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A Practical Theology of Galatians: The Role of Grace and Assurance in Producing the Fruit of the Spirit

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Our study topic leads us directly to Galatians 5:22, the only place in the entire epistle that Paul speaks of the fruit of the Spirit. Indeed, it is the only text in all of his letters in which the Apostle uses the phrase, *fruit of the Spirit, karpo.j tou/ pneu,mato.j*.² This limitation pertains to the entire Pauline corpus of thirteen letters, including the letters usually thought to have come from Paul himself, as well as those generally considered to have come from his interpreters or followers.³

The distinction as to source and authorship, therefore, is often made between the undisputed letters (1 Thessalonians, Galatians, 1-2 Corinthians, Romans, Philippians, Philemon) and the disputed letters (Colossians, Ephesians, 2 Thessalonians, 1-2 Timothy, Titus). The distinction relates to probable authorship, not to considered value or integrity.⁴ In any case, our phrase, *fruit of the Spirit*, is a rare one!

¹ See www.ILT.org and www.facebook.com/InstituteLutheranTheology.

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³ Calvin Roetzel, *The Letters of Paul* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox: 1998), p. 153-160.

⁴ David Hay, "Pauline Theology After Paul," *Pauline Theology IV* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), p.181-195.

Paul uses the word *karpos*, translated in Galatians 5:22 as *fruit*, in other texts, too, but in conjunction with terminology other than (*fruit of the Spirit*).⁵ In Romans 1:13 the word is used to speak of the *harvest* that Paul hoped to reap among the Gentiles in Rome.⁶ In Romans 6:21-22 he says, “So what *advantage* did you then get from the things of which you now are ashamed? The end of those things is death. But now that you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God, the *advantage* you get is sanctification. The end is eternal life.”⁷ In 15:28 he speaks of *what has been collected* for the ministry (of material blessings, v. 27) that he wants to deliver to the saints in Jerusalem (v. 25).

In 1 Corinthians 9:7 Paul defends his right to be supported as were other apostles: “Who plants a vineyard and does not eat any of its fruit?”⁸ In Philippians 1:11 we find the word again as the fruit of righteousness, in 1:22 as the fruit of work(-manship), and in 4:17, remembering the gifts of support he had already received from the Philippians, he wants them to acknowledge “the *profit* that accumulates to your account.”⁹

There are three other references to be mentioned. Ephesians 5:9 speaks of the fruit of light.¹⁰ So, 2 Timothy 2:6 echoes 1 Corinthians 9:7, alluding to the first *share* of the crops, reflecting the Apostle’s desire for Timothy to replicate and persevere in the ministry for which Paul has mentored him. And, 2 Timothy 4:13 mentions *Carpus* as the name of a person, specifically the man from whom Paul wants

⁵ The English translation of choice throughout this essay is the New Revised Standard Version (NRS).

⁶ Ernst Käsemann, *Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980, translated and edited by Geoffrey Bromiley, p. 20, says that the term here, “as in Phil 1:22, comes from the missionary vocabulary of edification.”

⁷ Käsemann, p. 185, points out that in v. 21c fruit “is the result of the service of sin,” while v. 21 speaks of freedom from sin and formulates “the antithesis of the past and the salvific present.”

⁸ Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), translated by James Leitch, p. 154, sees the illustrations of military service, farmer, and shepherd copied in 2 Timothy 2:3-6. The planter has the right to enjoyment of the fruit: Deut 20:6; Pr 27:18.

⁹ Ronald Hock, *Philippians in The HarperCollins Study Bible* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), hereafter *HCSB*, p. 2205, 2207, sees 1:9 like 3:9 in terms of the sharp contrast between righteousness of one’s own under law and that which is through faith in Christ. This is also the *profit* of 4:17.

¹⁰ For a substantial discussion of the word as used in Ephesians 5:9 see Markus Barth, *Ephesians 4-6* (New York: Doubleday, 1974), p. 567-568, who says that the context and references in v. 8-12 “suggest a translation of *karpos* in vs. 9 which carries the overtone of generation rather than of mechanical production.”

Timothy to retrieve his cloak (and bring also Paul's books and parchments). Hence the poignancy of 4:21a, "Do your best to come before winter."

The sense of the word *karpos* in Paul, as in the New Testament generally, thus relates to consequence or result, mostly in a positive way as expressed by profit, advantage, or harvest.¹¹ It signifies life in Christ, under the power of the Spirit, in service of righteousness, with benefits to ministry and mission. We can see that Paul has chosen a patently positive term to speak of the Spirit's produce in the resultant faithful walk of the believer's life.

