

## KNOWN BY OUR FRUIT

JANUARY 1, 2018

I'm so excited to be back. This is Sonja Corbitt, your Bible Study Evangelista. We are beginning our new series on the Fruit of the Spirit. I have missed you! I thank you deeply and truly for allowing me this long break. I just know now how badly I needed it. The first week or so I strained against it and I felt a little bit like a horse with a bit in its mouth, and I just felt like I needed to be doing something. I was just chafing against it quite a bit. Then a couple of weeks in I realized I was finally putting down my devices and forgetting about them for several hours at a time, and I am just so thankful. Thank you for allowing me the break. I know that you looked for the show and I appreciate that very much, but thank you for this break. It has helped me a lot to sort of clarify and get ready and prepared, so we're going to launch right into our first show in our series on spiritual fruit.

Our text for the entire series is going to come from Galatians 5:22-25. This will be in the show notes. I says *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit."* I chose this series after we had just wrapped up our Healing the Father Wound series because we did so much in-depth emotional work, I really wanted to do something that was still...anything in the Scriptures with the Holy Spirit is going to be rigorous, but I wanted to lighten the mood and the tone a little bit. When you talk about woundedness it can be overwhelming. I am so proud of you for doing the work you have done. The Facebook community has just been a great idea. I am so thankful to Julie and a couple others of you for bringing that up. I'm really thankful for that. You guys have helped me a lot. To see my own struggles in you and to see your victories and to share those with you and to share mine with you has just been phenomenal. I wanted to keep that going, so I changed the setting on our Facebook page for Sonja Corbitt so that you could do the very same thing on that page. Since we're not sharing such private stuff and deeply emotional things, I'm hoping that you will make use of that because that community has just been such a valuable tool for me personally, and I know for so many others.

I'm changing up a few things. I've been working on some new stuff for you, but I want to jump into the content of the show. Before we focus on Galatians 5:22-25 I also want to mention what Jesus says in Matthew 7:15-20. He says, *"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves."* We all know people like that, don't we? They say they are Christians, or think just because they go to church...it's not that they're not Christian but we can tell them by their fruit, can't we? This is an instance we used to call "fruit inspecting." Rather than judging - judge not lest you be judged, for which the measure you judge it will be measured against you - we don't want to judge people, meaning condemn, but we are told to evaluate the fruit. Jesus tells us that is a true and reliable way to know if people are His. I remember many years ago I was on our parish council, which thankfully I don't do anymore. I hate meetings. I desperately hate meetings. I was on parish council. I've done this in several leadership capacities in church. I remember as we began to look at other people to bring on board, whether on staff or on parish council or for leadership positions in ministries or whatever, and not that I'm the end-all be-all and I would look at this verse and I would think "Okay, that person's not very holy so you can bet they are going to give only their own opinion in every meeting. They're going to probably be critical of things automatically without giving the Holy Spirit time or voice." I would use that in the measure of should this person be considered or should they not? We should do that. In fact, we have a responsibility to do that,

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especially in church. We want to be careful to have good fruit in those places, because that kind of fruit produces more fruit, as we will see later on in the show. Jesus says, *“You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles? So, every sound tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears evil fruit. A sound tree cannot bear evil fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will know them by their fruits.”*

