

Galatians 5:22-26

22 By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. 24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another.

Galatians was written by the Apostle Paul, an expert theologian in both Judaism and Christianity. He was taught Judaism in the temple and was tutored by the top scholar of the day. He knew details about Christ due to his personal encounter with post resurrected Jesus. One of the main things that the Apostle Paul addresses in regards to theology is the contrast between law and grace. The law is based on people trying to do things in order to earn God's favor. Whereas with grace, we understand that redemption is not earned but freely given. The fundamental understanding is that we cannot earn God's forgiveness and there's nothing that we can do to achieve God's love. We will never be good enough no matter what we do to earn God's love and forgiveness because we all carry some form of sin. For example I am sure you have heard in your life someone say "Are you calling me a liar?" We all have heard that somewhere, if not in person then several times on TV or in the movies. It's always antagonistic and the answer is either silence, no, or some other negative response. That's because of the potential for conflict. The question is argumentative, challenging, and confrontational. I wish they would respond with "Yes, I am calling you a liar. Everybody is a liar because everybody has lied at one point or another in life. If you are saying that you are not a liar then that in itself makes you a liar. The point is we are all sinners. We all fall short of the glory of God and even though we are all undeserving, we get God's forgiveness. That's why we are here today. We realize this tremendous gift of God's love and we are so appreciative that we can't help but celebrate and express our thanksgiving to God.

The Apostle Paul's situation is that he is dealing with the development of the church and there is a conflict between those with a Jewish background that depend on the Law of Moses and the gentiles who depend on grace which is based on love. The letter to the Galatians is rich in Paul's theology and it is important understand that the source of his knowledge is a direct encounter with the post resurrected Jesus. In the first chapter of Galatians Paul asserts that he received the Gospel directly by the revelation of Jesus Christ. If the Apostle Paul is taught by Jesus Christ himself, then he knows God's plan of grace very well. .

In the Secret Place devotional on Tuesday June 1, there is a good match for today's message. The author reported that most of his life he felt that he needed to earn salvation even though he knows that he is not good enough for God's love and there is no earning or deserving anything from God. So, his advice is not to try so hard, just cool down and trust the Holy One. Someone once told him that the tighter your grip on a handful of sand, the less you will have. I thought that was a good lesson that we all run into in life. Trying too hard creates a scenario where the more effort you put into something results in decreased productivity. It is a matter of the basic biblical lesson to focus not on your own efforts, achievements, or failures but focus on the Lord.

The Apostle Paul explains a theological detail of the contrast between the law and faith. God made a very important change through Jesus which changes everything including trying to

earn God's favor by observance of the law. The law hinged on reward and punishment but God took action that is based on love. This brings to us a new covenant that replaces the old covenant. The new covenant is of Love, it is based on grace and God's love for us. Since God loves all people in God's creation we are commanded to love one another. We must love the people that God loves. We are called to be free from the law and we are commanded to love one another. So, God made a very important change and it is also very important for us to make a change. The challenge to live by the Spirit is in direct contrast to our desire to live by the flesh. To get his point across Paul lists several vices followed by some virtues.

This brings us to today's Scripture. The Apostle Paul refers to this as *The Fruit of the Spirit*. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. It would be helpful to remember these, try to study them and set them down in memory. However, I think it is better to be drawn to the Spirit where these come automatically in your life. This takes discernment, reflection, and a sincere desire to be one with Spirit of Lord. You must completely surrender your life to Christ. When you do, you will find internal happiness and satisfaction, and eternal happiness and satisfaction. Then you do not need or desire external stimulus. We belong to Christ. He crucified the flesh, its passions and desires. We live by the Spirit and are guided by the Spirit. Therefore, we do not become conceited, or desire self attention, and we do not compete against one another, or envy one another. We are happy and satisfied, full of joy, love, and The Fruit of the Spirit.