

a Bible Lesson from GALATIANS 5:22-23:  
ON THE WORKS OF CHRISTIAN MERCY

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## I. INTRODUCTION

In GALATIANS 5:19-23, The Apostle Paul contrasts the lives of two kinds of people, the non-Christian life that is marked by the wicked “works of the flesh,” versus the Christian life that is marked by the godly “fruit of The Spirit.”

Of the first, Paul says:

### GALATIANS 5:19-21:

<sup>19</sup> Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness,

<sup>20</sup> idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies,

<sup>21</sup> envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit The Kingdom of GOD. <sup>1</sup>

But of the second, Paul says:

### GALATIANS 5:22-23:

<sup>22</sup> But the fruit of The Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

<sup>23</sup> Meekness, temperance... <sup>2</sup>

Which kind of life are we living? One marked by “the works of the flesh?” Or one marked by “the fruit of The Spirit?” All men in this life, non-Christian and Christian, live in the world. But are we living “in the world” or “in The Spirit” of GOD? If we claim The Name of JESUS CHRIST as our Lord and Saviour, should not our lives show forth “the fruits of The Spirit” and no longer “the works of the flesh?”

Saint Ignatius says, “The tree is made manifest by its fruit. So those who profess themselves to be Christians will be recognized by their [godly] conduct...”<sup>3</sup> And as we are indeed saved by His Grace in The Blood of The Lamb of GOD, do we not owe a debt to repay to GOD and man? Indeed we do! And that debt calls for a life of Good Works of Christian mercy!

## II. TO REPAY OUR DEBT OF LOVE IN THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

How does GOD prepare us as Christians to repay our debts of love to GOD and man? By endowing us with The Grace of GOD, leading us to desire to keep our duty to GOD, which causes us to desire to keep our duty to our fellow man. By showing to us The great Price by which JESUS CHRIST has redeemed us in His Passion, death and Resurrection. By working in us to rebirth us and remake us in righteousness by His HOLY SPIRIT. By bringing forth in our lives The Fruit of The Spirit in us!

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<sup>1</sup> 1, NKJV, GALATIANS 5:19-21.

<sup>2</sup> 1, NKJV, GALATIANS 5:22-23.

<sup>3</sup> 2, Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs, entry “Salvation, III. Role of Obedience in Salvation,” p 580, 2<sup>nd</sup> entry. “Ignatius (C. 105, E) 1.55.”

Again, The Apostle Paul says:

GALATIANS 5:22-23

<sup>22</sup> But the fruit of The Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,  
<sup>23</sup> Meekness, temperance... <sup>4</sup>

The Almighty equips us by His Spirit – living, working, remaking and sanctifying us - so that these fruits can shine forth in our lives. But we can not attain these by ourselves apart from The Creator! As The Geneva Study Bible observes, “Therefore they are not the fruits of free will, but only as far forth as our will is made free by Grace” in JESUS CHRIST.” <sup>5</sup>

III. THE GIFTS AND FRUITS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

In Traditional Christianity, we often speak of “The Gifts of The HOLY SPIRIT,” which endow us with The Grace we need to bring forth “The Fruits of The HOLY SPIRIT” in our lives.

The Gifts of The HOLY SPIRIT

And as we grow in that Grace, we become more able to love both The LORD and our fellow man. As The Catechism of The Catholic Church says, “The moral life of Christians is sustained by The Gifts of The HOLY SPIRIT. These are permanent dispositions which make man docile in following the prompting” of The Spirit of GOD in us.” <sup>6</sup>

So The Lord equips us with “The Gifts of The HOLY SPIRIT,” which “complete and perfect the virtues of those who receive them,” making “The Faithful docile in readily obeying Divine Inspiration:” <sup>7</sup>

- \*\*wisdom
- \*\*understanding
- \*\*godly counsel
- \*\*fortitude
- \*\*knowledge
- \*\*piety
- \*\*reverence and awe of The Lord
- \*\*respect and tenderness for our fellow man

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<sup>4</sup> 1, NKJV, GALATIANS 5:22-23.

<sup>5</sup> 3, Geneva Bible Study Notes, GALATIANS 5:22, note k. Crosswalk.com. Retrieved 2/12/2008 AD.

<http://bible.crosswalk.com/Commentaries/GenevaStudyBible/gen.cgi?book=ga&chapter=005>

<sup>6</sup> 4, Catechism of The Catholic Church, # 1830, p 502.

