**The Fruit of the Spirit**

Galatians 2:13-16

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**Jeff:** All right. Well it’s good to be with you men. The thermometer said 1 on my thermometer and then 7 in my car; I like 7 better. *(Laughter)* But here we are. Thanks for coming out on such a cold morning; it’s great to see everybody.

What I want us to do is, we’re going to change topics. I think we made it through all of the topics that you suggested that we work through. If I missed one, let me know and we’ll go back and we’ll finish it.

**Don Maurer:** I’m still not sure of who I am, but that’s okay.

**Jeff:** Well, Don, we’re not sure who you are. *(Laughter)* Did we do identity? I can’t remember.

**Don:** Yes.

**Jeff:** Yes, we did. So if you have other topics that you’d like to explore, let me know. I’ve decided that what we’re gonna do is that we’re gonna explore a series on the fruit of the Spirit. I think that will be a help to us in general as we live the Christian life. And so I want us just to take a few weeks and think about that topic. So what we’re gonna do is that we’re going to turn to Galatians 5, and we’re gonna look at verses 13-16. Don, do you have that today?

**Don Maurer:** No.

**Jeff:** No? That’s okay.

**Don:** Sorry. I thought we were going to continue in Mark.

**Jeff:** Nope.

**Don:** Sorry.

**Jeff:** That’s okay. That was just a two-parter. Maybe we’ll go back and do some of the Gospels sometime.

**Don:** No, this is good; I’m looking forward to it.

**Jeff:** Okay. Galatians 5, starting in verse 13. *“For you were called to freedom, brothers; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh. But through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.*

*“But I say: Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.”*

All right. So what I want us to do is, I want us to look at this text in light of four things. I want to look at an introduction. Then we’re going to look at the right view of freedom, what it means to be called to freedom, the basics of freedom, and then the basic warning: Do not lose your freedom. And so those are the things that we’re going to be looking at today as we look at this text. And it will set us up for looking at the fruit of the Spirit. So we’re going to take those one at a time.

First of all, some introductory thoughts. I want us to think about some of the phrases that you might find in the book of Galatians, because when you think about the book of Galatians I don’t know about you, but I sometimes think about Johnny Cash. And when I think about Johnny Cash I think about being in prison. *(Laughter)* And when I think about being in prison I think about Galatians. And so that’s how my mind works. So when I think of Galatians I think of Fulsome Prison, but whatever.

But when you think about being in prison or being in bondage or being in captivity, you start to think about so many aspects of Galatians. For instance there are some prison metaphors in Galatians chapter 3: that we are shut up under sin; we are kept in custody under the law.

And then when you turn to chapter 4 you find that there’s a slave woman and a free woman. And you find that those who are bound to the slave woman are bound to the Old Testament and the old types and shadows of the past. And the woman who is free is the church, and she is the woman who has come to consummation and belief in Christ. And so there are these kinds of metaphors and images in the book of Galatians, not the least of which is a schoolmaster term.

I don’t know about you, but every time I thought about going to high school I thought about going to prison. *(Laughter)* I don’t know about you, but I didn’t used to like it. “I’m going to prison today”; that’s what I thought every day. That didn’t turn around for me until some years later. *(Laughter)* The scars are still apparent.

But anyway, the law is a schoolmaster. And when you think about the law in terms of the schoolmaster in those ancient days, the schoolmaster wasn’t a loving and kind and compassionate person. It was somebody who was very harsh, and if you didn’t learn your lessons well you were the object of some abuse. And so usually a schoolmaster or a tutor was harsh and a hard person. This kind of brings up the image of hard labor and slavery and imprisonment, and those sorts of things. When you think about the book of Galatians, I think those kinds of images certainly come to mind.

Now having that in mind, I want you to think about a right view of freedom. I’ll never forget—and this is several years ago now,--I was pastoring in another place. I had a guy in my congregation who was a single man. He got into doing some prison ministry. One of the things that he started to do was that he started to write to and disciple inmates. And this one inmate that he had been discipling through a writing ministry was going to get out. And he had been in a maximum security prison.

