

**Intro:**

I gave this message on April 9, 2000. I have altered it somewhat for our current series.

Last time we talked about the deceitfulness of the flesh. The flesh is so deceitful that those who operate in its realm think they are doing good, even though they are doing deeds of darkness and living in the path of death.

I tried to show you that even ‘little sins’, little flirtations with the works of the flesh *in their less extreme forms* are indeed deceptions meant to trap you in a web of defeat and destruction.

Let’s read our passage and look at

*How Crucifying the Flesh produces the Fruit of the Spirit*

Read Gal 5.19-23

**Proposition:** The fruit of the Spirit is created by the faith decision to crucify the flesh.

**I. The desirable goal (22-23)**

A. The perfect portrait of godliness (the fruit of the Spirit)

1. Winsome: charming, attractive, pleasing
2. Attractive: winning attention and liking, pleasing
3. Pleasant company

Who wouldn’t like someone who consistently exhibited these qualities?

Who wouldn’t like to be someone like that?

Why aren’t you someone like that?

B. The difficulty of attaining godliness

1. Attempts at discipline to react according to this list:
  - a. Love others
  - b. Joy in sorrow
  - c. Peace in trouble
  - d. Longsuffering when wronged
  - e. Gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance
2. Record marred by outbreaks of failure — lapse into reactions of the flesh

The goal of godliness, while desirable, seems ever more difficult to attain, even by someone who has been a Christian for a long time.

## II. The desperate problem (19-21)

### A. The quagmire of trouble

#### 1. The surface levels of pleasure

- a. Each work of the flesh has an enticing appeal
- b. The further one goes in each area, the more unclean and unsatisfying it becomes.
- c. Appetites intensified by feeding the flesh
  - 1) Perhaps furtively, occasionally
  - 2) Often willfully – in denial of the fleshliness of the source

This is that ‘playing at the fringes’ I was talking about last time.

I have an assignment sheet for counseling that I use to help evaluate the ‘flesh’ content of one’s spiritual diet. Covers three areas:

- Is your entertainment flesh free?
- Is your pursuit of possessions flesh free?
- Are your friendships flesh free?

If you feed the flesh, what will your garden grow?

#### 2. The apparent desirability is the trap

- a. Like quicksand, once in, hard to get out
- b. Self deception: “I’ll only go in this far” (even if we know in our head it is wrong)

#### 3. When self-discipline is tested, it sometimes fails in one of these ways.

- a. Sometimes? Often!
- b. Instead of love, there is lust
- c. Instead of joy, there is wrath

- d. Instead of peace, there is strife
- e. Instead of longsuffering, there is impatience
- f. Instead of gentleness, there is harshness
- g. Instead of self-control, there is self-indulgence

This is the condition that the world finds itself in. There is no fruit of the spirit for the lost person, only the works of the flesh.

For the believer, there is a struggle for mastery. The old nature too much asserts itself.

The believer does not understand how to turn to victory, often he is trapped in one or another of these particular lusts of the flesh.

#### B. It's not fair — the point of despair

1. The point of giving up and losing the battle against sin is the point of bitterness. (Heb 12.15)
2. Bitterness starts when you say, "It's not fair"
3. You react wrong to life situations, you indulge in the works of the flesh, when you say, "It's not fair"
  - a. You despair of ever getting "fairness"
  - b. You decide you will get back at the unfair
  - c. You just don't care anymore.

In despair, you think that the goal of godliness is just an elusive and delusive dream.

It is nice for somebody else (Miss Goodie Two-shoes!) because it is easy for them, but it wasn't ever meant for you!

The fact is that the goal of godliness was not meant for any sinner. It is totally incompatible with human nature as it now exists.

However, godliness is attainable by men and women in this life. But how?

### III. The desperado's remedy (Luke 15.11-24)

#### A. Observations from the parable

##### 1. The prodigal's condition

- a. The prodigal lived for the flesh — he didn't just dabble in it, he dove in head first.
- b. Ultimately, the flesh could not satisfy.
- c. The prodigal sank into despair
  - 1) He began to be in want (14)
  - 2) He hired on as unskilled labor (15)
  - 3) He was so hungry he desired the pig's slop (16)

The prodigal is down and out. He has no hope. He has come to the end of his resources.

This is the place that sin leads.

##### 2. The turning point (17)

- a. He came to himself (he woke up)
- b. He acknowledged his desperation (agreeing with God; confession)
- c. He blamed no one but himself
- d. He was willing to become his father's hired hand, no more a son.

##### 3. The father's response (20ff)

- a. Compassion; "fell on his neck, and kissed him" (20)
- b. Called for clothing and a ring (22)
- c. Called for a feast and a celebration (23)
- d. "And they began to be merry" (24)

This is *grace*

This came about as a result of confession, repentance, and return

The heart of the boy was turned from despair and sorrow to joy and delight by the *grace* of his father.

The act of the father produced the joy of the son.

Your part in obtaining the desirable goal is not self-discipline in the fruit of the spirit; it is confession in the pigpen.

## B. Application

1. What will it take for you to wake up in the pigpen?
2. Point of despair vs. the point of desperation
  - a. Despair leads to more bitterness, more flesh, more defeat.
  - b. Desperation makes you willing to yield your stubborn pride, confess your sin, and return to the Father.
3. Grace comes when you are willing to accept wrath – that's crucifying the flesh (Gal 5.24)

Have you ever come to yourself in your sin and suddenly realized what you were doing and how you were far away from God?

Have you ever returned to God after this kind of self-realization?

Have you understood what it means to be forgiven and cleansed and washed by your loving heavenly Father?

What did you feel when that happened? Was there not joy?

You see, you cannot work up the fruit of the Spirit. It is given to you when you are repentant and forgiven.

## Conclusion:

You can have love, joy, peace and all the fruit of the Spirit in your life.

You start by stopping short in your sin and realize that you cannot do it by yourself.

You must forsake the bitterness that leads you away from God and God's people.

You must come to God and yield yourself to Him — be ready to take the consequences — and He will give you grace.