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Galatians 5:19-26

Fruitfulness on the Frontline:

Modeling God's Character

Jonathan M. Romig

CornerstoneWestford.com

In Galatians 5:19-26, the Apostle Paul contrasts the works of the flesh with the fruit of the Holy Spirit. The flesh, or human nature, is self-focused, and willing to put me first at the expense of others. The flesh takes advantage of others sexually, through religion or fake spirituality, and anger or dominance. The Spirit on the other hand, transforms Christians to love others, put their needs first, and do so at great personal expense. This is only possible as the Holy Spirit reminds us of the gospel and what we already have in Jesus Christ. As our characters are transformed, we become more authentic and powerful examples of God's love. Listen to the sermon to learn more.

**Outline next page. Slides on website.*

Introduction: (Slide 1)

1. I didn't always want to be a pastor—for a few years I thought I was going to be a Marine officer.
2. I talked to a recruiter, took the basic aptitude test, and reviewed my medical history.
3. That's when I ran into a problem... I was getting allergy shots and that wasn't okay.
4. So I conveniently left that bit of information off my application.
5. I traveled to MEPS for my final physical review.
6. I was almost done, ready for the stamp of approval, when God convicted me.
7. He put this question on my heart, "If I can't lead myself, how can I hope to lead others?"
8. So I told the head doctor my mistake, had my medical records reviewed, and that's why I'm a pastor.
9. The first step to leading others to Jesus begins with reviewing ourselves.

(*Fruitfulness on the Frontline* is all about how Christians can make a positive impact to those around them.)

(The word frontline is a military term, it describes those forces closest to the enemy.)

(Our frontlines are in one sense where we are closest to our true enemy, Satan and his domain.)

(The battle; however, doesn't begin out there, it begins in our hearts, in our identities and character.)

(If we want to be successful frontline soldiers, we need God to mold and shape us.)

(This is similar to the message the Apostle Paul wrote to the church of Galatia.)

- A. The church in Galatia is a new church just like us.
- a. On Paul's first missionary journey in AD 46-48, he launched the Galatian church in Turkey.
 - b. About a year later, false teachers came into this new church to destroy it.
 - c. They're not teaching that people receive salvation as a free gift from God by faith.
 - d. But that Christians have to have faith and obey Jewish customs, like circumcision, to be saved.
 - e. So church has to decide, is it my works that save me or is God concerned with something else?
 - f. Paul argues that it's not their religion, but what God's Spirit does in them, that matters.
 - g. God is most concerned with our hearts; Godly character is a result of a heart changed by God.

(A good answer those early Christians can give those false teachers is... themselves.)

(As God leads and molds them, their character becomes a living witness of God's grace.)

I. (S2) We model the character of God. (Gal. 5:19-21)

- A. As part of our witness on our frontlines, we model the character of God.
1. The first way to be fruitful on your frontline is *M1: Modeling Godly Character*.
 2. Before Paul describes God's character, he describes the opposite, human nature.
 3. At our core, people are not good, nor are we exactly evil; rather, we're broken.
 4. People were created to reflect God's goodness, but in Eden we sinned, distorting that reflection.
 5. Now vv. 19-21 describe "the acts of the flesh", which is a typical human being stuck in sin.
 6. As typical humans, we distort God's loving character three ways:

B. **Sexually:** taking advantage of others (S3)

1. Sexual immorality, impurity, debauchery, drunkenness (leads to), orgies, and the like...
2. Paul is saying, *God cares more about what you do with your flesh than a mark on your flesh*.
3. What we do with ourselves and how we treat others speaks to what is in our hearts.
4. If I don't know God's real love for me, I'll try to take that love from other people.
5. No matter how deep I try to scratch that itch, it will never be enough, never satisfy.

6. The Greek word for sexual immorality is *porneia*, which encompasses all sinful sexual acts.
7. If you struggle with porn, that will impact how you treat those around you—see it as demonic.

(We distort God's character sexually, but also...)

C. **Spiritually:** do-it-yourself religion (S4)

1. Both *idolatry* and *witchcraft* have one thing in common, they attempt to control God.
2. If we offer incense or money to an idol, we're trying to get the spirits behind it to owe us.
3. God doesn't want to be in a currency-based relationship with us; he wants something real.
4. If we place crystals in our homes, we're trying to ward off bad spirits and attract good ones.
5. God is the Holy Spirit who can't be controlled by something he created, like crystals or people.
6. If we try and connect with a higher being through meditation, we're opening up to darkness.
7. God provides a simpler, clearer, pathway to knowing him, his words found in the Bible.
8. Do-it-yourself religion clouds and confuses, but Jesus came “to set the oppressed free”(Lk 4:18).

D. **Relationally:** me at the center (S5)

1. Hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, envy...
2. These words all describe elevating me and my needs above the needs of others (control).
3. Paul warns this attitude brings disaster to the church, the world, and doesn't reflect God.

E. NPR's *Wait wait... don't tell me!* Recently told the story of the world's grumpiest boss.

Mike Davis wasn't the world's most successful businessman. In fact, his oil business eventually went bankrupt. But when he died this week, we lost the man who may have been the world's grumpiest boss. His memos from his glory years have been saved and passed around for generations. For example, quote, "Do not speak to me when you see me. If I want to speak to you, I will do so. I want to save my throat. I don't want to ruin it by saying hello to all of you." And another favorite, there will be no more birthday celebrations, birthday cakes, levity or celebrations of any kind within the office, the boss wrote on February 8, 1978. This is a business office. If you have to celebrate, do it after office hours on your own time. His longtime associate Robert Fogelson once said, Tiger Mike could have been an angry TV police sergeant with a heart of gold, except there was no heart of gold.

