

## **The Fruit of the Spirit**

In our study of the Holy Spirit and His ministry we now move to the fruit of God the Holy Spirit. As we begin, let me read Galatians 5:13-6:2 to get it in your minds before showing you a pattern I have discerned there and how that can help us understand the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other. So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law. The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other. Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

Before showing you the pattern, let me talk about patterns in general. It is common in speaking or writing to follow patterns of ideas. Regular parallelism of ideas works like this: A, then B, then C, followed by A-prime, B-prime, and C-prime—where the letters stand for ideas. The “prime” just means it is basically the same idea as A, B, or C, but not exactly the same. Let me make up an example to explain. The person who loves the Lord (point A) and keeps His commandments (point B), will be blessed (point C). To create another statement of regular parallelism would mean that A, B, and C would be followed by A-prime, B-prime, and C-prime. So a sentence of regular parallelism might be this: the one who is devoted to the Lord (a parallel statement to loving Him), and walks in His ways (a parallel with keeping His commandments), will know God’s favor in his life (parallel to being blessed). That is regular parallelism.

Parallelism can work with any number of members, with at least two or more. Inverse parallelism would look like A, then B, followed by B-prime and A-prime. Or you could have many ideas, such as A, B, C, D, E, F, and G, followed by G-prime, F-prime, and all the way back to A-prime again. That would be inverted parallelism. The ideas eventually meet in the center, and you could also have a center member. For example, you could have one isolated idea in between three parallel ideas, such as A, B, C, and then D, followed by A-prime, B-prime, and C-prime. Of course, the “D” idea could be in the middle of a set of inverse parallelism as well.

There are examples in the Bible of such things, in case you are wondering what the importance of all this is. In John 1:1 the pre-incarnate Son of God is first referred to with the image of the Word, which would be idea A. Later in verse 7, the pre-incarnate Son of God is referred to as the light when it says that John the Baptist was a witness to the light, which is idea B. Then we have inverted parallelism, which is also known as a chiasm. If it were regular parallelism you would have “word,” then “light,” and

then something more about the word and something more about the light. But what comes next is not “word,” but rather the light coming into the world in verse 9. Then we are told about the Word becoming flesh in verse 14. The chiasm of John 1:1-14 serves to bind the passage together and to point us in the direction of its theme, which is the incarnation of Christ.

I believe I discern intentional parallelism in Galatians 5:13-6:2. We need to understand the fruit of the Spirit over against what John Sanderson calls “the weeds” in his book, *The Fruit of the Spirit*. Paul calls them “the acts of the sinful nature.” Is Sanderson justified in extending this imagery of fruit and weeds? I think he is, due to Galatians 6:7, which says, “Do not be deceived. God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.” You can see that the Bible itself pursues this imagery. Again in Galatians 6:9 it says, “At the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.” I am not saying one has to do it that way, but it is instructive to study the fruit of the Spirit over against the weeds, the deeds of the flesh.

It is important to see both of those concepts in their bigger historical and literary context. The historical context is explained in the early chapters of Galatians, where another gospel gets Paul mad. He is a godly man and he is willing to subordinate his own personal comfort and interest for the sake of the Gospel. So in Philippians 1 he tells us that while he was imprisoned, others took that as an occasion to score points against him. He said some were ministering the Gospel out of good motives, but some out of bad motives because Paul was imprisoned. While I am sure he was hurt because of those bad motives, he said, “Praise the Lord either way because the true Gospel was being preached.” In Galatians 1, when people were changing the Gospel, he called down the wrath of God on them. “Let them be accursed,” he says. In the Greek the word is *anathema*, which means “let them be damned.”

You can see the chiasm develop as we move through the passage. There is an exhortation to love in Galatians 5:13-14, which is matched at the end of the passage in Galatians 6:1-2. Then there is a pointing out of interpersonal abuses in Galatians 5:15 followed by a command to trust and obey the Spirit in 5:16. There is a parallel to those in Galatians 5:25-26. I will try to prove all this in a minute, but I just wanted you to have an overview. Then the center of the passage becomes D and D-prime where the weeds and the fruit contrast with each other, and both are to be understood in light of the exhortations to love and especially in light of the interpersonal abuses.

