

# Galatians 5:16-26

## You Can't Do It...But He Can

### The Summit Church

**MPT:** There is a war between the flesh and the Spirit over your status of slavery to sin or freedom in Christ. When you've found freedom in Christ, the Spirit of God transforms *every* area of your life and exhibits fruit.

**MPS:** Flesh will lead you toward legalism or lawlessness. On the contrary, the Spirit produces fruit and freedom, exhibited in godly living.

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## Introduction

My name is Curtis...we've been in this series called *Bear Fruit*...

- **Week 1:** Raudel preached on the fruit of repentance, which I'm still recovering from.
- **Week 2:** Will preached on the fruit of evangelism, which my *non-believing friends* are still recovering from.
- **Today,** I am preaching on the Fruit of the Spirit (*love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control*). I told my wife this and she **was startled**, "Huh...they picked **you** to preach on **that?!?**" I told Pastor J.D. this and he said *he* was actually supposed to preach on it this weekend, but he said he told V and she busted out laughing and said, "No way I'm letting you preach on that."

I'm just playing...but I am **praying that God would work through my weaknesses** today. So if you have your bibles: Galatians 5

Last weekend I was blessed to celebrate Father's Day with my wife and my two girls. **HAPPY PIC**. Man, they look so beautiful here don't they? They don't always look like this, though – **CRAZY PIC** – this is real life here. **You want to talk about testing whether you truly possess peace or patience or self-control, just have kids.**

A lot of times once they go down for bed my wife and I like to sit and **read our bibles** by candlelight and **sing hymns** together while

memorizing the **Apostle's Creed**...I'm totally playing, we usually plop on the couch and watch a show or something to wind down. Every once in a while, we'll go into a phase where we just love **reality transformation shows**...stuff like Biggest Loser; Fixer Upper; Secret Millionaire (the high school version of me loved the show *Pimp My Ride*...so I've always been attracted to these types of shows).

I think we like these shows 'cuz we love seeing folks take raw/broken materials and turn them into something beautiful. We love seeing **something** or **someone** that's been completely discarded by the world and seeing it transformed into something **magnificent**. *We love them because they reflect something we know to be true—or at least what we really **want** to be true – that God can take US, in our **mess** and **sin** and **suffering**, and make us into something **astounding** and **beautiful**.* He can take something that's **failing** and make it produce **fruit**.

We all love this idea, right? if I asked you if you'd like to be more loving, kind, patient, gentle...wouldn't you say "yes"? Who wouldn't? When I die, I want ppl to describe me as someone with these qualities.

And this is why we're spending four weeks talking about "bearing fruit" ...because this **fruit of the Spirit is what identifies you as a follower of Christ**. An unfruitful Christian is a contradiction. **Fill in the blank:**

- Matt 7:16, "*You will recognize them by their **fruits**.*"
- Matt 21:43, "*The Kingdom of God will be...given to a people producing its **fruits**.*"
- John 15:5, "*I am the vine you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much **fruit**...*"
- John 15:8, "*By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much **fruit** and so prove to be my disciples.*"

The proof that God has entered **into** your life is going to be that there is fruit that is **outwardly** seen.

Let's look at it, Galatians 5:22, <sup>22</sup>But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup>gentleness, self-control;

It's very important we understand that preposition "of," because **this is not fruit that we produce**, it's fruit that **the Spirit produces in us**.

- Notice it's SINGULAR "fruit." This isn't an exhaustive list...it's a list of the *types* of characteristics that the Spirit produces in you when you choose to plant the root of your faith in the soil of the gospel.
- When it comes to producing fruit **of the Spirit**, here's the bad news: **you can't do it...**
  - But the good news is that **God can!** And I'm here to tell you that **he wants to do produce it in your life**.
  - **You can't do it...but he can. "Not I, but Christ."**

Before we start going through this in depth, I need to give you some "initial instructions" ... I need to lay some groundwork for what Paul is thinking here. Because if I just go through and **define each of them** and explain how **the perfect Christian exhibits all of these**, all you'll hear is, "At the root you're really a **bad and proud and self-sufficient person...but the Bible says you need to be more loving and kind.**" So what you'll try to do is figure out a way to train yourself to actually be more loving and kind and patient and so forth...but you'll do that **out of pride** which will then make you *feel* **morally self-sufficient**. You'll start checking them off like, "Oh, I'm good at that one...I'm bad at that one...etc. etc." and it will instantly turn into **legalism**, which is the very thing Paul is bucking against.