There is our challenge for the show. The text for the whole series is going to be Galatians 5:22-25. But I want to lay the groundwork for you in this chapter so that we sort of know where we are going. Now that we can call God “Abba Father” as Jesus taught us in our last series Healing the Father Wound, we’re going to find out what that means exactly. He’s going to show us what comes forth through the relationship with God as Father in the Holy Spirit. As a rule when I’m doing an overview of a chapter or a whole book, what I like to do is look at the chapter headings - the chapter and the paragraph headings in bold print. If you’re following along in your Bible, and I hope you are, if you turn to Galatians 5 you notice that there are, depending upon your translation, several paragraph headings there. The first one is Christian Liberty or Christian Freedom. We’re going to learn here what true Christian Freedom is. St. Paul is going to urge the Galatians not to submit to the yoke of bondage. In this context he means specifically the old law, the Old Testament rules and regulations. He equates that as slavery to sin. The yoke of bondage he is talking about specifically is the Old Testament law, but we are going to look at it in a similar context only not the Old Testament law but our slavery to sin and woundedness. He does not want us to be deprived of the fruits of righteousness that come through a relationship with God as our Abba Father in Christ through the Holy Spirit. In Him, according to Paul, circumcision or non-circumcision - circumcision was the Old Testament sign of being part of the family of God, and through this book of Galatians St. Paul says that neither the circumcision nor being uncircumcised is going to count for anything, but only faith that works through love to produce the kind of fruit that he is going to enumerate for us later in the chapter.

Rather than looking at it as the Old Testament law or the circumcision or un-circumcision, meaning being part of the family of God or not, what we are going to look at are 2 things: Slavery to sin, specifically through legalism or self-sufficiency; and self-indulgence. He actually goes through and lists ways that we do those 2 things. He goes on to say that love fulfils the Old Testament law. He invites us, in verse 13, to Christian Freedom, and he shows that true Christian Freedom is not a license to do whatever we want. Rather, it is based completely on charity. We’ll look at that in great detail next week in our show on love. What is love and how do we practice it? It’s not kindness. We’ll look at that next week. I had a great confusion as a young Christian about what love really was. God taught me what it was, partly, through the church splitting that I experienced. Really what he taught me was what it wasn’t.

St. Paul is going to show us what Christian Freedom really is. He puts love and law against one another. He contrasts them. Error in this area leads us to assume that salvation is just forgiveness of sin. As a Protestant I can say that was an error that I fell into until I noticed in myself and those around me that we claimed to be Christians and yet our lives were not any different than the people that I worked with or knew in the marketplace or my family. I even saw that in my own soul, my own heart, and my own life, specifically in my problems with anger and aggression. He’s going to show us that we can’t just assume that salvation is just being forgiven. We imagined that we are saved in order to remain sinners. That’s really what we were doing. We imagined that we were saved so that we had a license to do everything that we wanted to do.

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Now that we have begun, I'd like to take a moment, especially now that we have turned the corner on the New Year and just thank you, Friends of the Show, for your support. I do it all the time and I really don't mean to beat a dead horse in case you get sick of hearing it, but I appreciate you so much. I'd like to list my newest friends of the show Judith, Susan J., Coletta, Alice, Robert, Kelli, Janet, and Mavis. Thank you so much for your support this year. You have no idea how very much it has helped me. I'm thankful. I'm so very thankful for you and I shouted you out on the website in the show notes. I just thought that was especially appropriate since we're talking about Christian Freedom and Christian love and what it is and is not.

As I said, St. Paul is teaching us through chapter 5 of Galatians that love fulfills the Old Testament law and all of its rules and regulations. True love, and knowing what it is, keeps us from assuming that salvation is just the forgiveness of sin, because what that does is lead us to presume on our salvation in order to do the things that we want to do and to remain in sin. This kind of person treats God's mercy as a sort of bank and he draws as often as he wants, past and future, as those offences he accumulates require. He presumes "Okay, I'm going to sin but I'm going to confess my sin and God is going to forgive me. Because I'm saved, everything will be fine." It's not just Protestants. We did that, but I also know that is true for Catholics because of the Sacrament of Confession. There are a lot of Catholics who think that they can sin presumptuously and then go to Confession and it's going to be just fine because they've been to Confession. I would caution you not to do that.