My thesis is that the weeds are largely interpersonal sins. And the fruit of the Spirit will produce the love that Paul exhorts them to have on both ends of the passage. The exhortation to love in 5:13-14 is this: “You, my brothers were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature.”—Such indulgence is not freedom in Christ, he says, but it is only license.—“Rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” That exhortation is “A.” Then he moves to “B,” in which he points out interpersonal abuses: “If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.” They will gobble each other up, so to speak. He then moves in the next three verses to tell them to live by the Spirit, to walk by the Spirit. Galatians 5:16 says, “Walk in the Spirit,” or “by the Spirit.” My understanding of this is that it means to live their Christian lives, which implies believing in the Spirit and being aware of the Spirit. But more than that, to walk by Him, or to live by Him, means to go step by step obeying the Spirit, trusting in the Spirit, and relying upon the Holy Spirit. Apparently this is something they are not doing, at least insofar as they are biting and devouring each other according to the previous verse. It is a sad thing indeed. Then we have the weeds in Galatians 5:19-21, which are the deeds of the flesh. Paul calls them the actions of the sinful nature. I will come back to those at the end when I talk about the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Let me clear up a possible question about terminology. I am using the words “walk” and “live” interchangeably in Galatians 5:16. The word is “walk” in the Greek in Galatians 5:16. Some translations render it “live.” It is an Old Testament picture carried over into the New Testament that is quite common. Since it is a common activity of walking beings, it is used as a picture for living our lives.

So we have love, interpersonal abuses—which are violations of love—and an exhortation to trust and obey the Holy Spirit. We have an exhortation to love again in Galatians 6:1-2: “Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently, but watch yourselves or you also may be tempted. Carry each other’s burdens and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” While he does not mention the word love, he mentions the concept of love. Furthermore, the law of Christ seems to be “love another as I have loved you.” It certainly shows an action of love. I would admit that part of my outline is not as crystal clear as the rest, which is largely lifting words out of the passage. That is an interpretation. I would think it is correct though. It is showing brotherly love, bearing each other’s burdens, and ministering to each other in fulfilling the law of Christ, which is the law of love.

Interpersonal abuses are again spoken of in Galatians 5:26. They are different from the ones in 5:15. “Let us not become conceited,” it says in 5:26. In 5:15 the biting and devouring of each other speaks of railing against each other and attacking each other verbally. This time, they are different sins but again they are interpersonal. They manifest themselves in their relations with one another. “Let us not become conceited.” Conceit occurs between a couple of people. If somebody is being puffed up over against his or her peers, it is interpersonal and provokes envying each other. So it is provocation and jealousy that is spoken of here. Now you may recognize how these sound like some of the weeds and the fruit of the Spirit sounds like the anecdote to some of those poisons. That is exactly right.

There is another emphasis on trusting the Spirit in Galatians 5:25. Paul says, “Since we live by the Spirit,” which is different from 5:16, because the word “live” is actually used this time. It is not even precisely the same meaning. He is saying something different. In 5:16 he is commanding them to live by the Spirit. In 5:25 he is saying, “Since we already do live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.” The phrase “keeping in step with the Spirit” in Galatians 5:25 means to follow or walk along with something. The idea of living is in verse 15, but the living by the Spirit in 5:25 means something more specific. Since we live by the Spirit, have been regenerated by the Spirit, and have been given eternal life by the Spirit, then let us, as a result of that, keep in step with the Spirit. The command to keep in step approximates the command to live by the Spirit in 5:15. What does it mean to keep in step with the Spirit? Basically the same thing as it means to walk in the Spirit. It means to go step by step, hand in hand with the Spirit, obeying the Spirit and living by faith in the Spirit.

What remains for us then is to understand the weeds and the fruit. I should mention verse 24 under the heading of trusting the Spirit. “Those who belong to Christ Jesus,” Paul says, “have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.” It is an important reference to the work of Christ, to union with Christ—to our being joined with Him in His death, which really shows the power for the fruit of the Spirit spoken of in the passage. So the passage is not apart from the cross of Christ. It is in conjunction with the cross.

