

Two Ways to Live

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[0 : 00] the Bible's in front of you. We're reading Galatians chapter 5 verse 13 to 25. I'll give you a wee moment to find out. Galatians 5 verse 13. You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free, but do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh. Rather, serve one another humbly in love, for the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command. Love your neighbor as yourself. If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other. So I say, live by the spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the spirit and the spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other so that you are not to do whatever you want. But if you are led by the spirit, you are not under the law.

The acts of the flesh are obvious. Sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery, idolatry and witchcraft, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy, drunkenness, orgies and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the spirit, let us keep in step with the spirit.

This is the word of the Lord. All right. Good evening. Great. We're going to need some help tonight. It's a brilliant passage. I'm excited. I hope you guys are excited. So Father, we pray that you'd speak to us by your word through your spirit this evening.

[2 : 15] Please help us to humble our hearts and learn and help us to learn to keep in step with the spirit, learning to love one another and serve one another humbly from the heart. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

And can I ask you, as we begin, are you a cockerel or are you a mother hen? Where am I going with this? You're wondering. And I wonder if you've ever seen a cockerel. A cockerel is a boy chicken.

And they are, when they come together, they don't get on. They like to fight. And when they fight, they pluff up their plumage and they make themselves look big.

And they stretch out their necks. And they love to strut around and claw the earth. And then they make themselves big. And then when they close for the battle, they size up the other one.

And they try to intimidate them. And then they jump on them. And they peck them. And they tear at their feathers. And they tear at their flesh. And they try to eat them and kill them.

[3 : 22] And a mother hen, a girl chicken, on the other hand, is remarkably different. Mother hens sit on their eggs for a long time. They nurse them. They look after them. They care for them.

And then when their chickens hatch, they guard their chickens. They show them the best seed. They protect them from their enemies. They love their chickens humbly.

They serve their chickens. They're slaves to their chickens with all that's within them. So can I ask you, are you a cockerel? Or are you a mother hen?

Are you proud like a cockerel? Or are you someone who loves to serve out of love like a mother hen? And the issue is, in Galatia, Paul is writing to a church in Galatia, which is southern Turkey. And it's a church that has forgotten that belonging to Christ means living as a mother hen in self-giving love.

[4 : 23] And instead, they've started to behave as cockerels. Just look down at verse 15 as they're reading. If you bite and devour each other, watch out, or you will be destroyed by each other.

And so our aim tonight is for us to see that as Christians, we need to be mother hens. Verse 13. We need to rather serve one another humbly in love.

What this passage is going to show us, that it's only possible for us to do this with help by the Holy Spirit living within us. And so Paul, the apostle, he's come to the Galatians and he's told them the good news of the gospel.

That they can only be right with God by faith. By simply believing and trusting in the Lord Jesus. Then they will be right, completely right with God.

Nothing more needs to be done. And no sooner has Paul moved on from this town in Galatia and moved on from that region, than certain agitators have come in with a different teaching.

[5 : 30] And they've said, well, that Paul, forget about him. He's only told them half the story. He's told them the fake version of the gospel. And if they want the real gospel, they need to realize that, yes, we are saved by faith in Jesus.

But we also need to obey and live according to the Jewish Old Testament law. Things you do to be right by God, with God.

And the result of this is that non-Jews have stopped becoming Christians. And the rule system, the pecking order of obeying the commandments, has caused infighting and one-upmanship in the Galatian church.

They're competing to see who's the most spiritual, who keeps the better laws. They're looking down on one another for not keeping the laws. And so the argument in the letter so far is in chapters 1 and 2, we've seen that Paul has argued, I am God's messenger, and my message is God's message.

And through your 4, he's then argued that the gospel is for everyone, not simply for those who are Jewish, because it is simply by faith, by believing and hearing the gospel through the Spirit.

[6 : 44] It's open for everyone. Nothing to do with your culture or your background. And in the start of chapter 5, we've seen that in the gospel, instead of trying to earn your salvation and work, you are free from that, free from rules that crush you by trying to please God in the things you do.

And so, chapter 5, verse 1, It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm then. And naturally, there's two implications of this great statement of freedom.

And the first one is, well, Paul, can we then do whatever we want? And we see that in the first verse of our reading tonight. Don't use your freedom to indulge the flesh.

And then, the second implication is then, but if we're not to live by the Old Testament law, how then are we to live as God's people? And Paul's answer there is, you are to live by the Spirit, humbly, and love towards one another.

