

Handling Rejection

Galatians 5:1, 13-25

Introduction

I check my Facebook page every morning. Some of my friends post humorous things and I chuckle as I read and respond with a “like” or a laughing emoji. Some post Bible verses, or Christian sayings and I respond with a “like” and maybe an “Amen!” Some post pictures of my grandchildren or great nieces & nephews and I respond with a “love.” Then, amid this lovefest, someone posts a pro-choice or pro-LGBTQ article and I find myself searching for the “unlike” button. I struggle to refrain from responding in a negative way or asserting my side because I know it wouldn’t do any good and that’s not the Christian thing to do. I have a hard time handling rejection.

Why? The Sin Nature

Many of you can relate to this problem. Do you know why? Put very simply, it’s because of the sin nature which we all share. As Augustine says: *The sinful nature is an adversary even within the baptized, and there is not within them a possibility of sinlessness.* Since Adam, we are all born with a sinful nature that not even Baptism can eradicate. We will struggle with this sin nature until the next life, whether this comes through our death or the return of Christ, whichever happens first. We see this at work in the disciples.

The Boanerges—Example of What Not to Do

In his listing of the apostles in **chapter 3**, Mark tells us that Jesus gave the nickname *Boanerges* to James and John, the sons of Zebedee, which means “sons of thunder.” More than likely, they got this handle because of the incident in our Gospel lesson today. They asked if they should call down fire from heaven on a Samaritan village that rejected Jesus (**Luke 9:54**). This incident may have been part of a pattern with them since the root of the word has to do with rage and another rendering of it would be “sons of commotion.” This demonstrates not only a negative example for us, but it shows how Jesus can change a person, that John, a son of rage could become the apostle who wrote and taught extensively about love.

Works of the Flesh

In **Galatians 5:19-21**, St. Paul gives us a list of works of the flesh. Paul is not saying here that our bodies are evil. After all, God made them and everything He made He declared to be good. Paul is calling our sin nature “flesh” to distinguish from the new nature that we have in Christ. The works of the flesh are the attitudes and actions which the Old Adam in each of us inspires. That’s why he *should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die and the New Man should be raised up in us (Small Catechism)*.

Fruit of the Spirit

As a counter to the works of the flesh, Paul gives us the fruit of the Spirit: *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law (Galatians 5:22-23)*. I want to call your attention to two things about this list.

Fruit—1 fruit, not many

First, Paul says **fruit**, not **fruits**. He is not giving a list of fruits, like apples, bananas, oranges, and grapes. This is not a smorgasbord of possible things we can choose from. He's saying that this is what it looks like to walk in the Spirit. As Marcus Victorinus says: *The whole essence of the Gospel is to think according to the Spirit, to live according to the Spirit, to believe according to the Spirit, to have nothing of the flesh in one's mind and acts and life.* Our guide for daily life is to love our neighbor. This is what it looks like when we love our neighbor.

Of the Spirit—Produced by the Holy Spirit

That this is the fruit **of the Spirit** means that it is only possible through the Spirit, as it is the Spirit who generates this attitude, this way of life. In the words of Martin Luther: *If we were pure of all sin and burned with a perfect love toward God and our neighbors, then of course we would be righteous and holy through love, but that does not happen in this life. This is why we need to be guided by the Spirit.*

Means of Grace

To live in the Spirit is to live a life of grace. This is what it means to be under grace instead of under the Law. The Holy Spirit works in us through the means of grace: Word and Sacrament. In Baptism, the Holy Spirit works faith in us. When we hear or read the Word of God and receive the body and blood of Christ, the Holy Spirit strengthens that faith and produces the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Living by the Spirit is how we can **HANDLE REJECTION**.

*And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
