

## Intro:

In the year 2000 we had a series of messages from Galatians. I actually managed to cover 6 chapters in 9 months. What was I thinking?

When we moved into this building, we were working through the ‘works of the flesh’ passage in chapter 5.

Recently, as I have been transforming our taped messages from analog to digital, I have been working my way backwards through these messages. I only hear snippets of them as I edit the audio files. These messages and some thinking I have been doing recently prompt me to go back to these themes and preach some messages on the subject of suppressing the works of the flesh and cultivating the fruit of the Spirit.

Back in our Galatians series, I called this pursuing “serious practical godliness.”

I am not sure exactly where this theme is going to take us, but I am going to work on this as another “occasional series” along with the “Our Church” series for our Sunday afternoon services.

We are going to start back at this topic with a message called:

### *Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit*

## **I. The metaphor of fruit with respect to people**

### A. The fruit that is the people – souls won to Christ

1. After meeting with Samaritan woman, Jesus talks to his disciples about ‘the harvest’ – souls: ‘gathers fruit unto life eternal’ (Jn 4.35-36)
2. Paul, writing to the Romans wished to ‘obtain some fruit among you also’ (Rm 1.13)
3. Paul talks about ‘fruitful labour’ if he remains in the flesh (Phil 1.22)
4. Jesus says, “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit” speaking of the fruit that will come from his work on the cross (Jn 12.24)

### B. The fruit that is produced from people

1. Bad fruit
  - a. Both Jesus and John the Baptists warned about bad fruit and good fruit

- 1) John the Baptist to the Pharisees: bear fruit in keeping with repentance – every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown in the fire.(Mt 3.8-10, Lk 3.8ff.)
  - 2) Jesus about false teachers: you will know them by their fruit, Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire (Mt 7.16-20, Lk 6.43ff.)
  - 3) Jesus to the Pharisees after the blasphemy of HS: Either make the tree good and its fruit good ... You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? Mt 12.33-34
- b. Jesus told parables about judgement of the bad fruit of Israel
- 1) Parable of the barren fig tree – let me work at it for awhile, then lets see if it will bear fruit (Lk 13.6ff.)
  - 2) Acted parable: cursing of fig tree: no longer any fruit (Mt 21.19, Mk 11.14)
  - 3) Parable of the wicked tenants: sent his servants for the fruit of his vineyard (Mt 21.34, 41, 43, Mk 12.2, Lk 20.10ff.)

Note: in this last parable, Jesus said the vineyard would be given to ‘a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.’

## 2. Good Fruit

- a. The parable of sower: seed gave fruit (Mt 13.8, Mk 4.7ff.,Lk 8.8)
- b. The major ‘fruit-bearing passages’
  - 1) Jn 15.2ff. Abide in me and bear much fruit [Read Jn 15.1-11]
  - 2) Rm 6.21 What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? ... but now fruit unto holiness (v. 22) [Read Rm 6.20-23]

Note in particular here that the end result, the fruit of sin, is death. Hold that thought.

- 3) Galatians 5.22ff. our passage
- c. A few ‘by the way’ references
- 1) Giving / generosity is fruit

- a) Rm 15.28 – offering for Gentiles described as their ‘fruit’
- b) Phil 4.17, Paul speaks to the Philippians concerning their financial gift as fruit he desires them to have
- 2) Eph 5.9 for the fruit of the Light *consists* in all goodness and righteousness and truth)
- 3) Phil 1.11 – Paul’s prayer for them, ‘having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ
- 4) Hebrews 12.11 – discipline yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness
- 5) Heb 13.15 – praising God is the fruit of our lips
- 6) Jas 3.17-18 – wisdom from above is full of good fruits [a parallel passage to Galatians 5]

I give you all this to get you thinking how God is working something out in your life — he is producing fruit in you.

- There is a component of God’s activity in your life which produces the fruit.
- There is a component of your activities that contribute to the growth of spiritual fruit.

Should you desire spiritual fruit?

## II. Our desire for spiritual fruit as Christians

Go back to Gal 5. Compare the two lists

### A. The works of the flesh (19-21)

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<sup>NAU</sup> **Galatians 5:19** 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.

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1. All of these works are indulgences of the senses [sensual]

2. The list is not complete! “and such like”
3. The list is bookended by practices that really should have been completely abandoned by a born again Christian
  - a. “Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,<sup>20</sup> Idolatry, witchcraft”
  - b. “murders, drunkenness, revellings”

You would agree that Christians shouldn't engage in any of these, right?

These things are the fruit you had “in those things whereof ye are now ashamed” [Rm 6.21] – complete indulgences of the senses.

4. But consider the middle of the list: “hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,<sup>21</sup> Envyings”

Or the NAS: “enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions,<sup>21</sup> envying”

Have you ever had any of those?

They are equally indulgences of the senses (and can lead to the others if indulged long enough).

When you are angry, you are almost always indulging your flesh.

- You have your reasons.
- The other person has done you wrong.
- You are out on a ‘seek and destroy’ mission – you may not use physical blows, but you will use words and emotional blackmail to get your way.

How do these works make you feel? Happy? Or miserable?

## B. The fruit of the spirit (22-23)

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<sup>NAU</sup> **Galatians 5:22** 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.

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1. Notice: ‘against such there is no law’ — this is perfect liberty
2. Of all of these, which are concerned with the ‘self’? Really only ‘self-control’ ... *self-control*.

How does this fruit make you feel? Miserable? Or happy?

Really, which spirit should a Christian desire — the spirit of self-indulgence or the spirit of walking in the Spirit?

Which do you want?

How do you get there?

### III. The Bible method for fruit cultivation

#### A. Your growth is the work of God

1. By the influence of the Holy Spirit
2. By the disciplining hand of God (Hb 12.11)

This is God’s part, but God works in yielded hearts.

God works more in ‘active’ hearts: those who are actually making an attempt to grow spiritually.

#### B. Your part in spiritual growth

1. Energized by the Word of God

It involves your reading and hearing the Word of God. You won’t hear God’s Word if you aren’t in the company of Christians.

So the positive method of cultivation are the basic Christian disciplines: Bible reading, prayer, Church fellowship

2. Cultivated by ‘crucifying the flesh’ (Gal 5.24)
  - a. This is spiritual ‘weed-pulling’
  - b. Notice that this is past tense – by the new birth, you are dead to sin and alive to God

c. See Rm 6.12-14, 17-19 – the crucifying of the flesh is past tense and present tense

- 1) One is clearing the ground
- 2) The other is weeding the fields

C. A few thought questions:

1. What are you doing to cultivate the fruit of the Spirit in your life?
2. What should you be doing to cultivate the fruit of the Spirit? (Crucify the flesh)
3. What aspect of the flesh most needs crucifying in your life right now?

D. Another question

1. What things in your life need to be crucified to produce love?
2. What things in your life need to be crucified to produce joy?
3. What things in your life need to be crucified to produce peace?
4. What things in your life need to be crucified to produce long-suffering?
5. etc.

## Conclusion:

Now I am not out to put you into a spiritual depression if you are currently failing God in some of these areas. Or in many!

What I want to do is point you to the place of joy in the Holy Ghost!

This is the way to the kind of joyful Christian life that people promised you when you became a Christian.

If you aren't a Christian, you can't actually do anything! You should be depressed! But you can give up your selfish ways, repent of your sins, and believe in Christ... and start the walk.

You could start today.