

THREATS TO CHRISTIAN FREEDOM: LICENSE

PART 4

Text: Galatians 5:13-24

February 12, 2012

INTRODUCTION/REVIEW:

A Christian is one who finds himself caught up in a bitter conflict between two opposing forces—the flesh and the Spirit. Therefore, believers are continually faced with the twofold threats of diminishing the law (legalism, vv. 2-12) or dismissing the law (license- vv. 13-24). Having thoroughly refuted legalism and defended the Christian's freedom in vv. 2-12, Paul recognizes the fact this freedom can be abused. Therefore, to guard believers against misunderstanding Christian freedom and thereby falling prey to the threat of license, Paul discusses four aspects of Christian freedom in vv. 13-24. So far, we have seen:

- I. PAUL DEFINES THE NATURE OF CHRISTIAN FREEDOM. vv. 13-15
- II. PAUL DESCRIBES THE CONFLICT OF CHRISTIAN FREEDOM. vv. 16-18
- III. PAUL CONTRASTS THE FRUIT OF CHRISTIAN FREEDOM. vv. 19-23
 - A. A Description of the works of the flesh, vv. 19-21

The works of the flesh reveal a life that dismisses God's law. Dismissing God's law is serious. Thus, Paul issues

- B. A WARNING AGAINST THE WORKS OF THE FLESH, v. 21B

All of the vices listed in vv. 19-21 are a clear indication of license (dismissing the law) rather than love (fulfilling the law).

Paul has shown us that we have been delivered from this present evil age (Gal. 1:4), justified (2:16), redeemed from the curse of the law (3:13), adopted (4:1-7) and known by God (4:9). What is the purpose of our Christian freedom? The answer is that we have been set free from the law in order to obey and fulfill the law. The law drives us to Christ (3:24) and Christ, by His Spirit, leads us back to the law in order to fulfill it (Gal. 5:14) rather than dismiss it. In contrast then to a life that dismisses God's law (license), what does a life look like that fulfills the law?

This leads us to vv. 22-23 where Paul contrasts (δέ, adversative conjunction) the "works of the flesh" (plural) with the "fruit of the Spirit" (singular). Concerning the contrast between the plural, "works" and the singular "fruit," Philip Ryken notes, "All the graces of the Spirit belong together, which perhaps explains why the word "fruit" occurs in the singular. The fruit of the Spirit is one whole spiritual life that is

rooted in the one Spirit of God. To change the image for a moment, these virtues are not nine different gems, but nine different facets of the same dazzling jewel” (*Galatians*, p. 234). Betz suggests the plural “works of the flesh” highlights the chaotic nature of the flesh in contrast to the oneness of the “fruit” of the Spirit (cf. *Galatians*, p. 283).). As we will come to see, this “dazzling jewel” is simply a character sketch of Christ—the perfect Spirit-led man. The “fruit” are His virtue produced in the life of a believer by the Holy Spirit (the Spirit of Christ, Gal. 4:6). Paul lists nine graces of a Spirit-led life (Note: like the works of the flesh this list is illustrative not exhaustive). These 9 graces are arranged into groups of three.

LESSON:

C. A DESCRIPTION OF THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT, vv. 22-23A

1. Group 1: Love, Joy, Peace

“Love” (ἀγάπη) is the chief fruit of the Spirit, which is why Paul begins the list with it. Martin Luther remarks, “It would have sufficed to list only love, for this expands into all the fruit of the Spirit” (*Luther’s Works*, vol. 27, p. 93). The reason love is the chief fruit of the Spirit is because love fulfills the law (i.e., the spiritual intent of the law, cf. 5:14). Thus, when you think of love think law.

Love (ἀγάπη) in this context refers to love for others (cf. 5:14; Note: Love for others presupposes love for God, cf. 1 Jn. 4:20). ἀγάπη is the “kind of selfless, sacrificial affection that enables us to serve one another in love” (cf. Ryken, *Galatians*, p. 232).

Love for others is the defining mark of a Spirit-led walk. Jesus, in John 13:35, said, “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” John, in 1 John 4:7-11, writes,

⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹ In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent His only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him. ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. ¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

Note that John states our love for others is evidence that we have been brought to life by the regenerating power of the Spirit (i.e., “born of God” v. 7). Moreover, John states that our love for others is preceded and empowered by God’s love for us in Christ (cf. vv. 10-11). Similarly, in Galatians 2:20, Paul writes, “...the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” In Romans 5:5, Paul says God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom. 15:30; Col. 1:8). The Holy Spirit enables us to love one another with the same love that God loves us.

