

Galatians 5:23b-26 “Do You Live Under the law of Christ?”

GAL 5:22-26 “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.”

It’s interesting that most of this letter to the Galatians is a refutation of the Law of Moses as a means to righteousness. Early on in this letter we see this.

GAL 2:16 “know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.”

GAL 3:10 “All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.”

And as has been pointed out the Judaizers were busy trying to get the Gentile believers in Galatia to submit to circumcision as part of their salvation experience.

But we’ve also seen that the law was essential and important for two reasons:

1) to curb sin..... GAL 3:19 “What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come.”

2) To lead us to Christ..... GAL 3:24 “So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.”

And so, as believers in Christ Jesus the law, (and here we’re speaking of the Law of Moses), is irrelevant in our lives as a standard by which we please God. In fact, a person who is under the law is a person whose sinful nature is in need of restraint, which again is one of the purposes of the law. And that person cannot please God.

ROM 8:8 “Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.”

And so, for the person who is trying to earn his way to heaven by being good enough as he keeps the law, (be that the Law of Moses, or a law of his own choosing), is really only running in place. He’s getting no more closer to pleasing God or earning a righteous standing with God than the person who has no regard for the law.

Outside of faith in Christ we all stand condemned. But when we looked at the fruit of the Spirit last week we saw something very interesting. We saw a contrast in the lives of those who have the Spirit of God by faith in Christ with those who don’t.

Remember how Paul had given us the deeds of the flesh in Gal.5:19-21? They ranged from sexual immorality to envying and drunkenness. And in a sense this is the law of the flesh. In other words, this is the principle of sin working itself out in the lives of human beings.

And so, when we use the word law we can apply it to a number of things. We can apply it to that principle which God had given to Israel through Moses and by which their lives were to come under its control. We can apply the word law to the principle which is inherent in the natural man which we know as the sinful nature.

But we can also apply the word law to that new principle which is now a part of every believer in Christ whose new life or new nature is governed by God in the power of the Spirit.

Whenever we use the word law in a biblical context we are talking about coming under some form of control. Israel, for example, was commanded to come under the control of God as He laid down the standard which was given to Israel on Mount Sinai.

The natural man is by nature under control of the flesh. He was born with a sin nature and that nature desires to please self.

But the believer in Christ is also under a law, but it’s not the law of the sinful nature and it’s not the Law of Moses. When we looked at the fruit of the Spirit we saw that a believer who is under the control of the Spirit lives in a way that reflects the nature of God.

That’s why it’s called the fruit of the Spirit. It’s not a natural fruit of man, and it’s not even a natural fruit of the believer. It’s a fruit or an outworking of God Himself which is seen through the believer who is now under the control of God.

Again, remember, the word law speaks to that which takes control of a person, be it the Law of Moses or the law of the sinful nature. It is a living and active reality which shows its own kind of fruit. And in the case of the believer the living and active reality is nothing short of the living and active God Himself who is conforming us into the image of Christ.

Now, if we are living in the Spirit and we are demonstrating the fruit of the Spirit which includes love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, then we are living the kind of life which the Law of Moses or any civil law points to, but can't fully accomplish in a way which will please God.

And this is why there is no law or controlling factor that can come against the fruit of the Spirit because there is no law that can come against God who is the source of that fruit working in and through the life of a believer.

This is precisely why Paul adds at the end of verse 23, "Against such things there is no law."

Can you imagine someone creating a law which puts you in jail for being kind to someone, or being patient with someone? How about a law which convicts you of a crime if you show love or gentleness or self-control in the course of your life?

Paul is saying that if you have the mind of Christ and the Spirit of Christ being worked out in your life as you love the Lord and obey Him then the world has no choice but to take note of the fact that God is alive and well and is demonstrating His compassion and mercy and love in you, and God is glorified in the process.

And for the first time in our lives we can live under a law, or under the control of the God of this universe, so that we might show ourselves to be united to our God in love. This is what Paul told the Romans.

ROM 8:1-2 "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death."

In other words, because I've received the atoning work of Christ on the cross by faith alone, I have His righteousness put to my account and I have been declared not guilty. I cannot be condemned by God. And as a result of this relationship I live under

the control of my God, which Paul calls the law of the Spirit of life which has set me free from the law of sin and death.

ROM 10:4 “Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.”

And here’s the point to all of this. For the first time in our lives we actually have the ability and the power to please God with our lives. We now have the ability to accomplish what Adam gave up in the garden.

Remember, Adam and Eve were created to have perfect fellowship with their God and creator. They squandered that when they rebelled against the Lord. Now, granted that relationship was, in a sense, reestablished when they believed the Lord’s promise to send a Savior, born of the seed of the woman, but it was greatly curtailed because of the introduction of the law of the sinful nature in their members.

