

Amen and amen. Well, what a delight it is to be back again with you after a good summer break. I'm so thankful for Dr. Thomas. as standing in the breach for me these past few weeks and doing so well, taking you through the life of Joseph. And this afternoon, we begin a new series on the fruit of the Spirit. So if you turn in your copy of the Word of God or in your bulletin to Galatians chapter five, we'll read together a portion of God's Word. We'll be in the Fruit of the Spirit, I think, for about the next 12 weeks or so. It's always hard to predict. It's a bit like the golden calf that Aaron threw into the fire. It just came out that way, so we'll see how we do. If we make it through in 12 weeks, we'll get to the end just before Advent, and if we take a bit longer, we'll either continue through Christmas or take a break over Christmas and do a different study, and then come back and finish up in January, God willing. So we'll pick up in Galatians 5, 16, and before we do, let's pray. Our God and our Father, we thank you for your word and its power to convict us, to convert us, to change us, and also to comfort us, O God, as we strive in between these two worlds, the world of the flesh and the world of the spirit, as we seek to lay aside every weight and the sin which so easily entangles us, and to run with endurance the race that is set before us. We pray, Father, as we begin this study, that you will help us to have our spiritual heads on straight and to chart a safe course between law and gospel, that we might run in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and not stumble into a life of being under the law and the crushing burden of legalism. And we offer these prayers, O God, in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, let's read together the Word of God, Galatians 5, 16, and we'll read down to the end of the passage. This is the Word of God. Please take heed how you hear. But I say, walk by the Spirit and you'll not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the spirit, and the desires of the spirit are against the flesh. For these are opposed to each other to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident, sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these, I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law, And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. Amen. The grass withers and the flower falls off, but the Word of God endured forever. Do we come to the end of the book of Galatians and we read this list of the fruit of the Spirit, the fruit singular, not the fruits, they are a packaged deal that describe the beautiful scars that the Holy Spirit leaves in the life of a Christian. And if we just begin with this list, one of the dangers is that you will regard this as a kind of spiritual to-do list that if you believe in Jesus and do these things, then you'll have a right relationship with God. And if you begin there, you completely miss the whole point of the book of Galatians. And so this morning, as we jump into this study, I want to kind of give you an overview of the book of Galatians, and it might take two weeks, we'll see. We've got a lot of ground to cover this morning. But you remember that Paul is dealing with an error in the book of Galatians. He writes this book and he's hot. He's angry. He's angry at false teachers who've come into the church, have unsettled their faith, and have led them away from the simple, pure life of faith in Christ. that brings

all of the benefits of God in the gospel down into our soul. And the chief blessing that faith in Christ brings, of course, is the forgiveness of all of our sins and the coming of the Holy Spirit who energizes us to live the Christian life. But teachers have come in, false teachers, and they've been attacking the church in Galatia, and you'll not understand anything in Galatia if you don't understand this, right? And so, these false teachers have come in, and as is often the case, false teachers attack the church, often from within the church, and they launch a two-pronged attack against Paul. First of all, they attack the messenger, they undermine him, and then they attack and undermine the message Paul's been preaching, the gospel. They attack the messenger and they attack the message. They attack the messenger of the gospel. They had to do that, of course, because Paul was the man who founded these churches in Galatia during his first missionary journey. Satan's strategy hasn't changed. One of his best ways of attacking the message of the gospel is to undermine the messengers who bring it. And in one sense, Paul was an easy target for attack. He was not one of the 12 disciples. He had never actually personally been present during Christ's earthly ministry. And so he'd never been a disciple of Jesus in that sense. They argued he'd not been properly appointed to the gospel, that he had appointed himself as an apostle. And therefore, they kind of came alongside, and we can't really blame Paul for getting it wrong, because it's not his fault. He didn't get the gospel from the horse's mouth, as it were. And so undermining Paul, they then turned to undermine the gospel. What were they saying? They were saying in a sense that faith in Christ is very important. You've got to believe in Jesus, but faith in Jesus is not enough to bring you into a right relationship with God. You need something more, and that something more was the sign of circumcision. And their logic sounded very plausible because circumcision was one of the central signs in the Old Testament that you were a member of the covenant community. Abraham was circumcised and so was Isaac and all of the other patriarchs, of course. And the rabbis spoke of circumcision as taking on the yoke of the Torah, the law, that you were committed to be different. You were set apart from the rest of the world, you were set apart for God, and you were determined to live a life of obedience to the law. So in a sense, being circumcised, you're taking on the yoke of Torah. And didn't Jesus say, take my yoke upon you? Take my lordship upon you. And so they would bring this plausible message that you've got to be obedient. And they were very concerned that Paul's teaching of faith alone in Christ alone could lead to a lax, careless Christian life. The Roman Catholics always say the chief among the Protestant heresies is assurance of salvation. That if you're assured you're going to heaven, well just kick back on the spiritual lazy boy and stop working out your salvation with fear and trembling. What's the point in putting sin to death and striving? Just lay back and go with the flow, as it were. And so they were very concerned that Paul's teaching of grace and faith was a cheap grace. and faith in a cheap gospel. And their answer was what Christians need is more law, more Sabbath keeping, more activity. You've got to be really working and working and working. And as you do, that's how you grow in assurance. And as is often the case, all heresies, at least the most dangerous heresies, are half-truths told as whole truths, which quickly become a whole untruth. And Paul's response is one of logic on fire. He gives us this glorious summary of the gospel in the book of Galatians. John Bunyan said besides that in the whole Bible, the book of Galatians was his favorite book. And Paul begins, you remember, by defending himself as the messenger. If you have a copy of the Word of God, maybe on your phone or in your Bible, you can look back