Mr. Davis had opinions on everything. More quotes - "Handwriting takes much longer than a typewriter. You're wasting your time, but more importantly, you're wasting my time. If you don't know how to type, you'd better learn." And another quote, "Anyone who lets their hair grow below their ears to where I can't see their ears means they don't wash. If they don't wash, they stink. And if they stink, I don't want [them] around me." Some former employees were said to have gone to his funeral just to make sure he was really gone.

(If you were to die, how would your coworkers talk about your character?)

(As typical humans, we distort God's character sexually, spiritually, and relationally.)

(But part of being fruitful is being called to model God's Character, so how do we do this?)

II. (S6) We model the character God through the Spirit of God. (Gal. 5:22-23)

- A. To model God's character, we need God's help.

1. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
2. We are the Holy Spirit's garden, he's working to produce fruit in our lives and character.
3. If the Spirit, a life-giving presence, is in us, we'll begin to see life-giving attributes in us too.
4. If the Holy Spirit dwells in you, you'll begin to see signs of life and fruit all around you.

(The *NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible* explains the fruit of the Spirit to us.)

(Don't view this list as a checklist, but as a production schedule, what God plans for you.)

B. Love: sacrificial, unmerited deeds to help a needy person **(S7)**

1. This list of fruit begins with love because it's the peak and summary of the rest.
2. 1 Cor 13:2b says, "If I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing."
3. By expressing love to others, we express the character of our God, "God is love" (1 Jn 4:8).
4. **Application:** This week, ask the Spirit to give you greater love for the people of your frontline.

C. Joy: an inner happiness not dependent on outward circumstances **(S8)**

1. For some of you, this is hard, because you don't enjoy your job or boss.
2. **Application:** Ask the Spirit to help you appreciate your tasks, supervisor, and customers.

D. Peace: harmony in all relationships **(S9)**

1. The OT word for peace is *shalom*—"prosperity, well-being, health, completeness, safety."
2. **Application:** If your frontline is in conflict, ask the Spirit to help you bring back peace.

E. Forbearance: putting up with others, even when severely tried **(S10)**

1. The word *patience* doesn't describe *long-suffering* or *enduring hardship* like *forbearance* does.
2. **Application:** Sometimes Jesus calls us to stick with those who are unkind to us, this is a fruit too.

F. Kindness: doing thoughtful deeds for others **(S11)**

G. Goodness: showing generosity to others **(S12)**

H. Faithfulness: trustworthiness and reliability **(S13)**

1. At Cornerstone, we share faith stories, which are *stories of God's faithfulness*.
2. **Application:** We model God's faithfulness when we are reliable and trustworthy.

I. Gentleness: meekness and humility **(S14)**

1. **Application:** We speak truth in love, not truth in victory or as the winner.

J. Self-control: victory over sinful desires **(S15)**

1. When the Spirit wrangles our flesh, we have the opportunity to grow fruit.
2. **Application:** If you're experiencing defeat, ask a friend to hold you accountable, gift of Spirit.

(Can we actually defeat sinful desires just by self-control? No, we need more.)

(How does the Holy Spirit grow this fruit in us? He reminds us of Jesus. Big idea...)

III. (S16) We model the character God through the Spirit of God in view of the Son of God. (Gal. 5:24-26)

- A. The Holy Spirit’s job is to shine on Christ, pointing us to him. (v. 25)
1. v. 25 says, “Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”
 2. In other words, align your conduct, your way of being, with the way of the Spirit.
 3. What is the way of the Spirit? It is bringing people to Jesus; he is what v. 24 is all about.
 4. As I look at the *acts of the flesh* and *the fruit of the Spirit*, I realize I’m more flesh than fruit.
 5. This is why v. 24 is such good news! **The Spirit takes my flesh and crucifies it to death!**
 6. Our acts of the flesh all died on the cross, so all we have left is Jesus and fruit!
- B. In Jesus, I receive **love**. (S17)
1. John 15:13 Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. (NIV®)
- C. In Jesus, I am **joy**.
1. Hebrews 12:2 says, “For the joy set before him he endured the cross...”—We are his joy!
- D. In Jesus, I experience **peace**.
1. I know what it means to be at peace with God and can work to share that peace with others.
- E. In Jesus, I show **forbearance**.
1. Jesus showed patient long-suffering as he went to the cross without complaint.
- F. In Jesus, I’m **kind** and **good** and **faithful** and **gentle** and have **self-control**.
1. Jesus was all those things, and the Spirit is making me into those things too, day by day.
 2. Maybe today you don’t feel like any of those things as a believer.
 3. This is a picture of the Dow Jones Industrial Average over the last 100 years. (S18)
 4. Over the course of your life, trust the Holy Spirit will bear fruit in you.
 5. He does so by directing you to Jesus Christ.

(S19) Big Idea: We model the character of God through the Spirit of God in view of the Son of God.

*We're going to close by watching a video; [Yes, I'm the Mechanic](#).

Preview: Come back next week for *M2: Making Good Work*.

Romans 15:13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (NIV®)