

March 7, 2021

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. Galatians 5:22-23

Often, at the end of my day, I reflect on what I've accomplished. This reflection is often the first part of an exercise that has me thinking forward to what I plan to accomplish the following morning. Yet, just as often, the reflection gets stuck looking backward, highlighting a personal failure and making a mockery of the plans put in place at the dawn of the day.

For me, failure is maddening, especially if the failure is not one of task completion, but of character defect. Time, after all, marches forward and challenges everyone and there is not always time enough in the day to do all that demands one's attention. Character failure, however, points to something deeper and more disturbing. Character is the seat of our conscience; the state of our heart, and a good character reflects the fruits of the Spirit. When my reflection of the day includes examples of God's spirit working through my human tendencies; holding back the snarky comment, being gentle with the sullen teenager, saying "I'm sorry" even when misunderstood – then the Spirit of God has triumphed over my human state. But so many times the incidents reveal the human spirit of strife, selfishness and sin. For these, I must ask for forgiveness. Often, I must also ask for repentance, as I may still feel perfectly justified with my impatient and hurtful behavior. Finally, it is important to acknowledge my need for transformation.

My character failures needn't discourage me to the point of letting go of God, but they should remind me that my number one task for any given day should be to seek the Lord with **all my heart**. It should be to surrender my will and my opinions and my plans to Him and allow myself to be used for His glory and His purpose. There is so much that I want to accomplish every morning. I have an intimidating to-do list that – if I really get cracking – I can actually accomplish in a nine or ten-hour stretch of time.

But more than tasks to be checked off on a to-list, I need my days to reflect the love of God. I want the Spirit of God to be manifest in my life and to show up as forbearance, kindness, goodness, gentleness and self-control.

For this, I must ask for and rely upon the power of the Holy Spirit.

Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Psalm 51:10