

Freedom – The Flesh and the Spirit

Galatians 5:16-26

“We pursue being a disciple making family: surrendered to Jesus, transformed by the gospel, and saturated in His word.”

The apostle Paul has spent a lot of time pointing out that salvation is in grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Salvation comes by the grace given to us by the work of Jesus on the cross and his resurrection. We are justified or declared righteous not by any outward work. Paul has pointed this out over and over to the believers of the Galatian church, almost to the point of thinking, “okay already, we get.” However, we are always in need of reminder because the way we view the work of justification will ultimately lead to the way we practically live out our lives. Paul points out in this passage that we can either live by the flesh or live by the Spirit. Freedom comes from staying in step with the Spirit.

1. What does it mean to walk by the Spirit or to be led by the Spirit? Would you say you are led by the Spirit (5:18)? Are you more inclined to follow your own course or do you tend to press into God to guide you? How might you become more dependent on the Spirit to guide you and to stay in step?
2. Paul writes that the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh. They are in opposition to one another. For Christians, this is the spiritual warfare that is experienced every day. Our flesh, the world, and the evil one wage war against the desires of the Spirit within us. We all know and experience this tension every day. What are some areas that you feel this tension and how do we overcome this as Christians? How does the work of the gospel and grace allow us to live both on the defensive and the offensive in regard to works of the flesh?
3. The catalog of evidence of the works of the flesh is not an exhaustive list. However, it points out the fruit that comes from the flesh. Paul said those who “practice” these things will not inherit the kingdom of God. There is a heart devoted to the self and against the things of God, unrepentant and unregenerate. This life characterizes the fruit of the flesh. What is the difference between someone who is unregenerate and someone who is saved but struggles with certain areas of the flesh?
4. Even though we may be Christians, we are tempted to serve these areas of the flesh. There may be a “struggle” not to satisfy the desires we once were bound to. In Christ we have been set free and the Spirit dwells within us allowing the ability to not gratify these desires. How do we handle it when we find ourselves returning to these ways: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, enmity,

strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, and drunkenness?

5. The “fruit” of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. As a Christian one receives the Spirit of God allowing us to have the “fruit.” All of these evidences will be present in Christ followers. As we continue to stay in step with the Spirit, we will grow in these areas. How have you seen this growth happen in your life after surrendering to Christ? How have you seen this happen in the life of someone else?