

1 The Fight of Your Life Galatians 5: 16-25

In one sense Paul has argued one thing in the book of Galatians which we are almost finished with. He is showing the difference between The gospel and religion is *word order*. Josh summarized it helpfully like this last week. 2

Religion	The Gospel
1. Come to Jesus	1. Come to Jesus
2. Obey the law	2. You are accepted
3. You are accepted	3. Obey the law

Secular Religion

The difference between these two is the difference between the gospel of grace and every religion or system of believe in the human history. See even secular religion of self-help is "I know I can justify my existence if I.... See if you put anything after I know I am justified but Jesus, You are in a whole new religion. A religion of slavery and bondage. Last week Paul applied that to community and how we accept people. ~~If God accepts me because of grace alone then I can't add conditions to fellowship with other believers. It doesn't mean we don't argue with them, but we argue like family. Now, he talks about the fruit of the gospel.~~ Notice he says fruit, not traits as we will see it is telling. Let's look at our text.

Apply to the comments
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3 Galatians 5: 16-25

¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. ¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality,²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹ envy,^[d] drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do^[e] such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

Introduction

The thing that rings true to me about the bible is that God pretty realistic about reality.

- The world is broken but beautiful.
- People are sinners but worth redemption.
- And the Christian life is hard but glorious. In the 66 books of the Bible you see redemption play out in the lives of people who yet fall hard and bad.
- In the Psalms you are confronted with three types of prayers. Help, Thank-you and Wow. That is about right. In our staff meeting on Tuesday we bring our hearts and what I love about it is people are raw and real. Last Tuesday as everyone went around the room it was like A Tale of Two Cities, "The best of times and the worst of times." Breath taking beauty and tears of lament over personal or other kinds of brokenness. Yea that is just about right. In our text we see three things about the Christian life after Conversion. A Realistic View of the Christian Life, A Reasonable View of the Christian Life and A Radical View of the Christian Life. Let's go.

7 Honest Reflections on human existence experience

4 A Realistic View of the Christian Life

¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

We have already seen that the Galatians started well. Last week as he begins to apply in practical ways the gospel to all of life, he says, **5** *You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?* (Galatians 5:7) Now he tells us why it is so easy to stop running well. He says this. After we become a Christian, new life is planted in us. God's Holy Spirit, the blessed third person of the Trinity lives in us. We literally have new life in us. But there is a problem we all face, we are still fallen, we still have a sinful nature and it is very real, so real in fact in our redeemed personalities, **6** ... *the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.* (Galatians 5:17) See even with our desire to love God, love people and love life we have inner conflict and actually do not do what we want or ought to do. Or as Paul says in the famous passage in Romans 7 **7** ²¹ *So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand.* ²² *For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being,* ²³ *but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.* ²⁴ *Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?* (Romans 7: 21-24)

Believer not
crossed
to cross
to struggle
Believer always
has within
himself

See a fight. To be like Jesus is a fight. If you haven't experienced this, you might not be a believer, you don't have new life planted in you. Different people have said it differently to illustrate this point. C. S. Lewis said it like this, **8** *"No man knows how bad he is till he has tried very hard to be good."* (C. S. Lewis Mere Christianity) I mean in heart, soul, mind, and strength. At the deepest level of motivation.

Doesn't get
easier
→ flesh of
flesh of
flesh

And you know what, it doesn't get easier as you get older or as you become more like Jesus. See the closer you get to Jesus, the more you desire to please him, the more light you let into your soul. So that it illuminates the places of your heart you couldn't even see years earlier. Another thing to note is that **flesh and spirit** do not mean literal flesh as if the flesh were bad and the spirit were good. No most of our most heinous sins are not sensual in nature—like sexual immorality, but in our hearts, like anger, jealousy, strife, enmity. **Flesh stands for our sinful nature that is always in self-protection mode.** Always looking out for number one. No, the easy thing is to do the list of externals.

Susanna Wesley is helpful here, mother of John and Charles, who started Methodist Church. John asked her to define sin. She replied: **9** *"Son, whatever weakens your reasoning, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes away your relish of spiritual things; in short, if anything increases the authority and power of the flesh over the Spirit, then THAT TO YOU BECOMES SIN, however good it is in itself."* (Susanna Wesley) See anything can be a sin. Desires of the flesh in old translations was translated "lust," in the original it means over desire. What Susanna Wesley told her son, David Powlison says in theological terms. **10** *"If 'idolatry' is the characteristic and summary Old Testament word for our drift from God, then 'desires' (epithumia) is the characteristic and summary New Testament word for that same drift ... The New Testament merges the concept of idolatry and the concept of inordinate, life-ruling desires ... for lust, craving, yearning and greedy demand."* (David Powlison, *The Journal of Biblical Counseling*)

See that? The fallen heart will set its heart on anything to be a savior. If I get this job, this house, this family. All good desires, but when they become the ruling desire, when they replace Jesus then it is sin. For me in my younger years it was sports. It became an inordinate desire, it was what I lived for and as I have gotten older, these over desires have changed and I am always in this struggle.

green
Flesh - the 500 things make sinful
sin as
over desire
Desire
want
children
son

That is the Christian life, that is a realistic view of the Christ life and struggle with sin. But also this text shows us a...