We have to understand the point that Paul is making: Sanctification is what must happen after the seed of salvation has been planted through baptism, that evidence of true salvation lies in a changed life through a changed heart. It's the kind of heart that hates sin and no longer wants to live in it. That's why you participated with me in the Healing the Father Wound series, because you don't want to continue living in those patterns that are so destructive to yourself and the people that you love. He says, then, later on the chapter that these selfish tempers and these fleshly indulgences drive the Holy Spirit away from the soul and cause us to bite and devour one another. We know that is true. We saw that. We know that's true of ourselves and our habits and the sins that we turn a blind eye to often. Then he points out in verse 17 how the flesh - he uses the word "lusts against the spirit." Then he talks about what that looks like and he enumerates a list of sins. This was a common practice in those days. They would make lists. It's not meant to be exhaustive, it's just sort of an example. Let's not get legalistic and think that if it's not on the list that we're not guilty and it's not destructive. We know better. Anytime there is a death in an area, even if it's a small one, then we know there is sin present because the wages of sin is death, it says in the book of Romans.

I want to just read the chapter quickly. *"Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty by which Christ has made us free and do not get entangled again with a yoke of bondage."* This is why I chose this subject as our new series. I don't want myself or you either to fall back into slavery; the slavery that the wounds cause us to perpetuate, and also I don't want us to fall back into those self-medicating sins, those toxic relationships, or those terrible bad habits that we are in bondage to. I want us to break free of those. We have to know how to do that. That's why we're doing it. We want to see how to bear the fruit of the Spirit. We're doing it because we don't want to get tangled again in a yoke of bondage. *"Indeed, I Paul say to you that if you become circumcised Christ will profit you nothing"* (meaning you go back to the Old Testament law) *"and I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law"* (meaning if you're going to be circumcised then you have to keep the whole Old Testament law). *"You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law. You have fallen from grace."*

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In this context what I want you to look at is trying to keep the law is rule keeping. You can tie this to attempts that you make to obligate God to you based on your religious or prayer or Catholic practices. You might say to God, “I go to mass every single day. Why haven’t you done so-and-so?” Or, “You owe me, Lord. I’ve done this and this for you. I pray the rosary every day. I do this prayer and I do these alms and I fast. I keep a Friday fast.” Those are all attempts to use our practices, as good as they are or may be, to try to obligate God to do things for us, or even for our salvation. That does not work. That’s what St. Paul was saying. Don’t fall into that bondage. Don’t fall into that error thinking that you can earn salvation or you can earn healing or you can earn spiritual fruit. You can’t. You cannot obligate God to do anything for you. He says to try to do that says that you have fallen from grace. *“For we, through the Spirit, eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor un-circumcision avails anything, but only faith working through love. You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? This persuasion does not come from him who calls you. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. I have confidence in you in the Lord that you will have no other mind. But he who troubles you shall bear his judgement, whoever he is. I, brethren, if I still preach the circumcision why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the cross has ceased.”* He’s saying, if I am telling you to go back to the Old Testament law then why are the Jews persecuting me? That’s what he’s saying. *“I could wish that those who trouble you would even cut themselves off. For you, brethren, have been called to freedom. 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 law ‘Even in this you shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another. Here is true freedom, walking in the Spirit.”* *“I say then, walk in the Spirit and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. 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. But if you are led by the Spirit you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident: They are adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contention, jealousy, outburst of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murder, drunkenness, revelries and the like, of which I tell you beforehand just as I also told you in time past that those who participate in such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law. And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another or envying one another.”*

