

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT, PART 1

Galatians 5:22-23

We are in Galatians 5:16-26 again, in a critical passage regarding our spiritual walk in this mighty epistle we call Galatians. Like Romans, Galatians is a very systematic book in its approach and structure. And understanding the context of Paul's argument, the overall thought and approach is incredibly important and has been the greatest lesson in itself for me as a teacher. It is very much like Romans and so I want to spend some time today first just recapping some of things we've learned so far and focus on the structure of the argument and bring into this argument some of the terminology used in Romans surrounding the idea of "law".

I. UNDERSTANDING TERMS OF PROGRESSIVE SANCTIFICATION. (VV. 16, 25)

There's probably only two words needed to remind us of the purpose of this book and the context we're in and that is the word "**progressive sanctification**" – growing in Christ, being conformed to the image of Christ, having Christ formed in us (4:20). We're taking about a spiritual walk. Because we live spiritually, we can now walk spiritually. Paul is writing to real believers who have really trusted in Christ and have really received the Spirit of God in their life. However, after they got saved, some men known as Judaizers came along telling them that the way to grow was to keep the Law and these believers have been tripped up by that teaching. They began by the Spirit, but instead of continuing by the Spirit, were trying to be perfected by the flesh (Gal. 3:1-5). They are no longer running well (Gal. 5:7) and so Paul is writing to correct them on how to grow in Christ. He wants them to quit spinning their wheels in the ditch of legalism and get back up on the highway and make progress.

He is giving in this little portion of Scripture an exposé (formal exposition) on how to live as believers – how to practice faith. The Word of God is our standard for faith and for practice. It is important that we not only be hearers, but doers of the Word. *Hearers only* are deceiving themselves (Jas. 1:22). We hear the Word of God and then we practice it. That is the order for us and for Paul's exposition. He gives the doctrine and then explains how to practice it. Most of us are probably acquainted with the term "**orthodoxy**." Orthodoxy is referring to **right doctrine, right teaching**. And Paul has certainly discussed right doctrine as we worked our way through the first four chapters of Galatians. But there is another term like orthodoxy that we are not as familiar with and that is the term "**orthopraxy**." Orthopraxy is referring to **right practice, right conduct**. And in order to be the church that God wants us to be, we have to be committed to both, balancing both. If you have one without the other, the church or the individual will err.

When you study some of the churches in the 2nd and 3rd chapters of Revelation, that is case. We see in those chapters that Christ is keeping tabs on His churches, walking among the lampstands, which are the churches, and having studied the churches, He then also has a message for each church – correcting and instructing them. The church of **Ephesus** was a church that was strong in its doctrine and teaching, testing those who called themselves apostles but were not. However, the church was told to remember its first love – originally it was a church known for its love of Jesus and the saints and a love for strangers through good deeds. Jesus said, "remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place – unless you repent." If they didn't heed His warning, they would lose their influence, their light. They had the orthodox part down (chapters 1-4) but were lacking in orthopraxy (5 &6). With the church of **Thyatira**, Jesus commended them for their faithful service and perseverance and that their deeds were greater than they had been at first. However, they did not pay close attention to teaching as they should have. They tolerated a false prophetess, a "Jezebel" that was leading them astray with her teachings.

They had orthopraxy but were lacking in orthodoxy. So we've got to stay committed to both and both are forms of worship. We are to pay close attention to our teaching and then live intentionally. When I read Galatians 5, it immediately takes me back to Romans 6-8 where Paul has further developed his arguments – it's like he had more papyrus to write on – but there he explained this argument on how to live the Christian life by thinking of it in “laws”.

A. **The Law of Moses**

First, we are free from the Law of Moses and are not to be slaves to the Law. We were actually made to die to the Law through the body of Christ (Rom. 7:4). Through our union with Christ, we died to it. The perfect Law couldn't die so we had too, because it arouses the law of sin in us. Romans 7:4-6 says, “Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God. For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death. But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.” If you still have any doubts or every time you doubt about whether or not you're under Law, go back to Romans and Galatians and write down everything it says about the Law and your relationship to it. Go back to the Word of God on your own and get it settled – just you and God and His Word – because it's not the Spirit of God leading you there back to the Law. “If you're led by the Spirit, you're not under Law” (Gal. 5:18).

