

A FRUITFUL HARVEST**Galatians 5:16-25****(Read Galatians 5:16-25)**

Intro: I could really do a Keto or Adkins diet because lots of bacon, beef, chicken, cheese, nuts, and other high protein foods really appeal to me. It's amazing but apparently these high fat, high protein diets are highly effective at getting people's sugar, cholesterol, and blood pressure into very healthy shape. Not only that, people lose lots of weight with them. I have a couple friends right here in Ashland who are mere shadows of their former selves because they've carefully followed the Keto diet.

There's one problem – I could never do it. Hi! I'm Keith and I'm a fruitaholic.

I freely admit it. There is one fruit I don't eat. I don't eat kiwi, because, even if it had any flavor, I'm terribly allergic to it and it would kill me. Other than that I like fruit, early and often. Fruit doesn't work in a diet like the ones I just referred to because they are carbohydrates and both Keto and Adkins are high fat, high protein and NO carbohydrates. So, I don't do the Adkins or keto diets. I eat fruit. And know what? FRUIT IS GOOD! It's healthy, and it's delicious. An apple is much better for you than an ice cream cone. I am a happy and unrepentant fruitaholic – and I think I'm healthier for it.

From what I just read from Galatians 5 we can see that Christ Followers need to be Fruitaholics of the Spirit. There are lots of vices a person can fall into, but when one has the fruit of the spirit, those vices have much more difficulty assailing the body of Christ – as we exhibit the Fruit, the Church will be much healthier. In that light, let's look at this final message from Galatians until after Christmas. First . . .

Take the high road

- Walk by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. The literal meaning of the word the NIV identifies as “flesh” is one's lower nature. This means we need to keep from sliding into the slime of sin. The Holy Spirit makes it possible for us to do this – we have the divine assistance to resist the temptations of the flesh. I love how Petersen paraphrases the first several verses of our text. Listen, *My counsel is this: Live freely, animated and motivated by God's Spirit. Then you won't feed the compulsions of selfishness. For there is a root of sinful self-interest in us that is at odds with a free spirit, just as the free spirit is incompatible with selfishness. These two ways of life are antithetical, so that you cannot live at times one way and at times another way according to how you feel on any given day. Why don't you choose to be led by the Spirit and so escape the erratic compulsions of a law-dominated existence?* Galatians 5:16-18 (The Message)
- Why don't you choose to follow the lead of the Spirit and take the high road? We can, you know, with the help of the Holy Spirit. It is the ultimate step in Christian Freedom – choosing to take the high road. The danger is what happens if you do not – if you try to go it alone, which is what following the Law is, and certainly thinking you have what it takes to make it on your own – the downward slide will be precipitous. There is a sobering catalogue of the things that comprise the low road in verses 19-21. As awful and lurid as they are, it's good to know what they are, because . . .

If you live like this you will not inherit the kingdom of God

- Paul says it right here in verse 21. It's because by participating in these practices in an unchecked, unrepentant way, you are walking away from God. It is out and out rebellion and rejection of what Jesus did on the Cross to redeem you from the sin in which you persist in wallowing. Plain and simple, if you do this, your mind is not on God
- Let's look at this list of the acts of the flesh as they are listed in the NIV: *...sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like.* Galatians 5:19b-21a. Now listen to that same list from The Message: *repetitive, loveless, cheap sex; a stinking accumulation of mental and emotional garbage; frenzied and joyless grabs for happiness; trinket gods; magic-show religion; paranoid loneliness; cutthroat competition; all-consuming-yet-never-satisfied wants; a brutal temper; an impotence to love or be loved; divided homes and divided lives; small-minded and lopsided pursuits; the vicious habit of depersonalizing everyone into a rival; uncontrolled and uncontrollable addictions; ugly parodies of community.* I could go on. Galatians 5:19b-21a (The Message). I'm not sure I need to do any more to clarify

the rotten tendencies of the flesh but, since, this world has a tendency to promote it in an alluring way, let me go on a bit.

