

of Discipleship

June 25, 2023

Day 1: Galatians 5:1

For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

Because of sin, freedom was corrupted and we have been living in a state of imprisonment ever since. We cannot exist in freedom unless we are first given the opportunity of freedom. For all who believe, Christ has transferred us from imprisonment to freedom. Standing firm is not passive, it means we must exercise that freedom. The Galatians “stand firm” by not following the pseudo-freedom offered by the Jewish-Christian missionaries, which was keeping the rituals of the Jewish Law. We stand firm by exercising (living out) true freedom that comes from Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection. It is in this state of true freedom that we can experience the Holy Spirit.

Question: What does the image of a yoke bring up for you?

Challenge: When does your freedom end?

Day 2: Galatians 5:13-14

For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’

One of the concerns of the Galatians was this issue of the “desires of the flesh.” The Galatians wondered how they were to live moral lives without the assistance of the Law. Instead of following the Law, Paul tells them that under the guidance of the Spirit they can answer all the questions about controlling their urges. The way to not allow freedom to become a staging area for the desire of the flesh is to love your neighbor as yourself and to be slaves of one another. The way to preserve and exercise Christian freedom is to exercise Christian love.

Question: What do you think of when you see the term “self-indulgence”?

Challenge: Why do you think Paul left out “love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind and soul?”

Scripture: I Corinthians 5:6-8,

Day 3: Galatians 5:15

If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.

The opposite of loving our neighbor is here in verse 15. The Greek reads, “if you bit and tear one another to pieces.” This is the current situation in the churches. The word *consumed* can also mean annihilate. If the Galatians continue to fight then they will annihilate one another. The same is true in the church today.

Question: What image comes to mind when you read verse 15?

Challenge: Conflict is often healthy in a relationship. How can we keep conflict healthy?

Scripture: I Corinthians 10:1-13

Day 4: Galatians 5:16-17

Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law.

Christianity is a movement and a walk, not a static belief system. Christianity is a way of living in relationship to God and others so that our lives have purpose and meaning. Paul makes the bold statement that we can overcome the unhealthy desires without the rules the Law provides. Being led by the Spirit is hard because it requires us to love our neighbor even when we do not like them.

Question: What do you think Paul means by the term “flesh”?

Challenge: How you are led by the Spirit?

Scripture: Romans 8:1-8, II Corinthians 12:19-21

Day 5: Galatians 5:19-21

Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

The list is nothing new and it is one that is well-known in the ancient world. Those who practice the works of the flesh not only will find life short and meaningless but they will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Question: What if we just think about these things but do not do them - will we be in the kingdom?

Challenge: What can you add to this list?

Scripture: II Corinthians 8:1-7

Day 6: Galatians 5:22-25

By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

The fruit (not fruits) of the Spirit brings hope and life to the community. Love, joy and peace are spiritual powers of the first order and they motivate us so we can act. Patience, kindness and goodness are human actions that are required for the community to live faithfully. Faithfulness, gentleness (humility) and self-control are outcomes of our mature life in Christ. Those of us who belong to Christ will not be overwhelmed by the desires of the flesh. The Galatians were concerned with sexual immorality, however sin is not just sexual immorality (and Paul knows this fact), so his perception for dealing with the Galatians’ problem applies to all sin. Paul calls us to create communities where we are slaves to each other and love our neighbor. In this environment the fruit of the Spirit will grow and nourish the community.

Question: What does it mean to “crucify the flesh”?

Challenge: Which of the sets of three are you drawn to the most and which set of three do you feel you have the most?

Scripture: Colossians 3:5-14