at the first verse or the first chapter. Paul begins, Paul, an apostle. And then he comes with these resounding notes, not from men nor through men. I didn't get my apostleship from a man, any man on earth. I didn't even get it through men, through the church. No, I'm an apostle, Paul says, through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised him from the dead. And then Paul essentially, and there's a lot, we have to resist the urge of giving you a whole kind of summary of the book of Galatians, but Paul summarizes the gospel beautifully. What he's really saying is, right, for you to live a healthy Christian life, you've got two main priorities, and they go together like water and wet. You've got to keep in step with the gospel, and you've got to keep in step with the spirit. All right? And I get those two summaries of the book of Galatians from Paul's words himself, keeping in step with the gospel. If you look in chapter 2, verse 14, Paul describes Peter, the great apostle, and the circumcision party from Jerusalem, the mother church, the only perfect church. He describes their conduct, and we'll go into that in a second, but just notice, he says, when I saw their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I then essentially firmly, publicly, and harshly rebuked Cephas. So what was it about this party, and Cephas in particular, who had fallen out of step with the gospel? Because if you're going to live a healthy Christian life, that's your first priority. You've got to keep in step with the gospel. You've got to know and embrace and hold on to it like a terrier with a tug toy that your relationship with God does not depend in any shape, form, or fashion on the things you do. It doesn't even depend on your faith, that you're believing, or your repentance, or your endeavor to put sin off and to put Christ on. Your relationship with God does not depend on what you do, it depends on what Christ has done. And that is the ground of your assurance. And nine times out of 10, when I hear a Christian express doubt about their assurance, and there's not a person in this room, I think, who hasn't at one time or another wondered, am I really saved? One of the reasons, one of the chief reasons why we doubt our salvation is that we look away from Christ and we look into ourselves. And we see how little faith we have. how much more repentance we have left to do, and how much more work we have to do in putting off sin and putting on Christ. And the work of God that's been done in us by the gospel is always in this current world an imperfect work. What Paul is gonna unpack here is that your justification, right, the forgiveness of your sins, and God regarding you as righteous in his sight is not dependent on anything that is done by you. It's not dependent on anything that's done in you. And it's not dependent on anything that's being done through you by God. It hangs completely and it hangs only on what Christ has done for you. The pronouns, not in you, not by you, not through you, but what Christ has done for you. And that's essentially what Paul's going to explain here. Let me read a bit more of this passage. So Cephas comes to Antioch, which is one of the chief cities of the early church, and Paul says, I opposed him to his face. This is Peter, the apostle, the rock, as it were. Why? Well, because he stood condemned. Well, what had Peter been doing wrong? For before certain men came from James, Peter was eating with Gentiles, right? So Peter's having fellowship with Gentiles. He'd come to the Wednesday afternoon supper at Antioch, and he'd eat with Jews. He'd also eat with Gentiles. He'd be happy at every table. But when they came, the circumcision party, the rabbis from Jerusalem who professed Christ but had been deceived into a legalistic Christianity, when they came, he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him. So that even Barnabas was led astray by the hypocrisy. Even Barnabas, the great

