers to the corruption of the old nature, the old man and carnal heart (the secular world calls it the lower nature).

The expression, "Crucified the flesh with its passions and desires," means that the power of the flesh to dominate and control our lives has been broken, since the supreme desire of the faithful who are in Christ is to honour God and the name of their Lord and therefore all the affections, passions and lusts and the disorderly wishes and desires that we may feel and desire contrary to love and moderation have lost the governing and controlling dominating power that they once had.

But it does not mean that we are totally free from the flesh (the corrupt nature) with its sinful dysfunctions and aberrations since it is still alive, but it's alive as a person fastened to a cross may be alive, though they cannot act and move as before, being under restraints, likewise the flesh though crucified and under the restraints of God's love and grace cannot dominate, reign and govern as before, yet it is alive, and acts, and operates, and oftentimes has great sway and influence and because of this it is in the sense that the flesh is deprived of its reigning power that it is said to be crucified.

Paul being fully aware of this principle wrote earlier in this letter to the Galatians: -

- 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 the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not nullify the grace of God, for if justification were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose (Gal. 2:19-21)

This means when the flesh did get the victory over Paul he did set about inflicting himself with physical lashings or inflict pain upon himself as some do nor did he condemn himself and mentally beat himself up, but rather he embraced the grace of God in Christ Jesus.

Paul's deepest desire was to live perfectly before God, but he knew because of the flesh (the lower nature of humanity) this noble and high desire of the heart was unattainable, so he chose to trust in the Good News of the Gospel of Christ which states that those in Christ are counted righteous by God because of their faith in His Son who laid his life down for them and therefore Paul's trust and dependence for righteous was not in his own self-effort to attain to it, but in his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is what Paul means when he said: -

- I do not nullify the grace of God (Gal. 2:21).

Paul the perfect example for all who faithfully followed Christ is gloriously shining a spotlight on the fact that he does not condemn himself in those moments the flesh gains a victory and thereby make the grace of God that Christ achieved for him on the cross serve no purpose. Paul statement: -

- If justification was attainable through the law, then Christ died for no purpose (Galatians 2:21).

Means that if any one of us could attain to the high standard of the law and live a life without sin then Christ death was pointless since there would be no need for it which clearly shows that the flesh (the lower nature of humankind) though crucified in that it has lost its reigning power and governing control over us will in certain circumstances and weak moment still seize the opportunity to raise its ugly head, this is the reason Paul lives his life by faith and in God's grace as we all should.

Walking in the Spirit: in this context, is living in the fruits of the Spirit meaning living in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness self-control, forgiveness and such like things and trusting in God's grace when the flesh gains the opportunity to raise its ugly head. Some faithful brothers and sisters in Christ feel that as they become aware of such things as selfishness, pride, ego, bitterness, jealousies, envy, resentment anger hatred covetousness and such like things dwelling in the depth of their heart that they cannot approach God because of all this darkness and ugliness residing dormant in the depth of their human nature, but this is a deception, how can that be some might wonder?

Simply this, the closer we move toward the Holiness of God the greater His light is going to shine upon the ugliness that dwells within. As the faithful in Christ become consciously aware of these things it is not a sign of moving away from God, but moving closer toward to Him. This is why Paul being fully aware of the ugliness that dwells in the flesh (the lower nature of humankind) said: -

- It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me (Gal. 2:20).

If we Live by the Spirit let us also Walk by the Spirit.

Galatians 5:25-26 ----- ²⁵If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. ²⁶Let us not become conceited (vain glory in KJV) provoking one another, envying one another.

Living by the Spirit: means that we live by faith and in God's grace in those moments that the flesh raises its ugly head, it means we trust and depend on our faith in Christ to be counted righteous by God and not in our own self-effort or adhering to ceremonial rites and holy days or keeping religious customs and traditions no-matter how good they may be.

