

The Spirit's Fruit

In many of my sermons and **NEWSLETTER** articles over the past three years, there has been one consistent theme. When one determines to give his or her life to Christ, there **MUST** be a change that takes place. This is counter to many in the world today (as there were many in the First Century) who believe that what one does in the body has no impact on the spirit. God is understanding and will not let our sinful lives affect His desire to save all.

Obviously, this is not true. There are entirely too many passages of Scripture telling us of the need to destroy our sinful nature so that our new creature can be born. There is no better example than in Paul's letter to the people of Galatia. In **Galatians 5**, Paul commands all of us to "live by the Spirit." He says in **verses 16-18** that there are two competing natures within us, each one striving to gain control of our spirit. One says "**gratify the desires of the sinful nature,**" while the other says we must be "**led by the Spirit.**"

The sinful nature, Paul continues to say, causes one to have certain characteristics that are a sure sign that no change has taken place in the heart of the so-called Galatian Christian. These are what they continued to do, alienating themselves from God. **Galatians 5:19-21**:

The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like.

In the strongest terms, Paul makes it obvious that those who "live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God."

So how should we act? What should our lives look like to the world? In "living by the Spirit" we should bear spiritual "fruit." **Galatians 5:22-26**:

"...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control..."

When we possess these qualities, it means we have "**crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.**" We are now living "**in the Spirit**" and keeping "**in step with the Spirit.**" We have made the changes God expects His children to make.

Over the next several weeks in the **NEWSLETTER**, we'll be looking more closely at these virtues that Paul tells us we must have in order to be pleasing to God. It is a necessary study, especially given the world in which we live, engaging in all of the "acts of the sinful nature." Stay tuned. --- Johnny Stephens