encourager, was led astray and began to hold Gentile believers at arm's length because they'd not been circumcised. But when I saw their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, if you though a Jew live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews? Paul's saying, you remember Peter, you saw the vision and you saw there's no such thing as clean and unclean food now, but all food is lawful. And you've been enjoying the low country boys with the rest of the Gentiles, and it's a bit hypocritical for you to be pulling back from them now just because they're not circumcised. Verse 15. We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners. And that's probably a phrase that these circumcised Christians were saying. We are of a higher stripe than the Gentiles. They were born sinners. We were born into the covenant community. Yet Paul says we know that a person is not justified by works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ. So we also have believed in Christ Jesus in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law. For by the works of the law, no one will be justified. No one. But if in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too are found to be sinners. If we're trusting in Christ and we're still living a life of sin, and struggling with sin maybe is a better way of putting it, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not. For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor. For through the law, I died to the law, so that I might live to God. That's a very important phrase. For through the law, I died to the law, so that I might live to God. What's Paul mean by that? Well, he tells you in the next verse. I have been crucified with Christ, It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. What's Paul saying there? He's saying that the law of God shows me to be a sinner. And as a sinner, the law of God condemns me to death. But that death has already happened when Christ died upon the cross. When Christ died, I died with him. It's almost like those billionaires on that yacht off the coast of Sicily. When that yacht went down, they died in that yacht. And when Christ descended on the cross into hell and was consumed by God's wrath and sentenced to be cursed, Paul says that did not just happen to Christ, but it happened to every Christian who was inside of Christ. And therefore the death that I deserve has already been died for me in Christ. The death of Christ is my death. The man who was under the curse of God and the wrath of God because of my sins against the law of God, that man has been killed. The sentence has been carried out. And God will never require that payment twice. First at Christ's hands and then again at mine. That's Paul's argument. And now, Paul says, now that old, guilty man has been done away with, I now live my life by faith in the Son of God who loves me and gave himself for me, right? And in chapter three, Paul goes on to explain that's always been the way the gospel comes. Right? It was the way the gospel worked in the life of Abraham. Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness. And Paul comes with that climactic sense that if any man be in Christ, he is a child of Abraham. Verse seven, know then that it is those, chapter three, verse seven, that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham, not those who've been circumcised, but those who are of faith. And through that faith, we become Abraham's sons. And as Abraham's sons, we inherit all of his blessing, not by circumcision from the law, because the best the law can do is curse you, That's Paul's next point. For all who rely on the works of the law are under the curse, for it is written, cursed be everyone who does not abide in all the things in the book of the law to do them. If you want to base your standing

before God on the law, then Paul says you're biting off more than you can chew. You're taking all of the law and all that it says, and if you don't do all of the law perfectly, personally, and perpetually, you're under the curse of God. Paul says, now it's evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for the righteous shall live by faith, but the law is not of faith, rather the one who does them shall live by them. Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written, cursed is everyone who is hanged on the tree. so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles so that we might receive the promised spirit through faith. In other words, if you're a Christian here this day, Paul is saying that God has no more curse to give you. It doesn't matter what you do. It doesn't matter what you have done. It doesn't matter what you are doing. It doesn't matter even what you shall do, the curse that your works deserve have fallen on Christ. And the only word God has now for you is blessing. And Paul has this beautiful statement in Galatians 3 verse 2. Oh foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. Let me ask you only this, did you receive the spirit, the spirit who's gonna produce these fruits in your life, did you receive the spirit by the works of the law or by the hearing of faith? It's a massive contrast. One couldn't be more active, the works of the law, things that you do. The other couldn't be more passive, the hearing of faith. As soon as the gospel touches your ear and you hear it with faith, before it gets into your brain and into your heart and does anything in your life, Paul says, just hearing it by faith. That brings all of the blessings of the gospel down into your heart. Forgiveness of sins and the presence of the Holy Spirit. You receive the Spirit by the hearing of faith. The works of the law couldn't be more active. The hearing of faith couldn't be more passive. As passive as someone leaning on a chair with all of their weight, feet off the ground. Not, they trust the chair completely. It's not one of those flimsy chairs like Mel Gibson made in the Patriot that kept on collapsing under his weight. And so he began to sit on it very gingerly. Remember that beautiful Georgian chair he was trying to make, the rocking chair, kept on collapsing. And so you never sit in chairs like that fully confident. But here's a message you can trust with all of your heart and all of your weight and all of your sins. Past, present, and future. You lean on this Christ, the hearing of faith, and all of the blessings of the gospel, all of the fullness of the spirit come down into your heart. And so if you live a Christian life, you must keep in step with the spirit, sorry, with the gospel. Just trusting the gospel of Jesus Christ. Now we're gonna come back next week and finish this, because we have no time now. But Paul answers the objection of the Judaizers that would say that Such as a gospel would lead to a careless life, and Paul says, no, no, because the two priorities of a healthy soul are first of all, and always foremost of all, and foundationally of all, to keep in step with the gospel. But like water brings wet, when you keep in step with the gospel, you'll find yourself keeping in step with the spirit. And that'll never leave you the same. It'll never leave you wallowing in sin, indulging sin, practicing sin. It will leave you beautifully scarred by the presence of the Holy Spirit. And let's go back and just read this passage. We'll end here this afternoon. And I'll come back next week and we'll finish the introduction as I threatened at the beginning. But I say, walk by the Spirit. And Packer translates that, keep in step with the Spirit. And you'll not gratify the desires of the flesh. Because you receive the spirit by faith. And that spirit comes into your heart and overwhelms you and overpowers you and creates the expulsive power of new