What I’d like to do now since we’ve read the whole thing and we have sort of an overview is go through verse by verse. In the subsequent shows we’ll focus on each aspect of the fruit of the spirit in turn; love, joy, peace, etc. I want to make the point that these are not fruits, plural, even though I said it inaccurately before. It is the FRUIT of the Spirit. All of this together is the one fruit that the Holy Spirit in all who are his children. This is a great way to take inventory. We have to know. We have to look at ourselves. Am I loving? Am I joyful? Do I have peace? Do I have patience with other people? We’ll look at these individually in turn so that we can really take a good look at our lives and take a good inventory, but it’s good to just do an overview just with that list. He says in verse 16 that the only consistent way to overcome sinful desires of our human nature - the flesh, is what he calls it, and when we talk about the flesh we’re not just talking about sexual stuff. We’re talking about the carnal desires - the concupiscence, the Church calls it - that we are born into. It’s the tendency to let the flesh rule over the spirit. That’s what it really is. The only way to overcome that flesh and its desire is to live step by step in the power of the Holy Spirit. This is the only way to produce spiritual fruit. We don’t know what it is, even. Jesus says that it’s impossible for us to bear any fruit of ourselves at all. We’ll look at that in coming shows. He says, “Without me, you bear no fruit.” We can’t produce it on



our own. What we can do is do our part by staying attached to the vine. He says *“Abide in me and you will produce much fruit.”*

Galatians 5:16 *“I say, then, walk in the Spirit and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”* He’s telling us that we have to walk with the Spirit. We have to be led. We have to live in the spirit. In verse 16 he uses the verb walk, in verse 18 he says led, in verse 25 he says live. They’re all the same meaning. To walk in the Spirit is to be led by the Spirit. It means to live in the Spirit. We habitually move (verse 25 uses that word, but it actually means “to march”). We are continually and consistently moving under the Holy Spirit’s direction. How do we do that? By staying connected to the vine and walking in step with him. The Holy Spirit, the pneuma in Greek, the breath of God, is the one who taught us to call God Abba through Christ. He is our gift at Baptism and Confirmation. He gives you freedom, Dear One, and he will teach you how to use it. He gives you freedom against and away from that list of sins that he lists in verses 19 through 21. He’s telling us that we can be free of all of those things, and we should be because all who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. In Romans, he says, *“For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship where we cry Abba Father.”* We don’t want to fall back into slavery to these sins. We want to be free because that is our inheritance through Christ in the Holy Spirit.

Freedom, then, is not self-indulgence or self-reliance. Paul gives us these two examples. We have to walk not in the law and not in the flesh, but in the Spirit only. He’s basically saying that the root of our your trouble is need of the Spirit. If you had him and were walking with him then you would completely do away with these sins that enslave you, meaning the self-indulgence and also the self-reliance. We’re going to look at those both. To walk in the spirit is to order your whole life after the impulses of the Holy Spirit. That’s very, very important. We all want to do that, right? We all want to grow in a relationship with the Holy Spirit. St. Paul is teaching us how to do that.

Also, this is really, really incredible and I hope that you will memorize this. Verse 16: *“Walk in the spirit and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.”* That is a promise and it is a very strong promise. Walking every minute by faith guarantees an absolute victory over those desires of our sinful nature. That is incredible. This is one of the verses that you should memorize so that it can come back to you in moments of temptation. When you are tempted to those sins of the flesh that you fall victim to over and over and over, those habits, those relationships, the self-medication...all of those things that we do out of our woundedness and out of our laziness, a lot of times...we are guaranteed that we will not fall to it, will not succumb to it, will not be enslaved to those things if we are walking according to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, he goes on to say, is completely opposite to the flesh. In verse 17 he talks about how the flesh lusts against the Spirit, that the flesh is the opposite of the Spirit and the Spirit is the opposite to the flesh. They are contrary to one another. He sets them up as sort of in Genesis 3, in the garden, and also too in Revelation 22. After the fall when Adam and Eve rebelled against the spirit of God, He allowed from then on that their lower flesh would rebel against their higher spirit. That is why we have such a problem with it now. That is the nature of original sin. That is concupiscence, according to the Church. Now it is a battle of lust. That’s the word that, depending on your translation, that is used for your desires, for carnal things. Overeating, overdrinking, comfort, whatever it is - all of those ways that we self-indulge. Or, there is the perfectionism and OCD. That’s a way in which we try to obligate God to us. Either of those things are ways that the flesh rebel against the Spirit. Our spirit is meant to rule over the flesh but when we give into those things over and over and over, we get the order out of whack and the flesh rules the spirit. We don’t do, St. Paul says, what we want to do. He goes on to say in the next couple of verses that *“You do not do the things that you wish.”* It’s because we have allowed the flesh to rule the spirit rather than the spirit

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rule the flesh. That's backward. The Holy Spirit has come and been given to us as a gift through Christ and his passion, death, and resurrection in order that we would no longer be slaves to that flesh.