- Operating like this means **pride is best case scenario** when things are going well, and **despair** when they're not.

I don't want you to hear, "Do better...be better...live better!" because that's NEVER the message of the gospel.

- The gospel is never "Try harder and God w/b pleased with you! Just tighten your spiritual belt!" **Not DO.**

- The gospel is "Look to Jesus and his ability to save, sustain, and sanctify you...and ultimately produce fruit in and through you!" **It's DONE.**

My goal is **not** for you to leave here with **action steps** of how to be a better person or to cultivate change in your life; I want you to leave here with a **worshiping heart** toward the one who **can** change your life. Paul's desire in Galatians is not that you'll learn some **new manners**...it's that you'll be a "**new creation**" in Christ, whereby you will plant the **roots of your faith** in the soil of the **gospel** and the Spirit will begin to **bear fruit** in and through you.

## Context

In order to get a full picture of what's going on, let's jump back to v1...and as we go I'm gonna give you some key words along the way:

### Galatians 5:1 (ESV),

<sup>1</sup>For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. . .

Paul is in Galatia and his whole message can be summed up in one word: **FREEDOM** (keyword #1). Most of us understand we've been saved *from* something...but few understand that you've also been saved *to* something. Christ freed us *for* **freedom**. But even as Christians we have a tendency to always run back and "submit again to a yoke of slavery."

**ILLUSTRATION:** I've been married almost nine years...what if my wife's **approval** and **acceptance** of me – what if her **love** for me – was based solely on the things I did for her?

- So one day she wakes up and says, "I just don't think you've been **loving me** enough...so I'm gonna need you to tell me how **sorry** you are, take me to **dinner** somewhere fancy tonight, and be more **kind**, then **maybe I'll love you back.**"

- Or, “You haven’t been very **patient** with me lately...I think you should **buy me flowers** and **rededicate your marriage vows to me** and then I’ll **accept** you back again.”

Now these aren’t bad things to do for my wife, but if I’m only doing them because I’m afraid I won’t be **accepted** or **loved** by her unless I do, **that’s slavery not intimacy!** Instead, I’ve planted **the roots of my heart** into a **covenant commitment of marriage** with her, and the natural fruit of that is a **desire** to do these types of things *because* I love her, not to *get her* to love me! **Fear** can never produce **fruit**.

When you are constantly trying to please God by your works, **that’s slavery**. When you’re constantly trying to produce fruit because you think *that’s* what makes God accept you, **that’s slavery**. If you’re only here to learn how to be a better person because God only loves “good people,” **that’s slavery**.

- Some of you even know it’s slavery, because you’ve felt it...haven’t you? You’ve felt trapped trying to **live** better, **do** better, and **be** better. Like God is never pleased with you.
- What you need from me is not more **instruction** on how to please God (DO); you need more **intimacy** with God.

Freedom comes in knowing that **everything necessary for you to be saved** and **everything necessary for God to be pleased with you** has already been accomplished by Jesus. **It’s already been DONE.**

That’s what Paul is battling against – a bunch of folks saying “DO DO DO”...something he actually refers to in Ch.1 as “another gospel.” **The entire purpose of the book of Galatians is to clearly distinguish between the gospel of Jesus Christ and this false gospel where you try to fix yourself.**

So let’s keep reading...

**Galatians 5:1; 13-14 (ESV),**

<sup>1</sup>For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. . .<sup>13</sup>For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. <sup>14</sup>For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

**Keyword #2:** The **flesh**. Flesh does nothing but want to please **SELF**.

- Cheesy, but what’s the middle letter in “S-I-N”?
- “I” for “independence” // all about my will // says, “**Not Christ, but ME.**”

**John 6:63, “The Spirit gives life; the flesh profits NOTHING.”**

Martin Luther used to say “nothing” is not a “little something.”

