

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 10/25/92 PM
Galatians 5:22 "Fruit Starts Here"

Intro:

Illust: Bring in piece of artificial fruit--looks good, colorful, appealing. But if you're hungry, it's quite a let down. Artificial fruit looks good on the outside. But it's not real fruit, obviously.

Q: Is there such a thing as imitation spiritual fruit?

Turn to Galatians 5...

"Fruit Inspection 101"

#1 Introduction--An Overview of Galatians 5

#2 The Works of the Flesh (5:16-21)

#3 The Fruit of the Spirit in our Relationship with God: Love, Joy, Peace (5:22)

#4 The Fruit of the Spirit in our Relationship with Others: Longsuffering, Gentleness, Goodness (5:22)

#5 The Fruit of the Spirit in Ourselves: Faith, Meekness, Self-Control (5:23)

#6 Walking in the Spirit (5:24-26)

Review: An Overview of Galatians 5:16-23

I. The Categories (16)

A. Flesh

B. Spirit

II. The Conflict (17-18)

III. The Contrast (19-26)

A. The Works of the Flesh (19-21)

B. The Fruit of the Spirit (22-23)

Our last time we learned that if we are to enjoy the fruit of the Spirit, we must get rid of the enemy of the fruit of the Spirit. What's that? The enemy of the Spirit is the Flesh. The product of the flesh is the "works of the flesh."

Paul highlighted 4 ugly categories of sins (17 total in our English Bible) that are evidence of the flesh's control:

I. Repulsive Sins (19)

II. Religious Sins (20)

III. Relationship Sins (20-21)

IV. Reckless Sins (21)

Here's the point. These have to go! If we are a follower of Christ, we have the Spirit of Christ living in us. Before we can experience the fruit of the Spirit, the works of the flesh must go. They don't mix.

Illust:

Q: What is the fruit of the Spirit?

A: Look at the phrase in Gal 5:22. Let's make 2 observations.

1. The Fruit of the Spirit is FRUIT, not fruits.

Paul identifies 9 graces--Love, Joy, Peace, etc. But he calls the list the "fruit" of the Spirit. Why is it singular?

The fruit of the Spirit is a package deal, not a pick and choose smorgasborg! They all go together. Fruit has to do with Character.

Quote: Wiersbe, "It's important that we distinguish the gift of the Spirit which is salvation (Acts 2:38), and the gifts of the Spirit, which have to do with service (I Cor 12), from the graces of the Spirit, which relate to Christian character. It's unfortunate that an overemphasis on gifts has led some Christians to neglect the graces of the Spirit." (719)

Definition: The fruit of the Spirit is the life of Christ lived out in the Christian. That's exactly what Christ desires to do in each of our lives, by His Spirit. Jn 15:4-5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He that abides in Me...much fruit..."

While on the earth, Jesus Christ exhibited love, joy, peace, etc. When He left, He sent His Spirit to indwell His followers. Here's what the Spirit does. When a believer is living in vital union with Christ, the Spirit reproduces the character of Christ in him.

II Cor 3:18 "But we all...are being changed into the same image..."

The fruit of the Spirit is FRUIT. That's important for 2 reasons. First, it underscores the necessity of abiding in Christ, which we'll touch on later. And second, it says we have no right to pick and choose among these 9 qualities. If we do that, we are a lop-sided Christian, out of whack.

Eg--"I just can't control my temper. It's not my nature." (Gentleness)

Eg--"Some people are relaxed and laid back. Not me. I'm uptight and nervous and edgy. But I can't help it." (That may be true that you can't help it, but don't throw that excuse in the face of the Spirit. He wants to generate the characteristic of "Peace" in you.)

2. The Fruit of the Spirit is produced by the SPIRIT, not us.

Listen. It's not natural to be a person who exhibits love, joy, peace, etc. It's not natural. It's supernatural. In fact, it's not only difficult for you to produce the qualities of Gal 5:22-23, it's impossible! Only God Himself can produce these qualities in us. And that's exactly what He desires to do.

Remember Paul's contrast in vv 16-23--Works versus Fruit.

Works take effort, strain, toil. We produce works, all by ourselves. Not so with fruit. Fruit must grow. Growth takes time. Fruit happens from the inside out. Fruit can't be manufactured.

Q: How does the fruit of the Spirit grow? If the Spirit produces fruit in our lives, does that mean we should sit back, kick up our heels, and watch the fruit grow?

A: No. Why not? See...

Gal 6:7-9 "Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows...he reaps."

There are certain conditions that must be met if fruit is to develop. That's our responsibility. We have to tend the greenhouse. We are responsible to create an environment in our lives so that the Spirit can produce the fruit of Christlikeness in us.

Illust: An apple tree doesn't force fruit to happen. Fruit is a natural product achieved when certain conditions are met.

So with the fruit of the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is the reproduction of Christ in us.

Q: How does that happen?

Principle: Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.

Illust: If I want to harvest a crop of peaches it would be ludicrous to sow corn or bean or barley seeds. If I want peaches, I have to sow and nurture a peach seed. The same principle holds in human behavior. If the Holy Spirit is to produce good fruit in our lives, then we have to sow good seed.

Problem: Some Christians seem surprised at the lack of fruit in their lives. They don't see the fruit of the Spirit, and wonder why. Maybe you are. But stop a minute and take an objective look at your life.

Challenge: Don't make excuses for sinful characteristics. Don't redefine sin. Admit your weakness to the Lord. Allow His Spirit to replace that work of the flesh with the fruit of Christlikeness.

Q: What type of seed are you sowing? Are you sowing to the flesh or Spirit?

