

# Galatians 5:16-24

## *The Fruit of Freedom*

Image Church // Galatians: Week 8

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### Introduction

Image Family! I hope you're doing well!

VBS this week! Going to be awesome. Almost 20 kids signed up!

### If you have your Bible, turn to Galatians 5...

- *As you're turning there....*

**Build the tension:** *If you had a fish in a bowl, it would be confined and not free...*

- *And let's just say that one day all of a sudden, that fish could talk, and it says I want to be free can you let me out and set me on the counter...*
- *You would say back- you're not going to experience freedom that way. You will die if I take you out of this fish bowl...*
- *And the fish says again, I want to be free. Put me in the toilet and flush it. I want to go where the water takes me...*
- *And you would say, that's not freedom- you will be in water for a little bit, and then you will end up at a sewage plant and you will die...*
- *And the fish says, well then, **how do I experience freedom?***

*And you say the way that you can experience freedom is by me putting you in a lake because this is where you were created to be, and there you can do what you were created to do, be a source of life that inhabits the water...*

Paul has introduced us to this idea of **Christian freedom**...

When we think about freedom, we think of autonomy... Doing what we want to do, the problem is that, **like the fish**, if we do what we want to do, it's not going to end well for us...

**Paul says in Galatians 5:13** *For you were called to be free, brothers and sisters; only don't use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but serve one another through love.*

This **freedom** that Paul's talking about is not the freedom to do what we want to do, it's the freedom to experience the love of God!

- Freedom to be who God created you to be a *worshiper of Him!*

We were enslaved by sin, this is what the law shows us...

- We can't obey rightly, and we don't even want to obey...
- The law shows us that we stand condemned...
- This is the curse of the law—the fact that we can't keep it and that we stand guilty before God...

*Jesus came to deal with the problem that the law pointed to...* Setting us free from the **penalty** of sin and the **power** of sin...

- And the way you receive this freedom is through faith...
- You don't receive it through your efforts but by embracing Jesus' efforts in your place...

And here's what happens, when you receive the **freedom** that Christ has purchased for you, there's a **transformation** that begins to happen in you and through you...

***The question is, what does this look like? How does this happen?***

For some of you, you grew up in a church that never pointed you to the freedom Christ offered you, they only pointed to the rules that you have to follow...

- so, for you, Christianity never felt free. It felt cumbersome rigorous, and daunting... It seemed confusing and even impossible to live out...

For others of you when it comes to your spiritual life you don't feel free at all... if anything you feel the opposite...

- You feel like you're always wrestling with the same sin
- Or, I keep falling to sin in my life...
- You don't feel like you're growing spiritually...
- You constantly feel like you're falling short...
- You have sin struggles in your marriage or in other relationships...
- *I am just trying to make it to tomorrow. What do you mean freedom?*

Let's look at Paul's answer in **Galatians 5**...

## Galatians 5:16-23

**Verse 16:** I say then, walk by the Spirit and you will certainly not carry out the desire of the flesh. 17 For the flesh desires what is against the Spirit, and the Spirit desires what is against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you don't do what you want.

Paul starts off by saying to walk by the Spirit because when you walk in the Spirit, you won't carry out the desires of the **flesh**.

**IOW:** the Spirit is what gives you the ability to experience the freedom that Christ has purchased for you...

- It's through the **Spirit** that you have the power to overcome the sinful desires of your flesh...

Paul's going to flesh this out in just a little bit...

- But what he does here is set up an important reality...

There's two natures that are at work in us...

- **The Spirit** and the **flesh**...
- And Paul says that the **Spirit** and the **flesh** are *in constant opposition to each other*...

See, here's what happens when you become a Christian, is that your sinful nature and the impulse to sin no longer rule over you, but the impulses and desires are still there...

Just because you're saved **doesn't** mean that you don't desire to sin, or that you don't sin. Being a Christian means that you now have the power to combat sin...

- **That you have a new power and a new perspective through the Spirit**...

This leads him to say this in **verse 18** **But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.**

**He's saying:** the Spirit provides the power and guidance to walk in the new life Christ has purchased for you... **Not** the law!