<sup>7</sup> 4, Catechism of The Catholic Church, # 1831, p 502.

### The Fruits of The HOLY SPIRIT

So will men know that we are disciples of The Lord, when He brings forth “The Fruits of The Spirit” in our lives towards others. As The Catechism of The Catholic Church explains, These Fruits “are perfections that The HOLY SPIRIT forms in us as the first fruits of eternal Glory” in the converted heart, renewed mind and saved soul of the Christian.<sup>8</sup>

They are impossible in any man, except first his love of GOD has brought him to The Cross of CHRIST, that he might be “born again”<sup>9</sup> into “newness of life”<sup>10</sup> in The Lord, and so be capable second of loving his fellow man:

- \*\*charity
- \*\*joy
- \*\*peace
- \*\*patience
- \*\*kindness
- \*\*goodness
- \*\*generosity
- \*\*gentleness
- \*\*faithfulness
- \*\*modesty
- \*\*self-control
- \*\*chastity

Now observe, that if we receive, by The Grace of GOD, “The Gifts of The HOLY SPIRIT, He then enables us to carry out “The Fruits of The HOLY SPIRIT.” But by ourselves and apart from The Spirit of The Living GOD renewing and remaking us daily, we can not carry out The Second, because we lack The First!

### IV. SAVED BY GRACE UNTO GOOD WORKS

How do we carry out our repaying of our debts of Love to GOD? By Christian “Works of Mercy” to our fellow man! These are those good works which should flow out of the changed lives and saved souls of men and women who are redeemed from darkness and death in The Saviour JESUS CHRIST.

They are not the means of salvation, which is only The Cross, but are the natural results of the redeemed being adopted by GOD Himself as his true sons and daughters in righteousness. And between The Two, there is the Christian life, indwelt by The HOLY SPIRIT, that brings forth Good Works out of a Living faith!

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<sup>8</sup> 4, Catechism of The Catholic Church, # 1823, p 503.

<sup>9</sup> 5, KJV, JOHN 3:5, “JESUS answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of The Spirit, he cannot enter into The Kingdom of GOD.”

<sup>10</sup> 5, KJV, ROMANS 6:4, “Therefore we are buried with Him by Baptism into death: that like as CHRIST was raised up from the dead by The Glory of The Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

Both Saint Paul and Saint James direct us to the same place:

EPHESIANS 2:8-10

<sup>8</sup> For by Grace are ye saved through Faith; and that not of yourselves: it is The Gift of GOD:

<sup>9</sup> Not of works, lest any man should boast.

<sup>10</sup> For we are His workmanship, created in CHRIST JESUS unto good works, which GOD hath before ordained that we should walk in them. <sup>11</sup>

Salvation is not earned by us, but taken hold of, as a free and unmerited Gift of GOD. As Jamieson et al says, The Mercy of The Lord, which He showers upon us at The Cross without our deserving it in any way, is “The instrument or mean of salvation...” For “CHRIST alone is The *Meritorious* Agent!” So The Anglican Church Father Richard Hooker says, “GOD justifies the believing man, not for the worthiness of his belief, but for the worthiness of Him in Whom he believes!” <sup>12</sup>

GOD forbid, then, that we should boast, save in The Cross of CHRIST! <sup>13</sup> But there is more! The Almighty has created us as new creatures by His Spirit at The Cross to be His servants. Servants work. We are called to Good Works, which require The Spirit of GOD first working in us! For “‘Good Works’ cannot be performed until we are new ‘created unto’ them!” <sup>14</sup>

V. FAITH WITHOUT GOOD WORKS IS DEAD

Christianity is not a mere ascent with our lips, nor a mere passing nod of the head, that we may keep our sinful rebellion against GOD and keep His Grace in our back pockets as an insurance policy, “just in case!” GOD forbid! Christianity is a radical rebirth by The Spirit of GOD that brings through and in us a new life of Good Works! A man that lacks Christian Good Works may then be lacking The Grace of a saving Faith!

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<sup>11</sup> 5, KJV, EPHESIANS 2:8-10.

<sup>12</sup> 6, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, Commentary Critical on The Bible, EPHESIANS 2:8.

Crosswalk.com. Retrieved 2/12/2008 AD.

