

FLESH v. FRUIT

Monday, January 5

Reading: Galatians 5:13-26

Galatians 5:16 *So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.*

Did you make any New Year's Resolutions? Most people make these resolutions about things they want to do in the new year, but they are usually forgotten or broken before the end of January. However, I found this list of resolutions online that I think we will all be able to keep.

1. I will stop licking frozen flag poles
2. I will only eat white snow
3. I will drive BY the gym at least once a week
4. I will stop buttering my doughnuts
5. I will remember to brush my teeth with the bristly end of the toothbrush

On a serious note: What would you like to happen in this new year? What changes would you like to make in your life? Perhaps a more important question is: What would God like to happen for your life this year?

As we think about this question, Galatians 5:22-23 comes to mind. We often call these "the fruit of the Spirit." The Apostle Paul lists 9 things that God wants to see grow in our lives this year (and for the rest of our life).

The fruit of the Spirit are first contrasted with "the acts of the flesh" (5:19-21). These describe the things that grow in people who live for themselves. Paul has already described how there is constant battle in the believers' heart (5:17). The old sin nature fights with the Spirit who now lives within us for control. There is an old story about a man watching a dogfight. When he asked which dog would win, the response was "The dog that is fed the most!" This is true in our lives as well. If we feed our sinful nature by focusing on the things of the world and living to please ourselves, sin will win the battle. Paul tells us to instead "walk by the Spirit" (5:16), be "led by the Spirit" (5:18), and "keep in step with the Spirit" (5:25). Paul said this in this letter to the Romans:

Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace (Romans 8:5-6).

All this reminds us that living for God is not a natural, human response. It takes effort! It takes discipline! It means listening to the Holy Spirit and giving Him control of your life. Too often, like a New Year's Resolution, we don't want to work at living for the Lord. We would prefer to take the 'easy way' – the 'more comfortable way.' Paul reminds us that "if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live" (Romans 8:13).

This week we will take a deep dive into the fruit of the Spirit. Make a resolution to take the time and discipline to let the Spirit grow these fruit in your life this year.