Does that mean that the Law is worthless and of no use? By no means. Not a jot or tittle of it will perish (not the dot of an i or the crossing of a t). Many of the commands from it were carried over into the NT (9 out of 10 commandments). It still sits there in its place with its moral standards, acting as firm, concrete, unflexing canopy over this sinful world, convicting men of their sin and making them accountable to a holy God, showing us a barrier exists between us and God – and the only way to break through the concrete barrier is through Christ because no one is justified by the works of the Law. The moment you place your faith in Christ, you are freed from the Law. Until then, if you want to live legalistically under Law, you'll struggle and you will not go anywhere with God – like a worm on dry cement. You will lack peace with God. But the moment you trust Christ, you're set free. “Apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets...” (Rom. 3:21). The righteousness of God that God requires can only be found through faith in Christ, the righteous One who kept the Law perfectly and died for our sins. In Romans 3:27, Paul says the **law of faith** does away with boasting, because if it were by works, we could boast. “Through one man's disobedience [Adam] the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One [Christ] the many will be made righteous.” If you have placed your faith in Christ, the righteousness of God has been placed upon you (imputed) and you are free from the Law because Christ kept it for you. You have been reconciled to God and by grace through faith you stand. Not only do you stand, you stand with a new outfit. You've put on the pure, bright white toga virilis (Gal. 3:27)! You've been clothed with Christ and graduated from the tutor and are mature sons of God who cry “Abba Father!” and want to do the will of your Father. That means the next question is quite ridiculous:

B. **The law of sin**

Does that mean you can now break the moral standard and continue in sin so that grace may increase? By no means! For we who have died are freed from the law of sin as well! The law of sin is that steady propensity to sin in us. Part of the reason He freed us from the Law is because it

actually entices the sinful nature in us and gives opportunity for sin (Rom. 7). When the Spirit baptizes us into Christ, we die to the Law and die to sin, because we're united in His death. We are not slaves of the Law of Moses and we are not slaves to the law of sin – because “How shall we who died to sin still live in it?” We've been co-crucified, co-buried, co-resurrected (Rom. 6). “For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in **sanctification**” (Rom. 6:19). And sanctification, being able to choose to live righteously – choose to live according to the divine nature is an incredible gift! It is a beneficial fruit! Romans 6:20 says – “What **benefit** [*karpon* – same word as Gal. 5:22 – fruit, harvest, gain] were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit [fruit, harvest, gain], resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.” Sanctification is an incredible gift. Before we have the divine nature, all attempts at reforming our life are futile. We need to be transformed from the inside out and not just reformed.

❖ **Sanctification is a fruitful benefit of having been saved. (Rom. 6:20-22)**

The Spirit doesn't lead you to sin but wants to set you free from that self-destructive way of living. What benefit is sin? What good is it? Even the drunk must reap a hangover in the morning, along with broken relationships, maybe even the loss of a job and eventually the loss of his life. But we derive our benefit now through an abundant life in Christ and then again with eternal life to come.

If there's a law that you want to put yourself under for growing, Paul says put yourself under...

C. The law of the Spirit of Life

This is brought out in Romans 8:1-4 says, “Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the **law of the Spirit of life** in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit”. Paul's use of the word law (nomos) here is not referring to the Mosaic Law but to a principle in believers. It's law in this sense that it is a steady principle at work, like the invisible law of gravity in the world. We have an invisible law at work in us. We have a new and steady liberating law at work in us by the Spirit. Paul is saying that if you want a law to live by, live by the one that gives life! The law of the Spirit of life! Live by the unseen law at work in you. It's the same thing as saying “walk by the Spirit!” Walk by the Spirit's compass. The Spirit takes us above the external commands of the Law and conquer the internal law of sin. No longer do we just not commit adultery, but by walking by the Spirit we overcome lust that causes it. No longer do we just not murder, if we're walking by the Spirit we will not hate and we will love. We'll even love our enemies and love our brothers, which Galatians 6:3 says, is fulfilling **the law of Christ. Through a law of faith we are saved and continue to walk by the law of the Spirit of life and fulfill the law of Christ.**

The question we ask now is how do you know whether you're walking according to the flesh or the Spirit?

Paul has contrasted the two natures with two lists, explaining that we can know by what our lives are producing at any given moment. At any given moment, you can know whether or not you're walking according to the flesh or the Spirit. The flesh produces **works**. Immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. So if something happens to you

that irritates you and you have an outburst of anger all the sudden, you know at that moment, you are not walking in the Spirit and should confess it to God immediately and yield to the Spirit once again. But while the flesh produces works like angry outbursts, the Spirit produces **fruit**.

