

Second Stage: The Illuminative Way

Illumination as Growing in the Character of Christ

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This week we continue to look at the three stages of spiritual growth: Purgation, Illumination, and Unification.

[Review with Power Point]

Today, I am going to continue talking about the Way of Illumination as a process of *relinquishing and realizing, relinquishing the "works of flesh" (attachments) and realizing the "fruit of spirit" (attitudes).*

A. The Way of Illumination

1. From blindness to sight

At least partly, the Way of Illumination involves moving *away from* attachments that blind us and moving *toward* an experiential knowledge of God in Christ. According to 2 Pet. 3:18, we are to "grow in the grace (*charis*) and knowledge (*gnōsis*) of Jesus Christ."

Because attachments distort our perceptions of God and our selves, because attachments inhibit our ability to love as we should, it is only after attachments have been reduced or eliminated that we are able to see as we should. That is the beginning of enlightenment.

2. Many colors of illumination

Illumination is not one thing. There are different colors (or marks) of illumination.

Two weeks ago, I mentioned that the Illuminative Way involved four things: (1) developing the character of Christ, (2) transcending the self in the service of others, (3) encountering the Living Christ through scriptures, and (4) meeting God in meditation and prayer.

Last week, Lois described the Illuminative Way as (1) an increased awareness of God's presence, (2) an increased experiential knowledge of God, and (3) an accelerated transformation into Christlikeness for the sake of the world.

3. Character and Virtue Formation

I'm going to focus on character and virtue formation.

According to spiritual masters of the Christian tradition (John of the Cross, St. Theresa Thomas Merton), once we have reduced or eliminated attachments, "the illuminative way is characterized by the operation of infused virtue."¹ Infused virtue refers to God changing our character from the inside out, becoming more like Christ. It is an act of divine grace that we cooperate with.

B. Life in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16-25)

Here we look at one of the things we are to realize: The Fruit of the Spirit. That is, the Way of Illumination involves developing Christian virtues.

1. Walk by the Spirit (16-18)

¹⁶ Live by the Spirit [**walk by the Spirit**], I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh [**you will by no means fulfill the desire of the flesh**]. ¹⁷ For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law. (NRSV)

¹⁶ Λέγω δέ, πνεύματι περιπατεῖτε καὶ ἐπιθυμίαν σαρκὸς οὐ μὴ τελήσητε. ¹⁷ ἡ γὰρ σὰρξ ἐπιθυμεῖ κατὰ τοῦ πνεύματος, τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα κατὰ τῆς σαρκός, ταῦτα γὰρ ἀλλήλοις ἀντίκειται, ἵνα μὴ ἂ ἐὰν θέλητε ταῦτα ποιῆτε. ¹⁸ εἰ δὲ πνεύματι ἄγεσθε, οὐκ ἔστε ὑπὸ νόμον.

Walk. The phrase, "live by the Spirit," is literally, "walk by the Spirit." It is a present tense imperative. So Paul is saying, "*Continuing walking* by the Spirit." It is something that we do.

The metaphor of walking is very important in the Jewish context of Paul. In Judaism, the metaphor of walking or *halakhah* refers to conducting one self according to the

¹ Benedict J. Groeschel, *Spiritual Passages: The Psychology of Spiritual Development* (New York: Crossroad, 1995) 145.st

rules and practices of the Torah.² So Paul is drawing a connection between “walking in the way of the Torah” and “walking in the way of the Spirit.” If we walk in the Spirit, we fulfill the way of the Torah (cf. 5:14-15).

By the Spirit. The phrase, “by the Spirit,” is an instrumental dative. That is to say, it is by the *means* of the Spirit or by the *instrumentality* of the Spirit that we “walk”. We habitually order our manner of life or behavior by the power of the Spirit.³

“You will by no means fulfill the desire of the flesh.” The phrase is not a prohibition (NRSV). Rather, it expresses a promise for those who walk in the Spirit (NIV and KJV).⁴ If a person depends on the Spirit to give him or her the knowledge and the power to the will of God, he or she will not fulfill the impulses of the flesh

This is important. It tells us to focus on tuning into the Spirit, rather than fighting the flesh directly. Suppose, for example, someone expresses hostility toward you. If you focus on aligning with the Spirit, you will tell yourself something like, “I will show love and respect to him” (positive), rather than saying, “I will not get angry at him” (negative). Focusing on not doing something makes it worse. For example, if I say, “Don’t think about a red taxi cab,” then, of course, we think about a red taxi.

