



[Title Slide] Today we're going to explore Galatians 5 and the fruit of the Spirit. Fruit of the Spirit? It's kind of a strange phrase if you stop and think about it, right? What does that even mean? And why do these guys keep popping into my mind?

[Fruit of the Loom guys photo]

Why did God choose the word "fruit"? Why is the Spirit the source of this fruit? Maybe I'm getting ahead of myself. Let's get into it:

[Slide] *Galatians 5:16 (NLT) ¹⁶ So I say,*

Let's pause for a moment. What does that word "so" tell us? It tells us that what comes next is the result of something mentioned previously, a point that Paul wanted to make about that previous something. What are these verses in response to?

The Christians in Galatia were experiencing conflict and tension amongst each other over cultural and ethnic differences. They were divided in factions, butting heads over how to follow God and what it meant to look like a follower of Jesus. Their conflict threatened to destroy them and their witness to the surrounding community. In response, Paul laid out for them how the transforming presence of the Spirit should be shaping their interactions and reputation:

Galatians 5:16 (NLT) ¹⁶ So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves.

It is a war, an ongoing struggle going on within each one of us. Why? Because we aren't yet in heaven, we haven't been made perfect yet, so our sin nature is still within us, demanding we live according to values contrary to God's. At the same time, as believers we have the Holy Spirit living in us and guiding us. Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

[Slide] *1 Corinthians 6:19-20a (NLT) ¹⁹ Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, ^{20a} for God bought you with a high price.*

You are a temple of God, a temple for the Holy Spirit. What an incredible gift and honor! The challenge is that it is a pairing of the literal divine and the profane. Two incompatible forces, one guiding us to Christlikeness, the other guiding us to destruction, both battling within us. Back to Galatians:

[Slide] *Galatians 5:17-18 (NLT) ¹⁷ The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions.*

[Slide] *¹⁸ But when you are directed by the Spirit, you are not under obligation to the law of Moses.*

This last line is a rebuttal to some of the Jewish Christians that were trying to make the others follow the Old Testament law. The reason Jesus came to bring salvation was because there is no way for us to earn salvation on our own! The law of the Old Testament revealed God's holiness, but no one was able to live up to it. We cannot be good enough on our own strength or will power.

More practically, the law was a distraction that resulted in pride, boasting, a feeling of superiority; all attitudes that are wrong in God's eyes. Before we get too self-satisfied that we aren't like these ancient Christians, though, the reality is that this still happens to this day. We love to compare ourselves to others to make ourselves feel better, superior. "Hey, I might not be perfect, but I'm not like so-and-so. They're a mess!" That kind of pride only fuels disunity and judgmentalism, and it misses the point: sure, we might make ourselves feel good by comparing ourselves to others, but that's not the standard we're measured against, is it? When we're compared to God's holiness, we're all left wanting!

[Slide] *Galatians 5:19-21a (NLT) ¹⁹ When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, ²¹ envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these.*

Paul made the case that it's an either/or scenario. There's no neutral ground. We either let the Holy Spirit guide our lives or we let our sinful

nature guide our lives, and if it's the sinful nature, the natural results are these kinds of behaviors.

What are sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures? These are any kind of sexual behavior outside of marriage, whether it's with another person or people, pornography, affairs, or recklessness. It could be the movies we watch, the content of video games we're entertained by, the jokes we tell, or that we laugh at. Our sinful nature rebels against the beauty of God's intent for sex.

Idolatry, sorcery – no one is into that anymore, right? In our first-world, modern culture, these don't come up anymore, do they? Except anything we love more than God is an idol, something we worship. Money, career, sports can all be idols. Politics can be an idol, which is not such a new idol after all. Centuries ago, Martin Luther wrote in his commentary on Galatians,

[Slide] **“it is clear that many rulers and bishops nowadays are treated like idols.”**¹ This warning is just as relevant today as it was centuries ago.

Hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division; politics, lives lived with no margin, these labels describe the reputation of far too many churches and Christians in our country, don't they?

Envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. “Other sins like these”? was Paul's way of saying, “Hey, this isn't an exhaustive list! I've only got so much ink in my pen!” His point? These are the kinds of things someone who is guided by their sinful nature is known for; these are the kinds of words people would use to describe them. Here's where it gets intense:

[Slide] ***Galatians 5:21b (NLT) Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God.***

I have to think that when this letter was read to the Galatian church, you could have heard a pin drop after that sentence. Was Paul calling them, and us, to perfection? No. In fact, elsewhere he lamented his own

¹ Gerald L. Bray, ed., *Galatians, Ephesians (Reformation Commentary on Scripture)* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 194.

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