

In Step With The Spirit

Introduction:

Paul has now warned of those troubling the church. He has defended his apostleship and message. He's reiterated his message thoroughly: justification comes through faith in Christ, not works of the Law. Heirs of God are sons of Abraham according to the promise . . . not lineage or law-keeping.

Paul will now give a final warning and encourage brethren to walk in faith by the Spirit!

Vs. 1-15 Serious Warning

- Vs. 1: That's what it had become. A heavy burden. A yoke of slavery.
- Vs. 2-6: This teaching resulted in being severed from Christ and falling from grace. Yes, we can lose our salvation and fall from grace (Hebrews 12:15; 2 Peter 3:17-18).
 - Why? Because the Law condemns. If you're going to keep a portion of the Law, you must keep the whole thing. But we've learned that no one has, and the consequence is death. If you reject Jesus' way (who died for you), then His life, death, and resurrection do not benefit you any longer.
 - The Spirit has given us hope as we eagerly await our final salvation. One day, all creation will be liberated, and those in faith will be glorified.
 - Christ is looking for faith working through love.
- Vs. 7-10: This teaching is not from Jesus. Jesus warned of the leaven of the Pharisees when He was alive. They are being warned to see their teaching as leaven as well. It will spread if it's not rejected.
 - There is an expected penalty for the one causing them trouble.
- Vs. 11-12: Paul clearly does not align with the false teachers. He wouldn't be persecuted if he was in agreement with them. He's being persecuted by the Jewish population as a whole for preaching Christ and not binding the Old Law.
 - It was one of Paul's most graphic statements, but it was called for. He thinks they should "emasculate/mutilate themselves" or "cut themselves off." Circumcision is a cutting away of the foreskin. He's saying it would be easier for everyone if they would cut and remove themselves from the body.
- Vs. 13-15: It's interesting how Paul ties love for one another at this point.
 - I believe he's shown how these false teachers were pleasing themselves (the flesh) and not helping/loving their brethren.
 - If you really loved the Law, which is fulfilled in loving your neighbor as yourself, then why are you causing division and destruction?

Vs. 16-26 In Step With The Spirit

- Vs. 16-18: Before naming the works of the flesh, let's consider some principles implied in Paul's statement:
 - Walk by the Spirit means you have a choice.
 - Desires of the flesh means they don't cease to be because you're a Christian.

- The desires of the flesh are against the Spirit means you're not going crazy. It's a battle we all face.
- "Doing the things you want to do" means that you do want to do what is right, but that truth alone doesn't exempt you from actually walking the straight and narrow. It's not enough to say, "but I really do feel bad about it" when you refuse to change (2 Cor. 7:10).
- Vs. 19-21: The evident works of the flesh.
 - Sex, seeking other sources for help, selfishness, pride, abuse, drunkenness, and THINGS LIKE THESE.
 - What things? Some things are evident that Paul shouldn't have to list out. We need to be people who go beyond "Where does it say it's wrong?" to "What's right about this?" What's your goal? What's your motive? Are we trying to get away with anything we can or focused on loving God and our neighbor?
 - Brethren, we need to realize the kind of things Paul is discussing. We can't major in the minor. We don't need to draw lines of fellowship prematurely, and we don't need to shy away when God clearly articulates what is unacceptable to Him. Such works of the flesh will keep you out of God's kingdom.
- Vs. 22-26: The fruit of the Spirit.
 - Vs. 22: Who are we? That's what we're getting to the heart of (not that specifics aren't connected—you can be loved and kind towards someone, etc.). The Spirit guides us because it's the nature of God. Rejecting a "works of the Law" approach will not lead to lawlessness and ungodly living.
 - Vs. 23-24: Being this kind of individual is never wrong. Such a person has committed themselves to the Lord and His way. Brethren, think about the focus of the one group and what it was promoting. Now, think about Paul and what he was promoting. Think about this in practical terms. Also, be aware: let's not be known for everything we're against but for what we're for and do. Works of the flesh are self-serving, but fruit of the Spirit seek to serve others.
 - Vs. 25-26: Let's not just talk the talk but walk the walk. It's not about what we claim but what we do. Take note of Paul's desire for peace and unity. We've got to get over ourselves and our selfish desires or standards.