- **IOW:** The changes you want to see don't come through behavior modification, legalism, or moralism; they come through being led by the Spirit...

So here's what Paul's about to do, he's going to show us what it looks like to walk in the flesh, and then he's going to show us what it looks like to walk in the Spirit...

**Verse 19:** **Now the works of the flesh are obvious:**<sup>1</sup>

### **The first 3 are sexual**

- **sexual immorality:** this means sexual intercourse between people who are not married... This could also be pornography – the word is **Porneia**: where we get the word pornography from...
- **moral impurity:** unnatural sexual relationships
- **promiscuity:** uncontrolled sexuality- this is not only an action, but also an attitude...

### **And then the next 2 have to do with religion:**

- **20 idolatry:** Anything that you love and serve more than God.
- **Sorcery:** Where you try and manipulate the power of God through things like rituals, practices, or superstitions.

<sup>1</sup> Definitions adapted from Tim Keller's *Galatians for you* chapter 11, with help from JD Greear's analysis/adaptation of Keller's definitions in his sermon *Freed to be Alive*. Oct. 29 2017.

### The next 8 are related to relationships

- hatreds, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambitions, dissensions, factions, **21** envy,

### The last 3 are related to substance abuse

- **Drunkenness**: excessive consumption of alcohol
- **Carousing** (or orgies): this doesn't mean sexual orgies. This word is tied to drunkenness... like a drunk fest- going to crazy parties and getting hammered and acting outside of yourself...
  - **To sum it in the words of DMX:**
    - Y'all gon' make me lose my mind  
Up in here, up in here  
Y'all gon' make me go all out  
Up in here, up in here  
Y'all gon' make me act a FOOL  
Up in here, up in here  
Y'all gon' make me lose my cool  
Up in here, up in here
- **and anything similar**: this throws out a net that covers anything that you need to hit, take or do, that releases dopamine in order to **feel alive** that's excessive or out of control...
  - It could be drugs, flaunting your body in public or on social media to get likes or stares...
  - it could be taking stimulants when you don't need them, excessive buying, binging on food, you name it- anything where you're acting outside of yourself in order to feed and fuel the need to feel the pleasure of being alive.

So that's what it looks like to walk in the things of the flesh... This is what it looks like to live out of our natural desires, to follow our natural impulses...

**And this is what Paul says about living this way...**

I am warning you about these things—as I warned you before—that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

When Paul says practice here, he's talking about a life that's characterized by these things... *Not on occasion falling and confessing*

- **IOW**: If you delight in these things, if you pursue these things, then it's evidence that you're not a Christ follower...
- Because a lifestyle characterized by these things reveals that you're **enslaved** to the power of sin and not walking in the freedom Christ has purchased for you!

What Paul's going to do is show us what that looks like by holding up the fruit that the Spirit produces in us... **Verse 22:**

[He says] **22** But the fruit of the Spirit is

- **love**, A genuine love of God that overflows in love for others... The willingness to forfeit or give up things for the sake of others...
- **joy**, A state of mind that's rooted in understanding God's love for you that exists even in the midst of difficulties...
  - This is different from happiness. Happiness is based on circumstances and the temporary things of this world, while joy is based on knowing the love of the God of this world...
- **peace**, On an individual level it means having confidence in the sovereignty of God trusting that He's in control finding rest in Him... On a corporate level... In the same way that God has extended peace to you, you also extend it to others...
- **patience**, Remaining steadfast in the hope of the gospel in the midst of hardships and suffering... It also means recognizing the patience that God has shown you in your sin and dealing with others in the same manner...

- **kindness**, Being warmhearted, considerate, gentle, and sympathetic toward others, being willing to serve even if it means having to give something up for the sake of others...
- **goodness**, having integrity and character
- **faithfulness**, being loyal and trustworthy, a person people can count on...
- **23 gentleness**, The quality of not being overly impressed with yourself... Having a humble heart...
- **and self-control**. Submitting your desires under God's desires...

And then Paul wraps up this list of the Characteristics of a Christian by saying: **The law is not against such things.**

- Remember how I told you that the law is like Google Maps, it shows you the direction but is powerless to get you to the destination...
- What Paul's getting at here is that the Spirit is what gives you the power to be who God's called you to be!

