

# “The Fruits of the Spirit”

Galatians 5:1, 13-25

As we continue to read through most of Paul’s Letter to the Galatians, as we have begun our journey through the long season of Pentecost, I have told you on a couple of occasions how Paul’s letter to the Galatians is a wonderful message of Christ justifying us, declaring us not guilty, by grace through faith, apart from the works of the Law. A common theme in Paul’s letters.

The Law brings to you the reality of sin and curse rather than the reality of righteousness. The Law doesn’t only condemn, but it always condemns. It always points its finger and says, “You are guilty.”

And here in Galatians 5, Paul gives us a couple of lists. The first is a list of what he calls “the works of the flesh” – things for which we are guilty. It is not an exhaustive list, as Paul concludes it with the words, “and things like these.” However, it is a list that cannot be ignored. It is not simply a list of bad things that you should not do. This is a list of things that destroys families and Christian fellowship.

You have to understand that Satan wants to destroy you, and you are always going to be more vulnerable when you are alone. These are all things that make you alone and separate you from Christ and His Church.

I'm not going to go through and examine all 15 works of the flesh, because I have another list to get to. But just know that the worst offense among the "works of the flesh" is false teaching. If you don't have your doctrine right, the practice, that is, the actions of your faith will obviously also be false.

And this discord is what results in all the things Paul lists. Whether it is a romantic relationship stepping outside of what God intended that one man and one woman be, that is, united in marriage, or whether relationships are broken because of strife, envy, fits of anger, rivalries, or perhaps it is the person self-medicating through the abuse of alcohol or other substances. All of this separates you from Christ and your family and your Church family. And all of this is the result of either bad doctrine or bad practice.

This is the reason for Paul's warning that "those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God." You are saved by grace through faith alone, apart from your works. So why is Paul so concerned about these works? Certainly idolatry and sorcery put you out of bounds in regard to your faith. This is why, when our LWML Rummage sale had a OUIJI Board donated, the decision was quickly made not to put it up for sale, but it was immediately thrown away.

But what about envy? What about division? Up in Wisconsin, I had a couple of brothers who hadn't spoken to each other in over 40 years. When their parents had died, one was given something that apparently the

other one thought he deserved. It ripped apart their family, and it affected their spiritual life. This was a matter of bad doctrine and practice.

This is what happens when the inheritance of the Kingdom of God is made to be a lesser priority. That is the real problem – God’s place in life being a lower priority. It is like I said last week, getting people to act differently is easy. I can twist your arm or make you feel uncomfortable enough to get you to act a certain way. Because of social and possible legal repercussions, this list of works of the flesh are things that we at least try and keep behind closed doors. But the desire is still there fighting against the Spirit.

It is getting people to think differently where real change happens. When your priorities change; when your desire for the works of the flesh is pushed down; when your desire for the fruit of the Spirit is elevated, life is just so much better. Now, this is not Paul saying if you have Jesus, then your life will be filled with joy and peace and goodness and flowers and puppies, and you will always be patient, kind, and gentle, having complete self-control.

That is not going to happen during life in this fallen world. But if you want to see the Holy Spirit at work in you, then look to these things, and practice these things. Have joy, even when not everything is going your way. Be at peace; don’t look for a fight. Be patient, be kind, be good to one another. Be better to your neighbor than your neighbor is to you. Be

faithful, because if you aren't nothing else matters. Be gentle, and exercise some self-control.

Paul says that the works of the flesh, all of those negative things that Satan uses to destroy your fellowship with Christ and your Church family and even your own family, they are "evident," they are obvious. They are easily recognized, even when we try to hide them.

We claim to be of the Spirit. Paul says, "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit." The fruits of the Spirit are evident, obvious, easily recognized also. The fruits of the Spirit do not earn you any points toward the Kingdom of Heaven or any nonsense like that. They are the fruits of the Spirit. This is the work of the Holy Spirit within you – His work. You are saved by grace through faith alone through the death and resurrection of the Son of God. That is the only reason you are no longer considered guilty.

Whatever kindness, goodness, gentleness, and self-control you exhibit when dealing with others, this is what we are called upon to do in thanks for being declared not guilty. It pleases our Lord. But it also keeps you in fellowship with one another within the refuge of Christ and His Church. And it creates the opportunity for those who are still under the yoke of slavery to sin to see that there is joy and peace to be found with those who belong to Christ, with those who cherish the truth of the Gospel, with those who cherish the good and gracious will of God, and strive to take what He has given and put it into practice. Amen.