Paul's choice of the positive word *karpos* in v. 22 shows the sharp contrast with what has been previously laid out in 5:16-21. The contrast (*Spirit, not flesh*) in 5:16, the naming of opposites (*flesh opposed to Spirit*) in v. 17, and the implication of law with flesh in the contrast (*Spirit, not law*) in v. 18 all recapitulate the argument that Paul has been making throughout the epistle. That is, after the contrasts of Spirit and flesh in 5:16-17, Paul replaces flesh with law in v. 18. He then can proceed to set "works of the flesh" in 5:19 against "fruit of the Spirit" in 5:22-23. Our topic text is thus characteristic of the epistle as a whole.

Paul's argument in Galatians is against those "who are confusing you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ" (1:7). His argument challenges and resounds on behalf of the Galatians "who are turning to a different gospel" (1:6). Paul affirms that his gospel is of divine origin and he emphasizes this conviction with the language of theophany, *apocalypsis*, saying that he had "received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ" (1:12).¹²

But what was the perverting of the gospel to which he refers? We learn from Galatians 2 that the problem imposed upon the Galatians was the opponents' presumed necessary addition of ritual law requirements for complete faith in Christ. The contest, then, is not between church and synagogue, but between two completely diverse perspectives on Christ-faith within the church. Paul retrieves

¹¹ Friedrich Hauck, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (TDNT) III* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), translated and edited by Geoffrey Bromiley, p. 614-616.

¹² Albrecht Oepke, *TDNT III*, p. 583-584.

two case histories (if we may call them that) following one upon the other in Galatians 2 in order to press his argument.

The first case, Galatians 2:1-10, pertains to Titus, an uncircumcised Greek, whom Paul had taken with him to Jerusalem (2:1) for a meeting with “acknowledged leaders” (2:2).¹³ This somewhat in-your-face move on Paul’s part raises (forces?) the issue of whether a regulation of ritual law (i.e. circumcision) will be deemed by the leaders as necessary for faith in Christ. Or, on the other hand, would the (law-free) gospel that Paul has already been proclaiming among the Gentiles (2:3) be affirmed as right and worthy of commendation? In other words, Paul has been receiving Gentile converts to the faith without circumcision. He now takes the uncircumcised Gentile convert, Titus, along with him as a test case.¹⁴ The occasion reminds us that practice may precede doctrine.

The “acknowledged pillars” (2:9) with whom Paul met included James (the Lord’s brother), Cephas (Simon Peter), and John (son of Zebedee).¹⁵ These leaders “recognized the grace” that had been given to Paul, gave “the right hand of fellowship” to Barnabas and Paul, and agreed that Paul and Barnabas should go to the Gentiles and they, the pillars, would go to “the circumcised,” the Jews (2:9). The agreement followed acknowledgement that Paul had already been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised (2:7), just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel for the circumcised.¹⁶

The concord on this matter amounts to legitimization of Paul’s apostleship, message, and equality of authority. The pillars, among whom James seems to be the head, then asked that Paul and his fellows remember the poor.¹⁷ This is an interesting progression on the part of leadership, *recognizing, receiving, agreeing, and asking*. Its outcome tacitly does two things. First, it establishes affirmation of

¹³ C. K. Barrett, “Titus,” *Essays on Paul* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1982), p. 118-131, here p. 120.

¹⁴ Olof Linton, “The Third Aspect,” *Studia Theologica III* (1949), p. 79-95; C. K. Barrett, *Freedom and Obligation* (London: SPCK, 1985), p. 11-12, 112.

¹⁵ F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), p. 121-122; Oscar Cullmann, *Peter* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1953), translated by Floyd Filson, p. 18.

¹⁶ Heinrich Schlier, *Der Brief an die Galater* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971), p. 76, points out that this is not about acknowledging two different gospels. It is about two different fields of mission.

¹⁷ Hans Betz, *Galatians* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), p. 99; C. K. Barrett, “Paul and the ‘Pillar’ Apostles,” *Studia Paulina*, p. 1-19, here p. 5.

