

Gal. 5:1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

"Stand fast" - be confident, hold on to what you have, be firm-- Paul is saying that Christ came to give us freedom. He would not want us to go back under the slavery of the law. (We can go to church on any day of the week.) Being "entangled" brings to mind getting caught up in something that hinders you; the idea of a situation being made more difficult--That is what bondage to the law does. It puts a bunch of "stuff" in the way of what should be a simple FOCUS--to imitate Jesus. Again, a "yoke" implies something that is forced and uncomfortable to lead you down a path of someone else's choosing. "Bondage" is obvious; it's slavery; not the choice of serving out of love.

Gal. 5:2 Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.

The issue is circumcision. It's not that circumcision is a wrong thing to do; it is the reason/motive for being circumcised that is the problem. If they are responding to pressure from others to be circumcised because the law demands it, then they are negating what Christ did on the cross. He fulfilled the whole law. They no longer have to try and keep the law. All they have to do is accept the provision that Christ made for them through His death and resurrection. Getting circumcised will not get them any closer to salvation. It will not give them any more power in their lives. They need to recognize Christ as sufficient for all their needs.

Gal. 5:3 For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.

You have a choice. If you choose to accept the law in one point, you have to obey the whole law.

Gal. 5:4 Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

Law and grace do not mix; it's like oil and water. By choosing to accept Christ's provision of salvation, you are covered by His grace. He has paid the sin debt; no other sacrifice is necessary. If you choose to serve the law, then you are basically saying - I don't need Jesus; He didn't do enough; I need to add to what He did - and that is wrong. His grace is sufficient, period.

Gal. 5:5 For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.

I think Paul's emphasis here is looking toward the time when we will be complete in the Lord. We are covered by the righteousness of Jesus now, but we still have the sin nature and struggle with temptation. We even fail along the way. But through the Spirit (the Comforter, the Encourager, the Empowerer) by faith (being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see, **Heb 11:1**) we look forward to the time when we will be complete in righteousness--without the sin nature, no more problem with temptation, no more questioning of our motives and intents. We will be perfected in Jesus.

Gal. 5:6 For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.

Paul is basically saying - It doesn't matter what YOU do or don't do (circumcised or not). What matters is what JESUS has done--it's your faith working for you, resting in His love and provision.

Gal. 5:7 Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?

I guess my paraphrase here is - You were doing great; what made you think you had to change what you were doing or how you were going about it? What made you think it was no longer truth?

Gal. 5:8 This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you.

Whatever or whoever it was--it wasn't from the Lord, the one who has called you and set you apart.

Gal. 5:9 A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.

Powerful truth - A LITTLE leaven leaveneth the whole lump---and we know that leaven represents sin. A little sin left unchecked and tolerated will begin to spread and spread.

Gal. 5:10 I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded: but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be.

Paul is confident that the Galatians will recognize the truth. How is he confident? In the Lord. He knows that God, through the Spirit, will show them the truth (if they are seeking it). He is also confident that the one who is trying to infiltrate them with a lie and destroy their freedom will receive his judgment.

Gal. 5:11 And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased.

Paul is appealing to their common sense. If I (Paul) am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? (My message has not changed.) I would no longer be offensive if I no longer preached that Jesus' death on the cross is sufficient. In other words, if I agreed that you needed something else besides the finished work of the cross, I would not be persecuted. The fact that I am still persecuted tells you that I am still preaching the cross--Jesus.

Gal. 5:12 I would they were even cut off which trouble you.

Well, when I first read the King James it seems obvious that Paul is wishing the false teacher dead--or at least "out of Dodge." When I read the NASB and NIV they seem to throw the thinking in reference to the circumcision that has been the problem and wishes that the false teachers were emasculated or mutilated themselves. Whatever--I know he is not wishing them well. I think this would be called righteous anger. He is jealous for his children in the faith and expressing his anger forcefully, BUT he is not acting on it. That is left to the Lord.

Gal. 5:13 For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

"called unto liberty" - my paraphrase, singled out for freedom. You would think that they would be so tired of watching their every little step according to the

law (especially as it had been so expanded by the leaders) that they would revel in their freedom. Then he quickly goes on to remind them that this freedom is to be used for good, to serve one another in love--not for selfish indulgence of the lusts of the flesh.

