

The Fruit of the Spirit

Galatians 5; John 15

I. Context of Galatians 5.

- A. The apostle Paul's response and warning regarding the Judaizers influence in Galatia.
 - 1. The Judaizers were Jewish Christians teaching that gentiles must keep the Mosaic laws for salvation (Gal. 5:1-12).
 - 2. Paul emphasized freedom in Christ and loving one another as a summary of the entire law (Gal. 5:13-15).
- B. Paul emphasized to live the Christian life one must "walk in the Spirit" (Gal. 5:16).
 - 1. The Christian is in a war between the flesh and the Spirit (Gal. 5:17).

II. Two opposing lists, two drastic outcomes (Gal. 5:19-23).

- A. The deeds of the flesh (Gal.5:19-21).
 - 1. deed—*an action that is performed intentionally or consciously*.
 - 2. 15 examples of deeds of the flesh—not exhaustive.
 - 3. Four categories:
 - a. Sexual sins.
 - b. Religious sins.
 - c. Social sins.
 - d. Personal sins.
- B. Fruit of the Spirit (Gal.5:22-23).
 - 1. Characteristics of Christ's attributes.
 - 2. Characteristics of all Christians.
 - a. Fruit is "singular"—all to be considered as a whole.

III. God is glorified when you bear much fruit—John 15:8

- A. Context of John 15.
 - 1. The night before the crucifixion.
 - 2. Possibly Jesus's last teaching.

3. The parable (John 15:1-11).
 - a. Jesus is the vine, God the Father the vinedresser, “Believers” the branches (?).
 - b. Previously a picture of Israel (Isaiah 5).

IV. Three things that make us more fruitful.

- A. *We will be fruitful when (and only when!) we abide in Christ* (John 15:4).
 1. Abide—to remain, stay, dwell, continue, or make one’s home in something or someone.
 2. IMPORTANT! The main point is not to bear fruit but to abide in Christ.
 3. We will only exemplify the character of Jesus in your life if we are in fellowship (abide) with Jesus.
- B. *We will be more fruitful when the Lord holds us up.* (John 15:2).
 1. Many views.
 - a. You can lose your salvation—“He takes away”.
 - b. Saved and unsaved “believers” are on the vine—He takes away the unsaved.
 - c. Only the saved are on the vine, He “lifts up” those who don’t produce fruit to help them.
 2. No matter what...
 - a. If we abide in Christ we will produce fruit and be saved.
 - b. When we go through tough times, God is there to “hold us up”.
- C. *The Lord helps us be more fruitful when He prunes us back* (John 15:2).
 1. God’s pruning include:
 - a. Removing unhealthy relationship
 - b. Allowing trials and suffering
 - c. Disciplining
 - d. Refining faith through testing
 - e. Redirecting your life
 - f. Long seasons of hardship before relief...promotion.

The Fruit of the Spirit

Galatians 5; John 15

Let's get practical... the Christian life is life in the Holy Spirit... You want to live the Christian life?... live life in the Holy Spirit.... What does that look like, how do we do that, what's going to happen when we do?... Those are the things we want to know, right?

This morning and next week I want to address two topics that are often confusing to the Christian... both are vital for our walk with Jesus Christ *in* the Holy Spirit... they are two different aspects of walking... but often there is a misunderstanding among Christians to their distinctions.

There's a distinct difference between the gifts of the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit... I know your bulletin says I'll be speaking on the gifts of the Spirit, your own pastor is confused... the sermon title is the gifts of the Spirit but the Bible reference has nothing to do with gifts... it's all about fruit...

This morning I want to address the latter, **the fruit of the Spirit** and next week the gifts of the Holy Spirit.... which unless the Holy Spirit directs me differently will conclude our series in the Holy Spirit.

There is no big decision to make over which passage in the Bible to turn to when looking into the fruit of the Spirit... those of you who grew up in the church most likely learned Galatians 5:22-23 in a song... and to this day can recite the list of the fruit.

We need some context of this passage... the subheading in my Bible titles this passage *Life in the Spirit*... and that is what we want!

We will also be looking at John 15 for some essential directions on how to do all this.

Verse 1 of Galatians chapter 5 is essential... if you remember when Randy began Galatians back in 2024... you remember that don't you?

He told us the churches in Galatia were under assault by the Judaizers—Jewish Christians who taught that Gentile believers (non-Jews) must obey the Jewish Law in order to be saved... in other words, adding to the recipe for salvation... [circumcision, keeping the feasts, etc]

Remember that Galatia is not a city... it is a province in what is today Turkey... made up of several small to large cities... The apostle Paul had planted several churches in Galatia... Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe... so this is a general epistle to several churches...