And so he had asked this guy in my congregation to come and to pick him up from prison because he couldn’t get any family or friends to pick him up. So this guy came to me and said, “I’m gonna go pick this guy up, and I’m a little concerned about doing that. Can you come with me?” And I said, “Absolutely.”

I want to tell you something. That was one of those times in my life where I was able to live as close to vicariously through another person as I could ever live. You know, I thought to myself: What would it be like after having spent ten years in a maximum security prison to walk out the door as a free man? I don’t think I can explain it, but the domination of that thought just gripped me for such a long time. I just kind of wondered, and I tried to ask him. “What’s it like to leave that prison behind and see it disappear, and to know that you’re a free man?

And you know, I had a great conversation with him, for a few minutes. And then the longer the conversation went, the more concerned I was for him. And we stopped at a number of places: his parents’ house, for instance, and they didn’t want him. We stopped at some of the siblings’ houses, and they didn’t want him. We tried to get these people to take him in before they released him. He thought that maybe showing up would help, and it didn’t.

So anyway we were finally able to get him situated. It was a happy and a sad moment at the same time. That picture kind of dominates me when I think about this text, and here’s why. It’s because we’re going to be told, “Do not use your freedom as an excuse for sin.” Do not use your freedom to put yourself back into captivity.

And the end of that story is that within a year’s time this guy ended up back in prison, and he was in a county holding cell. He escaped from the county cell and he got hold of some guns, and he was hold up in a bar and he ended up being caught. He ended up being back in prison, and I haven’t had contact with him since then. So he used his freedom and basically came back under bondage; a fine experience.

But anyway, Paul says: *“For you were called to freedom, brothers; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh.”* You are free in Christ. But do not use that freedom to come back under the dominion of the flesh, and then still call yourself free. That’s the idea.

Now I want us to explore what that means today. I want us to understand what it is that Paul is saying there, because I think that the biblical view of freedom is foreign to us today. I think that we all probably grasp what I say. You’ll understand it; you’ll feel that “I knew that; I knew he was going to say that.” But I don’t think that this view of freedom is what the world thinks about.

And I’ll tell you something else. In our politically saturated society with all the talk about freedom, I’m sure that the definition of freedom that I’m going to put up on the screen is absolutely foreign to the politically conservative sphere, and this is this: Christian freedom is bondage. Christian freedom is being free from the kingdom of darkness, and now being in bondage to God.

Now I don’t think that’s a view of freedom that most people hold to outside of the Christian church. I mean, most people view freedom as a condition wherein I can do whatever I want to do. The I becomes an autonomous I; I can do whatever I want to do.

And that’s not Christian freedom. Christian freedom is that I was once held in bondage and in slavery to the flesh in the kingdom of Satan, and now I am held in bondage to God in His kingdom. And I’m free to do whatever it is that He would call me to do. And He calls me to do a lot of things in His word, in His law. And I’m free to do those things.

You know, when you think about freedom, I think that the world has a tendency to think about freedom like you take a fish out of water and you put it on the ground. And it’s no longer free. It can’t move like it did in water, and it will eventually die because it’s out of its element. But I think people have this view of freedom that you translate into that example: that fish can live in water or outside of water, and just as easily in either.

And that’s not freedom. It’s the idea of the train being on the railroad tracks. As long as the train is on the tracks, it has freedom to go where those tracks lead it. But if you take it off the tracks it doesn’t have any freedom; it can’t go anywhere. And that’s the idea.

And so when you think about Christian freedom, Christian freedom is that we are in bondage to God. And I want you to think about the world’s view of freedom for just a minute. tin think he world’s view of freedom in its crassest form was summarized super well by John Milton’s Puritan poem “Paradise Lost.” You know, that poem was written in the seventeenth century, even though it’s on every ACDC tee shirt around.

Do you remember Satan’s famous line? Like I said, even if you haven’t read “Paradise Lost,” you’ve seen the ACDC T-shirts. I remember when “Highway to Hell” came out. This was on every “Highway to Hell” T-shirt. And that is, “I would rather rule in hell than serve in heaven.”

