

LSB Galatians 5:16 - 26 pt 3

16 But I say, walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. 17 For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you do not do the things that you want. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. 19 Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, 21 envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law. 24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk in step with the Spirit. 26 Let us not become those with vain glory, challenging one another, envying one another.

Sometimes Pam asks me when will we get to the happy texts? It's a light hearted tease from the person who knows me best I suppose. A little jab. She's not here to defend herself this morning, the grandbaby's called her north, but she wouldn't need to defend herself anyways.

I'm all about being positive when we get to the texts that are positive. You say, well, you're not postive very often up there. Perhaps that may be true.

If someone took the time to quantify by percentages the sober warnings of impending judgements as opposed to the so called "happy texts" I wonder what the number might be. We as christians have much to rejoice about. Incredible wealth awaits us in the next world. And we are solidly blessed in this one! How wonderful to be in this family that God has chosen out of the promised coming destruction and judgement.

We have reason to sing! The problem is; look around you. About half of one percent of the population of Tonopah is in this room this morning rejoicing.

Perhaps the ratio of "happy texts" as opposed to warnings of imminent destruction is sort of the same percentage as people in this room as opposed to total population of our little region.

Actually it's much higher. There is definitely more than half of one percent in the book that's positive. I think.

Pam's little jab is rooted in Eleanor Porter's story of a little orphan girl named Pollyanna Whittier, who according to the Disney version of the story is so positive that it rubs off on an entire town.

And the preacher in that town, and of course in 1906 or so which is the movie's time frame, everybody had to stop on Sunday and go to church, period. The preacher is a shouter who batters everyone into compliance every Sunday with stern warnings about eternal hell, trying to get them to behave for another week until he batters them again.

And, from memory, Pollyanna finds him in a field, under a huge oak tree, practicing the coming Sunday's latest verbal beating. Now she's a missionary kid whose parents have perished, she's an orphan, but she tells the preacher how her father discovered the "glad texts". The positive texts in the mean old book.

And her father was so overwhelmed by positive that he read the entire book in a night and counted them up. 800 glad texts. You know, the rejoicing texts. And the preacher asks Pollyanna if this discovery helped her father to feel better about things; Quoting from the book . . .

'Oh, yes,' nodded Pollyanna emphatically. 'He said he felt better right away, that first day he thought to count 'em. He said if God took the trouble to tell us eight hundred times to be glad and rejoice, He must want us to do it -

some. Eleanor Porter A little popular theology according to Eleanor Porter.

So, last week, I beat you up for 40 minutes studying the deeds of the flesh, but this week, we get to rejoice over the fruit of the Spirit. And fwiw, I teased Pam about bad timing. We finally get to a 'glad text' and she missed it. Because this is one of the high points of the entire Bible. That's why we haven't hurried in this portion. This is now Part 3 in dealing with the overall text from vs. 16 to vs. 26.

And Paul clearly took the time to create two diametrically opposed and contrasting pictures for us of what you look like when you're bereft of God, at war with God, and what you receive when God, the Holy Spirit comes to dwell inside your heart. Dual contrasting portraits of mankind. In rebellion against God, and at peace and fellowship with his Creator.

Life without God, apart from God, removed away from God, results in the deeds of the flesh. Destructive in this life, and then utter destruction away from God in black darkness forever. That's the first picture. The deeds of the flesh.

The second picture is life WITH God. Life from God, poured into you, by His grace.

And so that's the jumping off place for vss 22 - 26. The beautiful positivity of all of these blessings is contingent on a single pre-requisite. You must be born again. The lovely picture painted in these verses is the sole territory for those who have been quickened from the dead . . . spiritually.

These graces are poured into the hearts of those who have been regenerated, reborn, quickened from spiritual death to spiritual life because they have believed in the finished work of Jesus, in their place, on the cross.

These are not virtues generated by fallen flesh. These are graces poured into us from a source outside of us. God's Holy Spirit living inside the

hearts of regenerated, quickened from death to life believers is the source of the beautiful new you. *Christ . . . IN YOU . . . the hope of glory.* Col. 1:27

Last week I cherry picked a smattering of the deeds of the flesh. We didn't break down every word in detail. But I think we do want to dwell on every single descriptive word in this list a little bit. So, let's begin.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, agape.

