



# A FRUITFUL JOURNEY:

*Deepening the Fruit of the Spirit in Your Life*



By Advancing Native Missions  
*Devotionals by Women Leaders Around the World*

# INTRODUCTION

In a well-known illustration from John 15, Jesus tells His disciples that He is the Vine and His Father is the Gardener. In this devotional exploring the fruit of the Spirit, we begin by considering that image Jesus gives to His disciples. Keeping it simple, He tells us one thing we already know about essentials for producing fruit:

*No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine.  
— John 15:4*

But why?

Nutrients! The vital fluids containing nutrients that flow from the ground into the roots, and into the xylem and phloem of a plant to its reproductive parts, are a necessity. Just like you and I cannot live without food and water, a plant cannot survive—or produce fruit—without sap flowing. There is no alternative because the actual source of life is coming from the vine.

And in case His followers weren't listening, Jesus immediately repeats Himself, this time explaining the parallel:

*I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will  
bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.  
— John 15:5*

Allow that to sink in. Just like a plant, we must stay connected to Jesus to produce any fruit. It can only be produced by His Spirit—the sap that flows from Jesus to us.

The aim of these devotionals is to help you remain connected and to take a closer look at the kinds of fruit the Spirit of Jesus produces in your life when you stay close to Him.

*Our prayer is that you continue to live your lives in Him,  
rooted and built up in Him. – Colossians 2:6*

May God bless you on this journey with Him.

*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. Since  
we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. – Galatians 5:22–25*



*All scripture quotations from NIV unless otherwise noted.*

# LOVE

*By Amira, Missionary from the Middle East*

*For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

*– John 3:16 (NKJV)*

I didn't experience love from my Muslim family because I accepted Jesus and became a Christian. But I needed love. I suffered and struggled and God said, "come to me, trust me, you will find love. When you take it, then you will be able to give it."

All of us need love, but if we only take it, we will never truly have it. We must receive it from God and then give it to others, especially in the church.

First, let's look at where our love originates. John tells us that Jesus died on the cross for us because of His love for us. His death to redeem us represents the greatest love that anyone could ever have. Jesus gave his life on the cross for us so that we could be reconciled with the Father. We can have the same acceptance and forgiveness the father offered his prodigal son in Luke 15:11–24. The first church and the disciples were filled with that love, as they were filled with the Holy Spirit, and it is evident from the fruit it bore. They had authority and faith that allowed them to perform many miracles. One of the greatest reasons for this was their love for each other.

*You were cleansed from your sins when you obeyed the truth,  
so now you must show sincere love to each other as brothers and sisters.*

*– 1 Peter 1:22 (NLT)*

Here, believers are told directly that since we are now part of a family, we must show genuine love to the other "brothers and sisters" in the family.



*All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had.*  
– Acts 4:32 (NIV)

The disciples were unified in spirit, and because of that unity resulting from their love, they began to take care of each other's needs by sharing their possessions.

*Whoever loves his brother abides in light,  
and in him there is no cause for stumbling. – 1 John 2:10 (ESV)*

In this verse, it is clear that if we love our brothers, there will be such light that no space remains for evil to enter in. We will remain in the light—the same light Jesus talked about to His bride, the Church.

*Arise, shine, for your light has come,  
and the glory of the LORD rises upon you. – Isaiah 60:1*

The Church in the last days must dwell in that light full of glory.

*Who is this that appears like the dawn,  
fair as the moon, bright as the sun,  
majestic as the stars in procession?  
– Song of Solomon 6:10*

We must reclaim the great work and power of the Holy Spirit so that when Jesus comes back, He finds us shining bright, like an army ready for action, as is described in the beautiful book He gave us describing His relationship with His bride, the Church. Love is that glory that sets us apart, demonstrating that we are His bride.

# JOY

*By Kalkidan, Missionary from Ethiopia*

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy . . . – Romans 15:13a*

I am now 28 years old and a widow. When I married my husband, I was filled with excitement and hope, ready to start a new life and build a family together. We were joyful and eager to serve the Lord.

