



Carstairs-Bancroft United Church
October 19, 2021
DAILY ENCOURAGEMENT
DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC
By Rev. Maria Szabone Berces



Source: Our Daily Bread

Beloved Carstairs Bancroft United Church Members,

Today's Inspiration in one sentence

“Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.” (Galatians 5:25)

Did You Know?

- The opening verse of **Galatians** identifies the author as the apostle Paul. Apart from a few nineteenth-century interpreters, no one has seriously questioned his authorship.
- The date of Galatians depends to a great extent on the destination of the letter. There are two main views. The first is *The North Galatian theory*. It suggests that this letter was written between AD 53 and 57 from Ephesus or Macedonia, sometime during or after Paul's second missionary journey. The second is *The South Galatian theory*. According to this view, Galatians was written to churches in the southern area of the Roman province of Galatia (Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe) that Paul had founded on his first missionary journey. If this is the case, Galatians could be Paul's earliest letter, written in 48-49 after Paul's first journey and before the Jerusalem council meeting (see Acts 15).
- Paul writes this letter to counter the claims of legalistic Judaizers who were telling the Galatian believers that they must be circumcised and keep the law of Moses in order to be saved.

(The NIV Study Bible; 2 Corinthians)

Personal Insight

I found today's Our Daily Bread message meaningful because it pointed out a key question: what drives us?

And many times, in our basic, human instincts we rather submit to anxiety, indifference, impulsiveness, self-centeredness or harshness. We tend to cling to what we've got, and to lose hope when things don't go the way we would like.

As I can see, we definitely need God's Spirit, who is the Spirit of Truth to move us from this primal standpoint. And the truth is that God loves us. Even if we suffer from the consequences of our bad decisions and our disability to place ourselves and our situation into God's hands. Even as we walk through dark valleys of suffering or loss. The Almighty wants to be by our side, and yearns us to see it as the truth.

When we start to comprehend and appreciate that the Holy One's love is surrounding us, we become driven by this love. This makes us 'empowered' to bear and show the **“fruit of the Spirit”**, which is **“love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control”**. With the Spirit we receive capability to “put ourselves out for others”, and **“shine ... like stars in the sky”**. (Philippians 2:15) It's true: we can't do it alone... But *“we are not alone”*. (New Creed)

Grace and Peace to You All,

Rev. Maria



When to Sacrifice

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Galatians 5:22–23

READ Galatians 5:22 – 26

In February 2020, as the COVID-19 crisis was just beginning, a newspaper columnist's concerns struck me. Would we willingly self-isolate, she wondered, changing our work, travel, and shopping habits so others wouldn't get sick? "This isn't just a test of clinical resources," she wrote, "but of our willingness to put ourselves out for others." Suddenly, the need for virtue was front-page news.

It can be hard to consider others' needs while we're anxious about our own. Thankfully, we're not left with willpower alone to meet the need. We can ask the Holy Spirit to give us *love* to replace our indifference, *joy* to counter sadness, *peace* to replace our anxiety, *forbearance* (patience) to push out our impulsiveness, *kindness* to care about others, *goodness* to see to their needs, *faithfulness* to keep our promises, *gentleness* instead of harshness, and *self-control* to lift us beyond self-centeredness (Galatians 5:22–23). While we won't be perfect at all of this, we're called to seek the Spirit's gifts of virtue regularly (Ephesians 5:18).

Author Richard Foster once described holiness as the ability to do what needs to be done when it needs to be done. And such holiness is needed every day, not just in a pandemic. Do we have the capacity to make sacrifices for the sake of others? Holy Spirit, fill us with the power to do what needs to be done. – By **Sheridan Voysey**

REFLECT & PRAY

Holy Spirit, fill me afresh today and make me a person of virtue. Amen.

When have you made a sacrifice for the sake of others? What needs around you call for the Holy Spirit's fruit today?

SCRIPTURE INSIGHT

The book of Galatians has been rightly referred to as a "short and fiery" work. Paul's tone and word choices match the seriousness of the error that confronted the believers in Jesus in Galatia (a region in Asia Minor where Paul preached and established churches). What needed correction? False teachers were preaching a false gospel that required adhering to the demands of the law of Moses in addition to faith in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins.

Not only are we justified—made right with God—by faith in Christ alone (Galatians 2:15–21), but believers in Christ grow to be like Him (sanctification) by the same means—by faith apart from keeping the law (5:1–11). Through God's Spirit, believers are empowered for godly living, including loving one's neighbor as oneself (vv. 13–26).
– By **Arthur Jackson**

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