This does not mean that keeping these things are bad in themselves in fact some of them maybe spiritually healthy for many and be storing up treasures in heaven they only become destructively wrong when those doing them are trusting in them to be counted righteous rather than trusting in Christ. The moment we trust in our own self-efforts to be righteous is the moment we nullify everything Christ achieved for us on the Cross and make his brutal, bloody and cruel death count for nothing because we are trusting in our own self-efforts and our own self-righteousness.

Walking in the Spirit: in the context of this verse means if we are going to live by faith and grace to be counted righteous (as we should) then we should also make it our supreme desire to live a lifestyle in the Spirit which in this context means living in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, forgiveness and such like things. It is about trusting in Christ's righteous and doing-good to others and treating people whether in Christ or not with decency, respect and showing honest justice to all in contrast to living a lifestyle in the flesh and following its passions and desires to satisfy self, ego, pride, greed and lust etc. Simply put walking by the Spirit means let your outward lifestyle reflect the good character of Christ in every way.

2 Thessalonians

May God Establish your Hearts in every Good Word and Work.

2 Thess. 2:16-17 ----- ¹⁶Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, ¹⁷comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.

Some say that the Holy Spirit is not working amongst Christians today and that we should not pray asking God to help us to do-good or for help to study to know His word, because these are both things that are in our power to choose to do or not to do yet Paul in these verses is praying that God would do both of these for those who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. Now consider this, the Lord is in heaven, so how is he going to answer Paul's prayer and do what Paul is praying except by the Spirit.

The Christian faith it always involves both the believer doing what they can for God and God influencing and enabling them by His Spirit. Whatever is done in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ whether it is praying before God with a humble heart, serving in ministry or works of faith it is always the faithful working by faith and love toward God, and God by His Spirit working by His influencing power and by love and grace toward them.

Walking in the Spirit: in this context, is about speaking in a manner that is acceptable to God and the Lord Jesus Christ and avoiding corruptible talk that brings strife and divisions and about doing what is right and good before God and doing what is right and good to others. Something else that deserves having a spotlight shone upon it is the meaning of the word consolation (16) it comes from the Greek word (*paraklesis*) and from Strong's Concordance means to call or invite near, to comfort, support and give help and relief, this is exactly what God has done for us through the Lord Jesus Christ since salvation is founded upon grace and not self-effort and works of the flesh or by strictly adhering to ceremonial rites and holy days or by keeping religious customs and traditions. It also means that the foundation of all comfort is grace.

2 Timothy

Jesus is able to Guard the Word of God.

2 Timothy 1:11-12 ---- ¹¹I (Paul) was appointed a preacher and apostle and teacher (to proclaim the gospel) (v10), ¹²which is why I (Paul) suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me.

The thing that was entrusted to Paul was the Gospel. Following are four reasons Paul was able to say with absolute confidence that he trusts the Lord Jesus Christ is able to guard the Gospel that he entrusted Paul with when he appeared to him on the road to Damascus: -

1. The Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is the only Gospel on earth that has the power to deliver humankind from death to eternal life and reconcile even the lowliest child of Adam to God and clothe them in royal robes of righteousness that leads to everlasting glory.
2. There is no other message on earth that proclaims such love and grace as Christ manifested to all the world on the bloodstained cross of Calvary.
3. The Gospel is guarded by faithful brothers and sisters who have humble hearts of integrity and are devoted to the Lord as Paul was.
4. There is always the natural and the spiritual working together meaning the faithful of heart working spiritually together with the Lord Jesus Christ inviting men and woman into God's Kingdom.

These are the reasons Paul was able to say that he is fully convinced that the Lord is able to guard the Gospel until the glorious day he returns. The word in its widest sense naturally covers the entire Bible, but the primary focus here is the message of the cross and the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ which is the testimony of the Lord who through the Gospel saves us to eternal life by the power of God's Spirit not because of our works, but by grace which God gives us in Christ Jesus.

