

Christ in the Psalms

The Good Life

By the Power of God's Spirit

Phil@UsefulEngines.com

<https://tinyurl.com/zadnvuca>

Luke 24

Jesus himself gives the divine authorization for reading all of the Old Testament (including the Psalms) in reference to Him.

A quick review...

Truth, The Nature of Mankind, and Worldviews

- **Truth** is objective, knowable, and personified in Jesus of Nazareth. (John 14:6-11; John 18:37; Acts 2:22)
- The **Natural Man** recognizes God's creativity and intelligence in the created order; *but suppresses the truth in unrighteousness.* (Romans 1)
- The **Moral Man** recognizes how things ought to be; *but falls short of God's goodness revealed via his own conscience and rationality.* (Romans 2)
- The **Religious Man** recognizes that God exists, and that God has expectations; *but succumbs to selfish pride, artificial authority, arrogance, and hypocrisy.* (Romans 3)
- The **Just Man** relies upon God's promise, lives by faith; *and receives the blessing of imputed righteousness.* (Romans 4)

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World-View – Common to all men everywhere always.

1. Origins (Where do we come from?)
2. Meaning (Why are we here?)
3. Morality (How should we live?)
4. Destiny (Where are we going?)

The Spiritual Man – A New Creation

1 Cor. 2:6-16; 2 Cor. 5:16-21; Galatians 5; Romans 8

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. (2 Cor. 5:17)

- ***An Internal, Heart-Level Knowledge (Jer. 31:33)***
- ***A Personal Relationship mediated through Jesus Christ (John 14:6)***
- ***Obedience as a Sign of Knowledge; a Practical Test (1 John 2:3-6)***
- ***Love as the Outflow of Knowing God; a Practical Test (1 John 4:7-8)***
- ***The Witness of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:12-17)***
- ***The Fruit of the Spirit; a Practical Test (Galatians 5:22-25)***
- ***The Mind of Christ; a World-View Test (1 Corinthians 2:16)***

When Paul lists the “fruit of the Spirit” (Gal. 5:22–23)—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control—he’s describing the character and conduct that flow out of a life yielded to God’s Spirit. Although the explicit phrase “Holy Spirit” appears less frequently in the Old Testament, several psalms not only point to “living the good life” (i.e., walking in covenant faithfulness and blessing) but also reference or imply the work of God’s Spirit in shaping that life.

In **Jeremiah 31:31–34**, God promises a “new covenant” in which **His law will be written on people’s hearts**, and as a result, **“they shall all know me.”** This new covenant relationship implies an intimate, personal knowledge of God rather than a merely external or secondhand acquaintance. To understand how one can know they truly “know the LORD,” it’s helpful to consider several biblical principles that clarify the nature and evidence of this relationship.

1. An Internal, Heart-Level Knowledge:

Under the new covenant, God’s law is not just a set of external rules; it is internalized. This indicates that truly knowing the LORD involves a changed heart—a shift from merely following religious observances to experiencing a genuine inward transformation (**Jeremiah 31:33**). Thus, one sign of knowing the Lord is the deep, inner desire to love, honor, and please Him, not because of external pressure, but because one’s heart has been made new.

2. A Personal Relationship Through Christ:

The New Testament reveals that Jesus Christ mediates this new covenant. Through faith in Christ’s death and resurrection, believers enter into a restored relationship with God (Hebrews 8:6–12, John 14:6). Knowing the Lord, then, is inseparable from knowing Christ. If you have placed your trust in Jesus, believing His sacrifice for your sins, and have become His disciple, this faith relationship is a foundational indicator that you know God.

3. Obedience as a Sign of Knowledge:

First John gives practical tests for knowing God:

1 John 2:3–6: Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, “I know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.

4. Love as the Outflow of Knowing God:

Another test of knowing the Lord is found in love.

1 John 4:7–12: Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.

5. The Witness of the Holy Spirit:

Under the new covenant, God’s Spirit dwells within believers:

Romans 8:12–17: Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” **The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,** and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

Summary:

You can know that you know the Lord when your heart has been changed by Him, when you have come to Him through faith in Jesus Christ, when your life exhibits loving obedience to His commands, and when the Holy Spirit is actively at work within you. This inward transformation, evidenced in loving God and others, marks the reality of the relationship promised in Jeremiah’s prophecy of the new covenant.

Psalm 1 – The Fruitful Life

Character and conduct exhibit God's Spirit

Psalm 1 describes the character and conduct that flow out of a life yielded to God's Spirit.

Key Verses:

Psalms 1:1-3 *Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper.*

Connections:

- *Living the Good Life* : This psalm sets the tone for the entire book by showing that true blessing (or "the good life") is found in delighting in God's Word rather than following sinful paths.
- *Fruit of the Spirit* : Being "like a tree that yields its fruit" beautifully parallels Paul's "fruit of the Spirit" metaphor, underscoring that a life rooted in God will naturally produce godly qualities.

Psalm 51 – Renewal by the Spirit

Transformation in Spiritual Renewal

Psalm 51 describes the realization for change in repentance by the power of God's indwelling Spirit.

