

THE BOOK OF GALATIANS

"Spirit or Flesh - Which?"

Gal. 5:16-19

Introduction

1. To be a Christian is to live in opposition to all that is non-Christian. The dynamic for this sort of life is provided in the Holy Spirit.

2. This Holy Spirit marks a totally new situation in the arena of Christian living. Note how marvelously the Spirit is related to freedom. There are three significant areas:

1. FREEDOM FROM THE FLESH. v. 16

There is no question that the believer is free (cf. 5:1, 13). This liberty in the Lord, however, is not to be confused with license of living. Why and How?

- a. By counsel. "But this I say . . . " No matter what men may say, Paul has a word from the Lord. There is another course of action to vv. 13-15!
- b. By conduct. "Walk by means of the Spirit . . . " What a depth word! The verb is in the present tense, hence continuous action. The instrument is the Holy Spirit. Here is the golden key of spiritual victory in all areas of life.
- c. By concern. "ye shall not fulfill . . . " The negative here is double and is very strong. To overpower the flesh is possible!

2. FREEDOM FROM THE CONFLICT. v. 17

Since the Spirit is a new force in the Christian life, there is bound to be conflict. But the battle is not ours, it is the Lord's! Hear the Word. The conflict is:

- a. Stated. "For the flesh lusteth . . ." The old life is in definite conflict with the Holy Spirit. New masters are not given precedence without opposition from the old. The verb is present tense and is used in an evil sense here.
- b. Explained. "These are contrary . . ." The verb might be considered to convey the idea of antitheticalness! There is no personal interest between these two principles.
- c. Purposed. "So that ye cannot . . ." Again as in v. 16 the double negative is used - - "in no wise." Verbs are present tense. What is the purpose? Three suggestions:
- 1) Cannot perform holy resolutions;
 - 2) Cannot yield to old flesh;
 - 3) Cannot follow either Spirit or flesh without feeling resistance.
- Best: Cannot yield regularly to old flesh. The importance of v. 16 looms large at this juncture!

3. FREEDOM FROM THE LAW. v. 18

The major thrust of Paul's letter is to demonstrate the inadequacy of the law. It cannot be a way of life, a means of justification, nor a rule of conduct. All moves in the orbit of grace - - both its apogee and perigee. To be led by the Spirit (first class condition, present tense verb) is explicative of walking by means of the Spirit (v. 16). Should one feel pressed to sin because of the law, he need not! The Spirit opposes the law too!

Conclusion.

Should anyone have any doubts about the kind of life Paul is talking about, let him give heed to what follows - - the works of the flesh. "Adultery" is habitual immorality, prostitution and harlotry.

"Fornication" is moral impurity or uncleanness in whatever guise. "Lasciviousness" is wontonness or open and reckless contempt of propriety as something that shocks public decency. These are all illustrations of the flesh and relate to sensual sins. There are many more! ONLY the Spirit-directed life is pleasing to the Lord.

NOTES: