



March 16, 2025

“Lifestyle”

Sunday school at 9:30, Service at 10:30.

News:

Wednesday Nights at 6:30

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A gift that is earned, _____. Mercy that is deserved, _____.

Grace that is merited, _____. Salvation that is due, _____.

Love with strings attached, _____ (Romans 10:9&10, etc.).

God works (Genesis 2:2, Psalm 19:1, John 5:17, Revelation 2:26-28).

God’s work is the consequence of Him being Who He is (I John 4:8).

“A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit” (Matthew 7:18).

GALATIANS 5:13&14 ~ ¹³For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but serve one another through love. ¹⁴For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, “you shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate, or the prayer/suggestion box in the entryway, or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.

God Bless You!

Before He created the world, God appointed you to be free from... legalism.

Now, take your freedom from legalism and use it to enslave yourself to love.

To serve is to act.

The entirety of the Law is fulfilled in one command...

GALATIANS 5:15 ~ But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.

Here's another nuance of what it is to misuse freedom from the Law.

Without Christian maturity each person will interpret the principles to their advantage, which will be to the disadvantage of others.

The word bite refers to Satan (Revelation 12:3-9).

Only Godly love for others can keep us together in the unity of the Holy Spirit (Philippians 2:2&3).

GALATIANS 5:16-18 ~ ¹⁶But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. ¹⁷For the desire of the flesh is against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, in order to keep you from doing whatever you want. ¹⁸But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.

If we are led by the Breath of Almighty God, we don't need the Law.

Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

Name _____ Address _____
Phone _____ Email _____

GALATIANS 5:19-21 ~ ¹⁹Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: sexual immorality, impurity, indecent behavior, ²⁰idolatry, witchcraft, hostilities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, ²¹envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Thinking in terms of a list of dos and don'ts is, by definition, legalistic.

Paul was creating a sense of the character of those led by their flesh.

Character begets behavior.

When you think that you are about to lose someone, or something, that you care about, do you lash out in “resentment, discord, jealousy, hissy fits, self-promotion, dissension, backbiting (and) discord”?

When you are dissatisfied with your lot in life, do you turn to sexual sin, to drunkenness, to partying?

When you are worried about the direction things are going, do you try to control what is not yours to control?

Enslavement to loving ourselves more than we love all else leads us to a lifestyle revealed by the deeds of the flesh.

Idolatry, where we appoint ourselves as judge and final authority. Where we think that our opinions are the same as Truth.

Witchcraft, where we try to get our will done in Heaven, rather than God's Will done on earth.

Love of self will always lead to “hostilities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, (and) envy,” when we don’t get our way, or when we feel threatened.

Sexual immorality, impurity, (and) indecent behavior, where we ignore God’s design and provision.

Drunkenness (and) carousing, where we selfishly escape our responsibilities.

A person who is so deeply enslaved to self-love that their lifestyle exhibits these kinds of behaviors is not a person who is led by the Holy Spirit.

Such people “will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

GALATIANS 5:22&23 ~ ²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Once again, this is not a list of deeds that we check off from a catalog of dos and don’ts.

Unlike deeds, this is not fruits, plural, as though we could have some of them and not others.

Like deeds, this is designed to evoke an impression of the lifestyle of a person led by the Holy Spirit.

Each element feeds into and fosters the next

Finally, none of this is fleshly. All of it is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Last week, when talking about God's free gift of grace and our human participation, we concluded with this... It is not a blending of the two. It is not a 50-50 deal, not a 70-30 deal, not even a 99-1 deal. We are not to think of it as a tension between God's gift and our effort, as though there is some middle ground that we are supposed to navigate.

The Truth is that it is 100% grace through faith and 0% our participation, effort, works, or energy expended. 100% Christ's completed participation, effort, works, or energy expended on our behalf and absolutely none of our standing with God earned by us.

A gift that is earned... is no gift. Grace that is merited... is not grace. Mercy that is deserved... is not mercy, and Salvation that is due... is not Salvation. Love, manifested as forgiveness and acceptance, with strings attached, is not Agapê.

Please, please, please, see this Truth and embrace it... God so loved us that He gave up Himself to enable forgiveness and acceptance of we, who are unforgiveable and unacceptable.

Grace in its extreme super-overabundance is available to all. God does not withhold His free Gift of grace from anyone. Divine forgiveness and acceptance are there for you. All you must do is believe, and you will be Saved.

