

The Fruit Of The Spirit

Galatians 5:13-26

“For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. ¹⁴ For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” ¹⁵ But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another! ¹⁶ I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. ¹⁸ But if the Spirit leads you, you are not under the law. ¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, ²¹ envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. ²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. ²⁴ And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.”

The Bible is very clear in the fact that the believer is delivered from the curse of the law (Galatians 3:13). We are placed in the *freedom* and *liberty* of *grace*, and now serve the Lord, *not* out of *compulsion* or *threat of punishment*, but out of a *heart of love* and *gratitude* for so great a salvation. It is therefore *a contradiction* for a person *saved by grace* to serve the Lord because the *law demands it*, rather than because *love produces it*. This liberty in grace also gives divine discernment as to what is required.

There is, however, a danger, because the flesh is still with us, that we shall have a tendency to go back to the works of the flesh and the law. This was true in the case of the Galatians. Paul is

surprised that the *legalistic teachers* with the Old Testament *ordinances, laws, Sabbath days* and *commandments* would lead them astray. And he pleads with them in Galatians 5:1 to "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." And then in verse 7 he asks a question, "You did run well; who did hinder you that you should not obey the truth?"

Because our "flesh" is not saved, no amount of laws and threats can bring it under control. You see, it is not *law* on the *outside*, but *love* on the *inside* that makes the difference. We need another *power within*, and that *power* comes from the *Holy Spirit* of God.

There are at least 14 references to the Holy Spirit in Galatians. When we believe on Christ, the Spirit comes to dwell within us (3:2). We are "born after the Spirit" as was Isaac (4:29). It is the Holy Spirit in the heart who gives assurance of salvation (4:6); and it is the Holy Spirit who enables us to live for Christ and glorify Him.

The Holy Spirit is not simply a "divine influence;" He is a divine Person, just as are the Father and the Son. What God the Father planned for you, and God the Son purchased for you on the cross, God the Spirit personalizes for you and applies to your life as you yield to Him. These verses of scripture are perhaps the most crucial in the entire closing section of Galatians; for in it Paul explains three ministries of the Holy Spirit that enable the believer to enjoy liberty in Christ.

First of all, the Spirit enables us to fulfill the Law of Love. Paul says this in verses 13-15, "For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!" We are prone to go to **extremes**. One believer interprets **liberty** as **license** and thinks he can do whatever he wants to do. **Another believer, seeing this error, goes to an opposite extreme and imposes law on everybody.**

Somewhere between license on the one hand and legalism on the other hand is true Christian liberty.

So Paul begins by explaining our calling. We are called to liberty. The Christian is a free man. He is free from the guilt of sin because he has experienced God's forgiveness. He is free from the penalty of sin because Christ died for him on the cross. And he is, through the Spirit, free from the power of sin in his daily life. He is also free from the law with its demands and threats. Christ bore the curse of the law and ended its tyranny one and for all. We are "called unto liberty" because we are "called into the grace of Christ" (Galatians 1:6). Grace and liberty go together!

Having explained our calling, Paul then issues a caution: "Don't allow your liberty to degenerate into license!"

This, of course, is the fear of all people who do not understand the true meaning of the grace of God. "If you do away with rules and regulations," they say, "you will create chaos and anarchy."

Of course, that danger is very real, not because God's grace fails, but, according to Hebrews 12:15, because men fail of the grace of God. 1 Peter 5:12 tells us there is a "true grace of God," and if that is true, and it is, then there is also a false grace of God; and there are false teachers who, according to Jude 4, who "change the grace of our God into lasciviousness." So Paul's caution is a valid one. Christian liberty is not a license to sin but an opportunity to serve!

This leads to a commandment, as seen in verse 13, "By love serve one another." The key word, of course, is "love."

The amazing thing about love is that it, takes the place of all the laws God ever gave, as seen in Matthew 22:34-40, "But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together. Then one of them, who was a lawyer, asked him a question, testing him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, You should love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all

your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it; You should love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” **Now listen to me, very carefully right here, if you love people (because you love Christ), you will not steal from them, lie about them, envy them, or try in any way to hurt them.** **Love** in the heart is God's substitute for **laws and threats**.

Mark this truth down if you do not love one another, you are out of fellowship with God. **If you cannot love one another, then you are not saved!** And no matter how many rules or standards a church may adopt only God the Holy Spirit can impart the ability to love another!

Secondly, the Spirit enables us to overcome the flesh. Look at what we are told in verses 1624, “I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”

The Bible is teaching us that if the Holy Spirit controls the body, then we walk in the Spirit; but if the flesh controls the body, then we walk in the lusts (desires) of the flesh. **The Spirit and the flesh have different appetites, and this is what creates the conflict.** It is imperative that we understand that we cannot simply *will* to overcome the flesh, as seen in verse 17, “...these are contrary the one to the other,

so that you cannot do the things that you would." It is this very problem that Paul discusses in Romans 7:15,19 (NIV), "I do not know what I am doing. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do...For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do this I keep on doing." **Paul is not denying that there is victory. He is simply pointing out that we cannot win this victory in our own strength and by our own will.**

Therefore the **solution is not to pit our will against the flesh**, but to **surrender our will to the Holy Spirit**, as seen in verse 18, "But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law." This verse literally means, "But if you are *willingly* led by the Spirit, then you are not under the law." The Holy Spirit writes God's law on our hearts, as seen in Hebrews 10:16, "This is the covenant that will make with them after those days, saith the Lord: I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them." The psalmist says in Psalm 40:8, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God: yea, Thy law is within my heart." When we are willing to yield ourselves to Spirit filled life, the Bible says we will "not fulfill the lusts of the flesh."

Last of all, the Spirit enables us to produce fruit. Look again at what he says in verses 22-26, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another."

It is one thing to overcome the flesh and not do evil things, but it is quite something else to do good things. The legalist might be able to boast that he is not guilty of adultery or murder, but can anyone see the beautiful graces of the Spirit in his life? **Negative goodness is not enough in a life; there must be positive qualities as well.**

The contrast between works and fruit is important. Work is something we can do by the arm of the flesh, but fruit must grow out

of a life surrendered to the Spirit of God. Hebrews 9:14 reminds us that the flesh produces "dead works," but the Spirit produces living fruit.

We have been given a list of "the works of the flesh" as well as a list of "the fruit of the Spirit." And it is a simple matter for each of us to stop and take a little inventory of our lives to see where we are in relation to what God is looking for in our lives.

The secret of living the Christian life is the Holy Spirit. He alone can give us the freedom from sin and from self. He enables us to fulfill the law of love, to overcome the flesh, and to bear fruit.