

Galatians 5 pt. 4 v.22-26 - The Fruit of the Spirit

Our text presents what is commonly known as the Fruit of the Spirit.

This is something commonly taught on its own in a vacuum.

Sometimes this is presented as something we ought to strive for.

But the context for the fruit of the spirit is bound up in Paul's courageous defense of justification by faith alone, in Christ alone. He staunchly opposes legalists and Judaizers within the churches and points towards Jesus Christ.

Paul demonstrates by the Scriptures that their proposed way to salvation is dependent on the works of the flesh and human effort - be better, do better, do this, don't do that, etc.

But, Paul shows them that the all too evident, actual, works of the flesh are sin - that's our natural state of being! That is what our fleshly natures bring forth.

[Gal 5:19-21 NKJV] 19 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and

the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told [you] in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

He finishes naming these works with the terrifying warning - those who practice such things WILL NOT inherit the Kingdom of God.

Then Paul counters the works of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit - remember his words from v.16 - WALK IN THE SPIRIT AND YOU SHALL NOT FULFILL THE LUST OF THE FLESH!

When we walk in the Spirit it is impossible to fulfill the lusts of the flesh - the two cannot take place simultaneously.

We then come face to face with the Biblical idea that the Flesh, our bodies, our sin nature and the Spirit, God's Holy Spirit - are opposed to one another.

We must understand this and we must be abundantly careful with our study and understanding of how the Spirit and the Flesh relate to one another or we find ourselves landing in the heretical territory of the early Gnostics that began to infiltrate the early church.

Gnostics believed that humans are split between the physical and spiritual world: “the true human self is as alien to the world as is the transcendent God” (Pearson, Ancient Gnosticism, 13). They asserted that the true human self or soul is naturally divine, belonging to the same realm as the Ultimate Ground of Being, but is trapped and imprisoned by the material world. They viewed the physical body as a prison which malevolently trapped the “divine spark” within humanity (Pearson, Ancient Gnosticism, 12–14). Because of this imprisonment, Gnosticism incorporates an active hatred of the physical body, similar to Docetism. This dualistic split between the body and the soul means that the divine spark of the human soul must be freed from the material constraints of the world in order to attain salvation and unity with the Ultimate Ground of Being. Smith, Z. G. (2016). Gnosticism. In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, ... W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

The Holy Spirit of God opposes our flesh nature, but God desires every part of our being, including our flesh, not just our invisible parts. How we live and glorify God in our bodies matters.

So we come to the portion of our text where we see the fruit of the Spirit, and it is important that we understand why Paul refers to these attributes as fruit - rather than work.

Fruit is something that is produced naturally by a plant that is living in healthy conditions - enough water, good soil, good roots, enough light, etc (He who has ears to hear, let him hear!).

This understanding is important because we can very easily get pulled into a works based theology where we read these fruits of the Spirit and then we take this as an imperative - I should be doing these things: love, joy, peace, etc.

Many have walked that road in a vain and fruitless attempt to fabricate these attributes - perhaps in an attempt to prove their goodness, perhaps a fundamental misunderstanding of the Gospel whereby the misguided hearer believes, "If I do these things then God will be pleased with me."

BUT, the notion that Paul is presenting here is that these fruits are the natural, some may even say inevitable, result of the Holy Spirit on the individual, and in a collective sense, the church as well.

The root comes first - that is the Gospel of Jesus Christ - then the fruit is born out of that naturally by the Holy Spirit.

In this way Paul is showing us what a good tree looks like - “You tell a tree by the fruit that it bears.” Since God is pleased with us, since we have believed, since the Holy Spirit dwells within us then we will bear these fruits.

If we see what the works of the flesh are - what a bad tree looks like, well then what does a good tree look like, one that is given life and sustained by the Holy Spirit?

V.22-23 The first is Love - displayed very first and prominently on this list of what the Spirit produces in the life of a believer - love. What kind of love? A love like the Father, Son and Spirit demonstrate. A scriptural, holy love for God and others, thereby fulfilling the Law of God.

The second is joy - believers who are filled with the Spirit are joyful! This one is quite convicting. We see just how much we fight against the Spirit when we don't allow Him to produce the fruit of joy in our lives.

The third is peace - The Holy Spirit brings believers peace in our circumstances. One text writes about the Greek term Paul employed here that it communicates, “a state of freedom from anxiety and inner turmoil—‘peace, freedom from worry.’ ...‘Peace’ in the sense of

'freedom from worry' is often expressed by means of an idiom, for example, 'to sit down in the heart,' 'to rest in the liver,' or 'to be quiet in one's inner self.' Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 314). New York: United Bible Societies.

Consider how different that is from the busy-body, the one who stirs up controversy, sows discontent, and worry. The Spirit brings forth peace.

Next we find the fruit of longsuffering as we walk in the Spirit - another word for longsuffering is forbearance or patience. The fruit of patience is born out in our lives by enduring peacefully through circumstances that others find to be unbearable. Practically this is born out in how we bear with others. Are we quick to adopt some of the works of the flesh in our lives when we are provoked such as outbursts of wrath, or contentions? Or has the Spirit brought forth the fruit of patience/longsuffering in our lives? I find it true too that the Holy Spirit reminds us just how patient He is with us when we are unbearable.