But just eight months into our marriage, tragedy struck. My husband was taken from me by those who opposed our faith. Right before my eyes, they shot and killed him. I pleaded with them not to, but they did. My heart shattered.

In those dark days, I cried out to God – why would He allow such pain? My husband's dream of serving the Lord, having children, and leaving a legacy was cut short.

As a persecuted believer in Ethiopia, I had always faced challenges because of my faith, but this was different. It felt unbearable. I cried every day. I couldn't even stay in the same place where my husband and I had lived. Every corner reminded me of him. The pain was overwhelming.

Through my tears, God reminded me that true joy does not depend on circumstances but on our connection with Him.

*Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. James 1:2-3*

True joy comes from the Holy Spirit.

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, and faithfulness. Galatians 5:22*

Even in sorrow, joy remains because it is rooted in God's unchanging love.

Even in my deepest grief, I found a joy that could not be stolen – an inner peace that only God can give. Though I may not understand everything, I trust His ways.

At the same time, God used His people to encourage me. I received calls from strangers – people I had never met – sharing words of comfort and prayers. That was not just people; it was God working through them. He reminded me that I was not alone.

I encourage you to let the joy of the Lord fill your heart. Even when the world seems to be falling apart, His joy sustains us.

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13*

God's love is our refuge, our strength, and our everlasting joy. No matter what we face, we can rest in His promises and trust that He is always with us, guiding us through every trial.





# PEACE

*By Grace, Missionary from Southeast Asia*

*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for  
You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.  
– Psalm 23:4 (NKJV)*

Psalm 23 is much loved and for good reason. It has brought comfort, courage, and peace to many grieving and hurting hearts during their darkest times. David declares in the opening verse of this psalm that the Lord is his shepherd – a proclamation of confidence and certainty that resonates loudly in the innermost being of those who know they belong to the Shepherd that David writes about.

The reality of this psalm hit home vividly and unexpectedly when, out of the blue, an uninvited and unwelcome “visitor” intruded into my busy life some years ago. It was cancer, and its presence threatened to throw everything into disarray.

After the initial shock, the next few weeks were spent on more medical examinations, scans, and eventually, the inevitable — the date of my operation to remove the dreaded cancer. As I was wheeled into the cold, brightly lit operating room on the appointed day, the Lord, my Shepherd, whispered to my heart this reassuring reminder:

*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil;  
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. – Psalm 23:4*

I pondered the Lord’s words during my recuperation in the days after the surgery. And I realized that on this side of heaven, He is the only One who stays by our side at all times – through thick and thin. He gives us His peace when the storms of life threaten to overwhelm us.

He goes ahead of us, and we will never go anywhere that He has not gone before us. He tenderly leads, provides, and watches over us. He is our Good Shepherd – His presence, provision, and protection never leave us as we journey through life with Him. His promises are true, and He is always faithful to the end.

We can rest in the assurance that His rod and staff will protect and guide us when we find ourselves going through the darkest valley. He will provide everything we need, even when we are led into the presence of our enemies. His goodness and unfailing love will run after us every step we take and right into eternity when we will see Him face-to-face.

My recovery was quick – I could trace my Good Shepherd’s hand in orchestrating every detail of my post-surgery treatment and follow-up. Before long, I was back on my feet again, but with a renewed sense of gratitude and determination to make the rest of my time on earth count for Him. Yes, I had walked through the “valley of the shadow of death,” but I knew deep in my heart I never walked alone then, and I never will.

Whatever the days may bring, we can trust the Lord Jesus, our Shepherd, with our toughest challenges, deepest fears, and most painful insecurities. He knows us completely, with all our flaws and faults, but still loves us perfectly. Our Good Shepherd’s loving care for us allows us to enjoy the peace He produces in us.



# PATIENCE

*By Damara, Missionary from Mexico*

*Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. – 1 Peter 5:7*

**J**remember a time in my life when I felt overwhelmed waiting for some dreams I had been pursuing for a long time to come true. Every day that passed without seeing results, I felt more impatient. It was at that moment that I began to seek patience as a fruit of the Spirit, and I discovered that it was exactly what I needed to find peace and tranquility in the midst of uncertainty.