I take that to mean the problem of the Judaizers was a big widespread problem.

Ephesians 2:8-9

8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast.... Oh BUT ALSO throw in the entire law!...you must be circumcised... the Old testament dietary laws... the Mosaic Law...

As an aside... this is what Christians have done throughout history... add some form of works or performance...some routine... to be accepted by God... to God's recipe for salvation...

It's happening today... in this very city...hopefully not in this church!... *you have been saved by God's grace through faith and living this prescribed lifestyle... embracing this certain ideology...following these certain liturgies... embracing favored ideologies...*NO! it **is through grace alone, faith alone and Christ alone...**

So the apostle Paul for all Christians of all times penned this wonderful opening verse in Galatians 5:1... **It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.** {Let's all say that together!}

12 verses later Paul says basically the same thing... **You my brothers and sisters, were called to be free...**

Paul was countering that heresy by calling Christians to live by faith in freedom in Jesus Christ....but not without a purpose... and here's where so many Christians go off... we are free in Christ... but this freedom wasn't for our indulgences...this freedom wasn't for us to "indulge in our flesh"... this freedom we have in Christ.... While we enjoy it... has a purpose:

13b ...but do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh, rather serve one another humbly in love...for the entire law... according to the rabbis... the Laws of Moses contained 613 commandments...Paul says... all those laws can be summed up into just one command...(14) **love your neighbor as yourself (Lev.. 19:18)...** **if you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.**

Paul's being very practical...If we all love each other... we won't devour each other... we all win... but if we don't love each other... we all lose... we will destroy each other... we see that today don't we?... so then... there's a way to live as a Christian... as we've seen many times... when the Bible refers to living the Christian life... it is referred to as "walking".

16 So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want...

Freedom has boundaries so that, that freedom doesn't put you in bondage!

We are back to where we were a few weeks ago... we live with this raging war within us between our flesh and the Holy Spirit who resides in us... **we are born sinners and we remain sinners the rest of our lives...**

This will disappoint some of you new mothers... those with toddlers will understand...

Minnesota Crime Commission 1926

“Every baby starts life as a little savage. He is completely selfish and self-centered: he wants what he wants—his bottle, his mother’s attention, his playmate’s toys, his uncle’s watch, or whatever. Deny him these and he seethes with rage and aggressiveness which would be murderous were he not so helpless. He is dirty; he has no morals, no knowledge and no developed skills. This means that all children... are born delinquent. If permitted to continue in their self-centered world of infancy... every child would grow up a criminal, a killer, a thief, and a rapist”

Every child born is born delinquent.... Left alone, The fleshly nature never gets better.... If left unchecked it will only get worse....a secular crime commission!!!

Our evil nature needs to be curbed... we need something to restrain us... we have available something much greater than a restraint... WE HAVE Jesus Christ whose work on the cross broke the bond... the chains of sin in the Christian... we no longer need be slaves to sin...

And we have been given the Holy Spirit to empower us to have victory over sin... **16 So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh....**all while in fellowship with God the Father... we are...as believers and followers of Christ... now in a trinitarian life!

--

There’s so much in Galatians 5... but I want to key in on fruit... Paul gives us two lists... they are in opposition to each other...if we are in a war with the flesh and the Spirit... these are the two opposing armies... which army you choose to fight with has eternal ramifications...

The first list he calls “**deeds of the flesh**”... by definition a deed is... **an action that is performed intentionally or consciously...** that’s important... deeds are enacted through your decisions to do them.... Look at his list:

Read verses 19-21

Fifteen concrete examples of the deeds of the flesh...not an exhaustive list... he concluded verse 21 with **those who practice such things...**implies more could be on the list... in seminary we had to pull out of the Bible all the sins Paul mentions in all his writings...then classify them in “Types” of sin... classifications of sins...

All of them could be placed in one of four classifications of “types” 1. **Sexual sins** (uncontrolled lust), 2. **Religious sins** (idolatry), 3. **social sins** (slander, gossip, revenge) and 4. **personal sins** (sins against the body—addictions, self-destructive activities)

I counted 62 distinct sins...(no one had the same amount!)... these are the *deeds of the flesh*...and those who (21) “**practice**” these things...it’s not *those who do these things*...we all do them...it’s those who **practice** them.... Make them their lifestyle...**will not inherit the kingdom of God**... “Practice” is the key word....

