

# ***“Walking by the Spirit”***

**GALATIANS 5:16-26**

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If you were with us last week, then you know that we started looking at a passage near the end of Galatians 5. We studied the freedom we have in Jesus Christ, we thought about the fact that this freedom comes with great responsibility, the responsibility to make good decisions and we studied the flesh. The flesh, according to the apostle Paul, is basically a worldly way of thinking. The flesh is the part of us that makes some rather selfish decisions, decisions where we rely on what we want to do instead of relying on what God would want us to do. We learned that we are born with a God-shaped hole in our hearts, and the flesh represents our desire to fill that hole with something other than God. The flesh is the part of us that gives sin a chance.

We then studied the ***“deeds of the flesh,”*** those 15 characteristics of someone who is living a worldly life, and our main point last week was that the Christian life is a constant struggle. The flesh and the spirit are opposed to one another. As Christians, we are not to give in, we are not to give up, we are not to get discouraged, but we are to constantly be pushing back against the flesh. We are to maintain the struggle, and it is a struggle that will continue until this life is over.

This morning, I would like for us to continue with “Part 2” of last week’s study by looking ahead at the next paragraph as we consider the ***“Fruit of the Spirit”*** in the last few verses of Galatians 5 (p. 1825). Most of us enjoy eating fruit. I know that there are some exceptions. There is some fruit that I seem to be allergic to – I don’t know if it is some pesticide that is used or what – but for the most part, fruit is generally a good experience for most of us, and for the most part, fruit is generally good for us. Several days ago, the cook for our Bible camp this summer sent me the daily shopping list, and as I looked over that list, I was amazed at how much fruit she had on there. For nearly 7 days in the woods with a hundred people, she wants 24 pounds of bananas, 46 pounds of apples, 100 oranges plus a 10 pound bag of oranges, 10 pounds of grapes, 12 large watermelon, 5 6-pound cans of mixed fruit, 5 64-ounce cans of apple sauce, 6 pounds of pineapple chunks, 16 15-ounce cans of mandarin oranges, and 3 6-pound cans of peaches. To me, that is a lot of fruit, and we are looking forward to it!

The Bible, though, tells us about a kind of fruit that is much greater, the fruit of the Spirit. As we study the fruit of the Spirit this morning, as we endeavor to walk by the Spirit, I would like for us to go back and include the verses we studied last week (by way of review, and to put all of this in context), but our focus will be on the second half of this passage. Let us please look together at Galatians 5:13-26,

***<sup>13</sup> For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. <sup>14</sup> For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” <sup>15</sup> But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.***

***<sup>16</sup> But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. <sup>17</sup> For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. <sup>18</sup> But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. <sup>19</sup> Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, <sup>20</sup> idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, <sup>21</sup> envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.***

***<sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. <sup>24</sup> Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. <sup>25</sup> If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. <sup>26</sup> Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.***

As we focus in on the last part of this paragraph, I would like for us to consider what is meant by fruit, and then I would like for us to at least briefly consider each category that is listed here.

#### **I. But first of all, let us please notice THE SIGNIFICANCE OF FRUIT.**

What is it that caused Paul to label these particular qualities as “**fruit**”? There may be a number of reasons, but I would point out to begin with that fruit is visible. Most of you know that I grew up with a lot of fruit trees – apples, and cherries, and peaches, and pears, and plums – we also have a number of fruit trees in our yard here in Madison – apples, and plums, and pears – and one thing I’ve always observed is that fruit is obvious. Even right now in our yard, you can go out there and look at a tree and tell it is a plum tree – you can see little plums on it. Right now in my yard, I can see pears – they are about the size of marbles, but they are obviously pears. In our back yard, we have three grape vines, and there as well, you can see grapes – they are tiny, but they are obviously grapes. Even at this stage, I would never mistake pears for apples or grapes for plums, because the fruit is visible. There are no trees or vines in my yard that bear invisible fruit!

In the same way, I would suggest something very similar is true of our Christian faith. When we walk in the Spirit (as Paul instructs us to do here), the results are to be obvious. The results of living the Christian life are to be just as obvious as the hundreds of tiny grapes out in my backyard right now. People on the outside should be able to look at us, and they should be able to notice (based on who we are and what we do) that we are different, that we are Christians. If we are walking in the Spirit, other people will know it. They will recognize it.