So that’s the context we’re working with here. Paul is saying: “*Stop trying to prove yourself to God and to others by DOING DOING DOING, that’s slavery! Stop operating in the flesh which profits nothing! ... Remember you’re free in Christ! Remember you’ve already been accepted and loved by God because of Jesus’s sacrifice!*”

And it’s through **that lens** that we can now properly understand the **fruit of the Spirit**...

## Walkthrough

**vv16-17,**

<sup>16</sup>But I say, walk by the **Spirit** (**keyword #3**), and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. <sup>17</sup>For 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 you want to do.

*You ever felt like this?* There’s a **tug of war** going on in your soul with your desires. You *know what I’m talking about, right?* **COMPETING DESIRES!** You *want* to want God...but you just don’t WANT God. It’s

the, “How can I love Jesus yet still struggle so much with purity?”  
**That’s your flesh!** And your...

**FLESH will always lead you toward legalism or lawlessness.**

**Legalism** treats God like a **cosmic vending machine** – “As long as I do exactly right, I get God.” It’s “**do, do, do in the strength of self.**” I **cannot overstate this**: You can never obtain salvation through your own effort...because your own effort comes from flesh, and your flesh cannot please God. **You can’t do it...**You can’t get “here” from “there.”

- **Problem with Legalism**: Your bar is always too low. You’ll never be able to do enough...just when you think you can, you’ll meet Christians on steroids → “You’re up at what time?!? Is God up that early?”
- And legalistic Christians are the WORST, aren’t they? You wanna know what the opposite of “fun” is? It’s not boring...the opposite of “fun” is “a legalistic Christian.”

So the world gets this false picture of what it means to be a “great Christian” because they think it’s all about **rule-following** and **joyless duty**.

So what they’ll do is completely give up on **legalism** and try to satisfy themselves with **lawlessness**. Instead of trying to please God by the **strength of self**, lawlessness just looks to **please itself**, period.

- **Problem with Lawlessness**: Lawlessness says, “I’ll do **whatever** I want, **whenever** I want, **however** I want..” I’ve been this route...how many can testify with me that living like this won’t satisfy you? It doesn’t deliver.
- **Paul Tripp**: “The grand delusion of every act of sin is that we can be disloyal to God & everything will work out in the end.”
- Lawlessness always leads to **dissatisfaction, destruction**, and ultimately **damnation**.

Both of these are just forms of a fruitless faith:

- **Legalism** can never produce fruit because it tries to earn salvation by holding to a law it cannot fulfill.
- **Lawlessness** can never produce fruit because it tries to live by a false freedom that always pulls you right back into slavery and never satisfies.

So when you choose to gratify the desires of the flesh and plant the roots of your heart in the flesh you end up producing what scripture calls “**the works of the flesh**”:

**vv19-23,**

<sup>19</sup>Now the **works of the flesh** are evident: (They’re evident because in most societies they’re the norm. They’re the norm ‘cuz they seem to offer some **allure** and **satisfaction** to please self. Instead of “Not I, but Christ...it’s **Not Christ, but I!**”)

- **sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality** (Any distortion or perversion of God’s design for sex. It’s the reason you’re never satisfied with sleeping around and the reason it’s hard for you to commune with God *this morning* after *last night*.)
- <sup>20</sup>**idolatry** (A.W. Tozer says idolatry “*is worshiping anything other than God.*” – this includes “self!”)
- **sorcery** (“witchcraft” – The heart of witchcraft is attempting to control God. It’s about *doing things* to get God to respond to us and do what **we desire**.)
- **enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, <sup>21</sup>envy** (all bitter conflicts that cause discord. Remember Gal 5:14, “*For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’*”)
- **drunkenness, orgies** (orgies is tied to drunkenness because it’s less about sexual immorality and more about an attitude of, “I’m giving myself over to this desire to try to satisfy me.” *This is where we have a desire that ends up enslaving us, and we yield ourselves to it to such a degree that it ends up mastering us. So, it is not that we eat or drink; it is that we become glutton or drunkards. It is not that we have conversations, but that we become gossips. And this just becomes this cycle of*

**addiction** whereby we can't have enough food, or sex, or stuff, or friends, or money, or fame, or power, or pleasure; or w/e.<sup>1</sup>

- And things like these (just in case I missed any). I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Dissatisfaction. Destruction. Damnation.)