II. **THE SPIRIT PRODUCES FRUIT. (VV. 22-23)**

Paul said in verses 22-23, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control;” These are virtues that the Spirit of God supernaturally produces in us. We cannot manufacture this fruit on our own. We have to yield to the Spirit of God in our lives to produce any fruit. If we try to manufacture fruit on our own, it will be nothing short of artificial – it will be wax fruit, fake fruit, artificial fruit – because apart from Him, we can do nothing (John 15:5). We can only produce fruit as we depend on God to do it.

❖ **The Christian life is a life of dependence.**

Isn't that what it mean to have faith? The word faith means to trust – to depend on. We just celebrated independence day, the day we stopped depending on England. But the day you were saved could be considered your Dependence Day – the day you decided to depend on Christ and not your own works (which is day to celebrate as well!). And from there you continue to depend on Christ and His Spirit to live the Christian life. If you have faith in something, it means you're trusting it. You are trusting those chairs you're sitting on right now. And we are to trust Christ for salvation. We rely totally upon Him. And it's the same with sanctification. We trust totally on God to grow us and do His thing.

This life of faith/dependence is something that John Wesley (1703-1791), the founder of the Methodist Movement, had to learn through a long and painful journey. Most of us, to an extent, have to learn this the hard way as young believers because so many of us, when we decide to take our faith seriously, try to live out the Christian life *in our effort*. But John Wesley had an exceptionally hard time. You see, before he was a true Christian believer, Wesley was the leader of a “Holy Club” that devoted itself to strict observance of Christian disciplines, he was a priest in the Church of England and a missionary to America. He was very religious man and strove to live a holy life, but was dead spiritually. It's an important reminder for us: **Just because you're not carrying out the works of the flesh, doesn't mean you've got the Spirit and are producing fruit.** And he realized this as he spent time around a community of believers known as the Moravians from Germany. He first ran into them on his missionary trip to America. While crossing the Atlantic, the ship Wesley was on encountered a terrible storm that tore the sail and water was flowing into the boat. He described it as an hour of trial and thought he was going to die. He feared meeting God. He said the English on board were screaming and crying out in fear for their lives, but there was a community of Christians on the ship known as the Moravians who were calmly singing hymns – clearly manifesting the fruit of the Spirit in a storm. It was at that moment that he realized they had something he didn't and began to lodge with them and talk with them. He actually left America a defeated missionary and when he got back to England he met up with his brother, a former “Holy Club” member who had been saved and transformed under the discipleship of Peter Boehler, who was also a Moravian. Through a conversation with Peter, John became convinced of his unbelief and admitted *he had faith in God, but not in or through Jesus Christ*. Here's what he said he did: 1. He absolutely renounced all dependence, in whole or in part, upon his own works or righteousness on which I had really grounded my hope of salvation, and 2. He placed full reliance on the blood of Christ shed for him; trusting Christ, as my sole justification, sanctification, and redemption.” And that's exactly what it takes to be saved and live the Christian life isn't it? You stop trusting yourself and your own works and you trust the Christ, relying totally upon Him for salvation, sanctification and glorification because apart from Him, you can do nothing. Shortly after he did this, while hearing Luther's preface to Romans, he became assured of his saving faith and

understood this peace with God. He finally got it – finally understood the gospel and the finally had the fruit of the Spirit of God in his life and one of the first signs was an internal peace. Peace with God produces a peace from God in your heart.

Only those who are really born again by faith in Christ and dependently walking with Him will produce this fruit. You can't be sanctified if you're not saved. The fruit of the Spirit is a supernatural gift for those who believe on Christ. You can be extremely religious, like the priest or missionary, and not really know Jesus Christ or this fruit. Just because you go to church or do good works or have been baptized or confirmed or taken communion, does not mean you'll experience the fruit of the Spirit in your life. Communion won't save you. Only personal faith in Christ will. Until you have personal faith in Lord Jesus Christ, you can't experience the living experience of salvation seen in the Bible; you can't observe baptism or communion properly. They're not works unto salvation, but celebrations and reminders. We do it in remembrance of Him. It is a symbolic ceremony of internal spiritual realities. We already have Christ in us and the communion table is to remind us He is sufficient and to not go back to works. It is a reminder that we are to walk with Him based upon it as well. Christ who paid for our sins through His death, burial and resurrection and through Christ, the truths of the gospel, we live spiritually. Our souls feed off the sacrifice of Christ. It's where our identity and victory and life is.