affections. And so you'll walk by the spirit. You'll not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the spirit and the desires of the spirit are against the flesh. These two forces warring in the best of us and the worst of us. The flesh, man, as we would be without God, without the gospel, without grace, without mercy, without Christ. And the spirit coming in, invading us. And these two forces, the flesh and the spirit, at war. These are opposed to one another, Paul says, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. It's Romans 7, the good that I want to do, I don't do. The evil that I will not do, that I practice. Oh, wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death? Oh, it's the Holy Spirit and it's the gospel that brings the Holy Spirit down into my heart. But if you're led by the Spirit, you're not under the law, and that's a technical term, we'll look at that next week, but it's, I'm not under the law as the rule of my justification. That's all being done away with, the curse of the law, the condemnation of the law, is all being done away with by Christ as I keep in step with the gospel. No, he says, I'm not under the law in that sense anymore, as a rule to condemn me and curse me. where the works of the flesh are evident, sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissension, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things, those who practice such things, those who practice such things show they've never believed the gospel, they've never kept in step with the gospel, they've never had their sins forgiven if they're living still in those sins and haven't been set free from them. Now I warn you, Paul says, those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law. And so the fruit of the Spirit isn't a spiritual to-do list. The fruit of the Spirit is much more of a what Christ has accomplished list, what Christ has done list, what the Spirit is doing in your life now list, and what one day you shall become perfectly and personally because of his work in you. In that sense, the fruit of the Spirit is a bit like one of those architectural rendering. Some of you have had your kitchen renovated recently. And you probably had, over the summer, walked into your kitchen, and it was all sheetrock, dust, and mess, and piles of tiles, and workmen walking backwards and forwards, and music blaring out of their little speakers as they were working away like beavers. And you look at your kitchen, and it's a mess. And then you look at the rendering, and you think, oh, I can see now. There's the arch over the range. And there's the framing of the new island that's going to go in the middle of the kitchen. And you can see from where the work's at now, and you look at the rendering, and you'll see where the work's one day going to be. And that's how the fruit of the Spirit works in our lives. It's not so much something for us to do, But it's a way for us to look with hope at what Christ has accomplished and what the Spirit is producing in us. And we can look at the rendering, the finished article, and we can look where we are now and see how much more work there is left to be done. But even that work is not done by the law, by yourself. You don't white-knuckle. It's not like, you know, when you're being annoyed by noisy children or noisy grandchildren, and you go, no, no, no, no, by your own strength, love, joy, peace, patience, patience, I'm gonna be patient. No, no, it's the Holy Spirit. As you keep in step with the gospel, believing in Jesus, and then you keep in step with the Spirit, And you hear that beautiful rhyme that John Bunyan gave us, you remember? Run, John, run, the law demands, but gives me

neither feet nor hands. Oh, but better news the gospel brings. It bids me fly, and it gives me wings. And over the next few weeks, I wanna show you how the gospel will give you wings to soar by the grace of God, through the word of God, and the empowerment of the spirit of God, that you might put on the fruit of his presence, not by works, but by grace, and by the gospel, and by God, and be transformed from one degree of glory as you look at Jesus. who He is, how He perfectly radiates these fruits in His own life, or this fruit in His own life. As we see Him, we become like Him, as we behold His glory in the mirror of the law. We'll come back next week, and we'll look more and more at this list. But that's where we all begin, trusting in Jesus, leaning on Him, conscious, that our works cannot undo what Christ has done. Self-examination is not unimportant, but you never look at yourself, especially when you're being beaten back against the wall by the devil, condemning you, slandering you, pointing out all your sins. You never look in. Look in, you'll die. You look up to Christ. And you remind yourself and you remind that old snake what Christ has done. And that's the foundation. Keep in step with the gospel, and you keep in step with the spirit. Let's pray together. Father in heaven, I thank you for these eager hearers on these Wednesday lunchtimes. I thank you, Father, for Chef and his genius in the kitchen serving us so well. And thank you for food and fellowship around the tables. And we pray, oh God, that your word will do its work in our hearts, drawing us to Christ. establishing our hearts in him, rooting us in him, not in our works, but his work, and giving us confidence to live in this world on our best days and on our worst, safe and secure in Jesus, our Savior. Amen.