Remember, these are “**works of the flesh**.” Meaning, this is not a list of “Here’s how **bad people** live;” no, it’s a “Here’s what sin makes **all** of us do” list. We’re all guilty of this. **We’ve all tried planting the root of our hearts in the soil of flesh and learned that it only leads to dissatisfaction.** (“Wow, this is really discouraging. Bring PJD back.” Right, ‘cuz he’s so warm and fluffly.)

- So what we need another power within that can win this battle against our flesh...a power that comes only from the Spirit.
  - **You can't do it...but he can! It's already been DONE.** When you receive that and plant your root of faith in the soil of the gospel, then the...

**SPIRIT always produces freedom and fruit.**

That’s why Paul says back in **verse 18,**

<sup>18</sup>But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not **under the law.**

“**Under the law**” → The Spirit is about *internal* heart change...the law is all about *external* behavior modification that tries to earn God’s approval by works.

- Hear me: **YOU ARE SAVED BY WORKS...just not your own!** You *do* earn God’s approval by someone’s work – Christ’s finished work on your behalf → “**Jesus in my place.**” → **DO vs. DONE**

Now Paul is going to help us understand the difference between the **works of the flesh** and the **fruit of the Spirit**.

<sup>22</sup>But the **fruit of the Spirit** is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup>gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

He knows the more you are enthralled with the gospel and Christ’s beauty, then the more you will **want** to do these things. He knows that the more you remember your **freedom** in Christ, the more the Spirit begins to produce **fruit** in your life.

Think about it like this...**ILLUSTRATION:** I showed you my two girls...

- When my wife and I embarked on the (very fun) journey to try and get pregnant, we didn’t think like, “Okay, let’s think about how God setup the **biology of reproduction**. Let’s try to make a kid that looks like *this*...and let’s ensure we have the mechanics of the whole thing down...the way the biology works is...”
- NO! I was just so enthralled with my wife’s beauty that the fruit we produced ended up being a baby girl.
- In the same way, when you find yourself so wrapped up in God’s love for you in the gospel, the Spirit begins to naturally produce fruit in and through you!

It’s so easy to get focused on the **logistics** of attempting to produce fruit that you forget about the **love** of the One actually produces it in you! So you end up reading these lists and thinking about all the ways you don’t measure up – about **what you aren’t** and **what you can’t do**. **BUT** you can choose to **plant your root of faith in the gospel** and believe what the Bible says about **whose** you are, **what** he can do, and **what he wants to produce** in you. So when the devil tries to get you to operate in the flesh you can say, “NO, SIR, that’s not me, ‘cuz Christ has already DONE everything on my behalf, therefore...:

- *I am redeemed.*
- *I have been born again.*

<sup>1</sup> Driscoll, *Spirit and Flesh*

- *I have been crucified with Christ so that I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.*
- *I am a saint, one of the elect, one of God's chosen people.*
- *I am a member of the body of Christ.*
- *I am an ambassador for Christ.*
- *I am his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works.*
- *I have been declared righteous.*
- *I am no longer a slave to sin, but now I am a slave of righteousness and a servant of the one true God.*
- *I am not only a servant, but also a friend of God.*
- *I am now a son/daughter of God through faith.*
- *I was once dead. Now I am alive."*

And today I am declaring **freedom in Christ**. Today I'm declaring that the reason **I can bear fruit in my walk is because Jesus bore the cross in his, and his Spirit now lives in me** and I'm planting the roots of my faith in the soil of the gospel!