So I took my notebook and began to write down those things I was longing for and dreaming of. When I finished, I made a prayer to the Lord, setting everything in His hands.

At that moment I discovered that waiting and trusting God is more than words, it is *living it*.

As women, we can often feel impatient in a world where immediacy and speed are the norm and patience has become an increasingly scarce virtue. However, as women of faith, we know that patience is a fruit of the Spirit that can transform our lives in profound ways.

But what is patience?

Patience is not simply waiting and doing nothing. It is an attitude that allows us to trust God and His plan for our lives, even when things do not go as we expect. It is the ability to remain calm in the midst of the storm, to not let ourselves be carried away by anxiety or frustration.

*Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.*

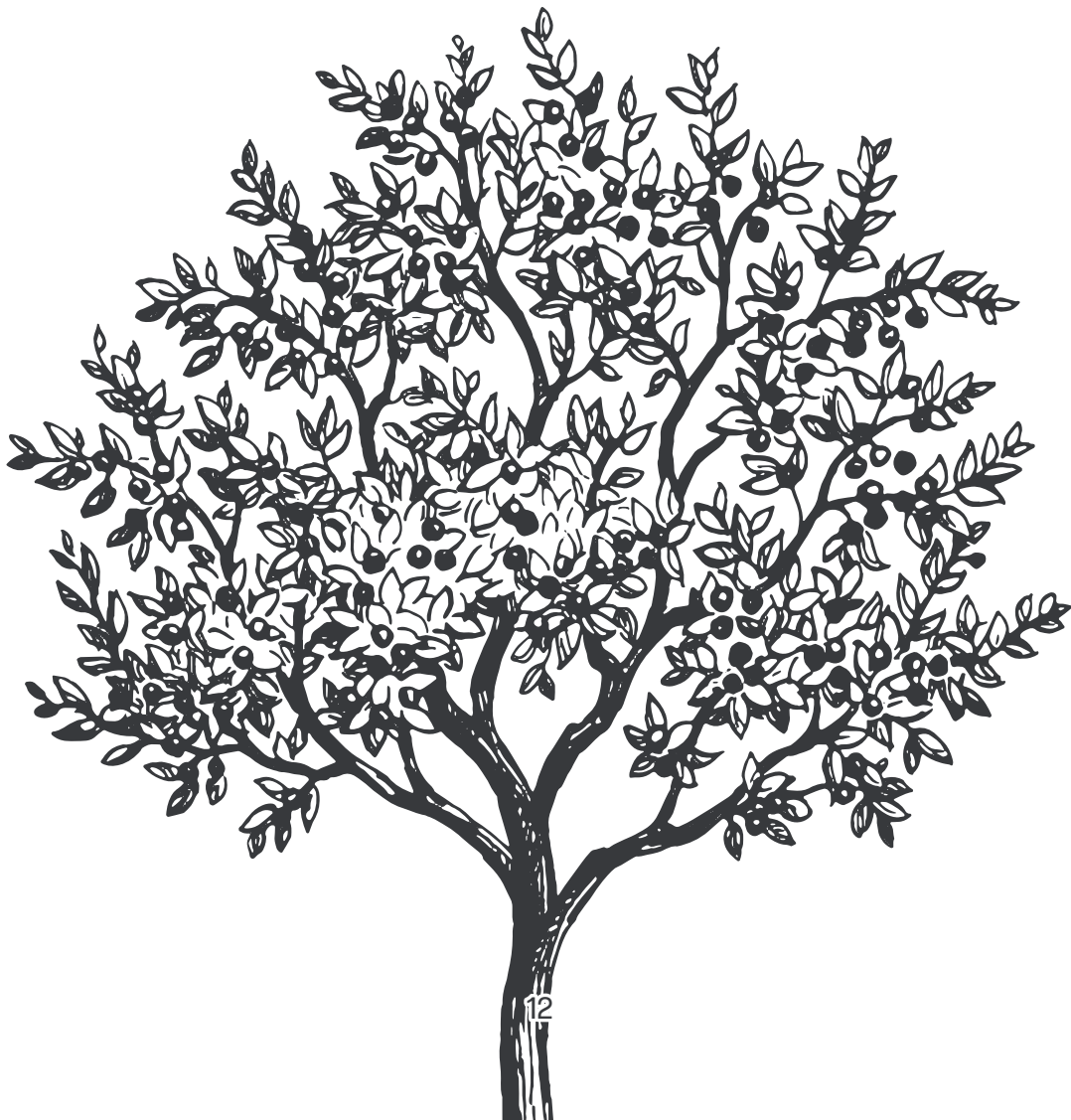
*– Psalm 27:14*

Patience allows us to see things from a broader perspective: When we are patient, we can see and understand that everything has a purpose. Living with patience also allows us to enjoy the process and not just focus on the outcome. And it helps us grow in faith, trusting God more for the outcome.

Cultivating patience requires prayer time with God, meditating on the Word, and practice. By praying, we can ask God to help us be more patient and trust in His plan. Bible meditation helps us to calm down and focus on what is important. And ultimately, patience is a muscle that needs to be exercised. We can practice it in our daily lives as we calmly wait in line, listen to others, sit in traffic, and more.

*Be completely humble and gentle;  
be patient, bearing with one another in love. – Ephesians 4:2*

This fruit of the Spirit can transform our lives in profound ways. So, sisters, I encourage you to cultivate patience in your lives and



# KINDNESS

*By Sandy, Missionary from Israel*

*Blessed is he who considers [regards] the poor. – Psalm 41:1*

Through my ministry, Be'ad Chaim (Israel Pro Life), I heard the story of Rachel. When Rachel discovered that she was pregnant at 20 years old, she was very confused. She had been heavily using drugs and led a very promiscuous lifestyle, so she had no idea who the baby's father was.

She'd left her ultra-orthodox family at a young age and grown up in boarding schools. Most of the time, she felt that no one cared about her.

Rachel thought it would be best to abort her baby because the drugs could harm them and she was alone. Our counselor, Miriam, cared about her and showed her kindness – first listening, then encouraging and giving Rachel hope and courage.

