



Alêtheia Christian Fellowship
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“Fruit = Unity”

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GALATIANS 5:13a ~ ^{13a}For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh...

GALATIANS 5:13b-15 ~ ^{13b}But through love serve one another. ¹⁴For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” ¹⁵But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.

GALATIANS 5:16 ~ ¹⁶But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh...

GALATIANS 5:17 ~ ¹⁷For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

GALATIANS 5:18 ~ ¹⁸But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.

GALATIANS 5:19-21 ~ ¹⁹Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, ²¹envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

GALATIANS 5:22-24 ~ ²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

GALATIANS 5:25&26 ~ ²⁵If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. ²⁶Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.

ἀγάπη (ä-gä-pā), Love

χαρά (xä-řä), Joy

εἰρήνη (ā-řā-nā), Peace

μακροθυμία (māk-řō-thū-mē-ä), Patience

χρηστότης (xřā-stō-tās), Kindness

ἀγαθωσύνη (ä-gä-thō-sü-nā), Goodness

πίστις (pēs-tēs), Faithfulness

πραΰτης (přä-ü-tās), Gentleness

ἐγκράτεια (ěn-křä-tā-ä) Self-control

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Galatians 5:13a – 13a For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh...

Two quick things and a question here... 1) Christians, as we are found in Christ, are not only forensically set free from sin, death, and the grave - as such, we are also, my friends, by definition, set free from legalism. We are set free in Christ Jesus from legalism. What is legalism? It is human performance to move the deity.

I do, or I say, or I chant, or I recite, or I pray, or I act, or I perform, or I sacrifice, or I abstain, or I - fill in the blank - whatever, in order to appease, propitiate, placate, or win over, some sort of supernatural force, the ancestors, the spirits, the gods, or even the God.

Can you see how the way so many people practice Christianity is fundamentally no different than the way other people practice witchcraft?

The Apostle Paul's primary point in this passage is that Christians are already God's children and His friends.

And since that is true, they can stop being legalistic and start relating well with God and with one another.

As redeemed, justified, adopted, saints, we have no need of gaining, or maintaining, our position through ceremonies, rituals, incantations, or any other religious requirements... We are His already. What is the implication? 2) The second point. As we are different from any other people on earth, we are “Called” into a different mindset and associated lifestyle. “Called” by Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, to act like... What?

The question: What is meant by, “Only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh”? Think about that. What is “An opportunity for the flesh” here?

Galatians 5:13b-15 – 13bBut through love serve one another. 14For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” 15But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.

Doesn't that strike you as odd? Paul was talking to us about freedom from legalism and caveats that with what seems to be an admonition not to get too free, by being licentious, but then follows in these verses with

serving and loving one another? Curious. Is Paul, as he's often accused, just randomly shot gunning? Has he moved from one topic to another so quickly that we just got whiplash? Nothing of the sort. Paul is a master rhetorician.

The indulgence of the flesh has everything to do with the disunity in the church... God, through Paul, is not talking about sin, for sin's sake. He's talking about the human self-aggrandizing of legalism that creates division in the Body of Christ - in the Kingdom of Heaven as we have it presently.

Anytime we have legalism, we have disharmony. Initially, we will disagree on what legalistic activities are appropriate. The strong will eventually dictate to the weak. Some of the weak will begrudgingly submit, while others will refuse. Those submitting will be miserable and those resisting will be persecuted. The church becomes the Spanish Inquisition on a micro-scale.

Left unchecked, we will. "Bite and devour one another," Ultimately, we will be, "Consumed by one another."

Galatians 5:16 – 16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh...

“Walk by the Spirit,” means live, think, speak, and act, in accordance with the Holy Spirit unity and harmony of the Kingdom of Heaven... Exist in lockstep with God, and with each other, through His power in you.

Galatians 5:17 – 17 For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

Two trajectories. You can “Walk” to fulfill your desire, live for yourself, orchestrate things to your benefit and liking and comfort zone. Manipulate others into believing you are something that you are not, and coerce them into playing your game, by your rules. Then become defensive, angry, and combative when they refuse.

On the flipside, you can let God set the parameters and let Him conform you to those parameters and let Him work at His own pace, with your siblings. If you think God is working too slowly in another person’s life, talk to Him, not the person.

You do you, and let others do themselves. Drive your own car. Look, honestly, none of us are such good drivers that we can afford to take our attention off of our own car and drive someone else's car for them simultaneously.

Galatians 5:18 – 18But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.