What we learn is this: We are to embody the *Way of the Spirit* to such a degree that it become habitual for us to react to people and situations with the attitudes of the Spirit, later called “fruit of the Spirit” (5:22-23).

The Flesh opposes the Spirit. There is a strong antithesis between πνεῦμα (spirit) and σὰρξ (flesh). The flesh is “the power that opposes God” and enslaves human beings.⁵ The “flesh” refers to an orientation *away from* and *against* God. Although the word “flesh” can have a physical sense, with Paul it usually has an ethical meaning. The way of the flesh leads to misery and spiritual death, whereas the way of the Spirit leads to resurrection life.

Be led by the Spirit. The verb is in the passive voice, which means it is something that God does. The Spirit acts on, in, or through us. What we do is *submit to* or *align with* the Spirit. The Spirit does not coerce or force us. As we become mindful of the Spirit’s leading, we go with the flow of the Spirit, instead of against it.

² The word *halakhah* is usually translated as “Jewish Law,” although a more literal (and more appropriate) translation might be “the path that one walks.” The word is derived from the Hebrew root Hey-Lamed-Kaf (הלך), meaning to go, to walk or to travel.

³ Kenneth S. Wuest, *Galatians in the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1944) 153-4.

⁴ So F.F. Bruce, *Commentary on Galatians*, New International Greek Testament commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) 243.

⁵ E.P. Sander, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (1977) 553 as quoted by Bruce, *Commentary on Galatians* (1983) 243.

If you have ever canoed on a river before, you know the difference between canoeing with and against the current. Once we sense the “current” or the “power” of the Spirit, we yield to that current and go with the flow.

We can identify the current or flow of the Spirit, because we learned it from Jesus.

Eph. 4:20-24. ²⁰ That [various vices] is not the way you learned Christ! ²¹ For surely you have heard about him and were taught in him, as truth is in Jesus. ²² You were taught to put away your former way of life, your old self, corrupt and deluded by its lusts, ²³ and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴ and to clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. (NRSV)

We need to be mindful of the Spirit--which can be every moment of the day--we have a choice: *Yield to the Spirit* or *yield to the flesh*.

[Excursus: *What does "not under the law" mean?* See footnote.⁶]

2. Works of the Flesh (18-21)

¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (NRSV)

¹⁹ φανερά δέ ἐστὶν τὰ ἔργα τῆς σαρκός, ἅτινά ἐστιν πορνεία, ἀκαθαρσία, ἀσέλγεια, ²⁰ εἰδωλολατρία, φαρμακεία, ἔχθραι, ἔρις, ζῆλος, θυμοί, ἐριθείαι, διχοστασίαι, αἰρέσεις, ²¹ φθόνοι, μέθαι, κῶμοι καὶ τὰ ὅμοια τούτοις, ἃ προλέγω ὑμῖν, καθὼς προεῖπον ὅτι οἱ τὰ τοιαῦτα πράσσοντες βασιλείαν θεοῦ οὐ κληρονομήσουσιν.

First, this is a list of vices—behaviors and attitudes harmful to human beings. The list is not exhaustive. Its just a sample.

Second, Paul says that the works of the flesh are obvious--the word is *phanera*, which means “self-evident, obvious, plain as day.”

3. Fruit of the Spirit (22-23)

²² By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love,

²² ὁ δὲ καρπὸς τοῦ πνεύματος ἐστὶν ἀγάπη

⁶ Several options: (1) to live under the law as a governing principle, one orientates one’s whole life around the Torah, (2) to be under the curse of the law (Gal. 3:13), or (3) under the judgment of the law or its sin-revealing power (Gal. 3:19-25; Rom. 5:20). So Scott McKnight, *Galatians*, the NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995) 269.

<p>joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness,²³ gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things.²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. (NRSV)</p>	<p>χαρὰ εἰρήνη, μακροθυμία χρηστότης ἀγαθωσύνη, πίστις²³ πραύτης ἐγκράτεια· κατὰ τῶν τοιούτων οὐκ ἔστιν νόμος.²⁴ οἱ δὲ τοῦ Χριστοῦ [Ἰησοῦ] τὴν σάρκα ἐσταύρωσαν σὺν τοῖς παθήμασιν καὶ ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις.</p>
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Paul has given us a list of vices, which he called “works of the flesh.” Now he lists nine different virtues, the “fruit of the Spirit.”