Gal. 5:14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, *even in this*; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Summing up the law - Love thy neighbor as thyself. Now we know that when the Lord was asked about the greatest command (Matt 22), He gave 2 commands as comprising the whole of the law.

- 1) Loving the Lord God with all your heart, soul and mind
- 2) Loving your neighbor as yourself.

He also said that the second was like unto the first. I think the key is that you can't love your neighbor as yourself without first loving God with all your heart, soul and mind. It goes against our very nature. We can only love unconditionally and unselfishly through the empowerment of the Spirit.

Gal. 5:15 But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

The warning from Paul is that if you continue to "bite and devour one another," you'll end up being "consumed" by one another. This is pretty descriptive language. "Bites" indicates small actions that end up destroying the whole. It doesn't have to be big sins (like murder, etc.); it can be the "little" sins (gossip, "white lies," etc.)

Gal. 5:16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

Now Paul reminds them that they can have victory over the flesh-----through the Spirit. The key is to walk in the Spirit. This indicates a continual process of forward progress. How do we do this? By taking heed to the Word of God. The statement is firm. If you walk in the Spirit, you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh. As the old saying goes, you cannot serve two masters. There is a choice involved. If you are giving in to the lusts of the flesh, you have made a choice to ignore the leading of the Spirit (if you are a believer).

Gal. 5:17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

Paul continues his argument. The things that bring up desire in the flesh are very different from the desires produced in us by the Spirit. I actually like the way the New Living Translation puts it--"The old sinful nature loves to do evil, which is just the opposite from what the Holy Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are opposite from what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, and your choices are never free from this conflict."

This is definitely a place for another excerpt from Romans.

Rom. 7:15 For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.

Rom. 7:16 If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that *it is* good.

How loving of the Spirit to have Paul include these two verses in this letter to the Romans. Most of us consider Paul as one of the greatest Christians to ever live—still he struggled with sin. He was just like you and me. He struggled with making the right choices. He wanted to choose what was pleasing to God, but sometimes he made the wrong choices anyway. He wanted to avoid doing things that were displeasing to God, but sometimes he did those wrong things. The new creature Paul is able to understand that the law is good in identifying his sin and by providing loving guidelines/boundaries for his actions.

Rom. 7:17 Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

As believers, we are new creations in Christ. Until we experience physical death (or the rapture), we are housed in the old body of flesh that still possesses the sin nature. Paul is saying that when he sins, he is yielding to the temptations of his sin nature; it is not the desire of the new creature in Christ that is the true Paul.

I have a quote from somewhere in my notes that applies here:
“Sin dwelling does not equal sin ruling, but it is a force to reckon with.”

Rom. 7:18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but *how* to perform that which is good I find not.

Rom. 7:19 For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.

Rom. 7:20 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

Rom. 7:21 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.

This section seems to be making a stronger statement of the truth of verses 15-17. In these verses Paul identifies what he wants to do as “good” and what he does not want to do as “evil.” That is a principle that has helped me—learn to call your sin what it is; don’t candy-coat it. You need to see sin in your life as something evil.

Paul can honestly say that his desire is to do good, but the influence of his sin nature is always pulling him toward sin. (ref to Galatians)

The key to overcoming the lust of the flesh is to walk in the Spirit. The obvious question becomes how to learn to walk in the Spirit. The key is in submitting to our “new husband”—Jesus Christ. Paul is going to address this subject further in the next chapter. The key in being able to submit is a matter of love—and love is a choice. The Lord summed it all up by identifying two commandments as the greatest.

Mark 12:29-31 And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments *is*, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this *is* the first commandment. And the second *is* like, *namely* this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

Gal. 5:18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

Then he reminds them again that if you allow yourself to be led by the Spirit, you are free from the law. The Spirit will not lead you into any area that causes anything or anyone to be your master other than Jesus.

Gal. 5:19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

Gal. 5:20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

Gal. 5:21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

Gal. 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

Gal. 5:23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

Gal. 5:24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

Now Paul decides to give a pretty exhaustive list of the works of the flesh. This leaves no room for equivocation. It would be obvious to begin a list of fleshly sins with those relating to sex (**adultery and fornication**). I decided to make use of our new computer software to check the Greek meaning of the word for the following:

uncleanness, it implies impurity either physically or morally. If something is impure, it is "tainted, impaired or infected" according to good old Webster; so this covers a lot of ground.