11 A Reasonable View of the Christian Life

¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹ envy, ^d drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do ^e such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control." (Galatians 5: 19-22)

Two
inheritor
two kingdoms

This is reasonable if you think about it. Apart from Christ, apart from having a new nature, no supernatural indwelling of a new principle of life the works of the flesh, our inheritance from the fall are these, *Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality,²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions,²¹ envy,^[d] drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do^[e] such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*” If self is the center, there is no new power living in me, this comes naturally. **Notice some are prodigal son sins, and some are elder brother sins.**

- Sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality-prodigal son.
- But some are Elder brother sins, sins we see more in religious settings among people insecure of their position in Christ or who are white knuckling it trying to be good but failing, *enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy*. Much of what Josh preached about last week is found here. See this is just human fallen nature. That is our inheritance—from Adam, from original sin.

But...given the gospel and that we have a new birth in Christ and are given a new nature, that God's Spirit lives within us, it is reasonable to expect different fruit from a different inheritance. As a Christian I am *in Christ*. Jesus is giving me what is his and what flows from this inheritance is called fruit.

Fruit is the evidence of a new inheritance, not the cause of it. You see that. For instance, an apple is evidencing an apple tree. The fruit doesn't cause it to be an apple tree, it reveals, and Paul uses this powerful metaphor to talk about the fruit that flows from a redeemed life. I want to look at it like this.

We normally like to break down the fruit of the spirit and look at them individually, but I want to do something different. He calls real Christian change the *fruit of the spirit*. And this will tell us something about the nature of how we change and give us a realistic and I hope a proper understanding of the maturing process of real change. Here is what fruit of the spirit implies. Christian change is gradual & mysterious, certain & organic, and holistic & one. **12**

A. *Gradual and mysterious*—what is implied by fruit, why not traits? This is a metaphor. It is a botanical metaphor, a metaphor of the garden. Everywhere in the Bible when Christian change is talked about it is usually in botanical terms. **Illustration**—Psalm 1; a tree; James 1—you have this seed planted in you. The point is growth is gradual, slow, almost imperceptible. For instance, my children and I have raised a bunch of them. I see them every day and they are growing. I swear I can't see it happening. I can measure it, but I can't see it happening before me. It is mysterious. The interesting thing about this metaphor is that there are seasons of fruit bearing. There are times of intense growth and it is very evident, and other times, like my grape vine, right now after winter I trimmed it to nothing and seems to be nothing happening. There are phases of growth in the Christian life. Here is another thing—you don't necessarily feel it. When I was diagnosed with a blood clot in my leg and a pulmonary embolism in February two years ago. I said two things, I must lose weight and get in shape. It took 18 months to lose 30 pounds. I started lifting and walking two miles a day. When I started, I did not feel any faster lighter or that I had any more endurance. I was keeping up an intense level. But I could measure it and tell, I was both faster and had lot more endurance. I could look at my lose it app and see the weight loss and I could see it in buying new cloths two times-- I could measure it. I say this for this reason. Some of you are going through things that you think you are going backwards. It is not fun, you sense even more of your sin. You don't see it. Oh, but listen. **Illustration**. Here is the thing about fruit, it is a long term investment. **13** "A garden is a grand teacher. It teaches patience and careful watchfulness; it teaches industry and thrift; above all it teaches entire trust." (Gertrude Jekyll) So true. When I use to take my tomato plants from inside, I would do what you call hardening off, leave them above ground to let them acclimate to the harsh elements. My plants look like they were dying, but actually they were getting ready to produce an abundant crop. **14**

B. *Certain and organic*—Fruit of the Spirit. This implies that you will produce fruit. Here is the reason why. James says this of the Christian: ¹⁸ He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we

* Get the

Long term, path, not a door
- organic - hirs
- slow & watch

huge 10 day
of 10x but strength



Holy Spirit

* G. G. character over competitors

might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created... Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you. (James 1: 18,21) See what he is saying? If you are a Christian you have planted in you divine life, it is like seed. It is inevitable that you will grow. **Illustrate** organic growth. acorn. Put it in ground. There is power in the acorn. You even put it under a sidewalk and what will you put your money on—sidewalk or the acorn. See it is organic, works from inside out. Notice the *fruit of spirit*—all internal character traits, have nothing to do with your personality or your performance. This is what the Holy Spirit is doing on the inside. He is not making you a more religious person; he is making you a better person, inside out. **Let me say parenthetically** this is different from the Gifts of the spirit. In **I Corinthians 13** we see it is possible to preach like an angel, be martyred, speak in tongues and people be bless and still miss the fruit of the spirit. Deep internal change. See it is possible to be using your gifts and not be growing. You can be rude, arrogant, harsh, and judgmental. Your gifts are producing fruits in their lives but not you're on live. Easy to boot off your gifts and not be growing at all. Go for fruit, gifts will follow. **15**