The list is not comprehensive. It was addressed to the church in Galatia that were in conflict. So Paul selected a list of *virtues* that counteracted the vices of conflict.⁷

Rather than commenting on all the terms, I’ll comment on fruit and love.

Fruit of the Spirit. Notice that the terms change from “works” (plural) to “fruit” (singular). The word singular use of “fruit” may suggest that all of the virtues mentioned form a unity—they work together.

In addition, “The change of terms to ‘fruit’ evokes a different image: from one of human responsibility to one of divine enablement; the image of fruit has a certain sense of passivity to it; it is the Spirit of God who produces such things, and they grow in the life of the Christian.”⁸

Still, Paul thinks that the person is responsible for cooperating with the Spirit and for “crucifying” the flesh (purgation).

Love is the most important virtue for Paul.

- It fulfills the demands of the Torah (Gal. 5:14)
- It endures forever (1 Cor. 13:13)
- It unites all the virtues of life (Col 3:14)
- It comes from God’s Spirit (Rom.5:5)

4. We live by the Spirit

<p>²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by [stoicheō = walk by] the Spirit. (NRSV)</p>	<p>²⁵ Εἰ ζῶμεν πνεύματι, πνεύματι καὶ στοιχῶμεν.</p>
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⁷ So Scott McKnight, *Galatians* (1995) 270.

⁸ Scott McKnight, *Galatians* (1995) 271.

Here we have a conditional statement—"If..., then..." structure. Paul is saying, "If we live in reference to the Spirit, and we do" (first class conditional), "then let us also walk by the Spirit."

The word "walk" ("guided by") is *stoicheō*, which means "to walk in a straight line," not veering left or right.

Paul gives us:

- The *indicative* (you are), then the *imperative* (do this).
- You live in reference to the Spirit (indicative), therefore walk in a straight line with the Spirit (imperative)
- It's like saying, "You are on the New York Giants football team (indicative), now play like you are a New York Giant (imperative)

C. Life in the Light (Eph. 5:8-11)

To show you that we have been talking about illumination, I want to compare what we have just read in Galatians 5 with Ephesians 5.

<p>Eph. 5:1-2, 8-11. ¹ Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children ² and live in love [lit. walk in love], as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us ...</p> <p>⁸ For once you were <u>darkness</u>, but now in the Lord you are <u>light</u>. Live as children of light--⁹ for <u>the fruit of the light</u> is found in all that is good and right and true. ¹⁰ Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹ Take no part in <u>the unfruitful works of darkness</u>, but instead expose them. (NRSV)</p>	<p>Eph. 5:1-2, 8-11. ¹ Γίνεσθε οὖν μιμηταὶ τοῦ θεοῦ ὡς τέκνα ἀγαπητὰ ² καὶ περιπατεῖτε ἐν ἀγάπῃ, καθὼς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς καὶ παρέδωκεν ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ...</p> <p>⁸ ἦτε γὰρ ποτε σκότος, νῦν δὲ φῶς ἐν κυρίῳ· ὡς τέκνα φωτὸς περιπατεῖτε ⁹ -ὁ γὰρ καρπὸς τοῦ φωτὸς ἐν πάσῃ ἀγαθῶσύνῃ καὶ δικαιοσύνῃ καὶ ἀληθείᾳ- ¹⁰ δοκιμάζοντες τί ἐστὶν εὐάρεστον τῷ κυρίῳ, ¹¹ καὶ μὴ συγκοινωνεῖτε τοῖς ἔργοις τοῖς ἀκάρποις τοῦ σκότους, μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ ἐλέγχετε.</p>
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<p>Gal. 5:16-25</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Walk in the Spirit 2. Be led by the Spirit 3. Works of the flesh 4. Fruit of the Spirit 5. Crucify the flesh 	<p>Eph. 5:1-2, 8-11</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Walk in love 2. Imitate God 3. Unfruitful works of darkness 4. Fruit of the light 5. Expose (the works of darkness)
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D. Reflections