

Teaching Plan
EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Date: October 7, 2018

Lesson Title: "True Fruit"

Lesson Passage: Galatians 5:13-26

ABOUT THIS LESSON

Chapter five of Paul's Galatian letter begins with the inspiring exclamation, "For freedom Christ has set us free!" He was referring to freedom from two quite different heresies, both of which were undermining the faith of the Christians in Galatia. One of these subversive teachings was "legalism," the insistence of Judaizers that, to be saved, one must obey the law of Moses in addition to having faith in Christ. The other heresy, "antinomianism" (literally, "against the law") advocated independence from all law. In our lesson passage, Paul is warning the Galatians against abandoning all restraints on their conduct, an error that might be cultivated by their sense of freedom. Instead, they must let their lives be controlled by the Spirit, which will teach them to live by the law of love.

TEACHING/LEARNING GOALS

(1) Explain the meaning of "antinomianism." (2) Show why "life according to the flesh" is incompatible with "life according to the Spirit."

BEGINNING THE LESSON

To begin the lesson, relate this anecdote: In a small church on the poorer side of a county-seat town, the men in a Sunday School class were discussing the meaning of Matthew 22:34-40, in which Jesus identified the two greatest commandments as "Love God with all your heart" and "love your neighbor as yourself." As the teacher elaborated on the meaning of the second of these commandments, referring to Phil.2:3-4 as an example, a young man who was sometimes described as a "roughneck" objected, saying, "But that ain't natural!" Then comment: He was exactly right. For when Paul was echoing this teaching of Jesus in Gal. 5:14 ("Love your neighbor as yourself"), he said that this was opposed to the "passions of the flesh" (i.e., "desires of human nature," Gal. 5:16). But this "law of love," Paul says in our lesson passage, is what should determine the conduct of Christians.

TEACHING PROCEDURES

1. Note that 5:13-14 are pivotal verses (pivotal in the sense that Paul now turns his attention from Jewish legalism to a different kind of problem). In contrast to the legalists, who want to add submission to the law of Moses to the requirements for salvation, the "antinomians" in the Galatian churches taught that freedom in Christ meant independence from all law. Whereas the legalists made the Mosaic law their authority

for conduct, the antinomians made their own desires their authority. They claimed the grace of Christ, but rejected his demands. This is the heresy Paul is addressing in Gal. 5:13-14. Comment on these verses: Christian freedom is not just "freedom from"; it is also "freedom for." It is freedom from sin, death, and subservience to the law of Moses; but it is freedom for living out the law of love.

3. Deal with the concepts of "flesh" and "spirit" as presented in Gal. 5:16-17: (1) "Flesh" (Greek, *sarx*) refers to human nature separated from God's influence. "Flesh" is godless in the literal sense of the word--apart from God." ILLUSTRATION: The words of Ernest Henley's defiant poem *Invictus* ("I am the master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul") express the sentiment of one who is "of the flesh." (2) "Spirit" (Greek, *pneuma*) refers to human nature that is controlled by God. One who "lives by the Spirit" (v. 25) is obedient to the Spirit's guidance. To be "of the Spirit" is to be God-controlled; to be "of the flesh" is to be self-controlled. (3) The dominant motive of "life in the Spirit" is love (v. 14); the dominant motive of "life according to the flesh" is self-gratification (v. 16). The life controlled by the "desires of the flesh" is turned inward; the life controlled by the Spirit is turned outward. This is why "the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit" and "the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh" (v. 17). (4) If one is dominated by the flesh (and lives for himself regardless of others), other people become his enemies (v. 15); if one is controlled by the Spirit, other people become his central concern.

4. Refer to the "works of the flesh" listed in Gal. 5:19-21, and offer these explanations: (1) This list varies in different ancient manuscripts (for example, some begin with "adultery," some do not). (2) The words themselves are translated in different ways (for instance, "emulations" in the KJV is rendered "jealousies" in more modern versions). Then suggest that these sins fall into four groupings, and ask class members to identify the sins that belong to each group: (1) Sexual sin (immorality, impurity, licentiousness). (2) Pagan religious practice (idolatry, sorcery). (3) Loveless relationships (enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy). (4) Unrestrained social life (drunkenness, carousing, and the like).

5. Make these points about the "fruit of the Spirit" in 5:22-23: (1) Here Paul uses "fruit" instead of "works," because these are not things that we just "do." Qualities like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness and faithfulness grow out of one's relationship with the Spirit. (2) "Fruit" is singular, because these attitudes and behaviors are all interrelated; they comprise a unity. (3) The "works of the flesh" are the results of the life turned inward; the "fruit of the Spirit" characterizes the life turned outward in love.

CLOSING THE LESSON

Discuss this concept: It takes much greater freedom to live for others than it does to live exclusively for oneself. (Our "natural" tendency is to satisfy our own desires, appetites and preferences.) The more we are

controlled by the Spirit, the greater is our freedom from these self-serving motives.

Lucien Coleman P.O. Box 2951 Weatherford TX 76086 682-262-1312