

Day 1- The Fruits of the Spirit

Scripture: Galatians 5:22-23

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.”

Devotional

C.S. Lewis once said that in the end, there are really only two types of people in this world: “Those who say to God, ‘Thy will be done,’ and those to whom God says, in the end, ‘Thy will be done.’” This is the message of Galatians 5:19-23. In verses 19-20, Paul writes about a number of vices that he calls the works of the flesh. The sins that he lists include impurity, idolatry, sorcery, and a bunch of other not so great stuff. This is the way of man. This is how all of mankind since Genesis 3 has chosen to live their lives when left alone to their own devices. The reason for this is that we all love sin. R.C. Sproul said that, “We are not sinners because we sin. We sin because we are sinners.” Sin is what naturally comes out of sinful creatures. When Paul refers to the fruit of the Spirit in verses 22-23, he is referring to that which the Holy Spirit produces in one that has been made new by Christ. The Holy Spirit only produces good things and is incapable of bringing anything that goes against God’s standard of holiness. If we want to live a life that keeps in step with the Spirit, we need the Holy Spirit to be actively working in us. J.V. Fesko writes, “The Spirit produces his holy fruit within us. We cannot pull ourselves up by our moral bootstraps in the effort to love, to have joy, or to produce peace within our hearts.” If we want to live a morally good life, it can only be accomplished through our cooperation with the Holy Spirit. If we want to be the type of people that say to the Lord, “Thy will be done,” we must first have the Holy Spirit change us from the inside out.

Discussion

1. What do you think it means for God’s will to be done in your life?
2. Looking at the 9 fruits that are listed in Galatians 5, are there any that you feel you need to work harder towards having?
 - a. Are there any that you feel you are living out well?
3. What do you think it means to walk in the Spirit?

Day 2- Love

Scripture- 1 Corinthians 13:4-7; 13

“Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things... So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

Devotional

We have the tendency to toss around the word, “love” pretty carelessly these days. I took my son to Walmart to pick up a few groceries the other day and every time that I said we had to pick up the next item on the list, he said that he loved the thing that we needed to pick up (yep, even the wheat flour). If I were to say that I love reading (which is true) and that I love my wife (which is also true) am I speaking about the same kind of love? Obviously not! What do we mean then when we talk about love? I think that for Christians we need to be aware of our vertical and horizontal loves. Our vertical love is the love that we have for God and our horizontal love is the love that we have for our neighbors. When Paul says that the first fruit of the Spirit is love, he means that every remaining fruit stems from that love. Martin Luther writes, “It had been enough to have said “love,” and no more; for love extends itself unto all the fruits of the Spirit.” If God did not first love us, we would never be able to love Him. If we do not first love our neighbor, we will never feel any desire to reach out with the love of Christ towards our neighbor. We need love. Without love, we would be in a very dark place. Whatever love we show to anyone should mirror the great love that our Savior has already shown to us. The cross is the clearest example of God’s love for us. There is never a moment where we will be able to say, “God, you never loved me.” May the great love of our Savior drive us towards a greater love for Him and for our neighbor.

Discussion

1. Why do you think Paul lists love as the greatest gift in 1 Corinthians 13?
2. What is the difference between horizontal love and vertical love?
3. Why do we need the love of God every day?
4. What are some ways that your love for your neighbor can mirror Christ’s love for you?

Day 3- Joy

Scripture: Psalm 16:7-11

“I bless the Lord who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me. I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being *rejoices*; my flesh also dwells secure. For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption. You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of *joy*; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore. “

Devotional

What brings you the greatest joy in life? Is there a certain place where you feel happier than anywhere else? Is there a certain gift that you received from someone that make you feel more loved than anything else? What happens though when that joy goes away? The treasures of this world can be amazing gifts from God but no earthly gift lasts forever. When it comes to the gifts that we receive and the joy that comes with those gifts, we will either die and they will be of no use anymore or they will pass away and be of no use for us anymore and the joy that we once had will vanish along with it. The kind of joy that all need to be able to experience is a joy that lasts forever. The only joy that can produce this everlasting joy is that which comes from Christ. John Calvin said of Psalm 16:11, “David, therefore, testifies that true and solid joy in which the minds of men may rest will never be found anywhere else but in God; and that, therefore, none but the faithful, who are contented with his grace alone, can be truly and perfectly happy.” When the Holy Spirit produces joy in our hearts, it is a joy that can never be lost. While there may be moments in our lives where it is hard to be happy, there will never be a moment where the joy of our salvation can be removed.

Discussion

1. What brings you the most joy in life?
2. Does the love of Christ for you produce joy in your heart?
3. What are some ways that you can increase in joy?

Day 4- Peace

Scripture: Romans 14:17-19

“For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and *peace* and joy in the Holy Spirit. Whoever thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and approved by men. So then let us pursue what makes for *peace* and for mutual upbuilding.”