Kindness - The Spirit brings forth the fruit of kindness. This is again something that we demonstrate in our relationships and interactions with others. The Spirit moves us to kindness. We must be careful

when we say, “I’m just rough around the edges,” or “that’s just my personality.” We are called to adopt Christ’s characteristics by the Spirit rather than clinging to our own unkindness. Take heart! The Spirit is able to bring about this fruit in our lives as we walk in the Spirit.

Goodness - That may seem pretty broad. Bear in mind that these fruits of the Spirit are part of the nature and defining characteristics of God - not our relativistic opinions of what they ought to be.

One lexicon remarks on this broad term: “In a number of languages there is no abstract term such as ‘goodness.’ Since goodness implies some type of activity involving others, one must frequently use a verb expression, for example, ‘to be good to’ or ‘to benefit.’ The qualification ‘full of’ in Rom 15:14 must likewise be restructured in a number of languages so as to indicate the fact that one always engages in doing good, for example, ‘that you are always doing good to people.’” Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 741). New York: United Bible Societies.

Faithfulness - As we grow and mature in the Spirit we understand how important faithfulness is and we also find that it is nearly impossible for somebody to fabricate, or fake, faithfulness. Faithfulness means

keeping faith with others because of Christ. It means, “being someone in whom complete confidence can be placed...” Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 376). New York: United Bible Societies.

Gentleness - Are we dealing gently with others or are we dealing harshly with others? Bear in mind as we go through these we do not have the authority to modify these based on our own inclinations or momentary wants. We may desire to caveat Paul’s writing where none exists. We may say, “Well, there’s a time for gentleness, and a time for being firm.” Paul is speaking here about how we will be characterized by the Holy Spirit in a general sense. It is not our place to make allowance for our own bad personalities and the works of our flesh in the face of God’s word.

Finally we come to self-control. Are we impulsive, inconsiderate, etc - those characteristics belong to the flesh. The Spirit enables us to control ourselves when it comes to how we live rather than being controlled by our sinful flesh.

As a side note - In regard to the Gifts of the Spirit intersecting with the Fruit of the Spirit - some may teach that it is possible to be “overpowered” by the Spirit in pentecostal settings. This was a huge

problem in the Corinthian church and it caused tremendous confusion in the church - as the members stood up to speak over one another all throughout their gathering. Well, one of the fruits of the Spirit is self-control. So, if one is full of the Spirit, they will be able to control themselves.

Paul writes to us that these fruits are unhindered by any Law - and why should they be? They are truly a benefit to those around us and to us ourselves. These are tremendous blessings.

Where before the Galatians looked toward the Law, fulfilled on their own terms, in the flesh, Paul is teaching them that the result of being a new creation, a Jesus follower, is that the Holy Spirit lives in each of us and He brings forth these wonderful attributes of God in our own lives in a very real and practical way.

These fruits are the evidence of our faith rather than trying to accomplish the Law by our own hands.

All of these fruits, mind you, are found and observed in the nature of Jesus Christ first and foremost, not because He conjured them up as performance art, or in an attempt to trick people into thinking that He was morally superior (He is) but because He is one with the Father and the Spirit.

Since this is Christ's nature these fruits are found in we who believe because we are called to be one with the Father, Son, and Spirit as well.

We are called to put to death our old nature and be new and to bear fruit because we are made into new good trees for the benefit of others - fruit benefits others, not the tree.

V.24 As we said, the Spirit, stands against the flesh and vice versa - Paul brings this right down to a very graphic application that those who belong to Jesus have crucified the flesh along with its passions and desires.

The result of coming to Jesus Christ, being filled with the Holy Spirit is that we put to death our sin nature, not in a passive sense but in an active, participatory, intentional way as we come to an understanding how vile our sin nature is and how offensive it is to God's Holiness.

[Rom 8:12-14 NKJV] 12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors--not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. 13 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. 14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

[Col 3:5-7 NKJV] 5 Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, 7 in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.

Brutal! But this body we live in wars against us. We may think - this is too hard! I can't do it. That's true, not by yourself.

When we examine the fruit of the Spirit and find that we aren't as mature as we thought we were, or that we are fabricating some of these, or perhaps we are full on depressed because the branches aren't heavy with fruit as they should be, we can become weighed down by despair wondering, "How do I even do this? How do I crucify the old man, the flesh? How do I walk in the Spirit?"

It is only by Jesus, loved one. He knows the struggle, He has shared in our likeness.

[Heb 2:17-18 NLT] 17 Therefore, it was necessary for him to be made in every respect like us, his brothers and sisters, so that he could be our merciful and faithful High Priest before God. Then he could offer a sacrifice that would take away the sins of the people. 18 Since he

himself has gone through suffering and testing, he is able to help us when we are being tested.

Remember it was Christ who first went to the cross for our sakes, who showed us the way. It was Christ who called the first disciples to take up their own crosses and follow after Him when he taught them: [Mat 16:24-25 NLT] ... "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross, and follow me. 25 If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it.

This is what we are called to - the cross.

V.25-26 - These last two verses before chapter 6 serve to reinforce Paul's teaching on the oppositional nature of the flesh versus the Spirit.

Paul is urging the reader, "to unite with [him] in a course of action upon which he has already decided." Wallace, D. B. (1996). *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (p. 464). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

He has decided to shun the works of the flesh by refusing to become conceited, falsely puffed up/proud, bearing ill will toward others,

provoking others - but rather allowing others to experience the sweet fruit of the Spirit.

Paul's decision, and the decision that we make when we commit to Christ, is to walk in the Spirit, since it is by the Spirit that we have found true life. Walk in the Spirit loved one, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.