That’s not ACDC. That’s John Milton placing those words into Satan’s mouth in the 17th century in “Paradise Lost.” That’s an amazing thing. But the concept has not changed. The world’s understanding of freedom has not changed. “I would rather rule in hell than serve in heaven.”

Now the one thing that it does get right is this: Service is part of the Christian life, whether it’s in this life or in the next. We will serve the living God because we are His bondservants; we’re His slaves. But I dare to say that the first half of that equation is absolutely wrong. You will not be a ruler in hell.

**Brave Man:** That’s right.

**Jeff:** You will be suffering in hell. The first part of that is deadly wrong. And so that’s the world’s view of freedom. The world’s view of freedom is that I’m autonomous; I can do whatever I want.

And if you look at Satanism today, essentially, as a religion, Satan does not promote a metaphysical creature who lives below and who is the father of this particular religion; that’s not what they promote. Satanism today promotes autonomy. Satanism today is basically ‘I am my own God. I rule my own destiny; I’m autonomous.” That’s Satanism.

And so that is captured in that phrase. Satanism today is exactly that. There is no metaphysical help for me to go to. But I’ll rule now, and I will not be a subject to God; I will not be His servant.

But the Christian’s view of freedom is bondage to God for the purpose of service. Now we could to any number of places and see this in the Scriptures. I think it’s in a number of places. Whether it’s in Peter or James or Paul, you have the same idea. I’m going to tell you one place, and just take you there and show you the same concept elsewhere. It’s in Paul’s letters; we’ll go to Romans 6.

Look at Romans 6. *“For when you were slaves to sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.”* That is, you weren’t under righteousness at that time. *“Therefore, what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. But now, having been freed from sin and enslaved to God.”* There’s our concept: freed from sin, enslaved to God; that’s the idea. And that’s Christian freedom.

So the question that I have for you guys is a very simple one. How do we take our freedom in Christ as an opportunity to serve the flesh? Because that’s what he’s saying that we ought not to do. How is it that we do that? I have an answer to that, but you guys have some thoughts about how it is that we could actually take our freedom in Christ and bring ourselves back under the dominion of sin. Do you have a thought about that before I give my answer?

**Ted Wood:** A lot of it has to do with thinking that what God says can’t be trusted.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Ted:** We have this freedom, but we think that the flesh can serve us better. I mean, it always comes down to that, doesn’t it?

**Jeff:** Yes, absolutely. Wow, Ted, that was good! I think you’re right; we do have a tendency, like in the worst part of us, to doubt God and His ability.

**Ted:** Every time we worry or are anxious, that’s what we’re saying.

**Jeff:** Yeah. And just so you know, the Bible addresses that. There’s this beautiful phrase in 1 Peter 5:6. It says: *“Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that at the proper time He may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on Him because He cares for you.”* And the interesting thing about this is this: When you read that, you really don’t get the sense of what the chronology is there.

What you find is this: This casting is an aorist participle. And when you’re translating Greek, one of the things that you realize is that you need helping words like datives to make sense of it in the translation. Participles are the same way; you need helping words. And so an aorist participle takes the preposition *after* as a helping word to give the sense of it.

So let me read it with the helping word in there and you’ll get the sense of it. Then let me make an application. *“Humble yourselves therefore, under the mighty hand of God, so that at the proper time He may exalt you, after casting all your anxieties on Him because He cares for you.”* In other words, you can only humble yourself under God’s sovereign and mighty hand after you relinquish your sovereignty, by casting your anxieties on Him. In other words, so long as you believe that you're sovereign, you’ll hold on to your anxieties; you won’t cast them on Him. And t therefore you won’t be able to humble yourself under His sovereign hand.

So the chronology comes out when you put the helping word in. *“*After casting your anxieties on Him, humble yourself under His mighty hand and submit yourself to His sovereign administration.

Now let me say this and I’ll just finish it off. He goes on to say that we are to be sober-minded and to be watchful. And then this, listen to this: *“Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”*

Why would he bring that up there? I’ll tell you why I think he would bring that up there. He would bring it up there because this is exactly the garden picture. In other words, Adam did not cast his anxieties of the situation with his wife Eve before God. And Satan was there to devour him in his pride, not in his humility. I think that kind of gives us that sense. But yes, I think that’s it. Yes, Don?

**Don Maurer:** In addition to not trusting the Lord, we don’t want to wait on the Lord either. Peter says that at the proper time He will exalt us. But we want instant gratification.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Don:** And the flesh offers that. The book of Hebrews says that Moses supported the people of Israel rather than enjoying the pleasures of sin.

**Jeff:** Yeah Yes?

**Mike Davis:** We talk about grace a lot. Therefore you’re saying how we use our freedom in Christ as an opportunity for the flesh. I often have this mindset: I sin, but God gives me grace. And it’s not just you, it’s everybody. God gives me grace only because I’ve been bought by the blood of Christ; election and all that. But we’re breaking faith towards God because we believe that we’re covered.

**Jeff:** Leon Morris in his commentary on Galatians says: *“Freedom is not to be the starting point of the flesh, an excuse to pander to our sinful selves.”* I think that’s what you’re saying. And you know, I think all these other things are true and theologically accurate where we are. But when we get down to the brass tacks of it, we’re faced with a sin and we know it’s wrong. And we say this to ourselves; there’s that sneaky little voice that says to us, “You’re forgiven; you’ve got grace. But you’re not saved by your works. This little thing is not going to keep you out of heaven, not with the blood of Christ covering you. So go ahead, do it!”

And then what happens? You know, I don’t know about you guys. But a couple of summers ago I took a summer to read two or three volumes of Tolstoy. That summer I read *Anna Karenina, War and Peace,* and *Resurrection. Resurrection* is a long novel of Tolstoy. *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina* were wonderful novels.

,*Anna Karenina* was fantastic, and I’ll tell you why. It’s because Tolstoy did this tremendous job of taking Anna who is married to this guy in a stable, happy relationship. And she falls in love with this man, and she’s struggling with the idea of happiness. And all of a sudden she’s not happy with her husband with whom she was happy, and it’s really interesting. And if you read the novel you’ll see that Anna finds it odd after she meets her new lover. She finds that her husband’s ears are bigger than she ever thought they were. And throughout the rest of the novel she keeps noticing his ears.

And what Tolstoy is doing is that he is showing us that she’s trying to find reasons to justify her unhappiness, even if they are insignificant. Well anyway,--

**Don Maurer:** Did she know that she was irritable?

**Jeff:** She was irritable. *(Laughter)* Don, let me say this because you’re not privy to this. But let me just tell you that everybody’s head in the center just dropped when you said that. *(Laughter)* They just dropper. *(Laughter)* Anyway, Tolstoy doesn’t describe the moment of the affair. But he describes the instant after it; I’ll never forget it. Anna drops to the floor and she’s caught by a whopper. And he says to her, “But aren’t we happy now?” And she says, “You call this happiness?” Because what has happened to her is that a wave of guilt has now swept over her for her actions.

And so brothers, listen to me. We can use grace as an excuse to sin. But the moment we give in, if we be in Christ it will seem like a tidal wave has swept over us; a tidal wave, okay? And so I think that when you read this idea of not using our freedom to bring ourselves back under sin, that’s an example of it.

Martin Luther says this in Vol. 27, page 49: *“The more certain we are about the freedom granted to us by Christ, the more unresponsive and slothful we are in presenting the Word, praying, doing good works, enduring evil, and the like.”* I wonder what he means by that. And you’re laughing because you know that’s true. And it is true, isn’t it?

I mean, listen. One of the things as a Calvinist is that I believe that God is absolutely sovereign over all things. God predestined me to shake my finger like that before the foundation of the world; of that I have no doubt, okay? I don’t doubt that at all.

But I can tell you that that kind of confidence in the sovereignty of God can bring a complacency to a person: a slothfulness, an unresponsiveness. This is why Paul says, “Don’t use your freedom as an excuse for sin.” Don’t do it, because if you have a right understanding of who God is and what God has done for you in Christ, then that is the inevitable outcome. Why? Because the worst part of you, the sin that remains in you, will constantly be trying to convince you of the unnatural and unbiblical implications of the truth of the gospel. The unnatural and unbiblical implications are that you can sin, because hey, sin! Let grace abound! Right? That’s the idea.

