

Now What? *A Series on Spiritual Maturity*

The fruit of change

Galatians 5:16-24 (ESV)

Intro: I suspect that if you're here, it's for spiritual reasons. So much that underlies our actions and motives is spiritual. If not a Christian, perhaps you want to fill an emptiness. If a Christian, perhaps you want to grow. From the first verse, Paul speaks to that itch, and even more. As we are introduced to a fundamental battle within everyone who desires to follow Christ.

The flesh and the Spirit (v16-17)

- *Flesh* (sarx) refers to the entire realm of the body, including our actions, behaviors, and subsequent habits. It is your personal kingdom, where your will can exercise authority.
- *Spirit*, in this case, refers to the reborn heart under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

^Diff between xian and non.

Flesh made to serve the heart. In non-xian, this is switched.

Paul, in verses 16-17, speaks of Spirit/flesh in close proximity to each other.

A Christian is reborn, yet still has lingering bad habits.¹

“Opposed to each other” - present tense and ongoing

They keep you from doing what you want to do.

Now, this is not a passive journey.² It is a life in which forces within you are in collision.

And the “spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

Therefore, the Christian life of maturity is constantly giving room to the Spirit, and teaching the flesh to submit to it. Otherwise, the flesh takes over. Little battles.

The manifestation of the flesh (v19-21)

What it looks like when you continually lose the battles with the flesh. (habitual, not accidental)

Sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality - ?

Idolatry (replacing God), sorcery (manipulating God) - *worship*

Enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of rage, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy - *relational*

Drunkenness, orgies - *sexual unrestraint*

To curb these, Paul's listeners would try one-of-two things: legalism or unrestraint

Legalism: Adding enough rules will circumvent my fleshly desires. **API!**

Unrestraint: God's grace compliments my fleshly desires.

Adding more rules only enflames the flesh. It does not give it freedom.

Living unrestrained for the desires of the flesh is slavery. And its habits keep you there

You need more than rules or libertinism. You need the power and the promise of the Spirit.

¹ Dallas Willard writes, “When our heart (will, spirit) comes to new life in God, the old ‘programs’ are still running contrary to our new heart, and for the most part they are running *in* our body and its parts or members.” *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ*. (Colorado Springs, CO: Nav Press, 2002). 166

² “Walking in the Spirit is not the same thing as coasting along in a fair breeze, for the flesh wars against the Spirit and the Spirit wars against the flesh. Still, Paul is fundamentally optimistic here, claiming that as one walks by the Spirit and is led by the Spirit, there is substantial, significant, and observable victory over the flesh.” Thomas R. Schreiner. *Galatians*. (ECNT; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010). 345

The promise of the Spirit (v16)

Freedom from slavery to bad habits comes from walking by the Spirit. (16)

And you will not (double negative) gratify the desires of the flesh. (16b)

Walk by, led by, in step with. (16,18, 25).

3x we're told to participate with what the Spirit is doing. (see Long, 244)

Notice “works” of the flesh vs. “fruit” of the Spirit.

The works of the flesh are the manifestations of what is in your heart.

The fruit of the Spirit are not things you do, but things you have—in your heart.

Paul is circumventing our habits, and going straight to the origin: who we are.

God's desire in your spiritual maturity is to produce spiritual fruit with deep roots in the heart

The fruit of the Spirit (v22-23)

Love - Doing something for someone else, based on their intrinsic worth, and not the need to get anything in return.³

Joy - Delight in God that moves you to keep going. Not elation, which easily turns to mood swings.⁴

Peace - Confidence in God's control that keeps you unswerved.⁵

Patience - The ability to endure difficult situations/people without melting down.⁶

Kindness - Generosity, benevolence, a desire to help others.⁷

Goodness - same as above

Faithfulness - Loyal, dependable, and follow through. Courage. People trust you.⁸

Gentleness - The ability to be clear and firm without also being harsh.⁹

Self-control - Restraining yourself in necessary areas. If you have the above, you have this one.¹⁰

These are supernatural.

I say this because some of you are looking at this list, saying “I have one or two of those.”

Examples: faithful/gentle, kindness/patience, joy/peace

What you are describing are areas of temperance, or personality preference. Not spiritual fruit.

How do I know? Because the word for “fruit” in greek is *singular*.

Meaning, all of these must be growing at the same time. You can fake rules, but not FOS.

Examples:

- You might be a natural go-getter, courageous, follow-through, but you aren't gentle. You steamroll people. You don't have the gift of faithfulness, you're just mean.

³ Schreiner, 349

⁴ Keller, 154

⁵ Keller

⁶ Schreiner, 349; Longnecker, 262

⁷ Schreiner, 350

⁸ Ibid, 350

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

- You might be kindhearted towards people in need, but if you don't also have the patience to endure despite the outcome, what you thought was kindness will turn into disillusionment when said people do not change or return the favor.
- You might be answered by life's obstacles, but without sheer delight in God, it may just be walls of hard-heartedness, and an inability to be vulnerable with others.

You're describing *temperament*, and while those can be good, they are not powerful enough to transform you.

Fruit of the Spirit is a supernatural change of the human person by an outside force

Gospel: this is what the prophets promised would happen

Ezekiel 36:25-28

I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

Jesus delivered on this promise.

He brought the Kingdom of God to bear on the human heart.

API!

John 3:3

Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

John 16:7-8

Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment

Herein lies the reason for the two lines about not being under the law (18,23) (Long, 246)

It is neither more rules, or less rules. There is a third way: to become a different kind of person, who is able to go beyond the parameters of the law to live in true freedom in the Spirit, so much so, that the law seems unnecessary (Long, 259, 263).

Making room for the Spirit (v24)

By crucifying the desires of the flesh

To even enter this life, you must die in Christ. It's starts with who you identify with.

Is it still your life, or is it Christ's?

Galatians 2:20

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

To continue in this life, you then grow in your identification with Christ regularly.

Keller: identifying the "why" and replacing it with Christ.

What a great motive: not, "Don't do this, because God will get mad," but...
"Don't do this, because this is a better way to live"

Imagine a church where we are not scrutinizing each other based on the rules, but we are growing in love, joy, and peace.

Imagine families who are not holding each other to impossible standards, but are growing together in patience, kindness, goodness, and self-control.

Imagine a culture where unrestrained hedonism isn't the standard of happiness, but faith hope, and love.

This is only possible by the Holy Spirit. The good news is, the HS is a gift of God to us, through the death and resurrection of Jesus. And we can have him and all his resources to live a life of following Jesus in His kingdom. You will daily encounter fleshly impulses. And each impulse is an opportunity to fight. To battle. You know you're growing when you're battling. And you will struggle. You will mess up. You will choose the flesh at times. But Jesus will still be present with you. The Father will be gracious towards you. And the Holy Spirit will keep prodding you. And as you continue to get up and follow those leadings of the Spirit, the battle with the flesh will weaken over time. And you will taste a glimpse of the kingdom coming to bear on your present experience.