It's the same word here in Galatians that is used in the Genesis account where Eve's desire will be for her husband "*but he shall rule over you,*" it says in Genesis 3:16. It's actually used 3 times in the Old Testament: Genesis 3:16, 4:7, and in the Song of Solomon 7:10. In Song of Solomon it's meant in a good way but in the others it's a negative, it's a stretching out after, a longing for. The flesh longs after that self-indulgence whether through carnal desire or perfectionism. It longs for it. It satisfies the flesh and the more you feed the flesh the more it will grow, and the same principle for the things of the spirit. In the Song of Solomon it's used "I am my beloved's and his desire is for me." That word desire means that longing after. God's longing is for us but our longing is for the flesh. This concept of the indwelling Holy Spirit, or the spirit of God, is the power of the Christian life. The whole rest of the chapter is about that. Mastery over the flesh, then, belongs to everyone who is a child of Christ. In a word, his spirit is the absolute antagonist and the sure winner over sinful human flesh if we stay connected to him, as he goes on to talk about through the rest of the chapter.

The spirit and the flesh are opposites in Galatians 5:17. Each one is bent on destroying the ascendancy of the other. The cravings and the tendencies of the flesh are opposed at every point to those of the spirit. Where the flesh rules the spirit has to succumb and where the spirit rules the flesh has to succumb. Whatever we feed will grow. That is a principle of sowing and reaping. Someday we might do that. I think it's Bob that keeps asking for that...prosperity and sowing and reaping. We might do that later on.

What we want is that his will be done on earth as it is in heaven. This is the battle between good and evil. All of history is a battlefield for the struggle between God's spirit and our rebellious flesh and the nature of the flesh. You feed the flesh and you get complete rot. You feed the spirit and you get complete freedom. The spirit lusts against the flesh. The Holy Spirit's desire, his lust, is for us to be free from sin. He strains out after it. He longs for us to be free from sin. Why? Because we don't serve God fully when we have sin in our lives. We're ashamed. We feel like a hypocrite. We are hypocrites in a lot of ways. That was actually one of my problems when I first got started in ministry, and I'll talk about that in the last segment. You have to begin weeding out these sins or else you aren't truly a child of God. That's really what Paul is saying here. We want to be careful that we are making progress in the fruit of the spirit.

He goes on to say in verse 18 that freedom is not self-indulgence but it's also not self-reliance. Love versus the law again. It's not performance or earning as is indicated in the context of "law". He uses that word law. Keeping the rules, OCD, perfectionism, law-keeping do not overcome sin; they just aggravate it. All that does is highlight where we are failing, and that is our focus. Our focus is on our failures and not on the Holy Spirit. Instead we have to focus on the Holy Spirit and the fruit will come. We've got to change our perspective. Do you see how practical this is? Isn't it great?

In verses 19 and 20 he talks about this law of the flesh or self-indulgence. First he says that self-reliance is not freedom, and we know that it is not because it keeps us in bondage to this perfectionisms, but neither is self-indulgence. He goes through this list: Fornication (which is sex outside of marriage), adultery, infidelity, impurity or uncleanness (did you know that the root of that in Greek is effeminacy? That can be either moral or physical. Fr. Ripperger, I think it was, did a sermon on this and he talked about how moral effeminacy is where men allow women to rule over them according to Genesis 3, that whole idea of how Eve's desire will be for her husband but he will rule over her. Instead, it gets backwards where we are determined and we subjugate men to us and

they allow it. That is moral effeminacy. We know what physical effeminacy is. That is the root of the word impurity or uncleanness there), and then immodesty. So lasciviousness, licentiousness, sexual vice. Jerome says that is an extraordinary form of lust. He says “The works of the married, even, if not done with delicacy and modesty and merely for the procreation of children come under the Apostle’s description of uncleanness and lasciviousness.” I may have just lost you there.

