

# Fruit of the Spirit - Intro

Have you ever looked at your life and thought “What is God up to?” “What is He trying to do here because this looks like a mess!”

That’s every day of my life. I’m messy. I have issues. Ask my family. Ask the elders.

I believe one of the major errors of the church today is that we think some people have it all together and are issue free.....sometimes that person is you.

What this causes is judgemental Christianity. The “I would never do that” attitude and we forget that we have our own mess.

Look at the great commission.

## **Matthew 28:18-20 (NKJV)**

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,20 teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.

What are we commanded to do? Make disciples!

How do we do that? Baptize them (which means we presented the gospel and they accepted it) but then TEACH them to observe all things that I have commanded you.

What is the church teaching the unbeliever.....what are we teaching the new believer? I hope we are teaching that “you know what? I’m not perfect either but God is working on me.”

And I hope we are teaching them that we have been changed. That we are continuing to grow in Christ and look more and more like Him every day.

See we were not called to make converts but to make disciples who obey Christ in all things....we are talking about continual life change. It takes work. Work for you, work for them, work for the Holy Spirit!

In Galatians 5, Paul tells us to walk in the Spirit, be led by the Spirit, and live in the Spirit. He is saying over and over to choose Jesus. Over and over, evaluate your life and the things you do, and get closer to God because the closer a person gets to God, the further they get from the life of sin that leads to death.

Salvation is a wonderful thing. But salvation is about way more than getting that ticket to heaven.....(and the church said “Amen”).....then start living like it!

Salvation has more to do with:

- Life in Christ than Works for God
- Who we are than What we can do
- What we have become than what we can accomplish

God is not just concerned with changing our destination but also with changing us!

I just recently had the salvation discussion with someone who didn't know it was a continual work not a just an isolated event. You have been saved, you are being saved, you will be saved.

- Justification - “Changing our destination”. God forgives us and removes our sin, giving us the right to enter heaven. He frees us from the penalty of sin.
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- Sanctification - “Changing us”. God heals us from the damage caused by sin and changes us into the likeness of His Son. He frees us from the power of sin.
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- Glorification – when the restoration is complete, we'll take on a new body and be with Him, free forever from the presence of sin.

God is doing something in you on the journey to heaven. So if you view the life of a Christian as an easy ride to heaven you are missing a huge part of God's purpose and plan for your life.

## 1. God is working on you

### **Ephesians 2:10 (NKJV)**

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

We can easily think that God is using us like a handy tool in His workshop but in reality God is in His workshop because He's working on you!

### **Isaiah 64:8 (NKJV)**

But now, O Lord,  
You are our Father;  
We are the clay, and You our potter;  
And all we are the work of Your hand.

Have you ever tried to make something on a potter's wheel? It looks hard! I can't imagine the patience it takes to perfectly shape something so that it can be useful and in the end be something beautiful!

I think it would be hard because I'm a perfectionist. You know who else is a perfectionist? God.

When He created each person they were perfect and then sin got ahold of them and now He is taking us through the process of being perfectly remoulded into the image of Christ!

C. S. Lewis says in Mere Christianity:

"Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps, you can understand what He is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on; you knew that those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised. But presently He starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make any sense. What on earth is He up to? The explanation is that He is building quite a different house from the one you thought of - throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were being made into a decent little cottage: but He is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it Himself."

You are a work in progress. God is in the process of making you into something wonderful.

He's tearing down some walls and will rebuild them into something that can house His glory.

This remodel will cause some trials and testing. The old must come down....you can't just cover it up. But while the tearing down is not fun or easy, it won't compare to the beauty when the work is complete.

## 2. God wants you you become like Jesus

What does Jesus look like? Shouldn't all of the men have long hair and beards?

The gospels don't really talk much at all about the physical appearance of Jesus. Don't you think if it was important they would have talked more about it? But they don't.....

If you really think about it, there really isn't even much about His mannerism, His morning routine, the way He plans His itinerary, what His favorite tunic was....

What we DO see, over and over, is the CHARACTER of Jesus. Which is a huge part of why He came.....so we could see what God would be like if He became man.

Jesus is the perfect example of godliness and God wants our character to take on Jesus' character.

Now if this is the Father's will for our lives then can't we expect Him to use all means necessary to accomplish it?

He uses those trials and tribulations. He uses setbacks and disappointments. He uses ALL of life's experiences, both the good and the bad to accomplish this shaping of our lives!