What about the weeds and the fruit? They are the heart of the matter here. I emphasized that historically the Galatian churches were not only afflicted with a false gospel, but also the true believers in the congregations were struggling with a false view of the Christian life. It was presumably a legalistic view of the Christian life. We are indeed to obey the law, but you cannot show me that the main emphasis of the Christian life is obeying the law or obeying principles. The word legalism can mean different things. It can mean a salvation by works mentality. Paul attacks that idea in Galatians. Legalism can also be the

idea that we start off saved by grace through faith, but that God has left us to our own designs the rest of the way, and our job is to obey His word—to obey the commandments. Again, it is true that we are to obey the commandments, but He has not left us to our own designs and our own power. That can be a legalism in the Christian life. Show me where law is the focus of the Christian life. Show me where law is all in all of the Christian life. No, the law and the Word are part of the content for part of the Christian life.

Let me put matters in perspective because this is really important. The motivation for the Christian life is not the law. There are many motivations given in the Bible as to why we are to live for God. The primary motivation for the Christian life is gratitude for God's grace. It is not law-keeping. Law has its place. But it is one place among a bigger picture. The primary motivation is to love Christ because He loved us first. It is to be grateful for God's grace. What about the power of the Christian life? Is it keeping the law? No, the power of the Christian life is the power of the indwelling Spirit. It is the Spirit applying to us the death and resurrection of Christ every moment, every hour of every day. The goal of the Christian life, again, is not just law-keeping. The goal of the Christian life is the glory of God. So keeping the law is part of the content of the Christian life—an important part of the whole, but not the whole. The motivation is loving God who first loved us, in gratitude for His grace. The power for life is the power of Christ's resurrection, the power of the Holy Spirit. Those are different ways of saying the same thing. The goal is glorifying God. Within that framework, the law has its place as part of the content of the Christian life. But if you make law everything—goal, motivation, power—you are going to end up biting and devouring each other, as Paul says in verse 15. You are going to end up conceited. The law keeping breeds that. I may be doing better than you are. Or maybe you are doing better than I am on this particular day, so I envy you. It is easy to understand how people can provoke each other. The Christian life becomes a rivalry. In this context, we want to see their mistake and the acts of the sinful nature. It is no wonder they have got a lot of weeds to pull because they are forgetting the Holy Spirit in the Christian life.

It looks to me like the weeds break down into a number of different sins, different categories of sins. Sexual sins are mentioned in Galatians 5:19—immorality, impurity, and debauchery. I could say a lot about this, but let me say this to the gentlemen: we need to really be careful in our world today. We are bombarded with sexual messages in commercials and everywhere. We are just bombarded. We need to be accountable to other men. Ladies, we need your help. We really need your help in terms of your dressing and behaving in a godly way. Wives and husbands need to love each other and communicate with each other, yet we live in a world that is so tempting in that regard. So did the Galatians, and so Paul begins with immorality, impurity, and debauchery. Debauchery is giving oneself over to sexual sin without restraint. Perhaps impurity is even more a matter of the heart and immorality more outward. That may be helpful to view them that way.

Religious sins are listed next. It sounds like Romans 1, does it not? You see sexual sins there, especially homosexuality, and you see religious sins. How warped we are as sinners that sin affects our life of worship. The religious sins are idolatry, following substitutes for the true and loving God, and witchcraft. It is amazing that in the post-Christian, so-called "enlightened West," we are into such things today. That is so sad, indeed.

But the largest group of sins is no surprise, given the historical context and the literary context. The words that surround the weeds and the fruit are a list of interpersonal sins. They are hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, and envy. What a list that is. There are eight sins listed. Jealousy and envy are pretty similar. Dissensions and factions match up pretty well. Hatred

and discord are close. Why does Paul mention so many things if some are near synonyms? It is to be emphatic. It is to lay emphasis where the Galatian Christians needed it, on their biggest area of need.

Next he mentions sins of excess: drunkenness and orgies. They are sins where there is a tremendous lack of self control. My contention is not that the fruit of the Spirit match up one for one with every weed. It is more general than that. But there is some matching that goes on.