The “Law,” with its legalistic requirements and abundant loopholes... But most importantly for this passage, with its widely varying interpretation of dos and don'ts, that no one can agree upon... Therefore, the divisions within the Community of Believers that it causes.

But praise be to God, we are not under the “Law.” We are free to live as children, rather than as slaves.

Galatians 5:19-21 – 19Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, 21envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that

those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Scholars love to point out that this is not an all-inclusive list of vices. They do that because they assume that the Apostle Paul is talking about sin in general... He's not. Every one of the things listed here, were actual things that were taking place in the early church that caused division.

This has everything to do with being so concerned about self-righteousness, that there was no way the church could get along with each other.

It had everything to do with what goes on today in every church in the world. People doing what they think is right in their own eyes without care or concern about what effect that has on the group. Frankly, people don't care about the church community - the church family - if it pushes them out of their own personal comfort zone. As an example: 1) Take faithful members of a church. 2) Dramatically change the style of worship music in that church. 3) Sit back and discover that they weren't nearly as committed as you thought.

Galatians 5:22-24 – 22But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. 24Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Again, those passions and desires in this regard are the inclination to put ourselves, our opinions, and agenda ahead of others - to live the way we think best, rather than the way of harmony and unity.

We have talked about the “Kingdom of Heaven” so much over the last few months, that by now, you all know that it is a state of being, where God’s Will is completely unopposed, in any way, shape, or form. It is, therefore, a reality of pure love... Pure love, with its complete acceptance, drives out all fear... Where there is perfected love, there can be no fear at all, and we are left with perfect relational harmony and unity.

If we don’t have a burning desire, spurred by the Holy Spirit, to sacrifice our personal interests and opinions for harmony and unity in the Body of Christ now - we are going to hate Heaven.

And indeed, the Bible declares right here, that if that describes us, we don't need to worry about it at all. People led by their own selfish, self-serving, self-promoting ways, "Will not inherit the Kingdom of God."

Galatians 5:25-26 – 25If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. 26Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.

To live by the Spirit means to be made alive by the Spirit and is to be born again... It is to be a Christian. If we claim Christ, then we must live in accordance with that claim. If we don't walk the walk, it is completely useless to talk the talk - we're just deceiving ourselves.

Please note... Only that self-deception can explain Jesus' pronouncement that there will be people saying, "Lord, Lord," to which Jesus will respond, "I tell you the Truth, I never knew you. Away from Me you evil doer" (Matthew 7:22&23). Can you see it? People who talk the talk, but walk a different walk - a walk of evil doing - a walk of doing the "Deeds of the flesh." A walk of legalistic doing to elevate self, rather than a walk of relational sacrifice.

Please don't make it about sin in general, or staying on the religious straight and narrow. The sin here, is putting yourself ahead of God, and ahead of your fellow Christians, and ahead of the lost... All to their detriment.

It isn't about behavior per se, it's about an attitude of fear that would rather serve self than selflessly serve.

What that means, to take one example, is God is not prohibiting drunkenness because it is a sin... He's prohibiting the selfish indulgence that harms relationship.

Let's get more specific. When a person indulges in drinking to the point of a loss of judgment - the definition of drunkenness - they have essentially chosen to put themselves ahead of God, their family (both at home and at church), as well as ahead of their witness to the unsaved... In short, they have done what they "Please," putting their "Flesh with its passions and desires," ahead of the "Kingdom of Heaven" and indulged in the deeds of the flesh.

Now, again, it isn't that God is offended by drunkenness itself - it's the underlying attitude leading to it and the damage done by it...

In drunkenness, God is blasphemed, because He was insufficient for you... You had to find whatever it is you had to have, in overindulgence, rather than in Him... In a bottle, instead of in the Bible.

In drunkenness, your family (generally your spouse and children, but perhaps parents, or others) are, at a bare minimum, frightened. Of course, it can be a whole lot worse for them than just being scared, and often is, but please recognize, merely causing fear in your family is inexcusable - it's outrageously selfish. Drink to the point of harming your loved ones - their sense of family - their sense of safety, security, and stability in the home - their sense of reliable relationship with you... Unacceptable.

In drunkenness, your church family receives the message - I care a whole lot more about my own personal needs, than I do about anyone in my church, who might be affected.

In drunkenness, all credibility is lost as a minister of God's grace to others.

Now, of course, God is good, and He forgives... But, who again is it that He forgives? God forgives those who repent. Repentance means that we recognize the evil and turn away from it.

