

Sermon

Grace Street Fellowship

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February 11th, 2018

Galatians 5:22 - The Fruit of the Spirit

INTRODUCTION

1. Healthy practices of our faith involve attention to the apostles teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and to prayer. These are compass points on the map, so to speak. But what is the evidence that they are working?
2. You can surely say a prayer or two, take the Lord's Supper, go to church, and quote the Bible without being a faithful Christian. Didn't the Pharisees of the OT do exactly those things, yet miss Jesus? You can have the form of religion, but lack the power of faith (2 Timothy 3: 5).
3. When our faith is working, we will see its evidence in what Paul calls the fruit of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness faith.
4. These are tests to illustrate the effectiveness of our connection to Christ.
 - a. One analogy might be – having a car you've built in the garage. It looks right, but you won't know for sure how good it will be until you take it out on the road;
 - b. Or, let's say you google somewhere you want to go, say Galveston. As you travel down I45, you still pay attention to the signs. If you start seeing signs to Baytown, then you've taken a wrong turn somewhere. It isn't that the instructions were wrong, but that you are making sure that you are following them appropriately.
 - c. Or, let's say you go to the doctor, and you are diagnosed with the flu. The expert tells you what medicines you need, and you begin to stay home, take your antibiotics, rest, etc. However, you monitor your symptoms constantly to verify your progress. If you don't get better, you call your doctor back, and perhaps try out another medicine.
 - d. Or, let's say you are baking cookies. You have the ingredients and the instructions, but you still taste the cookies to make sure you are on the right track.
 - e. Or, let's use the analogy of a marriage. You've been to the church and made your vows in front of the people, but you know that's not enough. The proof is in the pudding. The test is the connection produce in good and tough times, and the oneness which is the outflow of the vows made so long ago.
 - f. The fruit of the Spirit in the Christian life is that taste test.

5. Paul is teaching us in this passage that a growing Christian will produce the fruit of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, etc.
 - a. So, if you are moving along through life, and you are suddenly tested, and you don't have joy, or peace, then something isn't right, and you need to size things up for a moment.
 - b. Paul says it this way. You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth. A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough (Gals. 5: 7,9).
 - c. It isn't that there is anything wrong with the instructions, but perhaps your prayer life is non-existent, or perhaps you attend church regularly, but something blocks you from experiencing God there.

LEAN INTO THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. Live by the Spirit, Paul says (Gals. 5: 16) – our very breath is by the Holy Spirit;
2. Follow the Spirit's lead (5:18);
3. Keep in step with the Spirit 5:25
4. In another place, Paul says we are to be filled with the Spirit (Ephs. 5:18);
5. Result will be the fruit of the Spirit.

THESE FRUITS ARE TO GROW, NOT TO BE GRASPED

1. The fruits are a natural byproduct of God's Spirit flowing in us from root to branch;
2. These fruits in a believer are as natural as light and heat coming from the sun;
3. Yet, there is danger in giving us such a list, because instead of seeking transformation in our life with Christ which overflows into fruits, we may take this as a list of virtues a way to imitate them or to use them in a way that masks our own sin.
4. For example, if a root problem in us is that we are proud and self-sufficient, and then an authority like Paul gives us a list of virtues, we may well attempt to accomplish kindness and goodness in a way that makes us feel superior to others. The list of virtues would not help us at all, but make it worse.
5. This is why the Lord gives us this important test in the context of Paul's warning against legalism and the law. The Lord's aim is not to change the veneer of our lives with some new learned habits of behavior.
6. His aim is a new creation, so that these new habits are the natural outgrowth of our hearts.
7. Northern Minnesota pastor John Piper says it like this "Paul takes in Galatians 5:19-26 to keep us from coating the sour ball of our pride with a milk chocolate morality.

WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A WORKING FAITH?

The First Three - The first three are fruit of the mind, our attitudes and temperament.

1. Love – It means unconditional commitment, but you’ve heard that from me so often, let me see if I can put it another way. It means an “unconquerable benevolence,” meaning that no matter what someone does to us in the way of insult, injury or humiliation, we still want that person’s highest good;
2. Joy – chara – Not a joy which comes from earthly things. Paul and Silas singing in a Philippian jail. A power for which Christ went to the cross. Joy comes even when tears flow; what joy is: “a deep state of well-being which transcends circumstances.” Romans 14:17: “The kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” Paul said he was “sorrowful, yet always rejoicing” (II Cor. 6:10).
3. Peace – Eirene – not the absence of trouble, or the result of human effort, but the attitude which flows from the all-pervading consciousness that our times are in God’s hands.
4. Review: Ask yourself: does your love for others depend on their love for you? Are your happiness and peace affected by the stock market, your popularity at school, your health today? In the Spirit, you can be filled with unconditional, transcendent love, joy, and peace today.

