Family, today we begin our new summer sermon series on the fruit of the Spirit. We will spend the next several weeks, by the grace and leading of God, unpacking and learning how the Spirit molds and shapes these things in our lives. Chances are, if you grew up in the church, you may be able to recite the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. But there is so much to learn about them, perhaps more than we think! Listen, the fruit of the Spirit are the evidence of the Holy Spirit at work in our lives. Paul addresses this in his letter to the church at Galatia:

 1 Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead), 2 and all the brethren who are with me,

 To the churches of Galatia:

 3 Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, 4 who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, 5 to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

 6 I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, 7 which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. 9 As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

 10 For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.

Here Paul warns the members of the church in Galatia about lies and schemes that could cause them to turn from the true Gospel. Later in Chapter 5, Paul warns also of the internal conflict that has endangered their being led by the Holy Spirit:

 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

 19 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.

This admonishment recognizes the war *within*, conflicts with which we are familiar (!).

 Before we begin any inspection of the fruit, first we need to look at the overall issue through the proper lens. Let’s look at John 15:1-9:

 1“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. 3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

 5 “I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. 7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. 8 By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, so you will be My disciples.

 9 ***“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.”***

Verse five of this familiar passage tells us that apart from Christ, we can do nothing. The fruit of the Spirit, Church, is a result of the *abiding*. And Galatians 5:1 tells us that it is for freedom that Christ set us free. Family! Listen, in the abiding in Christ is the most freedom you or anyone will ever find this side of Heaven! Christ’s will for us is that we enjoy His freedom—remaining in His love, free to be fruitful, remaining dependent upon God, operating in the full awareness of grace, free from sin, and established in this freedom to serve one another: “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Galatians 5:13-14), and we can do this by living by the Spirit, by being led by the Spirit (verse 25).

 Now listen, Family. The Spirit is not a leader like the pace car at the Daytona 500. The Holy Spirit leads like the locomotive of a train. Walking by the Spirit, being led by the Spirit, means staying connected to the source of the power, literally abiding in Christ. We don’t follow in our own strength. We are led by His power, securely united with the living Christ. From this abiding unity with Him comes freedom. From remaining in His love comes freedom. Family, notice how verse 22 of Galatians 5 doesn’t say “fruits” of the Spirit. Adrian Rogers says, “There is one fruit with nine flavors,” all grown from the same vine. These nine characteristics are made manifest in the life of every spirit-filled believer. Look with me at verses 16-18 of Galatians 5:

 16 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. 17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Desires of the flesh do not overcome the soul that is led by the Holy Spirit. The fruit listed in verses 22-26 result from a submitted life, the evidence of the Spirit at work in our lives. Church, the fruit of the Spirit involves our Christian character, our ability to live unified in the body of Christ, to be the submitted hands and feet of Jesus. And when the Spirit produces fruit, God gets the glory.

 Listen, Church. Fruit is meant to be eaten. It nourishes and satisfies. It is not meant to be put on display and admired. Fruit has a greater purpose. People around us are starving for love, joy, peace, patience, and kindness. And can I just say this? Criticism, negative attitudes, gossip, and complaints are not fruit of the Spirit. Speaking ill of a brother or sister in Christ is not a fruit. It’s a sin. Neither are coarse joking and foul language. Church, as we abide and mature and as the fruit of the Spirit grow in us, we remember it is by the grace of God for the Glory of God. For fruit to grow, a proper atmosphere, a proper climate, is crucial. We must ask God to reveal the intimate things in His heart and reveal the hidden areas of our hearts that need the Holy Spirit. Warren Wiersbe has said, “Fruit grows in a climate blessed with an abundance of the Spirit and the Word.” With the Holy Spirit and with the Holy Word, we gain an increased awareness of the grace of God. We develop a willingness to provide a proper climate for the fruit of the Spirit to grow. Sometimes this means pulling out the weeds, so the seed of the Word can grow and bear fruit. Remember the work of the Spirit is to make us more like Christ. And as we become more like Him, we develop an atmosphere welcoming to the Spirit, maintaining our connection to the vine, enjoying His freedom (Colossians 1:10\*). This is the encouragement of Paul to the Galatians, and I echo that encouragement. Bear fruit! Increase your knowledge of God. Over the next few weeks, we will take a look at the nine characteristics of the fruit of the Spirit, taking our time and trusting the leadership of God’s Holy Spirit, as a divinely designed community.

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\* Colossians 1:10

“that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.”

Passages in Support of this Sermon:

John 15:1-9

15 “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. 2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. 3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. 4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

5 “I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. 7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. 8 By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, so you will be My disciples.

9 “As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.

Galatians 5:1, 16-26

5 Stand[a] fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.

16 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. 17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

19 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.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. 24 And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.