C. *Holistic and one*—notice, *Fruit of the spirit*—then nine things. Subject is singular and the predicate is plural. Is this just bad grammar? No, what he is saying is the Fruit of the Spirit is holistic, these things are interdependent. You will not be growing in one without the other. It is like a diamond, multi faceted. All the graces go together. Let me illustrate what I mean. These are not natural temperaments. *is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness, self-control.* Some of these come easy to you. If you are a type A personality faithfulness, self-control come naturally to you. You take charge get things done. If a type b personality oh you are patient, gentle and kind. You don't need fruit of the spirit for these. But if you are a type A personality and you start seeing gentleness, patience in them, that is the fruit of the spirit. Or you see the naturally sweet person, become faithful and stand up for truth—that is the fruit of the spirit at work in you. See you don't look these traits that come naturally to you to see where you are, you go to least, the ones not naturally to you and when you see them start forming in your life---that is the power of the Holy Spirit in your life is producing things that are not naturally there.

That is the pattern; do you see this in your life? Is it growing? It will happen if you are a Christian, to some degree. Christian growth is “fruit” it is a process. It is gradual, mysterious, certain and organic and holistic and abundant. And notice how he ends. Notice that this is a catalogue of virtues rather than a list of rules. Perhaps this is why Paul ends by saying, *“Against such things there is no law”* (Gal. 5:23). This is a deliberate understatement. The reason there is no law against these virtues is that they are positively lawful, and thus people who practice them fulfill the law.

15 A Radical View of the Christian Life

²⁴ *And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*

²⁵ *If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.* (Galatians 5: 24-25)

Now how do we get there? This new abundant life of fruitfulness. Two radical things, the language is radical. Two things it involves death and submission two things the modern mind hates and runs from. Ironically these two things lead to freedom. **16**

1. *Crucify the desires of the flesh*, verse 24, with it's over desire. Why crucify? It could be electrocuted, or kill by lethal injection. It means put them to death. (This is called mortification) In other words, find those things that you over desire that you live for—beauty, popularity, money and you have to look at them in light of the cross. You have to say, when I have a savior that died for me, why do I have to have these pseudo saviors? Why? See you must unmask these desires. You can't just say no! These are deep seated—you are worshipping them. Till you can do this, you will not know have abundant fruitfulness, you won't. Till you can see the reason for your anxiety, worry, jealousy is

that you have over desire for something, it is actually the thing that you look to be your savior, you will never be the great person that Jesus has in mind here. **17**

2. *Keep in Step with the spirit.* Let me tell you two things about what this means. First of all, notice verse 24 to keep in step with the Holy Spirit means we have to know what the Spirit is after. In verse 17 *For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh*, In other words, the Holy Spirit desires something lust after if you will. You know what it is? Jesus. In John 15, the Spirit is lusting after Jesus. He is pointing to Jesus, that is his job that is his job in your heart. To show you Jesus. You will never break patterns of sin, of over desire, till you lust after Jesus—he becomes your desire. Jesus, said, I will send a comforter and he will tell of me. Till you see and experience what Jesus has done for you, you will never lust after him. Secondly, *keep in step, walk*, this is a deliberate action. Mundane as opposed to spectacular things like visions or emotional type crisis. These are habits of grace. **18** *“Habit forming is the Spirit’s ordinary way of leading us on in holiness. . . . Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control are all of them habitual . . . ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving.* (J. I. Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit*) Packer goes on to stress that “Holiness by habit forming is not self-sanctification by self-effort, but is simply a matter of understanding the Spirit’s method and then keeping in step with him.”

Know what the Spirit desires

→ step - a path
NOT a door
NOT a savior

Conclusion

Let me close with a personal testimony. I was so low Monday morning about a besetting sin in my life, I was literally in the floor in the fetal position. This text found me Monday morning, and I realized this is a realistic picture of the Christian life. I was feeling so weak, undone. And I read a letter from John Newton called *The Advantages of Remaining Sin*. I needed that, so much of it, who will deliver me from this body of death. And he wrote this. **19** *But when, after a long experience of their own deceitful hearts, after repeated proofs of their weakness, willfulness, ingratitude, and insensibility, they find that none of these things can separate them from the love of God in Christ, Jesus becomes more and more precious to their souls.* (John Newton, *Advantages from Remaining Sin*)