



Free to Live

RECAP

This week's focus: Spiritual fruit comes from deep roots.

Salvation is made possible by God's grace alone, through faith alone, and in Christ alone. God by His grace sent His Son on a rescue mission to free us from the bondage and condemnation of spiritual death. Any addition to the Gospel of grace will lead us back to the trap of "works righteousness" which results in death. The greatest threat to our spiritual growth and true freedom is the bondage of thinking that it is our job to accomplish God's promise of salvation and sanctification.

Paul illustrates these truths with the story of Abraham and Sarah. They had been promised that God would give them a son in their old age. Impatient and, perhaps thinking that they were helping God out, they took a shortcut. Hagar was their solution to fulfill God's promise. This was a major problem. They were trying to fulfill God's promise through a scheme of the flesh rather than relying on the work of the Spirit. The result was the rise of two opposing nations that still impact us today.

Paul begins his long conclusion of the whole book in Chapter 5 by showing us that we have been set free to love. When we love something, we don't need a command to do it. God desires to change our hearts so that we love Him without being commanded. Then obeying His commands will feel like freedom. This is all made possible by grace alone, through faith alone, and in Christ alone.

God makes freedom possible by restoring our relationship with Him as Father and putting His Spirit in us. When we experience this Gospel truth, we become a person overflowing with generosity and love. Yet, Paul warns us of a battle that rages within all of us as we trust in the Gospel. The battle between the flesh and the Spirit.

The flesh is the un-renewed part of us that still desires to sin, and the Spirit is the renewed part of us that is totally surrendered to God. Each of these opposites reveal their own fruit. The works of the flesh show up in sexual sin, idolatry, relational conflicts, and substance abuse. The fruit of the Spirit is revealed through nine different aspects of Christian character that reveals the goodness of God, and evidence that the Gospel is at work within.

Any gardener will tell you that healthy fruit comes from deep roots. Focus solely on the fruit and the plant will surely die. To produce growth, one must tend to the soil and roots to bear fruit that will last. The same is true for our spiritual fruit. Focus on the root of your righteousness, the Gospel of Jesus Christ and you will bear fruit that will last.

The key to growth in the Christian life is not try harder or follow a list of rules. The key to real growth is to apply the Gospel to areas of our lives that are fruitless. We do that by choosing to have an intimate relationship with God. This is what Paul means by "walking in the Spirit" to avoid the desires of the flesh. Feed the Spirit and the flesh will starve.

When you draw near to God with a contrite and humble heart, He grabs your hand, and you journey through life together. You feed the Spirit by diving deeper into all that Jesus has done for you. And when the Spirit is growing, the flesh is starving!



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SHARE (5-10 min)

Icebreaker Question: If you could change one personality trait in yourself, what would you change? What do you really like about yourself?

STUDY (about 30 min) Read Galatians 4:21-5:22

1. What about the reading or message on Sunday that stood out to you? Is there anything that was unclear, or that you have questions about?
2. Read Genesis 15:17-16:10, 21:1-3 and Gal. 4:22. What was the difference between Abraham's two sons? What point do you think Paul is trying to make? Why do you think Paul used this story to make his point?
3. Abraham and Sarah decided to rely on themselves to make God's promises come to pass. When have you done something similar? What were the results? When have you seen God do what seems impossible in your own life, or in the lives of those around you?
4. What does freedom in Christ really mean in practical everyday terms? How would you explain freedom in Christ to a teenager?
5. Liberty in Christ is not a license to sin but an opportunity to serve one another in love. The whole law is summed up in a single commandment 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' What enables us to follow this commandment?
6. Read Galatians 5:16-25. How would you describe the difference between the flesh and the Spirit? What are the differences between "works of the flesh" and "the fruit of the Spirit"?
7. What does it mean for you to "focus on the root and not the fruit" in your life? What does it look like to grow deeper roots in this season of your life?
8. Examine yourself. Which "works of the flesh" (behaviors) in Gal. 5:19-21 do you see at work in your life? What are the "over-desires" that cause you to think and behave this way?
9. How do you see the fruit of the Spirit growing in your life? What does it look like for you to respond to the work of the Spirit and walk with the Spirit?

SUPPORT (15 min)

Pray: As you struggle with the "works of the flesh", pray this prayer. "Lord, help me, I admit that I'm powerless over (your struggle) _____. I believe that the power of the Spirit will save me, heal me, and make me whole. I turn away from any desire that is not pleasing to you and choose to surrender to Your will for my life."