Walking in the Spirit: in this context, is about being faithful and humble and speaking the true words and messages of Christ regardless of the cost to self, in contrast to prideful and false teachers who are enticed by worldly riches, fame, importance, power and control who distort and twist the Scriptures for their own personal gain and for their own advantage.

The Lord Stood by Me.

2 Timothy 4:17-18 ---- ¹⁷But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth.
¹⁸The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

When Paul was first being persecuted no one stood with him except the Lord Jesus Christ, who not only stood by him, but also strengthened him. If the Holy Spirit is not working in the lives of Christians today how could the Lord have strengthened Paul?

There are numerous testimonies even today amongst the global body of Christ of brothers and sisters in the Lord who have faced persecution, suffered great sorrows, troubles and hardships of life who have known the comforting influence and spiritual strength of the Holy Spirit upon their hearts and minds that transcends their own efforts. Added to this how is the Lord going to rescue and save Paul except by the Spirit?

Today we do not have the physical presence of the Lord Jesus Christ as the apostles did, but God has not left us on our own (i.e., as orphans), but given us the Holy Spirit. The following are the two ways in which God's Spirit influences comforts and strengthens Christians today: -

1. God's word is Spirit and truth, as we read and meditate upon the messages of Christ, the prophets and the apostles they influence our hearts and minds convicting us of sin and impart to us God's wisdom, God's love and God's grace and by these not only comfort and strengthen our hearts and minds, but also lead us to God's love and grace in Christ which has the power to save even the lowliest of sinners to eternal life and everlasting glory.
2. The Spirit of God and the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ work in the lives of those who belong to Christ, influencing them toward God's will, His plans and

His purposes to bring about His eternal plan for their lives and by the Spirit comforts and strengthen their hearts and minds in those dark hours of suffering, sorrow and need.

Walking in the Spirit: in this context: is living and trusting in God's grace, God's love and the faith that the Lord Jesus Christ will save us and bring us into his heavenly Kingdom when he returns in glory in contrast to trusting in our own self-effort to earn righteousness and be counted worthy on our own merits.

James

Show no Partiality as you hold the Faith of the Lord.

James 2:1-4 ----- ¹My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. ²For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, ³and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, "You sit here in a good place," while you say to the poor man, "You stand over there," or, "Sit down at my feet," ⁴have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

Verse one in the King James Bible says: -

- My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.

Based on this verse some religious teachers have taught that James is rebuking those he is writing to because they should have the same faith that Jesus had, but they don't, these false teachers say that James is teaching his listeners that if they had the same faith that Jesus had they would be able to do the same miracles that he did, but this is to isolate the verse and take it totally out of its context, and force it to mean something other than what it actually does mean. (I mention this primarily because it is a perfect example of how false doctrines are established).

The context to these verses has nothing to do with miraculous power it is about showing partiality which means being one-side, to have a bias and show favouritism. The faith that Jesus had that James his brother is referring to is Christ's lack of showing partiality and favouritism to anyone. It mattered not to Jesus whether a person was noble or lowly, a Bible scholar or lacked such knowledge, rich or beggarly he treated them all with the same esteem. Jesus exalted no-one on the basis of their high standing in society or lack of it.

In the assembly of the Christian church no brother or sister should be esteeming one person above another regardless of whether they are the President of a nation or the CEO of a global company all humans are to be treated with the same respect and dignity. No matter whether noble or poor, rich or lowly we are all sinners that need saving and even when saved we are still all in desperate need of God's grace.

Added to this not one of us is saved or counted righteous because we have made ourselves to be so or are worthy of it, but because of our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and God's grace so whether noble, rich or poor we cannot even boast that we have done any great works to earn our own salvation since it is granted to us as a pure gift by God because of our faith in His Son and not because we have made ourselves worthy of it by our worldly achievements and successes.