Paul's gospel and apostleship as legitimate.¹⁸ Second, it sets up the contrast that follows hard on the heels of this affirmation, as Paul next launches into his account of the conflict with Cephas at Antioch (2:11).¹⁹

The second case that Paul retrieves from past experience relates to his confrontation of Peter over another aspect of ritual law, namely *kosher* or table regulations (Galatians 2:11-21). It is difficult to ascertain whether Paul's report of the Antioch encounter with Peter continues through 2:21, with v. 15-21 being a summary of his Antioch speech, or ends at v. 14. Perhaps Paul had in mind both the actual remembered situation in Antioch as well as the present problem in Galatia (and what he wanted to do about it) as he wrote.²⁰ Or, to put it another way, his recounting of the episode may in its reporting have turned into homily. What is clear is that both Peter and (even) Barnabas were trapped in what Paul called their "hypocrisy" (v. 13), having caved to the pressure imposed by representatives from James and the circumcision faction (v. 12). We should note that allegiance to the practice of circumcision would not have constituted a *faction* within Judaism, but it could be called that within the Christ movement, indicating the inter-church nature of this conflict.

Furthermore, "The vacillation of Cephas and Barnabas shows that the Jerusalem agreement (2.7-10) had failed to address the problem of table fellowship."²¹ That is, the agreement in Jerusalem had addressed a specific point of law, circumcision, but not other points of law or law as such. This step regarding the larger issue of law itself will be taken by Paul himself.

Peter's vacillation related to his previous decision to be in full fellowship with Gentile converts to the faith, and now he had drawn back and separated himself from them. That decision for full

¹⁸ Walter Grundmann, *TDNT II*, p. 37-40, speaks of this as a sign of treaty, compact, agreement, and alliance.

¹⁹ Wayne Meeks and Robert Wilken, *Jews and Christians in Antioch in the First Four Centuries of the Common Era* (Missoula: Scholars, 1978), p. 1, see this episode implying that in Antioch Christianity is first perceived as a distinct movement and that it has crossed the boundaries of Judaism in seeking Gentile converts on a law-free basis.

²⁰ Schlier, *Galater*, p. 88, points to both factors, as the statements in 2:14 and following have "den Charakter einer Zusammenfassung," a combined report and summing up. See Betz, *Galatians*, p. 113-114.

²¹ Richard Hays, *Galatians, HCSB*, p. 2185.

fellowship reflects the steps Peter had taken as described in Acts 10 and the incident with Cornelius. Therein Peter learned about the equality of grace and that he ought not refer to anyone as unclean. Old distinctions and identifications had been surpassed. He was then free to enter table fellowship with the Gentile Cornelius and his household and to evangelize among the people “in every nation” (*evn panti. e;qnei*, Acts 10:35).²²

This breakthrough was received by the others in the Jerusalem church: “Now the apostles and the believers who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also accepted the word of God. And they praised God, saying, ‘Then God has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life’” (Acts 11:1,18).²³ Peter’s retreat from that fellowship was the reason for which Paul challenged and reproached him in Antioch.

For Peter it had apparently seemed expedient, if unprincipled, to acquiesce to the pressure for stricter law observance as pressured by the men from James.²⁴ So we might think about these men from James and wonder,

What was their message? It may have been something like this: ‘news is reaching us in Jerusalem that you are habitually practicing table-fellowship with Gentiles. This is causing grave scandal to our more conservative brethren here. Not only so: it is becoming common knowledge outside the church, so that our attempts to evangelize our fellow-Jews are being seriously hampered’.²⁵

In view of this pressure, Peter relented and withdrew from the previously initiated fellowship with Gentiles. For this inconsistency he found himself at cross purposes with Paul who now commences in the Galatian letter to raise the point at which he has been aiming from its start. After a cursory comment directed to Peter in 2:14, Paul begins in v. 15 to lay out his message of justification.

What Paul has done with the two case histories is to announce that neither circumcision (2:1-10) nor table regulations (2:11-14) can

²² τὰ ἔθνη can be translated as either *the nations* or *the Gentiles*.

²³ Heikki Räisänen, “Galatians 2.16 and Paul’s Break with Judaism,” *New Testament Studies* 31 (1985), p. 543-553, affirms the need of conversion for both Jew and Gentile, for all to become a new creation: “It was a new beginning.”

²⁴ Cullmann, *Peter*, p. 51, recognizes that Peter “occupied in relation to the party of James an infinitely more difficult position than did the independent Paul.”