So, you can't do what you want. Paul says, can you do what you want? Paul says, no. How should we live by the Spirit? And so, what we've seen in Galatians is, through the Spirit, by faith, you've been made right with God.

[8 : 04] Chapter 5, verse 5. And here tonight, we'll say, through the Spirit, by faith, you are being made into God's likeness, little by little. You are being made to be the people that He wants you to be.

And you should have been handed a service sheet on your way in, slightly different to this morning. And you should find some points in there. And our first point is, freedom from the law is not an excuse to live as you want.

Verses 13 and 14. So, freedom of the law is not an excuse to live as you want. So, just look down at verse 13. And it's a new section that he begins.

And so, if you're free from the law, can you do just what you want, is the question.

Paul answers, no. Do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh. But, verse 13. Rather, serve one another humbly in love.

[9 : 14] Literally, be slaves to one another. Humbly in love. You've moved from slavery to rules. And now you are called to be slaves to one another.

Humbly in love. And the reason that Paul gives is that by in doing this, we are in actually fulfilling God's law. So, just look at verse 14.

For the entire law, that's all the Old Testament, all of that, is fulfilled in this one word, this one command. Love your neighbor as yourself.

Love your neighbor as yourself. And I wonder if you spotted the surprise in how Paul summarizes the Old Testament law there. There is no mention of loving God in his summary.

I wonder if you spotted that. But what he does is he summarizes the law from a section in Leviticus 19 that speaks all about how we live well together as God's people.

[10:16] Loving one another. And how as we love one another, we draw people in to God's kingdom. We don't push them away. We don't put up stumbling blocks.

And so, what Paul is saying to the Galatians where they're getting us wrong in not loving one another and putting people off because of their failure to love and their rules.

They say, rather love one another and people be drawn in. And so, to those who are saying, can we do whatever he wants, he'll say, don't make the same mistake as what you're doing previously in not loving one another.

But rather, don't use your freedom not to love one another well. But use your freedom to love others well and draw people in. Rather, be slaves towards one another.

And in doing so, you'll draw people into God's kingdom. And this attitude here reflects what Paul has said in 1 Corinthians 9.

[11:22] I have made myself a slave to everyone that I may win as many as possible. And so, as Christians love one another, and so people see the beauty of Christ.

And they're drawn into God's kingdom. And they want to know Jesus. Maybe it is. So, if you're someone who loves rules, maybe you're someone who loves rules.

Paul's advice to you is, well, love others. Don't let those rules put people off and draw people in. But if you're someone who loves not having rules in your life and you love doing whatever you want, he says, don't let your freedom put others off.

But rather, love others and so draw people in. Love your brother Christians, brothers and sister Christians, and draw people in.

And so, the second implication there of our freedom from living to the law is then, how should we live as God's people if not by the law? And the answer is, by the Spirit, humbly in love towards one another.

[12:29] And he shows us by presenting, firstly, two ways to live. How life in the Spirit, in that age to come, that's in the future, is completely different to life in this present evil age.

So, we're on that point. Two ways to live there. Look at verse 15 and 17. So, just look down at verses 16 to 17 there.

So, I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not, and it's an emphatic will not there. You will know, you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. And they are in conflict with each other. So, that you are not to do whatever you want.

And by flesh there, he's not simply talking about gross sins, like the first things that you might think of. But he's talking about a life outside of God, in a way that is displeasing to God.

[13:34] And so, you could do that by living in a really gross way, like stuff you might see your mates get up to on the weekend. But perhaps more relevant to the context in Galatians, is you could also do that by living in a way that's proud and arrogant and demeans others.

And that's very self-righteous. A way that character assassinates others through our words and how we use them. Simply because they don't live up to our expectations, don't live up to our rules and what we think is the right way to behave.

And that's perhaps more harmful and dangerous. And the thing that the Galatians were doing is that second thing. And they thought they were safe. They thought they were advancing in the gospel.

But Paul wants to know that when they do this, they're in great danger and are, in fact, advancing towards their destruction, towards death. And so, that's our second point on the sheet.

They're doing the things of the flesh leads to death. Verse 19 to 20. So, just look down very quickly. Look at verse 15. If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you'll be destroyed by each other.

[14:51] And then, just cast your eyes down to verse 26, which is slightly out of our reading. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

And the word for conceited that he uses there literally means gaining honor at someone else's expense. Pecking others for your own glory.

And then look at that list of things that he says we shouldn't do that are acts of the flesh in verses 19 to 21. The acts of the flesh are obvious. Sexual immorality, impurity, debauchery, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, and envy, drunkenness, orgies, and the like.

And so, he tops and tails the list with gross sins, and then there's idolatry and witchcraft. But the biggest portion of that list, the bulk of that list, is all about problems that come from being proud and

self-righteous and have to do with how we speak to one another and how we treat one another and think towards one another.

Hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissension, factions. And those were all things that were problems for the Galatians.

[16:17] They wanted to be seen. They puffed themselves up. They wanted to be, they loved being moralistic. They loved to rule. They were ambitious. They were at the top of their class.

But they were conceited. They were the ones who always had the clever quip to put someone down. They bit and devoured one another with their words. You're not meeting our standards. They were the one, for them, the one who is the one who keeps the most rules and has the most bragging rights. And the problem that Paul says here is that doing that doesn't lead to life. They think they're advancing in the gospel. But he says, it doesn't make you more godly, but leads you to death. And so if you follow this road by being proud and self-righteous, then watch out or you'll be destroyed by each other.

And I think we probably get a sense of this if we've had any experience. So in marriage, it's those one-off comments. There's like an invisible scoreboard that you're keeping.

[17:24] And the winner is the one who says the last clever quip. Or maybe with your housemates or your classmates, the one who wins is the one who has always got the deriding comment for someone who gets away with the most.

Or maybe in your workplace or in your tutorials at university, you're always trying to gain one over your partner or your opposition or the person in your office.

Put them down so that you can get ahead slightly. slightly. And the danger for us when we do this, and particularly when this creeps into church as it was in Galatia, is that we're in great danger and at risk of destroying each other's faith and at risk of not inheriting the kingdom of God.

So just look down at verse 21. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. They were in great danger because of their rule keeping and one-upmanship. But in contrast to this, if we belong to Jesus, Paul tells the Galatians that they are to love others well and serving them humbly. And if they are to do that, well, then they need to walk in step with the Spirit that leads to life.

[18:48] And that's our third point on the sheet there. So just look down at verse 16. We've read it there. So I say, walk by the Spirit. And then again, verse 18.

But if you are led by the Spirit, you're not under law. And then that brilliant list of the fruits of the Spirit in 22 and 23. And at the end of that, he finishes the list off with, against such things, there is no law.

And verse 25, let us keep in step with the Spirit. And then verse 18, you're not under the law. And against such things, there are no law.

And when he speaks of the work of the Spirit, and then says straight after that, you are not under the law. And against those things, there is no law. I think the thing that he's saying there, he's not saying that when we live by the Spirit, we're abolishing God's commands.

But when we live by the Spirit, God fulfills God's commands through us and within us. And they're exceeded in a way that the written code, trying to be right by the rules, could never bring about in our lives.

[19:56] He is saying that it's the fulfillment of Jeremiah 31, 33, where God promises to write his law on our hearts as a sign of the new covenant.

Not on tablets of stone, not in a written book, but within our hearts. Or Ezekiel 36, where God promises to give his people new hearts.

Where God will put his Spirit within those who belong to Christ, within those who are God's people. And he'll cause them to walk his way in his statutes and make them careful to obey his rules.

And living God's way is not something that we do. It's not an action that we can tick off. But just as we are called to be free, so God leads us by his Spirit.

And so he grows Spirit within us, the fruits of godly living within our hearts and lives. It's not something that we can do through our own efforts.

[20:57] It's something that God grows within us. So verse 22, but the fruit, it's something that grows within us, of the Spirit is. And it's God's work in the life of those who trust and believe and belong to Jesus.

You have God's Spirit living within them. And it's very different to the acts of the flesh, which is our actions, things we do. Here, it's something that God grows within those who know and love the Lord Jesus.

So just notice the way to advance in this growing is to walk in the Spirit, to be led by the Spirit, to keep in step with the Spirit, literally to dwell, to abide in the Spirit, to have a daily communion with God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to enjoy God daily.

So my mate, David, he's done a lot of sports stuff and he's got this adage, train hard, race easy. And so what he's saying about that is, if we apply this to belonging to Christ, that if we seek Jesus out daily, if we make it a priority to spend time in His Word, if we pray to Him earnestly about things, if we work hard at loving others well, then God will make us into the people we are to be.

He will grow fruit of the Spirit within us. And so when the time comes when we really need Him, He'll shape our characters and we'll be able to trust Him even when it's really hard, when circumstances are really tough in life.

[22 : 41] But if we haven't been pursuing God, if we haven't been seeking to know Him, then we might find things a bit tougher. And so the way to advance in the Christian life is not a new set of rules, not a new thing to do, not a new regime, but it's a new worship.

It's a new love. It's a new delighting in Jesus day by day, practicing living His way as led by the Spirit, asking Him to teach you day by day.

And so just notice the fruit of the Spirit just very briefly there. The fountainhead of them, the first fruit, is love. That's the one from all the others' flow. We're called to love and serve one another humbly.

And so the thing that the fruit, that the Spirit's going to grow within us is a love for one another as God's people. That's the first and the greatest. Living as God's people means being a people who are marked by love.

What might that look like for us? Well, it might be offering to babysit for some young parents at church. It might be texting someone that we're praying for them when they've got a job interview or something like that going on.

[23 : 58] It doesn't have to be a very big or flashy thing. It might mean giving up Friday nights to help out with Friday Night Live or something like that. It might be offering to cook meals for students who are writing exams and don't have time to attend to the necessities of life.

It might mean offering to pay for someone to go on the church weekend away. It's not big, it's flashy, it's very ordinary but it's sacrificial loving of others.

It might not be big for us but it might be very meaningful for them. And loving others well is something that we'll never be able to tick off. We'll never be able to finish the list and say, that's it, I'm finished with loving people now.

I don't know if I can sit back and relax. No, there was always something else to do. It's a continually striving. It's a debt we'll never be able to pay entirely.

And just notice how these fruits are the complete opposite to what was going on in the Galatian church. To those who are trying to be self-righteous and proud and display one-upmanship.

[25 : 04] They had lots of infighting and dissension but keeping in step with the Spirit teaches you to be peaceable. It's difficult to point someone to Jesus if you're always falling out with them.

And so, and we should be pointing others to Jesus. And just notice how these fruits of the Spirit are things that we saw in Jesus' life when he was with us on earth.

Jesus, when he lived on earth, he was completely innocent and yet he was crucified and he never said a word. Rather than fighting back, he entrusted himself to his heavenly Father.

He humbled himself to death on a cross and with his dying breath, he prayed for his enemies. And so, what we see in these verses is that walking in the Spirit leads to life.

Look at verse 25. Since we live by the Spirit, we have life by the Spirit. Verse 24. If those who live by the written code do not inherit the kingdom of God, by implication then, Paul's saying, that those who are marked by the Spirit will inherit God's kingdom.

[26 : 17] They will live. They'll get life. Chapter 5, verse 5. For through the Spirit we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope. Through the Spirit by faith we are declared righteous.

So through the Spirit by faith we grow in righteousness. We grow to be the people that God wants us to be who will be with Him in heaven forever and ever.

We grow to bear fruit. We grow to be mother hens, people who love one another humbly and are slaves to one another out of love. And just notice there it's by faith.

So in verse 24 we read that if we belong to Jesus by faith then we have crucified, we have died to the flesh and its passions and desires.

That is, if we belong to Jesus we are saying no and God's Spirit within us we are saying no to those things that might tempt us away. Those things that cause us that produce death within us.

[27 : 17] But we also see in Christ's death on the cross that we are made alive. That we have His life, His indestructible life, His resurrected life living within us.

So chapter 2 verse 20 Paul writes I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live but Christ lives in me. Jesus Christ who is resurrected by His Spirit.

The life I now live in the body I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me. And by Jesus' death by faith we are made into new creations.

We're no longer part of this world. We might live here but our home is in that heavenly world that is to come. The old is gone. And so chapter 6 verse 15 May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ through which the old world has been crucified to me and I to the world.

Neither circumcision that's rule keeping nor uncircumcision counts for anything. What counts is the new creation. So through the Spirit by faith as we trust in Jesus as we look to the cross we are brought into life.

[28 : 29] We are promised life forever and ever. Absolutely glorious. Let's pray as we close. So Father we pray that we would keep in step with the Spirit.

We pray that we would seek to be your people. We pray that we would look to you to grow fruit within us. Not through our own efforts but through your leading and guiding and guiding.

Please help us to be mother hens. Please help us to love one another. To serve one another. To be slaves to one another out of love day by day.

In Jesus name. Amen.