Miriam showed her the kindness and compassion that she needed to choose life. Rachel stopped smoking, drinking, and using drugs. Miraculously, her mother received her back at home with love. Rachel took control of her life, and turned over a new leaf because she realized that she now had a little life growing inside her.

Now, Rachel's son is four months old. We provided her with baby furniture and gift vouchers through the generosity of kind donors. Rachel commented that she "didn't know people could be so kind and generous to strangers." Miriam's compassion melted Rachel's scarred, hard heart and produced a soft heart that chose life for her son, a son who changed her life.

I belong to Christ, so I am destined to become more and more like Him, and the fruit of goodness is one way we can see it. As an heir, I abide in the Lord (John 15:7) and His words remain in me. The outcome of goodness and abiding is exactly as Jesus says: ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you (John 15:7).

The Father's desire is for us to bear much fruit. John 15:8 says the Father is honored by it and that bearing fruit proves we are His followers. Our God is a good God. He wants us to share His goodness with others so that they may know Him. Goodness makes it obvious that we are alive in Christ and fruitful children of His, like the passage below:

*Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked  
or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers,  
but whose delight is in the law of the LORD,  
and who meditates on his law day and night.  
That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,  
which yields its fruit in season  
and whose leaf does not wither —  
whatever they do prospers. – Psalm 1:1–3*





# FAITHFULNESS

*By Sergeja, Missionary from Slovenia*

*Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you the desires  
of your heart. – Psalm 37:4*

I always find it fascinating when I watch the YouTube video of Ethiopian-born Dutch runner Sifan Hassan winning the Olympics in Tokyo 2020. She was running a 1500-meter race, when she fell down. She got back up, started running again, and still won the race. This tells me she had been faithfully training. After Sifan had fallen and gotten back up again, she was the last runner among the ladies, so she had to catch up and surpass each and every competitor. She accomplished this and came to the finish line in first place. As a runner, I find this story very inspiring.