²⁵ Bruce, *Galatians*, p. 130.

serve as identity requirements or markers, in view of God’s work in Christ. The nature of these two ritual observances served the identity-defining function of the law. The peculiar practices of a group can work to mark that group off as distinct from others in a sociological way. The boundaries that such rituals establish serve the group’s own definition of identity. In this sense the ritual laws inherent in the two cases addressed in Galatians 2 were in fact identity markers for Jews, badges of covenant membership. They were expressions of covenant faithfulness.²⁶

The ritual regulations also applied to proselytes who were Gentiles fully converted to Judaism.²⁷ The boundaries served by such ritual laws were too great, the threat to Jewish identity (even for those Jews of faith in Christ) was too real, and the pressure from the James party was too forceful for Peter and the others to ignore.²⁸

But rather than backing away from the force of the issue Paul went one huge step forward: he moved inductively from the aforementioned aspects of ritual law to the entire law as a whole. He mentions the law for the first time in 2:16: “we know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ.” His phrase, *works of the law* (*evx e;rgwn no,mou*) must relate to what he has just been talking about, namely, circumcision and table regulations. He uses the phrase three times in 2:16, and once each in 3:2, 5, 10. In each instance the phrase is used with a negative, *not, no one* (2:16), or it is placed in opposition to an implied or rhetorical positive. Thus, “Did you receive the Spirit by doing the works of the law *or* by believing what you heard?” (3:2); “Does God supply you with the Spirit and work miracles among you by your doing the works of the law, *or* by your believing what you heard?” (3:5); “For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse.” (3:10).

But even before Paul is finished using the phrase, works of the law, he abbreviates with a kind of shorthand. He drops *works of* (*evx e;rgwn*) and speaks only about *law* (*no,mos*), in 2:19, 21, thereby allowing us to think of law as a whole. The switch from specific

²⁶ James Dunn, “The New Perspective on Paul,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 65 (1983), p. 89, 108.

²⁷ Kirsopp Lake, *The Beginnings of Christianity* I (London: MacMillan, 1920-1933), 5:82-84.

²⁸ James Dunn, “Works of the Law and the Curse of the Law (Galatians 3:10-14),” *New Testament Studies* 31 (1985), p. 528-529.

works to the law as such, from parts to the whole, is heightened in 3:10 with his reference to the book of the law and all things written therein. So also in 3:17 his reference to the law having come 430 years later (that is, after the covenant with Abraham) can only refer to Sinai and the giving of the Ten Commandments. Based on his use of the case histories relating to circumcision and table regulations in chapter 2 we might have expected that Paul would argue about the chronology of ritual law rather than moral law in relation to covenant. But he has moved away from concentration on works of the ritual law in particular, in order to speak of law itself: it does not justify (2:21); it does not supply the Spirit (3:2); it does not rest on faith (3:12); it is associated with curse (3:13); it is connected to the flesh (3:3).

Hence, we arrive at the contrast inherent in our topic, between the works of the flesh (5:19) and the fruit of the Spirit (5:22). The two lists are quite conventional. *Works of the flesh*, that is, vices, are enumerated also in Mark 7:21-22; Romans 1:29-31; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; 2 Corinthians 12:20. *Fruit of the Spirit*, that is, gifts or manifestations, are listed in Romans 8:9-11; Philippians 1:11; 1 Timothy 6:11; 2 Peter 1:5-8; Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:7-11.²⁹ Such lists are often described as catalogues of vices and virtues. They are, however, not mere attributes of an individual person, regarding which anyone of us might have control and choice. They are the marks of a community as that community is shaped, informed, led, and living by the power and influence of either flesh or Spirit.³⁰ The lists are thus the result of the working within community of either flesh or Spirit, and believers ought not be surprised by the results of the realm within or the rule under which their community has seen fit to walk.

These lists ‘emphasize sins against the common life in the brotherhood’; their function is not to ‘distinguish an outstanding group of high moral standards from the abominable immorality of the world’ but ‘to show the church how much this world is still living in its midst’.³¹

²⁹ Richard Hays, *HCSB*, p. 2190.

³⁰ J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), p. 496, 524-540; Betz, p. 281-290.

³¹ Bruce, p. 247, quoting Schweizer. On the functions of such lists see also Martti Nissinen, *Homoeroticism In The Biblical World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), translated by Kirsi Stjerna, p. 114; Robin Scroggs, *The New Testament and Homosexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), p. 101-109.

If in fact the (*abominable immorality of*) *the world* can still find a foothold in the midst of the church, then exhortation is in order: “If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit” (5:25). It is little wonder that this aspect of Paul’s message comes within the part of the letter usually reserved in all his letters for exhortation and moral encouragement.³² Paul has reminded us in 5:18 that the old opposition of law-flesh is past. What opposes flesh and its works now, in the new era (or aeon, age) is the Spirit: “But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law.” The second person plural, *a;gesqe* (*agesthe, led*), addresses the community as a whole and raises the question of what the marks of its identity shall be.