Romans 10:9&10, 9if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; 10for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

100% faith and 0% our participation results in Salvation, but Salvation isn't merely an agreement to a proposition, Salvation is transformative as the Holy Spirit gives the Christian a new birth from above.

Our works as Christians is merely the inevitable, natural, result of our new birth in Christ. It isn't that God does His bit and then we do ours. It is that God does His bit and then we are His children filled with His Breath and dwelling in Jesus... Period.

Sons of God behave as sons of God because that is simply who we are and obviously, the person who does not behave like a son of God isn't a son of God.

God works. As mentioned, Christ's completed work on our behalf. And further, Genesis 2:2, "By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done." Psalm 19:1, "The heavens tell of the glory of God; And their expanse declares the work of His hands." Jesus declared in John 5:17, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working."

At the end of Revelation chapter 2, Jesus exhorted us, "The one who keeps My works until the end, I will give him... the morning star" (Revelation 2:26-28). That means the person who behaves in the way Jesus behaves will receive Jesus, the true morning star, forever. Endless morning in the Light of Jesus' presence.

My point is that God works and whether it was the work of creating the universe, creating mankind, creating Salvation, or creating every other thing, His work is merely the consequence of Him being Who He is. All of it, without exception, is done by Him

from His great love. “God is Love” (I John 4:8), and from His love character He acts. He’s simply requiring that we do the same.

Keeping the works of Jesus... is to do... what God does. God loves and so, He acts in harmony with Who He is – He acts in accordance with love. We are commanded by Him to do precisely the same as He does.

We are humanly incapable of that and so, God pours out His love upon us, and in us, and through us. The “works of the flesh” is just a way of saying the lifestyle, activity, and behavior of a person who is at their core fleshly, self-serving, immature.

The works of God is just a way of saying the lifestyle, activity, and behavior of a person who is at their core faithful, Christ-focused, mature. Jesus plainly stated that “A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit” (Matthew 7:18). It’s simple stuff.

Galatians 5:13&14 ~ 13For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but serve

one another through love. 14For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, “you shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

“You were called to freedom,” literally means that before God began working in this physical realm, He appointed you to be free from... legalism. You weren't expecting that but remember that is precisely what this Letter is all about.

To be set free from legalism by God prerequisites that He first set you free from sin, death, and the grave. Only a Saved and Spirit-filled Christian can be truly free from legalism.

Now, take your freedom from legalism and use it to enslave yourself to love. Shackle yourself to Christ allowing Him to fill your to overflowing with His love for God, for the church, and for the lost. That is the work of the Christian.

Do that positively instead of doing the opposite negatively speaking. Never use your freedom from legalism as an opportunity to act the fool. Never use your freedom from legalism to indulge your selfish

desires that come at the expense of someone else or of something better.

God through Paul is saying right here that the obvious overreaction to freedom from legalism is licentiousness. Don't go there. Instead "serve one another through the love" that God has provided.

To serve is to act. As we saw last week, "service" is actually behaving in a way that is truly beneficial to another. To God, of course. To the lost, without question.

To the church, to your fellow brothers and sisters who are in Christ, absolutely. This relational service within the Christian community is commanded, and highlighted, and emphasized, because it is the most telling of the reality of love.

Anyone can pretend to love God, and anyone can put on a good show of loving the lost, but no one can fake loving the church for long. It is too intimate, too constant, too persistent, too challenging, for that. An unloving person will soon show signs of their discontent.

Oftentimes, not always, church hoppers, as well as those people who infrequently attend church, are simply people who do not love Christ's Body on earth. They just cannot put the wellbeing of the group ahead of their own happiness.

For a nice bow on top, God, through Paul, declares just what Jesus Himself confirmed. The entirety of the Law is fulfilled in one command, "you shall love your neighbor as yourself." The works of God are works born from love – His love through us. Make yourself a slave to His love working through you.

Galatians 5:15 ~ 15 But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.

Here's the flipside, but more than that, this is another nuance of what it is to misuse freedom from the Law. When people are not constrained by black and white rules, they are left to operate based upon their personal character.

Imagine no speed limit... That means that you must use your judgment based upon your character to choose the best speed.

Taking it further, what that means is that in a non-legalistic community – a community of people without laws to follow – a community like the church – the people will govern themselves. When we don't have rules, we either have chaos or we have individuals who responsibly regulate themselves for the good of all with integrity and self-control.

