

Fruit of the Spirit

DAVE BAST

Living in the Good News of the Gospel, of life in Christ, sets us free from the condemnation of the law and judgment; but once we have received freedom, what do we do with it? Our next study of Galatians addresses that question by talking about internal conflict, spiritual warfare, and the fruit of the Spirit. Stay tuned.

BOB HEERSPINK

From ReFrame Media and Words of Hope, this is *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Bob Heerspink.

DAVE BAST

And I am Dave Bast. Bob, freedom in Christ is Paul's great theme in Galatians Chapter 5, and he emphasizes the fact that it is both freedom from and freedom for; it is freedom from the condemnation of the law; freedom from the obligation of merit-based religion, of trying to earn our way with God; freedom from guilt, from the power of sin; freedom even from the rules that other people might put on us; but it is also freedom *for*; freedom for loving others as Christ loved us; freedom for service; freedom for obedience.

BOB HEERSPINK

Right; now, is that the kind of liberty that we see people living out today?

DAVE BAST

Well, yes; many people, including Christian people, have kind of been caught up in this idea of nobody can put any rules on me. I am free to do what I choose to do, no matter what the old customs or... it is all out the window. Here is a wonderful quote, I think, from John Stott, the great evangelical scholar and preacher. Christian freedom, he says in his commentary on Galatians, is freedom *from* sin, not freedom *to* sin. It is unrestricted liberty of approach to God as his children, not unrestricted liberty to wallow in our own selfishness.

BOB HEERSPINK

And that is a very different definition than most people are operating with today. I mean, most people take the idea of liberty and they really turn it into autonomy; this idea that I am a law unto myself. I can do what I want. I came across an interesting quote from the philosopher, Sartre, the existentialist, who said: Freedom is being free of other people. In fact, he even said: Hell is other people; a very famous quote. You know, just get me away from everyone – distance me from other people and that will be my heaven.

DAVE BAST

Well, it is true, other people can drive us crazy sometimes...

BOB HEERSPINK

They can.

DAVE BAST

But I think that is a radically different idea from the Christian view.

BOB HEERSPINK

Yes; because you compare that to C. S. Lewis, who said: Hell is really isolation. In hell everybody just wants to get further and further apart.

DAVE BAST

I know what you mean. That is from *The Great Divorce* isn't it?

BOB HEERSPINK

Right.

DAVE BAST

It opens with this scene of hell as a kind of a dreary suburb where everybody keeps moving farther and farther away from each other because in a sense they cannot stand each other, but also because everyone is their own little god, and they think nobody else should compete with them for their self-worship. You used the word autonomy; literally, they are a law unto themselves.

BOB HEERSPINK

Yes; and if you look at how people understand freedom today, you know, it is that notion that, well, I can live in my own little world. I can pull up into my garage in suburbia and the door opens up automatically. I drive in. I don't have to deal with other people. I don't have to deal with neighbors; and yet, as a result, we live in a community – we live in a society – that feels so isolated that people are really just burning with this desire to connect with other people; and they are alone.

DAVE BAST

Well, one of the foundation truths, I think, of the Christian faith is that errors tend to come in pairs of opposites; and we have been thinking about the error of legalism – of rule keeping – of ritual and religion as the way to go; but the opposite error of legalism is *antinomianism*. Now, I know our producers are going to object to that because that is a big word, and they keep telling us we cannot use big words. In fact, they suggested that we should be fined every time we use a Greek or Latin word; and *antinomianism* is Latin, all right?

BOB HEERSPINK

That is more than four syllables.

DAVE BAST

But you know what it means. Explain it.

BOB HEERSPINK

Well, antinomianism basically says that you are opposed to the law. You just take the law and you cast it away.

DAVE BAST

No rules.

BOB HEERSPINK

No rules. The rules are out the door.

DAVE BAST

Don't need them; don't have to keep them.

BOB HEERSPINK

Right; and that means that we really don't have to take much responsibility for other people because the rules in place generally are rules that deal with how we relate to other people. It is really a sidebar to the whole notion of autonomy, where we are our own little gods. We live in our own little worlds.

DAVE BAST

And Paul was constantly being accused of antinomianism because he kept preaching this Gospel of free grace and justification by faith; continually the objection would be: Well then, everybody is going to anything whatsoever... If you don't have to be good, if there is no reward for being good, why not just be bad? God loves to forgive, I love to sin, everything is admirably arranged, as one wag once put it; and Paul responds to that as strongly as he can over and over and over in all of his letters, really.

BOB HEERSPINK

Yes; we have been studying Galatians, and it is interesting how he deals with the issue of salvation by faith – by grace alone – but he doesn't allow us to get outside from a vision that we are together as the family of God. We are a community; one community that transcends issues of race, issues of nationality; we are one people, and we have to figure out a way to live together as the body of Christ.

DAVE BAST

Well, the way is the law of love. Paul says very clearly in Galatians 5:13,14 that the whole law is summed up in a single word: Love; and Jesus of course famously said... it is just two commandments, really, that are the flipside of each other: Love God and love your neighbor; but the problem is, we have trouble keeping that simple law of love, and that is because of a conflict that rages within us, and that is what Paul is going to talk about next here in Galatians 5, which we will take up after this break.

Segment 2

BOB HEERSPINK

This is *Groundwork*, where we dig into scripture to lay the foundation for our lives. I am Bob Heerspink.

DAVE BAST

And I am Dave Bast.

BOB HEERSPINK

Dave, we have been talking about the challenge of living a life that really connects with our neighbor in a way that reflects our discipleship; and we have said we have a struggle within that causes us some real challenges to do that. I would like to read from Galatians 5 where Paul talks about that struggle, and also the shape of the Christian life to which we are called.

He says:

¹⁶But I say, walk by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh. For these are opposed to each other to keep you from doing the things that you want to do; ¹⁸but if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. ¹⁹Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹envy, drunkenness, orgies and things like these – what a list!

DAVE BAST

Yes; things like these...

BOB HEERSPINK

Yes, we could just add to this list.

DAVE BAST

You could go on and on, right.

BOB HEERSPINK

He says:

^{21b}I warn you, as I warned you before that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God; ²²but the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. ²⁶Let us not become conceited, provoking one another and envying one another.

So Dave, right there Paul says: Hey, we've got a battle going on. It is a spiritual battle within between the spirit and what he calls the selfish nature; literally in the Greek the flesh.

DAVE BAST

The flesh. I love Paul's realism in this passage. First of all, just a word about that battle, the two sides or the two contestants in the inner struggle; I think every human being feels something of that tug, and sometimes people have thought: Well, that's my higher nature and my lower nature; that I have this god within me or this angelic side. Remember the old cartoons and sometimes TV ads or something; the little angels on each shoulder...

BOB HEERSPINK

Yes, the angel and the devil; one on each shoulder.

DAVE BAST

One on each shoulder, exactly; that that is the struggle. The ancient Greeks thought of it in terms of body versus soul; and we still have a lot of that thinking.

BOB HEERSPINK

There is a lot of that stuff in the Church today.

DAVE BAST

Dualism.

BOB HEERSPINK

That it is really my body that drags me down, and the reason I am sinless when I go to heaven is I leave my body behind. The truth of the matter is, the reason we are sinless in heaven is because of another transformation of God's grace.

DAVE BAST

Right, exactly; so in New Testament terms, the struggle isn't between body and soul, it isn't between good side and bad side, but between what Paul calls the spirit and the flesh; and by flesh, again he doesn't mean our physical nature; he means our fallen nature.

St. Augustine famously described it as being curved inside upon yourself. It is really selfishness, and it affects all of us; it affects our mind, our thinking; it affects our will and our choosing; it affects our bodies, our emotions – the things that we feel – our passions; the things we are tempted toward; and fighting against that is God's Spirit or Christ, we could say, who is living within us. So that is really the battle; and it is a lifelong battle.

BOB HEERSPINK

Yes, and I think it is, as you say, Paul is so realistic here, because very often people think: Oh, when I become a Christian then life really gets easy; but that is when the battle really begins. You know, I have talked to older folks, and a lot of young people think: Hey, you know, old folks... they have been walking with Jesus for 50 years or more; they don't have any struggles; and the reality is, you talk to people who are

older and they talk about real spiritual issues that they are still struggling with. They have been around for years, and if anything, maybe they can define those things better after walking with Christ all those years than what they could when they were 25.

DAVE BAST

Paul here is so helpful to me because he has identified this as something that goes on and on; so when I look at myself and see: Wow, I am not that spiritual. I am maybe not that spirit-filled because I still feel all the time this tension between the things that I am drawn to that I don't want to do and the things that I would love to do, but don't somehow find myself consistent in following.

BOB HEERSPINK

Yes; I am in my 50s and I thought when I was younger that I would be much further along in winning these battles than what I really am; and when people come along and say: You know, I am not bothered by sin anymore; or money doesn't mean anything to me; I pretty much dismiss that talk. Psychologists talk about cover opposites, that you project to others just the opposite of what you are inside; and so often that kind of pious talk really reflects the fact that, well, no, you really are wrestling with money in your life; you really are wrestling with issues of sexuality; otherwise you wouldn't project to other people that all is so fine.

DAVE BAST

One of the things that I find of interest in this list of the works of the flesh – what Paul calls the works of the flesh here, and we both pointed out as you were reading it that it could go on and on. It is a whole variety of attitudes and behaviors, some of which are rooted in our sensual nature or our physical desires and urges; things like sex and drunkenness; but many of them have to do with mental kinds of things or relational things like anger and envy and bitterness and... So, it is this complex opponent that we face called *the flesh* – our old nature; and the question is: How do we overcome that? Is it just a matter of better will power or more strength inwardly, more fortitude?

BOB HEERSPINK

Well you know, one of the things I think we have to take seriously as Christians are the spiritual disciplines because we are not going to win this battle on our own; and things like prayer, meditation, being in scripture, these become very important to strengthen that relationship with Christ in the spirit that gives us the fortitude to really take on the battle that we face. Sometimes we have just basically said: You know, I really don't have to spend that time in the spiritual disciplines. I am just going to go out and live a Christian life; and then we fall flat on our faces.

DAVE BAST

Well, the answer is to be found in the life and work of the Spirit within us. That is what Paul is saying here; and that fruit of the Spirit, that wonderful sort of set – comprehensive set – of virtues and qualities...

BOB HEERSPINK

Right; there is a content to this that we have to take into account...

DAVE BAST

Exactly.

BOB HEERSPINK

You know, sometimes people say: Oh, walking with the spirit, that is just kind of this loosey-goosey...

DAVE BAST

Let go and let God; you have just got to kind of surrender and then it will happen to you.

BOB HEERSPINK

People come into my office and say: I am living with my fiancée before marriage, but it is okay because God's Spirit led me this way; and it is like, well, let's go look at what scripture says about what it means to be a disciple. There is a content to this walk with the Spirit that we are going to take a look at next because has some very specific things to say about what happens in your life when the Spirit is at work.

DAVE BAST

And we will get to that in a moment, but first, we would love to hear from you; hear your ideas about the things we have been talking about or your ideas for future programs. It is easy to get in touch with us. Just visit us online.

BOB HEERSPINK

Groundworkonline.com, that is our website. Visit us and help us to, with you, dig deeper into scriptures. We have a spot on our website called: We were wondering, and we would like you to give your responses to help us prepare upcoming programs. Again, finding us is easy. Just visit our website: groundworkonline.com.

Segment 3

DAVE BAST

Christian freedom; that is what we are talking about today. Negatively, it is not the freedom to sin, to pursue those works of the flesh, of our fallen nature that the Apostle lists, but positively, it is the freedom to love others and to make that more real. That means cultivating the fruit of the Spirit; what Paul calls the fruit of the Spirit in our lives; and just listen again to this beautiful passage from Galatians 5:22:

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

BOB HEERSPINK

You know, as I hear that list, Dave, it really reminds me that living a life of discipleship gets beyond just a list of rules and regulations. I was reading N. T. Wright the other day – a Christian author – and he talks about the fact that there are many people who, as Christians, want to approach the Christian life one of two ways; that they either say: Hey, it is let the Spirit lead you and just do whatever your heart desires; or it is: Here are the rules. Here are the regulations that you need to meet; and he points out that as we have gone through this whole mess with regard to the global financial crisis that the pendulum really swung from one point to another. There were a lot of rules in place at one time with regard to the financial markets, and over time those rules basically got thrown out the door. It is a matter of, hey, you know, do what feels good; do what makes money; and now that everything has crashed, now we are back to saying: Hey, we have got to put rules back in place; and while we need rules, the truth of the matter is, people can find their way around the rules. The only way to bring ultimate financial stability to the markets is to have people who are people of character, who have integrity; and I see the same thing working here. Paul is saying to really walk by the Spirit, we need a moral DNA change so that we become a different person than what we were before.

DAVE BAST

I like that idea, Bob, because we do seem to rush from extreme to extreme, don't we? For a while everything will be kind of loose and do what feels good, and then we realize, whoa, that leads to all sorts of problems; so then, boom, get the rules back and follow that, but then that leads to problems, and we swing back and forth; but what is really needed is a different kind of nature. It strikes me that this fruit of the Spirit – it is a list, but there are no rules here...

BOB HEERSPINK

Right.

DAVE BAST

They are all qualities; they are all attitudes: Love, joy, peace... in a sense, those describe primarily our relationship to God, and then to others as well: Patience, kindness, goodness, that is kind of a person-to-

person sort of thing: Patience – bearing with people – putting up with them when they maybe can be aggravating – being kind to them – being good to them – doing them good; that is practical love, it is not an emotional thing.

BOB HEERSPINK

And this is the kind of person we become as we grow in maturity. You read the book of Galatians and there is a big stress on the fact that the Spirit is given to mature us in the faith. I think of the way I raised my kids; when they were younger there were rules: This is what you have to do; you say thank you, you say please; but beyond that, I was trying to nurture in them the attitude of being a polite person; and so, as they get older you say: Okay, we don't need these rules because now it is part of your nature. This is who you are; and you start to live that out. I see the same thing happening here in this passage as Paul talks about what it means to spend your life walking with the Spirit – walking with Christ.

DAVE BAST

But I read this... and I like what you said, Bob, and I agree with it, but I look at myself; I get to the end of this list and the last two are always the same: Gentleness and self-control; where are those? I have been trying to do this for almost 60 years, and where is this? Where is my self-control? What is the matter with me?

BOB HEERSPINK

You know, the challenge I think we face, Dave, is that we cannot pick and choose among the fruit. I mean, I would like to do that. You know, we look at the list and we say: Well, you know, I am a person who is kind, but self-control? Well, that just wasn't my fruit. The gifts of the Spirit, which empower us to serve others... Okay, you have different gifts than I have; we all have our own gift mix; but the fruit we all are called to nurture because the fruit... it is not *fruits*... it is *fruit*; it is essentially one, and then as we look over this list, I think we all have those specific aspects of the fruit that, really, we struggle with because of our personalities.

DAVE BAST

You are suggesting don't take them one at a time; and especially don't say: Well, I don't have any of that one, but I will make up for it by getting a little more of this one.

BOB HEERSPINK

Yes; don't defend yourself: Well, I don't have much self-control, but you know, I am a really kind person and I will say some really nice things to people today so that balances it out...

DAVE BAST

Right.

BOB HEERSPINK

Well, we know in our ordinary relationships with people, it doesn't. If we don't have self-control, it is just a nasty thing that spills over into the other fruit, so to speak.

DAVE BAST

Have you found anything specific or practical that helps you grow in the Spirit? You know, Paul says: Walk by the Spirit; live by the Spirit; but what do you do to do that? You mentioned the spiritual disciplines; how does that work for you?

BOB HEERSPINK

Well, you know, when you are in the word – when you read scripture – it is not as if you say: Oh, here is this big discovery that is going to help me to be kinder tomorrow; but you read, for example, the stories of Christ's life, and they begin to form you. There is a certain sense in which we as Christians begin to live into the story of scripture; and I think that is an important thing we need to do. What is our place in the story? This isn't just a story about First Century Christians and about Jesus, this is a big story from beginning to

end; and all of a sudden, I have a role in this story, and I am helping to complete, as it were, the story by the way I relate to my neighbor.

DAVE BAST

Yes; reading the Bible and meditating on it and living into the story; I like that. I have also found this helpful; actually, just fairly recently... I memorized the fruit of the Spirit some time ago... I don't know, so I can rattle off the nine of them, but I found it very helpful... somebody suggested in a devotional book to pray these every morning at the start of the day; and pray each one... just say: Lord, help this fruit to grow in my life; and I found that as I did that, later in the day when I was tempted to get mad or lose my self-control, that would come back to me, and in a small way that helps. Maybe it is just that; baby steps, day by day...

BOB HEERSPINK

Day by day.

DAVE BAST

Keep in step with the Spirit; don't indulge the works of the flesh. That is Christian freedom.

BOB HEERSPINK

Right; don't run ahead of him, walk with him.

Thank you for joining our *Groundwork* conversation, and don't forget it is listeners like you asking questions and participating that keep our topics relevant to your life. So tell us what you think about what you are hearing and suggest topics or passages that you would like to hear on future *Groundwork* programs. Visit us at groundworkonline.com and join the conversation.

<https://groundworkonline.com/episodes/fruit-of-the-spirit>

Printed on July 26, 2025