

Gospel Freedom

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[0 : 00] Let's pray. Our Father in heaven thank you for your word and we pray now as we hear it and as we continue to meditate on your revelation to us that you'd be working us by your spirit to produce in us the fruit of your spirit. Thank you for our time in your word so far this morning please give us energy to be able to concentrate well now if we pray in Jesus name. Amen. We know how a person's a fisherman don't you? They generally go fishing and you ask them the question do they catch fish? How do you know someone's a gardener? Well hopefully they'll be able to sort of grow some food in the backyard and eventually maybe you might even get a tomato. How do you know someone's a swimmer? Well if they're a swimmer ideally you can get in the deep end of the pool and not drown and do a few laps. How do you know if someone's a Christian? Well Jesus said you would know a

Christian by their fruit. Luke chapter 6 says each tree is known by its fruit for figs not gathered from thorn bushes nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. Or he says in John chapter 15 by this my fathers glorify that you bear much fruit and prove to be my disciples. How do you know if someone's a Christian? Well they'll be producing the fruit of the kingdom of God. That's what they'll be doing won't they? They'll be producing the fruit of the gospel of Jesus. They'll be producing the fruit of the spirit and the of the true and living God. That's what we'll be doing. Now it's important to get this right okay. Gospel comes first, fruit comes second. That's what happens. And as we come to this passage before us it comes in the context of the letter that Paul's been writing to the Galatians. Now all of Paul's letters are written in the same way. The first half is basically gospel, the second half is fruit. How the gospel bears out, lived out, what it looks like. And so a reminder again what the gospel is. The gospel is, well what is it? Paul's been telling people about the good news of Jesus being Lord and Saviour repeatedly in Galatians. Have a look at chapter 1 verse 1, chapter 1 verse 3, sorry you'll see it there. Paul speaks clearly, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age according to the will of our God and Father. He speaks about it again in chapter 2 verse 15, have a look at chapter 2 verse 15.

Here it is, chapter 2 verse 15, we ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners, yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ.

So we also have believed in Christ Jesus in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law because by works of the law no one will be justified. So the big thing we've been seeing in Galatians is that being right with God comes by trusting in what Jesus done for us at the cross.

[3 : 24] Being right with God doesn't come by legalistic righteousness, by doing works, keeping the Jewish rules and regulations. It was never like that, it was never to be like that.

The only way to be right with God is by relying on what God has promised, what Jesus has done, bringing us forgiveness and making us in the right with God.

That's what it means to be righteous, be justified. But the gospel of Jesus doesn't mean we're free from everything in life, right? The gospel means that we're free from striving for salvation in our own strength but it doesn't mean we can do whatever we like now, right? It doesn't mean that.

It's like, you know, Thomas a tank engine with the kids. There's rails that you need to run on to flourish. It's not a freedom to do whatever we like, right? It's a freedom that allows us to serve others. That's what he's been picking up there in chapter 5 verse 13 and 14, right?

For you were called to freedom, brothers, right? Freedom from the Jewish laws and regulations. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh but through love serve one another.

[4 : 41] To love our neighbour. So the gospel isn't a licence to self-rule. That's what he's saying there in verse 13 and 14. Jesus is Lord and Saviour, yeah? And while we ever have breath, we'll be in the living, a constant battle for the affections of the heart. That'll be ongoing. And that there is a

battle, well that is a good sign. It's a sign of spiritual life. That's what it is. If there's no battle, it can be a sign that there is no spiritual life.

So here's the battle. The battle is between two desires. You see in verse 16 and 17. There's two competing desires going on. Now desire is the idea of the way one leans.

That's the idea of desire, right? Okay? And so there are good desires. 1 Timothy chapter 3 speaks about who desires to be an overseer. Desire is a noble task, right? It's a good thing. And there are bad desires as we read in what follows. It's impossible to be neutral, right? It's impossible to be neutral. You'll either be living according to one desire, maybe a desire of the flesh, or you'll be living to the desire of the Spirit. That'll be the other desire. Desire of flesh, desire of the Spirit. That's the battle, right? Young or old, rich or poor, male or female, slave or free, we'll have this battle going on. Whatever we live, whatever I live, this battle is on. And you see the command, verse 16. There is a command. But I say, walk by the Spirit and you're not gratified the desires of the flesh.