When you look at the list of the fruit of the Spirit you should see that Paul isn't just listing virtues; **he's describing a person**. And it's not you, it's not me, it's not some super-Christian. He's describing one person here, and **it's the guy who saved you!**

You say, **"I may not look perfect all the time, but that's why I look to Jesus who IS PERFECT and who sent the Holy Spirit to produce these things in me!** It's **not I, but Christ!**

Which changes the way we read this...<sup>22</sup> **But the fruit of the Spirit is... [BELIEVE & BECOME]**

**love:** The greatest act of love in the history of mankind was Jesus sacrificing himself for us.

- **When you BELIEVE that...you BECOME loving toward others.**

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 26:53-54

**joy:** In spite of his suffering and circumstances, Jesus counted it all joy to go to the cross for us.

**peace:** Jesus is the Prince of Peace and the giver of peace.

**patience:** Not sure about you, but the best proof of Jesus' unlimited patience is that he saved **me**.

**kindness:** Jesus not only healed and loved on people, but went out of his way to care for the outcasts of society.

**goodness:** Jesus is the Good Shepherd.

**faithfulness:** Jesus came to earth with a plan and, despite hardship, fulfilled that plan.

<sup>23</sup>**gentleness:** Matt 11:28-29 *"Come to me all who are weary & burdened and I will give you rest...for I am gentle & humble in heart."*

**self-control:** At any point in his suffering Jesus could've called upon legions of angels to flip the script<sup>2</sup>...but instead he remained steadfast because of his self-control.

- **Jesus tells us that** the only way to "self" control is by **letting go** of yourself and allowing the Holy Spirit to take control!
- Are you being controlled by the flesh, or by the Spirit?<sup>3</sup>
- **It's impossible to be full of the Spirit if you're full of yourself.**

Where the Spirit reigns, the law and the flesh no longer have control. That's why verse 24 says...

<sup>24</sup>**And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. <sup>25</sup>If we live by the Spirit (inward), let us also**

<sup>3</sup> These final reflection questions come from:

<http://www.familylife.com/articles/topics/faith/essentials/growing-in-your-faith/10-ideas-reflecting-the-fruit-of-the-spirit>

**walk by the Spirit** (outward). <sup>26</sup>Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

## Conclusion:

**You have two options with the FLESH: gratify or crucify.**

<sup>25</sup>If we live by the Spirit, let us also **walk by the Spirit.**

- **Keep in step with // follow // be guided by** the Spirit...

Obvious question: *How do we **walk by the Spirit**?*

There's no perfect plan for me to give you that tells you how to do this...only the Spirit can direct you here. He's so much better of a teacher than me or Pastor J.D. or anybody else who ever stands up here will ever be. **I think an illustration might be more helpful...**

**ILLUSTRATION:** In ear monitors for WL's...you have to know what his voice sounds like. [*Jesus Paid it All; Here as in Heaven*]<sup>4</sup>

- He's **directing** them. He's **leading** them. He's **telling them** and **reminding them** over and over of **where** to go, **what** to do, **how** to do it, **what's next**...and the result is beautiful music. As he **whispers** in their ears, the **fruit** is something amazing and incredible. **But they have to listen!** They can't go by their instincts and try to do it on their own, which would lead them astray...they have to listen to him!

In the same way, the Holy Spirit is always **whispering** and **applying** the gospel to your **heart**...to your **mind**...to your **soul**. He knows when to tell you to **swell**...he knows when to tell you to **calm it down**...he knows **what song you need** to sing and **when you need to sing it** over your life. And as you listen to his **declaration of your righteous standing** because of the gospel, then your life begins to **produce the fruit of the Spirit** as you **walk by the Spirit**. And as you listen, your

actions become beautiful music to a listening world...where you're then able to produce the fruit of the Spirit all areas of your life as you **walk by the Spirit**.

**Where is the Holy Spirit applying the gospel to your life right now?**

Where does he need to declare "DONE" in your life?

- To your identity? To your lack of peace? To your joylessness? To your legalism? **You have to listen.**
- But if you haven't planted your roots of faith in the soil of the gospel and what Jesus has done for you, then you don't have in-ear monitors to hear him.

The fruit of the Spirit is not about achieving **something**...because you can't anyways; it's about knowing **someone**, and his name is Jesus.

And the people that love Jesus the most are the ones who experience **freedom** and **fruitfulness**.

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<sup>4</sup> Final illustration taken from Steven Furtick sermon "Spirit Cycle"