**Romans 8:28-29 (NKJV)**

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. 29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

We all know v28, don't we? But what about v29....WHY do all things work together for good to those who love God? It's part of being conformed to the image of Jesus!

God uses everything to shape and mold us. He may not choose to CHANGE your circumstances or REMOVE your problem because His plan is to SHAPE your life by it instead!

What you see as Disappointment may actually be His appointment

So the next time you quote Romans 8:28 over your situation, don't forget to include the part about becoming more like Jesus. He doesn't work all things for your good just to make life easier or better, it's to change you into the image of Jesus.

### 3. God wants to produce good things in your life

As God is working on us, and as He's shaping us to become more like Jesus, He wants produce good things in your life.

This is a work of the Holy Spirit. We spent 10 weeks on the "Things of the Spirit" - new life, unity, revelation, comfort, freedom, gifts, conviction, baptism.....and the evidence that the Holy Spirit has done some work in your life is the fruit of the Spirit.

It's what God produces in your life by the working of His Spirit. Only God can produce good.

Here's what we can produce on our own....

**Galatians 5:19-21 (NKJV)**

Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like;

of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

If you jump a couple verses back, Paul tells us that these things are contrary to the fruit of the Spirit. This means they OPPOSE the things of God.

When we find ourselves indulging in the lusts of the flesh we produce WORKS of the flesh. This is bad stuff....it means we are producing things that are against the character of Jesus. They oppose His character.

Apart from the working of the Holy Spirit in your life, these are the actions that your sinful nature will instinctively gravitate toward. You don't even have to think to do them, your sinfulness already desires them.

- **Sexual sins** - adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness
  - These stem from a desire for intimacy. Sex is a good thing, in fact it's one of the greatest pleasures that God gave to mankind. But it's meant to only be shared between a husband and wife and it's an expression of intimacy with God.
- **Religious sins** - idolatry, sorcery
  - These stem from a desire for the spiritual realm but instead of connecting with the One, True God, Jesus Christ, they are human invented means where they say "god" is the ultimate object but they reject the revealed way to worship instead molding a god into the image they want
- **Passion sins** - hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders
  - These stem from human passion. God created us to be passionate people but when people reject Jesus they also turn on themselves and others causing destruction in human relationships as well.
- **Influence sins** - drunkenness, revelries
  - These stem from a desire to be under the influence of the Holy Spirit and celebrate the "God things" of life....only those who don't know Jesus drown out life by being under the influence of alcohol to "feel good" to "let loose", and in turn celebrate that temporary "freedom" they are experiencing

Paul says we are called to turn away from these acts of the sinful nature, these works of the flesh and put on the new life in Christ that bears the fruit of the Spirit

The play of words is significant – from WORKS of the flesh to FRUIT of the Spirit. One is of human efforts, and the other by divine grace.

**Galatians 5:22-23 (NKJV)**

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

The fruit of the Spirit is the character of Jesus.....and the Holy Spirit produces these things in our lives to see that the character of Jesus becomes a reality in our lives.

You can not attain the character of Jesus by attending more conferences or reading more books. It's not something that is manufactured by self effort. It's a supernatural work of God in your life.

The reason you find yourself engaging in the works of the flesh is because the problem resides inside of you.

When we have too high of a view of ourselves and forget the fact that we are a messy, work in progress, a remodel that's yet to be completed...you become more like the Pharisees.....looking at the outward instead of the inward man....

**Matthew 23:27 (NKJV)**

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness.

But God has a plan for that.....Galatians 4:6.....God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts...

It's an inside job where God sent His Spirit into our hearts when we accepted Jesus as Lord.

The Holy Spirit dwells within us and changes us from the inside out. Over the next 9 weeks we'll look at each Fruit of the Spirit, the weeds the try to choke it out, and the imitation fruit the enemy produces.

How do we respond to this today? What do we do to be conquerors in this battle of the works of the flesh vs the fruit of the Spirit?

1. Surrender to God - realize that you are completely helpless and can't win this thing on your own. Fully surrender to your rescuer
2. Cooperate with God - whatever you are going through, remember that God is working on you.....trust Him.....He does not make mistakes and the end result will be beautiful
3. Remain in Christ - We are not called to produce fruit, but to bear it (bring forth, birth, deliver). The Holy Spirit produces it....but only if we, the branch, are connected to the vine, Jesus.
  - a. stay connected to Him in a relationship of trust and obedience. Let everything in your life revolves around this relationship with Jesus.