And so, from that time on they struggled with the sinful nature and the promise they were given which they received by faith. In a sense they could say with Paul, “For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.” (ROM 7:22-23)

Unlike Adam and Eve, every believer since the resurrection of Jesus Christ has the unique relationship with the Spirit of God in that each one of us has been indwelt with the Holy Spirit, and therefore we have the power of the Spirit to accomplish God’s will in a new and dynamic way. And so in that sense we have something Adam and Eve didn’t have.

But because we are given a new nature in Christ our lives don’t have to come under the control, or if you will, under the law of the sinful nature, nor under the Law of Moses which was meant to curb the sinful nature.

We live under a new law of life and freedom in Christ and we are meant to let that new life take precedence to the degree that the old nature no longer is our master and lord.

And as we walk in this new life in the power of the Spirit who has given us life in Christ then that new law of life will begin to show itself with the fruit of the one who gave us life, thus the fruit of the

Spirit. And this fruit will begin to work itself out in many practical ways.

ROM 13:8 “Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law.”

ROM 13:10 “Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.”

GAL 5:14 “The entire law is summed up in a single command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

GAL 6:2 “Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”

Now keep in mind that we're not simply in the business of obeying a law, but rather we fulfill it in Christ as we demonstrate His life in us. But, I love the way James describes this law of Christ.

JAM 2:8 “If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing right.”

We have the privilege of walking in the royal law. The word royal as James describes it literally means a law emanating from a king or befitting or worthy of a king. When we walk in the Spirit with the fruit of the Spirit we are showing ourselves as coming under the control of the King of kings and Lord of lords. It is a royal life showing the royal touch from our King.

And it is at this point that we fulfill what Peter describes us to be in Christ.

1PE 2:9 “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”

This is what it means to walk in the Spirit. This is what it means to bear the fruit of the Spirit. It is all meant to point the world back to the One who gives life and delivers us from the law of sin and death, and in the process we give glory to God.

As Paul closes out this chapter he once again is going to make this contrast between having life in Christ and being conformed to the world. But he also states quite clearly how this is accomplished.

GAL 5:24 “Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.”

First we note that we belong to Christ. This is the language of ownership. This is the language of what it means to come under the lordship or control of someone else. Some might look at this in a negative way, but for the believer it should make our hearts soar because it confirms that since we belong to Christ our old master can never claim us again.

ROM 6:13-14 “Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.”

This whole idea of ownership is something we sometimes lose sight of, especially in a world which teaches us that we become our own island, we determine our own destinies without anyone else.

Well, Jesus made it clear that ownership determines outcome. And in the case of the Jews of Christ’s day they learned from the lips of our Lord Jesus that ownership was something we should consider as there are really only two owners in a spiritual sense with two entirely different outcomes and destinations.

JOH 8:44-47 “You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me! Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me? He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God.”

Who we belong to makes an eternal difference. And if we belong to Christ than we have the assurance that He will never let us go.

JOH 6:39 -40 “And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”

If we belong to Christ then there is nothing in heaven or hell which can snatch us away from our God and Savior. Jesus says, I shall lose none, and I will raise him up at the last day.

JOH 10:28-30 "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one."

We ought to rejoice in that truth everyday of our lives. And one of the ways we do that is to not only understand who we belong to, but also the One who belongs to us in that we are in Christ and He in us.

And out of thanks we crucify the flesh on a daily basis. That's what Paul says in our text. Now what does he mean by this? Well, the word crucify is not used by accident. In fact, in every place in the bible where the word crucify is used it's used primarily of Jesus Christ who was crucified for our sin.

There's only four places where the word crucify refers to something other than Christ's death. This is one of them in our text. The word crucify ultimately refers to the execution and death of someone.

In our modern vernacular when we use the phrase "they got the chair" we're not talking about the lounge chair. We're talking about the execution and death of a criminal.

And so, whenever the term crucify came up in the Roman world it was always in reference to the execution and death of a criminal. Well, in a similar way when Paul uses the term crucify to describe what happens to our sinful nature he is saying that it needs to be put to death.

There are two senses in which he speaks of crucifying the flesh. One is a positional perspective while the other is a practical perspective.

Positionally speaking, when we accepted Christ's sacrifice on the cross for our sins we also accepted the result of that sacrifice which is death and therefore full payment of our sin. But in accepting that payment we also accepted the reality that sin is no longer our master. This is what Paul meant when writing to the Romans.

ROM 6:1 -2 “What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?”