Each member of the group will conduct themselves honestly in accordance with their character. Their character, which is derived from the community culture, which, in turn, is derived from the general principles that the group holds sacred.

In a Christian community such a thing is possible through the group's submission to one another in love by God's power. In a non-Christian setting, there will be chaos.

Why chaos? Without the Christian maturity described as "self-control" each person will interpret the principles to their advantage, which will be to the disadvantage of others. Do I need to say more?

I could go on and on about the particulars of human behavior, but you know that any group of people who spend much time together at all and who have no solid regulations for what's acceptable and what's not acceptable, will soon disagree with each other over... well, everything.

The problem with freedom from the Law is that there are no black and white rules anymore and so we either invent them as some Christians do or we actually do what Christ demands and learn to operate from love.

When we govern ourselves based upon our character as formed by our deeply held principles, we will disagree on how best to proceed. The immature human love of self will result in us biting and devouring each other and the church will be consumed by Satan.

The word bite used by Paul specifically means the bite of the serpent. To act the way immature Christians act, is to act like the "Serpent of Old," like the "Great Red Dragon who swept a third of the stars from heaven" (Revelation 12:3-9).

Only the mature Godly love for others can keep us together in the unity of the Holy Spirit. We are commanded to have the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in the same spirit, and intent on the same purpose. Doing nothing from selfishness or empty pride, but with humility considering one another as more important than ourselves (Philippians 2:2&3).

Galatians 5:16–18 ~ 16But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. 17For the desire of the flesh is against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, in order to keep you from doing whatever you want. 18But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.

The point here, besides the obvious, is that the only way community can exist apart from the oppression of the slave master called the Law, is for each member of the community to be in step with the Holy Spirit.

If, and it is an extremely big if, if, we are led by the Breath of Almighty God “we don’t need no stinkin’” rules, or badges either. Does Jesus need the Law to

tell Him how to behave? Can you see that it follows then that if a Christian is following Jesus, they also have no need for the Law?

Galatians 5:19–21 ~ 19Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: sexual immorality, impurity, indecent behavior, 20idolatry, witchcraft, hostilities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, 21envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Every sermon or class covering this passage will delve into the minutia of what each deed of the flesh means. While that is our natural human inclination... to quantify and qualify everything into its black and white parameters, it is the wrong way to look at the deeds, or works, of the flesh.

Thinking in terms of a list of dos and don'ts is, by definition, legalistic. Paul wasn't creating an exhaustive list, nor was he creating a list that most closely resembled the misbehavior of the Galatians.

Paul was creating a sense of the character of those led by their flesh instead of by the Spirit of Christ. Character begets behavior, it produces lifestyle, it generates conduct.

Take a look at yourself when you think that you are about to lose someone, or something that you care about. See whether you press into God, or lash out in “resentment, discord, jealousy, hissy fits, self-promotion, dissension, backbiting (and) discord”?

When you are dissatisfied with your lot in life, do you turn to sexual sin, to drunkenness, to partying?

When you are worried about the direction things are going, do you try to control what is not yours to control?

This list is all about creating a general impression of what it is for someone to be led by their flesh rather than by the Holy Spirit. When a Christian fails to take their freedom from the Law and use that freedom to enslave themselves to love for others, they operate from the only other source of behavior available. Such a person operates from their continued enslavement to loving themselves.

Loving self is the default human position. I can easily show you that the source of every sin imaginable, every negative, destructive behavior, every community spoiling activity, and every relationship straining conduct, is self-love.

Slavery to loving ourselves more than we love all else is what leads us to...

Idolatry, where we appoint ourselves as judge and jury, where we function as though we are our own final authority, where we think that our opinions are the same as Truth from the Burning Bush.

It leads to witchcraft, where we try to get our will done in Heaven, rather than God's Will done on earth.

Love of self will always lead to "hostilities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, (and) envy," when we don't get our way, when we feel threatened, when we notice that others disagree with us or don't hold the same values as we do.

It is obviously destructive to relationships and completely contrary to the one thing that Jesus commanded us to do... To “love one another” and to be in community with each other. Allowing our insecurities to cause disruption in the church is the polar opposite of obeying Jesus.

I will tell you right now that it is utterly impossible for all of us to get along without all of us making concessions. Please get that. You can seek what you want and look out for your own interests, or you can seek what God wants and look out for the interests of the group. You cannot seek both.