James is rebuking those who he is writing to because they are setting themselves and those they considered to be noble, rich and successful above the poor and lowly and in doing this they are not only judging people according to their religious status or their worldly riches and possessions, but also showing that they consider those who are poor and less fortunate to be of lessor value to the rich and wealthy. This is why James is telling them they do not have the faith that Jesus had, Christ never judged or exalted anyone who came to him in this worldly manner. Certainly this is the way the world judges those who belong to it, the mind (consciously or unconsciously) of those in the world judge a person according to what they own

(i.e., the size of their home, car, company, bank account, fame and such like things), should a person be blessed with these they are esteemed as a somebody to be looked up to and exalted whereas those who lack are judged as lower class citizens (i.e., the lessor). This is one of the reasons that self-worth of those in the world is fickle, it is based on what they have and achieve outwardly and not on who they are as a person on the inside. Their worldly possessions, fame and significance give a sense of importance and a feeling that they are somebody of worth, but the citizenship of those in Christ is not of this world and therefore they should not be acting or judging in this manner.

Dangers of spiritual gifts: judging others to be of greater or lesser value is not limited to judging according to worldly wealth possessions riches and fame etc., there is a more subtle danger for Christians and that is of judging people to be of greater or lesser value according to their success, authority and importance within the Christian community. Here the danger is to exalt and esteem those who are blessed with spiritual gifts above those who lack them. This was a great problem the Corinthian brothers and sisters had within their church so much so Paul told them they were not only acting like infants in Christ, but behaving only in a worldly way (1 Cor. 3:1-5).

A second danger of exalting others is that the one being exalted becomes puffed up with pride. When this happens they can be seduced and deceived into feeling that they are not only more valued by God, but also feel superior to those who they are ministering to (especially to those who do the more menial tasks). Exaltation of those gifted can indirectly result in others in the faith that are not gifted in the same manner feeling they are of less worth not only to the assembly, but to God. James is teaching that to judge people this way is grossly sinful and worldly.

God does not judge those in the family of Christ according to their worldly success or lack of it or according to their spiritual gifts and religious positions of authority, but rather according to the integrity of their heart and the kindness and compassion they show toward others. The self-worth of those in Christ should never be based on their positions of authority or standing in the world or the church or based on riches, wealth and material possessions, gifts and talents they may have attained, but based on the following: -

- The truth they are accepted by God because of their faith in Christ.
- They are humble and have a heart of integrity and honesty before God and man.
- Their heart is full of love, compassion mercy and grace and such like things.
- The deep desire of their heart is to honour God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

This does not mean we should never speak words of credit or of encouragement to someone who has worked hard to serve the Lord or to those who have blessed us in some manner, even the Lord himself will honour and reward whoever faithfully serves him, but giving credit and encouraging a person is a totally different thing to exalting and esteeming someone above others.

Walking in the Spirit: in this context is about considering each other equal in Christ in contrast to exalting and esteeming others as being more important simply because they hold great positions of authority (religious or secular), are gifted in oratory and speech making, have exceptional spiritual gifts and talents or because they have an abundance of worldly success, riches and an material possessions.

If you Show Partiality you are Committing Sin.

James 2:8-9 -----⁸If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself you are doing well. ⁹But if you show partiality (have respect to persons in KJV) you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

The words the royal law, mean the most-highest law, the chief law it is the principal law of all laws. Here is the stunning splendor of God's wisdom and the Christian faith all the laws, rules and do's and don'ts throughout the entire Bible can be summed up in the following two laws: -

1. Love God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.
2. Love your neighbour as yourself (Matt. 22:37-40) (Mark 12:28-31).

Love your neighbour as yourself means do not deliberately do harm to other humans. No sane person deliberately does things to inflict pain on themselves, loving others as you love yourself is not about feeling some warm and fuzzy emotion towards others, it is about not hurting others as you would not hurt yourself.