You know, picking back up on that, as the book goes on, as *Anna Karenina* goes on, Anna becomes decidedly unhappy. But she tries to convince herself that she is happy. So it’s really fascinating. At the beginning she says, “I’m happy. I’m happy with my husband; I’m happy with my situation.” She looks at her sinful nature once, and she recognizes that this is not happiness. But because she believes in her sin, she has to convince herself, despite being unhappy, she has to convince herself that her unhappiness is actually freedom and happiness. There are a lot of Christian overtones to what’s going on there.

**Ted:** Tolstoy was Orthodox.

**Jeff:** Yeah, he was a bad dude in some ways. He had a really crumby view of justification. That made me do some reading on him. In his novel *The Resurrection* he denies the atonement of Christ.

Anyway, we are not to use our freedom as a license to sin. Let me talk about the call to freedom. Now this is a really simple point. We’ve been warned. The question is: How can we accomplish this call to be free and not use it as a license to sin? That’s really the sinful thing, isn’t it? I mean, that’s really the simple thing that we have to ask ourselves.

And the answer to that is in verse 13. In verse 13 it says: *“For you were called to freedom.”* And you say, “Wait a minute! I’m sure I know the answer to that! What’s different from what we’ve been talking about already, right?”

I want you to focus in on the word :called.” *“For you were called to freedom.”* The word is (a Greek transliteration.) You were called.

That word has two aspects that I want you to pay attention to. When you think about tense, you think about time. And this is in the aorist tense, which is the past tense. In other words, you were called to freedom. Not in the present, but in the past God called you with a sovereign decree to be free in His Son. In other words, this call to freedom is not something that occurred on the spur of the moment, even with Paul on the spur of the moment. He’s saying that this call to freedom happened in the past by God. I was called to be free; you were called to be free.

And the second thing is, there’s a voice. And the voice actually describes how the subject is related to the action. There’s the active voice, which means that the subject is the doer of the action. And then there is the passive voice, which means that the action happened to the subject. This is in the passive voice: you were called to this. You didn’t do anything to bring yourself into freedom. You were called into this freedom—sovereignly, irresistibly, into this freedom.

Now I want you to think about a couple of things here. You can think about this in at least three ways. First of all, think about a court summons. If you are summoned, subpoenaed, to show up in court, there is an irresistible aspect to that summons? Why? Because if you don’t obey it, a bailiff or a sheriff is going to come and see to it that you obey it, okay? So there’s a sense in which we would describe this call as an irresistible call, something like a court summons.

Or we could say that this call is an experience. For instance, when I was called from my previous pastorate to my current pastorate, I would have talked about having a sense of calling to the pastorate. And so I would have gone home and I would have said to my wife, “I just got an invitation to candidating in another church.” And my wife said, “And you told them no.” *(Laughter)*

I said, “I told them to give me two weeks to think about it.” And she said this: “And then you’ll tell them no.” *(Laughter)*

And then I said, “We’re going to take two weeks to think about it.” And she said, “I get the sense that you are thinking that you might take this call.”

I said, “We’ll take two weeks and we’ll think about it. So we’ll pray.”

And she prayed, “Lord, do not send us away from this church. Please don’t let him have this in mind.”

And I prayed, “Lord, send us if You will, and keep us if You will. But whatever You do, bring my wife with me in her thinking.” *(Laughter)*

And so after a week I didn’t talk to her about it at all. Then I said to my wife, “Where are you in your thinking?” She said, “I hate it, but I think I’m wanting to go!” *(Laughter)* I just thought that I always say to her, “I’m going to pray for you.” *(Laughter)*

But anyway it’s an experience, right? And it’s not something that you can necessarily put your finger on. But you have a sense—an experience—of being drawn somewhere or to something. So it can be an external summons; it can be an internal summons. But it has to be the work of the Holy Spirit, and so that’s what’s in view here.

