

## GALATIANS 5

Among other important facts established in Gal 4, two are pertinent to the beginning of Galatians 5:

### **Galatians 4:6-7**

6 And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" 7 Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.

### **Galatians 4:30-31**

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."

31 So then, brethren, we are not children of a bondwoman, but of the free woman.

We, who are baptized into Christ (Gal 3:26-29), are sons and heirs; and as heirs, we are free. Only bondage remains for those turning back to the law or any other perversions of the gospel, according to Gal 1:6-10.

## Christian Liberty

### **Galatians 5:1-7**

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

*2 Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. 3 And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. 4 You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. 5 For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness. 6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.*

Why, if Christ has made us free by the liberty bought with his death on the cross, would we want to turn again to the bondage of pagan idolatry or Judaism and the Law of Moses? Yet religions claiming Christian affiliations have done it even beginning at this time in the first century until now. If one binds the law (circumcision), Christ will profit nothing. And if we or modern religions bind a part of the law we are in debt to the whole law. Many present day practices seek Old Testament justification: praise worship, infant baptism, instrumental music, feast days and Sabbaths, incense burning, etc. Have they not become estranged from Christ? In fact, the writer says plainly, "You have fallen from grace."

The faithful will remain true to the faith (Jude 3) by faith working through love of the Lord, his church, and his gospel.

## Love Fulfills the Law

### Galatians 5:7-10

7 You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth? 8 This persuasion did not come from Him who calls you. 9 A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough. 10 I have confidence in you in the Lord, that you will adopt no other view; but the one who is disturbing you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is.

Sometimes we get a good start, faithful to the word of the New Testament, but false teachers hinder us, planting false teachings, unfounded in the scriptures. Once they come in and place that teaching in the heart of just one member, the false teaching runs like leaven through the entire congregation. Paul believes that they will return to the mind of Christ, and the false teacher will stand the judgment of God.

### **Galatians 5:11-15**

*11 But I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? Then the stumbling block of the cross has been abolished. 12 Would that those who are troubling you would even mutilate themselves.*

*13 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. 14 For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 15 But if you bite and devour one another, take care lest you be consumed by one another.*

Let us suppose that we, as Paul, might go along with perversions of the gospel. In Paul's case this was circumcision. In our case, it will be the many perversions of the day, the offense of the cross will not cease just because we go along. Paul may hope, but those that teach falsely will never go away.

Those of us, who are called to the liberty in Jesus, are not called to seek opportunity for the flesh. The opportunity that we have is to love and serve one another. There is only one thing that we get from the law: "Love your neighbor as yourself." To bite and devour one another leads to our destruction at the hands of one another.

## **Walking in the Spirit**

### **Galatians 5:16-18**

*16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. 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. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.*

### **The Spirit against the Flesh**

Walking in the Spirit keeps us from fulfilling the lust of the flesh. In fulfilling the lust of the flesh, we sin just as James described in James 1:14-15:

But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. 15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

The great war within us is the flesh lusting against the Spirit and the Spirit lusting against the flesh. In Ephesians 6:10-12, Paul described this war in more detail placing the devil and his minions in the leadership role:

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. 11 Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

### **The Works of the Flesh**

### **Galatians 5:19-22**

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

**The first three mentioned works of the flesh (immorality, impurity, and sensuality) are public and personal sins including participating in evil or showing evil for others to see:**

**1. Immorality** includes adultery which is is unfaithfulness from within the marriage contract. Hebrews 13:4 teaches:

4 Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.

To Peter in 2 Peter 2:13-14, this evil may be carousing through the church:

They are stains and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, **as they carouse with you**, 14 having eyes full of adultery and that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls.

Modern permissive marriage laws promote adultery and unlawful remarriage even among those within the church.

Immorality also includes *fornication* which is unrestricted sexual abuse outside the marriage contract and often translated as *sexual immorality*. In our age we are talking about sexually active teenagers, unmarried adults committing sexual misconduct, now called casual sex, and homosexuality, which the Bible condemns in the most clear and certain terms. Paul shows sexual immorality to be a sin of unique and irrevocable dangers and consequences in 1 Corinthians 6:18-20:

8 Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. 19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? 20 For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

Homosexuality, in spite of its contemporary publicity and mounting public approval, is a sexually immoral sin of certain condemnation. Paul wrote in Romans 1:26-27:

26 For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, 27 and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.

**2. Impurity** in the original language indicates relationship between false religion and permissive immorality: “suggestive of the fact that sensuality and evil doctrine are frequently associated.” (from Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Copyright © 1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers.) This easily is illustrated by modern religious festivals which become an excuse for unbridled licentiousness. Mardi Gras comes to mind, and also the reveling and emotional dancing of some praise worshipers.

**3. Sensuality** is unchaste, vulgar, obscene behavior. Perhaps the meaning is seen best through its synonyms: bawdy, blue, coarse, crude, dirty, filthy, foul, gross, gutter, impure, indecent, lascivious, obscene, locker-room, nasty, pornographic, porno, profane, raunchy, ribald, smutty, trashy, unprintable, vulgar, wanton, X-rated.