This question is anchored in Paul’s *before and after* theological perspective on the coming of Christ, the advent of faith in him, and freedom from flesh and the law. Several texts specifically reflect this perspective in the Galatian letter.

First, Paul greets the Galatians with the proclamation of “the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to set us free from the present evil age” (1:4). He uses the verb of the Exodus (*evxe,lhtai*) to speak of *deliverance* or *rescue*, as in Exodus 3:8 (LXX, Paul’s Bible). Just as the deliverance in Exodus 3 was from misery, slavery, and suffering to freedom in a new land so in Galatians 1:4 it is deliverance *evk tou/ aivw/noj tou/ evnestw/toj ponhrou/* (*from the present evil age*) through the freedom for which Christ gave himself. Paul immediately follows this proclamatory greeting with the challenge of 1:6. He confronts the Galatians with their desertion of him (who called them) and their turning to a different gospel. The “different gospel” amounts to reversion to the old or previous aeon from which they had by Christ been delivered. That is the aeon over which the works of the flesh hold sway.³³ That aeon may be thought of as continuing, but Christ’s people have been rescued from it: “Wake up to the real world, you Galatians! God’s redemptive act has been carried out!”³⁴

Second, in line with the forgoing, Paul can speak of the law as an entity in relation to which he has died: “For through the law I died to

³² Roetzel, p. 59-60; Betz, p. 253.

³³ Betz, p. 42 n. 58.

³⁴ Martyn, p. 90.

the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (2:19-20). Paul disassociates the law from justification (2:16,21), from reception of the Spirit (3:2), from the working of miracles (3:5), from Abraham’s faith and blessing (3:6-9), and the inheritance (3:18). He associates the law with the flesh (3:3), with curse (3:10,13), with transgressions (3:19), and with imprisonment. *In relation to the law he has died: evgw. ga.r dia. no,mou no,mw/ avpe,qanon(i[na qew/| zh,swÅ Cristw/| sunestau,rwmai (For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ.)* This death in relation to the law is brought about by the law, and the purpose of this death is so that Paul might live in relation to God. The transfer from one realm (law) to another (faith), from death to life, corresponds to the aeonic shift that has taken place with Christ’s coming, work, death, and resurrection.³⁵

Third, the effect of the foregoing death may be summarized by 3:23-26,

Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith would be revealed. Therefore the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian, for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith.

The *disciplinarian,(paidagwgo.j)* of which Paul speaks was the specific servant who was rigorous, rude, and rough, in charge of the young master until that one’s age of majority.³⁶ In Paul’s line of thought, life under the pedagogue is equal to slavery and thus a “positive educational development from Judaism to Christianity” could not have been intended so much as a purely temporal sense of the rule of law, which for Christians is now past.³⁷ This temporal sense is supported by 4:4-5, reporting God’s action to send the Son in

³⁵ C. F. D. Moule, “Death ‘to Sin’, ‘to Law’, and ‘to the World’: A Note on Certain Datives,” *Mélanges Bibliques* (Gembloux, 1970), p. 367-375; Robert Tannehill, *Dying and Rising With Christ* (Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1967), p. 55-60.

³⁶ J. B. Lightfoot, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), p. 149, “the main idea is that of strict supervision.”

³⁷ Betz, p. 177-178.

“the fullness of time.” We note also the contrast in 4:8-9, between *formerly* and *now*.

Fourth, the new creation is in contrast to the old circumcision-uncircumcision distinction. Paul’s two-aeon perspective undergirds his view of the role of law as well as the new, cruciform, life of the believer in Christ. The distinction is clear in 6:14-15. Paul’s summary statement points to Christ’s having come to be under the law for the purpose of redeeming and adopting all people. In this way Christ’s coming is the turning point of the ages.

And it is for *all* people, according to 4:1-11, where to be under the custodianship of the law is equal to being under the dominion of *the elements of the world* (*ta. stoicei/a tou/ ko,smou*). This essentially Gentile application Paul makes fit all people.³⁸ To be under law is materially the same as being subject to beings who are by nature not real gods.³⁹ We note, then, the melting together of *we* and *you* throughout 4:1-11. Furthermore, Paul’s use of *evn tw/| staurw/| tou/ kuri,ou h`mw/n Vlh sou/ Cristou/(diV ou- evmoi. ko,smoj evstau,rwtai kavgw. ko,smw/|* (*except/in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world*) in 6:14 hearkens back to 2:19 and being *crucified with Christ* (*Cristw/| sunestau, rwmai*). Paul makes his experience be the paradigm for all believers.⁴⁰

What shall be said, then, about these things? Several concluding comments may be in order.

