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Grow a

THE STRONGEST FRUIT
BENDS THE LOWEST

WEEK 4



The Strongest Fruit Bends the Lowest

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Big Idea: The strongest Christians don't have something to prove—they have fruit to produce, and the more the Spirit grows in us, the more humbly we live, serve, and love.

Main Scriptures:

- Matthew 25:21
- Proverbs 16:32
- Galatians 5

Main Point: Real spiritual strength isn't found in getting our way or proving our power, but in choosing faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control because we are becoming more like Jesus.

Context:

The strongest Christians do not have something to prove; they have fruit to produce.

We tend to think strength means winning the argument, having the last word, or making people feel our power. But what if real strength is demonstrated not by everything you are capable of doing, but by what you are capable of doing and choose not to do?

That question frames Paul's closing fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5 and reframes what spiritual maturity actually looks like.

1. The Fruit List Is Not a **Checklist**

Paul wrote Galatians to churches fighting over the gospel itself, not to hand Christians nine personality goals to try harder at. He uses the word "fruit" (singular), because one Spirit forms one kind of life in a person surrendered to Him.

The contrast between “works of the flesh” and “fruit of the Spirit” is crucial: works show what our sinful nature produces when it is running things; fruit shows what the Holy Spirit grows in a life that has yielded to Him.

The real question underneath Galatians 5 is: Who is **leading**?

2. Faithfulness – I Do Not Have to **Run**

Faithfulness is not flashy; it is showing up Tuesday after Tuesday, keeping your word after the excitement fades, and staying trustworthy even when obedience produces no immediate reward.

Paul writes to churches torn by quarreling, jealousy, and division, and into that mess the Spirit produces people others can depend on.

Jesus celebrates this quality in Matthew 25:21 – not fame, not impressiveness, just the **faithfulness** of carrying what was entrusted and not walking away.

Faithfulness is not staying in danger; it is staying when you are merely uncomfortable, and asking the Spirit whether you are being released or just tired.

3. Gentleness – I Do Not Have to **Retaliate**

Gentleness is not weakness or passivity; it is strength that refuses to become destructive.

The word Paul uses carries the idea of meekness – power submitted to love.

Jesus calmed storms and commanded demons, and those same hands knelt to wash feet.

Gentleness does not mean avoiding confrontation or ignoring sin; it means refusing to use strength simply to make someone feel your strength.

Proverbs 16:32 teaches that ruling your own spirit is greater than conquering a city, because you can win every argument and lose everyone you love.

4. Self-Control – I Do Not Have to **Give** In

One of the great paradoxes of Christianity is that people most under the Spirit's control become increasingly able to control themselves.

Paul opens Galatians 5 with freedom and closes his list with self-control, because true freedom is not “I can do whatever I want” but “I do not have to do everything I want.”

If you cannot tell a desire no, something is controlling you.

The freest word a believer can say is sometimes simply: **no**.

5. These Fruits Flow from the **Cross**, Not from Effort.

The sermon could be heard as behavior modification, but Paul in Galatians 5:24 takes us straight to the cross: those who belong to Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Jesus perfectly embodied faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, then bore our failure to the cross and rose from the grave.

He does not forgive us and wish us luck; He gives us His Spirit. Galatians 5:25 shows the order clearly: Jesus saves, the Spirit enters, fruit grows.

Grace does not eliminate obedience – grace makes obedience **possible**.

Conclusion

The mature branch bends not because it is weak but because it is carrying something heavy.

Jesus, who had nothing to prove, was willing to bow low, and that is the model for every Christian.

The invitation is not to clean yourself up and then come to God, but to come empty-handed to Jesus, trust what He accomplished through His death and resurrection, and let His Spirit begin making you new.

Next Steps

Apply the message:

Identify one area where you are tempted to run, not because something is dangerous but because it has become hard, and ask the Holy Spirit honestly: “Am I being released, or am I just uncomfortable?”

If you have been retaliating – through a drafted message, a cutting remark, or a refusal to apologize – choose gentleness: delete the message, lower your voice, or say sincerely, “I was wrong. Will you forgive me?”

Name one thing you say you control but your inability to say no suggests controls you, and bring it into the light by telling a trusted person and asking for help.

Next week a guest from Lafayette Urban Ministry will join to close out the series with a final word about where this fruit is ultimately meant to go.
