

There is a game we played in school when the rains came down, and we couldn't go outside. Fruit Basket Turnover! Sometimes we used it for mixers at church camp or youth meetings. Put a group of kids on chairs in a circle, with one person standing in the center. Each person on a chair is given the name of a fruit, and the person in the middle calls out the name of two fruits, and the two people who have named those fruits must quickly change seats, while the person in the middle tries take one of their seats. The one left standing then calls the name of two other fruits, and tries to take one of their seats. Or, the one left standing in the middle may call "fruit basket turnover" and everyone must change seats while he or she tries to grab one of their seats.

That is what we have in the letter to the Galatians. A fruit basket turnover! Look at the text with me for a few minutes.

On his missionary journeys Paul traveled into the northern region of the modern day country of Turkey preaching the gospel, telling all the people that God loves them all, and wants to make them followers of Jesus Christ, that the love of God is not dependent upon any law, but is free for the taking. After he left Galatia sometime later word came to Paul that troubles had developed in his churches in that country in his absence.

Some of newly made Christians have gone wild with their new religious freedom, taking Paul's proclamation that they are now free from the Jewish law, and justified by God's grace, to mean that they can go out and do anything they want, that they can sin on and on, and it will be all OK.

Some of them have fallen off the moral wagon, running around late at night, carousing with the wrong crowd, stumbling around from bar to bar, jumping around from bed to bed.

And some of them have started fighting with each other in church, dividing themselves into groups, quarreling in Sunday School, arguing about the Bible, arguing about theology, arguing about worship services.

Hearing reports of the trouble, Paul sits down at his desk, picks up his pen, and writes a letter to his friends, "Fruit basket turnover!"

"It's time for you to change your ways. You have been doing some terrible things. You have been thinking and doing some bad things. I am warning you now, as I warned you before, if you keep it up you will not inherit the kingdom of God." It is time for a "Fruit basket turnover!"

There are some fruit that should be growing in the garden at your church, “. . . love, joy, peace, patient, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”

Here is the better way I want you to live!

Here is the way Christ wants you to live!

Now take a look at that list of things that Paul says the Galatians have gotten into; I'm planning to speak about fifteen minutes about each of those! Just kidding! Take a look at them for a minute,

“fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissension, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing and things like these.”

These are things which Paul says are “works of the flesh.” These are the desires of this life which are primarily concerned for their own satisfaction, which take little thought for others, which are opposed to the working of the Spirit. “I am warning you,” Paul says, “as I warned you before; those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

Now, don't misunderstand what Paul is saying. In mentioning “the desires of the flesh,” Paul is not saying that human nature, human feelings, or physical desires, or sensual pleasures are inherently evil, or things to be avoided or suppressed. What is to be avoided is the tendency to make these things the end of life, the goal of living, to make them highest concern of life, until they blind our eyes, until we lose sight of other things, so that we lose taste for the higher things of life.

If we become obsessed with the “desires of the flesh,” we need someone like Paul to come along and name the problem, so we can begin to overcome it.

In “Harry Potter and the Socerer's Stone” by J.K. Rowling, there is an evil power which has murdered Harry Potter's parents and tried in vain to murder him. Through the story there is a great fear of this evil one, whom everyone knows but is afraid to call by name.

Everyone refers to the evil one as “You-know-who.” Harry Potter is young and has not learned that he is not supposed to speak the name of the Evil One. But every time Harry uses the name, people gasp and correct him, scolding him for daring to use the name.

Finally at the end of the story, after the Evil One has been overcome, Harry is talking with Hagrid who is filled with grief thinking about how his foolishness almost cost Harry Potter his life.

“It's – all – my – ruddy – fault!” “I told the evil git how ter get past Fluffy! I told him!” “Yeh could've died! All for a dragon's egg! I'll never drink again!”

But Harry replies, “Hagrid, he’d have found out somehow, this is Voldemort we’re talking about, he’d have found out even if you hadn’t told him.”

“Yeh could’ve died!” Hagrid sobbed. “An’ don’ say the name!”

“VOLDEMORT!” Harry bellowed. “I’ve met him and I’m calling him by his name.

Harry is not afraid to speak his name, Voldemort! Harry is not afraid to name the evil in their midst. And how important that is! Not until we name of evil can we hope to overcome it.

When we are depressed, when we are overcome with anxiety, not until we can name the evil, and go through the process of verbalizing our fears and angers, can we begin to overcome them.

When our society is breaking apart at the seams, when our homes and our streets are filled with anger and violence, not until we begin to name the evils for what they, greed, poverty, disease, unemployment, racism, not until we can look them in the face, admit their reality and come to grips with their power, can we begin to overcome them. It is not until we can name our problems do we have the power to overcome them.

And so Paul says, “Now the works of the flesh are obvious . . . “ and he makes a list of them for the Galatians. But that not the end of the matter.

He goes on to turn the fruit basket over, and to say, here, “by contrast is the fruit of the Spirit . . . love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”

Here are things are the things of the Spirit. Here are the things we are to live by. Here is the way that we should walk. “If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.”

But notice it is no snap-of-finger, flip-of-the-light-switch thing! Paul says it means crucifying the flesh with its passions and desires, so that they are no longer the only thing in life we worry about. It is no easy thing to turn the fruit basket over and start growing new fruit.

Have you ever raised a garden? We are not farmers, we are city slickers. Born and raised in the city, we thought milk came from glass bottles left by some man on your door step at dawn. We thought vegetables came wrapped in paper in frozen containers at the A & P> We thought hamburger came from White Castle. We are city slickers.

But then one day I accepted the call of a church in a little town in a farming community, and thirty years ago in May we moved into a church parsonage on the south side of that little town, and immediately we became farmers. The minister who lived in the

house before us loved fresh strawberries and he left a big beautiful bed of luscious red berries in the back yard. And when we moved in all we had to do was walk out the back door, bend over and pick up those juicy red berries. I had strawberries on my grape nuts for breakfast; with powdered sugar for lunch, sprinkled on a bowl of chocolate ice cream for dessert after supper. "This is great!" I said. "Let's see what else we can grow." So the next year we put out some green beans and carrots and tomatoes. Sarah wanted some acorn squash, and I wasn't so sure, but before too long were down on our knees scraping the dirt into little piles and tucking those little squash seeds down into the ground. And we began to lick our chops. "Wow! We can't wait to see what happens!"

But do you know what happened? We discovered that gardening is work! It takes work to make a garden grow. The vegetables don't just pop up out of the ground, throw themselves into a can and jump onto the supper table when you are sitting on the back porch sipping lemonade. There are weeds to be pulled, and insects to be killed, manure to be hauled, hoeing and watering to be done.

That first summer a high pressure system moved in, the clouds disappeared, the ground dried up and the garden withered. We didn't have a hose long enough to reach the garden, so I went out and bought another hose, and we had to drag it out there in the morning and turn on the water, and check it again in the evening. And drag the hose out of the way to mow the yard.

It takes work to make a garden grow!

And so it is for the fruit of the Spirit. We don't just snap our fingers and say, "Now I'm going to be filled with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." You don't stick a seed in the ground one day and expect tomatoes, carrots and green beans the next. That's not the way a garden grows. It takes time, patience and hard work.

Take love for example. Paul says the fruit of the spirit is love. The New Testament word is *agape* - you have heard it before! This kind of love is not found on a Hallmark greeting card. It is not just a warm feeling that comes when someone remembers your birthday. It's not just a handshake and a hug from a friend. It's much deeper than that; it goes beyond emotion to the mind, it's an attitude, it's a decision which says, "I'm going to care about you, and treat you fairly no matter what you do to me, whether you care about what happens to me, regardless how you treat me." It is love without limits, without regard of reward or reciprocation.

Take peace for example. We talk about peace of mind, and being at peace with ourselves and one another. But in the New Testament the word peace stands for the

Hebrew word, *shalom*, which has social implications. It is not just freedom from trouble and worry, but everything that makes for wholeness and well-being, health and happiness in a community. Shalom is not something I have if my neighbors are sick; if 25% of the people in town are unemployed; if 44 million Americans are unemployed; if women are denied equal pay for equal work, and so on. Shalom won't be found until we find solutions to those problems which tear our communities apart and pit people against one another.

Take patience for example. You heard about the woman frustrated with her husband, "God, give me patience to deal with that man, and give it to right now!" We don't just snap our fingers and expect patience to pop into our hearts. Patience takes patience to grow. It means working on understanding, tolerating, forgiving, being patient. The word Paul uses in the New Testament is commonly used for the attitude of God towards humanity, towards you and me. God has endured with patience our folly and foolishness. And that is fruit which Paul says will grow in us if we plant ourselves in the soil of the Spirit, and sink our roots down deep into the heart of God.

We are not farmers! We did not a thing about gardening when we moved into that house in that little town. But we soon learned that it takes hard work and plenty of water! And you always get exactly what you plant!

Someone said, "Here, plant these, you will really like them." We thought they were pumpkin seeds, and we could taste pumpkin pie already. But when they came up they turned out to be squash. How were we supposed to know? When you plant squash, you get squash. And so it is with the fruit of the Spirit. As Paul reminded the Galatians, "God is not mocked," You cannot fool nature! "You reap what you sow!" You get what you plant!

And so it is with the fruit of the Spirit. If we plant ourselves in the soil of God, if we sink our roots down deep in the life and of Jesus Christ, we may soon begin bearing great fruit of the Spirit! God make it so!