Love for others is the complete antithesis of the works of the flesh listed in vv. 19-21. All the works of illustrate what it looks like to do wrong to a neighbor. For example, the root problem with the disputes, quarrels, envy, prideful attitudes, factions and fighting among the Galatians (cf. 5:15) can be traced to a failure to love. In contrast, bearing one another's burdens flows from a heart of love and thus fulfills the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2). Giving to help others in need flows from a heart of love (Gal. 6:6-10). Thus, walking by the Spirit leads us to fulfill the spiritual intent of the law (i.e., to serve one another through love rather than dismiss the law and do wrong towards one another). In Romans 13:8-10, Paul writes,

⁸ Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. ⁹ For this, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." ¹⁰ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

"Joy" (χαρὰ) is the experience of gladness (BDAG, p. 1077). Joy originates from faith and the Holy Spirit (cf. Philip. 1:25; 1 Thess. 1:6; Rom. 14:17). The Greek root for joy (χαρ-) is the same as the one for grace (χάρις). Joy is the deep-rooted sense of gladness in those who have come to experience the grace of God in the gospel. It is a gift of the Holy Spirit that comes receiving and resting in Christ alone for salvation. Joy is the exhilaration of delight that one experiences from knowing he has been justified before God (2:16) and adopted as His beloved son (4:1-7). In Romans 14:17, Paul says, "for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (i.e., joy that is inspired by the Holy Spirit).

"Peace" (εἰρήνη) is a state of wholeness and wellbeing (Note: Peace is frequently used in the opening greeting of Paul's letters, cf. 1:3). Peace is both objective and subjective. *Objectively*, peace is the consequence of being justified by grace through faith in Christ alone. In Romans 5:1, Paul writes, "Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have *peace with God* through our Lord Jesus Christ" (emphasis mine). To be at "peace with God" is to be free from the condemning curse of God's law (Gal. 3:13). All who are at "peace with God" are no longer an enemy but rather welcomed into God's Fatherly favor as adopted sons (cf. 4:1-7). God is no longer our condemning judge but is now our loving Father.

"Peace with God" is the result of grace. Peace can never be had until our sin is first forgiven by grace. Grace releases us from sin and quiets our conscience and the result is peace. This double benefit of the Gospel is captured in the Aaronic blessing found in Numbers 6:24-26, "²⁴ The LORD bless you and keep you; ²⁵ the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; ²⁶ the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace."

Secondly, peace is *subjective*. In Philippians 4:7, Paul writes, “*the peace of God*, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (emphasis mine). The “peace of God” is the inner conviction that all is well; the inner tranquility that results from having “peace with God” (i.e., the internal rest that God gives through His Gospel and Spirit). Through the Gospel, the Holy Spirit gives us rest, ease of conscience for our guilt, quiets our fears for our failures and alleviates our anxiety and doubt of God’s favor towards us.

Such a state of peace is intended to bring about harmony in personal relationships (the exact opposite of 5:15, 20, 26). Because we have peace with God and the peace of God we are enabled by the Holy Spirit to make peace with others (cf. Rom. 14:19; 2 Cor. 13:11; Eph. 4:3).

2. Group 2: Patience, Kindness, Goodness

“Patience” (μακροθυμία) is a state of being able to bear up under provocation (aggravation/frustration); forbearance, patience toward others (*BDAG*, p. 612). It is enduring difficult situations and people without losing one’s composure; not to be easily offended. F.F. Bruce paraphrases “patience” as “long-tempered” in comparison to “short-tempered” (*Galatians*, p. 253). Cole defines patience as “the quality of putting up with other people, even when one’s patience is sorely tired” (*Galatians*, p. 219).

“Patience” is a quality of God. The Scriptures teach that God is longsuffering/slow to anger towards sinners. Exodus 34:6 says, “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, *slow to anger*, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness...” (emphasis mine). God’s patience is what the Holy Spirit produces in believers and therefore is the basis for Paul’s exhortations to believers to show patience to one another (cf. Eph. 4:2; Col. 1:11; 3:12; 1 Thess. 5:14). Love is not only patient but also kind (1 Cor. 13:4).

“Kindness” (χρηστότης) is the quality of being helpful or beneficial, generous (*BDAG*, 1090). Like patience, kindness is also a quality of God. In Luke 6:35, Jesus says that God “...is kind to the ungrateful and the evil.” In Romans 2:4, Paul says God’s kindness is designed to lead us to repentance. Again, God’s kindness to us in Christ is the basis for our showing kindness to one another (Eph. 4:32).

“Goodness” (ἀγαθωσύνη) is closely related to kindness and also carries the idea of generosity. Goodness is the opposite of envy (Bruce, *Galatians*, pp. 253-254). This means goodness is the fulfillment of the 10th Commandment. It is instructive to note that all the virtues listed in vv. 22-23a are the exact opposite of the vices listed in vv. 19-21a. For example, enmity is the opposite of love. Dissension is the opposite of peace. Patience is the opposite of outbursts of anger. Kindness and goodness are the opposite of jealousy and envy. Self-control is the opposite of immorality, sensuality, outbursts of anger.

Concerning “goodness” Timothy George writes, “It conveys the idea of benevolence and generosity toward someone else, a going the second mile when such magnanimity is not required” (*Galatians*, p. 403). In Galatians 6:6, 10 Paul specifically applies doing good (generosity) to meet the needs of others, especially fellow believers.

Goodness is also a quality of God. For example, Psalm 136:1a says, “Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good (MT, טוב; LXX, 135:1, “χρηστός,” kind/good). Has not the LORD dealt with us in a magnanimous way in Christ? If anyone has gone the “extra mile” is it not God the Father who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ (Eph. 1:3ff)? But, rather than being kind/good toward one another, the Galatians were biting, devouring and consuming one another (5:15); they were boastful, challenging and envying one another (5:26). Such objective criterion was clear evidence the flesh was in control rather than the Holy Spirit.

3. GROUP 3: FAITHFULNESS, GENTLENESS, SELF-CONTROL

“Faithfulness” (πίστις) is “the state of being someone in whom confidence can be placed, faithfulness, reliability, fidelity, commitment (*BDAG*, p. 818). “Faithfulness” characterizes a person who can be relied upon; is trustworthy; reliable in one’s dealings with others (cf. parable of the talents, Matt. 25:14-30; parable of the pounds, Lk. 19:11-27). This describes a man in whom Ronald Reagan’s motto, “trust but verify” doesn’t apply.

Again, “faithfulness” is a quality of God. In the OT, “faithfulness” expresses His total dependability (cf. Ps. 36:5; 40:10; Lam. 3:23). In the NT, in 1 Corinthians 1:9, Paul writes, “God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.” In 2 Timothy 2:13, Paul writes these deeply encouraging words, “If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.” The fact is all believers struggle with sin and fail (i.e., we are faithless). But, God is faithful and will pardon, restore, and keep those who are truly His. Paul says God is not like us. He is not prone to change. He doesn’t turn from His covenant promises. He is the promising keeping and performing God. Paul says God is not able to be faithless. Thus, in Revelation 19:11, John describes Jesus as “Faithful and True.” You never have to “trust but verify” Jesus. Jesus can always be fully relied upon. Like Jesus, who is faithful (i.e., can be fully relied upon), the Holy Spirit enables believers to be faithful as well. Thus, such faithfulness or a life of faith is characteristic of those who are justified in God’s sight (cf., Hab 2:4; 2 Tim. 2:2).

“Gentleness” (πραΰτης) is “the quality of not being overly impressed by a sense of one’s self-importance, humility, courtesy, considerateness...” (*BDAG*, p. 861). Gentleness is the opposite of forceful and harsh behavior (cf. Gal. 5:15, 26). In Galatians 6:1, Paul says those who sin should be restored in “a spirit of gentleness” (ἐν πνεύματι πραΰτητος). The reason is because this is exactly how Christ deals with sinners (i.e., you and me!). “Gentleness” is a quality of Christ and expresses how

He deals with sinners (Matt. 11:29). In contrast to the Galatians who were acting like wild untamed animals (5:15), Paul says the Holy Spirit produces a Christ-like quality of meekness/gentleness toward one another.

“Self-control” (ἐγκράτεια) is “restraint of one’s emotions, impulses, or desires. It has special reference to sexual desires but is not restricted solely to it” (BDAG, p. 274; George, *Galatians*, p. 404). “Self-control” produces a walk (lifestyle) of temperance and moderation. It characterizes a person who is not ruled by uncontrolled passions. Though a Christian struggles against the relentless desires of the flesh (v. 17), he is not ruled by them. Thus, self-control is the discipline the Holy Spirit gives that enables Christians to resist the desires of the flesh (cf. Gal. 5:17). This final virtue is the antidote to a life of unrestrained license. Those who dismiss the law desperately need a renewed desire to fulfill the law and this discipline of self-control is the Holy Spirit’s antidote to a licentious heart.

We see from this list, that the Holy Spirit’s chief work is to bring believers into perfect conformity to all that the Law requires. Another way of saying it is: the chief work of the Holy Spirit is to conform us into the image of Christ. As we previously noted, “the fruit of the Spirit” is a “character sketch of Christ” (Dunn, *Galatians*, p. 310). The “fruit of the Spirit” is nothing less than the presence of the crucified and risen Christ (cf. Betz, *Galatians*, p. 289). Believers have been given the Spirit of Christ (Gal. 4:6). Since the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ (cf. Gal. 4:6), one would expect that He would produce in us the same virtues of Jesus.

It is vital to understand that such godly qualities are not latent within fallen human nature (the works of the flesh are, vv. 19-21). The fruit of the Spirit is the result of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. Paul is not calling on believers to gather up strength within to live a new way of life (see Schreiner, *Galatians*, pp. 348-349). The listing of the fruit of the Spirit is not a call to work at being more virtuous. Fulfilling the law is a gracious work of the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit. The law may prescribe and describe the fruit of the Spirit but only the Holy Spirit can create what the Law demands. Thus, the internal work of the Holy Spirit is better than any external demand of the law. This is why Paul at the end of v. 23 writes, “...against such things (i.e., fruit of the Spirit) there is no law.”

D. THE SOURCE OF THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT, V. 23B

The meaning of the phrase “against such things” has been variously interpreted. Some suggest it means that there is no law against the fruit of the Spirit because they are the very virtues the Law requires. Therefore, there is no law against such things because those who walk by the Spirit are fulfilling the Law (see Fung, *Galatians*, p. 273). Others suggest the phrase highlights the fact that no law could ever produce such godly, supernatural qualities (see Schreiner, *Galatians*, p. 350). It could be that Paul has both ideas in mind. Either way, Paul’s statement is quite amazing!

He is saying to the Galatians (and us) that ethical living cannot be legally enforced (i.e., contrary to the Judaizers, Paul asserts that life under Torah/Mosaic Covenant will not lead to ethical living!). Rather, it is the Holy Spirit, working through the gospel that motivates and enables people to live ethically (i.e., fulfill rather than dismiss God's law). Schreiner writes, "Living in a way that pleases God is the fruit of His miraculous work, not the result of self-effort, though human beings are called upon to walk in the Spirit and yield to the Spirit" (*Galatians*, p. 352).

The Holy Spirit produces in us the very requirement that the Law cannot (cf. Ezek. 36:26-27). Paul has already stated in 3:21 that the law cannot give life (i.e., right standing with God). Only God's promise can give life, which is why Paul argues in 3:15-18 that the promise is superior to the law. The law can reveal how people should, ought, must live and condemn them for not doing so. But, the law cannot and does not provide the power necessary to enable a person to live a life that is pleasing to God (i.e., fulfill the Law; fruit of the Spirit). Thus, in contrast to the Law, the promise not only grants life but also empowers life. The Holy Spirit continues His work in the believer the same way He began (i.e., by hearing the gospel with faith, cf. 3:1-5).

Paradoxically then in order to fulfill the law we must not be under law (cf. Gal. 5:18). To be under the law is to be under the dominion (rule and reign) of sin/flesh. Such a state makes it impossible for one to fulfill the law. We must first be set free from the rule and reign of sin and slavery to our flesh. We must be freed from the law as a covenant for life ("Do this and live.") in order to produce fruit that fulfills the righteousness demanded by the Law! This leads us to the fourth and final aspect of Christian freedom Paul gives.

IV. PAUL ANNOUNCES THE TRIUMPH OF CHRISTIAN FREEDOM. V. 24

Paul writes, "And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." This passage announces Good News! It doesn't tell us something that is to be done *by us* but rather something that has been done *to us*.

(Note: Contrary to John Stott, Paul is not emphasizing what is done *by us* but rather something that is done *to us* cf., *Galatians*, p. 150; see also Ryken, *Galatians*, pp. 236-238). Because God, in His grace, has already united us by faith to Christ in His crucifixion (Gal. 2:20 – perfect passive indicative, "I have been crucified"—I am the passive recipient of the crucifying action), so Paul can also say, looking back to that moment when the Spirit drew us to believe, "those who belong to Christ" have crucified (aorist active) the flesh with its desires." If Paul intended to refer here to our ongoing responsibility to mortify our fleshly desires, his choice of verb mood would be subjunctive or imperative, not indicative; and the tense/aspect would probably be present/progressive rather than aorist. Compare Romans 6:12, where Paul does call us to continue to struggle against sin: "Let not sin therefore reign (present subjunctive) in your mortal body." It is vital to note that Paul also in Romans 6 has already laid the indicative foundation in vv. 1-10.

A parallel perhaps to Paul's emphasis that, by our union with Christ, we participate in his victory over our sin may be Romans 5:17. We might have expected, in view of the parallels and contrasts of this paragraph, that Paul would have completed his "just as death reigned through that one man (Adam)," with "much more will life reign through the one man Jesus Christ." But instead, he injects believers as those who reign: "much more will those who receive the abundance of grace...reign in life." Jesus' victory and rule are ours!" (The preceding insights were gained from private correspondence with Dr. Dennis Johnson, Westminster Seminary, CA).

Paul says that those who "belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." By faith in Christ, the rule and reign of sin (flesh) has been forever defeated! Now, you may be wondering, "When did I crucify the passions and desires of my flesh?"

The answer is found in the word "crucified." John Calvin writes, "The word crucified is employed to point out that the mortification of the flesh is the effect of the cross of Christ" (*Calvin's Commentaries, vol. 21, p. 169*). Paul's statement in v. 24 points us back to Galatians 2:19-20, where he says that we died to the law when Christ died. The crucifixion of the passions and desires of our flesh took place at conversion when the Holy Spirit graciously through faith united us to Christ in His death. Because believers "belong to Christ" (i.e., are united with Christ), they share in His death.

Paul makes the same point in Romans 6:5-7, "⁵ For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, ⁶ knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; ⁷ for he who has died is freed from sin."

All men are born into the world as sinners, enslaved under the ruling and reigning power of sin/flesh. But, at the moment of conversion, the "old man/flesh" (who we are in Adam) was crucified and put to death with Christ ("it is no longer I [old man in Adam] who live..."). Through the believer's union with Christ, the dominion and rule of sin have been defeated. As a result, we are no longer enslaved to the dominion of sin, the desires of the flesh and the crushing demand and sentence of the Law ("Do this and live or be condemned."). Moreover, because of the indwelling gift of the Holy Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit is the natural and inevitable result of the Spirit uniting us to Christ. Christ's imputed virtue (2:16) is now slowly being cultivated in our lives (i.e., His imparted virtue; 5:22-23a). Paul, then, is announcing the triumph of Christian Freedom.

Now, you may, at times, feel completely overwhelmed and defeated by the desires of your flesh. You may think that your life will never look like the list Paul describes in vv. 22-23a. But, take heart! Paul announces the good news that you are not left powerless to the ruling and reigning desires of the flesh. You are no longer a slave. You are now a free man! All who belong to Christ now share in Christ's death and

are no longer enslaved to the desires of the flesh. To be sure, this verse doesn't imply perfection. Neither Romans 6 nor Galatians 5 teaches a sinless perfection (cf. Gal. 5:17; Rom. 7:14-23). Paul has already stated in 5:17 that a Christian can expect a great conflict between the desires of the Spirit and flesh. But, the good news is that the power of sin and flesh have been broken in those who believe. Calvin writes, "The flesh is not yet indeed entirely destroyed; but it has no right to exercise dominion, and ought to yield to the Spirit" (*Calvin's Commentaries, vol. 21, p. 169*).

Christians will still experience a mighty struggle with the flesh but the desires of the flesh no longer rule and reign in them. Paul is announcing that Jesus' victory and rule are ours! His victorious death is also ours! Consequently, by virtue of our union with Christ, we are now free to walk by the Spirit and triumph—albeit imperfectly—over the desires of the flesh, which formerly dominated us.