**The next two mentioned works of the flesh are sins of religious implications (idolatry, sorcery) with a history of promoting false teaching and unrighteous acts:**

**1. Idolatry** with its sins and dangers is clearly defined and condemned in the New Testament; yet, it runs rampant in the world today, finding its expression even in religions that claim to be Christian. From statues of Buddha to the angel of Maroni of Mormons to the many, many graven images of the Roman church, idolatry is alive and well in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The prohibition against carved images or statues of worship in the New Testament follow the Old Testament in its condemnation without qualification. The Ten Commandments set the standard with exact words in Exodus 20:4-6; 22-23:

4 "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. 5 You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, 6 but showing loving kindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

22 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'You yourselves have seen that I have spoken to you from heaven. 23 'You shall not make other gods besides Me; gods of silver or gods of gold, you shall not make for yourselves

The apostle Paul affirmed this teaching in the New Testament in Romans 1:20-23:

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. 21 For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, or give thanks; but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

24 Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, that their bodies might be dishonored among them. 25 For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

For Christians who may think the carved statues of worship make little difference, God warns of his wrath in Romans 1:18-20:

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.

And if 21<sup>st</sup> century Christians are tempted to dabble in idolatry, 2 Corinthians 6:16 forewarns:

16 Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God.

The most common form of idolatry today and the one Christians are most cunningly deceived by is money—the all mighty dollar. Consider the declaration of Jesus in Matthew 6:24:

24 "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. [NIV translates: mammon, money].

Paul called covetousness and greed *idolatry* in Colossians 3:5-6:

5 Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. 6 For it is on account of these things that the wrath of God will come,

**2. Sorcery** is called witchcraft in the NIV. In Bible times, they professed to perform miracles and speak prophetic words called, sooth saying, which is the pretense of prophecy by supernatural

means. In this category, fall the modern (new age) prophets and miracle workers. Their fate is certain as stated in Revelation 21:8:

8 "But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

**The next set of the works of the flesh is the most numerous of all these. They are sins of division and animosity among the brothers and sisters (enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, 21 envying) which destroy the church.**

Whatever else is said of controversy in the church, many times the scriptural truth of a position is offset by the mean and nasty way it is presented and side-picking efforts that go along with it. There are eight of the sins listed, outnumbering the immoral sins and the false teaching sins all together. Their meaning is self-evident; their presence in the congregation where they exist is obvious; their destructive nature moves like wildfire. Alas, opposition by the faithful may be tepid and timid, especially if the leader is popular and charismatic.

**1. Enmities** has a special prohibition; for we are neither to hate our brothers nor our enemies, as Jesus taught in Matthew 5:43-45:

43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.'  
44 "But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you.

**2. Strife** are tendencies to quarrels and disputes. Paul elaborated in Titus 3:9-11:

9 But shun foolish controversies and genealogies and **strife** and disputes about the Law; for they are unprofitable and worthless. 10 Reject a factious man after a first and second warning, 11 knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned.

**3. Jealousies** find modern meaning in synonyms: covetousness, enviousness, green-eyed monster, envy, resentment.

**4. Outbursts of anger** are destructive to a congregation in an open and blatant way. God would have us flee from wrath as in 1 Thessalonians 5:9-10

9 For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, 10 who died for us, that whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with Him.

James 1:19-20 addresses the appropriate behavior of Christians, leaving no room for wrath:

19 This you know, my beloved brethren. But let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; 20 for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.

**5. Disputes (Selfish ambitions in NIV)** is the subject of Paul's illustration of preachers who have sinful motivation in Philippians 1:15-17:

15 Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from good will; 16 the latter do it out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel; 17 the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment.

The appropriate attitude toward our brothers and sisters contrasts to selfish ambition in Philippians 2:3-4:

3 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; 4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

**6. Dissensions** depend on factions and cliques to survive. By definition they are destructive and dangerous: disagreements; especially partisan and with contentious quarreling.

**7. Factions** denotes “‘a choosing, choice’ . . . then, ‘that which is chosen,’ and hence, ‘an opinion,’ especially a self-willed opinion, which is substituted for submission to the power of truth, and leads to division and the formation of sects . . . such erroneous opinions are frequently the outcome of personal preference or the prospect of advantage; . . .” (from Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Copyright © 1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers.)

In short, opinions versus scripture lead to division and the creation of factions and sects: our world sees many of these opinions championed by sectarianism: new age prophecies; homosexual approval; God did not create man; there are many churches; rowdy, reveling church services; permissive sex among all peoples; non-contested divorce—to mention only a few common factions.

**8. Envy** speaks to our desire to have what belongs to another: their beauty, wealth, family, knowledge, wisdom, etc. The sin of envy is coupled with self-seeking according to **James 3:14-17**:

14 But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. 15 This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. 16 For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.

How different this spirit is than the one described as the mind of Christ in Philippians 2:3-6:

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; 4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. 5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,

## The Fruit of the Spirit

### **Galatians 5:22-24**

*22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*

This writing will save the specific definitions of the wonderful fruit of the Spirit until another lesson. For now, note the repetition of these traits in the various scriptures. Paul wrote in Philippians 4:8-9:

8 Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things. 9 The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things; and the God of peace shall be with you.

Peter's rendition of these works (fruits) of the Spirit tells us to add them in 2 Peter 1:5-8 in order not to be unfruitful:

5 Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge; 6 and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; 7 and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. 8 For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Galatians 5:24-26

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

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

NASB If we are Christ's we have crucified the flesh with the passions and desires. We, who were baptized into Christ, did put on Christ. Paul called it doing away with the body of sin, in Rom 6:4,6,11, 12:

Romans 6:3-13

4 Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; 7 for he who has died is freed from sin. 8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. 10 For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. 11 Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts,

NASB 12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts.

Thus ends the war between the Spirit and the flesh: **Let us live in the Spirit; let us walk in the Spirit.**