Devotional

There is no peace between God and man without the cross of Jesus Christ. Paul says of Christ in Colossians 1:19-20, “For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.” It is amazing to think that the most needed peace in the universe came about by the death of the sinless Son of God. If Christ was willing to go to the grave so that peace might be restored, surely, we have no excuse to not desire to be at peace with those around us. If we want to be at peace with God and man, it must be through the fruit of the Holy Spirit. The joy that we have through Christ relates perfectly to the peace that we have with Him. Without peace from God, we would never find joy in God. John MacArthur said, “If joy speaks of the exhilaration of the heart that comes from being right with God, then peace refers to the tranquility of mind that comes from saving relationships.” As you go through your week, may you meditate on the perfect peace that you now have with God and may you watch for opportunities to be at peace with others.

Discussion

1. Why do you think that it is hard for humans to have peace with each other?
2. What do you think the hardest part of being at peace with one another is?
3. How often do you stop to reflect on the peace that now exists between you and God?
 - a. What are some ways that you can stop and think about it in the future?

Day 5- Patience

Scripture- 2 Peter 3:8-9

“But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is *patient* toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.”

Devotional

I will admit that I am not a very patient person. I am so thankful that the Lord is not like me in this regard. If the Lord had the same level of patience towards me that I have towards others, I would have been dead a very long time ago. There is a time set in eternity where Christ will return. Heaven's calendar has a day circled where all shall be made new and the children of God will enjoy Him fully forever. I am sure that we are all longing for that day. The older I get, the more I look ahead with a greater desire for Christ to return. However, there is a good reason that Christ is not here yet and that is because there are still lost children that need to come home. There are still people out there that need to hear about the salvation offered through Jesus Christ and Christ will not return until they do. Those that belong to God will not be left out of the fold. They must come to Him and because of this, God is being patient towards us. I am thankful that He was and continues to be patient towards me.

Discussion

1. Why do you think it is so hard to be patient?
2. Does the patience that God has towards you inspire you to be patient towards others?
3. What is one area of your life that you are struggling to be patient in?

Day 6- Kindness

Scripture- Romans 11:22-23

“Note then the *kindness* and the severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God’s *kindness* to you, provided you continue in his *kindness*. Otherwise you too will be cut off. And even they, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again.”

Devotional

Paul refers to both the kindness and severity of God. I always thought that it was strange that those two should be mentioned together but the more you think about it, the more necessary it is for those two attributes to be linked. Origen puts it best when he said, “Note the kindness and severity of God. For he is not kind without being severe or severe without being kind. For if he were only kind and not severe, we would not think much of his kindness. If he were severe and not kind, perhaps we would also despair in our sins. But God is both a kind and a severe God.” If God is all kindness, where is His sense of justice? If God is all severity, where is His love? When it comes to the attributes of God, one is never sacrificed for the good of another. For God to be a God of love, wrath must also be possible because He would ultimately be unloving if He did not judge sin and sinners. When it comes to kindness, we need to be able to accept hard truths. I have told my students before that I would rather be told the truth and it hurt than be told a lie and carry on living as if everything were ok. The same can be applied to our kindness towards others. Sometimes the kindest thing that we can do is warn someone about something that may cause harm to them or their soul. James writes, “My brothers, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins” (James 5:19-20). Might it sting to feel the weight of sin? Yes. Is it a tremendous kindness? Absolutely.

Discussion

1. What is the greatest kindness that someone has ever shown to you?
2. If an opportunity comes to you where you have to address sin in someone’s life, what are some kind ways that you can address that topic?
3. Why do you think it is hard for some Christians to be kind?

Day 7- Goodness

Scripture- Psalm 145:6-9

“They shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds, and I will declare your greatness. They shall pour forth the fame of your abundant *goodness* and shall sing aloud of your righteousness. The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. The Lord is *good* to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made.”

Devotional

I love the *Chronicles of Narnia* series and I believe that C.S. Lewis was one of the most brilliant men to have ever walked on the face of the Earth. One of my favorite moments in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* is when the beavers are talking to the Pevensie children about the great lion Aslan and Susan asks if Aslan is safe to be around. Mr. Beaver replies, “Safe? Who said anything about safe? Course he isn’t safe. But he’s *good*. He’s the King, I tell you.” If you are looking for safety in religion, you won’t find it in Christianity. The God of the Bible does not call us to comfort, He calls us to service and sometimes that service means that we must lay our lives down. Is Christianity safe? No. But we can have confidence because our Savior is Good. He is the King after all. The Lord is slow to anger but sin must face judgment. We are fortunate to know that our God “is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made.” What should we do with the goodness of God? Why would we want to keep it to ourselves? St. Augustine said, “So there is a good that can make [you] good, and there is a good with which you can do good. The good that makes [you] good is God, for only the one who is always good can make people good.” God has been good to us and now we can take the goodness that we have been given and share it with others.

Discussion

1. Would you rather serve a God that is safe or a God that is good?
2. What do you think would make these two God’s different?
3. How do you handle being good towards others when others are not always good towards you?