It is important to recognize a warning from verse 21. Christians can fall into the sins that we have called weeds. Otherwise Paul would not be writing these words. He writes, "I warn you as I did before, that those who live like this," which means those whose lives are characterized by the weeds. They may not be Christians at all. "Those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God." Those are strong words. Does God call us to be judges of our brothers and sisters? No, God is their judge. Does he call us to be fruit inspectors? Yes. There are some people who overdo that and think they are God's fruit inspectors given to the holy church. They should probably do a lot less of it. Most of us, however, are on the other side. We would hardly ever rebuke a brother or sister. Yet we should do it remembering Jesus' teaching that we should do unto others the way we would like them to do unto us. We should do it in a way that fits with Galatians 6:1-2. It should be done prayerfully, without nitpicking somebody's life. Otherwise we would be hounding each other all the time. By the way, our closest neighbor is our spouse. Show me a marriage that works and I will show you two people who follow the teaching in James and 1 Peter that "love covers a multitude of sins." We need to overlook things. On the other hand, you cannot overlook everything. When we need to speak to our spouse or speak to our brother or sister who is plainly sinning, but we need to do it prayerfully, lovingly, and privately. In the scriptural order, that is how you start. Speak out of a spirit of helpfulness. It is helpful not to force this, but weeping is a good way to do it sometimes. If you are burdened enough, that may just come out of you and your care will just come forth. I say it this way: we need to earn the right to do this. That is, you do not just go jumping on the new guy who visited your church Sunday and let him have it with both barrels. But overall we do not do enough of this correction with each other. I know godly men and women who, because of the bombardment of the sinful world, are entering into accountably relationships with other godly men and women. Every week or two they meet for breakfast or lunch or whenever and they say, "How is it going in this area, my friend?" The ladies help each other and the men help each other. That is a wonderful thing indeed.

Let us look at the fruit of the Spirit, understanding them in the context of the weeds as well as the whole context here in Galatians. The fruit of the Spirit is love. It is easy to understand how that is personal. The fruit of the Spirit is joy. In its context, it is shared joy. It is not rivalry and jealousy. It is my being delighted at what the Lord is doing in your life. If the Lord blesses your ministry three times more than mine, I should rejoice with those who rejoice. Praise the Lord! It is for God's glory. It is His kingdom. That is the way we should be. In this context joy is not a private matter. Neither is the peace that follows. It is harmony. The Bible teaches about an individual's peace in the heart. Philippians 4:6-7 is one place. The Bible certainly teaches that, but many of us tend to read the Bible with an individualistic perspective. That is a mistake. In this context he is not talking about individual peace of heart. He is talking about harmony between the brothers and sisters in the body. The whole context is interpersonal, as we have seen. Patience means bearing with one another in love. Kindness is being kind to one another. The goodness here means generosity, sharing with one another, or supporting one another in love.

There is also faithfulness. What the Lord wants from us, primarily, is to love Him and to obey His commandments. He wants faithfulness from us. We wish we could be spectacular. Then we think we could be a witness for Jesus. But you do not need to be spectacular. If God wants to do something

spectacular that is His business. But God is interested in faithfulness—everyday dependability. If we live like that, we will stand out in a day and age when there is little faithfulness and commitment of human beings to others. Gentleness and self-control are also there.

I will do just a little bit of matching fruit and weeds. Self control is obviously contrasted to things like fits of rage, drunkenness, orgies, and debauchery. There is an interrelation here. He is talking against certain things. Kindness and gentleness are against hatred, fits of rage, and so it goes. You can do much with these terms and concepts. Sometime for your own devotional life, consider each of the weeds and contrast them to the list of the fruit. You will find that almost every one has at least one counterpart. Some of them have more than others.

