

INTRO - I was chaplain again at the hospital this week again. I saw aids using an instrument that is old, but still useful. The aids and nurses took vital signs including blood pressure and temperature. A temperature reading is still a useful tool. If a temperature is elevated, you know and I know that there is an infection or illness is present. If there is no elevation in temperature, well, at least that is a good sign.

I. In today's lesson God gives us a thermometer, a measure of sorts for our Christian faith and life, as he tells us about the fruits of the flesh, and the fruits of the spirit.

A. Look at the Epistle lesson from Galatians 5.

1. According to verses 19-21, **The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like.**

A. God is telling us that these are acts of sin and sin, and acts of living in this world.

B. If your life is full of hatred, sexual immorality, rage, discord, drunkenness, then your faith is not healthy.

2. On the other hand, according to verses 22-24, **the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.**

A. God is telling us that these are acts that show a lively faith.

B. If your life is full of love, and joy and peace then your faith is healthy.

B. The doctor, the nurse, the aid uses the thermometer to see if a person is healthy. God wants you to look at your life and ask yourself, is my faith healthy.

1. Does my faith show that it is alive because my life is full of actions that show that God is alive in me?

2. Or, does my life show that my faith is weak, and I am running from God's presence in my life?

II. Back to the thermometer again. Can you think of anyone who has never had a fever? All my family and friends have had a cold, the flu, and infection of some kind during their lives. Do you think there is anyone who can only find fruits of the Spirit, and no fruits of the flesh in their lives?

A. While you may hope that primarily your life is full of the fruits of the Spirit, perhaps a Bible verse can illuminate our situation.

1. Verse 17 says, **¹⁷For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. THEY ARE IN CONFLICT WITH EACH OTHER, SO THAT YOU DO NOT DO WHAT YOU WANT.**

2. There is no one who hasn't experienced some hatred, some envy, some discord.

3. As sinful people in a sinful world, we are always going to struggle with sin, and we'll always have sinful portions of our life.

B. On the one hand it is good that this verse points out our shortcomings, but on the other hand, please know the danger involved.

1. Paul says in verse 21, **I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.**

2. Yes, we all struggle, because our Spirit and flesh are at war.

3. But we had better know the dangers of these behaviors and fruits of the flesh in our lives; they are deadly.

III. So, back to the thermometer one last time. If you have a fever the nurse can't say, 'think real hard now and you just make that temperature go away.' You can treat the cause of the fever, whether it is an infection, or an illness. But wishing and hoping and trying to feel cool instead of hot doesn't make the temperature go away.

A. But God is not calling us to treat the symptoms and ignore the cause of sin.

1. God wants us to look at our lives to judge our relationship with Him.
2. God wants us to focus on the root cause of our behaviors, and he calls us to let him live in our lives and change us.
3. That's what the final verse of this lesson says, ²⁵**Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.**

B. In other words, love and joy and peace, patience and kindness and self control do not come from us.

1. It does not come from our own strength, or knowledge, or effort.
2. Fruit follows the seed.
3. The source of a life of righteousness and holiness, a life of love, joy peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self control, the source of such a life is God living in us.
4. Jesus came to a world of sin to die and to rise and to overcome the sin that plagues us.
5. When we live in Jesus, and God lives in our, our lives are changed, forever. ²⁵**Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.**

C. God is not just calling for us to change our behavior, but to seek what causes health, to seek God's presence in our lives, His Spirit.

1. God promises His Spirit in Baptism, and today we celebrate God's gift in the lives of 3 children.
2. God promises to work faith in us through His word, so worship and Bible Classes are good places to frequent, so that God will work in us and live in us.
3. When I fail, I trust not my better efforts next time, but God's love, and God's forgiveness. I can't trust myself, but I can trust God.
4. As God lives in me my life will change.

CONCLUSION - I've done a lot of gardening and planting lately. We planted a garden, with my daughter's help. We've planted trees. And we planted a lawn. We got our ground graded away from the house, had top soil delivered. We spread the dirt and raked it level and then spread fertilizer, raked out our foot prints. We rolled the soil and then planted seed and rolled it again. That job took the help of friends and family and took 3 12-14 hour days. I was beat.

In the middle of our lawn are lots of weeds, seed that came in the soil. Now, I can leave the grass alone, and the weeds will grow more, or I can pull some weeds, fertilize the lawn, and ultimately the lawn will be more predominant. But, I'll never get rid of all the weeds.

That's what our life is like. Is your life full of weeds, of hatred, and envy, and anger? Have you let yourself go? Or is your life full of love and joy and peace. Does patience show in

your life? Do you have self control? Feed God's presence in your life, and His life giving, life changing presence will show in the way you live.