Our next scripture will be coming from Paul’s letter to the Galatians. Galatians is one of the letters found in the New Testament. In this letter, Paul is giving instructions to this Gentile or non-Jewish community about what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ.

In this part of the letter that we will be reading, Paul is going to be contrasting two ways of living life. One way he says is the way of the flesh and the second way he says are the fruits of the Spirit.

**Read Galatians 5:13-26 (Letarshia)**

This summer I have let many of you know that I would like to visit you at your workplace whenever that is possible. I have been able to spend some time over the past couple of weeks with some of you. I have been in a police car. The front seat! I have been in a warehouse. I have been in a medical facility.

I have been in an office building. I have been in an athletic training facility. Susan O, our church office manager, has invited me to her workplace here at the church although she says she has to work with a somewhat nutty pastor.

I have really appreciated the opportunities to visit folks in their places of work. If you have not invited me and you are open to me visiting you in your places of work, then please let me know. I am learning a lot about the challenges and opportunities that you are facing vocationally.

I realize that I can’t go into every workplace. But even if I can’t visit you in your workplace then I invite you to find a creative way to expose me to something that is important to you.

For instance, Mark Sleeper informs me that for some reason I am not allowed to sit with him in the cockpit of a US Air Airbus, but I have accepted his offer to go up in a private plane. If you are retired or you work out of your home, then I welcome you sharing with me some way to catch a glimpse of how you spend your time.

My first visits this summer have left me feeling so honored to have a connection to you because of what you are doing in this community. I have been impressed by how I have seen you carry out your duties with care and compassion while you may feel the pressure to produce results for your employer.

It’s not always easy to live out Christian values in the workplace. By that I don’t mean you can’t be honest about your faith. What I mean by saying that is that it can be hard to live your Christian values in the workplace because of the environment that you find yourself in.

For some of us, in our workplace, we find ourselves in work environments that are like the works of the flesh that Paul describes. As I return to his list, see if this reflects what it is like where you work. Do you find any of these characteristics modeled?

Characteristics like co-workers having affairs, strife, jealousy, quarrels, anger, dissention, factions, envy, drunkenness and other things like that? Can you relate to that? Is Susan O, our church office manager, here? Is that what you find at your workplace?

It can really be discouraging and draining to work in places like this. It can be very difficult to work in a place where you feel that there is such negativity around you. It can be very difficult to be in an environment where you feel as though you are being dragged down in one way or another.

So, if you find yourself surrounded by these types of negative behaviors, what do you do? Do you leave your job? Do you look for something else? Do you suck it up? Do you say something?

We who are church workers commonly talk about being “called” into ministry. You will hear pastors and other church workers talk about how God called them out of whatever profession and into ordained ministry. But God’s callings are not just upon those of us who are pastors and church workers. God’s callings are also upon those of us who serve in non-church or secular positions.

I recently read a blog article written by someone who provides career counseling. In this post, the writer shared the story of Duane. He says this about Duane:

Duane’s story illustrates how a vocational calling unfolds over the years. He was working at a car rental agency when he came for career counseling. Although he had received several promotions and was excelling in his work, Duane felt that what he was doing lacked sufficient meaning.

His purpose in doing career planning was to figure out where he should be investing his abilities to be the best possible steward of his gifts. A natural visionary, he loved using his creativity, marketing, and networking skills to grow an organization and make a difference in people’s lives.

Duane and his wife, Tricia, have been willing to take risks, persevere, grow and be obedient to what they believe God calls them to do. The career counselors asked Duane what he was learning about vocational calling.

Duane responded, “God is teaching me to not be afraid to leave an area where I am not using the gifts, skills, talents, and passions that God has given me, but rather to pursue leveraging those gifts, skills, talents, and passions for God’s kingdom!

Duane says that he has learned that when he takes a step of faith and goes in the direction where he thinks he can best be used; God meets him there and multiplies his ‘loaves and fishes’ in ways he could never imagine.”

So, this leads us back to the Galatians passage. What does it mean to be a follower of Jesus Christ in the workplace? It means following the advice of Paul in how we conduct ourselves in the workplace. And how do we conduct ourselves? According to Paul, we show the fruits of the Spirit. These fruits are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

We don’t have to have some big dramatic calling and big dramatic purpose in life. If we follow Paul’s advice, then we show the fruits of the Spirit everyday wherever we may be at work. We witness to God’s Spirit within us when we show these fruits of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Showing these fruits can be really, really hard. But I was reminded this week by one of you about how showing the fruits of the Spirit can make a really, big difference. This person was telling me about getting their car worked on. An issue came up with the dealer where the dealer backed away from a promise. This person handled this situation in a way that I think reflects someone who exudes these gifts of the Spirit.

As this person was leaving the dealership a man who observed how they conducted themselves approached them in the parking lot. This man had been very down and was contemplating hurting himself.

But then this person witnessed the Allison Creek Church person show love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. This person told the Allison Creek person how much they appreciated the way they conducted themselves in the dealership. This model of Christian faithfulness was Sam Covington.

See your work as a vocational calling. And this work includes those of us who are retired and those of us who work from home as parents or have home offices. Whatever you find yourself doing vocationally, conduct yourselves with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

As we share the fruits of the Spirit then we are faithful to our Godly vocational calling. AMEN.

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-<http://worklife.org/vocational-calling-as-a-lifelong-journey>

-Given: June 30, 2019 in Allison Creek Presbyterian (York, SC)