

Beulah Baptist Church
Rev. Jerry D. Black, Pastor

Sunday School Lesson

May 29, 2022

Teacher – Sister Kevyn “KC” Carter

Lesson —The Spiritual Fruit of Freedom
Devotional Reading: Isaiah 32:1-8

Text: Galatians 5:16-26

I. Aim for Change/Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, we will...

1. **EXPLORE** the freedoms gained when “walking by the Spirit,”
2. **DESIRE** the personal and relational qualities of a Spirit-led life, and
3. **SUPPORT** one another in living a life centered on Jesus Christ.

Key Verse — *“If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” (Galatians 5:25, KJV)*
“Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit’s leading in every part of our lives.” (Galatians 5:25, NLT)

II. People Places and Times

Fruit. Most of the time, we cannot recognize a fruit from only its seed. Only after seeds are planted in the ground and start sprouting do we know what type of fruit has been planted. Fruit is used metaphorically in Scripture to illustrate this fact. We do not know the power at work in people’s lives until we see the fruit that power produces. In Scripture, fruit (works or deeds) is the sign of God’s power moving within a person. Sin produces fruit (works) of the flesh, but the Holy Spirit produces the fruit of the Spirit in the lives of believers.

Early Church Identity. The Roman government viewed first-century Christianity as merely a sect of Judaism because the church was still searching for its identity, and many in the first-century churches identified as Jews (according to their ancestry). Many Christians in fact still worshipped in the Jewish synagogues. The first believers did not even call themselves Christians, but “followers of the Way.” Antioch was where the term “Christian” was first used (Acts 11:26). As increasing numbers of Gentiles became believers, due largely to Paul’s endeavors, the necessity of observing the Mosaic Law came into question.

Paul reflected that our righteousness being based on Christ’s righteousness and received as a gift was the foundation of the Christian faith. This marked the separation of Christianity from Judaism. In Paul’s letter to the Galatians, he consistently emphasized the difference between being enslaved by the Law and being free in the Holy Spirit as a means to teach the true Gospel and solidify the church’s identity.

III. Background

The apostle Paul challenged the believers of his day to learn what every believer today would do well to remember: the key to making progress in the realm of Christian freedom is to keep walking in the Spirit.

If the Galatians were to live free from sin’s power to control their lives, if they were to fulfill the law, it would be because they surrendered themselves to the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. Only those who

have surrendered and who keep on surrendering themselves to the complete control of the Spirit are empowered to walk according to the Spirit's orders.

IV. In Depth

1. **Works of the Flesh (Galatians 5:16-21)** Today's lesson begins in the midst of Paul's attempt to convince the Galatians to not become enslaved by the Law, which – unlike the Holy Spirit – was not intended to save, but rather to shed light on sin (Romans 3:20). Paul informs the Galatians that those led by the (i.e., those under the continual guidance of and in abiding relationship with the Spirit) are no longer subject to the Law, nor can be condemned by it (Romans 8:1).

The question would follow then, “How does one go about following the Spirit, but not the Law and not the world?” Those listening to Paul had been used to thinking of the world in two groups: those who sinned and those who followed the Law. Now that Paul has told them not to follow the Law, he must explain that they aren't supposed to follow the world either. Instead, the Spirit is unique from both the world and the Law (vv. 17-18).

It turns out, Paul tells the Galatians, that following the Spirit will end up looking a lot like following the Law. The things God already told His people not to do, they still should not do. Paul uses a vice list (a convention of Greco-Roman moral rhetoric) to emphasize that those who continually practice these sins will not inherit the kingdom of God. On this list we see items that we might consider “big sins” like idolatry, heresy, and murder. But we also see sins that you and I might commit on a regular basis: hatred, strife, or drunkenness. All sins are equal before God, for any sin means that we have decided to set ourselves against God's protective Law, thinking we know better. *(I am now controlled by the law of the Holy Spirit. That law gives me life because of what Christ Jesus has done. It has set me free from the law of sin that brings death – Romans 8:2 – New American Standard Bible:1995 Update (NASB95))*

2. **The Fruit of the Spirit (vv. 22-26)** The works of the flesh contrast the fruit of the Spirit. The word “fruit” denotes an organic growth that stems from the believer's relationship with Christ. The first fruit listed is love. It is also the virtue upon which all the other fruits are based (1 Corinthians 13:1-3). In essence, the operation of the Holy Spirit is love manifested in believers' lives; there is no law against love.

Followers of Christ still struggle with sinful human desires, but strive to do good. Instead of following the Law and covering their sin with an animal sacrifice, Paul uses the image of believers nailing their sins to Christ's Cross. Instead of trusting the Law to cover up their faults, they trust in the Cross to pay them off once and for all.

Paul adds that if believers live by the Spirit, they should walk in the Spirit. In other words, believers should be in one accord in following the Spirit instead of giving in to competition or jealousy. So much trouble comes when we compare our Christian lives to that of others. Our insecurities lead us to think it's not fair for them or we try to bring them down. We might also lord our seeming height over another, provoking them to jealousy or spiteful action. Such things are also of the world just as much as witchcraft, heresy, and murder are. *(1 Corinthians 2:12-16 – Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. (v.13) Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. (v.14) But the natural man receiveth not the things of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them,*

because they are spiritually discerned. (v.15) But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. (v. 16) For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ - I Corinthians 2:12-16 – KJV)

V. Liberating Lesson

From the moment we're born, laws govern our lives. Babies must have birth certificates. Children must go to school. Drive on green. Stop on Red. Most people try to follow the law to the letter. It's easy for us to look at the fruit of the Spirit as more laws to follow. The Lord desires that our lives reflect the fruit, but not in legalistic ways. Our lives should be an outpouring of our love for Christ and our desire to serve one another.

VI. Application for Activation

We have many opportunities to do good in this world. The question is, what should we do? Create a plan to exhibit at least one fruit of the Spirit each day of the week. Come back and report to the class the challenges and rewards.

Words You Should Know

- A. **Drunkennes** – (Galatians 5:21) *methe* (Gk.) – Intoxication
- B. **Revellings** – (v. 21) *komos* (Gk.) – Drunken behavior

Your Take-Away(s)

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God Bless You and Keep You

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