<http://bible.crosswalk.com/Commentaries/JamiesonFaussetBrown/jfb.cgi?book=eph&chapter=002>

<sup>13</sup> 5, KJV, GALATIANS 6:14, “ But GOD forbid that I should glory, save in The Cross of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, by Whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world!”

<sup>14</sup> 6, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, Commentary Critical on The Bible, EPHESIANS 2:10.

Crosswalk.com. Retrieved 2/12/2008 AD.

<http://bible.crosswalk.com/Commentaries/JamiesonFaussetBrown/jfb.cgi?book=eph&chapter=002>

Paul deals with those who thought they could make themselves justified in the sight of GOD by adequate Good Works, forgetting that it is by His Grace that He applies His Mercy to forgive our sins. James deals with those who think doing GOD the favor of accepting His Grace freely offered by His hand, devoid of any life changing piety and bereft of any resulting Good Works, is enough to be justified before The Lord! <sup>15</sup>

JAMES 2:14-20

<sup>14</sup> What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?

<sup>15</sup> If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,

<sup>16</sup> 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?

<sup>17</sup> Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

<sup>18</sup> 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.

<sup>19</sup> Thou believest that there is one GOD; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

<sup>20</sup> But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? <sup>16</sup>

Mere empty words of sympathy to those suffering, to whom we are able to give some substantial aide, are “of no profit to the professor” of a dead faith, as much as they are of “no profit to the needy object” of such empty words. GOD sees through to the heart. Mere mouthed words, from a heart that is still stone cold and dead in sin, will not justify the unrepentant sinner! <sup>17</sup> But if you want to radically change evil for good in your corner of this world, become a faithful Christian with a living Faith and a life flowing forth with Good Works!

Assenting to The Truth of GOD’s existence does not bring forgiveness of our sins. Even the demons in Hell know this, and they tremble! How much more will the unwashed soul of man before The Judgement Seat of The Almighty! The soul that loves GOD will receive His Grace and bring forth the fruits of The Spirit working in him! <sup>18</sup> Therefore the vain, that is useless, false profession of faith in GOD of the unrepentant is

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<sup>15</sup> 6, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, Commentary Critical on The Bible, JAMES 2:14. Crosswalk.com. Retrieved 2/12/2008 AD.

<http://bible.crosswalk.com/Commentaries/JamiesonFaussetBrown/jfb.cgi?book=jas&chapter=002>

<sup>16</sup> 5, KJV, JAMES 2:14-20.

<sup>17</sup> 6, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, Commentary Critical on The Bible, JAMES 2:15. Crosswalk.com. Retrieved 2/12/2008 AD.

<http://bible.crosswalk.com/Commentaries/JamiesonFaussetBrown/jfb.cgi?book=jas&chapter=002>

<sup>18</sup> 5, KJV, I JOHN 4:18, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.”

dead. You, “who deceivest thyself with a delusive hope,” tremble, repent and live! <sup>19</sup>

## VI. A LIVING FAITH AND ITS GOOD WORKS ARE OUR JOY IN THE LORD

So what is the balance between a living Christian Faith and Good Works? It is this: A mere intellectual ascent to The Truths of The Gospel is not salvation. There must be a life changed to righteousness in thought, word and deed, wrought by The HOLY SPIRIT and our cooperation with His Grace daily. And the end result? The joy of The LORD becomes our strength, both now and forever!

The balanced Christian man happily takes hold of both a Faith and Works, each enlarging the other in an ever ascending and expanding spiral of thankfulness and joy in The Lord! It is a life in CHRIST that actively seeks to keep The Commandments of GOD, and learns by nature to do so more and more! From what? From an earnest love of GOD and our fellow man. Not as a means of salvation, for we are saved by His Grace. But that, if we receive His Grace, there will be a life of Good Works that follows Faith, and that joyfully!

### PSALM 98:1-4

<sup>1</sup> O sing unto The LORD a new song; for He hath done marvellous things: His right hand, and His holy arm, hath gotten Him the victory.

<sup>2</sup> The LORD hath made known His salvation: His righteousness hath He openly shewed in the sight of the heathen.

<sup>3</sup> He hath remembered His Mercy and His Truth toward the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen The Salvation of our GOD.

