

Parson to Person
(Galatians 5 – Part 3)
(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).

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).

It should be noted that the “*works of the flesh*” are the natural “*practice[s]*” of the non-regenerated. This was implied in the letter when Paul wrote, “*those who practice such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God.*” “*Those*” must be distinguished from “*you.*”

The regenerated will “*inherit the kingdom of God*” (see Ephesians 1:14) in spite of the “*works of the flesh.*” Our salvation does not depend on our performance—positive or negative. However, at least three times in the New Testament, believers are compared to “*those who practice such things*” (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:9–10; Ephesians 5:5–7) and told not to partake of, participate in, and/or practice “*such things.*”

Paul commanded believers to, “*put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. Therefore, putting away lying, ‘Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,’ for we are members of one another. ‘Be angry, and do not sin’: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil. Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you” (Ephesians 4:22–32).*

Work

It is my opinion that believers *“who practice the works of the flesh”* are indeed working at it.

Most of you know this part of what I am communicating when I say the words “blessed misery.” Intentional sinning makes the believer uncomfortable.

Consider how much work a person will put into planning an adulterous affair, avoiding exposure of secret sin, attempting to silence guilt, shame, etc. I could illustrate several times over—I don’t think it necessary. The point is, the intentional sinning is *“work”*—not rest, not peace, not joy.

None will argue that Paul’s confessions in Romans 7 were only a manifestation of the “great wrestling match” he suffered with the flesh. But note, it was a war, a battle—not rest. But he came to rest in grace after identifying himself with the imputed righteousness provided him in Jesus (see Romans 8).

Once a person is genuinely born again, the *“fruit of the Spirit”* will gradually (sometimes quickly) begin to manifest in the believer. *“The works of the flesh”* no longer fit the “comfort zone” of the redeemed.

When Paul wrote, *“Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh”* (Galatians 5:16), he was not suggesting one should allow for the “works of the flesh;” he was showing us all that “walking in the Spirit” will overcome the propensities of the flesh and give us freedom, peace, and rest—in Jesus.

Fruit

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

Herein there are three things I want you to note:

- 1) The fruit of the Spirit is *“the fruit of the Spirit.”* It is not our *“work;”* it is His *“fruit.”* We are not the originators or developers of *“the fruit of the Spirit.”* It is the Spirit who produces *“fruit”* in those who will *“inherit the kingdom of God”* (cf. Psalm 1).

“Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32).

- 2) There is no conjunction *“and”* in the verse (even in the Greek). Moreover, the fruit of the Spirit is noted in the singular—not plural. This allows us to see that *“the fruit of the Spirit”* is defined as *“love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.”* These attributes are definitions—not items.
- 3) God does not *“try”* to *“work”* in you. He manifests Himself in you—and me! It is no *“task”* for God to *“work”* in you—to *“work”* in me. His *“fruit”* is the outflow of His person. It is the manifestation of His *“good pleasure”*—*“For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure”* (Philippians 2:13).

The *“love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control”* manifest in God is what has caused His *“work”* of redemption—and in redemption, our transformation.

As you walk in the Spirit, led by the Spirit, you will grow in the Spirit, and manifest the fruit of the Spirit. His *“fruit”* in you—not our *“work”* in Him.

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage”
(Galatians 5:1).

I love you all,
Pastor Paul