So what we’re being told is that God in the past passively called us into this freedom that we now enjoy in Jesus Christ. And so listen, brothers. Here is the thing that I want you to get from this. What I want you to get from this is that you are not alone, left to your own strength and resources that you should do this. It’s not as if you’re standing by yourself and Paul is warning you: Do not use the grace you’ve been given as a license to put yourself back under the dominion of the kingdom of sin and death, because it’s all on you, brother!

No, that’s not the way it is at all. The way it is is that he is reminding us that this is what God brought you into; this is where you stand. And the God who brought you into this will bring it to completion on the day of Christ Jesus, and you will continue to grow.

But brother, even if you are a genuine believer, you can have a weakness of faith that will cause you not to experience this closeness that God is talking about in this call. And when you experience that you can feel alone, and you can actually decide to do something contrary to the law of God and put yourself back under sin’s dominion, at least in your outward actions and your decisions.

And you know, like David, that’s setting aside the fact that we’re saved in Christ. If we’re saved in Christ we’re saved in Christ. And he goes through this terrible, awful time. And yet we see a David who emerges from it stronger and more wonderful. But he loses four sons as a result, and his daughter Tamar is violated in the midst of it. He loses his kingdom and he goes through a lot of trouble before he again becomes the man after God’s own heart; that’s the idea.

Okay, so the basics of freedom; let me talk to you about the basics of freedom. I want to talk to you about just a few basics of freedom. First of all, service is a basic of freedom. And remember that I said to you that we’re to serve the Lord. But the word is not *diaconos;* the word is *dulos;* the word means “slave”; that’s the word here. To serve is the word “slave.” And so we need to understand ourselves rightly. This is not like we’re in a position where we’re going to serve, and we can voluntarily do that. No, he makes his point pretty clear in that we’re slaves.

Here is a way of translating it that I think brings out the sense of it, and it’s a legitimate way to translate it. We do this through or by means of love; this is in verse 13. *“Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh. But through”*—or by the means of—*“love, serve one another”;* slave to one another.

And then he says that this sums up the law. Do you want to know the railroad tracks? Take a look at the law; take a look at the Ten Commandments. Those are the railroad tracks on which your freedom is going to run freely. That’s how you’re going to slave to God and to others. And of course he uses the last six there because he talks about serving one another.

Let me give you another Luther quote. *“It is true faith toward God which loves and helps one’s neighbor, regardless of whether the neighbor is s servant, a master, a king, a pope, a man, a woman, one who wears purple or one who wears rags, one who eats meat or one who eats fish.”* (Vol. 27, p31.) I love it; it’s a great book. That’s how you see yourself: as a slave, to serve any category of people.

And then: Do not lose your freedom. I want to wrap up with this. Do not go back to prison. How is it that we do not go back to prison? I think there’s an interesting parallel: Through love serve one another. If you look at verse 15, he says: *“If you bite and devour one another.”* He’s drawing a parallel there for us, because what he wants us to see is that when you keep a slave-oriented mentality toward one another, you won’t do verse 15 and you will do verse 13. And that is a good start in you not bringing yourself back under verse 15, right?

Why? Well think about it. In *Anna Karenina,* if Anna loved her husband and wanted to serve her husband, she wouldn’t have done what she did, right? She wouldn’t have devoured him. There’s a sense in which you can see this whether it’s a husband/wife relationship, a friendship relationship or a societal relationship. If you see yourself in service to one another you’re not going to devour one another; you’re going to seek to love one another. According to Luther’s quote, that love, patterned after the love of God, whether it be a pope or a barbarian, a man or a woman, somebody who wears purple or somebody who wears rags,--if you have that mentality you are well on your way to not bringing yourself back under sin. When we use freedom as an excuse to go back under sin, that’s when we land in prison.

I’m gonna have to bring it to a close here today, so let’s pray and then pick up next time. Father in heaven, thank You for this day and for the blessing of life in Christ, for the opportunity to be in Your word. We pray that You will continually enable us to use the manifest grace that we’ve been given by faith alone so that we might love one another and not come back under sin’s dominion. We pray it in Jesus’ name. Amen.

**Brave Men:** Amen. *(Applause)*