Look, I like sex as much as anybody, maybe more than some of you, but what St. Jerome is talking about here really hit home to me very strongly when I was reading the writings of the visions of St. Anne Catherine Emmerich. What I noticed there is people in those days, in Biblical times, it’s not because they were prudish or anything, it’s just that they weren’t oversexed like we are. We are saturated in sex all the time. It’s this whole self-indulgence idea where the more you feed it the more it demands. It wasn’t that way with them. They saw sex as mainly a way of bearing children and that’s pretty much it. There’s nothing wrong with it, I’m not saying that. When Paul talks about immodesty he’s talking about sexual vice and forms of lust. I’ll just say it: Girl porn, or porn period where you’re watching it. When I say “girl porn” I’m talking about romance novels and the filth that’s in those and in every single movie anymore. I’ve gotten to the point where I don’t even go see movies anymore because of all this gratuitous sex. It means nothing anymore. He groups these together: fornication, impurity (or effeminacy), and immodesty. He groups those as a set in which to show how self-indulgence rears its ugly head in a sexual sort of way. Basically he’s saying that self-indulgence shows itself in sexual sin.

Then we have idolatry. I don’t know about you, but oftentimes people think about idolatry as image worship but the basis of it means that God is not first in my life. Whatever comes above him, whether it be work or children or relationships or money or other possessions, whatever - If anything else is in position before God then idolatry is present. We have to watch. Who gets the bulk of our time? Who gets the bulk of our money? Who gets the bulk of our talents? All of those ways of stewardship, that’s how we identify whether we are being idolatrous or not. Then sorcery, maybe you think of Tarot cards and Ouija boards, and it does mean witchcraft and is used that way several times throughout the scriptures, but the actual root of it is pharmakeia and that is a particular Bible term for potions specific to contraception and abortion, but also addictions, chemicals that cause us to be addicted. I’m not here to point my finger at anybody. St. Paul is doing this. I’m just saying evaluate your life in the presence of the Holy Spirit. I’m looking at these for you so that you can do that with him. Where are we addicted chemically? Maybe cigarettes, maybe alcohol, maybe sugar, maybe pills, whatever. Whatever it is. Where are we guilty of this pharmakeia for contraception or abortion? Those two are grouped together: idolatry and sorcery go together, according to Paul. That is another example of self-indulgence.

Then we have enmity, which is hatred; strife, which means contentions, debates, people who are argumentative. Everyone has one in their family, right? That was me. I was totally argumentative. I had to have the last word. I had to be right. I had to be the smartest. It was the Holy Spirit, really, who kept convicting me of how obnoxious I was. People who were like that would get on my nerves because I was that way. That leads to jealousy or covetousness, and then to anger. Wrath and murder are obviously capital sins. Selfishness, which is just “me first. I will not serve. I have to have the last word.” Those things lead to dissention or sedition, which is disunity, division, heresy, rebellion. In my Protestant church I saw that a lot in a very tangible way through the church splitting, but it also happens in Catholic churches. It’s just behind the scenes and you can’t really run off a pastor, but it happens. If we’re guilty of that then we are guilty of self-indulgence.

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Then we have some other things that are grouped together here: Party spirit, drunkenness or carousing (the Greek word is reveling and it just means that lascivious and rioting that people do when they are drunk. They get really mad or maybe they get really very into verbal innuendo or sexual jokes or bawdiness. You know what I'm saying).

