

The Easy Way to Live the Christian Life

By Willis S. Langford

Text: Galatians 5:16

There is an easier way. Yes, there is an easier way to live the Christian life! Our text assures us: “Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.”

The church of Christ, unlike some denominations, affirms the biblical truth that the Old Law, with its Ten Commandments, is not binding on us today. Paul assures us: “...if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.”—Galatians 5:18; yet, it seems we are trying to save ourselves by keeping the Ten Commandments. Ours has become a “Thou shalt not” kind of life where we wrestle constantly with “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life.” – 1 John 2:16.

Paul chided, “O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?” (Living witnesses had testified to them – we have their written testimony – 1 Corinthians 15:4-8.) He continues: “This only I want to learn of you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith (i.e., by what you heard and accepted pertaining to the faith)? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?”—Galatians 3:1-3.

Verse 10-14 reads: “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse (which includes disease); for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.’ But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for ‘the just shall live by faith.’ Yet the law is not of faith, but ‘the man who does them shall live by them.’ Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’). This sacrifice was made that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, so we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

He then asks, “Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ (i.e., His, not ours, KJV) might be given to them that believe.”—Galatians 3:21-22.

The writer of Hebrews assures us that Christians have a better covenant, founded upon better promises than the Jew had under the Law of Moses (Hebrews 8:6). The Law, viewed from its ceremonial and/or its moral aspects, could not save the Jew. Neither can our keeping of the Ten Commandments save us. As to our freedoms in Christ: see Acts Chapter 15, I Corinthians 10:15, 23, 31, I Timothy 4:5-11, and Romans Chapter 14.

We cannot save ourselves by concentrating on removing these negative traits or characteristics from our personalities either (refer to the board). In fact, when we concentrate on these in a strong effort to avoid these sins, **we simply give more strength to our habits and lusts**. Even if successful in overcoming these sins, we would then be in a position that Jesus warned of, “When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ And when he comes, he finds it swept and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first.” – Luke 11:24-26.

We must do more than cast out the devil. Though the apostles exhort us to put to death these vile sins, we must do more than concentrate on the removal of these negative habits and character traits. Our error has been in our concentration on the elimination of the negative. Even if we were successful in ceasing from all these sins, we would have an empty house. We must accentuate the positive. We must ask the Holy Spirit to come into our heart and mind (Luke 11:13) and, with His guidance, we must concentrate on the cultivation of the positive Christian virtues or graces: the Fruit of the Spirit. We must fill our house with God and Christ, and with the Fruit of the Spirit (Refer to the board). The demons then will leave, never to return. These sinful lusts and habits will dry up and go away.

James counsels us: “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, ‘Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works’. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.” --James 2:14-26. Jesus does not bind upon us rigid keeping of the Ten Commandments, but the production of fruit. The lukewarm and lazy will produce no fruit and be condemned! Our commitment must be to cultivate the Fruit of the Spirit. We must bring forth works “meet for repentance? –Matthew 3:8, Acts 26:20.

Yes, the easy way, the only way, to live the Christian life is to accentuate the positive! Let’s quit trying to whip the devil single-handedly and enlist Jesus and the word of God so the battle will be easy. We must, “Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of

the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness (faith and love – 1 Thessalonians 5:8); and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of (the hope of - 1 Thessalonians 5:8) salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints” – Ephesians 6:11-18.

Being involved in prayer for and in helping others keeps us from sin, loneliness, and depression. (Step 12 of AA says that one will be enabled to stay sober to the degree that he helps others stay sober.) “Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” – James 4:7.

How shall we go about it? The easy way, the only way, is to study and pray. Set aside at least 30 minutes a day for study, meditation, and prayer. When we do this we enlist the aid of God and Christ. We must be diligent in our efforts: “Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as his divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. **For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful** in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and (your) election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” – 2 Peter 1:2-11.

Truly, let us diligently add these Fruit of the Spirit (refer to board): “For if these are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful....for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” – 2 Peter 1:8-11.

Yes, we must put away these evil things (refer to board), “...since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man, who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him (i.e., Jesus) who created him:....” – Colossians 3:9-10. Let us understand: the only really successful way to put off these old ways is to cultivate the Christian graces, which change our heart and mind and character. It is not in putting off our sins, but in putting on the fruit of the Spirit, that we save ourselves.

This may sound odd to you who have been taught that once you accept Jesus nothing you do, or fail to do, can cause you to be lost. Look at the judgment scene in Matthew 25:31-46 to see what caused those on the left to be lost: You never fed me, or gave me to drink, or took me in, or clothed me, or visited me when I was in need. That’s why they went to Hell. These were Christians! How do I know that? Because only

Christians are commanded to feed and clothe “the least of these, My brethren” – Matthew 25:40, 45. Note Romans 12:9-21: “Let love be without dissimulation (w/o deception or hypocrisy; that is, we’re to love sincerely). Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord (i.e., not lazy or neglectful, but hot on the job for we are serving the Lord); Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant (i.e., diligently) in prayer; Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.” Once in Christ, it is our pleasing God that keeps us in his grace. Of course, a large part of pleasing him has to be the confession of our sins and repentance concerning them.