Our position before God is such that we are no longer viewed as sinners who are condemned. We are viewed by God as righteous because of Christ’s righteousness put to our account. And this, by the way, is the reason we are seen as friends of God. Outside of Christ we are His enemies.

And so, positionally, we are clean. Though our sins were as scarlet we have been made white as snow, though they were red as crimson, they have been made like wool.”

Paul took this same truth and put it this way to the Romans.

ROM 6:5-7 “If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin - because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.”

And so, positionally we are free from sin because we have died to it in Christ. We are free from the penalty of sin and therefore in Christ we are united to Him and we belong to Him. But when Paul uses the term crucify here in Romans and in our text in connection to our old self being crucified, or put to death, he also uses it in a practical outworking in our lives.

If our old natures, or our old sinful ways have been put to death positionally, then it stands to reason that we can now walk in that reality in a practical way to the glory of God who saved us from penalty and power of sin, which is death.

And so there is a sense in which one follows the other. If you have life then you live. If you’ve died to sin then sin is dead in your life and life takes priority.

However, the cold hard facts remain that despite how we have died to sin positionally, our sin nature persists on a practical level. And this is where the struggle comes in. This is why the fruit of the Spirit in our lives sometimes looks more like that tiny green unripe fruit instead of the robust ripe fruit.

And this is Paul’s point back in our text. He is saying that you belong to Christ Jesus and have crucified the sinful nature with its

passions and desires. Notice he is talking in the past tense; have crucified the sinful nature, not, are crucifying the sinful nature.

And what he means is that your reality is that the old man has been put to death at the cross of Christ when we accepted Christ's sacrifice on our behalf. And because of that reality we can now daily put our old man to death as we walk in this sin-filled world which is always vying for our allegiance.

In other words, it comes back to choices based on which nature we submit to. Do we submit to the old nature and sin against God in any given situation, or do we submit to the Spirit and obey our Lord and please Him in the process as we bring glory to His name?

The way in which we flee from the old man is by actively seeking and then doing the things of the Spirit in love and obedience.

GAL 5:25 "Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit."

What Paul means by this is again what we said earlier and that is if we have life, let's live.

If the Spirit of God has given us eternal life, then it makes all the sense in the world to walk or keep in step with the Spirit who not only gave us this life but who now empowers us to do that.

How do we keep in step with the Spirit? We follow Christ. We seek after the living word and we become doers of the word. The things of the Spirit by which we keep in step with the Spirit are those things the Spirit has given us.

He has first and foremost given us the word of God as we have it in both the old and new testaments as He revealed this word through His prophets and apostles. But in giving us this word He has revealed the Son of God who is the word become flesh.

If we are ever to walk in the Spirit we can never neglect the word of the Spirit of God. But He has also given us each other. We are one in the Spirit, we are united in the Spirit, in the sense that we are all part of the same body; the body of Christ.

And as the body of Christ we are commanded by our Lord to come together for fellowship, for worship, for breaking bread together as we have before us this morning in the Lord's Supper.

These are all ways in which we can walk in the Spirit and grow in the Spirit and thus begin to demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit in a

dynamic and meaningful way as we are being conformed into the image of Christ.

But there is a process involved in this and part of this has to do with engaging our minds as we seek those things above. The world often characterizes us as mindless people who have a blind faith. That simply isn't true.

But if we are not using our minds as we read God's word, as we use our gifts, as we walk in the Spirit, as we meditate on those things the Lord teaches us then we are not feeding the new man we are in Christ.

ROM 8:5 "Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires."

ROM 12:2 "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will."

Are we being renewed into the image of Christ? That can only truly happen as we engage our minds, which includes our wills, as we seek Christ through the means He has given us through the power He has given us in His Spirit.

Not to pursue the things of the Spirit will lead us to pursuing the things of the flesh or old nature and as Paul closes this chapter he gives the Galatians and us what that will produce.

GAL 5:26 "Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other."

The law which the Judaizers were trying to force on these Galatians created a division of pride within the body of Christ; conceit and envy. The law is a feeble attempt to gain favor with God. It's an attempt to please the Lord and that will never happen. But it doesn't mean that the law doesn't accomplish anything when added to the finished work of Christ on the cross.

But it's all negative in nature. It produces a fleshly approach to a spiritual life. It's a dead man's approach to one who has life. The two don't mix. The new law we have in Christ is a law which is written on our hearts and one which will show itself to be alive.

It is a royal law which loves God above all and our neighbors as ourselves. But unless we engage ourselves in this new life on a daily basis we are only feeding the old nature and the one we feed the most is the one who is most active.

Let's keep in step with the Spirit as we encourage each other to pursue the things of the Spirit.

GAL 5:16-18 "So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law."