There will always be obstacles in life. It may be a financial problem, an illness, a divorce, or something else. There is a story in the Bible in John 5:1–18 about a man who was paralyzed for 38 years. Thirty-eight years is a long time, but he still faithfully waited every day at the pool of Bethesda for healing. His disease stopped him from having a normal life – things like a job, family, community, friends, and fun. He had probably gotten used to this condition and was now focused on surviving.

The pool of Bethesda was surrounded by people needing a miracle. Some of them had come there for weeks, months, and maybe even years like this man.

Then Jesus appears by the pool. But, knowing Jesus, He didn't just appear. He stopped by this man on purpose.

Jesus asked the man one question: Would he like to be healed?

But the man didn't answer Jesus' question. Instead he explained why he hadn't been healed yet: someone else always reaches the water before him when the waters are stirred.

Jesus tells the man to get up, take up his bed, and walk. The man does exactly what he's told and he is instantly healed. The miracle happens in a moment.

In John 15:7 Jesus says to His disciples, *If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.* Even though faithfulness is a fruit of the Spirit's work in us, faithfulness itself yields a harvest as well. This verse tells us that our heavenly Father cares about our wishes, so we can ask and it will be done.

It was obvious that this man wanted to be healed. His faithfulness to come to the Pool of Bethesda demonstrated it. He held onto the hope that one day he would be, even if he was thinking it would happen in a different way than God sending His Son Jesus to him to speak a word.

What is the result if we do not faithfully abide in the Lord?

People find themselves in a situation they think there is no way out of. They can't see the light at the end of the tunnel. Maybe it's gone on for a lot longer than they imagined. They quickly accept the situation and then change isn't welcome because changing their normal is hard. What will they do with a life that is the opposite from what they are used to?

No matter how easy it might be to become complacent while waiting by your "Pool of Bethesda," if you are faithful to abide in Christ, there is no turning back once the change has taken place. Life will take on a different dynamic. When a person meets Jesus, this shift always occurs. It is a good shift to a life full of surprises.

# GENTLENESS

*By Bong, Missionary from the Philippines*

*You have also given me the shield of Your salvation; Your right hand has held me up, Your gentleness has made me great.*

*- Psalm 18:35 (NKJV)*

Jesus tells us if a person abides in Him, he or she will bear much fruit, and that fruit will last (John 15). Gentleness is one of the fruits produced by the Holy Spirit as He indwells and works in an obedient Christian. Biblestudytools.com defines gentleness as “sensitivity of disposition and kindness of behavior, founded on strength and prompted by love.”

That definition became real and filled with purpose for us when the pandemic hit the Philippines and our city was locked down. Villages put up barricades that kept residents from leaving and outsiders from entering to prevent the spread of the COVID virus. Strangers were not allowed to visit and only one designated member of each family could leave their home to buy the family’s food rations.

It was a scary time with unknowns, tragic losses, and separation from loved ones. Fear became crippling and it was hard on everyone. The streets were deserted and scary, and the rice bins were empty.

It was terribly difficult for parents and their young children. Money was scarce since most businesses were forced to remain closed. Parents could afford only basic items when they went for scheduled food purchases. This meant there were no treats for kids living in the most poverty-stricken areas and looking for hope.

We wanted to find a way to help the children, especially as we could see how terrified they were. Praying together with staff, we asked the Lord to show us what to do. I wanted to reassure everyone that God loved and would take care of them, claiming the promise of Isaiah 41:10:

*So do not fear, for I am with you;  
do not be dismayed, for I am your God.  
I will strengthen you and help you;  
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. (NIV)*

Finally, the Lord faithfully showed us what to do. We began to put together treat bags containing snacks, a piece of fresh fruit, and a Christian tract. We were able to hand out the bags to parents of young children when they purchased food. They were so grateful for the hope the treats brought to their children!

