

The Fruit of the Flesh vs. The fruit of the Spirit

Gal.5:16-26 (vv.19-24)

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I. Historical Background and Biblical Context

A. Historical Background

The apostle Paul concluded chapter 4 by urging the Galatian Christians to choose the freedom offered by Christ rather enslave themselves to following the Law. Chapter 5 continues that sentiment. In 5:1 Paul, stated everything he wanted them to understand: “Christ has liberated us to be free. Stand firm then and don’t submit again to the yoke of slavery. The harder they try to pursue righteousness through their own actions, they would alienate themselves from the righteousness of Christ. In V.7-12, he reminded them that they had been on the right path, but they had allowed the Judaizers to derail them. He urged them to fulfill the Law by loving their neighbors as themselves—a reference to Matt.22:37-40. They are to rely on the grace of God for salvation.

B. Biblical Context

The second half of this chapter contains a contrast between a life lived through the flesh and a life lived through the power of the Holy Spirit. The key theme in this Book is a continued attack on the idea that people can earn their way into a relationship with God by obeying the Law. In this section Paul is letting them (us) know that they can’t have it both ways. The contrast between the fruit of the flesh and the fruit of the Holy Spirit is given in Galatians 5 verses 16 through 23:

- a) **What is the Fruit of the Flesh?** As described in verses 19 to 21 are “sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; Idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies and the like.”

- b) **What is the Fruit of the Holy Spirit?** As described in verses 22 and 23, the Fruit of the Holy Spirit are “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”

The Holy Spirit, who lives inside every believer, produces His Fruit. It is a unified whole, not independent characteristics. As we grow, all the characteristics of Christ will be manifested in the life of the believer. Yet, like physical fruit it needs time to grow.

II. The Lesson: The Fruit of the Flesh vs. The Fruit of the Spirit

1. vv. 16-17.

Paul is telling the Believers: “Let the Holy spirit direct your life and they (we) will not satisfy the desires of the flesh (human Nature). How? By placing our faith exclusively in Christ and the Cross, who the Spirit works exclusively through (Rom.1-2). This is what is meant to walk in the Spirit. What the flesh or human nature wants is opposed to what the Spirit wants and what the Spirit wants is opposed to what the flesh wants. There is a battle going on because the two are enemies. As the Tamrie’s always say “Flesh is a Mess”. These two will never be in harmony with each other.

These verses teach two things about the Holy Spirit (v.16) –he frees us from bondage of the corrupt sinful nature and (2) the Holy spirit contends actively with the flesh to keep us from sinning when we allow it to operate in our lives. The New Testament often speaks about the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit. In the Garden of Gethsemane, before Jesus was arrested, He asked his disciples to pray with Him, but they kept falling asleep. Matt.26:41- He warned them that the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. Paul says, Nothing good dwells in me (Rom.7:18).

2. vv.18-21.

One cannot follow the Spirit and the Law at the same time, but unfortunately that’s what most Christians try to do. When we follow the desires of sinful nature, the results are very clear. Verse 17 points out that the sinful nature wants to do evil, which is to gratify itself regardless of the cost or consequences.

Because of the inner conflict, Christians must continually choose which power is going to define the direction of their lives. Paul makes this assertion of them being mortal enemies in Roman 7:19: For the good I want, I do not, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. This internal conflict has an enormous impact on believers. There are three entities living within us which we can choose to follow: The Holy Spirit; The sinful flesh (which nothing good dwells); and we who can choose between the two). Paul says our basic choice is which of these will we obey (Rom.6:16). The Spirit calls believers to live in the freedom that Jesus gives, rather than in bondage to sin and the Law. In freedom we get to make a choice but the one in bondage simply does what they are told. Every Believer must daily choose whether to walk in the resurrection power of Jesus or in the power of the old nature, the flesh. In the flesh we serve our own appetites but, in the Spirit, we serve others in Love.

Paul has listed what is manifested by the works of the flesh. He says in Romans 8:5 –Those who live as their human nature tells them to, have their minds controlled by what human nature wants... Verse 6: To be controlled by human nature leads to death. He also let them know in our lesson that they will not inherit the Kingdom of God if they do such things. This tells us in no uncertain terms that if our faith is not everlasting in Christ and the Cross, we will not make it to our heavenly home. Col.3:25- ...all wrongdoers will be repaid for the wrong things they do, because God judges everyone by the same standard. God only have one way to Salvation and that is Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

These behaviors do not breathe Jesus into our world. They do, however, lead us into dysfunction, addiction, escape from reality and ultimately depression. The thing they all have in common is the focus is on “Me” or “I”. We are not our own: 1Cor.6:19- Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit, and we are brought with a price, so we must honor God with our bodies.

