

GALATIANS 9

Fruit of the Spirit

*"We do not deny that there is such a thing as moral conflict in non-Christian people, but we assert that it is fiercer in Christians because they possess two natures-flesh and Spirit-in irreconcilable antagonism...Is the tragic confession that "I cannot do what I want to do" the last word about a Christian's inner moral conflict? Is this all Christianity offers-an experience of continuous defeat? Indeed, it is not. If we are left to ourselves, we could not do what we would; instead, we would succumb to the desires of our old nature. But if we 'walk by the Spirit' (verse 16), then we shall not gratify the desires of the flesh. We shall still experience them, but we shall not indulge them. On the contrary, we shall bear the fruit of the Spirit."*¹

Pre-Article Questions:

1. When you did your prayer partner assignment this past week, how did God encourage and speak to your hearts?
2. How is good fruit cultivated on a tree?

"The moment you received Jesus as your Savior by faith, God sowed His Spirit and Word into your heart like a seed, and you were spiritually born again by the incorruptible seed of the Word of God (1 Peter 1:23)."² Orange seeds always produce oranges, apple seeds always produce apples. So it is with God's seed in your heart, it immediately begins to produce more Christ-likeness. Paul's use of the term "fruit of the Spirit" in Galatians five, is brilliant, bringing understanding to the direct result of the life of Christ transferred to the believer by the Holy Spirit. Inevitably, this next section of scriptures continually makes mention of the Holy Spirit. Named at least seven times in this passage, He is the great sanctifier who alone can subdue our flesh, oppose it, rendering the fruit of righteousness in us.

"Fruit" speaks of the open countryside, the quiet garden, and the silent but life-giving forces of nature-something coming from the life that God gives. Fruit is the proof, the tangible evidence, of life. There is first the bud, then the blossom, finally the ripeness of harvest. Underlying each step in the process is the life in the tree that produces the fruit."³ Yet yielding fine, juicy, ripe fruit is impossible where there is death and decay. Just as there are many "agents" that harm fruit trees, generating rot, so our old nature, flesh, is at war with our new nature, Spirit, and consistently endeavors to infuse decay.

Thankfully, God's word gives us the perfect "pesticide" solution when dealing with our fleshy nature: crucifixion. The only way to deal with the flesh is to "crucify" it, ensuring that it does not stifle the fruit-bearing life of Christ within us. Paul writes in Galatians 5:24-25, "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit." So what does it look like to crucify the flesh? John Stott writes, "The fact that 'crucifixion is to be the fate of the flesh is very significant... First, a Christian rejection of his old nature is pitiless. Crucifixion in the Graeco-Roman world was not a pleasant form of execution, nor was it administered to nice or refined people; it was reserved for the worst criminals...If, we are to 'crucify' our flesh, it is plain that the flesh is not something to be respectable to be treated with courtesy and deference, but something so evil that it deserves no better fate than to be crucified. Secondly, our rejection of the old nature will be painful...which of us does not know the acute pain of inner conflict when 'the

1. Stott, 148,149.

2. Renner, Rick. Sparkling Gems from the Greek. Teach All Nations: Tulsa, 2003. p. 523

3. Gee, Donald. The Fruit of the Spirit. Gospel Publishing House: Springfield, MO. 1934. p. 6

fleeting pleasures of sin' (Heb. 11:25) are renounced? Thirdly, our rejection of our old nature is to be decisive... Once a criminal had been nailed to the cross, he was left there to die...When we came to Jesus Christ, we repented. We 'crucified' everything we knew to be wrong. We took our old self-centered nature, with all its sinful passions and desires, and nailed it to the cross. So, Paul says, if we crucified the flesh, we must leave it there to die. We must renew this attitude every day towards sin..."⁴

As stated before, apples produce apples and Christ produces Christ-likeness. If we have received His free gift of salvation by faith, we do not live to gratify the sinful nature nor to indulge in "works" of the flesh. "The acts of the flesh are obvious: 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."⁵In thinking about "works," words like strain, toil, effort, and even death come to mind. Looking at our list above, the "works" of the flesh truly are dead. What a contrast to the fruit that the Spirit gives!

In John 15, Christ tells us to remain in Him and we will bear much fruit. This word "remain" broken down in the Greek means to "stay put, dwell, or abide." The key to growing and bearing much "fruit" is our relationship, or communion, with God. We produce by staying put. How relieving that as Christians we are called to be not to do. Our "doing" flows out naturally from our "being." The growth of love, joy, peace, etc. is the result of staying connected to the source of life and the crucifixion of the flesh. Just as a healthy piece of fruit signifies life in the plant, health and wholeness in the life of a follower of Jesus demonstrates growth in these attributes and death to that which rots, corrupts, and corrodes.

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control are powerful traits and our Savior was full of each of these. In fact, Jesus told His disciples, "All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you."⁶ Moreover, as the Holy Spirit produces the fruit of righteousness in our lives it will not only make our stay here on earth much more pleasant and beautiful, but it also impacts all those who "taste" of it. As believers, we are called to reach the world. One of the most powerful ways to share the gospel is by showing the world the effects the gospel of Jesus Christ has had on your life in these areas. "So don't give way to the flesh...Instead, yield to the Spirit and allow the seed of God's Spirit and Word to produce the fruit of the Spirit in your life."⁷

Article Question:

1. Can you describe a time recently when you really sensed the war between "the flesh" and "the Spirit" going on inside you? What thoughts or actions brought victory?

Galatians 5:13-26, NIV

You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. 14 For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." 15 If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other. 16 So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. 19 The acts of the

4. Stott, 150, 151.

5. Galatians 5:19-21

6. John 15:16

7. Renner, Rick. p. 523

flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Study Questions:

1. How are you prone to use your Christian freedom as an opportunity for the flesh? What does Paul suggest as a resolution to this kind of living and thinking in verses 14-16?
2. Read Romans 13:9 and James 2:8, what does it look like to love our neighbor as ourselves? In what ways has a fellow believer in Christ loved you this week and how did it make a difference in your day?
3. As a Christian, how would you describe our relationship with the law? (Thought: Paul is not teaching us to disregard and throw out the law altogether. This letter teaches us that law cannot justify or save us, however, once saved, we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to fulfill the law, the law of Christ "Although we cannot gain acceptance by keeping the law, yet once we have been accepted we shall keep the law out of love for Him who has accepted us and has given us His Spirit to enable us to keep it.")
4. In Galatians 5:16 and 25, Paul uses the words "walk" and "keep in step" with the Spirit, what do you think that looks like on a day to day basis?
5. The word "works" conjures up all kinds of emotions and thoughts. Re-read Galatians 5:19-23 and discuss the difference between "works" or "acts" of the flesh and the "fruit of the Spirit."
6. How do we practically, "crucify the flesh?"
7. How does Paul's analogy of these Christ-like qualities growing in the way fruit grows encourage you or help you to better understand the process?
8. Which fruit of the Spirit are you enjoying the most right now and which fruit of the Spirit are you struggling the most to walk in and why?
9. In what ways has your relationship with Christ grown since being liberated from "works" and the "law" and walking with the Spirit who is producing this fruit in your life?

Prayer Partner Assignment:

Meet with your prayer partner this week to read and discuss:

1. Read John 15:1-17 and answer the following questions:
2. How do these scriptures encourage you?
3. Who is the vine, the branches, and what is the fruit that is to be brought forth?
4. According to these scriptures, how do we bear much fruit?
5. What are some of the things Jesus commands us in this passage? How have you been encouraged or challenged by these commands in this past week?

Scripture Memory:
Galatians 5:22-25