Day 8- Faithfulness

Scripture- Psalm 40:10-11

“I have not hidden your deliverance within my heart; I have spoken of your *faithfulness* and your salvation; I have not concealed your steadfast love and your *faithfulness* from the great congregation. As for you, O Lord, you will not restrain your mercy from me; your steadfast love and your *faithfulness* will ever preserve me!”

Devotional

One of my favorite hymns of all time is Thomas Chisolm’s, Great is Thy Faithfulness. “All I have needed thy hand hath provided, great is thy faithfulness, Lord unto me!” When we think about faithfulness, I think we have the tendency to think about the saving faith that we have in Christ. That is certainly important to meditate on but how often do we stop to meditate on the faithfulness of God? Paul reminded Timothy, “If we are faithless, He remains faithful for He cannot deny Himself” (2 Tim 2:13). Paul does not mean that if alleged Christians turn away from God in faith that God will still allow them into Heaven. It may be hard to hear but those that abandon the faith were never Christians to begin with. What Paul means is that even if we were to be faithless, we would never be able to question whether or not God was faithful because He is faithful in every sense of the word. He is faithful to His promises, He is faithful to His children, He is faithful to His Word, in every way God is faithful. When David says at the end of Psalm 40:11 that God’s “steadfast love and your faithfulness will ever preserve me,” he understands that if it were not for God’s faithfulness to him, he would never have any assurance. The assurance of our salvation can come from the knowledge of God’s never-ending faithfulness to His people and His promise. If you have been connected to Christ through saving faith, God will continue to be faithful to you.

Discussion

1. In what ways has God shown His faithfulness to you?
2. What verses can you memorize that will remind you of God’s faithfulness?
3. Does the assurance of God’s faithfulness inspire you when you go through seasons of doubt and worry?

Day 9- Gentleness

Scripture- Ephesians 4:1-3

“I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and *gentleness*, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

Devotional

A Christian is not to be an angry person. A Christian is to be someone that is patient, kind, humble, and gentle towards others. Christians are to not be harsh towards one another. It is important to think of how Christ treats us as His followers. He is the Great Shepherd and we are His sheep. A good shepherd is never harsh or abusive of his sheep. He is gentle and loving towards them, always leading and always protecting. Christ Himself admits to this when He says in Matthew 11:29-30, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” Christ is not brash and ruthless. He is not unloving or unkind towards His people. He is gentle and wise in all of His treatment of us. Christ is always our greatest example on how we should act towards others. Donald Gray Barnhouse said, “Gentleness is soft and loving, the opposite of rudeness. There is no awkward haste, for gentleness handles the emotions of others with the tenderness that one would use with a baby. Gentleness is composed of equal parts of love, kindness, courtesy, and tenderness.” I am hoping that if your baby was crying in front of you that you wouldn’t curse at it, scream at it, or abuse it to get it to stop. Instead, you would be gentle and loving towards your child because that is what the child needs. The world today is always in need of those that are willing to be gentle and kind.

Discussion

1. How do you think that gentleness links to the other fruits of the Spirit?
2. Do you find it easy to be gentle towards others or do you find it difficult?
3. Are there certain people that you feel inclined to be gentle towards? Why do you think that you feel that way?

Day 10- Self Control

Scripture- Titus 2:11-12

“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live *self-controlled*, upright, and godly lives in the present age.”

Devotional

The Christian life is a battle between flesh and spirit. That is why it is so important for believers to exercise self-control. Paul himself recognized just how difficult it is to live with self-control. Paul says in Romans 7:22-23, “For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.” Paul recognized that even though he had been redeemed by Christ, he has not yet fully been glorified. Martin Luther recognized that believers are at the same time both righteous and sinners (Simul Justus et Peccator). Even though Christians are justified by faith alone, we do not automatically cease sinning. The desire for sin may finally start to disappear but we often find ourselves making the same mistakes. This is why we need to live lives that are self-controlled. We recognize that sin is still present and we live in a fallen world but even though Satan and the world continually offers to us things that look sweet, we know that those things produce only death. Still, it is tempting and many times we found ourselves falling into similar sinful patterns. The Gospel shows that we do not need to be enslaved to the things that once held us captive. The Holy Spirit is more than able to help us in our battle against sin so that we may be able to live self-controlled lives. John Piper writes, “When we really see and believe what God is for us by grace through Jesus Christ, the power of wrong desires is broken. Therefore the fight for self-control is a fight of faith.” As we strive to live self-controlled lives, we can do it by looking back at the fruit of the Holy Spirit. God’s love is enough for us, our joy is eternal, our peace is secured, He is patient towards us when we stumble, He is kind and good in all His ways, He will always be faithful, He is gentle towards those that are undeserving, and Christ serves as our grand example of living a self-controlled life in a fallen world. Let us always thank God for His provision and pray that the Holy Spirit would produce His fruit in us.

Discussion

1. No questions today! Instead, reflect, meditate on, and thank the Lord for what He has revealed over the past 10 days.