That is the way of life we're to have. One that's controlled by the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit will have us live under the Lordship of Jesus. That's what He will do. And as we do that, we'll not be serving the desires of the flesh, our own earthly, sinful, fleshly desires, right? We'll not be living with ourselves as Lord, we'll be living with Jesus as Lord. That's the way it will be.

[7 : 15] And if we stop feeding the flesh, the flesh will not flourish, it will wither up and die. That's the idea. If we stop watering, feeding, nurturing the Spirit's work in us, well, that way of life too will shrivel up and die.

That would be a terrible thing to see happen. The desires of the flesh and the desires of the Spirit are not friends, right?

The desire of the Spirit brings death. The desire of the Spirit brings life. The flesh opposes God. The Spirit serves God. The flesh is of the kingdom of this world. The Spirit is of the kingdom of the God Himself.

The flesh is in the kingdom of darkness. The Spirit is in the kingdom of light. The flesh is slavery. The Spirit is freedom.

[8 : 28] It's a real, real struggle. And when we gratify the flesh, the sinful nature, we don't do what the Holy Spirit wants. And when we obey the Spirit, we don't do what the flesh wants.

That is the battle. Now, Paul tells us, God tells us in verse 18, if we are led by the Spirit, we are not under law.

We are in the new covenant, not the old. We're not under the rule of law, for the hope of being okay with God. We're under the law, the rule of the Spirit.

The law doesn't actually save people or defeat sin. It doesn't and it can't. We're not under the rule of law, for the hope of being okay with God.

For the law doesn't save people, doesn't defeat sin. The law, paradoxically, has the opposite effect. You know Romans chapter 7, verse 5 and 8?

[9 : 33] The law actually incites in us the desire to sin. That's what the work of the law does in us.

You know what it's like. The sign says 60 kilometres an hour and you say, I say, I can do 65.

The sign says, don't walk on the grass. And every fibre in my body wants to put my toe on the grass.

That is the nature of law. It incites me to sin. Being under the law will not produce godliness because the law doesn't change my heart.

It's the Holy Spirit that does heart surgery and changes hearts. For the Spirit of God leads us into truth and sets us free.

[10 : 37] If you want to have victory in the battle over sin, then the way forward is this. Not necessarily to try harder. Not to resolve to work longer.

Not to beat yourself up more when you fail. But to walk by the Spirit, submitting to the Spirit and so Jesus' Lordship.

And to do that we need to have God's Spirit informing us by His Word on how to live. And so the battle is on. It is a real battle for those who have the Spirit of God living in us.

And we see it specifically in what follows. Now hear me clearly. What follows comes from a heart of love and concern not from a position of pride and arrogance and superiority to try and make people feel guilty and bad.

So look at verse 21. Look at verse 21. Second half of it. I warn you as I warned you before that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

[11 : 55] This is a heartfelt warning about the danger of saying that you are a believer but actually living in ways which indicate that you're not.

all right. So let's have a look at it at the works of the flesh in verse 19 to 21. The flesh is a way of talking about the sinful desires that come from out of our hearts.

Mark chapter 7 talks about them at length. The evidence of the flesh is obvious for all to see there in verse 19. See it's obvious.

And we can group this list of sins into sexual sins and into spiritual and relational categories of sins. And Paul gives examples of sexual sins or spiritual sins and relational sins and these are just a sample. They're not all. See verse 21. Those who do such things.

[13 : 02] It's just such things. It's not exhaustive list. Right. And these are the symptoms of the disease called sin. That's what they are. So to be clear there is a distinctive walk a distinctive way of life for the Christian.

And there are clear ways we see the desires of the flesh displayed and here they are. Right. Here's the sexual sins in verse 19.

Sexual immorality. Impurity. Sensuality. Orgies. Verse 21. Which often flow out of drunkenness. These are the sexual sins he's speaking about. Sexual relationships outside of heterosexual marriage. And marriage according to God right in his word is between one man and one woman entered into for life.

In anticipation of building a home where children can be born and brought up in love and fear of the Lord. That's the idea of marriage. That is the scriptural and conjugal view of marriage.

[14 : 31] And the word sexual immorality is the word porneia from where we get the word pornography. And so to be clear pornography is sin.

It's a sin which damages ourselves a sin which damages others and damages our society. Sexual intimacy is only for the safety and in the security and the sanctity of marriage.

sensuality is a lack of self constraint which involves someone in a conduct that really violates all social acceptability and now these days social acceptability is pretty low.

Impurity is being a state of moral corruption and unnatural vices. It's Ephesians chapter 4 verse 19 speaks about it. But friends it's not just sexual sins we warned of here right?

There's spiritual sins as well have a look at them spiritual sins of idolatry and sorcery idolatry is the worship of anything other than the true and living God that's what idolatry is and we're told that in Colossians chapter 1 that greed is idolatry the wanting of more and more things for ourselves is idolatry it's the worship of self of giving to self I mean when is enough enough for me why do I want more and more things desiring to have greater and greater riches we're told in 1 Timothy chapter 6 that godliness with contentment is great gain now sorcery comes from the word we currently use for pharmacists interesting isn't it originally the medical use of drugs for healing was the idea but then the abuse of drugs for poisoning instead of healing right and then finally to witchcraft is the idea where the word went to pharmacy to sorcery it's the occult it's the seances it's the tarot cards it's the fortune telling the spell casting the ouija boards it's that sort of stuff you go to the markets invariably you'll find someone who will tell you the future and you can fork out for it but it's not just sexual sins not just spiritual sins that are evident of the desires of the flesh there's also relational sins have a look at them with me enmity there's hostility between classes and races and individuals the idea of enmity strife and jealousy fits of anger rivalries dissensions divisions basically behaviour that leads to relational breakdown people out and out for a fight out and out for disagreement now you won't know this but I've met people on an island far far away into the

[18 : 07] Pacific Ocean who like to start rumours and see where they end up what strife they can cause just for the fun of it jealousy and envy are very similar that is not rejoicing in someone else's gift and abilities but wanting to have them yourself instead rather than give thanks to God that they've got them dissensions are evident when people are in different groups in opposition to each other and then there's divisions between people and then verse 21 drunkenness we're told not to be drunk on wine but rather be full of the spirit not to lose control of our own behaviour but to have self-control as evident of the fruit of God's spirit at work in us what drunkenness does is actually frees us up to do what's already in our heart to do that's what happens one of the great

Australian boasts is to say that you got so drunk last night you can't remember what happened that's the society we're in that is clearly the work of the flesh not the work of God's Holy Spirit and then he talks about verse around and the like it's not an exhaustive list it's a representative list of

the ways which people sin sexually spiritually and relationally all of which are symptoms of the disease called sin and sin is death in the end notice the result of this sin he would be saying those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God it's an important note to get a hold of here I just want to nuance this a bit it's not the question of whether I have done any of these things which disqualifies me

I wish I could say that I've never sinned in any of these areas I wish I could say that every thought of mine was pure and holy that there was never any idols in my heart which take my attention off God to worship the things that are not him I wish I could report that I was never angry with my words towards others that God brought in my life I wish I could say that that was the case but it's not but if when we sin in these ways God's spirit convicts us and we repent well that is a good thing that is a healthy thing but what God is saying in his word is this if this is the pattern of my life the common practice of my behaviour if this is what characterises my life the normal way that

I live and behave sexually spiritually relationally and I'm happy and comfortable with it see nothing is wrong with it at all seeing that it's an acceptable and celebrate this way of life if that is the fruit of my life what does God say I will not inherit the kingdom of God if however the Holy Spirit's at work in us we will hear God's word and repent from the fruit of the fleshly desires and hear me clearly it's not like having an ongoing lifestyle of some sins are more acceptable than others right see a life characterised by fits of anger is just as serious right as a lifestyle of being involved in orgies the life characterised by divisiveness is just as bad and dangerous as the life characterised by sorcery for what is at stake is entering the kingdom of

