

Be Patient— I'm Not Perfect Yet

The Fruit of the Spirit

J U A N I T A P U R C E L L

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PREFACE

Do you ever feel as if you are taking two steps forward and three steps backward in your walk with Christ? You just get one sin conquered, and now you have to battle another one? Don't get discouraged! I feel the same way! Struggling with the flesh is a daily battle. But, praise God, we're still struggling! We may be hobblin' and wobblin', but at least we're still walking.

Yes, be thankful you are still fighting the enemy of your soul, Satan. He has one goal for your life: defeat. He will keep whispering in your ear, "Give up; it isn't worth the struggle"; or, "If God really loved you, He wouldn't make life so tough for you." Many Christian women have listened to Satan and have fallen by the wayside. The enemy now controls their lives, and they are fulfilling the lusts of the flesh listed in Galatians 5:19–21. Their lives are filled with anger, hatred, bitterness, greed, jealousy, adultery—and the list goes on. What a terrible exchange these people have made! If they had just kept climbing, they could have learned to walk in the Spirit. Flowing out of the Spirit-filled life is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and self-control.

As I was writing these lessons, I ran across an old booklet in my husband's library. The following thoughts from that book have kept me going when I am tired and question, "Is it really worth the struggle?"

"How far up toward the height of His perfect surrender will you climb? He will meet you where you meet Him. The only limit to His fullness is that which you impose in the limitation of your surrender. The more absolutely, sweepingly, irrevocably you yield yourself, time, talents, possessions, plans, hopes, aspirations, purposes, yea all to Jesus Christ, vouching yourself His loving bond-slave to do and suffer His will, the more you shall know the blessed fullness of His Spirit. You may have all the fullness you will make room for. In a profound sense it rests with you. What a tremendous thought! To go through all the long years of life with the privilege, peace, and power of the blessed life within your grasp at any hour and yet to have missed it!"¹

If you are not perfect yet—but desire to become more like the Perfect One, Jesus Christ—this book can be a great help to you. My prayer is that it will be used of God to transform your life so you will daily see the fruit of the Spirit blossoming in your life.

Note:

1. James H. McConkey, *The Threefold Secret of the Holy Spirit* (Lincoln, NE: Back to the Bible Publishers, 1897), pp. 43, 44.

PART 1

TILLING THE SOIL WHERE THE FRUIT WILL GROW

Nine lessons in this Bible study deal with the fruit of the Spirit as listed in Galatians 5:22 and 23. However, before we look at each of these qualities individually, we need to prepare the soil in which the fruit will grow. Before a farmer can grow a good crop, he must prepare the soil by tilling, or breaking, the hard lumps. The soil we are talking about is our heart. The fruit of the Spirit grows best and flourishes more easily in a prepared heart. Lessons 1 through 3 of this study will help us till the soil of our heart.

PART 1
TILLING THE SOIL WHERE THE FRUIT WILL GROW

LESSON 1

Why Do I Keep Sinning?

*“Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord”
(Romans 6:11).*

Which would you rather have in your life: ugly sins or beautiful spiritual fruit? The choice is yours! We will learn in this lesson that we are dead to sin. That means we no longer have to sin. We sin now because we *choose* to sin. Remember, THE CHOICE IS YOURS! Which will it be: ugly sins or spiritual fruit?

The *New York Times* once reported that a man had returned to his home in Wales after having lived in New York City for thirty-four years. He had come to the United States to find employment, and eventually he quit writing his family in Wales. After seven years a Welsh court declared him dead, so his wife legally remarried. When the man returned to Wales, he found that he had thirteen grandchildren and eleven great-grandchildren. Thus a man returned home—legally dead, but very much alive!

There is quite a difference between being dead and being legally dead. Triumphant Christian living begins with an understanding of the fact that every Christian is, in the sight of God, legally dead!

1. The Bible gives a vivid picture of us before we were born again and alive unto God. What is that picture according to Ephesians 2:1?
2. What does “dead in trespasses and sins” mean?

