

# Paul's Letter to the Galatians

## Chapter 5

### ***“The Fruited Plain”***

A *“paraprosdokian”* is a figure of speech (a *rhetoric* or *locution*) whose ending makes you rethink the opening, creating a *syllepsis*, or *semantic zeugma*, in which the two clauses disagree. With me so far? Okay, here's what I mean .....

- ***“The last thing I want to do is hurt you, but it's still on my list.”***
- ***“I didn't say it was your fault; I said I was blaming you.”***
- ***“I've had a perfectly wonderful evening, but this wasn't it.”***
- ***“He was at his best when the going got good.”***
- ***“Light is faster than sound which is why he appears to be bright until he speaks.”***
- ***“I take life with a grain of salt. Plus a slice of lemon. And a shot of tequila.”***
- ***“Zucchini is a fruit; go ahead, slice one on your Frosted Flakes.”***

But more about fruit later .... Paul is writing to new believers in Galatia (today's Turkey) in about 48 A.D. because false teachers there are contending that to be a *bona fide* Jesus follower requires faith AND circumcision. “Not!” objects Paul. Either you're living in Lawville, trying to please God by *doing* (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16) or living in Graceland, trusting God by *faith* (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Steve McVey writes in *Grace Walk*, “Improving your behavior will not give you victory in the Christian life.” He cites this sad cycle: at first you're excited to follow Jesus, but you can't sustain that “high,” so you sink into doubt and guilt. Finally, you plead with God to forgive you, vowing to “do better.” And the cycle begins again.

Feelings make bad theology. Jesus and His Word are Truth. As always, the maker is the brains behind the product.

God sent His Son, Jesus the Messiah, to earth to be “a servant of the Jews,” aka “The Circumcision” (Romans 15:8). Jesus said, “I was sent *only* to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 15:24). For three years He spreads “the gospel of the *kingdom*.” Despite His virgin birth, water-walking, feeding crowds from an Ivar's appetizer, healings and raising the dead, His people crucify Him.

Yet God loves and pursues the Jews as *individuals*. The risen Christ wins over their ace enforcer, Saul, who was terrorizing new Jesus followers. Being a Roman citizen, Saul takes his Roman name, Paul.

Having returned to heaven, Jesus unveils to Paul the “gospel of the *grace* of God” which he bravely rolls out across southern Europe (Ephesians 3:1-9; Romans 16:25-26; Colossians 1:24-27). Instead of hyping the kingdom of heaven on earth, this Gospel (“the

mystery”) introduces “the Church, the Body of Christ,” and invites Jews and non-Jews, both sexes, free citizens and slaves to simply *believe* and *accept* that Christ’s death completely paid our punishment for sin. God has made peace with *all* men (2 Corinthians 5:17-21)! To close the deal, He waits for us to accept His pardon by faith (Romans 3:21-24). **Let’s read Galatians 5:1-26, NIV p. 867.**

## ***“Tote That Barge. Lift That Veil.”***

### ***Galatians 5:1-12***

**Let’s read 2 Corinthians 3:12-18, NIV p. 859.**

World population was about 600 million. Many were enslaved by religious shackles, tying one’s performance to his eternal destiny. You can imagine that Paul’s promise of spiritual freedom was a radical message, incensing some, offering hope to others.

DISCUSS: What does Paul mean by “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free?” Why is this freedom downplayed by most religions?

You may be a sincere churchgoer, Bible-savvy, baptized, pastor-ized, Sunday School perfect attendance, tithing, praying. But these are not necessarily evidence of knowing Christ. Living by religious rules can create spiritual pride or guilt. The law is good; it’s God’s standard of perfection. We just can’t keep it in our own strength. Sinning is not the issue; accepting God’s forgiveness for your sin is THE issue. Christ’s death was the *complete* sacrifice for *all* sin, *everybody’s* sin. If you’ve accepted this free gift by faith, you are, in God’s eyes, ***totally forgiven*** (Romans 8:1; Colossians 2:9-10)!

Retreating to religious legalism would be rejecting the freedom Jesus paid for with His life. Circumcision undercuts God’s grace.

DISCUSS: Is it wrong then to live by a spiritual code of conduct? Jesus said on the cross, “It is finished.” What was finished?

## ***“Jesus, Take The Wheel”***

### ***Galatians 5:13-21***

Residing in the spirit of those who believe, God’s Holy Spirit is at war with your mind, emotions and will (Romans 7:7-25). It’s a battle against sin and death that God’s already won for us because, in God’s sight, we were “crucified” with Christ. That’s freedom! But Paul cautions the believer to not exploit this liberty lest it become a blank check for profligate living (Jude 4). God’s bottomless love accomplishes what the law never could (Romans 5:5; 13:8–14).

Do Paul's Top 10 sins shown here resemble what friends scribbled in your yearbook? Paul's talking about a *habit* of sin, not an *act* of sin, so He tells believers, "(Habitual sinners) is what some of you *were*."

Since our soul and body have not been retrofitted for heaven yet, God gives us faith to *believe* we're who *He* says we are, not what we may *seem* to be (Romans 7:18, 8:7-13; Philippians 3:3).

DISCUSS: How would knowing this impact a person?

## ***Low-Hanging Fruit*** ***Galatians 5:22-26***

God gives you the "fruit of the Spirit" the instant you give your life to Jesus. It comes in nine flavors at once, not monthly like Harry & David's. It's a picture of who God is. Any moment you need it, God's Spirit in you makes these available to benefit you and those around you. First is **LOVE** -- *agape*, divine love (1 Corinthians 13:4-8; Romans 5:5; Philippians 1:9). Embracing all the remaining eight, love ushers in JOY and PEACE – a "holy optimism" that runs deep like a cavern stream (Philippians 4:10-20; John 14:27).

PATIENCE, or *long-suffering*, is *courage* under adversity, with no quit in it. **KINDNESS** and **GOODNESS** are *love* in action. **FAITHFULNESS** is *dependability*. **GENTLENESS** is *meekness*, or power under control – ideal for dealing with difficult people (Matthew 11:29). And **SELF-CONTROL** is an endangered species.

"Walking in the Spirit" simply means living in the humble awareness that true **love** comes only from God, that He's our Source of joy, our wellspring of peace, our "go to" for patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness and self-control. Everyone craves this fruit. It's the believer's privilege to be God's fresh fruit stand where the fruit is free, already bought by Jesus on the cross, giving us the ability to live this Christ-powered life.

**DISCUSS: How can we access this heavenly fruit?**

Only the Holy Spirit, residing in us, can give us victory over temptation and sin, can motivate us to surrender our will to God's will, and can produce in us this just-in-time Jesus fruit.

If we depend on our keeping religious laws, rites and traditions, we deny what Christ has already done for us. If God's opinion of us depends on our being holy Dudley Do-rights, we slip from **trusting** into **trying**. And, says Paul, that's not where life and liberty are.

As Greg Laurie puts it, "Life is short, death is inevitable, eternity is real." If you've never done so, there'll never be a better time than now to close His Deal, God's Deal.

Just tell Him, “I’m amazed that You know me and love me. Please take the wheel of my life. I humbly accept Your forgiveness of my sins. And I’m ready and eager to live life as You designed me to. Thank You, Jesus!”

His Deal

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