And that leads me to a second very closely related idea concerning fruit, and that is: Fruit always reflects the character of the tree or vine that is bearing it. Imagine me going out into my yard to check out the apple tree, and imagine that when I go out there to look at it, I find that it is covered with grape clusters. That would be wrong! We remember what Jesus said in Matthew 7:16-20, with reference to false teachers. The Lord said, ***“You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are***

**they? So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So then, you will know them by their fruits.**" In other words, as I said just a moment ago, fruit always reflects the character of the tree or vine that is bearing it. If I am walking in the Spirit, I will be bearing spiritual fruit in my life. We remember what Jesus said in John 15:5, **"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."** If we are in the Lord, if we are attached to the vine, then we will be bearing fruit as we should. And, as the Lord said earlier, if a Christian is not bearing fruit, that person will be pruned or cut down and thrown into the fire. In terms of the Christian faith, we might say that there are two types of trees: There are productive fruit-bearing trees, and there is firewood. There is no middle ground. So, first of all, fruit is obvious, and secondly, fruit reflects the character of the source.

And that leads me to a third very basic idea here at the beginning, and that is: Fruit is the natural result of healthy growth. And what I mean by that is: Fruit cannot be manufactured. Nobody has invented a machine that can create an apple. There is no process for manufacturing a grape. Instead, fruit is the result of a long and drawn-out natural process. And that's the way it is with the fruit of the Spirit. The fruit is not instantaneous. When we are baptized, we don't come up out of the water perfectly loving, and patient, and kind, and so on, but it is a long process of growth. So, fruit is the natural result of healthy growth.

And before we get into the list that Paul gives us here, I would make one other observation, and that is: In this context, **"fruit"** is singular. Maybe this is a big deal, maybe it is not, but it is at least interesting to me. We do not read about the "fruits of the Spirit," but we read about the **"fruit of the Spirit."** There may be several reasons for this, and I believe the main reason is this: If we are Christians, this is the fruit we will bear – all of it, as a package – almost like nine grapes on a cluster or nine sections in an orange. This isn't like the grocery store where we can go in and pick out some apples and oranges and leave the pears. We don't have the ability to say, "I think I'll be bearing love and patience today, but no thank you on the self-control." We cannot pick and choose; but instead, if we are walking by the Spirit, then we will bear the fruit of the Spirit – all of it, not just some of it.

## II. **With that, let us look at THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT AS PAUL OUTLINES IT FOR US – we see the list in verses 22-23.**

And as we look at these nine qualities, I would just ask that we keep in mind: Jesus is the perfect example of every single quality! As the true vine, the Lord Jesus is our perfect example.

### 1. **Notice, please, the first quality is LOVE.**

And the word Paul uses here is AGAPE. As I understand it, the word does not refer to an emotion or mushy feelings toward another person (as we might describe love today), but the kind of love we are discussing here is a choice – the choice to willingly do whatever is best for another person. Love (in this context) is self-sacrificing. It is the same word used in Ephesians 5:2, where Paul said that we are to, **"...walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God..."** The Lord gave himself for us on the cross, not because of any warm fuzzy feeling, not because we were so lovable, not because we were good people, but because it was exactly what we needed. He gave himself up for us.

The practical application comes in 1 John 3:16-18, where John said, **"We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has the world's goods, and**

**sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.** Love, then, is a choice that we make. Just as the Lord laid down his life for us, so also we choose to lay down our lives for others – not necessarily all at once (by dying on a cross like he did), but a little at a time, over and over again, for a lifetime.

The flesh says, “You aren’t being very loving to me, so I’m not going to be very loving to you.” The Spirit says, “Even if you are not loving me, let me show you what real love looks like.” Love is a choice over a long period of time. And so with that in mind, are we bearing love as a fruit? For those of us who are married, do we really love our partner? Are we doing what is best even when we do not feel like it? How about our children? How about our parents? How about our friends? How about our brothers and sisters in the congregation? Are we putting their well-being before our own? Are we choosing to sacrifice ourselves? That is the kind of love that Paul is talking about here.