Key Verses:

Psalms 51:10-11 *Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.*

Connections:

- *Living In the Spirit*: Here we see one of the clearest Old Testament references to the Holy Spirit as David pleads for spiritual renewal and heart transformation.
- *Repentance and Inner Change* : The fruit of the Spirit begins with a renewed heart. David's prayer mirrors Paul's teaching that genuine transformation comes from God's work within us (Rom. 12:2; Gal. 5:16–17).

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. (Rom 12:2)

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. (Gal 5:16-17)

Psalm 139 – Life Under the Omnipresent Spirit

The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit

Psalm 139 recognizes that God's Spirit dwells with us.

Key Verses:

Psalms 139:7 *Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?*

Connections:

- *Living In the Spirit*: Although Psalm 139 focuses on God's omniscience and omnipresence, it explicitly mentions God's Spirit.
- *Relational Intimacy* : Recognizing the inescapable presence of the Spirit can encourage believers to walk in holiness and obedience, as Paul would later teach about "keeping in step with the Spirit" (Gal. 5:25, Rom. 8:10-11).

If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. (Gal 5:25)

And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. (Rom 8:10-11)

Psalm 143 – Led by the "Good Spirit"

Requires a "Teachable" Humility

Psalm 143 exhibits the teachable heart of a humble believer.

Key Verses:

Psalms 143:10 *Teach me to do your will, for you are my God! Let your good Spirit lead me on level ground!*

Connections:

- *Living In the Spirit* : This psalmist's plea for God's "good Spirit" to guide him resonates with Paul's exhortation to "walk by the Spirit" (Gal. 5:16).
- *Practical Guidance* : Just as the fruit of the Spirit shapes our day-to-day decisions and relationships, the psalmist yearns to be taught and led by God in every aspect of life.

Psalms – The Fruit of the Spirit

Other Psalms Highlighting Virtues Aligned with the Fruit of the Spirit

Psalm 15 – Describes the character of the one who may dwell in God’s holy place: blamelessness, truthfulness, integrity. These traits overlap with “goodness”, “faithfulness”, and “gentleness”.

Psalm 34 – Invites us to “taste and see that the Lord is good” (v. 8) and calls for humility, seeking peace, and pursuing righteousness—echoes of “goodness”, “peace”, and “self-control”.

Psalm 37 – Urges believers to “trust in the Lord and do good” (v. 3), to “delight” in the Lord (v. 4), and to refrain from anger (v. 8). This reflects virtues such as trust (faithfulness), goodness, and patience.

Psalms – Putting it all Together

Living the Good Life by the power of God's Spirit

"Living the Good Life" : In psalms like 1, 15, 34, and 37, the good life is portrayed as a life blessed by God - rooted in His Word, marked by integrity, and upheld by His covenant love.

"Living in the Spirit" : Although more explicit in the New Testament, the direct references in Psalm 51, 139, and 143 show an Old Testament understanding that God's Spirit is at work in the believer's heart (cleansing, guiding, sustaining), much like Paul's description of the Spirit's transforming power in Galatians 5.

Parallels to Galatians 5:22–26 :

- *Love* : Central to many psalms (e.g., God's steadfast love and the believer's call to love righteousness and neighbor).
- *Joy and Peace* : Prominent in worship psalms (e.g., Ps. 16:11; 23:2–3).
- *Patience, Kindness, Goodness*: Found in psalms urging us to wait on the Lord, to show mercy, and to do good (Ps. 37).
- *Faithfulness and Gentleness* : Modeled by the righteous man in Psalm 15 and others.
- *Self-Control* : Seen in the repeated theme of refraining from anger or sin (Ps. 37:8).

In short, while Paul gives us a concise list of virtues that the Holy Spirit cultivates in believers, the Psalms flesh out what such a life looks like in varied circumstances - be it in times of repentance (Psalm 51), seeking God's guidance (Psalm 143), or rejoicing in His unending presence (Psalm 139). Together, they paint a full picture of "living the good life" under the transforming influence of God's Spirit.

Paul's Vision of the "Good Life" – The Just shall live by faith

1. A Right Standing with God (Romans)

- Recognize human inability to earn God's favor
- Receive justification as a gift by faith in Jesus Christ
- Cultivate gratitude, peace, and hope from this new identity

2. A Spirit-Led Lifestyle (Galatians)

- Reject legalistic or performance-based religion
- Rely on the Spirit for real moral and spiritual transformation
- Express faith tangibly through loving relationships and service

3. A Life of Ongoing Faith and Perseverance (Hebrews)

- Understand faith as an enduring trust in God's character and promises

- Draw near to God through Christ, the perfect High Priest
- Embrace trials with the knowledge that faith yields eternal reward

Paul's theological insights into "the just shall live by faith" depict a cohesive vision of the good life - one grounded in God's grace, shaped by the indwelling Spirit, and sustained by a persevering trust in God's promises. The good life, therefore, is not found in external success or self-powered morality, but in a God-centered relationship that results in genuine transformation, lasting hope, and love for others.