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Galatians 5: 16-26 (NRSVue)

So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

The acts of the flesh are obvious: 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. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

From CAC 6/16/25 email ( used(?) as Peace Lamp prayer)

Joy Unspeakable  
erupts when you least expect it,  
when the burden is greatest,  
when the hope is gone  
after bullets fly.  
It rises  
on the crest of impossibility,  
it sways to the rhythm  
of steadfast hearts,  
and celebrates  
what we cannot see.

## SERMON NOTES

Today we include the whole passage - it's complex, and I want to take some time to dig a little deeper.

### **Disabuse myself (and maybe you too) about this term 'flesh'.**

The opposition of Spirit and Flesh is NOT (a human) duality, not lodged in the individual between the sinful lower nature and the higher, better self. What Paul means by contrasting "flesh" and "spirit" is *not* a contrast of "physical" and "spiritual."

Rather the opposition is a **cosmic conflict** between the redemptive power of God and the rebellious fallen creation. Systemic in nature.

Flesh: Paul is referring to an entity that is not merely internal to the individual.

When Paul refers to "the flesh" he's speaking about a cosmic power standing against God. Paul speaks of this malignant power, noting that it can take up residence in a human community, leading that community into patterns of behavior that destroy it as a corporate entity.

Wherever there is violence in the world, the Flesh is rampant.

The flesh and the spirit are both suprahuman powers - including and beyond our singular humanness.

Paul emphasizes sins that are destructive of community. Ways that destroy community life. They live in us - I have violent thoughts - they are here, in me, and yet I must choose not to live them out. *This cosmic power is in us and in our community.*

The "works of the flesh" is not a comprehensive list - middle of the list - 8 words that highlight dissension and offenses against the unity of the community - hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy- Paul's concentration on these community-destroying behaviors shows that his primary concern is for the unity and peace of the Galatian churches as a body.

Those who belong to Christ will oppose violence not by counter violence - but by manifesting the fruit of the Spirit.

The marks of the Spirit continue this emphasis on community life, beginning with love, joy, peace.

Love that is a communal characteristic of daily life, patterned after God's love. The violence that is a major characteristic of "the flesh" is not met by a greater violence, but by love, joy, and peace.

In contrast to the multiple and varied 'works' of the flesh, the Spirit produces the singular 'fruit' of a community characterized by the gracious qualities listed. The spirit is like a healthy tree that continuously bears fruit, and this fruit forms a single unit, even though several of its marks can be listed. Paul is primarily concerned with the way in which **the Spirit's work is made manifest in community.**

**(Really want to think about this together** - I'm not presenting a thesis to be accepted or rejected - but sharing some thoughts that I've been thinking about based on reading and meditating and walking with this scripture.)

Think together about this fruit that is from the Holy spirit - not for us to strive for, not like gifts that Paul talks about elsewhere - these are the fruit (single) of the Spirit. Not the fruit of Kate - **they're what is made manifest when the community - church, family, local residents - is being led by the Spirit.** It's one way we know we're following Christ, and not being sidetracked by "the Flesh".

*This feels like a subtle but important difference in how we understand the meaning of this fruit.*

GIFTS - they are given to individuals by the Spirit - It's the Spirit **being given** to us:

### **1 Corinthians 12: 4-11(SLIDE)**

There are different kinds of gifts. But they are all given to believers by the same Spirit. There are different ways to serve. But they all come from the same Lord. There are different ways the Spirit works. But the same God is working in all these ways and in all people.

The Holy Spirit is given to each of us in a special way. That is for the good of all. To some people the Spirit gives a message of wisdom. To others the same Spirit gives a message of knowledge. To others the same Spirit gives faith. To others that one Spirit gives gifts of healing. To others he gives the power to do miracles. To others he gives the ability to prophesy. To others he gives the ability to tell the spirits apart. To others he gives the ability to speak in different kinds of languages they had not known before. And to still others he gives the ability to explain what was said in those languages. All the gifts are produced by one and the same Spirit.

Given to the individual to use for the good of all.

From our Galatians passage:

*So I say, walk by the Spirit... if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.*

*The acts of the flesh are obvious...*

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.*

Gifts are given to individuals. The Fruit is more like the outcome of a community that's aligned with the Spirit. Working with the Spirit. Do you see the difference?

The FRUIT of the Spirit is somehow different - these attributes are not ours - not something we have or don't have - **they're ways that we will know that we are working in line with the Spirit.** That we're aligned with the Spirit. When we see, or experience these fruits, we know we're on the right path. Connected to the root of them.

Let's stop for a moment - think about when you've experienced the Spirit at work in a community. Can you name a time - just call it out -

I think of blessing a family as they leave us. Last summer we blessed Ankit, Rebekah and Annie- a few weeks ago Nathan, Allison and their girls. We send them with this love, this sense of peace.

I think of moments in our inter-generational SS classes this year - one time we sat outside and read a story from Genesis, and we discussed it - all together - young and old. There was a lovely sense of being one body - a kindness, a faithfulness in listening to one another.

(WHAT ARE OTHERS IN THE CONGREGATION ADDING?)

I think of the ways we care for one another. The elders really stepped up as Gladdie was in her last hours of life. Faith noticed significant changes, reached out, and Leah and Doug showed up. There was fruit on display - gentleness, goodness - against such things there is no law.

My friends, since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

END WITH POEM **Soft Courage by James Crews**

This is what we mean  
by courage, to be like  
the hummingbird I saw  
yesterday—not searching  
for nectar, but instead  
with its needle-beak  
gathering dandelion fluff  
to line its tiny nest  
in the tree above, making  
at least one soft place  
to land and rest in this  
harsh world.

References:

**[OT 13- Third Sunday after Pentecost – Unfolding Light](#)**

Martyn, J. Louis, 2004. *Galatians: The Anchor Yale Bible Commentary*. Yale University Press.  
*New Interpreter's Bible Commentary, Vol. IX, Galatians*, (PP 1150-1155.) Abingdon Press.