3. What contrast is pictured in Ephesians 2:1 and Romans 6:2?

Ephesians 2:1—Before salvation:

Romans 6:2— After salvation:

“Just as you believed at first that He delivered you from the guilt of sin because He said it, so now believe that He delivers you from the power of sin because He says it. . . . Just as much as He came to deliver you from future punishment did He also come to deliver you from present bondage.”¹

To understand the picture of death to sin, we must see it from two sides: the positional side and the practical side.

POSITIONAL SIDE

Legally: We are dead in God's sight.

Galatians 2:20—We are crucified with Christ.

Romans 6:3, 4—We are baptized, or placed, into His death.

Romans 6:6—Our old man (old nature) is crucified with Him.

Positionally: We are freed from sin's power.

PRACTICAL SIDE

Experientially: We are alive in men's sight.

1 John 1:8—If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves.

Romans 7:15–25—Paul constantly battled the flesh, the sin principle.

Galatians 5:17—We, like Paul, battle daily with the flesh.

Practically: We still struggle with sin.

Satan was once the authority who ruled our lives; He was our master. We sinned because we were spiritually dead and lacked the power not to sin. But that is no longer true. When we are born again (John 3:3–7), we become new creations in Christ (1 Corinthians 5:17). We are to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4). We are legally dead to sin.

4. Death is separation. Since we are legally dead in Christ, from what are we separated? Read Romans 6:7.

5. Since a believer is freed from the power of sin, why does she still have such a struggle with sin? Read Colossians 3:9 and 10 and Ephesians 4:22–24.

“Christian, what hast thou to do with sin? Hath it not cost thee enough already? Burnt child, wilt thou play with fire? . . . Hast thou not had enough of the old serpent? . . . Did sin ever yield thee real pleasure? Didst thou find solid satisfaction in it? If so, go back to thine old drudgery, and wear the chain again, if it delight thee.”²

How can we gain control over the flesh, which no longer has any right to rule us but continues to try? Paul explains how we can gain control in Romans 6:1–13. As we study these verses, we sense he is challenging us in our intellect, emotions, and will.

Intellect: “Know ye” (verse 3)

6. After reading Romans 6:1–13, describe how verse 3 involves our intellect.

“I am in Christ and identified with Him. Therefore, whatever happened to Christ has happened to me. When He died, I died. When He arose, I arose in Him. I am now seated with Him in the heavenlies! (see Eph. 2:1-10; Col. 3:1-3) Because of this living union with Christ, the believer has a totally new relationship to sin.”³

Emotions: “Reckon ye” (verse 11)

7. The Greek word for “reckon” (*igizomai*) means “to count” or “to take into account.” How are our emotions involved when we take into account that the Bible says we are dead to sin, or freed from sin’s power?

Will: “Yield yourselves” (verse 13)

8. How is the will involved in yielding one's self to God?

9. If we don't have to sin anymore, why do we? Read James 1:13–15.

10. When we were crucified with Christ, we became legally dead to sin. What other dramatic change took place in our lives? Read Galatians 2:20.

11. The following passages reveal that Christ lives in us: 1 Corinthians 6:19; Romans 8:9, 10. How does Christ live in us?

12. Romans 8:2 calls the Holy Spirit “the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.” What exciting and significant truth does this verse teach?

13. Have you ever thought about the fact that the struggle with sin is often more difficult after salvation than before? Why is this so? Read Romans 7:15–25.

“The believer has an old nature that wants to keep him in bondage; ‘I will get free from these old sins!’ the Christian says to himself. ‘I determine here and now that I will not do this any longer.’ What happens? He exerts all his willpower and energy, and for a time succeeds; but then when he least expects it, he falls again. Why? . . . If we depend on the energy of the flesh, we cannot serve God, please God, or do any good thing. But if we yield to the Holy Spirit, then we have the power needed to obey His will. The flesh will never serve the Law of God because the flesh is at war with God. But the Spirit can only obey the Law of God!”⁴

This list gives the deeds of the flesh as recorded in Galatians 5:19–21. These are sins a Christian can commit when she chooses to yield to the enticements of the flesh.