## 2. The second quality is JOY.

The world can offer happiness – happiness is what happens when things go well. In other words, if I get a bonus, if I get a new car, if my relationships are going well, if I pass all of my exams, then I will be happy. Joy, though, is not dependent on our circumstances. We think of Paul who wrote in Philippians 4:4, **“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!”** When Paul wrote that, he was under house arrest in the city of Rome and chained to a Roman soldier. Paul’s joy did not depend on his circumstances.

The same is true today. No matter what happens around us, we as Christians have so much to be truly happy about – we have a Father who loves us, a Savior who died for us, and the Spirit to guide us through the written word.

## 3. The third quality is PEACE.

The word comes from a root word referring to something being bound together, and it came to be translated as quietness, rest, or set together again – almost like you might set a broken bone – at one time the situation was really bad, but once the doctor came in and put things back together again, now we are at peace, now we are back the way we should be. In an emotional sense, sometimes we might refer to somebody who “has it all together.” And that also is the idea here. Instead of living a life of chaos, we as Christians are able to be at peace – at peace with ourselves and also at peace with others. The word refers to tranquility of mind, the peaceful feeling we have because we are okay with God, the idea of being calm, with no reason to be nervous or afraid. When so many people in this world are stressed out and worried about their jobs, and the economy, and their health, and their families, Christians will face some of the same challenges, but we can be at peace through it. We are at peace, not because we are oblivious to what is going on around us, but because we have confidence in God who has promised to take care of us. Again, we think about what Paul wrote, imprisoned in his own apartment in Rome, in Philippians 4:6-7, **“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”** Paul lived a rough life, but he had it all together. He was not afraid of what might happen next. In the same way, we also can face whatever happens to us with peace, knowing that God will hold us together.

#### 4. The next quality here is PATIENCE.

The word translated here as “*patience*” comes from a compound word which is a combination of the words for “long” and “anger” or “passion.” The first part is “MAKRO.” With my background, I think of macro photography. Technically, macro photography involves taking a picture where the image on the camera sensor or on the negative is larger than the original. So, if I take a picture of a tiny mosquito and the resulting image on the camera’s sensor is larger than the original mosquito, then that is a macro photograph. The word “MAKRO,” though, literally refers to something being long, and when combined with the rest of the word here, “anger,” or “passion,” the idea is basically that of having a long fuse or waiting a long time to get mad over something.

The flesh part of us, though, is not like this at all. Generally speaking, we are not naturally patient. We think of a baby who gets hungry in the middle of the night. That kid doesn’t just lay there and think, “Well, I’m really hungry, but mom and dad are sleeping, so I think I’ll wait a few more hours before waking them up.” No! Little kids are not naturally patient, they do not have long fuses; instead, they tend to blow up whenever they feel like it, even in the middle of the night. As Christians, though, we have matured past that, and our fuses are to be long. Having a long fuse is the opposite of being short-tempered. Instead, we are to be “long-tempered.”

We think of God in the Old Testament and how he had such a long fuse with the children of Israel. The Lord God put up with a lot. He was patient. And thankfully, the Lord is patient with us as well. We remember what Peter wrote in 2 Peter 3:7, “***The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.***” The Lord God is long-suffering, he is patient. In the same way, we are also to be patient with those around us. We reflect God’s patience for us by being patient with our families. We are to have a long fuse with our spouse, and with our children, with our co-workers, and with our fellow students. We are to treat the people around us just as God treated us.

#### 5. The next quality is KINDNESS.

The word refers to goodness, excellence, uprightness, and it comes from a root word referring to something that is useful or serviceable. Some of you know that about three weeks ago our dishwasher became unserviceable. I had repaired it one too many times, and it was finally beyond repair. This word is the opposite of that. I guess we might say that now we have a dishwasher that is “*kind.*” It works, it does what it is supposed to do, it is excellent, it is upright (in terms of what dishwashers are designed to do). The word refers to something that is decent, honest, and helpful. In the ancient world, the word was used to refer to healthy and tasty food – food that was doing what it was designed to do.

We think of what God did in Ephesians 2:6-7, when he raised us up with Jesus, “***...and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.***” He showed his kindness by doing for us only what he could do for us. In a similar way, we are called upon to be kind to those around us, serving in a way that only we can serve. We are to be useful.