In 2023 more than ever before we have to stop and define love. The simple word, even *with* context, can mean different things to different people.

The Boy Scouts of America just had their big jamboree. One of the pavillions was all rainbows and affirming of LGBTQ+++ transgender no more he she, now we're they, singular, giving away rainbow trinkets and just gushing out love and acceptance for everyone. Almost everyone.

But if I walked in that tent with a T-shirt on with some crystal clear verses from God's book that try to warn people away from the wide road of destruction, I am a _____ . . . what? I'm a hater.

I'm trying to warn you not to drive 60 mph into that tunnel with a locomotive coming at you at 80 mph that you can't see. But the world says, that's hate. Yet this book says, that's clearly the most loving thing I can do.

18 When I say to the wicked, 'You will surely die,' and you do not warn him or speak out to warn the wicked from his wicked way that he may live, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. 19 Yet if you have warned the wicked and he does not turn from his wickedness or from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered yourself. Ezekiel 3:18,19

Those are two of the scariest verses in the entire Bible. Because what God orders me to do as love, the world responds to as hate. Diametric opposites. Those two poles could not get any farther apart. What God

refers to as love, the world is in agreement, to them God's love is hate speech.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, agape.

what an interesting word to study for a few moments. Agape. When you dig in a little bit you discover this is a new word coined by the christians in the first century.

The greeks used a couple of other words to describe very well this world's love. Phileo is the greek word for simple affectionate love. Brotherly love. Familial love. And eros, of course was the word to describe erotic love.

But the Holy Spirit brought a new kind of love that christians exhibit towards one another which is kindred to the love that God exhibits towards objects that are totally unloveable for lack of a better word.

In our fallen state, we are vile to God. We are the equivalent of something that spilled out of a broken sewer pipe. Vile, wretched, soiled filth. And yet God loved us.

So much so, that He gave up His only Son to die in our place in order that by putting our deserved punishment on His Son, sin could be forgiven, paid for, and we then could be washed and made clean and adopted by God as sons.

This new love that the world doesn't have or experience is a love that prefers others over ourselves. Preferential love. You first, me second. Just like God preferred us at the cost of death to His own son. Christian love says all of you are more important, more to be preferred than myself.

In ancient literature, this word, agape, doesn't occur until the new testament is being written. It's a new word to describe a new kind of love. God's love, poured out in our hearts, by His Spirit, that puts everyone else, lovely and unlovely, before myself.

Jesus coined the word and the idea behind it when He said this to the disciples on the eve of His death; *By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*” Jn. 13:35 “*There is no greater love than this: that a person would lay down his life for the sake of his friends.*” Jn. 15:13

The Holy Spirit pours out a love for one another that is unique to Christians only. So much so that this is the signature that draws the world to us and to Christ. We used to sing a sort of kum ba yah camp song. *They will know we are Christians by our love.* By our love.

We have a unique love, a preference of others over ourselves, that is designed to draw the world to Christ. But that's also ground zero for Satan in his war against God and God's elect. That's where Satan goes first. Eliminate selfless preferential love in the church and the siren song of Christ to the world through the church is nullified.

Easy peasy. Get the Christians to fight with each other. Mission accomplished. Once this unique Godly love is extinguished, we've got nothing to offer that the world doesn't have.

Look at vs. 26 *Let us not become those with vain glory, challenging one another, envying one another.* How fragile this love is that Satan targets in order to equalize the church with the world. We carry God's love around in human clay pots. We still possess that flesh that defaults to me, mine, pride, and the dainty flower of agape love is crushed.

Oh! But what a powerful draw it is when that love is present in the body of Christ.

I'm standing before you this morning because as a high school graduate I found myself at a Christian camp conference at Westmont College and all I could think was, whatever these kids have . . . I want it. I received Christ that weekend. August 26th 1970.

Agape love mesmerized me. The world had no equivalent. I wanted what I had discovered and the Lord received me with open arms.

Pam teases me about being negative as I work verse by verse through the books of the Bible with you. Verse by verse exposition. We don't choose the positive or the negative, we just teach what's there. And you've heard me quote John MacArthur's old axiom. *Hard preaching makes soft people. And soft preaching makes hard people.*

We experience that truth in this body. We teach the word of God, both negative and positive, and the result is a tangible agape love in this body of believers. We do enjoy a sweet fellowship with each other here. The fragile flower thrives where the word of God is taught and obeyed.

There's a direct connection between the elusive agape love and the book we cherish. There must be. All we need do is evaluate Satan's strategy against the church. Eliminate the book. Devalue the book. And the love disappears along with the book. Win win, if you're Satan. Get rid of the book and the unique love provided by God through His Spirit also vanishes

Look around you in the last 10 or 15 years as the mega church became the woke church. Something happened. All of the power seeped out as the Word was apologized for and put away. The church became the world. But the world is unimpressed.

Agape love is what impresses the world. A love that when they see it, they'll give up anything, even their sin, in order to enjoy the not from this world love. Agape love is what makes the real church a siren that calls sinners to Christ.

Next word. Joy. JOY! This is not happiness. This joy is a deep seated wellness. Something bigger than me is in control. Someone bigger than me has my back.

Joy is a deep seated wellness that transcends the circumstances of the moment.

Yesterday I watched a you tube interview of the writer producer of the new Essential Church movie speaking with James Coates, the Canadian pastor that went to prison because he refused to obey the Canadian health magistrates that ordered his church to cease and desist until *they* decided it was "safe" for them to meet again.

He's a young man with small children at home, and they took him in shackles to a maximum security prison for an undisclosed amount of time. It turned out to be 35 days but they didn't know that when the shackles were put on him and he was taken away.

What could be worse than watching your wife and babies disappear as you're taken to jail for being a faithful pastor? Yet he speaks of the joy of ministering to the other inmates while God was writing his future.

Like the agape love, this joy is something the world neither knows or understands. An inner joy that transcends situational happiness or sorrow. The joy that understands, this life is 5 minutes long. We're eternal citizens of the kingdom of God. We are owned and under the careful watchful care of the One who spoke this world into existence from nothing.

This life ebbs and flows. We have the joy of eternal wellness with our All Powerful Creator God who loved us so much that He died, in our place, in order to purchase us out of this world.

Our joy is an out of this world joy that comes from the fellowship of our God who loves us. We look on at the current status of the cattle being herded to the killing floor, the people of this world, and we cannot imagine not having a transcendent joy that knows our God has purchased us and saved us from destruction.

It's the joy that Shadrach, Meshach and Abadnego had when they told the

King; Daniel 3

16b “O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to respond to you with an answer concerning this matter. 17 If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to save us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will save us out of your hand, O king. 18 But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods, and we will not worship the golden image that you have set up.”

The joy of knowing Whom you belong to is the joy that summons the courage in the fearful day. Joy is the knowledge that we are bigger than ourselves. We possess God. And God possesses us. He purchased us at infinite cost.

If you never memorize anything else, do yourself a favor and lock in this joy by memorizing Romans 8:31 - 35 Having these words ready when the day of gloom overwhelms you will stabilize you in joy inexpressible and full of glory;

31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? 32 He who indeed did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things? 33 Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies; 34 who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. 35 Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will affliction, or turmoil, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

Joy is never mentioned once in that passage. But it explains the reason for a joy that is inextinguishable by any circumstance this world can throw at us. Any fight this world has got, has already been won. The history of our victory is pre-written. We win. That's the source of our other-worldly joy.

Paul continues in Romans 8.

vss 36 *Just as it is written,*

*“For Your sake we are being put to death all day long;
We were counted as sheep for the slaughter.”*

37 But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We are more than conquerors. Why wouldn't I have a deep seated joy in the knowledge that every battle this world can heave at me, I win. In Christ, I win. He's already written it down. It's done. That confidence is our joy.

In the old testament book of Nehemiah, when Israel had returned from the Babylonian captivity and they had busied themselves rebuilding the wall, restoring the security of their destroyed homeland city, when the gates were hung and there was a time to reflect and celebrate their security and progress, something wonderful happened. God brought a spiritual revival.