Now... this list was not a checklist to determine if one was saved or not... Paul is talking about people who abandon themselves to a lifestyle habitually dominated by these sorts of deeds... **in comparison is the fruit of the Spirit**... characteristics that flow from one who is truly saved by the blood of Jesus Christ... so Paul gives us a list... notice he does not call them “deeds”?

Deeds are something YOU do... you don’t produce the fruit that comes from your life.

He calls them “fruit”... **fruit in the singular**...fruit is one of those words that in the English can be singular or plural... one apple is a fruit... 12 apples are fruit... here Paul calls this list of many characteristics... fruit singular... many parts that make up the whole... like a bunch of grapes...

WHAT IS FRUIT?...remember... One of the primary purposes of the Holy Spirit coming into a Christian’s life is to change that life... **It is the Holy Spirit’s job to conform us to the image of Christ, making us more like Him....**fruit are Christ-like attributes.

These qualities are “evidences” to be found in all Christians...(this is a distinction from the “gifts” of the Spirit as we will see next week)... these qualities of the Christian walking by the power of the Holy Spirit flow together from a heart indwelt by the Spirit of God...

Life in the Spirit means life controlled by the Spirit in every area...from our innermost attitudes and emotions to our outermost relationships and responsibilities...

Read verses 22-23

Now... we could go through each one of these fruit...but I think there’s a more important message waiting for us than defining these familiar words... I think there would be value in doing a word study and contemplating each one of these... but we all pretty much have a good idea of what each one of these fruits are.

So turn to John 15... Jesus is going to help us

The bigger consideration is what does the Lord want from us in this... what is our role in this having fruit... how do we get fruit in and out of our lives?...how do we become fruitful Christians?...

Read John 15:1-11

Verse 8 tells us... Jesus tells us that His Father... God... **is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples...** He wants his children to be fruitful... at the end of John 14, Jesus and His disciples... less Judas... this is the night before the cross... they just finished their “last supper”...

In 14:13 Jesus says to the remaining eleven disciples **Get up let us go from here...** they leave that upper room... they walk over to the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus will be arrested early in the morning...

On their way from the upper room to Gethsemane... Jesus teaches this very important parable... about the vine, vinedresser and the branches... we know from His other parables, that Jesus often used what was around Him as illustrations to get across His veiled truth... He was walking amongst the lilies of the valley when He stopped and gave the sermon on the mount.

He most likely pointed to the lilies that were around them when He said 28 **“So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin...”** He pointed to the birds that were around them when He said:

Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

On their way to the garden of Gethsemane, He says **I am the vine and My Father is the vinedresser...** over the centuries people have speculated why Jesus used the illustration of the vines... it is doubtful they passed by any vineyards on their way to the garden... these were the streets of Jerusalem...

This is just passing interest... but the ancient historians... Josephus, Tacitus both wrote of this... that the entrance to the Jewish temple was adorned with golden vines... they prominently stood out from the street... these golden vines wrapped up the columns..

It is suggested by several biblical historians that when Jesus was passing by the temple on their way to the garden... He is pointing at these golden vines, using them for this illustration... this parable of the vines is probably His last or near His last teaching before the crucifixion.

Whatever Jesus pointed to... an actual vineyard or these golden vines on the temple columns... He uses this picture of viticulture to get across one of His most important lessons... He points out a vine... which is a reference to Himself... **Jesus is the vine.**

The **“vine dresser” is God the Father...** and (I think) **we are the branches...** In verse one Jesus says **“He is the true vine”** ...true in the sense of being faithful and true... this is the vine you can count on... this is the vine where everything else grows from...

This is not a new picture in the Bible... in the Old Testament, the vine was Israel... And we know about Israel in the Old Testament (and now)... not always true and faithful... Isaiah 5:7

For the vineyard of Yahweh of hosts is the house of Israel ... Isaiah 5 goes on to describe this vineyard was planted by and cared for by God Himself...

Yet in spite of all His loving care Israel... the vine... produced “**wild grapes**” which were not good grapes... so God takes down the fence that protected the vineyard allowing people to come by and plunder the grapes... all a picture of unfaithful Israel resulting in God taking away their protection..., He chastened them to try to get them to return to Him...

