

**Galatians 3
(Chapter 5)**

Those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh

The third use of the word 'crucified' is in 5:24 where Paul says that those who belong to (are of) Jesus Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Notice that Paul says 'the flesh' not 'their flesh'. 'Their flesh' would, presumably, be their physical body. But 'the flesh' is the spirit principle of the Flesh at work in their body and life. Paul explains 'the Flesh' in this chapter.

5:1 For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. Paul has been explaining that the Law of Moses is a regime of slavery to performance and self-justifying religion. Performance based religion means that we are in control of our progress and sense of achievement in ritual and moral observance. Jesus Christ does not destroy the law; rather He fulfils the requirements of the law. The law is used by us to make ourselves acceptable to God. If we do the right thing then God will accept us; if we do the wrong thing God will destroy us. Sin is doing the wrong thing. Our religion defines what our sin is. The Christian gospel says that Jesus Christ has made us acceptable to God by paying the price of (being the penalty for) our sin. Under the law we are always trying to reach salvation and achieve redemption. Under grace we are already saved; the challenge is to live a saved or redeemed life. As Christians we are already in the heavenly places in Christ (Col 3:1-4). Therefore to go back to the law is to go back to the slavery (drudgery) of religious observance, which in many cases people prefer because they can see (control) what is being done. Performing law does not require faith, only conformity to a pre-established plan. The freedom that we have as Christians is not moral abandon or religious licence but the freedom that is found in Christ: the freedom is in Him. Jesus Christ sets the vision and the bounds and, through the Holy Spirit, provides the energy (ability) to live out the redeemed life.

5:2 Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision then Christ will be of no benefit to you. Circumcision is the sign of the old covenant given to Abraham (Gen 17:11). Certain believers were saying that Christians should be circumcised to be saved. Circumcision was the start of the Jewish process of salvation not the end. The Christian is to enter into full salvation now, by faith in Christ. To go back to the law is to deny all the benefits of Christ, to reject the Christian way and not live by faith.

5:3 I testify to every man who is circumcised that he is obligated to keep the whole law. Once we start on the path of religious observance we have changed our method of living and gaining acceptance before God. Therefore we have to keep the whole law. Now we cannot falter in any respect. We would have the burden of observing the whole law upon us.

5:4 You are cut off from Christ, you who would be justified (made acceptable, righteous) by law: you have fallen away from grace. Continuing the cutting metaphor, Paul says that those choosing circumcision have removed themselves from Christ. They have fallen away from the glorious place of grace.

5:5 For through the Spirit, we, by faith, eagerly await the hope of righteousness. The Christian is living by faith in the Holy Spirit. The fact that we are made acceptable in Christ is a hope that we eagerly await to be proven: it is a faith walk. The evidence of our Christian life (our redemption) is in the quality of our life in the Holy Spirit. The contrast is:

Old Covenant

Flesh

Law

Performance justified

Works of the flesh

Observance (merited favour)

New Covenant

Spirit

Faith

Christ justified

Fruit of the Spirit

Grace (unmerited favour)

5:6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any importance but faith working through love. What matters in

the Christian life is not what you have done to your body but what you are doing by faith. What is faith generating in your life? Faith is the place and love is the method. Faith puts you in a place from which you minister/serve/do things in love. Love becomes the expression of the faith-filled life. There is a generosity in God that comes with faith-based living. Faith says that there is always more in Christ. Faith brings it forth (Mk 11:23). Nothing is impossible with God (Mtt 19:26; Mk 10:27; Lk 1:37; Lk 18:27). Have the faith of God (Mk 11:22).

5:7 You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?

In the Christian life there is always the challenge of unbelief and distorted belief. There is a perversity in human nature (and in the spirit realm) that will incite us to disobey what we know is true. The truth is to be obeyed.

5:8 This persuasion does not come from the One who calls you.

There is no divine origin to this idea of returning to the law.

5:9 A little leaven leavens the whole lump. Leaven was added to the some sacrifices of the tabernacle (Lev 7:13; 23:17). Leaven is anything used in cooking to produces fermentation which can be viewed as a sign of corruption or decay. Unleavened bread is used in the Passover feast (Ex 12:34). In the NT leaven is seen as an evil influence. 'Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees' (Mtt 16:6). In Mtt 13:33 the Kingdom of God can be viewed as an influence (presumably for good). But it can also be viewed as infiltration by evil influence which is the corrupting leaven in the flour of the bread. In the NT leaven is figurative of sin (1Cor 5:6-8), false doctrines (Mtt 16:6-12; Mk 8:15-21) and hypocrisy (Lk 12:1).

5:10 I have confidence in you, in the Lord, that you will think no other way. But the one who is troubling you will bear the judgement, whoever he is. Paul has confidence for them in the Lord

that they will not depart from the true teaching. Those that are troubling them will be judged for it. We are all accountable to God for our actions (Rom 14:10-12; 2Cor 5:10).

5:11 But, brethren, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still persecuted? Then the offence of the Cross has ceased. Paul

claims that the fact that he is persecuted means that he is not teaching submission to the law. Paul has found a new way to live. He does not live by the law but by faith in the Cross of Jesus Christ. The Cross of Calvary is an offence to respectable people because it was a criminal execution designed to humiliate. But it is also an offence because it is an alternative to performance based religion. People want to feel good about themselves and religion is one way of doing that. A conscience based on observance can satisfy its craving for significance and order by performance and personal control. Grace abandons systems of religious acceptance. We are freed from religious observance and tedious self-regulation to produce faith ventures motivated by love. This is a deep expansion of the soul. Where is your faith? What are you venturing, by faith, for the Kingdom of God?

5:12 I would that those who are troubling you would emasculate themselves! Following the metaphor of the cutting of circumcision, Paul in his desperation wants those who are disturbing the saints

in their believing, to render themselves impotent both to influence others and to reproduce their kind.

5:13 For you, brethren, were called to freedom; only do not use freedom as an opportunity for the flesh but through love serve one another. As Christians we are called to a life of freedom. This in itself is a big responsibility. It is easier to follow rules (law). The law is a form of restraint. Without restraint people can indulge their appetites which create an opportunity to be driven by the flesh. Love becomes the restraint.

5:14 For the entire law is summed up in one word 'Love your neighbour as yourself'. Love is the fulfilment of the law and the true means of personal restraint.

5:15 But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you devour one another. The risks of un-love are dangerous.

5:16 But I say, walk by the Spirit and you will not gratify (fulfil) the desires (intentions) of the flesh. The key to living the Christian life is to live in and by the Holy Spirit. It is an inspired (inbreathed) life.

5:17 For the flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh. These are opposed to one another with the result that you do not choose the things you do. There are the intentions and designs of the spirit and there are the intentions and designs of the flesh. There can be these two kingdoms (motivations) in our life that compete for our attention and performance. The result is conflict and the inability to act. This conflict means that we do not choose the things we do. There is a difference here:

- 1) We do not do what we choose and
- 2) We do not choose what we do.

In 1) we can have a failure of will power. We choose to do something but for some reason we are not able to get ourselves to do it. In 2) we are doing something that we do not choose to do. This suggests that there is another influence (spirit) in our life beyond the control of our choice. That is, we are in bondage to another force making us do what we do not choose to do. I think that 2) is the correct translation. We must be aware of spirit forces in our life that are directing our behaviour beyond what we actually want. This is the base of addictive behaviour.

5:18 But if you are led by the spirit you are not under law.

Remember spirit goes with grace, faith, freedom and love. The flesh goes with law, bondage, works and addiction. This distinction is revealed in the following list:

5:19-21 Now the works of the flesh are evident: (NO BOUNDARIES)

1. Fornication (no sexual restraint)
2. Impurity (uncleanness)
3. Licence (wantonness, excess, making our own licence/rules)
4. Idolatry (manufacturing and worshipping idols)
5. Sorcery (use of medicine, drugs, spells, witchcraft)
6. Hatreds (hostility, quarrels)
7. Strife (contention, argumentative)
8. Jealousy (burn with envy)
9. Anger (passion, wrath with outbursts of anger)
10. Rivalry (selfish ambition)
11. Division (sectarianism, disagreements)
12. Heresies (false teaching, forming rival camps)
13. Envy (demanding covetousness, 'I'll have what she's having')
14. Drunkenness (drinking bouts, desiring to get drunk)
15. Revelry (raging, partying)

and the like. I warn you as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God (1Cor 6:9-10; 1Cor 15:50). These behaviours are the enemies of the soul and body.

5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is: (GODLY BOUNDARIES: where I recognise/respect where I stop and another person begins.)

1. Love (God's kind of love)
2. Joy (compare happiness (soul) and pleasure (body))
3. Peace (the gift of God, not just cessation of hostility)
4. Patience (longsuffering, capacity to endure)
5. Kindness (goodness of heart, recognise another's need)
6. Goodness (character quality of persistent kindness)
7. Faithfulness (faith, also a gift of the spirit 1Cor 12:9)
8. Meekness (gentleness, not demanding our rights)
9. Self-control (self-rule, self-containment, no abandon)

Against these there is no law. These are all spirit experiences. They do not necessarily have a psychological counterpart and, in many cases, can only be mimicked (counterfeited) by the soul. The fruit of the Spirit can only come from the activity of the Spirit.

5:24 those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. The flesh is a spirit realm force or

principle that opposes the presence of the Holy Spirit. Cross-carrying crucifies the intentions and desires of the flesh.

Following the desires of the flesh creates its own intentions and designs in life. But the desires of the Spirit are to be followed and nourished. I (must) crucify the flesh not God (James 4:8).

5:25 If we live in the Spirit let us also walk in the Spirit. The desire is to be guided and organised by the Spirit (Acts 16:6-10). May we produce the fruit of the Spirit's presence.

5:26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. Conceit is pride in one's self. Pride introduces rivalry and competition. Envy is an inverted pride whereby we feel that we will be proud if we only have what that other person has. Our work under the Spirit is to curtail pride in church and self.