<sup>4</sup> Make a joyful noise unto The LORD, all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise! <sup>20</sup>

## VII. WORKS OF CHRISTIAN MERCY

The Catechism of The Catholic Church speaks of Christian “Works of Mercy,” those “charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbour in his spiritual and bodily necessities.” These are the flowing of The Divine Love in the Christian life, by the power of The HOLY SPIRIT, serving CHRIST our King by serving in His Kingdom - The Church.

They are The Gifts of The Spirit that enable us to keep The First Table of The Ten Commandments and thus The Second. They are the results of living Faith that desires to produce Good Works. They are The Fruits of The Spirit working in us - loving GOD and thus loving our fellow man - by Divine Grace. They are “spiritual” for the souls of others in need and “corporeal” for the bodies of others in need: <sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> 6, Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, Commentary Critical on The Bible, JAMES 2:15.

Crosswalk.com. Retrieved 2/12/2008 AD.

<http://bible.crosswalk.com/Commentaries/JamiesonFaussetBrown/jfb.cgi?book=jas&chapter=002>

<sup>20</sup> 5, KJV, PSALM 98:1-4.

<sup>21</sup> 4, Catechism of The Catholic Church, # 2447, p 648.



“The Spiritual Works of Mercy:”<sup>22</sup>

- \*\*Admonish sinners.
- \*\*Instruct the uninformed.
- \*\*Counsel the doubtful.
- \*\*Comfort the sorrowful.
- \*\*Be patient with those in error.
- \*\*Forgive offenses.
- \*\*Pray for the living and the dead.

“The Corporeal Works of Mercy:”<sup>23</sup>

- \*\*Feed the hungry.
- \*\*Give drink to the thirsty.
- \*\*Clothe the naked.
- \*\*Shelter the homeless.
- \*\*Visit the imprisoned.
- \*\*Visit the sick.
- \*\*Bury the dead.

And O Lord, what a world of difference we as Christians can make, by His HOLY SPIRIT living and working in us, if we all had a Living Faith that yielded the Good Works that GOD has called us to do from before He even laid the foundations of the world!

What are the effects of Christian Works of Mercy? Let us list some:

- \*\*They show The Love of GOD and direct men to JESUS CHRIST.
- \*\*They therefore encourage men to also love one another as CHRIST loves us.
- \*\*They bring about justice over injustice.
- \*\*They are used of GOD to overcome evil with good.
- \*\*They are evangelical witnesses of the truth and effectiveness of The Gospel to the lost.
- \*\*They encourage and edify the brethren in CHRIST.
- \*\*They strengthen The Kingdom of CHRIST and weaken the kingdom of the devil.
- \*\*They store up for us eternal treasures in Heaven.
- \*\*They draw us closer to GOD and to our fellow man and fellow saints.
- \*\*They strengthen our faith and those of others.
- \*\*They give glory to GOD The Father, Son and Holy Ghost.
- \*\*They testify to Hope in The Messiah JESUS and call men to enter The Church.
- \*\*They convict sinners to repentance at The Cross.
- \*\*They are part of how GOD grows us daily in Grace and Faith
- \*\*They are a means by which we are transformed into The Likeness of JESUS Himself!

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<sup>22</sup> 7, Kosicki, “I Demand Deeds of Mercy,” p 13, “Spiritual Works of Mercy.”

<sup>23</sup> 7, Kosicki, “I Demand Deeds of Mercy,” p 13, “Corporeal Works of Mercy.”

### VIII. IN CONCLUSION

So what have we seen here? That GOD prepares us to repay our debt of love to Him and to our fellow man by The working of The HOLY SPIRIT in us, yielding The Fruit of The Spirit. The Spirit of GOD imparts to us The Gifts of The HOLY SPIRIT, that we might serve Him and others.

We are saved by His Grace, so that we may perform the Good Works that He has set before us. Only a living Faith can bring forth Good Works. A living Faith and its resulting Good Works are our joy in The LORD. So we should seek every opportunity to faithfully carry out the spiritual and physical Works of Christian Mercy. And if we do, oh how we may change the world for Good over Evil!

We began with The Apostle Paul in GALATIANS 5:22-23. And so, let us end there! “But the fruit of The Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance...!”<sup>24</sup> May it ever be so with all who name The Name of JESUS CHRIST as Lord and Saviour! In The Name of GOD The Father, The Son and The Holy Ghost. AMEN.

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<sup>24</sup> 1, NKJV, GALATIANS 5:22-23.

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