But now... in John 15... Jesus says **I am the true vine...** meaning I’m the faithful and true vine... and *I want My followers to be faithful and true and be a part of My vine...* Then Jesus launches into this whole idea of “fruitfulness”... what does it mean to be a faithful and true Christian... as He is faithful and true... that is why He emphasized in verse 8...**My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.**

A disciple of Jesus... a true follower of Jesus WILL BE FRUITFUL... and How does Jesus then help us to be fruitful?... He tells us in this parable... three things I want to point out.... Three things that tell us how, when and why we are fruitful...or more accurately **three things Christ does to make us more fruitful.**

1. We will be fruitful when (and only when!) we abide in Christ.

Read verse 4

Ten times in John 15 Jesus uses that word “**Abide**”... important, vital word for the Christian... some of your translations say “**Remain**”...

In the Bible, “**abide**” generally means **to remain, stay, dwell, continue, or make one’s home in something or someone.** It carries the idea of **ongoing, steadfast relationship rather than a brief visit.**

“Abide in me, and I in you.”

Here, Jesus uses “abide” to describe a **continual, dependent relationship with Him.** Just as a branch must remain connected to the vine to live and bear fruit, believers are called to remain connected to Christ.

IMPORTANT! The main point is *not* to bear fruit... Nowhere in this discourse is the believer commanded to produce fruit... **YOU CAN’T!**... so don’t take this list home and start working on the fruit... fruit will flow naturally through and out of your lives if you are in this abiding fellowship with Jesus Christ... work on abiding!...not fruiting!

I’ve GOT TO BE more loving

I’ve got to have more peace and joy in my life

I need more patience... be kinder...have more self control... I got to, I got to, I got to...

Abide in Christ!...THAT WILL KEEP YOU BUSY! **we are promised that IF WE ABIDE IN CHRIST....fruit will result.**

So, biblically, **to abide in Christ means to:**

- **Remain in Him** — continue in relationship with Christ rather than turning away.
- **Dwell in Him** — make Christ the place of your spiritual home and security.
- **Continue in His teaching** — allow His words to remain in you and shape how you live (John 15:7).
- **Depend upon Him** — recognize that spiritual fruit comes from remaining connected to Him (John 15:5).
- **Obey Him out of love** — Jesus connects abiding in Him with keeping His commandments (John 15:10).
- **Bear fruit** — a life that remains in Christ produces spiritual fruit (John 15:4–5).

THERE IS NO FRUITFULNESS APART FROM CHRIST

A simple definition

Abide = to remain faithfully and continually in close relationship with Christ, depending upon Him, **trusting Him, and **allowing** His Word to shape your life.**

It isn't merely “**spend a little time with Jesus.**” The biblical concept is deeper: **remain connected to Him as your continual source of life.**

ABIDE = “**to remain, stay, continue, or dwell.**” That helps explain why the imagery of a branch remaining on a vine is so powerful.

A helpful way to think about two options when it comes to life in Christ....visitors and dwellers...

Visit → come and go.

Dwellers—Abide → remain.

You must be a “dweller”... with Jesus... so many try to live their Christian lives as “visitors” with Christ... Come to church for a visit on Sundays...

We will only exemplify the character of Jesus in your life if we are in fellowship with Jesus...[do you see a common thread in all these messages on the Holy Spirit?... last time *A Still Small Voice*... how do we “hear God”?... by knowing Him!...how do we produce fruit?... by being in complete fellowship with Jesus Christ...]

When Jesus dominates my life out flows His character... when my flesh dominates my life... what comes out?... that list of fleshy deeds!...so it all boils down to **who am I spending the most time with?**

[Who you spend the most time with really does have an impact on who you are... Me, John and “my New York accent”]

Abiding in Christ is on us!... that is our part... to abide is a decision you and I make... who we abide with, how long we abide in... all is our decision...when we abide in Christ... fruitfulness will be the natural outflowing... the natural result.

(5) I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

As long as I abide in Christ I will be fruitful for Christ...

2. How can we be more fruitful?...when the Lord lifts us up

We’ve established I hope...that we are not the growers of fruit... we are the bearers of fruit...the Trinity grows the fruit... how then can we be more fruitful...

Back to verse 1 and 2...

Read verses 1-2

Verse 2 has been a challenging verse to translate through the ages...how you translate it can have very drastic consequences... the question is centered on what does “**branch**” mean?... and the term “**take away**” mean? **In Me** So many variations... here are a few of the main ones:

1. Some conclude that all Christians are branches on the vine... and if you don’t produce fruit... you’ll be cut off the vine... in other words... you lose your salvation... so you had better produce fruit!...we believe Scripture is very clear that once saved always saved... you can’t lose your salvation.