The second Three: fruits of our relationships with others.

1. Patience (long suffering) – makrothumia – two words – strongly tempered. This describes our ability to endure well many things which come against us. Chrysostom said that it is the grace of the man who could revenge himself and does not, the man who is slow to wrath. Interestingly, this is the oft-described attitude of God towards us.
2. Kindness – to give more than you receive;
3. Goodness – to find ways to help people whether they deserve it or not;
4. Review: Does your patience, kindness, and goodness depend on receiving the same from the people in your life? Or do you look for ways to serve, to help, to be kind, even and especially when others do not? In the Spirit, you can have a servant heart no matter whether others serve you.

The last three: Fruits of our personal conduct & character

1. Faithfulness – reliable, trustworthy, and consistent.
2. Gentleness: (Translates Praus)
 - a. No one English word adequately describes this one.
 - b. Plato used it to describe the power to soothe and calm, as an ointment on a wound.
 - c. Socrates used it for a man who could discuss emotional things without losing his temper.

- d. Aristotle gave the word its classic definition: the man who is always angry at the right time and never at the wrong time (Nicomachean Ethics 2.1108A).
 - e. Someone who controls his or her emotions, no matter the circumstances.
 - f. It is simply “strength under control.”
3. Self-Control (translates eskrates)
- a. The word originally meant to grip or to control something; We are to be godly with our passions, and especially with respect to sexual morality.
 - b. Plato and Aristotle used the word for a man who had powerful passions and desires yet controlled them. He was always their master, never their servant (cf. Nicomachean Ethics 7.4.1145B).

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE TIMES WHEN WE DON'T EXHIBIT THIS FRUIT

1. Don't lower the standards – It is too easy to measure ourselves by what others do instead of what is right.
2. Run from self-righteousness - The Pharisees of Jesus' day were masters of this: "God, I thank you that I am not like other men – robbers, evil doers, tax collectors (Luke 18:11). I'm better than others, so I must be right with God. So long as we aren't as bad as the criminals we see on television, or as someone else we know personally, we're fine. I've heard it again and again through the years, "I'm just as good as everyone else," but that is not enough.
3. Don't fake it – When you recognize that something's off, don't attempt to keep up appearances.” We’re like David, covering his sin with Bathsheba in the eyes of the community, but not before God. So long as our society thinks our marriage is fine, our kids are succeeding, and our finances are strong, we must be.

WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

1. Choose the Spirit over the flesh - Galatians 5:16 – walk by the spirit, and you won't gratify the desires of the flesh; These two are in conflict with each other;
 - a. Envy – product of a heart that thinks it merits more than it is getting;
 - b. Jealousy is the product of a heart that expected to be paid what went to another;
 - c. The kind of heart that produces these byproducts is one that thinks of itself as a creditor and everyone else as a debtor.
 - d. The flesh is convinced of its own merit and expects God and man and nature to pay dues by giving the satisfaction it desires.
 - e. The flesh knows nothing of grace.

2. Choose the Spirit over the Law - If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.
3. But How? – We all have heard preachers say “Let the Spirit lead you,” or “Allow the Spirit to control you,” and have gone away puzzled as to what that means practically. Keep your heart happy in Him. Let Him satisfy you.

CONCLUSION/INVITATION

The value of our lives is not in our abilities or possessions, but in the one who controls us. If you are a Christian, you have the Spirit. Does the Spirit have you?

Holy Spirit, breathe on me,
Until my heart is clean;
Let sunshine fill its inmost part,
With not a cloud between.

*Breathe on me, breathe on me,
Holy Spirit, breathe on me;
Take Thou my heart, cleanse every part,
Holy Spirit, breathe on me.*

Holy Spirit, breathe on me,
My stubborn will subdue;
Teach me in words of living flame
What Christ would have me do.

*Breathe on me, breathe on me,
Holy Spirit, breathe on me;
Take Thou my heart, cleanse every part,
Holy Spirit, breathe on me.*

Holy Spirit, breathe on me,
Fill me with pow'r divine;
Kindle a flame of love and zeal
Within this heart of mine.

*Breathe on me, breathe on me,
Holy Spirit, breathe on me;
Take Thou my heart, cleanse every part,
Holy Spirit, breathe on me.*

Holy Spirit, breathe on me,
Till I am all Thine own,
Until my will is lost in Thine,
To live for Thee alone.

*Breathe on me, breathe on me,
Holy Spirit, breathe on me;
Take Thou my heart, cleanse every part,
Holy Spirit, breathe on me.*