

Our Spiritual Journey: The Fruit of the Spirit

Scripture Reference: Galatians 5:13-26

Throughout the book of Galatians, Paul protects the purity of the gospel and warns believers not to turn from grace to legalism. In chapter five, he warns them to not become entangled in Old Testament rules and ordinances (Mosaic law) like circumcision. It will put them in bondage and rob them of the benefits of the liberty which Christ purchased for us (Galatians 3:1-3; 4:9-11; 5:1-12 cp. Colossians 2:6-23). Righteous, godly living is accomplished by the means of grace and the work of the Holy Spirit. It is not accomplished by the fleshly efforts of law-keeping (John 1:17). After believing in Christ, the Galatians were being tempted to go backwards into bondage.

The subject of Christian liberty has been mishandled by many. Some imply that Christian liberty makes us free from all laws and regulations of God, so that a person can just do whatever they think is best. As if to say, *“Jesus paid for all of our sins, so it doesn’t matter what we do with our bodies now!”* This lawless kind of thinking and living is soundly contradicted by the writers of the New Testament (Romans 6:1-2; 8:1-4; Jude 1:3-4; I John 3:4-10). Holy living is a mandate for those who trust Christ to save them from sin (Romans 6:6-23; Hebrews 12:14). Christian liberty is to know that we are free from Old Testament ordinances that were delivered to Israel by Moses (circumcision, sacrifices, feasts, etc. – see Acts 15:1-33; Galatians 2:1-21; 6:12-18; Colossians 2:13-14; Hebrews 8:1-13; 10:1-17). Christian liberty also compels us to freedom from the control of sinful impulses and to operate under the control of God’s perfect love by the influence of the Holy Spirit (**Galatians 5:6,13-16**; Romans 13:8-10; I Corinthians 9:19-23; James 2:8-12 cp. John 8:30-36; II Corinthians 3:18; 5:14-17).

This brings us to the subject of the fruit of the Spirit. In Scripture, godly, productive lives are often described as fruitful (Psalm 1:1-3; 92:12-15; Jeremiah 17:7-8; Matthew 13:1-9,18-23; John 15:1-8,16). A fruitful life can refer to good works in general, accomplishments in ministry, and converts through evangelism. When we focus on the fruit of the Spirit, we are referring to godly, Christ-like character. This is a work of the Holy Spirit in our lives (**Galatians 5:22-23**; Ephesians 5:9 cp. Philippians 1:11). We cannot produce this fruit on our own, but it is our responsibility to cooperate with God’s Spirit and seek to have this fruit in our lives (John 15:4-7; II Timothy 2:1; II Peter 1:2-22; 3:17-18).

Galatians chapter five challenges us in three ways, concerning our spiritual journey / our working relationship with God’s Spirit:

- Walk in the Spirit – Galatians 5:16-17, 25-26 (empowerment)
- Be led of the Spirit – Galatians 5:18-21 (direction)
- Seek the Fruit of the Spirit – Galatians 5:22-23 (character)