All of those are ways he is telling us that self-indulgence rears its ugly head. He groups some of those together in those sets. Freedom is not self-indulgence and it's not self-reliance. True freedom is through the Holy Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 15:56 he calls the law "the power of sin", and he means the Old Testament law. He is saying that to be under the law, in his view, was to be held consciousness in the grasp of sin. That is the condition that the legalism, or falling back into the Old Testament law, would reduce the Galatians too, and that is what will happen to us if we continue to let the flesh rule our spirit. That's the point for us. The Holy Spirit will prevent that in us. Then we see in verse 22 what true freedom is. *"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control."* In the Latin there are 12 but in the Greek there are 9. In several of the Church Fathers they use 12 for Latin and then others use 9 according to the Greek. Where there are 12 used it is a repetitive sort of redundancy there. Love, St. Paul says, fills all of them in one. It casts out evil from the heart. It stills the ugly hand and ugly tongue. It makes it impossible for freedom to give into any sort of selfish or fleshly impulse. That's what we want, right?

The law of love is not natural and it is not automatic. You and I both know it. It is divine inspiration. Love is of God. It's the characteristic fruit of the spirit of adoption. It is implanted and nourished from above through the Holy Spirit. When he says he wants us to love each other by serving, he says in verse 22, he's saying, "I don't expect you to do this of yourself but by force of the Holy Spirit. I know it's contrary to your nature. I know it's contrary to your flesh. But I'm telling you to walk in the spirit and it will be easy." *"You will not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For you, then, will not be in slavery and nothing will be impossible."* Isn't that awesome?

I mentioned that one of the very first lessons I learned along this line was trying to quit smoking. It was the New Year, ironically, of 1995. I had tried to quit several times and I finally had. I had been quit for several months but I picked it up again because we were moving here to Tennessee from North Carolina, and it was a lame attempt at comfort seeking. It helped me get through towing a boat through seven hours behind the wheel of a rented moving truck, away from all the people who had ever loved me in my hometown. I was already sick of it again. I was sick of coughing. I was sick of not being able to breathe. I was sick of being enslaved by it. Everything I owned reeked of it. I couldn't even watch a whole movie before having to pause it halfway through and run out and smoke. I knew I was just doomed to emphysema. Nobody at church knew that I smoked. I hid it because I was embarrassed, but also because once I was having lunch with a girlfriend and I was approached by this older lady. She came up to me and she said with this Southern drawl, "Young lady, you're too pretty to smoke." It just convicted me. The Holy Spirit just used her to show me something. I didn't want anybody at church to know that I was a smoker because I knew I was being a hypocrite. God kept convicting me about it so I thought, "All right, I'll try it." As much as I hated it I actually liked it too, so I kept doing it. I did the only thing I knew to do. I tried again. I tossed out the remains of the last pack and then I went to bed because I had researched it and I knew that the physical addiction would be eliminated in five days. That was my only goal: just get through five days. I figured what better way to begin than to be unconscious in sleep? At least then I'll be 10 or 12 hours in. When I woke up, I remember being at work and it was a minute by minute struggle. I was watching the clock constantly. I was embarrassed at that point that I wasn't getting up to go to the break room with my buddies to go smoke. I begged God at every single second to help me. Then I had gone all morning, and then the

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whole day, and then the whole week, and then the whole year. I got victory. It was the first New Years resolution that I ever kept and I have been a nonsmoker since then. It was the hardest physical habit that I ever had to break.

Like the Old Testament Israelites, we are freed from bondage in one area and we fall back into bondage later in another area. God knows that. But he is calling us, Dear One, to the freedom that is our inheritance in Christ. The question then, for each of us, is what is our pet sin? Where are we guilty? He wants us to know that we are known by our fruit. Let's test the fruit. What's the smell test? *"They that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and lusts."* Whatever your pet sin is, get to Confession, make a plan, and let's get rid of that and walk in the spirit day by day through the rest of the week.

Next week we'll talk about love as the first aspect of the fruit of the spirit.

