

Parson to Person
(Galatians 5 – Part 2)
(Verses 13–26)
“Stand Fast in Spiritual Liberty”

“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! 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, 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” (Galatians 5:13–26).

Love your Neighbor—A Theological Command

“Lov[ing] your neighbor as yourself” has been identified in the context of the previous passages of Galatians. Therefore, genuine love (agape) must be understood in the light of doctrine.

The Galatians were called to identify false teaching and then mark those false teachers (and their teaching), rid the Church of them, and thereby protect others from the errors being communicated or embraced.

False teaching harms the Gospel. Theological error should be discerned, highlighted, and discarded—especially when the popular churching of today intentionally discounts doctrine in order to deliver “community” and “experience” at the expense of pure biblical worship. Churches that put doctrine in the background in order to build larger and broader “congregations” are intentionally ignoring the clear directive of Scripture. It is not love toward a neighbor to allow them to believe a lie or fail to understand the truth.

Love Your Neighbor—An Orthopractic Lifestyle

The “*works of the flesh*” (like false doctrine) harm our neighbors. Therefore, we must “*practice*” the truth and refrain from the “*practice*” of fleshly behaviors.

The harm caused by “*the works of the flesh*” should be cataloged within the following list:

1) “*The works of the flesh*” harm the believer.

God calls us to “*put to death*” (Colossians 3:5) the deeds of the flesh. Our choices benefit or harm us. God loves us and wants no harm to come to any. Therefore, He commands all believers to turn from the “*works of the flesh*” and “*live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age*” (Titus 2:12).

2) “*The works of the flesh*” harm the believer’s neighbor.

When a person sins, the sins committed carry consequence for both the “sinner” and those adjacent. For example, adultery affects at least two people; moreover, it impacts children, grandchildren, etc.

One can make a case for the natural effect sin has on others. However, in addition we must recognize the spiritual—and how sin affects the spiritual environment. Willful rebellion and the “*works of the flesh*” create darkness evil forces are licensed to traffic (see Proverbs 14:34 and Ephesians 6:10–18).

3) “*The works of the flesh*” harm the believer’s testimony.

The believer is called to represent the Lord and His righteous standards. Those around us are stumbled, discouraged, and robbed of the required edification we are called to provide—if or when we “act” according to the flesh.

4) “*The works of the flesh*” result in the (former) sufferings of Christ.

Jesus died to pay for our sins—by proxy. Therefore, we must recognize that our sin added to the afflictions of Christ.

For many years I have said, “*I am far more motivated to live righteously by considering that my sins have added to the afflictions of Christ my Lord, than by the fear of future suffering some have suggested will be the resulting consequences experienced at the Judgment Seat of Christ. ‘Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe.’”*

The Works of the Flesh

“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” (vss. 19–21).

As believers, we are children destined for the Kingdom. We are not to practice the sins of those who *“will not inherit the kingdom of God”* (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:9–11).

The Fruit of the Spirit

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (vss. 22–23a).

As believers, we are not the originators or developers of *“the fruit of the Spirit.”* The Spirit produces fruit in those who *will “inherit the kingdom of God”* (cf. Psalm 1).

The Wrestling Match

Paul exhorted the Galatians, writing, *“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” (vss. 16b–18).*

As believers awaiting our final redemption, we are people with two natures: The old and the new—the flesh and the (regenerated) spirit. The old nature battles for *“the works of the flesh”* and wars against *“the fruit of the Spirit”*—challenging His leadership. However, the regenerated *are* given power to overcome the *“works of the flesh”* (by the Spirit), but, as we sojourn toward “home,” even the best fall short. Therefore, Paul wrote, *“if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law”* (vs. 18). There is no condemnation to those

who are in Christ Jesus. We are set free from the law of sin and death.
(See Romans 7:1–8:39)

No Prohibiting Law

“Against [the fruit of the Spirit] there is no law” (vs. 23b).

There is no law preventing or prohibiting *“the fruit of the Spirit.”*
“The law [was] made for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine” (1 Timothy 1:9–10 modified). Therefore, believers are free in the Lord! Free to live righteously! Free to enjoy *“the fruit of the Spirit”* God alone produces in His own—in due season.

I am thankful for the work of the Lord—and the fruit He produces. We can rest in Him knowing that we are free from the condemnation of sin.

Rest my friends—the work is all His!

I love you all,
Pastor Paul