

Fruit of the Spirit – Galatians 5:16 - 25

"No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. (Luke 6:43 – 44) This parable of Jesus' perfectly illustrates the Spirit's teaching in Galatians 5:16 – 25 where Paul contrasts the fruit of our sinful nature (e.g. hatred, discord, impurity, drunkenness...) with the fruit of the Holy Spirit (e.g. love, peace, goodness, self-control...). Paul introduces these two lists¹ with these instructions, *"So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other..."* So what is this fruit-bearing work of the Holy Spirit all about; and how is it related to the spiritual conflict within us? Read Galatians 5:16 – 25 and consider the following questions:

1. Like a fruit salad, there is an obvious interdependence among the fruit of the Spirit. Read Paul's definition of Love in 1 Corinthians 13:4 – 8. How many of these love-words (and phrases) can you find among the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22 – 23?
2. The Holy Spirit distributes his gifts as he chooses within the body of Christ, so not everyone receives every gift (1 Corinthians 12:7 – 11). However the fruit of the Spirit should be evident in every believer. How are the Holy Spirit's gifts and fruit different?
3. Read 1 Corinthians 13:1 – 3. Why is the Spirit's fruit (e.g. love) is even more fundamentally important than the Spirit's gifts (e.g. tongues or prophecy)?²
4. Read 1 Corinthians 3:5 – 9 and Galatians 5:25. Since it's God alone, through the Spirit, who produces spiritual fruit in us, what role do we play in our spiritual growth and productivity?
5. If God's Spirit produces good fruit within us then it's fair to say that our sinful nature produces thorns and weeds. How do we live according to the fruit of the Spirit and also deal with the thorns and weeds of our sinful nature? (Which of the Spirit's fruit do you most need to cultivate in your life? Which thorns of the sinful nature do you need to weed-out?)

¹ Paul probably didn't intend these two lists to be exhaustive (notice his phrases, *"and the like..."* and *"such things..."* (5:21 - 22). Instead, the lists describe two different natures.

² Although Paul makes this contrast, the Spirit's gifts and fruit are designed to work together.