I'm going to take the time to read the entire account of that revival because it re-affirms my belief that joy and revival are inextricably connected to what we are doing this morning, expositing God's book. Nehemiah ch. 8

1 And all the people gathered as one man at the square which was in front of the Water Gate, and they said to Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses which Yahweh had commanded to Israel. 2 Then Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly of men, women, and all who could understand when listening, on the first day of the seventh month. 3 And he read from it before the square which was in front of the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of men and women, those who could understand; and all the ears of the people were attentive to the book of the law. 4 Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden podium which they had made for the purpose. And beside him stood Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Uriah, Hilkiyah, and Maaseiah on his right hand; and Pedaiah, Mishaël, Malchijah, Hashum, Hashbaddanah, Zechariah, and Meshullam

on his left hand. 5 And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people for he was above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. 6 Then Ezra blessed Yahweh the great God. And all the people answered, "Amen, Amen!" while lifting up their hands; then they bowed low and worshiped Yahweh with their faces to the ground. 7 Also Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodiah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, the Levites, were providing understanding of the law to the people while the people stood in their place. 8 They read from the book, from the law of God, explaining and giving insight, and they provided understanding of the reading.

9 Then Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites, who provided the people with understanding, said to all the people, "This day is holy to Yahweh your God; do not mourn or weep." For all the people were weeping when they heard the words of the law. 10 Then he said to them, "Go, eat of the fat, drink of the sweet, and send portions to him who has nothing prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not be grieved, for the joy of Yahweh is your strength."

The joy of the Lord is our strength. It doesn't come from us. He pours it into us. He is the source of wellness. Indefatigable joy, not my own. Immovable joy, because neither me nor anything else in this world is it's source.

The third word for us this morning is logical if the first two are real. Peace.

Peace. The world wants to talk non-stop about peace, as if they could do anything to cause it. What did Jesus say. In the world you have . . . _____ what? Tribulation.

19 We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. 1 Jn 5:19

It's the same two pictures Paul just painted for us. The world has no source. There IS no source for peace in this world. All the world has is trouble,

because all the world can produce is the deeds of the flesh. Period. Any talk of peace, however lofty, is arrogance.

The soul source of peace is right here. Period. This is it.

We all laugh at the blond beauty queen who tells us her goal is world peace. After she wins she's going to take all that money and join the peace corps. She's fooling herself and hopefully the judges.

All that mankind without Christ can produce is listed in the deeds of the flesh. That's their only source. Listen, I'm so smart I can tell you conclusively how many years in the 6000 since the fall in the garden that there hasn't been a war. I've got the number. Zero.

Fallen people are hopeless. We have no source for peace. We're hopelessly broken. No peace inside our selves, and no peace with each other. No source for peace. Meanness is what we've got inside. Have you driven down Hwy 95 lately?

In my lifetime 3 billion fallen souls with a significant influence of the salt of Christ has become 7 billion while at the same span, the salt has become tasteless. We can see the difference with our eyes and ears. Daily. Spooky.

Here's the reality. 1 Thess. 5:3

While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman who is pregnant, and they will never escape.

That's an end time prophecy that is yet to be fulfilled, although it has happened every single time there was some sort of negotiated peace in history. The final "peace" and that's in scare quotes, is negotiated with the anti-christ immediately prior to the final holocaust. So much for man's arrogance and the peace they talk about all day long.

The single source of peace, is Jesus, the Messiah, who offers peace, not to this lost world in our time, He offers peace, one heart at a time.

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, Ro 5:1

The whole world is at war with the Creator who owns it but peace has been purchased for anyone who will repent of the rebellion and receive the Lord Jesus into their heart.

When that war is ended, one christian at a time, peace floods the hearts of those who literally walk away from this worlds rebellion and into the arms of a loving God.

Listen to Jesus during the upper room discourse. Judas has left them to go get his 30 pieces of silver and show the soldiers where to find Jesus. Darkness is closing in. Trouble is crouching at the very door, and Jesus two times speaks of an island of peace within a sea of trouble.

Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful. Jn. 14:27

And finally in His last words to them before departing the safety of the upper room and going into the garden where the soldiers will find Him and take Him away, He says: 33 *These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.*” Jn. 16:33

There is more to say about the unique inner peace that christians alone enjoy and we're out of time this morning so with the Lord's blessing we'll pick up this discussion of the fruits of the Holy Spirit poured out in our hearts next time we meet. Inner peace will be our tie together.