The thing God hates the most is when we do harm to another person, physically, financially, sexually, verbally, mentally, emotionally or spiritually and the thing God loves the most is when we do good to others. It is interesting to notice that the major crime that God points out in Noah's time and one of the main reasons for the flood was because of all the violence in the land.

- Micah wrote: "What the LORD requires of mankind is to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with their God" (Micah 6:5-10).
- Isaiah says: "The LORD loves justice, hates robbery and wrong doing" (Isaiah 61:8).
- Jeremiah said: "Those who know God practise steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth, because it is in these things that God delights" (Jer. 9:24).

The great prophets Micah, Isaiah and Jeremiah clearly show us that the people the LORD loves are not only those who acknowledge God, but who also uphold justice, do not lie, deceive or make promises they do not intend to keep, but speak the truth, do what is right, show respect and give help to others when able and make choices that lead to peace. These are the things the LORD delights in and that bring His favour.

The constant theme throughout Jesus famous Sermon on the Mount is doing what is right before God by seeking the way of peace in all situations. In this sermon Jesus calls Christians to treat people fairly and with respect, dignity, decency grace compassion, kindness, mercy and to be quick to forgive. For further information on Jesus Famous Sermon see: "Matthew 5" in Commentary New Testament (ON WEBSITE MENU).

But, the royal law, "Love your neighbour as yourself," not only means do-good to others and not harm, but also embraces the idea that we treat everyone as equals meaning we show no favouritism (partiality) in regards to judgment to anyone because we have a bias toward them. James in these verses is shining a spotlight on the truth that the instant we show favouritism in regards to judgment is the instant we are transgressing the law and committing sin. This is because God is a God of justice and justice means doing what is right and fair to all people regardless of our personal feeling or differences toward them.

A practical example: a common saying amongst the world is that, "Husbands, wives and friends should show favour toward each other regardless of whether they are right or wrong." Certainly this sounds wonderful, but it is worldly and not what God would say. For those who belong to the global family of Christ honest justice and fairness and doing what is right for all people must override our love and friendship for a person regardless of whether they are in God's Kingdom or our friends honest justice must be supported. Not one of us should favour a person who is in the wrong simply because they belong to the family of Christ or because we have an affectionate friendship with them since to do this is to pervert justice and justice is one of the great pillars of God's throne.

Walking in the Spirit: in this context: embraces two things, firstly it is about fulfilling the royal law and following the command of Jesus to love our neighbour as our self, meaning do what is right and good toward others and not harm and living a life that brings honour to God and a good testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ and the Christian faith. Secondly it is about honest justice and doing what is right and fair for all people in contrast to perverting justice by showing favouritism.

Walking in the Spirit in the Old Testament.

During the Old Testament era walking in the Spirit meant the same as walking in the LORD. The following verses shine a light upon what walking in the LORD in the Old Testament meant to God and to the faithful of Israel: -

- What does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul ¹³and to keep the commandments and statutes of the LORD which I am commanding you today for your good? (Deut. 10:12-13).
- You shall love the LORD your God and keep his charge, his statutes, his rules and his commandments always (Deut. 11:1).
- Be careful to do all this commandment that I command you to do, loving the LORD your God, walking in all his ways and holding fast to him (Deut. 11:22).
- Be careful to obey all these words that I command you, that it may go well with you and with your children after you forever, when you do what is good and right in the sight of the LORD your God (Deut. 12:28).
- You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear him and keep his commandments and obey his voice, and you shall serve him and hold fast to him (Deut. 13:4).
- Obey the voice of the LORD your God, keeping all his commandments that I am commanding you today, and doing what is right in the sight of the LORD your God (Deut. 13:18).
- It (a book of the law) shall be with him (the king) and he (the priest) shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes and doing them. ¹⁹that his (the kings) heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment either to the right hand or to the left, so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel (Deut. 17:19).
- This day the LORD your God commands you to do these statutes and rules. You shall therefore be careful to do them with all your heart and with all your soul. ¹⁷You have declared today that the LORD is your God, and that you will walk in his ways, and keep his statutes and his commandments and his rules and obey his voice (Deut. 26:16-19).