Peter admonishes, “...abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul;...” – 1 Peter 2:11. Paul explains how: “...Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” – Galatians 5:16; Romans 8:13.

It is one thing to refrain from murder, lying, cheating, or adultery because we are so commanded. This is doubly difficult. It is quite easy to refrain from these sins when, through the Spirit, we have developed our character so there is no desire or occasion for these things. When we have learned to love God and man, we will break none of the Ten Commandments, or any other. **Those who sin are not perfected in love.** Truly, a Christian need obey but two commandments: love God, and love man. **The problem is not that we lust and sin. The problem is that we do not love.** Our lust and sin proves that we do not love. If we love God, would we break these first four commandments? If we love man, would we lie, murder, steal his property or his wife? All sin is a lack of love, pure selfishness. We must study to love!

We have a problem when it comes to love. We don’t know what it is, and we don’t know the difference between love and approval. Parents have caused the child to perceive, “I must win my parents approval or they won’t love me.” Love and approval are two different things. We are to love the sinner, even our enemy, but hate the sin (Matthew 5:43-45). We are to rebuke his sin, but we must show our love by encouraging and helping him, by doing good for him. Because of our early conditioning this is difficult. We think, “to love him is to approve his evil.” We think, “I hate all that he stands for; therefore, I hate him.” No, we must rebuke him for his sin; but we must love him for he is made in the image of God. He is one with us in the human condition.

To show love to the needy ones, to speak the name of Jesus to the lost ones requires that we get outside our comfort zone. It requires that we cultivate a present mindedness to recognize the opportunity to speak His name, or to even create that opportunity. Jesus tells us how important this is. In Matthew 25:31-45 He clearly tells us that we are to minister to the hungry, thirsty, homeless, naked, sick, and the imprisoned; this may well include the lonely, who are imprisoned in rest homes and residences. Let us not visit only our brothers and sisters so confined, but their contacts also. It is not enough to take them a bowl of soup or other help; but we must speak the word of Jesus to them. The little tract *Some Things You Should Know* is the perfect tool. Always have

several in pocket or purse. Jesus clearly warns us that if we do not do this, we may very well end up in that Other Place; however, that isn't the reason a Christian does it. We must do it because we love every lost soul, just as Jesus loved our lost soul and gave himself for us.

The lukewarm and lazy will produce little or no fruit and be condemned! Our commitment must be to cultivate the Fruit of the Spirit. We must bring forth fruit meet (fit) for repentance. We know this is true, yet we do not. This is sad for: "... to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin. -- James 4:17.

O' when we do a good work, who gets the glory? What did Mom teach us? Say "You're welcome". Who got the glory? When we do good, we must resist our early training and give the glory to God by speaking his name. "Please give your thanks to Jesus, It is Him that I serve."

Study of God's word, with resultant growth, is one of the first works a newborn Christian must do. Note these confirming verses: "...continue in...the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration Of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work."-- 2 Timothy 3:14-17. "And he gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers; for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, Till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting."-- Ephesians 4:11-14. 2 Peter 3:17-18 warns, "...beware lest you also fall from your steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; But grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

How do we grow then? How do we become able to teach, to do good works, to avoid being misguided? There is just one way: study combined with experience. James 1:3-4 reads, "...the testing of your faith produces patience (perseverance, endurance). But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing." Romans 5:3 reads, "...we also glory (rejoice) in tribulations (trials), knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance character (experience); and character hope." 2 Peter 1:5-10 reads, "...giving all diligence (earnestly), add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, To godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and (your) election sure: for if you do these things, you will never stumble (that is, fail in purpose): for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

Ben Franklin, that great patriot, developed and used a card method to become the great man that he was. Early in life, he decided that he needed certain character traits to succeed as a businessman and citizen. He wrote each trait that he desired to develop upon a card, 13 in all. Each week he would use one card as a reminder, and would work each day to develop that trait. He made several copies of each card and placed them in several places where he would be each day: the bathroom mirror, his desk at home and office, the dash of the buggy. Seeing them would help his scatterbrain

mind, busy with business, remember his main business was to work at acquiring that trait. As succeeding weeks passed, each trait would become more and more a part of his character. He tells about this method, and its great benefit, in *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*. It's a small book. I urge each of you to read it at your earliest opportunity.

This system develops in us a present-mindedness for daily study and for speaking the name of Jesus. Each day, we will review Scripture that applies to that fruit, and memorize one or two applicable verses. At this time, we need to form the habit of making a Plan of the Day with the needful tasks of the morrow assigned a priority of A, B, or C. We determine to do the most important tasks first. This is the way to proficiency and success.

