

Lawless Freedom

Gal 5:13-6:2

So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh . . . But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Gal 5:16, 22-23

Getting on the Same Page

Initially the Galatians were running well. That is they believed in the gospel. Then many of them were turning back to following the law as a means of earning God's love. The cross is offensive because it means that there is nothing we can actually do to earn it. Grace doesn't free us to do whatever we want, but it frees us to resist enslaving ourselves to things of this world. The command to love and serve others then is not a means of earning God's love, but instead a response to what God has done for us.

As Christians, we are confronted with two choices in life: on one hand, we can spend the freedom we receive in Christ on our own passions and desires ("flesh"), which will inevitably lead to consuming one another, as Paul warns (v. 15). Or we can pursue God's true purpose for our freedom—loving service to others. But we don't accomplish this through reliance on our own strength.

Much like using a power strip, if we plug into one of our own outlets, we will never find the power we need to battle the flesh in the way we should. But God has given us His power in the Holy Spirit who lives within us. When we "plug in" to the power of the Spirit, He guides us and transforms us piece by piece as we anticipate eternity with Christ.

Discussion Questions

Getting Started

- Who in your life is really difficult to love, and why is the case?
- How should remembering how Christ has loved you help you love these difficult people?
- How has the Fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, ...) in other people shown you more about God?

Study Read Gal 5:13-26 Together

- How do we, as Christians, practically live out freedom in a way that denies “the flesh”?
- What does verse 17 make clear about the Christian life? (That we will always experience spiritual conflict in this life, which means walking by the Spirit requires consistent intentionality.)
- How do Paul’s list of the works of the flesh (vv. 19–22) and his list of the fruit of the Spirit (vv. 22–23) differ from one another? How would you explain the difference between “work” and “fruit”?
- In verses 24–25, Paul uses two active verbs to describe Christ-followers: 1) They “have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” 2) They “keep in step with the Spirit.” What do these active verbs suggest about the Christian life?
- What are some practical ways you can keep in step with the Spirit?

Apply

- In what way does freedom pull you in the direction of self-protection and/or self-gratification?
- Are any of the “works of the flesh” areas that need your attention? How are they negatively effecting your ability to walk in the spirit?
- Who in your life right now has been “caught in a sin” and needs you to take the risk of seeking to “restore them gently”?
- If you were completely honest, what evidence would others identify as increased fruit of the Spirit in your life over the last year?

Transformation

You have been set free to live free, but not to spend your freedom on yourself. True freedom is found in humble, loving service to others. Love fulfills the Law. It’s easy to get hung up on a to-do list of external works, but we cannot be what God wants us to be on the outside without first experiencing His transforming power on the inside.