

Galatians 5:23b-26

...against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.

Against Such Things There Is No Law

If we are not under the Law, why would Paul say that against such things (the fruit) there is no law? It is because if every believer is to walk by faith the outer actions, which men judge, will still look upstanding. *The severed tie to the law due to death with Christ, leads us to have no affiliation with the former ways even if some of the external behaviors may look similar!* Outward similarity in action does not imply the same motive, the same life source, or the same eternal result.

Why do humans focus on works as a proof of justification or sanctification (Galatians 2:16)?

Why is intimacy within the body a better method for both understanding sanctification and being sanctified?

Now Those Who Belong to Christ Jesus

Paul has drawn out the relationship between the believer and God the Father as well as Christ over and over throughout the epistle to the Galatians starting in verse 1:6. Paul continued to draw out the true relationship between those who walk by faith and Abraham (3:9), adoption as sons (4:5), and relationship as personified in the illustration of Sarah and Hagar (4:25). It is through this identification with Christ that Paul can put forth the next assertion in this verse about crucifixion positionally, but He calls for reckoning conditionally.

Have Crucified The Flesh

The great verses on reckoning in Romans 6:1-14 parallel the thoughts Paul has put forth here so tersely. The conditional need for reckoning is most definitely important for the believer to understand. As Hal Molloy put it we see the A,B,Cs of sanctification:

A – the believer is to understand **abiding** in Christ (John 15)

B – the believer **beholds** the Lord (2 Corinthians 3:18)

C – the Believer **ceases** striving to live the Christian life and instead just walk in fellowship and lets the Lord work through him or her (1 John 2:13, Colossians 1:29)

The doctrine of identification tells us that God has removed the believer's bondage to sin and the flesh's passions and desires. Paul therefore applies that to reckoning so that we can see the importance of knowing what is true and then growing in that

truth. The growth happens when we set our minds on things above, it happens when we learn what is already true of us.

*Why does it make sense to let the flesh – which has been crucified along with its passions and desires – have any foothold in the daily life of the believer?
What justifications do Christians give for walking in sin?*

If We Live By the Spirit

Starting with “If...” Paul sets up his logical argument about expected behavior due to the spiritual affiliation believers have. J.B. Stoney put it thusly: “Progress is only advancing in the knowledge, the spiritual knowledge, of what we really possess at the outset.” This means that believers need to know what is true of them first, then they can walk in them. A believer drawn to legalism is not resting in what is true of him or herself (freedom, liberty, Spirit led living) and therefore does not walk in those things. Paul calls the Galatians to take these truths to heart and let them become their walk. The Law called for the Jews to go everywhere with the Law on their lips. Paul draws the parallel here where the Spirit is to be their life, not the Law, and that they would be constantly reminding one another of these things. A Jewish convert would recognize the principles of life and community and edification through relationship and see that their application was similar, but the source and motive are different.

Let Us Not Become

Paul then leads the believers to repent of the attitudes of the flesh including (but not limited to) the carnal characteristics of boasting, challenging one another, and envying one another. Clearly these are a reference to the works of the flesh, but also would have been common amongst the Pharisees who were pushing themselves in pride and boasting to make sure everyone knew of their very strict application of the Law. The custom of challenging one another was common even in the temple where various sects would grab an area by a pillar and teach competing and challenging things. This created a culture of disagreement and challenging, but was not God’s plan for truth and unity under Himself. Clearly envy was not right, but since material blessing and self righteousness were often tied together in the Jewish understanding of God’s work in Israel it was natural for the flesh to cultivate envy. Paul continues this thought into chapter 6 and addresses edification within the body under the system of Grace.

*What cause does the believer have to boast (2 Corinthians 10:17, 11:30)?
What blessing does the believer look to so that material things don’t bring about envy (Ephesians 1:3)?*