Adultery: Illicit sex between married people

Fornication: Illicit sex between unmarried people

Uncleanness: Filthiness of heart and mind

Lasciviousness: Indecent, unrestrained, and shameless conduct

Idolatry: Anything that comes ahead of God in one’s life

Sorcery (witchcraft): Involvement in occult practices

Hatred: Holding bitterness and anger toward others

Strife (variance): Causing division and discord

Jealousy (emulations): Rivalries; trying to make someone look bad in the eyes of another

Wrath: Uncontrolled anger

Factions (strife): Debating contentiously with enmity; divisions

Seditions: Causing dissension by false teaching

Heresies: Self-willed opinions contrary to Scripture

Envyings: Wrongful desires to possess what belongs to another

Murders: Destroying another person; taking another person’s life by deed or thought

Drunkenness: Being under the control of intoxicating drink or drugs

Revelings: Uncontrolled rioting and pleasure-making; drunken carousings

And the like: The list continues indefinitely

14. The deeds of the flesh could be put into four categories. How would you label each of these groups?
- (a) Immorality, impurity, sensuality: _____
 - (b) Idolatry, sorcery: _____
 - (c) Strife, jealousy, wrath, envyings: _____
 - (d) Drunkenness, revelings: _____
15. How can we yield to the Holy Spirit's control rather than to the control of the flesh? Read Galatians 5:24.
16. How can we crucify the flesh? Read Romans 6:17 and 18.
17. Read Romans 12:1. What does it mean to "present your bodies a living sacrifice"?
18. Have you ever presented yourself to God and given up your rights, plans, and desires by exchanging your will for His will? If your answer is yes, describe the experience.

If your answer is no, are you willing to do that right now and pray the following prayer?

"Here, Lord, I abandon myself to thee. I have tried in every way I could think of to manage myself, and to make myself what I know I ought to be, but have always failed. Now I give it up to thee. Do thou take entire possession of me. Work in me all the good pleasure of thy will. Mold and fashion me into such a vessel as seemeth good to thee. I

leave myself in thy hands, and I believe thou wilt, according to thy promise, make me into a vessel unto thy own honor, 'sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.' ”⁵

19. How can we know whether the flesh or the Holy Spirit controls our life? Read Galatians 5:16, 22, and 23.

We must be emptied of self before we can be filled with the Spirit! This is a daily process of emptying and filling—sanctification—if we desire to live the Christlike life.



From My Heart

I once read that most Christians have just enough religion to bug them instead of bless them. How true! For many people, the Christian life is a vicious cycle of sinning and confessing their sin, sinning and confessing again. Why is this? Could it be that these people have not heard and understood what Christ has done for them? Christ died not only to set us free from the penalty of sin in the future (Hell), but also to set us free from the power of sin now (Satan's bondage).

I no longer *have* to sin; I sin now because I *choose* to do so. I don't have to yield to God either; that is another choice I must make.

Why have I chosen to yield myself to God? I have learned by experience that the benefits far outweigh choosing to sin.

When I yield myself to God, I have a Captain to fight my battles for me. I have a Burden-bearer to lighten my load through life. I have a Fortress to hide me from the enemy. I have a Shield to protect me, a Guide to lead me, a Comforter to console me, and a Shepherd to care for me.

What about you? Are you making good choices?

From Your Heart

Are you living with a sin that dominates your life? Has Satan deceived you into thinking you can never be free from it? What is that sin? What steps are you going to take to enjoy the freedom that is available to you?

Notes:

1. Hannah Whitall Smith, *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life* (Westwood, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1952), p. 53.
2. Charles H. Spurgeon, *Morning and Evening* (Lynchburg, VA: The Old-Time Gospel Hour, n.d.), p. 303.
3. Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1989), p. 531.
4. Wiersbe, pp. 537, 538.
5. Smith, p. 39.