First, deliverance has been given through Jesus Christ. It is deliverance from the present evil age (1:4), from the law (2:19), from the flesh (3:3), from the curse of the law (3:13), and from the (fallen) world (6:14). Paul asserts time and again that the Christ event (that is, Christ’s advent, death, and resurrection, considered together) has been the turning point from the old age to the new, from the rule and role of law to the time of faith, from death of the flesh to life in the Spirit. It is grace that this deliverance is an accomplished fact and it is grace

³⁸ Ernest De Witt Burton, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1921), p. 517; Helmut Köster, *TDNT* 9, p. 272, Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament 1* (New York: Scribners, 1951), translated by Kendrick Grobel, p. 67

³⁹ E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), p. 69.

⁴⁰ Georg Eichholz, *Die Theologie des Paulus im Unriss* (Neukirchener, 1972), p. 224; Betz, p. 122.

that it is accomplished and delivered by Jesus Christ. Proclamation that would convey assurance therefore administers this message of deliverance.

Paul is consistent throughout the letter in associating grace with the person and work of Christ (1:3, 6, 15; 2:9, 21; 5:4; 6:18). He speaks simultaneously of this news of grace in and of Christ as the *gospel* (1:6-9, 11; 2:2, 5, 7, 14; 3:8; 4:13). We could call this gospel of grace the *objective reality of salvation*. It is established solely by God's work in Christ: *salvation* because it redeems, *reality* because it is accomplished, *objective* because it is not subject to human condition nor dependent on human cooperation. The captive is not self-freeing, but is acted in-behalf-of, by someone else. Only so is the captive set free (5:1) and only thus is the free person capable of having assurance beyond the power of captivity. Therefore, "Faith does indeed lend an ecstatic aspect to life: it establishes the ground of life outside the human individual in Jesus Christ."⁴¹

Second, with freedom comes obligation. With cessation of the old comes the new. With death of the self in relation to one person, power, or domain comes life in relation to another. "So there is no contradiction between freedom and obligation."⁴² Or, to state this assertion in terms of the letter's chief parts, there is a vital link between the *Propositio* in which is certainty of the new, cruciform life, and the *Exhortatio*, in which is the challenge to live in accord with the new life.⁴³

Paul makes this link between gift and challenge, freedom and obligation, deliverance and responsibility, also in 5:25, "If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit." Here we have Paul's "entire ethic in a nutshell."⁴⁴ The link is between the beginning and the continuation of life in the Spirit. Paul (3:3) had previously asked the question, "Having begun with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh?" In 5:25 he answers his own question, as he points the Galatians to a continued manifestation in daily life of the new life that had its beginning in them.

⁴¹ Gerhard Ebeling, *The Truth of the Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), translated by David Green; p. 150.

⁴² C. K. Barrett, *Freedom and Obligation* (London: SPCK, 1985), p. 71.

⁴³ See Betz' outline, viii.

⁴⁴ Betz, p. 293.

“If the Spirit is the source of our life, let the Spirit also direct our course” (NEB). That their new life in Christ was life by the Spirit they knew; the moral corollary of this, Paul reminds them, is that their conduct should be governed by the Spirit; they should march in line (keep in step) with him.⁴⁵

Third, the verb Paul uses in 5:25 is *stoicw/men, let us walk*. He uses it again in 6:16 to speak of following after the rule of new life in Christ. And yet he is not, and has not been, advocating the works of the law as the way to live the daily life of faith.⁴⁶ The subjunctive verb with the dative, *by the Spirit*, marks the line or direction.⁴⁷ Paul may have borrowed a military term for his purpose, and if so, then, “Paul would be calling upon the Christians of Galatia to all march in line following the Spirit as the leader.”⁴⁸

Finally, the plural list of vices that Paul catalogs in 5:19 as the *works* of flesh stand in contrast to the singular unity of *the fruit* of the Spirit.⁴⁹ The list in 5:22 is held together as one entity, not as individual gifts from which a person might choose, or a few of which may bless and characterize one’s life. The unity of the fruit of the Spirit is the ground or foundation out of which new life grows and on which the Galatians are encouraged by Paul to stand and walk.



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⁴⁵ Bruce, p. 257.

⁴⁶ Betz, p. 294.

⁴⁷ Lightfoot, p. 214.

⁴⁸ Betz, 294.

⁴⁹ Betz, p. 286.