I am ready to draw some conclusions based upon a summary of the historical context, the literary context, and then working through some of these matters together. The fruit is character or qualities produced by the Spirit. After all, it is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. That is, the divine sovereignty is accented in the very expression the fruit of the Spirit. These are evidences of the working of God the Holy Spirit in a person's life. Every Christian is to exhibit all of the fruit. You might say, "I do not consistently exhibit all the fruit all the time." Welcome to the club. I am not trying to sound like a super-spiritual hypocrite. But it is true that all of us are to exhibit these all of the time. You might say, "I have growing to do." Welcome to the team. There are only two kinds of people in the world and they are both sinners. There are unforgiven sinners and there are forgiven sinners. God has given us His Spirit, first of all, that we might come alive toward Him. But it is also that we might grow in Him and make progress in the Christian life. So these are not gifts that some have and some do not, although some people excel in some of these areas more than the rest of us. I do not deny it. But it should be our goal in a lifelong way to grow in each of the fruit of the Spirit.

You have the raw materials here for another good devotional activity. Why not pray about these things and thank the Lord? Or give the list to your spouse—this may be a fearful prospect—and ask him or her to grade you where you are doing well. Get that affirmation first. Then ask where you need to grow. Thank the Lord for where you are doing well and thank the Lord that we cannot be afraid as Christians to fail and we do not have to be afraid to grow. That is what it is all about by God's grace.

The fruit is character qualities produced by the Spirit. This is not a self-help program. The sovereignty of God the Holy Spirit is accented. Nevertheless, it is not one-sided either. It is not God doing something with you doing absolutely nothing. That is not faithfulness to God. Human responsibility is not omitted. After all, believers are commanded to keep in step with the Spirit according to Galatians 5:25 and to live by the Spirit according to Galatians 5:16. So the Lord makes it clear that the Spirit is in control and He is the ultimate producer of the fruit. But He also calls us to account. Human responsibility is not omitted. We are thus fellow workers under the Spirit and we are to work with the Spirit. We are commanded to trust and obey God the Holy Spirit step by step, day by day. The Spirit only produces His fruit in those who have been united to Christ.

Galatians 5:24 mentions Christ's death explicitly and His resurrection is implied in the reference to regeneration in verse 25. First Peter 1 attributes the new birth to the Father's will. Other passages attribute it to the Spirit's working, since we live by the Spirit, but also to the Father's will and to the Son's resurrection. The Son's resurrection unleashes the power of the new life that we receive from God at regeneration. The Spirit only produces His fruit in those who have been united to Christ in His death and resurrection. The Spirit does this in all those so united. So we do not try to have the fruit of the Spirit produced in our lives in order to become Christians. No, that is not the Gospel. The Gospel is given in Galatians 1 and 2 on the basis of believing in Christ and Him alone for salvation and having His

righteousness as our only appeal before God. Then we who have the Spirit want to grow in the Lord. So we look for fruit in Christians, not in unsaved people. The fruit are only properly understood in contrast to the deeds of the flesh, or the weeds.

If peoples' lives are dominated by weeds, it may be that they are not saved. That is a tricky issue. Every pastor who cares has an inner core in his congregation that he is sure of, but as you move out from the inner core, on the outer rings there are definitely unsaved people. And in between those outer rings and the inner core, there are people whom pastors who care are not sure about. Are they saved or not? You cannot always be sure. At times you may think you see a heart for God in them, but there is little desire for public worship. There is little Bible study. There is little growth. There is no sharing of the faith. They are like secret Christians. Pastors stay up late at night concerning people like that. Obviously from the context of Galatians, however, Christians do have weeds in their lives and need to live by the Spirit and grow. The fruit deals largely with interpersonal relations. The fruit are a part of God's equipping us to love our neighbors.

It may be asked how we connect the ideas that the fruit has to do with character qualities but it also has to do with interpersonal relations. How are these things put together? The character qualities manifest themselves in our dealings with others. That is, we do have a private and personal relationship with Christ, but loving God is demonstrated by loving our neighbors as we love ourselves. I cannot claim that God is doing wonderful things in my life if I do not love other people. There is a contradiction in terms there. In that way, Christianity is others-centered.

Our next topic will be the gifts of the Holy Spirit. We have followed the proper order in this study. After surveying the person the Holy Spirit, we then began His works and His ministries with the application of salvation. That was a good place to start. We have talked about the fruit of the Spirit, which all Christians are to demonstrate and grow in, and now we are ready to move to talk about the gifts of the Spirit.