Before we take communion though I have a couple quick points. While the “works” of the flesh are plural in the Greek, the “fruit” of the Spirit is in singular form. It's not fruits, but fruit.

III. **THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS A PACKAGE-DEAL. (V. 22)**

It's a trip to heaven with the hotel, car and flight paid for. A free horse with a saddle and trailer and all the hay you need to feed it. For the farmer, it's a tractor complete with four-wheel drive, loader, scraper, backhoe, and mower – all the attachments. A kitchen with every appliance. It's a fruit package.ⁱ All come together, not one at a time. All are available to us. If we're walking by the Spirit, all of these will be evident in our life, though some more visible than others. I think they should be looked at like a cluster of grapes on the same vine. I like to think of it as a bowl full of different fruits I've harvested from my garden. Potatoes, sweet corn, onions, carrots, green beans... at the right time of year you can go out into your garden and harvest all of those at the same time and it makes for a very colorful and attractive harvest. Walking in the Spirit will bring about a beautiful harvest of sweet and attractive fruits.

IV. **THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS TO BE DESIRED (V. 23)**

“Against such things, there is no law.” People desire the fruit of the Spirit. There's no law against any of the fruit virtues mentioned here. They are not condemned or undesired, but highly desired. Wouldn't you rather have love than hate? Joy than sadness? Peace than worry? There is no written legal system in the world that singles these virtues out and says, “Nope. Going to jail for that one. Can't be putting up with any of that love around here. Can't have anybody be in our country that practices joy.” There's no country you will go into where it is illegal to be patient – people appreciate it, especially those in the customer service industry or those in front of you on the highway! There is no person who truly hates it when people show them love. There is no man or woman sitting in a jail cell or on death row right now who, in their right mind, wouldn't want to go back to the moment that got them there and exercise self-control. The law doesn't punish you for self-control. It punishes those who get out of control. I've heard that most police calls are regarding domestic violence, broken relationships. Well the fruit of the Spirit restores relationships and helps us live in harmony and at peace with one another and love one another. It changes us to restore the situations we're already in. You see, a lot of people run from one place to another, from one circumstance to another, trying to find the right place for them,

the right person for them, the right car, the right house, the right job where they'll find joy and peace and love. But the fruit of the Spirit is there to work in your current circumstances, especially the difficult ones. I love how **while the works of the flesh are mostly about doing, the fruit is about being – it's about character.** And over time they should become more mature.

❖ **God desires that these virtues ripen in our life.**

...through the experiences we go through in life. That they become sweeter and richerⁱⁱ and more delightful. A Christian often start out fairly rigid but gets more loving. The more we go through, we learn to trust God more and more, that He's a Romans 8:28 God. Most of us know some older and faithful believers who this is true of and some who had a particular influence on us because of how they displayed it, especially in the trialsome times. I think of one college professor who, knowing he wasn't going to survive the cancer this time, kept right on teaching God's Word until he couldn't anymore. It was something to behold. These virtues should become richer the more we walk with God and the older we get. In 2 Peter 1, a passage I oft refer to, he gives a similar list of virtues (moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, brotherly kindness and love) and says these virtues are to be *ours and increasing*. I had an lady (I don't know if she was a Christian) tell me the other day that she just didn't have the patience for a certain things anymore. She had "lost her patience" over the years. If I'd have been thinking on my toes I would have said, "Ma'am, you are not to lose your patience, but to increase in it!" And let's remember that when we display these supernatural virtues, we bear the image of Christ. He is the supreme example of what it means to walk by the Spirit.

ⁱ David Thompson, *sermon notes on Galatians 5:22-26*, accessed 5 July 2019, www.texascornersbiblechurch.org

ⁱⁱ John F. MacArthur, *sermon notes on Galatians 5:16-26: The Fruit of the Spirit, Part 3*, from May 27, 2018, accessed 7 July 2019, www.gty.org

("This is what sanctification is. It is the presence of these virtues in ever-increasing dimensions. They are there when you in the Spirit as a new believer. They are there when you walk in the Spirit as a long-time believer. But the beauty of the virtues will be more rich and more manifest toward the end of the sanctifying process than it might have been at the beginning because there is so much more spiritual depth and life flooding into the beauty of these virtues. These are things that should mark every Christian from the moment of salvation on, but they would be most lovely in those who have walked with the Lord for the longest time. They are, however, not something that you have to be mature to express.")