God itself now brothers and sisters warnings are good things aren't they they are life saving things when there's a warning of a cyclone a storm what do you do you prepare for it when there's a sheep graziers warning what do you do you get your sheep out of the when there's a fire warning you're told to evacuate when there's a hailstone warning you put your car under cover you you you you you you you give warnings because you love people that's why you do it missing out on the kingdom of God is a massive price to pay for being shut out of the presence of God for all time is beyond bad being shut out of the glory of God's blessing for all time being shut out of the eternal riches which where everything is right where relationships are perfect where everything is given to us where joy is ultimate is a massive price to pay just to be living to please self indulge self worship self for a few short years on this planet and so if this is your way of life then

[24 : 07] God's word to you submit to him as Lord and Saviour it's far far better to be in the kingdom of God than to be shut out for it on that last day but and this is the big contrast the fruit of the spirit the fruit of the Holy Spirit is the lifestyle of a person under the rule of God's Holy Spirit is something completely different and we've been spending time on that for the last five six weeks and another week to go yet the fruit of the spirit is healthy and wholesome it won't kill us the fruit of the spirit is something to be nurtured and encouraged to keep watering and growing and notice it's one fruit but multifaceted the fruit of the spirit verse 22 and 23 it's one fruit nine facets elicited but they are not exhaustive either have a look at it with me we won't spend a great lot of time because we've already been preaching on it for the last few weeks verse 22 and 23 but this is the contrast right you got the fruit of the flesh now the fruit of the spirit is love and joy peace patience kindness goodness faithfulness gentleness and self control against such things there is no law it's not exhaustive but there's the list it's nine characteristics and these characteristics are not something that we have in our own strength that we've been hearing it's the outworking

God's Holy Spirit in us now we could spend a long time looking at these facets but let's just come back to love I mean told in the scriptures that God is love but that's not the sum total of God but we get a definition of love from 1 Corinthians chapter 13 love is patient love is kind it does not envy it's not boasting it's not arrogant it's not rude it's not insisting in its own way not irritable or resentful it does not rejoice at wrong doing but rejoices with the truth love bears all things believes all things hopes all things endures all things love is more than an emotion love is also an action and the fruit of the spirit is love and much much more joy and peace and patience and kindness self-control is evident not by being out of control but having our emotions not rule our lives but our brain ruling our hearts self-control is evident by the ability to say no to things and so you don't end up in credit card debt you can't afford self-control is evident of the holy spirit at work if we've got self-control we won't be greedy for more and more things we won't be gluttons we won't have massive credit card debt we'll be able to be level headed and there's no law against these things for living this way we're living lives that please

God the law prohibits right the law reveals failings the law is external that's the nature of the law people but the holy spirit prescribes a change of behaviour from the heart and encourages more and more and more and more of that lifestyle and so friends the victory's on the battle's on sorry but the victory's been won and the reality is that those who belong to Jesus have put the flesh to death that's what he says here in verse 24 those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires it's been decisively killed the war cry of the Christian is death to sin the flesh no longer rules the desires and passions of flesh are over dead and buried with Christ and the victory has been won but the battle continues so let's live by the spirit let's live by the spirit in this way not give in to the flesh it takes time to live consistently in accordance with the spirit it's a lifelong battle but under

God we'll have victories along the way friends learning to walk is not easy and ask a physiotherapist learning to walk again after some operation takes practice it takes exercise to build the muscles it takes time when you plant an avocado tree it takes time when you plant an orange tree it takes time when you plant a mango tree it takes time you don't get avocados and oranges and mangoes next week but you do expect to get avocados and oranges and mangoes one day that will be the fruit and if you don't you ponder what you planted you doubt you wonder what you planted and so brothers and sisters in Jesus so to it's right to expect fruit in the Christian who is filled with God's Holy Spirit let's pray our Father in Heaven we do ask that you'd help us to put to death the sinful nature to crucify with Christ the nature of flesh and we pray that there will be an ever increasing abundant evidence of the fruit of your Spirit that love and joy and peace and patience and kindness and goodness and faithfulness and gentleness and self control might be welling up into a massive fruit growing in our church and growing out into the world from us we pray in Jesus name Amen
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