**Now, here's the challenge** for many of you: When you hear this, you feel like it's a list of things that you need to do...

***He's not laying out a list of things to do, he's pointing to a list of characteristics that you have access to through the power of the Holy Spirit...***

This is not about a list of things that you need to do; it's about the power source that you need to be connected to...

The only way to experience these things and to walk in these things is to be connected to a power source that's outside of you...

*Watch this*, when Paul talks about **the flesh**- the things that you're capable of doing, the sinful things, he calls those the works of the flesh...

But when he talks about what the **Spirit** produces, he calls it fruit...

- This is not something that you do, it's something that the Spirit produces in you...

If you could manufacture these things on your own, then the gospel would be pointless...

The central message of the gospel is that you could never live out the fruit described here by Paul, these characteristics didn't exist in you... Jesus came to live in your place and to die in your place, and then to raise to life to give you access to new life through the Spirit...

**That leads us to the question... How do we walk in the Spirit? How are we led by the Spirit?**

Well, we have to understand that the same faith that gave you access to the Spirit is the same faith that allows you to continue to walk in the Spirit...

What do you have to have faith in, in order to access the power of the Holy Spirit? **The Finished Work of Jesus...**

***Listen, the best example*** of how all this works is an example that Jesus uses from the Old Testament.

The people of Israel had turned their back on God again and were chasing after other idols... So, God sent poisonous vipers into their camp, and the vipers began to bite them...

- You say *that's unfair*... No, what's unfair is that God had left them alive at this point after all that they had done to rebel against Him!

But the People were on their deathbed and in great pain, and they started to call out to God...

God told Moses to make a bronze snake and put it on the pole...  
Anyone who looked at it in faith would be healed...

And so, Moses did it, and as the people looked, they were healed, and their health was restored...

***But why put a snake on a pole?*** Why would he hold up the very thing that was killing them as a symbol of life?

Because it was a picture of what Jesus would come and do, like the snake on the pole, he would hang on a pole, and ***Jesus would take on that which was killing us, in order to bring us life...***

And the same thing that was true for the Israelites is true for us...  
***Look and live!***

For us, this ***isn't*** a one-time look; this is a continuing gaze at who Jesus is and what He's done for us... As we look on and rest in what Christ has done for us, we access the power of the Spirit inside of us, and we are being made to bear fruit...

Let me show you what I mean: In **John 15:5** Jesus says: I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me.

***What is Jesus getting at??*** He is saying that growth and fruit comes from being continually connected to The Vine, to Jesus, so that His life can flow into us... ***Apart from Him we cannot produce fruit.***

Jesus ***doesn't*** say ***do*** ... Jesus specifically says "***remain***" or "***abide***" ...

***How do we do that?*** You just rest in the finished work of Jesus... continuing to remember and believe the gospel...

That means that we don't grow by focusing on the fruit that Paul lists here... We grow by remembering and believing the gospel... Allowing it to shape everything that we are...

***Example:*** If you struggle with patience...

- The goal isn't behavior modification aimed at being more patient in situations
- The aim is going back to the gospel, looking at Jesus, seeing the patience he had for you!
- Then you can allow that to be the means and motivation for your patience with others...

***Personal example:*** Braxton...

***Spiritual growth and transformation happens through the power of the Spirit as we look to Jesus...***

- When the gospel is the center of your life, you will begin to experience the fruit of the Spirit...
- This means that our priority isn't beating sin, but beholding Jesus...
- This means seeing that what Jesus offers you is better and more complete than your sinful desires...

The Spirit does His best work in you when you stop trying to change in your own efforts, where you see your inability, and you look to God's ability...

- That in the same way that He saves you through faith, He also changes you through faith...

*Now what Paul's going to do is summarize the point he's been making. He says in Verse 24:*

Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Paul is showing us what the process of *walking in the Spirit* looks like...

It's crucifying/killing off the desires of your flesh...

- **Jesus...** Luke 9:23 *deny self, take up the cross daily, follow me...*

Maybe let me ask it this way: **are you at war with your sin?**

- I have said this before, but **the mark of a Christian is a man or woman who's at war with their fleshly desires...**

Or are you **happily doing the very things that Jesus bled for?**

- You have to understand that these things that Paul listed are the very things that Jesus died to free you from...