John 10:28–29 — **“I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one can snatch them out of My hand. My Father who has given them to Me is greater than all. No one can snatch them out of My Father’s hand.”** the Son and the Father hold believers securely

2. The branch is made up of both true Christians and those who *think* they are saved but are not... Not all who associate with Jesus (take Judas for example—you would have thought him to be a true disciple... but it turns out he was His betrayer)

So like Judas, not all who are “**in Me**”(2a) are actually abiding, they just appear to be by association. They will eventually be discarded off the vine and face judgement... God’s judgement...eternal judgement...

Now for sure...There are some who will face that judgement... look down at verse 6:

“If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned These are clearly those who are not IN Christ...

The Greek word that has been translated as “*takes away*” can mean “take away” or “remove” as in the second view... but it can also mean... and it most often does... *to raise, to lift up or to draw up...literally to lift off the ground.*

[The New King James makes this distinction in a footnote]

3. All who *abide* in Christ/attached to Christ, **in Christ**...in the vine...they are saved. If one does not produce fruit, there must be a problem...perhaps they are very downcast... dealing with some horrible situations in life... perhaps some sin that is keeping them down... Christ...instead of “*taking away*... He “**lifts up**”.

Vinyards at the time of Christ were not on trellises like they are today... the vines grew on the ground... as the bunches of grapes matured...laying on the ground subjected them to mildew, disease, insects and so forth...so to help them grow to maturity and be healthy, they would prop the grapes up with sticks or stones...to get them off the ground.... They would “**Lift them up**”.

Some believe that is the picture here...it’s a very encouraging view... just because I go through a period of my Christian walk where I’m not producing much if any fruit, I’m not going to be plucked out and burned up by God...

Rather Jesus comes alongside of me and lifts me up... restores me... it is very difficult to produce fruit when you are downcast... if you are in a place of being in despair and discouragement... it is hard to be fruitful.

The arguments go on but here’s what we should get out of this... regardless of all these views... **what is important is for us to abide in Christ**... if you abide in Christ.... You will not be burned up in the burn pile!...you will be fruitful.

And whether or not this is talking about removing unbelievers from the vine or lifting fruitless Christians up... **we can be assured that God in deed lifts up those who are struggling**...in Psalm 3:3 David writes:

But You, O Lord, are a shield about me, My glory, and the One who lifts my head.

David wrote Psalm 3 when his son Absalom had rebelled against him... and David was very, very low... he was downcast... but he tells us the Lord “**lifts him up!**”

1 Peter 5:6–7 – “Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that **he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.**

This is what Jesus meant when He said ²⁸“**Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.** Matthew 11:28 *I’ll lift you up.*

Psalm 145:14 ¹⁴**The Lord sustains all who fall and **raises up** all who are bowed down....**If you are a true believer in Christ... God will not burn you up He will raise you up.

3. The Lord helps us be more fruitful when He prunes us back.

The last part of verse 2... **Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away [lifts up], and **every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it will bear more fruit**...** Legacy Standard says **He cleans it so that it will bear more fruit.** A more literal translation.

Greek word *kathairo* ...we get the word *cathartic*...to cleanse, clean, purge....**you become a Christian, you start producing fruit, life’s a piece of cake!**

[Pruning—Central valley, orange trees]

Ever been pruned by the Lord?...it’s usually pretty painful...

Just look again at David... God did a pruning job on David after his sin with Bathsheba... read about it in 2 Samuel 12... begins with a confrontation with the prophet Nathan...

The child born from the affair with Bathsheba dies...

The sword never departed David’s house

Totally dysfunctional family.

Yet... Psalm 51 was eventually written by David...

Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness;

According to the abundance of Your compassion blot out my transgressions.

²Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity

And cleanse me from my sin.³For I know my transgressions,

And my sin is ever before me.⁴Against You, You only, I have sinnedAnd done what is evil in Your sight,So that You are justified when You speak

And pure when You judge.

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Pruning refers to God removing, refining, or reshaping parts of a believer’s life so they can bear more spiritual fruit (John 15:1–2). It is not punishment but purposeful refinement.

God’s pruning include:

- Removing unhealthy relationship
- Allowing trials and suffering

- Disciplining
- Refining faith through testing
- Redirecting your life
- long seasons of hardship before relief...promotion.

The Lord wants us to be fruitful... so He looks at the stuff in our lives... *and because I love you and I want you to be more fruitful... I've got to cut some stuff out...* It sometimes hurts... but in order to produce more fruit... Christ character in us... there's things in our life that need to be cut off....

Some selfishness... some anger... some unforgiveness... some lust... some pride... some bitterness... some compromise... He wants to cut those things out to make us more fruitful.

8"My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples."