

The Fruit of the Spirit

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[0 : 00] We're carrying on tonight as we have been on Sunday nights for the whole semester in our series on the Holy Spirit, and we're pretty far into it now.

We're to the point now where we're looking at the ways that we walk with the Spirit, and what the Spirit means for our normal daily, very practical lives.

In Galatians 5, the section we read is very famous. Of course, it's the fruit of the Spirit, and it tells us exactly what the Holy Spirit means for our very normal, very practical lives.

And we believe here at St. Columbus, this is part of our vision, that the gospel changes all of who we are. The gospel of Jesus Christ, the word salvation, it's not just about the forgiveness of sins.

The forgiveness of sins is the starting point, but it's not the finish point. And the gospel comes into your life to change everything. To forgive you of your sins, but also to change you, to do something in you and all about you and all of who you are.

[1 : 05] And John Calvin talked about it like this. He said that the Holy Spirit gives us what he called a twofold grace. And the twofold grace of the Spirit is first that you're justified by faith, you're forgiven.

But then secondly, that you're also sanctified. That means that the power of sin is broken so that you can actually change, you can grow. He said that's the twofold grace of the Spirit.

The Spirit takes God's work in Jesus and applies it to you and forgiving you, but then also breaks the power of sin in your life so that you can actually change.

And that means that the Holy Spirit comes into our life to show us what Jesus means, but also so that we might grow, so that we might change.

And so we say here, we are justified by faith alone. We're saved, we're forgiven by faith alone. That's how we receive the good news of the gospel.

[2 : 06] But we're not, we don't walk in a faith that remains alone. We want to be faithful. We want to grow, we want to change. We want to not only say Jesus Christ is my savior, He's also my example.

And you can never say the second unless you've said the first. You can never flip them around. But if Jesus Christ is your savior, then He's also your example. And that means we're called to grow, to change, to have a change in the life of our character.

And that's what Galatians 5 hears all about. Now Paul tells us here that we want, we seek, we desire the fruit of the Spirit.

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control. We seek the fruit of the Spirit.

Why did God through Paul want you to think about growing in sanctification in the language of the metaphor of fruit?

[3 : 11] And actually when you ask that question you realize that fruit has always been the idea throughout the Old Testament and the New Testament. Where does fruit come from?

Fruit comes from a couple of different places, but one of the main places, fruit comes from a tree. I fruit from a tree this afternoon at one of our church members' house.

Amazing apples and our crumble. And the fruit, it fell right off the tree. And the only way that you can get fruit from a tree is if that tree is healthy and if it's growing like it should be and it's producing green leaves and then the fruit that comes from that.

And you take that idea back and you realize that that's the metaphor God chose, Psalm 1, that God wants every single person that He comes into their life that He changes from the inside.

He wants to make them like a tree that's stuck beside a river that even when the heat comes into their lives there's green leaves and there's fruit abounding.

[4 : 13] And that's the metaphor. That God chose for us and it's always been that way. And here it is right here. Good healthy trees bear fruit. And that fruit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Now we can't tonight walk through all of those, all nine of those, but what we'll do instead is listen to what the Holy Spirit means for growing in the fruit of the Spirit and we're told right here you read it in verse 16.

The preface of the fruit of the Spirit is verse 16 when Paul says, here's how you do it, walk by the Spirit. Walk by the Spirit and you will put on the fruit of the Spirit.

So how do you in your life seek the fruit of the Spirit? Paul says walk by the Spirit. So first how not to walk by the Spirit and then how to?

There's two ways Paul tells us here to not walk, how not to do it. And he says walk by the Spirit, don't walk, don't walk instead according to the flesh.

[5 : 25] He says don't walk according to the law, but do walk according to the Spirit. So there's our outline. Don't walk according to the flesh, not by the flesh, not by the law, but instead walk by the Spirit.

How can we? All right, so first, not by the flesh. We don't seek to walk by the flesh, but by the Spirit. Right here in verse 17, right after Paul gives you the command, walk by the Spirit.

Verse 17, Paul says this, the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit. Now Paul is saying here that in every single one of you there is a war happening.

All of us deep down in the bottom of our heart, in our deepest consciousness, there's war taking place. And he tells us exactly what that war is.

If you're a Christian tonight, Paul says there's a war going down in your heart between the desires of your flesh and the desires of the Spirit.

[6 : 30] That there's a war in you between the Spirit and the flesh. And the flesh wants you to do what's wrong all the time, and the Spirit is advocating, speaking to your heart, and telling you that there's a different way.

Now even though Paul's talking to Christians here, this is something that every single person in the world understands. By the way, we call it the common operation of the Spirit, the Spirit's working everybody's life to a degree, Romans 2, showing all of us that there's good and there's bad.

Everybody knows, everybody knows, you don't have to be convinced that there's a war going down in your heart from the time you're born. You know that, I can prove it to you, I've said this several times from here, but if you've ever known exactly the right thing to do in any situation, what would be truly good?

And you've said, I don't care, I want to do what I want to do anyway. And you do it. You know that there's something, there's a gap between your mind and your heart, that there's a war going on in the life of your soul.

Now everybody knows what they were like, maybe you're just now here, maybe you're not quite here, most of you are way past this, but you remember maybe what life was like when you were 16 years old, sweet 16.

[8 : 01] Some of you are right there right now, I can see, but some of you I can see are not there anymore. And listen, let me tell you a story, Saint Augustine, the great bishop, one of the greatest Christian theologians of all of history, he tells us a story about when he was 16 years old about the war.

And this is what he says, he says that there was a, he was 16 years old and there was a pear tree. He says there's a pear tree, I'm going to read to you exactly what he says, okay, there's a pear tree near the vineyard, my vineyard.

And he says it was laden with fruit, tempting, tempting not in color or taste, the pears weren't great pears. They were okay.

Some lewd young fellows of us, we went late into the night precisely because we were out prolonged into the night because of our sports in the street.

And he says, and we went and we shook those pear trees and we robbed those pear trees. And we took huge loads of pears, not for eating, not because we were hungry, but to fling them to the very hogs, having only tasted them.

[9 : 17] And this was to do what we liked only because we knew it was disliked. And then he writes in his book, a prayer as an old man thinking back on the pear tree.

He says this, behold my heart, O God, behold my heart, which you had spitty upon in the bottom of the bottomless pit. Now behold, let my heart tell you, O God, what it found there, that I would be gratuitously evil having no desire to do wrong except the thrill of doing wrong.

It was foul and so I loved it. I love to perish. I love my own faults. And he says, he says it was no noble theft, those pears.

It wasn't like a laden and a boo, you know, taking the bread because they were truly hungry, not at all. He said, he writes, he says, I did it because I was controlled by my desires.

Now have you ever felt that in your life? That you were so controlled by wanting what is evil and wrong that you could not help but do it.

[10 : 35] That's what Augustine's talking about here. Now you say it's some pears, but he stole them. They weren't his pears. And he's just giving us an example. This is exactly what, this is the war. This is the war that's deep down in every one of our lives.

Christian or not tonight, we all know the feeling. And if you're not a Christian tonight, let me say to you that I don't know if you can put that feeling anywhere.

You know, I don't know that you have a box to say this is what makes sense of this feeling, this guilt that I feel within myself. I don't think you know what to do with it because it speaks of a law.

It speaks of something truly great that stands above all of us that tells us that there's something wrong with me. Now here in Galatians 5, Paul is talking about the Christian life and he's saying, if you have the Holy Spirit, if you have Jesus, you have the Holy Spirit.

And if you have the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit now is at war with those exact desires, the desires of the flesh. And here when he says flesh, he doesn't mean the physical life versus the spiritual life.

[11 : 41] So the desires of the flesh are not desires for food, not sexual desire, not anything. It's not fleshly just because it's physical, not at all. That's not what he means.

Instead, we actually have the list. He gives us a list. He says, you want to know what the desires of the flesh are? Well let me put some of them on paper for you. Verse 19, he says, here they are, sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger.

Now here's how you know that he doesn't mean that flesh is physical versus spiritual because he says that one of the desires of the flesh, he writes, is sorcery.

And sorcery is an entirely spiritual sin. And so what are the desires of the flesh? The desires of the flesh are not physical versus spiritual. Instead, they are evil versus good.

The desires of the flesh are natural inclination to want, what is wrong, to want things in the way that God has not made the world, to not want to walk in the grain and the groove of creation order.

[12 : 52] And to walk in the grain and the groove of creation order is to seek the good, but we want the bad. And that's the desires of the flesh. And Calvin comes to you tonight and he says after Paul that the Holy Spirit, look, if you're a Christian tonight, the Holy Spirit has come into your life and given you a two-fold grace.

And that grace is first to say that Jesus Christ's death and resurrection, his work is yours and that you're forgiven for every evil desire that you've ever had.

That's justification. But then he comes and says, but the Holy Spirit doesn't stop there. He comes into your life and says to you that I'm here to break the power that's been held over you by the desires of your own flesh.

And that means that the spirit is at work in your life tonight, Christian, in order that you might grow. And Paul says to you tonight, on the one hand, you cannot grow into the fruit of the spirit without the spirit.

It's a grace. It's a gift. And at the same time, he says, walk by the spirit so that you might grow in the fruit of the spirit. Now, do you hear that nuance?

[14 : 09] He says there is no growing. There is no change in your life without the Holy Spirit and walk with the spirit so that you might change.

Now you could put it another way. In Corinthians six, Paul does the same thing. He gives us a list of sins and he calls them the sins of the flesh.

And then he says, and such were some of you, but you are this no longer. You used to be this, but you're not this anymore. And you see what he's saying? He's saying the Holy Spirit has come into your life so that you can no longer be identified by these sins.

And walk instead with the spirit. In other words, become the very person that the spirit has made you. In other words, he's saying, this is the work of God in your life and you've got to do something

about it.

This is all the spirit and you've got to get up and get active at the very same time. You know, in your justification, your forgiveness, there's nothing you can do.

[15:15] Nothing in your hands you bring simply to the cross you clean. And when the spirit comes and gives you that, but then breaks the power of sin, God says, now walk and step with the spirit, put on the fruits of the spirit, be active, not passive.

Now let me move on and ask you a question. And the question is framed according to 1st Timothy 6:12, which says, fight the good fight of the faith.

Fight the good fight of the faith. J.C. Riles great book on holiness, he says that the Christian life is entering into the fight. All right, the fight, the war that's deep down in the bottom of your heart.

Now let me ask you this and don't get offended because this is what I'm asking myself tonight.

When are we going to grow up? When are we going to grow? When are we going to grow?

When are we going to say I'm entering into the fight? When are we going to say holiness is serious?

And I want to hear, Gilesh, I want to walk by the spirit and I want to change.

[16:21] I want to grow. So let me ask you tonight, have you, have you by the grace of the spirit, by the grace of the spirit entered into the fight?

And the answer, of course, for all of us, if you're a Christian tonight is yes and no, right? It's yes, but no, but yes, but no. It depends on what day this is.

It's Sunday, maybe it's better. But that's why we're here because today is the day to remember the gospel, the good news of forgiveness, into enter the fight.

And to say tomorrow is the day that I seek the fruit of the spirit, that I walk and step with the spirit, that I long to grow, to change. All right. Secondly, walk by the spirit, not by the flesh, walk by the spirit.

Paul says, secondly, not by the law. We move from verse 17 here, walk not by the flesh to verse 18, walk not by the law. But if you were led by the spirit, he says, you are, quote, not under the law.

[17:25] Now he doesn't hear mean law in general, because we know that walking by the spirit is actually obeying the laws of God.

It's loving the Ten Commandments and listening to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and saying that we actually want to become the person that Jesus describes in the Sermon on the Mount.

Instead he means something different here. Walking by the spirit, not by the law. Law is a term here that stands for something else, not just the commands of God.

But one pastor, a preacher, he puts it this way. Paul here means by law, it means living, living as if your performance is the ground of your acceptance before God.

Living under the law means living as if your performance is the ground of your acceptance before the living God. All right. So, anytime, living under the law is this.

[18:27] When you think in your heart that obedience gets you to God, that's living under the law. Anytime you think that your obedience will get you into the acceptance of the living God.

Now, this is exactly what we saw in the Old Testament. First Kings 18, Elijah was on Mount Carmel with the prophets of Baal, and they went to war, they went to war over who the true God is, and at the top of the mountain, the prophets wanted their God to listen to them, the false prophets.

And what did they do? They first recited magical incantations, but their God did not hear them. He didn't listen. And then they started singing and dancing.

They started dancing, and their God didn't hear them. And then they resorted to cutting themselves, the text tells us. And that's exactly what living under the law is.

It's when you think that you can get the attention of the divine by performance. If I do enough, God will listen to me.

[19:35] If I say enough, if I say it the right way, if I do it the right way, if I behave the right way, then I can get God to come down. And that's what Paul means here. That's living under the law.

And you can do this with anything. Here he's talking in this context about living under the law of Jewish custom keeping, that in Galatians, the Galatians were being told if they were to keep the customs the right way, then they would be accepted by God.

And in every single one of our lives, there's all sorts of little ways that were attempted to come under the yoke of some law, some little God that says to you, dance for me.

And if you do it the right way, maybe I'll enter into your life. And that is not how our living, the true God works, not at all. And Paul says, instead, walk by the spirit, don't walk under the yoke of the

law.

Now here's the danger. This is why we need to say this, because we're saying tonight, seek the fruit of the spirit. Seek love. Seek joy.

[20 : 36] Seek peace. Seek patience. Seek kindness and gentleness. Be faithful. These are all good things, but there's a real danger when you hear the command, walk by the spirit and seek the fruit of the spirit, that we get confused in our heart and think that walking by the spirit by seeking faithfulness becomes the law.

In other words, that we treat the virtues of the spirit, the fruit of the spirit, as if they are the ground of our acceptance before God. And for some of us, especially those of you who have been in the church a long, long time, it's very easy to get lulled, even if you know in your head that you don't believe this, to get lulled in your heart to thinking that your public display of virtue, the fruit of the spirit, is the true ground of your acceptance before God.

And you know what that is? That's flipping justification and sanctification. That's saying that my growth is the grounds to justification. And Paul comes and says, no, don't walk by the flesh, that's the flesh, don't walk under the law, that's the law.

No, here, Christian, that the only way to truly grow is if you know, if you know that your virtue is never the ground of your acceptance before God.

And let me give you one example of this. This won't strike home with everybody, but I think it's something that everybody needs to be aware of. Today there's a movement across the Western world called, that's me, and called Hustle Culture, Hustle Ideology.

[22 : 12] Some of you know about this, but it's exemplified more than anywhere else in the popularity of the Joe Rogan podcast. So if that's meaningless to you, then I'll explain it.

The Joe Rogan podcast is the most popular podcast in the world. Joe Rogan has not millions of downloads, but multiples of billions of downloads worldwide.

And Joe Rogan is one of many, many people who are part of a movement that's known as the Hustle and Grind movement, the Hustle Ideology or Hustle Culture. And this is what Hustle Culture says.

Now listen, listen to this. It says, you only have one life. So work hard, challenge yourself, keep your body in shape, never give up, have a stout heart, a stout soul, seek patience, seek faithfulness to the people in your life that you've committed yourself to, stay committed.

The key to the good life is working hard, working out, being patient, being persistent, and being faithful above all else. And look, you listen to that message.

[23 : 26] It's called the Hustle Culture message. And you say, there is so much virtue there. There's so much good in that message. And this is how the Hustle Ideology finishes it off.

It says, look, you only have one life to live and then you die. And in that one life, you need to seek the most idealized version of yourself.

Seek the ideal. There's lots of good here. Here's the difference in Christianity and Hustle Ideology. Hustle Ideology says, seek the good life, be virtuous, work hard, be responsible, be committed to the people in your life that you've committed yourself to.

Do the best you can at your job because work really matters. And the Christian comes along and says, basically, yeah, that sounds about right, but here's the difference.

In the Hustle Culture, in the world's eyes, you seek the best version of yourself for the sake of yourself. This is called, this is being under the law.

[24 : 31] You see, being under the law is any time you seek something for the sake of your own self. Seek virtue so that you can realize the idealized self. But this is what Christianity says.

Christianity comes and says, seek true virtue, not for the sake of yourself, but for the sake of the God who has come into your life and saved you when you were at your worst.

Seek virtue, seek holiness, seek the fruit of the Spirit, not so you can be a better person. No, not at all. But because you have a great God, the true God, seek Him.

You see, you seek the fruit of the Spirit in order to seek the face of God. You seek the fruit of the Spirit because you want to be like Him. You want to know the God who's come into your life, who's changed you.

You want to know Him and you want to be like Him. And that's completely different than every other virtue philosophy, which is, this is just one. In all of world history, we'll move to the final brief point by saying this, look, that's law.

[25 : 36] Anything that says to you, law, law, it's when you are enslaved to some temporary master, and even a philosophy that says to you, put on as much virtue as you can, be as responsible as you can be in this life.

Seek all of those goods because you only have one life. That's seeking a false master. It's seeking a mere idealized version of yourself and then you die.

That's law. Here's the gospel. It's when you realize that you're never going to love enough. You're never going to be patient enough.

You're never going to have the right amount of joy. You're never going to be gentle enough. You're never going to be faithful enough. Never. Not to reach the idealized version of yourself and not to get acceptance before the living God.

And instead you say this, God in Jesus Christ has entered my condition. You know, He was patient. He was so patient and He died for my impatience.

[26 : 47] He is love and He died because of all of my hatreds. He is faithfulness and yet He became the sheep led to the slaughter for my inconsistencies, my lack of faithfulness.

Don't live by the law. Live by the gospel because the gospel says that you've got something more to live for than just this life. You don't seek virtue for the sake of virtue. You seek virtue because you seek the living God and you do it by way of the gospel.

Walk by the spirit, in other words, not by your achievements because that's walking under the law. Now finally, let me close with this. Three things, and I'll just rattle them off. Three ways that you can do this.

Walk by the spirit this week. Three ways. Verse 23 says it. It says in the spirit, you have crucified your sinful desires. All right, here's the first thing.

If you're a Christian tonight, your sinful desires have been crucified forever on the cross of Jesus Christ. And that means that you can come tonight to a verse like verse 19 and 20 and read this list and say, on this list of sins, I know what I struggle with.

[28 : 04] Now you can look at the six times that Paul gives you a list of sins. He does it six times across his letters and you can say, I know in my heart, these are the particular issues that I'm still really wrestling with in my life.

And then you got to come back and you got to hear it one more time. The sinful desires of your flesh have been past tense already crucify with Jesus Christ.

You are not under condemnation for the sins that you struggle with. They were crucified with Jesus Christ. You are forgiven.

That's your justification fully and finally and forever. And so that means practical step number one. Some of you tonight may be struggling with shame because of sins that you cannot shake.

And the first thing you've got to do is you've got to know my sins have been crucified with Jesus Christ because sometimes what happens is you can't get out of the shame.

[29 : 11] And actually when you're in the midst of shame over your particular sins, we run right back to them. We swim around in them for so long that we ended up just staying right there.

But put away the shame because Jesus Christ was enough for God the Father to forgive you. And if Jesus Christ's death was enough for God the Father to say you're forgiven, then what is it going to take for you to forgive yourself?

Is Jesus enough to say that that sin is past and I'm moving on? You don't have to live in shame. You're forgiven. That's for a second.

Verse 25, it's not only that your sins have been crucified in Christ, but verse 25, you see what he says in verse 25? He says he doesn't just say now walk by the Spirit.

He says now live in step. We live by the Spirit, so we keep in step with the Spirit. Your sins have been crucified with Jesus.

[30 : 17] You're forgiven. Secondly, he says here, now today walk in the steps of the Spirit. Now I grew up in America, as you know, and I grew up hunting.

And we hunted for all sorts of animals. And one of the things about hunting that I remember most, when I was little, all the way to when I wasn't as little, my dad saying the same thing to me over and over and over again.

I would be right behind him and we would be walking through the woods trying to get to the place where we were looking for whatever deer or whatever it would be. And he would turn around and tell me to be quiet and to walk in exactly the steps that he walked.

Because the key when you're hunting is you don't step on the sticks because the sticks crack and then the animals run away. And so my dad would say take every step that I take. And so I was stretching my legs out as far as I possibly could, trying my best to take his long steps. Paul says to here, not just walk by the Spirit, but take the exact steps that the Spirit is taking. [31 : 33] Now we're told what those are. It's a call. It's a call to be incredibly active in the life of your spiritual growth.

You see what he's saying, it's not just walk by side the Spirit, but actually take steps wherever the Spirit is walking. In other words, it's saying Paul says it like this. He says, oh, wake, oh, sleepers and rise up.

Get your mind in gear. Get your heart in gear. Wake up and walk with the Spirit. Don't be asleep. Listen to the Spirit. Be attuned to the Spirit.

Know the type of thing the Spirit desires and is speaking to your life. Here it is. It's love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control.

Walk in each of those nine steps, eight, nine steps with the Spirit. That's when seek the fruit, because that is walking in the steps of the Spirit. It's the call to be active, to know that two natures are working deep down in your heart.

[32 : 37] Your sinful desires and the Spirit be in step with the Spirit. Seek the Spirit. Put on the fruit of the Spirit. Lastly, and we close.

Lastly, why is it that the fruits, these fruits, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, that this is the fruit of the Spirit?

Why is that? Why is it that walking in step with the Spirit should be moving you towards this particular person? And here it is.

It's because these things you read about here, these are the attributes of God. Did you know that? The fruit of the Spirit, we're reading here the very attributes of the living God, that God is love and God is joy and God is peace and God is patient and kind and gentle.

And he's faithful and he's controlled. These are the very attributes of God. And so when it says here, seek the fruit of the Spirit, walk in step with the Spirit, it's actually telling you, put on the very attributes of God.

[33 : 46] Now why? It's because God made every single one of us here to be in His image, as His image. And it's saying that as you put on the fruit of the Spirit more and more in your life by the grace of the Spirit, you are actually becoming fuller and fuller and fuller the image of God.

You're putting on the very thing you were made to be, the very image of God. And that's why salvation does not stop at the forgiveness of sins. You see, salvation says this, become in full the image of God that you were made to be.

And we are truly saved in the second coming of Jesus Christ when we put on fully and finally and forever the fruit of the Spirit without remainder, without sin, that salvation, becoming the full image of God.

But here's the promise, today, Christian friends, by the Spirit you can put on the fruit of the Spirit. And so walk in step with the Spirit.

Let's pray together. We give thanks for the grace of forgiveness in Christ tonight that our acceptance is not by law but by the cross.

[35 : 03] And standing on that ground and no other ground, we ask that you would move in our hearts, Holy Spirit, to make us active participants seeking to grow, to be holy, to love, to have joy, to have peace, to be gentle and kind, all of these things.

And so Holy Spirit, grow us up as fruit-bearing trees, we ask. And we pray this in Christ's name. Amen.