Application: How can we practically sow to the Spirit?

Quote: John Stott, "By sowing the apostle appears to be referring to the whole pattern of our thoughts and habits, our lifestyle, life-direction, and life-discipline. It includes the company we keep, the friendships we cultivate, the literature we read, the films we watch in the cinema or on TV, the kind of pursuits with which we occupy our leisure, and everything which engrosses our interest, absorbs our energy, and dominates our mind." (81)

Illust: Our lives are like a field. If you are a Christian, it's a divided field. One section is called "the flesh," the other "the Spirit." It's possible to sow in either section. We have a choice. We can sow to the flesh, or to the Spirit. Listen. The harvest will depend on where and how we're sowing.

I want to be practical. The Spirit produces fruit in us. But He doesn't work in a vacuum. He uses certain ingredients: The Word of God, prayer, personal worship, corporate worship, fellowship with other fruitful Christians.

We can't force fruit to happen. But when we cooperate with the Spirit by implementing these ingredients, fruit grows naturally.

Illust:

Now let's become Fruit Inspectors. Let's get out our magnifying glasses and examine the 9 characteristics that Paul lists in vv 22-23.

The Fruit of the Spirit (22-23)

Is there any sense of order to the 9 virtues? I think there is. When the Spirit of God controls our lives, He produces visible fruit in 3 spheres of our lives: In our Relationship with God, in our Relationship with Others, and in Ourselves. Paul lists 3 qualities in each sphere:

- A. The Fruit of the Spirit in our Relationship with God: Love, Joy, Peace
- B. The Fruit of the Spirit in our Relationship with Others: Longsuffering, Gentleness, Goodness
- C. The Fruit of the Spirit in Ourselves: Faith, Meekness, Self-Control

Tonight I want us to notice where fruit starts. The first area the Spirit transforms is our Relationship with God. He replaces the works of the flesh with: Love, Joy, Peace. Now obviously these qualities affect all areas of our lives, but they start with God first. A Spirit-filled, fruitful Christian exhibits:

1. Love--A Supreme Love for God
2. Joy--The Joy of the Lord
3. Peace--The Peace of God that passes all understanding

I. The Fruit of the Spirit in our Relationship with God: Love

V 22 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love."

Paul begins with "love." The other 8 qualities grow out of this one. Love is the highest virtue.

I Cor 13:13 "Now abideth faith, hope, and love...but the greatest of these..."

Jn 13:34 "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples...love..."

When God saves us, the first area He transforms is our "love life." I'm not talking about marriage. I'm talking about our affection, our ambition. When the Spirit regenerates a person, He gives that person a Love for God.

The word is "agape" which is divine love. Agape love is the way God loves.

Q: How does God love?

A: God loves w/o distinction. God loves by taking action (Jn 3:16). God loves by doing what is best for others, even those who don't deserve it.

Definition: Love is the choice I make to do what's best for the other person.

Key: God loved us (Rom 5:8). God gives us the capacity to love.

When we love God, it means He is our number one priority and focus in life. It means we aim to please Him and honor Him and glorify Him with our lives.

Q: And when we love God properly, what else will happen?

A: We will love people. God's love will flow through us towards others.

Illust: Book Father, Son, Three Mile Run, A dad who didn't go to son's soccer games, "I don't like soccer." Man said, "You don't go to your son's soccer games because you like soccer, but because you love your son!"

Watch this. When I am walking in the Spirit and controlled by the Spirit and exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit, it will be apparent here first. I will love God and love

people. Agape Love isn't natural. Agape love isn't dependent on my feelings. Agape love is generated by the Spirit.

But listen, if my life is marked by friction and jealousy and strained relationships, that's evidence that I'm being controlled, not by the Spirit, but by the flesh. Illust:

II. The Fruit of the Spirit in our Relationship with God: Joy

V 22 "But the fruit of the Spirit...joy"

Q: Do you enjoy God? Do you?

Neh 8:10 "The joy of the Lord is your strength."

Do you have the joy of the Lord in your life?

Definition: Joy is inner satisfaction regardless of circumstances.

Problem: Far too many Christians are long-faced and sour.

That's tragic. A sour Christian is a contradiction in terms.

Rom 14:17 "For the kingdom of God...is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit."

Rom 15:13 "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing..."

Again, may I remind you that joy, like the rest of the Fruit, is not manufactured. Joy is the product of the Spirit's working.

Jn 15:11 "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."

Key: Circumstances don't have to be smooth to experience joy.

Jm 1:2 "My brethren, count it all joy when you face various trials..."

I Th 1:6 "...having received the word with much affliction, with joy of the Spirit."

See also: I Pt 1:8

Illust:

III. The Fruit of the Spirit in our Relationship with God: Peace

V 22 "...peace..."

Illust: Artists asked to portray "peace." Winning artwork was a bird in her nest, feeding her young, perched on a branch resting over Niagra Falls!

Someone has said, "Peace is tranquility in the midst of turmoil." (Jim Turner)

A fruitful Christian is one who knows that all is well between him/her and God.

Rom 5:1 "Therefore...we have peace with God through our Lord..."

Phil 4:7 "And the peace of God which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts"

Q: How do we obtain that peace?

A: Again, we don't manufacture it. It must be produced in us. How?

Eph 2:14-17 "For He is our peace..."

Peace comes only when we're in tune with the Lord.

II Th 3:16 "Now the Lord of peace Himself give you peace always by all means."

Peace is a gift. Just like love and joy. It is fruit which the Spirit of God generates in our lives. Illust: