

GALATIANS 5.13 – end

So far Paul has explained:

- Salvation as a free gift
- Accompanied by the converts “receiving the Spirit” (3.2)—whatever that means
- Accompanied by adoption into God’s family as sons, and
- Accompanied by the freedom that comes from being sons rather than slaves, and from being released from the curse of the Law

Now Paul moves on, as always at the end of his letters, to discuss the implications of all this for our behaviour.

5.13 – 5.25 Paul introduces here the concept of *the flesh* which is repeatedly set in contrast to *the Spirit*. This is a key concept for Paul, but not necessarily straightforward to grasp. Keep an eye on this subject as we go through; hopefully by the end of the chapter we will have a clearer idea of what he is talking about.

5.13 – 5.15 Up to now Paul has been very negative about the Law. Now, suddenly he’s seeing it in a slightly more positive light.

So we have to ask,

- **Paul has previously been very rude about the Law, but what does he really think? Does he object to the actual moral content of it? Or is it to something else?**
- **For Paul does the Law have a useful role to play? If so, what is that role?**

The obvious danger of the gospel of free grace—people can take advantage of it and use it as an excuse for “the flesh”—Paul’s shorthand phrase for the whole gamut of worldly living. Paul returns to this in the next chapter; here, he just says “Don’t do it.”

5.16- 5.25

“walk by the Spirit”—in 3.2 Paul talked about receiving the Spirit. Now he says, walk by it.

- **How do these two relate?**

Paul here contrasts two fundamentally different lives—the life of the flesh and the life of the Spirit. There seems to be some sort of internal conflict going on here.

- **What is the nature of this conflict? How does it work out in real life?**

And then in 18 he’s contrasting not the Spirit and the flesh, but the Spirit and the Law!

- **So what is the connection here between the flesh and the Law, in Paul’s mind?**

Verse 19 contrasts the **works** of the flesh with, in verse 22, the **fruit** of the Spirit.

- **Why doesn’t he say *the fruit of the flesh* or *the works of the Spirit*?**

Verse 21—“*will not inherit the kingdom of God*”.

This could be interpreted in several different ways—it’s ambiguous.

- **Is this ambiguity deliberate, or is it carelessness on Paul’s part?**

- **Did Paul know what it meant himself?**

Verse 24 deliberately uses the past tense. He doesn't say *should crucify*, he says *have crucified*.

- **Why?**

In verse 25, Paul concludes this paragraph on walking by the Spirit.

- **Are we now in a position to understand what Paul is talking about? We've had:**
 - **Receiving the Spirit (3.2)**
 - **Living by the Spirit (5.25)**
 - **Walking by the Spirit (5.16, 25)**
- How do they all interrelate?**

CHAPTER 6

Verse 2—**what does Paul mean by “the law of Christ”?**

Verse 2 says we should bear one another's load; verse 6 says each must bear his own load.

- **Is this a contradiction? What's the point?**
- **(And why the sudden, unrelated reference to supporting the teacher in verse 6?)**

Verse 6.7 –6.9

- **Why is it not a good idea to use the free gift as a licence for wrong behaviour?**

Verse 11

- **Why the large letters?**

Verse 14—we find again the past tense for

- *the world has been crucified to me* and
- *I have been crucified to the world*

- **Why past tense?**

Verse 15—neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. This is Paul's final, bottom line, summing up of the whole thing.

- **Do we understand it?**

Verse 16—is an interesting and politically controversial statement in the modern world.

- **Who or what, for Paul, is “the Israel of God”?**

Verse 17

- **What are the “marks” that Paul refers to?**