#### 6. The next quality is GOODNESS.

We think of Barnabas who is described as being a “*good man*” in Acts 11:24. In Acts 10:38, Peter describes Jesus as someone who “***went about doing good.***” We think of Paul’s words in Romans 12:20-21, “***...if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him A drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals***

***on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*** We think of what Paul will go on to write in the next chapter, in Galatians 6:10, ***“So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.”*** We put all of these things together, and we get the very clear idea that having the quality of ***“goodness”*** means that we will go out and actually do good stuff for other people. Someone has described goodness as “active kindness,” and I would certainly agree with that. It is almost the idea of being generous, overflowing with good works. As Christians, our goodness is to be just as obvious as the apples on my tree at home.

**7. The next quality is FAITHFULNESS.**

It is the idea of reliability, the idea of being true to somebody, and in this case, true to the Lord. We are to be true and faithful to our families, we are to be faithful and reliable at work, but most importantly, we are to be true and faithful to God. There are many times when we will need to choose between family, work, and God. God is to always come out on top. We know from Romans 10:17 that faith comes from hearing God’s word. So, to be faithful, we are to read and study.

**8. The next quality is GENTLENESS.**

The idea we have here is power under control. We think of these huge horses that have been trained to do what they are told to do – power under control. Moses has been described as gentle – not weak, but in fact a very powerful man who harnessed that power for good. The Lord has been described as gentle; so again, not wimpy or weak, but we are talking here about power under control. One writer has used this word to describe the kind of spirit that does not demand proper respect; so again, we have power under control.

**9. And the final quality here is SELF-CONTROL.**

The word refers to an ability to control one’s passions and appetites. We think of what Peter said in 1 Peter 2:11, ***“Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.”*** Self-control allows us to hold back when we really need to hold back.

And at the end of this list, Paul concludes by saying, ***“...against such things there is no law.”*** The early church, of course, was about to go through a time of intense persecution, so Paul pointed this out – no matter how bad things may get, keep on bearing the fruit of the Spirit, ***“...against such things there is no law.”***

**Conclusion:**

In reality, most of these things seem to be fairly difficult. It is hard to always love as we should. It is difficult to rejoice in tough circumstances. It’s hard to be at peace. It is hard to be patient, and kind, and good and faithful. It is hard to restrain ourselves. It is hard to practice self-control. However, there is something we have overlooked in this passage. Two times Paul refers to walking by the Spirit. The first time (in verse 16), he uses the normal word for walk, just like we might walk down a path. I was pretty sure he used that same word again; however, I looked it up, and the second time (in verse 25), he used a military word that refers to standing in rows. And so the idea in the second reference is to walking beside somebody and keeping in step, just as we might march in a parade or just as a husband and wife might go on a walk together and walk next to each other hand in hand. To me, then, that is an interesting picture. We are to walk by the Spirit. We are to walk next to the Spirit. We are to keep in step with the Spirit. As we bear this fruit, we are to call the Spirit to our side to help. In fact, sometimes the Spirit is referred to as our ***“helper,”*** and the word there is PARACLETE.

The word refers to calling someone to our side. So, maybe we hurt ourselves, we can't go on any longer, and we call in someone to help us along. That is the role that the Spirit plays in our Christian faith. We walk by the Spirit.

And when we think about it, as we walk, there is movement involved. There is action. We walk from one place to another. We move forward. Walking means that we're going somewhere. And that is what the Christian life is all about. We may not be perfect, but we make progress. With God's help, we move from where we are to where we need to be, if we stumble and fall we get back up, and we do it with the Spirit by our side, walking by the Spirit, being led by the Spirit. The Spirit leads through the inspired word of God, and we follow (we keep in step) by putting one foot in front of the other, using the Bible as our guide.

The first step in walking by the Spirit is to invite God's Spirit into your life. In Acts 2, on the day the church began, the crowd wanted to know what they needed to do to be saved, and this is what Peter said, ***"Change your hearts, and let each one of you be immersed in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins might be forgiven, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."*** The gift of God's Spirit is still available today. If you are interested and have any questions, let us know. But if you are ready to obey the good news right now, if you are ready to be immersed in water so that your sins might be forgiven, we would love to help you with that right now. You can let us know about your decision as we sing this next song. Let's stand and sing...

To comment on this lesson: [fourlakeschurch@gmail.com](mailto:fourlakeschurch@gmail.com)