- Archibald Hunter, in his commentary says this, “*The things done by our lower nature are plain to see (in 5:19); and there follows a catalogue of fifteen “works of the flesh,” ranging from sexual sin to drunkenness, and including idolatry and sorcery (5:19-21). They may be classified as sexual sins (immorality, impurity, and licentiousness); pagan sins (idolatry and sorcery); sins of faction (enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, and envy); and sins of appetite (drunkenness and carousing).*” (End Quote)
- I’m interested that Paul’s list of sins has a majority that deal with sins against our fellow human beings.
 - And notice, that contrary to popular thinking, sexual sin is very much a sin. Sexual immorality, as the NIV translates it, encompasses a number of things.
 - That means that fornication, which is sex outside of marriage, is still sin. It is completely contrary to God’s design. Pornography is a way that this sin is being promulgated. It is sin and it must stop.
 - And making homosexual “marriage” legal does not alleviate the issue of sex outside of marriage, because homosexuality is not God’s design for human relationship, same sex marriage is not an option for a Christ Follower. Homosexual practice simply does not fit, physically or morally. I want to be sensitive here – I know this proclivity is particularly difficult and effects about 2% of the population. So for anyone who struggles with it, the tendency is not the sin, the practice of it is.
 - Incest was another huge issue in Paul’s day. It persists today. I cannot tell you the number of people I know who have been devastated by this particular evil. And the sad thing is that when it happens in our families it persists because of the fact that it continues as an evil cycle.
 - Adultery is another sexual sin. Of course out and out unfaithfulness is obviously wrong. But Jesus further clarified it by saying in his Sermon on the Mount “*You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*” Matthew 5:27-28. This is another reason pornography is so insidious. By its very nature it causes a viewer to slip into adultery.
 - One commentator pointed out that the Greco-Roman World of Paul’s day was in sexual chaos and unspeakably immoral. And then he went on to say that “In nothing did early Christianity so thoroughly revolutionize the ethical standards of the pagan world as in regard to sexual relationships” (Duncan). Let me just say the obvious and point out that we are again in sexual chaos and the Church has been shirking its duty in teaching healthy ways out of it.
- Let me say a few things about the remainder of Paul’s list of sins of the lower life.
 - We think that idolatry is not a problem in this modern world. But it is. It might be a little carved statue, but it is still a created thing. Offering service to a created thing rather than the Creator is usurping the rightful place that only belongs to God.
 - Witchcraft was and is a prevalent evil. But not only that, the word Paul used here indicates the use of illicit drugs. In those days it was for the purpose of poisoning an enemy upon whom you wanted a curse. Today one way it occurs is in the evil of drug addiction. In the same way Satan looks with satisfaction on sexual sin he laughs at the scourge of chemical dependency.
 - Hatred and discord clearly is part of the world and is part of one’s lower nature, but has no place in the life of a Christ Follower.
 - Jealousy is quite literally self-centered zeal.
 - Fits of rage are still an issue in a society where rampant anger issues rage in epidemic proportions.
 - Selfish ambition rears its ugly head in our “dog eat dog” society. And it’s not just in politics either.
 - Speaking of politics – what Paul describes as “dissensions” is the practice of sowing strife. Over the past few years it has become increasingly difficult to have a civil conversation about politics. In fact there are families that no longer meet for Thanksgiving Dinner because of the passions that run high over political positions. Of all places, these kinds of factions do not belong in the church.

- And since I mentioned the Thanksgiving meal, gluttony and drunkenness are just a contrary to the Christian walk as sexual promiscuity. Food is not wrong – worshipping it and overconsuming it is idolatry. Wine is not wrong, but drinking it to the point of inebriation is evil and a horrible witness.
- This talk is getting long and I’ve barely scratched the surface of this catalogue of sin. But let me just say again – Paul clearly says that practicing any of them puts anyone’s kingdom inheritance, for which Jesus died, in serious jeopardy.
- Now, let’s look at the best part of the passage. That which brings a fruitful harvest. I’ve heard it said, and it’s very true, no one has all the gifts of the Spirit, but every Christ Follower must have all the fruit of the Spirit.