3. **vv.22-24.**

Believers demonstrate that they are walking in the power of the Holy Spirit when they are serving others in love. They will not desire to act on what the flesh desire. Law keeping is about what I can do for self-improvement. The flesh cannot be improved. That is the reason why we as believers must daily crucify the flesh daily (v.24). We are to be transformed by the renewing of our mind

(Rom.12:2). How do we know if we are doing the right thing? **We can look at the List of the Fruit of the Flesh or the Spirit to see which we are producing the most.** In other words, what is growing in your garden? To nourish your new life in the Spirit and starve the old nature it is necessary to have (1) Prayer (2) Bible Study and (3) fellowship with other Believers (Eph.4:22-24).

The *first Fruit of the Holy Spirit* is love which connects all the others. It is an unconditional commitment to an imperfect person. 1 Cor.13:4-8; (1) **Love**: God is love (1Jn.4:7-8); (2) **Joy**: The worlds' joy is fleeing. We will experience the fullness of joy as we cling to Jesus (John 15:4-11); (3) **Peace**: Is not the absence of the storm; It is God in the midst of the storm (Php.4:6-7); (4) **Patience**: Sometimes our trials help us to grow this character (Rom.5:3); (5) **Kindness**; (6) **Goodness**: We are beneficial and productive to those around us. We are good team members who use our gifts. Constant kindness can accomplish much. As the sun makes ice melt, kindness causes misunderstanding, mistrust, and hostility to evaporate. Zech.7:9; (7) **Faithfulness**: We walk in accordance with the Word of God rather than satisfy our own desires. God tries our faith so we can try His faithfulness" (Lam.3:23); (8) **Gentleness**: When confronting others, there is an attitude of seeking the best for the person rather than insisting they must agree with us. The focus is on serving rather than controlling. Let your gentleness be evident to all. Php.4:5; (9) **Self-control**: Inward strength. Every athlete submits to strict discipline... 1Co.9:25.

Maturing in faith includes exercising the responsibility and the authority of our inheritance, by becoming responsible children of what has been given to us as members of His family. In our flesh we serve our appetites but with the Holy Spirit, we serve each other in love. With love as the foundation, the rest of the character of Christ will come forth. We bring the Kingdom of God into the world when we live a resurrected life by being led by the Holy Spirit.

Those who belong to Christ have nailed their passions and desires to the cross. As Pastor has preached, we must "Put on Our new Clothes": Col.3. We are living a new life, it no longer us but Christ who lives in us. We have died to the old life and our life is hidden with Christ (Col.3:3).

4. **vv. 25-26.**

Now or since God has given us new life, we should do something to live victorious in our new life. We must keep in step as soldiers do when they march, daily with the Holy Spirit. God has given Him to us to lead, guide and teach us the right path to follow and be our Sustainer. We can't break the yoke on our own accord but only by the relying of the Holy Spirit. The Christian life doesn't end at justification, after that comes the process or journey of sanctification (Make Holy). It is the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of Believers. Rom.15:16; 1Th.2:13.

III. Conclusion

Like a successful gardener, one must battle against weeds that grow in the garden in order to enjoy the sweet fruit. If not caught in time it can ruin or take over. We must constantly work to rid our lives of the weeds of our sinful nature that wants to choke out the work of the Spirit. If the Christian life looks impossible or hard to live, we must remember that we are not called to live it by ourselves. Think of ourselves as the train on a track; the train can't move on its own power; it's the engine that gives it power. So, walk or be led by the Spirit means to stay connected to the divine power of God and go wherever He leads. Jesus said in John 15:4-5: "Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me". Our flesh is weak and do not have the ability to practice righteousness (Matt.26:41). As Believers, we are to be cleanse from all filthiness (2Co.7:1) as we lead a life surrendered to God so the Fruit of the Spirit will be displayed.

Application: Pray, read & meditate on the Word of Truth and ask the Holy Spirit to develop the Fruit of the Spirit so we can become more Christ like in character.