Galatians 5:22-25 gives us several more fruit of the Spirit that we should add, a total of fifteen. Write these 15 "fruit of the Spirit" on 3x5 cards, one on each card--include its definition and one or two supporting Scripture passages. Choose one card and put several copies everywhere you will be as reminders to practice that fruit for one week. At that time, choose another card and spend a week cultivating that fruit. This enables you to complete the list three times in one year with time for vacation or other break.

This program of growth will keep you from evil, but we must also resist evil wherever we find it: "You that love the Lord, hate evil: He preserves the souls of His saints; He delivers them out of the hand of the wicked."-- Psalms 97:10. "Submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you." --James 4:7. Isaiah 1:16-17 urges, "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well". "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove (admonish) them."--Ephesians 5:11.

You can tell that I've been speaking to those who are "born again"; to those who have been immersed, baptized into Christ for the purpose of washing away their sins. I've been speaking to Christians. We are at war! It is not a cold war. There is no peaceful coexistence. This is a hot war. Are you zealous for the cause of Christ? Or, have you just been playing "Church"? Is Jesus about to vomit you out because you are lukewarm (Revelation 3:16)?

I pray that each of you will understand this lesson and change your approach to living the Christian life. Repent! Confess your private sins to God and your public ones to your brothers as well. Ask God, in the name of Jesus, to forgive your lack of love and zeal. Let go of the hurt of earlier rejection or abuse. Release the resentment and anger, the hate that you may have buried deep within. Examine yourself and make sure that you are walking in the Spirit. Ask him to help you find the Easy Way to Live the Christian Life.

To those who have never entered into Christ, even though you may have thought that you had when you first believed, or when you prayed the sinner's prayer, or when you accepted Jesus into your heart, you must repent of your sins, all which you have ever committed, and confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God and accept Him as Lord of your life. You must acknowledge that God raised Him from the dead, and you must then be immersed into Christ in water for the remission of your sins as Peter commanded those Jewish believers as recorded in Acts 2:38.

Mistaken teachers have taught you untruths, ways not found in the Bible. God has placed all Spiritual blessings in Christ (Ephesians 1:3-11). There is but one way into Christ for the repentant one who believes in Jesus with all his heart: Turn with me to read about it Galatians 3:26-27, Romans 6:3-6.

Remember the easy way to live the Christian life: “Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.”

It isn't enough to realize this “Easier Way” for our own advantage. Jesus expects us – has commanded us – to tell it to others! I spoke earlier about using a small tract that makes this the Easy Way to speak the name of Jesus. Get that tract and “go preach the Gospel”.

Song: *Buried with Christ*. 10/13/2014

THE LAW: |
 Ten Commandments: Exodus |
 20:1-17: You shall: |
 1. "have no other gods." |
 2. "not make graven images, |
 not bow down to them." |
 3. "not take His name in vain." |
 4. "Remember the Sabbath." |
 5. "honor father and mother." |
 6. "not murder." |
 7. "not commit adultery." |
 8. "not steal." |
 9. "not bear false witness." |
 10. "not covet." |

REMOVE THE NEGATIVE: |

LAY ASIDE: 1 Peter 2:1 |
 Malice Deceit |
 Hypocrisy Envy |
 Evil speaking |

PUT TO DEATH: Colossians 3:5 |
 Fornication |
 Uncleanness |
 (homosexuality) |
 Evil desire & passion |
 Covetousness (idolatry) |
 PUT OFF: Colossians 3:8-9 |
 Anger Wrath |
 Malice Lying |
 Blasphemy |
 Filthy talking |

ABSTAIN FROM FLESHLY LUSTS |
 I PETER 2:11 |

CULTIVATE THE POSITIVE:

DILIGENTLY ADD:
 2 Peter 1:5-8
 Virtue (manly courage)
 Knowledge
 Temperance (self-control)
 Patience (perseverance)
 Godliness (God-ward-ness)
 Brotherly-kindness
 Love

PUT ON GRACES: Colossians 3:12-13

Tender mercies (compassion)
 Kindness
 Humility
 Meekness
 Peace
 Longsuffering
 Forbearance
 Forgiveness
 Charity (love)

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT:

Galatians 5:22-25
 Love
 Joy
 Peace
 Faithfulness
 Longsuffering
 Meekness
 Temperance (self-control)
 Kindness (gentleness)
 Goodness

WALK IN THE SPIRIT AND YOU
 SHALL NOT FULFILL THE LUSTS
 OF THE FLESH - Galatians 5:16

Ask about the Gospel Minutes Tract, *Some Things That You Should Know* and a method of presentation that makes speaking of Jesus easy and certain.