

True Fruit
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Galatians 5:13-26

- **What should the life and character of a follower of Christ look like?**
- Statement: “Evidence of a person’s salvation is seen in godly character.”
- So that means Christ saves us and we immediately start looking, acting, speaking, and loving like a Christian 100% of the time – right?
- Though Jesus boiled it down to two commandments, love God and love others as ourselves (Matt.22:36-40), we still can’t do that consistently!
- If we’ve trusted Christ we should act, speak, and love like He did.
- **Why is that not as easy as it sounds?**
- 100% of humans suffer from human nature – even saved humans.

Big Idea: Trying to live the Christian life and defeat our flawed human nature is a losing battle. The Christ-like life must be the Spirit filled life of intentional daily dependence on the Holy Spirit.

- In chapter four we talked about what it means to live in Christian freedom.
- We talked about two extremes LEGALISM (you’d better keep every rule perfectly, even some that aren’t in scripture) and LICENSE (because of grace, can’t I sin all I want? No!)
- Christian freedom/liberty is in the middle between those two extremes.
- So how does a flawed follower live in that middle space? Paul tells us in this very important chapter.

Galatians 5:13–26 (ESV)

¹³ For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one

another. ¹⁴ For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” ¹⁵ But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

- “Flesh” has two meanings. **What does it mean here?**
- Our freedom can become an “opportunity” to give in to our selfish, sinful human nature. The first evidence of that is lack of love for others.
- *“Biting and devouring one another”* - have you ever been around a group of professing followers of Christ that acted like that? You can tell by the behavior of believers who is in charge, the flesh or the Spirit.
- In any group (family, church, work) *“lack of love results in division.”ⁱ*
- On the other hand, showing self-sacrificing “agape” love to others results in unity and peace. That only comes by the power of the Holy Spirit living in us.
- Remember: Trying to live the Christian life and defeat our flawed human nature is a losing battle. The Christ-like life must be the Spirit filled life of intentional daily dependence on the Holy Spirit.
- Next Paul tells us how to tap into that power.

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.

- The desires of our human nature are at war with the desires of the Holy Spirit. As they say, *“the struggle is real!”*
- Remember in movies and cartoons the angel on one shoulder and the devil on the other whispering in each ear? Silly but somewhat accurate.
- Swindoll: *“The issue is control. The solution is surrender.”ⁱⁱ*
- Illustration: Freedom to look or listen to either, but when asked for help the “angel” (Spirit) has super powers – but only when asked.

Bible Knowledge Commentary: *“As a believer walks through life he should depend on the indwelling Holy Spirit for guidance and power. But the Spirit does not operate automatically in a believer’s heart. He waits to be depended on. When a Christian does yield to the Spirit’s control, the promise is that he will not ...**gratify** (telesēte, “complete, fulfill” in outward action) **the desires of the sinful nature.**”ⁱⁱⁱ*

- Paul gives us some examples of those desires:

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, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

- This is not an all-inclusive list, but some important examples.
- What about that last sentence? **If I slip into these things do I lose my salvation? What DOES Paul mean? Why is it actually GOOD NEWS that you struggle with sinful tendencies?**
- Remember: Trying to live the Christian life and defeat our flawed human nature is a losing battle. The Christ-like life must be the Spirit filled life of intentional daily dependence on the Holy Spirit.
- Now Paul casts a vision for what the Spirit-led life looks like:

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.

- Imagine the “basket” of your life filled with fruit like that!
- I love the metaphor of “fruit” because we can all relate to it.
- None of us can manufacture fruit. Growing “fruit” is a miracle of God’s creation. We plant a seed and pay attention to it and God does the rest.
- We do our part: tilling, planting, watering, weeding, etc. Only God can produce the fruit.
- We also can’t manufacture weeds? **What is different about weeds?**

- So how can a follower of Christ get busy growing some good fruit?

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.

²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

- **How do we “keep in step” with the Spirit? What do you think that looks like on a day-to-day basis? How can I tell if it’s happening?**
- David Jeremiah recently wrote a book called “A Life Beyond Amazing” about the nine fruit of the Spirit. At the end he gives us some practical advice about how to “*keep in step*” with the Holy Spirit:

“There is a common misconception that when you become a Christian, the Holy Spirit suddenly surges into your life like an irresistible electrical current, and from that moment on you are totally spirit-filled with no further action required on your part. It’s true that the Holy Spirit takes up residency in your life the moment you believe. But you do not, at that moment, instantaneously become a fully matured believer. It takes time for His fruit to germinate and ripen. It requires careful tending of your spiritual soil.”^{iv}

Jeremiah then gives five specific steps to the “Spirit-empowered” life:

1. Desire the Spirit – We must ask for His direction.
2. Renounce Your Sin – 1 John 1:9 – If we confess our sins...
3. Devote Yourself to God’s Word – We read the Bible to learn how to live the Christian life.
4. Let Go of Your Own Ambition – Your life has no room for two CEOs. Either you will be in charge, and you probably already know where that’s headed, or you can place the Holy Spirit in charge.
5. Commit to the Spirit’s Direction – Daily choosing the Spirit’s direction.^v

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- We can all agree by our own experience, trying to live the Christian life and defeat our flawed human nature is a losing battle.
- The Christ-like life must be the Spirit filled life of intentional daily dependence on the Holy Spirit.
- How intentional are we about daily surrendering to the Holy Spirit's power in our lives? Do we ask for His direction? Do we ask Him to interpret scripture for us? Do we do our part in the garden of our lives so He can produce the fruit of the Spirit? This week let's "keep in step" with Him.

ⁱ Explore the Bible Leader's Guide p.65 - Lifeway

ⁱⁱ Swindoll, Charles R.. Insights on Galatians, Ephesians (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary Book 8) (p. 124). Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.. Kindle Edition.

ⁱⁱⁱ Campbell, D. K. (1985). Galatians. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 607). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

^{iv} JEREMIAH, DR DAVID. LIFE BEYOND AMAZING: 9 Decisions That Will Transform Your Life Today. THOMAS NELSON PUB, 2018.

^v ibid