Being at war with your sin is more than just saying **no** to sinful things... This is getting under the root of why you want to do them...

- This is seeing idolatry of your desires...
- The lack of trust in your decisions...

**There's 2 things that we need to be aware of in what Paul lays out:**

1. We can't be lulled into complacency by assuming that God automatically does all we need apart from our response to the gospel...
2. Or the flip of this into thinking that it all falls on their own shoulders lapses into a "works" mentality that breeds anxiety.<sup>2</sup>

You have to understand that Paul is saying that the motivation for the Christian is what Christ has done and that motivation leads to your actions as you respond.

What we need to understand is that *walking is a form of movement. It's neither standing still nor running. It's steady movement, in a particular direction, under the power of the Spirit.*<sup>3</sup>

- That direction is toward Jesus!

**Illustration:** The Spirit is not a leader like the pace car in the "Daytona 500." He is a leader like a locomotive on a train. We do not follow in our strength. We are led by *his* power.

- So, **walk by the Spirit** means staying hooked up to the divine source of power and going wherever he leads.<sup>4</sup>

**\*The way that we do that is by fixing our eyes on Jesus.**

**Very practically...**

- Are you putting yourself in places to be reminded of the gospel??
  - Time in the Word
  - Community Group or DNA Group
  - Is the weekend Gathering a priority

The more we are anchored in the gospel, the more consistent the Spirit's work will be in our lives...

## Conclusion [VAMP]

The freedom that's been extended to us through Christ provides a new direction (**love**) and new power (**the Spirit**), giving us everything we need to walk in new life and experience transformation.<sup>5</sup>

**Here's what I want to leave you with...** In **Matt. 7:20** Jesus is preaching His sermon on the Mount...

- And He's talking about salvation and how you identify those that are saved...

And He says that: **you'll recognize them by their fruit...**

- You won't recognize them by the church they go to...
- You won't recognize them by where they send their kids to school...
- You won't recognize them by the way that they look in physical appearance...

<sup>2</sup> Moo, D. J. (2013). *Galatians* (p. 368). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

<sup>3</sup> Desiring God. Joe Rigney, *Walk the War Before You*.

<sup>4</sup> Example for John Piper

<sup>5</sup> Moo, D. J. (2013). *Galatians* (p. 348). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

- Jesus doesn't say that you will recognize them by what they say they believe...

***Jesus says that you will recognize them by their fruit!***

**IOW:** [Jesus says that you will recognize a Christian by] the change and changing lifestyle that cannot be blamed on the normal maturation process of adulthood [or even the moral norms of our culture]. It can only be blamed on the indwelling presence and power of the Spirit of God working in your life!<sup>6</sup>

The reality is that there is a response for everyone in this room this morning...

- For some of you, you need to surrender to Jesus for the first time...
- Your life is not marked by the transformational power of the Spirit inside of you...
- You need to put your faith in the finished work of Jesus, that when He died on the cross, it counted for you...
- You need to embrace His forgiveness this morning...
- You need to stop playing church, stop pandering in religion, and you need to surrender...
- Openhanded and an open heart and watch what God can do!

For others of you, there are glaring gaps in your life... There's places where the Spirit is not bearing fruit in you and you need to take it to Jesus this morning...

- There's either sinful patterns in your life that you need to confess...
- Or there's ***characteristics of the Spirit*** that you're not experiencing in your life...

The Spirit gives you access to *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control*...

- There may be one or many of those that are missing in your life...

And you need to fix you eyes on Jesus... And you need to see that this is ***not*** a list of things that Jesus wants ***from you***. This is a description of ***what He's been for you!***<sup>7</sup>

- And you need to come before the Lord and ask him to help you see that and believe that...
- Because the more you understand what Jesus has been for you, the more that thoes things will flow through you!

**CALL TO COME PRAY...**

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<sup>6</sup> Adapted from Bryan Loritts, *A Supreme love*.

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<sup>7</sup> JD Greear, *Freed to Be Alive*.