Paul argues that the Holy Spirit—who is better than any external law—will produce a life that is pleasing to God in every respect. And this is guaranteed because you now "belong to Christ" and His victory and rule are yours!

REFLECTION:

As we reflect on the "fruit of the Spirit", let us remember three things.

1. WE DO NOT GROW FRUIT ON OUR OWN. V. 23B

We must not forget this! Paul didn't give us a list of works of the Spirit but rather the fruit of the Spirit. We must not think of "the fruit of the Spirit" as a how-to/self-improvement guide of moral virtues. If we think of it like this, we have fallen back under law and into a works-righteousness mindset. The "fruit of the Spirit" are virtues the Holy Spirit produces in us. He is the one who conforms us to the righteous requirements of the Law. However, though we cannot produce the "fruit of the Spirit" we can cultivate the soil in which fruit can grow.

2. WE CAN CULTIVATE THE SOIL IN WHICH FRUIT CAN GROW.

Even though the fruit of the Spirit is a miraculous work of grace, believers are still called upon to walk by, be led by and keep in step with the Holy Spirit (5:16, 18, 25). The fruit of the Spirit flourishes in the soil of the gospel (5:18, 23-24) and the weed-killing work of the law (5:21). Because we have "crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" we can and must put sin to death (Col. 3:5). Because we are free, we can yield to the desires of the Spirit rather than the desires of the flesh (Gal. 5:18). We "walk and are led by the Spirit" when we germinate in the rich soil of the gospel (Gal. 5:23b-24) and carefully heed the warning of the law (Gal. 5:21). We must then make use of the ordinary means of grace, which have been given to us by God to bring about spiritual growth. By the regular use of the Word, sacraments and prayer, we increase in fruitfulness.

3. THE HOLY SPIRIT IS NOT LAWLESS.

In 5:13-24, Paul has demonstrated that the Holy Spirit is not lawless. Concerning “the fruit of the Spirit,” Betz writes, “It is this overwhelming presence of Christ, the crucified and resurrected Lord, His Spirit, the ‘fruit of the Spirit,’ which prevents the intentions of the flesh from accomplishing the ‘works of the flesh’” (*Galatians*, p. 289). Instead of dismissing the law (license), the Holy Spirit enables the Christian to fulfill God’s law.

So, the law still has its place for the Christian. The law still commands good works for believers (e.g., Gal. 5:25-6:10). But these commands are not conditions for justification because we are no longer “under law” as a covenant for life (i.e., “Do this and live”). Because Jesus has fulfilled the whole law (Gal. 4:4), the commands are not conditions for us to fulfill. Rather, the commands (imperatives) of Scripture become the appropriate response of thanksgiving in view of the mercies of God (i.e., “Live! Therefore, do this, namely be who you are!”).

Simply put, all who “belong to Christ” obey not *for life* but *from life*. The law no longer condemns or brings our consciences under the guilt of judgment for our failures. To those who “belong to Christ” (cf. v. 24), the Law only acts in the capacity of a kind of adviser (cf. *Calvin’s Commentaries*, vol. 21, p. 164). The law continues to direct but no longer condemns! John Colquhoun writes,

By the doctrine of faith, the law is also established as a rule of life to believers. According to this doctrine, it is established in the hand of the Son of God, the glorious Mediator...According to that doctrine, all believers are bound by infinite authority to obey; they are enabled sincerely to obey; they are constrained by redeeming love to obey; they resolve and delight in dependence on promised grace, to obey; and they cannot but obey the law as a rule of duty. The love of Christ, as revealed in the gospel, urges them; the blood of Christ redeems them; the Spirit of Christ enables them; and the exceeding great and precious promises of Christ encourage them to obey and yield spiritual and acceptable obedience” (*A Treatise on the Law and the Gospel*, p. 181).

The Spirit-led believer considers obedience to God’s moral law not just his duty but also his privilege and delight (cf. Ps. 40:8; 119:97; Rom. 7:22; cf. Heb. 10:7, 9). The Holy Spirit, working through the gospel, leads the believer to establish/fulfill the law rather than dismiss the law. Our freedom in Christ does not lead to license but rather love (i.e., fulfilling the law; Gal. 5:14). God’s grace does not free us to live to ourselves. Rather, it frees us to genuinely love God and others for the first time in our lives as an expression of immeasurable gratitude!

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