As born-again Christians we did repent of our sinfully selfish lifestyles and He saved us once and for all... There is no need to be re-Saved every day, week, or year... What there is though is a reality check. If a person is not driven to "Walk by the Spirit," do they truly, "Live by the Spirit"? See? That's what this means... The person who lives by the Spirit is the person reborn by the Spirit and so a Spirit-filled Christian, but if they don't walk by that same Spirit is the first part true?

How can we walk by the Spirit Who has made us alive? We take the Fruit of the Holy Spirit and understand it as not only a partial listing of elements making up that singular fruit, but also as a stairstep circle... One thing enabling the next all the way around to the beginning and around and around we go in an upward spiral of

love, harmony and unity, as opposed to the downward spiral of self-indulgence.

ἀγάπη (ä-gä-pā), Love. We love because He first loved us. We gain the cerebral knowledge, but it isn't until we actually believe that He loves us, that we can get off this first step. So many Christians are stuck right here. never able to fully embrace the love of God that He has poured out into their heart.

When we become convinced that God truly loves us, that He has us, and that He will never let us go, we step up to...

χαρά (xä-rä), Joy. Joy is not at all what people think Joy is. Biblical Joy is the underlying reason for the emotional feeling we recognize as joy, well-being, or even happiness. As the foundation of the feeling, it is eschatological. What do I mean? When we know that God loves us, we realize that no matter what's happening, no matter how things look, it's going to be alright.

In fact, when we really embrace His love for us, we know that no matter how bad things seem, it will all be

perfect in the end. Therefore, my worry, my struggle, my fear, is gone, and I experience Joy.

εἰρήνη (ā-r̄ā-nā), Peace. Only when I have Joy, am I able to be at peace with God, with others, and with myself. Peace, like Joy, is not the emotional feeling, but the underlying reality enabling the feeling. It is a peace treaty with God that has been in place all along, that I now fully accept. Because I have peace with God, I can have peace, at least from my side of the equation, with others. Then, and only, then, do I have true peace with myself.

μακροθυμία (māk-r̄ō-thū-mē-ä), Patience. Patience is the proof of love. It's where love is demonstrated. In order to be long-suffering, one must first be long bothered. God isn't moving fast enough for your liking. Your fellow Christian is remedial. You, yourself keep making the same mistake over and over... Be patient.

You are at peace with God, with others and with yourself... Relax, have a cream soda, take a chill pill, it's all going to work out just fine... Trust God.

χρηστότης (x̄r̄ā-stō-tās), Kindness. Kindness is an attitude born out of patience. If I'm patient teaching a

person a skill, it not only comes across to them as Kindness, it actually fosters that attitude in me.

It's like the Florence Nightingale effect. The more patient I am with a person, the more I care about them, connect with them, and am favorably disposed towards them.

ἀγαθωσύνη (ä-gä-thō-sü-nā), Goodness. Goodness is simply the outworking in actual deeds of Kindness. It is Kindness actualized. It is acting like our Heavenly Father by doing what is best for another. What is “Good,” may not be what they want, but it is what is best.

Loving boundaries are born on this step.

πίστις (pēs-tēs), Faithfulness. By now, we are actively acting for the “Good” of God and the group... Which is the “Good” for our self as well, but as the byproduct, never as the thing sought. As such we can be counted on... That's what faithfulness is... Goodness that has become so habitual, that it can be counted on.

πραΰτης (přä-ü-tās), Gentleness. This is not the gentleness of being a door mat for others because of

weakness... This is the self-submitting gentleness that can only ever come from a position of extreme power.

What power? The power that comes from Christian maturity. What do I mean? I mean a mature Christian is a person with so much faith that they are unshakeable and can easily afford to be gentle to others.

The two most common conversations I have concern Theology and flying. I often talk to people who, comparatively speaking, don't have a clue, but they want to share their opinion, nonetheless.

When I was less experienced, and less knowledgeable, such interjections would annoy me... Now? I don't care. I have nothing to prove. If someone with little to no experience wants to tell me how it is, I'm okay - I'm not threatened - I can be incredibly gentle with them.

ἐγκράτεια (ĕn-křä-tā-ä) Self-control. That's what being consistently gentle is. The Apostle Paul summed up everything it is to be a Christian with this one word, that we turn into a hyphenated word in English. The truly mature Christian trusts God so much they are in control of themselves.

Such people can experience the love of God in a much deeper way and up the scale we go again.

It starts with accepting God's love. Can you do that?