The Fruit of the Spirit is one single unit

- Love, joy, peace, patience (the NIV calls this “forbearance”), kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control – is the very basis of the secret of successful Christian living. And it is in graphic contrast to all the ugliness of the works of the flesh. This is because the Christian experience not only began in the Spirit but it continues by the Spirit. For the Christ Follower, guidance from the Spirit is a reality, because to walk in the Spirit means to be under the constant, moment by moment direction, control, and guidance of the Holy Spirit. This, Paul points out is the definition of Christian freedom.
- Before I take a quick run through the cornucopia of the Spirit, let me read Peterson’s paraphrase because it will give a wonderful introduction. Listen, *But what happens when we live God’s way? He brings gifts into our lives, much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard—things like affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity. We develop a willingness to stick with things, a sense of compassion in the heart, and a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people. We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments, not needing to force our way in life, able to marshal and direct our energies wisely.* Galatians 5:22-23a (The Message)
- Now let’s briefly look at the make-up of this fruit.
 - Love is from the Greek word *agape*. It is the no holds barred, unconditional love God has for us and we must have for one another. Ronald Fung says that “*Christian love is not flabby or sentimental but keenly perceptive: it is capable of true discrimination and does not refrain from censure or warning when such is demanded by the situation.*” In other words, love is honest and straightforward. Barclay says this love means “. . . *unconquerable benevolence. It means that no matter what a man may do to us by way of insult or injury or humiliation we will never seek anything else but his highest good. It is therefore a feeling of the mind as much as of the heart; it concerns the will as much as the emotions. It describes the deliberate effort—which we can make only with the help of God—never to seek anything but the best even for those who seek the worst for us.*” It’s appropriate that Paul begins the list with love because it’s what makes all of the rest possible.
 - Joy is not earthly happiness – instead it is far deeper and cannot be shaken by the cares and griefs of the world. This is because its foundation is God. Ronald Fung says “Joy is divine at its source, thus not perturbed by sorrow or tribulation.
 - Peace in the New Testament often derives from the Hebrew word *Shalom*, which means more than just freedom from trouble and actually but everything that’s for humanity’s highest good. Barclay points out that here it comes from the Greek word that means that tranquility of heart which derives from the all-pervading consciousness that our times are in the hands of God. That truly is peace. That is truly something that only Christ Followers experience.
 - Patience – or as the NIV translates it, forbearance, is a kind of conquering patience that persists in the face of human onslaught. Saint Chrysostom said that “*it is the grace of the man who could revenge himself and does not, the man who is slow to wrath.*” It is what is used in the New Testament to describe God’s attitude toward us. We should at the very least treat one another to the kind of patience God has for us.
 - Kindness and Goodness are so similar they are often translated as the same word. And they reflect upon one another. But this word kindness is one that means a firm kindness. And in Barclay’s

words the idea of the word is a goodness which is kind. The Christian needs that goodness which at one and the same time can be kind and strong. I think this picture illustrates that perfectly.

- Faithfulness is a word that means reliability and trustworthiness. We are faithful to God and we can count on one another.
- Gentleness is similar to what we just said about kindness and goodness. It means being submissive to the will of God, it means being teachable and never too proud to learn, and considerate. Often in Greek it is used of an animal that has been tamed and brought under control. That is us, under God's control.
- And self-controlled – which is our final part of the fruit of the Spirit. Barclay points out that it is the spirit which has mastered its desires and its love of pleasure. And Paul uses it when he talks about an athlete's discipline in 1 Corinthians 9:25 and of the Christ Follower's mastery of sex in 1 Corinthians 7:9. As you can see it is the diametric opposite of the works of the flesh. When we have this kind of self-control we can easily be of service to one another.

Conclusion: This has been a long talk, and there is so much more that can be said. But let me just say, be done with the life that come from your selfish desires and take the high road of fruitful living. Paul points out that there is no law against any part of the Fruit of the Spirit. Use this delightful check list of the ingredients that are what make up this fruit – in fact it would be great if we ALL would become fruitaholics of the Spirit. That will bring a fruitful harvest because it is doing exactly what God calls us to do and be. Amen.