Shortly after this, the Lord led us to make arroz caldo (chicken and rice) in plastic bags to give away. When our missionaries distributed this food, they prioritized the kids, who waited expectantly for the treats, but they were able to provide bags to the elderly as well.

The message shared with the gift bags was always spoken gently: “God loves you very much and has not forgotten about you. In fact, He is waiting to hear from you. Jesus gave His life for you and you need to trust in Him as your Savior.” Parents often gathered their whole family to listen to those encouraging words, and some wanted to hear more. In a time of such fear, it was wonderful to serve people who desperately needed to hear that Jesus loves them and has not forsaken them.

The words “Jesus Loves You!” written on each bag of treats and arroz caldo displayed that ‘kindness of behavior prompted by love’ speaks volumes to the people we encounter—and produces even more fruit. No other message can be gentler than that.



# SELF-CONTROL

*By Marina, Missionary from Central Asia*

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.*

*– Galatians 5:22*

What is the first thing that comes to mind when we hear the last Fruit of the Spirit, self-control? What do you associate with it? A common thought, especially for parents, is a teenager or a young person who needs to restrain their thoughts and actions of a sexual nature.

But what about me personally? I am 47 years old and a married woman – even if I do not have problems and questions with sex like many married women my age, what about other areas of my life? Anger and malice, foul language and gossip, quarrels and arrogance are all parts of my fleshly desires that often win.

*Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. –*

*Galatians 5:19-21*

Satisfying fleshly desires is the goal and meaning of life for many people, which is why the Bible calls humans “slaves to lust” in many places. Only being born again gives us the ability to control ourselves and our desires. Even then, we do not do all this ourselves, but with the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

So, what is self-control? Self-control is the correct attitude of our spirits, which God changed so we can let go of our fleshly desires.

It is restraining ourselves from fulfilling those desires that are not consistent with God's will and does not benefit the soul, enrich us spiritually, or accumulate treasures in Heaven.

The Lord is our reason, source, purpose, and meaning of self-control. If we leave even a little bit of fleshly desires in our hearts, such as irritation towards someone or something, it can grow and grow until we are living in hatred. That is why we need self-control. Self-control is when we say to ourselves, with the help of the Holy Spirit, I refuse to have this negative feeling or do this bad action, even though I want to.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9:27, *"But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified."*

There are many good, legitimate desires in our lives that are necessary and given by God Himself, such as the needs for food and intimacy. But as soon as these desires enter the zone where they become sinful, such as desiring food turning to gluttony, then self-control must work.

Self-control is not legalism, it is a Fruit of the Spirit. To learn self-control we can look through the New Testament at the value of discipline (1 Corinthians 9:24-27), controlling our thoughts (2 Corinthians 10:4-5), training ourselves to recognize goodness (Hebrews 5:13-14), controlling our words (James 1:19), and renewing our minds (Colossians 3:2-10).





# IN CLOSING

There's one more factor to developing a big picture of the themes in the passage in Galatians we've been looking at. Let's review the basics of what we've learned.

- We need to be connected to the Spirit of Jesus to grow fruit.
- We know more about what the fruit of the Spirit looks like so now we can recognize and encourage its growth.

Finally, we want to consider the context of the Apostle Paul's words to this church that was being led astray by other teachers. These 'Judaizers' were saying believers had to follow Jewish Law. His fatherly letter, while corrective in nature, was born of his concern about them turning to the works of the flesh – which he also calls the works of the law – for their justification.

In the middle of chapter five, we arrive at the verses we have been meditating on for this devotional, where Paul contrasts the works of the flesh with the works of the Spirit. He reminds them that since our righteousness is from God (by faith), then our fruit also comes from Him.

His admonition to them – and to us – is that if we rely on ourselves, we will produce works that are in sync with our flesh. The flesh cannot produce righteousness.

When we are in relationship with the Spirit of Jesus, He produces something entirely different:

*Love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. - Galatians 5:22-23*

Let's move forward eagerly anticipating the harvest the Lord has prepared for Himself and His children.

*And remember, since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. - Galatians 5:25*

May God bless you on your next journey with Him.

