

Using Christian Liberty Wisely

Harmony M.B.C., June 12, 2016

I. Gal. 5:13 For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only *use* not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

- Refer also to **5:1**
- What is that liberty? **James (1:25)** calls it the “perfect law of liberty.” What is this law? See **John 8:32** - **And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.**
- Use not liberty ...occasion to the flesh
 - ◆ As humans, we can get the notion (mostly an unconscious notion) that since we are redeemed, and since our sins are forgiven, and since the Lord no longer remembers our sins and iniquities (**Heb. 10:17**) we can therefore become callous and even cruel toward others, even fellow believers or our families – that is, use our liberty for an occasion to the flesh.
 - Folks, you can save a snake from being killed by a dog, but if you give that snake a chance, it will still bite you. What is that snake doing? It is using the freedom you created for it to bite the hand that saved it! Without having a real conscious knowledge of the fact that it is taking advantage of a much better circumstance you created for it, it is using the occasion to act like a snake. If it could think and have appreciation, it would think, “this person saved me, so I am going to behave like it intended for me to behave, having saved me from death by a dog.”
 - But the snake doesn’t act out of appreciation; it acts out of natural instinct and uses his liberty as an occasion to act like a snake.
- Notice what the opposite of this is: “by love serve one another” – two things
 - ◆ By love – Do we as believers remember that the foundation of understanding truth is based on comprehending what the mercy and love of God has done for us?
 - Let’s go back to the snake story: If that snake could comprehend what you did for it, then it would understand what your mercy had done for it, and it would behave as you behaved.
 - ◆ That’s what this phrase is speaking to us about.
 - ◆ Serve one another –not use one another, not sucker one another, not even take one another for granted...but **serve** one another.
 - ◆ This, simply put could be understood to mean, “be a servant to one another.”

II. Gal. 5:14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, *even* in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

- First, let’s keep in our minds that Paul is writing about the potential for us to abuse one another; to dis one another.
 - ◆ Go back to “Who is my neighbor?” **Luke 10:29-37**

- Now, can any of you tell me a little more about the Jew in the ditch? What kind of life did he lead? What kind of language did he use? What kind of clothes did he wear? What kind of morals did he have? How old was he? How young?
 - Another question: can you tell me whether this Jew, through his own negligence, got himself into this desperate situation? Was he warned about traveling this road alone, but ignored it? Did he broadcast around town that he had something worth being robbed for? Did he live such a careless life that he brought himself to this dead end condition here on the side of the road?
 - Next, can you tell me anything about what that Jew did toward the Samaritan when he got well?
 - My point: The word of God took no inventory of the Jew except that he was in need. The need was for medical help and help for survival.
 - The need was real, not trumped up...not fabricated...he may have been mostly or all to blame for ending up here in the road ditch, but Jesus does NOT make that part of the mix for teaching us who our neighbor is.
- By love, serve one another!
 - Let me close this part by saying that for every Samaritan on the road to Jericho, there is a neighbor. And for every Jew in a ditch on the way to Jericho from Jerusalem there is a neighbor.

III. Gal. 5:15 But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

- Why is it that Paul stuck this statement in here? Why did the Holy Spirit inspire him to stick this in here?
 - ◆ Because, being a servant to people is sometimes one of the most trying things a person can do.
 - ◆ Also, because for the most part, being the servant always costs the servant far more in personal sacrifice than it costs the person who is being served.
 - ◆ In this kind of lopsided arrangement, resentment and frustration can get the best of anybody.
 - ◆ When animosity arises, in which the believer is acting the servant to someone who is in need both sides in this drama can develop ill feelings and destroy Christian fellowship. This is the threat, and this is what Paul is dealing with among the Galatians.
 - ◆ We need to also look again carefully at the story of the Good Samaritan (**Luke 10:29-39**) and remember that the Samaritan did all the giving, while the wounded Jew gives nothing and says nothing by way of gratitude in the story.
- I want to remind us of our Lord's instructions and example (**Mat. 20:26-28**).

IV. So, because following our Lord's example demands God-given power and because everything associated with it can try men's souls, we find that the Spirit by the pen of Paul gives us the formula for dealing with these problems:

- **Gal. 5:16** *This* I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.
 - ◆ The one thing that is certain to trip us up in life is to walk as we walked before we came to know the Lord. This kind of walk will create conflict and disunity in our lives and the lives of those around us.
 - ◆ The implications of how the Holy Spirit has placed this command in here is that the uproar among believers, the bad relationships, the schisms, the disunity has come from behavior (probably among all players in this) called “walking in the flesh.”
 - ◆ This charge here is the exact opposite of that. What does it mean?
 - ◆ It means follow the leading of the Spirit in our behavior.
 - I saw a movie a while back in which two soldiers were crossing a mine field. The leader told the soldier behind him to walk exactly where he walked and they could get through the field. They set out. About halfway across, the following soldier got out of the steps of the lead soldier just a little bit and stepped on a land mine. He was trapped and panicked and was killed when the mine went off.
 - **Eph. 4:17**“...walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind”
 - **Eph. 5:15** See then that ye walk **circumspectly**, not as fools, but as wise,
 - Nothing makes a believer look more like a fool than to behave like he did before he came to know Christ as Savior.
 - Nothing makes a believer have a stronger influence on those around him than walking in the Spirit

V. Now, we read about one of the great reasons we must walk in the Spirit:

- **Gal 5:17** For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.
 - ◆ Notice first that this statement clearly reveals that not walking in the Spirit creates a Mexican standoff in our lives
 - ◆ The flesh has its eye on carnal things; the Holy Spirit has His eye on divine things. In the believer who does not behave as led by the Spirit, there exists a resistance within him against doing what the Spirit leads. At this same time, the Holy Spirit is the watch captain over the people of God, and He points in the right direction and resists the carnal inclinations of the old man that is favoring sinful things. More than that, He will not let the believer experience the full experience of carnal satisfaction or pursuit...so, we have a Mexican standoff.
 - ◆ Just like the verse says, then, you cannot do the things that you would. You can’t fully experience the sinful behavior and its carnal pleasure, and you cannot fully do the righteous. You are frozen in place. You are brought to a standstill.

VI. Which brings us to the next truth about walking in the Spirit:

- **Gal. 5:18** But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.
 - ◆ Do we realize that every time we start wandering off in the direction of fleshly behavior we become handcuffed by the law of sin and death?

- ◆ It is the law of God that tells us that transgressions are contrary to God. The law tells us that transgressions lead to punishment and death (ask congregation to read carefully **Hebrews 10:26-27** and think of adversaries as our carnal man and even our bodies)
- ◆ But when we are led by the Spirit, we do not come into conflict with the law of God
 - **Rom. 8:2** For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

VII. In this section Paul reviews what the behavior of the flesh is and what the opposite behavior of the Spirit is:

- **Gal. 5:19** Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,
- **Gal. 5:20** Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance (quarreling, contentious), emulations (“hot under the collar”; indignant), wrath, strife (intrigue; soap opera stuff), seditions (disunion; dissension), heresies,
- **Gal. 5:21** Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings (partying), and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do (Greek: “prasso”- practice as a way of life) such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.
- **Gal. 5:22** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,
- **Gal. 5:23** Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

VIII. Gal. 5:24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

- I want us to notice that this verse does not say we have killed the flesh, that is the carnal old man, rather we have put it on the cross so that it will die.
 - ◆ Read **Rom. 6:6** and emphasize that when we KNOW (knowing this) that our old man is crucified with Christ, then we discover power to put to death the deeds of the flesh.
 - ◆ When we have consented to Christ being the Lord of our lives (they that are Christ's), we have gotten to a place where we can get victory over our base or carnal behavior.

IX. We close with a challenge from the word of God to each of us:

- **Gal. 5:25** If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.