

The Fruit of the Spirit

Galatians 5 v 13-26

Context:

Paul's letter to the Galatians is a masterpiece in expounding the difference between three approaches to life, namely *legalism*, *license* and *liberty*. **Legalism**, an approach adopted by some members of the churches in Galatia under the influence of Jewish followers of Jesus, effectively says: 'You are *not* free to sin, and here are a set of laws to make sure you don't'. **License**, an approach taken by some other church members in opposition to the legalism group, effectively says: 'You *are* free to sin and Jesus will forgive you if you do.' Paul writes this letter to criticise both of these views and to argue for a third way which all Christians must embrace – **Liberty** effectively says: 'You are free *not* to sin through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit.' It is against this background that we read about the Fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5 v 22-26.

Observation:

1. What does Paul say the Galatians were called to be in v 13a?
2. How should they use their freedom according to the rest of v 13?
3. How does Paul summarise the Law of Moses in v 14?
4. What solemn warning does he give in v 15?
5. How can they avoid gratifying their sinful desires according to v 16?
6. What conflict does Paul describe in v 17?
7. What consequence of being led by the Spirit does Paul mention in v 18?
8. What works of the flesh/sinful nature does Paul list in v 19-21a?
9. What solemn warning does Paul give at the end of this list in v 21b?
10. In contrast to the works of the flesh/sinful nature, what are the fruit of the Spirit listed in v 22-23 and what statement does Paul make about this fruit at the end of v 23?
11. What startling statement does Paul make in v 24?
12. What command does Paul give in v 25 and what example of this does he mention in v 26?

Meaning:

1. What kind of freedom is Paul talking about in v 13? What are Christians free *from* and *for*?
2. To what extent is Paul's summary of the Law of Moses in v 14 a good one and how does it fit with the teaching of Jesus about the Old Testament Law?
3. What kind of damage can the behaviour described in v 15 do to a church community? How can this be avoided?
4. What do you think it means to 'walk by the Spirit' (v 16) and why does this kind of life help us to avoid gratifying our sinful desires?
5. Do Paul's words in v 17 resonate with you? To what extent do you experience this inner conflict and how do you deal with it?
6. What do you think Paul means in v 18?
7. What are the serious implications of living in a way described in v 19-21 and why do you think this kind of lifestyle has such solemn consequences?
8. In contrast, discuss what each of the virtues mentioned in v 22-23 mean in practice.
9. What do you think is the significance of the contrast between 'the works of the flesh' (v 19) and 'the fruit of the Spirit' (v 22)? How do 'works' and 'fruit', and 'flesh and Spirit' compare and contrast?

10. What do you think Paul means in v 24? Why, if our flesh has been crucified, does it still cause us problems?
11. What does it mean to 'keep in step with the Spirit' (v 26) and how do we do it?
12. What kind of damage can behaviour such as that mentioned in v 26 cause to our relationships and how do we avoid this?

Application:

1. Can you identify in these verses the three approaches mentioned in the Context section at the beginning of this study – Legalism, License, Liberty?
2. Are there any changes God is calling you to make as a result of doing this study?

Pray:

- Thank God for the gift of the Spirit and the fruit he produces in us.
- Pray for grace to walk in step with the Spirit.