From these Scriptures we learn that walking in the Spirit in the Old Testament was: -

- To fear God, walk in all His ways and always be careful to keep His commandments.
- To love God with all your heart, mind and will and obey and serve Him.
- To establish God's word in the heart and obey His rules and instruction.
- To love and abide in God, doing what is good and right in His sight.
- To listen to His voice and his word and keep His ordinances and statutes.
- To worship and serve Him holding fast to Him in love and keeping His law.
- To never allow pride to exalt itself above others.

Isaiah

Walking in the Spirit according to Isaiah.

Isaiah 61:8 ----- ⁸I the LORD love justice; I hate robbery and wrong; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.

When reading the messages of the prophets it should be kept in mind that they are proclaiming God's message to His people not to those in the secular world, with this in mind we learn from this verse (and many others like them) that it is not enough simply to say, "I believe in God" outward actions and behaviour should be in line with the character of the Lord and the God who we are believing in. Clearly stealing and wrong doing is totally against the character of God while justice is one of the pillars of God's throne. Walking in the Spirit in this context is about doing what is right, fair and just toward others and staying away from all forms of wrong doing.

Jeremiah

Walking in the Spirit according to Jeremiah.

Jeremiah 9:24 ----- ²⁴Let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD."

From these verses we clearly see that the LORD loves those who practice steadfast love, justice and righteousness which mean that walking in the Spirit in this context is about living a life that shows love and fairness to all people and doing what is good and right before God and man.

Micah

Walking in the Spirit according to Micah.

Micah 6:5-8 ----- ⁶With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? ⁷Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" ⁸He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?

The following sins permeated the land of Israel: -

- Worship of idols the sun, moon and the stars (the host of heaven).
- Innocent people were killed and cheated out of justice.
- Leaders oppressed others for their own selfish gain.
- The rich cheated the innocent and showed no sense of responsibility towards the poor, but instead devised new means of depriving them of their property.

From these verses we learn that the LORD has no interest in His people's offerings no matter how great they might be if their heart is corrupt, but what he does require from His people above every offering they can offer is honest justice (doing what is fair and right for all people), kindness and humbleness. Applying this principal to Christianity today it would be right to say that strictly adhering to ceremonial rites, regularly attending church every Sunday, legalistically keeping religious customs and traditions and praising and worshipping God with spiritual songs counts for nothing before God if those doing them do not have a humble heart before Him and are not treating others with kindness, fairness, decency and respect especially their brothers and sisters in Christ.

SUMMARY: Walking and Living in the Spirit.

Walking in the Spirit is the same as living in the Spirit and embraces: -

- Living in faith and God's grace and believing our righteousness is in Christ.

- Living with an absence of self, ego and pride (the lower nature).
- Living to honour God and to bring a good testimony to the name of Jesus and the Christian faith.
- Living a lifestyle in love, joy, patience, goodness, faithfulness and gentleness.
- Living in the way of peace and doing what is good, just and right.
- Living with respect, dignity, compassion, mercy and grace toward others.
- Living in self-control, kindness, decency, fairly and being quick to forgive.
- Living in humbleness, speaking the truth and keeping promises.
- Living to do all we can to protect others from harm and helping when able (especially the less fortunate and the poor).

Though we by faith and God's grace belong to the global family of Christ we are nevertheless still descendants of our earthly father Adam and because of this we all dwell in a fallen and corrupted body infected and polluted with sinful dysfunctions and aberrations that hinder us from attaining to the perfect standard the law demands and the perfect Holiness of God. This means that not one of us is going to be able to attain to all the above every moment of every day, this is why we are saved by grace, but it should be the supreme desire of our heart and we should be endeavouring to doing all we can to attain to them so that we bring honour to God and a good testimony to the name of Jesus and the Christian faith.

End