Lasciviousness refers to anything that excites lustful desires.

Idolatry--we know that this includes more than the obvious worship of an image; it's anything that occupies the priority position in our life that rightfully belongs to God.

Witchcraft in the Greek is from the root word "pharmakeia," i.e., medication, drugs, magic and sorcery. Magic is the use of charms, spells and rituals in seeking to control or cause events. Sorcery adds the implication of using "evil supernatural power" to effect your magic. (I've never stopped to research all of these words before. It is pretty enlightening.)

Hatred indicates hostile opposition, strong dislike or ill will.

Variance refers to quarreling, contention, debate or strife (Greek); an active disagreement or dispute (Webster).

Emulations indicates an unfavorable zeal such as jealousy and envy.

Wrath is a fierce passion and indignation (Greek); describes actions that are carried out with intense anger, rage or fury for punishment or vengeance.

Strife refers to stimulating or provoking anger.

Seditions refers to causing dissension and division.

Heresies add the dimension of choice, making a purposeful decision to cause these divisions. Webster further defines heresy as any belief opposed to the "orthodox doctrines of the church" or any opinion opposed to official or established doctrine.

Envyings implies causing to spoil, ruin, corrupt, defile or destroy thru ill will, jealousy or envy.

Murders - obvious.

Drunkenness is intoxication that results in loss of self control.

Revellings implies rioting, carousal (as if letting loose) (Greek); and Webster adds that it is drinking much alcoholic liquor with others to have a noisy, merry time.

"**And such like**" seems to serve as a catch all for any area related in any way to the above. It's interesting to me to note how the different words provide a complete description of actions and motives.

After making this detailed list, Paul makes clear that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. The word "do" comes from the Greek "prasso" which means to practice or perform repeatedly or habitually. A Christian can and will sin; but a servant of the Lord will not *practice* sin.

Verse 22 - In contrast, Paul now states that **the fruit of the Spirit is love**. "Fruit is" is singular. Love is the fruit that comprises the rest of the list. Without love - which comes only from God (**I John 4:7-8**) - we cannot reflect the virtues that follow.

Joy (cheerfulness, calm delight)

peace (quietness, rest)

longsuffering (forbearance, fortitude, patience)

gentleness (excellence in character or demeanor)

goodness (virtue, beneficence--doing good, being charitable)

faith (moral conviction of the truthfulness of God; reliance upon Christ for salvation; assurance; fidelity)

meekness (humility)

temperance (self control).

There is no law against any of these virtues/attitudes. They can only be obtained through the work of the Holy Spirit in your life. You can't have the Holy Spirit without accepting the gift of salvation, which in turn is accepting Jesus as Lord of your life. The Spirit will never lead you into the works of the flesh. When you submit to the Lord, He will lead you into producing good fruit.

Those who belong to Christ have crucified (put to death; made it of no effect; extinguished passion and selfishness) the flesh and its affections (influences) and lusts.

Gal. 5:25 **If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.**

To live in the Spirit implies that we are abiding and dwelling in the safety and security of the Holy Spirit with confidence of the power He gives us to defeat sin. To walk in the Spirit implies that we are moving with purpose and with a goal in

mind to be all we can and should be for the Lord. Movement attracts attention. It will either cause others to want to follow us or avoid us.

Gal. 5:26 Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

This verse closes with a reminder not to be boastful or provoke one another or envy one another. One of the greatest dangers a Christian faces is becoming boastful of who He is as others recognize him/her for their good deeds, attitudes, etc. It's very easy to get sidetracked into performing for the wrong reason. Motive is so easily impacted by pride. It's something I pray for, that God will make me sensitive in any area of service in which I find myself. I often wish I could be an invisible person to avoid that pitfall, but then you miss the privilege of encouraging others by example. It's like you are on a continual tightrope. (The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. **Jeremiah 17:9**)

It's also easy as a Christian to find yourself provoking one another when you think you have the answer and someone else hasn't. Again, pride comes into play.

Finally, Christians will often find themselves in a position of envy when comparing themselves to other Christians. They wonder why God won't use them in a more visible and powerful way. Everyone wants to be the head or heart or hand or foot; no one wants to be the capillary or little toe or fingernail.