

Implications of the Fruit of the Spirit: Liberty

A Series on the Fruit of the Spirit: Part 1

1. Galatians 5:13 speaks of Believers being “free.” Does Paul speak of “freedom,” “liberty” or “free” earlier in this letter to the Galatians? Carefully observe this background that leads up to Paul’s “fruit of the Spirit” in Galatians 5:22-23.

But it was because of the false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our **liberty** which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage. (Gal 2:4)

Apparently some in Jerusalem believed that some aspects of the Law, such as circumcision, was required as part of salvation. For their part in adding to the gospel, Paul calls these Jewish Believers “false brethren.” To the Galatians, Paul wants them to know that the gospel liberates them from the rituals of the Mosaic Law.

Tell me, you who want to be under law, do you not listen to the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman and one by the **free** woman. But the son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and the son by the **free** woman through the promise. This is allegorically speaking, for these women are two covenants: one proceeding from Mount Sinai bearing children who are to be slaves; she is Hagar. Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is **free**; she is our mother. For it is written, “Rejoice, barren woman who does not bear; Break forth and shout, you who are not in labor; For more numerous are the children of the desolate Than of the one who has a husband.” And you brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise. But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now also. But what does the Scripture say? “Cast out the bondwoman and her son, For the son of the bondwoman shall not be an heir with the son of the free woman.” So then, brethren, we are not children of a bondwoman, but of the **free** woman. (Gal 4:21-31)

As in Jerusalem, some in Galatia felt that the blessing of salvation was reserved for Jews, heirs of the promise who traced their physical descent from Abraham and desired to impose Jewish requirements on Galatian Believers. In response, Paul declares that “there is neither Jew nor Greek” (Gal 3:28), “if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise” (Gal 3:18), and “if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendants” (Gal 3:28-29), and appeals to the Galatians that they are free of the Law and its stipulations. The Law is bondage, because it does not bring salvation. Only faith in Christ achieves freedom from the penalty of one’s sins, freedom from God’s judgment, and freedom from living under the obligations imposed by the Law.

Paul further addresses the issue of the physical descent of Abraham as a requirement for the blessing with an explicit allegory contrasting two of Abraham’s sons, Ishmael and Isaac.

The Bond (slave) woman’s son (Ishmael) is born according to the flesh (natural means – Gen 16:2).	The Free woman’s son (Isaac) is born according to God’s promise (the miracle – Gen 18:11-14).
The Bond woman symbolized the Old Covenant and earthly Jerusalem.	The Free woman symbolized the New Covenant and heavenly Jerusalem.
Implication: Advocates of Judaism are born of the Bond woman, slaves to sin and not an heir to God’s promised blessing.	Implication: Faith in Jesus makes the Galatian Christians sons of God and heirs to His promised blessings and freedom from the penalty of sin.

Implications of the Fruit of the Spirit: Liberty
A Series on the Fruit of the Spirit: Part 1 (page 2)

It was for **freedom** that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. (Gal 5:1)

In this one verse, Paul sums up his allegory and appeal: since Jesus Christ's purpose was to set man free of the penalty of sin, stand firm and resist the imposition of Judaism's religious regulations.

For you were called to **freedom**, brethren; only do not turn your **freedom** into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Gal 5:13-14)

While license is a reflection of one's selfishness and self indulgence, the nature of Paul's freedom is serving others through love, which Paul teaches is the ultimate purpose of the Law. Faith finds its expression through love, and it is not determined by man-made rules or regulations. Given that Believers are still capable of sinning, freedom from the penalty of sin confers a responsibility of living rightly as one strives for holiness.

2. Examine the contrast observed in Galatians 5:16-24. What do you learn about the Holy Spirit and the "fruit of the Spirit?"

The flesh sets its desire against the Spirit (Gal 5:17)	The Spirit sets its desire against the flesh (Gal 5:17)
Deeds of the flesh – a natural product of man	Fruit of the Spirit – the natural product of the Holy Spirit
Violation of one's physical body: immorality, impurity, and sensuality Violation of God's relationship: idolatry and sorcery Violation of human relationship: enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, and envying Violation of one's mind: drunkenness, carousing, and things like these	Character from God: love, joy, and peace Character towards others: patience, kindness, and goodness Character towards oneself: faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control
"Deeds" is in the plural and indicates a variety of evil behaviors and conduct	"Fruit" is singular and indicates that these character attributes occur as a whole

Paul implies that the natural inclination of human beings, whether Believer or not, is to live according to our fleshly desires.

Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. (Gal 5:24)

If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. (Gal 5:25)

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. 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. (Gal 5:16-17)

Implications of the Fruit of the Spirit: Liberty
A Series on the Fruit of the Spirit: Part 1 (page 3)

Paul makes clear that the war between the “flesh” and the “Spirit” cannot be won by the efforts of the Believer alone. Christians will not carry out their desires of the flesh only if they “walk by the Spirit.” Holiness is not humanly possible, it requires divine enablement.

References:

1. Gaeblein FE ed., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol 10, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House (1992).
2. Swindoll CR, Zuck RB eds., *Understanding Christian Theology*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, (2003).
3. Grudem W, *Systematic Theology*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, (2000).

Implications of the Fruit of the Spirit: Liberty
A Series on the Fruit of the Spirit: Part 1

1. Galatians 5:13 speaks of Believers being “free.” Does Paul speak of “freedom,” “liberty” or “free” earlier in this letter to the Galatians? Carefully observe this background that leads up to Paul’s “fruit of the Spirit” in Galatians 5:22-23.

2. Examine the contrast observed in Galatians 5:16-24. What do you learn about the Holy Spirit and the “fruit of the Spirit?”