“Sexual immorality, impurity, (and) indecent behavior,” I’ve said many times and will say again that nearly every person on planet earth either makes sexual sin more restrictive than the Bible or less restrictive. Almost no one takes the Biblical position in this area of life.

It is this simple. Sexual intercourse outside of one flesh is sin. God defined one flesh as one man, married to one woman, in His Holy sight. Intercourse outside of Biblical marriage is sin. Period, end of

story, take it up with Jesus... Because I guarantee, that one day Jesus will take it up with you.

Beyond that, sexual and sensual attitudes that lead to thoughts, words, and deeds of a licentious, lewd, lustful, promiscuous, salacious, or risqué, nature that either harm others, or unduly offend them, is also sin. That's it. I worded all of that extremely carefully so don't take it for more than I said, or for less than I said... If you want to be Biblical about it.

We have "drunkenness (and) carousing." Again, most Christians take this beyond what God demands and others don't take it far enough. There is no prohibition in the Bible applicable to all Christian people to entirely abstain from alcohol. To say that there is, is to twist Scripture and to claim to be more holy in this area than God is and I refuse to do either.

On the other hand, the Bible is crystal clear that intoxication from any source, alcohol or otherwise, including medical marijuana, is a sin. What is drunkenness? A loss of faculties and judgment. Medical science can easily define that as a blood

alcohol level of 0.08 or higher. For pilots, a blood alcohol level of 0.04 or higher will get you jailed.

If you are having more than three standard drinks for a special occasion, or averaging more than two standard drinks per day, or having more than 14 standard drinks per week, you are guilty of the sin of drunkenness.

Why is it a sin? Because whether you accept it or not, you are hurting your witness as a Christian, which hurts God and the church. You are hurting your family, the people whom you say you love the most. And you are hurting yourself. You might think who cares about that last one, but even self-loathing is a form of harmful self-love. It is profoundly selfish.

“Carousing,” is partying like a fool, whether a person is intoxicated, or not, it is exhibiting a loss of decorum that harms, or unnecessarily offends, others.

Again, it is not these particular acts, it is a lifestyle that is self-centered leading to these behaviors and other behaviors like them. Murder for example.

A person who is so deeply enslaved to self-love that their lifestyle exhibits these kinds of behaviors is not a person who is led by the Holy Spirit. Their slavery is to loving themselves, not, as commanded by Christ, to loving others. Such people “will not inherit the kingdom of God.” That’s not my judgment; that’s God’s Holy Word.

On the other hand... Galatians 5:22&23 ~ 22But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Once again, this is not a list of deeds that we check off from a catalog of dos and don’ts. This is a very well thought out, meticulously structured, and thoroughly superb, description designed to evoke an impression of what would constitute a Christ-like lifestyle.

Unlike deeds or works, this is not the fruits, plural, as though we could have some of them and not others. It is the fruit, singular. You either have the Fruit of the Holy Spirit, or you don’t, and if you do, then you have at least a bit of every element described.

Like deeds or works, this set of descriptors is first and foremost designed to evoke an impression. A person led by the Breath of Almighty God will obviously have a lifestyle in harmony with Him. They will conduct themselves in accordance with the Breath of God Who leads them, which is to say in agreement with the Spirit of Christ, which is to say in solidarity with the Will of the Heavenly Father.

In addition, each element feeds into and fosters the next. Love is the foundation. Everything is predicated on the Love of God given – Agapê is the basis for our life in Christ.

The end of what it is to be a Christian, what it looks like to be a mature follower of Jesus walking in tune with the Holy Spirit, is to be self-controlled. Paul described the lifestyle of those made righteous by Christ in Acts 24:25 as being self-controlled.

Christian maturity can be summed up and measured by one's self-control.

Therefore, it should be the goal of every Christian to discipline themselves and become more and more under their own control.

Jesus encountered a lot of people and a lot of situations and every time He was in complete control of His reaction. Whether gentle or harsh, whether sorrowful or joyful, His reaction was precisely what He intended. He was in complete control of Himself and provided us with an example to aspire to.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, none of this is fleshly. All of it is the work of the Holy Spirit. The Christian actively and intentionally yields to the work, yes work, of the Holy Spirit within them to become more like Jesus.

Try to exhibit the Fruit of the Holy Spirit apart from the Holy Spirit and you will end up with a self-serving mess covered in a thin coating of self-righteousness. Work with the Holy Spirit. Pray, and meditate upon these things, and yield, and be.