

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church  
Quincy, IL  
Rev. Martin Eden

Pentecost 3  
Saturday, June 25, 2022, at 5:00 p.m.  
Sunday, June 26, 2022, at 9:00 a.m.

# “The Fruits of the Spirit”

Galatians 5:1, 13-25

Within Paul’s letter to the Galatians, we find this wonderful message of how Christ justifies us, declares us not guilty, by grace through faith, apart from the works of the Law. Obviously, a common theme in Paul’s letters.

On vacation, I was listening to a podcast where there was a practicing Jew, Dennis Prager, who was the guest on this podcast where the other people joining the conversation were interested in the idea of God and religion, but were not churchgoers. They were all unfortunately very interested in the Jewish idea of God being pleased with you when you “keep” the Law. They all agreed that that made sense.

This is a podcast I listen to frequently. They often talk about religion. The one member of their group who is a faithful Christian was not there that day. So I was sitting in our hotel room listening to this and thinking, “This is what it looks like when someone is seeking the Father, but does not know the Son.” You will only find the Law.

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.” In the Law, you will never find the comfort of having your guilt washed clean in the blood of Christ.

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. That was one of the points made by Dennis Prager in regard to the value of keeping the Jewish Sabbath and being with his family and community each week. The odds of making it on your own are not in your favor.

I agree. But your odds of making it without Christ are zero. And Paul lists things that not only make you alone but work to 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 which is the cause of these “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 – which always go hand in hand.

This is the reason for Paul's warning that "those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God." We all know what Paul says elsewhere, "You are saved by grace through faith alone, apart from your works." So why is Paul so concerned about these works? All of these works separate you from God and Christian fellowship.

Certainly some of these works of the flesh separate you more quickly than others. Idolatry and sorcery put you immediately out of bounds in regard to your faith. Don't seek out spiritists to find out the future or play with a OUIJI Board.

But what about envy? What about division? We have all seen how envy and division can rip apart a family. If not your own family, we have all seen examples. And it doesn't just affect mealtime at Thanksgiving and Christmas. It affects the spiritual life. It drives people away from each other and often some of them from their church family. This is 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. I have often said 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 – at least for a short time. 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. The word "repent" literally means "to change your mind." This is God's work in you. When your priorities are changed; when your desire for the works of the flesh is pushed down through daily contrition and repentance, and 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 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 having been washed in the blood of Christ. Walking in the fruits of the Spirit pleases our Lord. But it also keeps you in fellowship with one another as we live our days within the refuge of Christ and His Church. Amen.