

The Attackers: There Is No Law against Virtue; Christian Freedom Is Not to Be Used as a Starting Point that Gives Opportunity to the Sin Nature

- (1) These are virtues that can only be consistently applied by a Spirit-filled believer. When they become a person's way of life, he enters a sublime category in which he is free from the law.
- (2) Galatians 5:23 continues with the phrase **κατά (kata)** plus **τοιούτος (toioutos)**: "against such." This is followed by the present active indicative of the verb **εἰμί (eimi)** plus the negative conjunction **οὐκ (ouk)**: "there is no."
- (3) No what? The nominative singular of **νόμος (nomos)**: Law.
- (4) The present tense of *eimi* is static which denotes a condition that is assumed as perpetually existing and therefore ever to be taken for granted as a fact.
- (5) The active voice with the negative *ouk* indicates that the Law does not produce the action of prohibiting any of these nine categories of *karpos*: fruit, or better, "production."
- (6) The indicative mood establishes this as a fact. This means that the Mosaic Law never prohibits these virtues; neither do the laws of nature; neither do the commandments of the New Testament.
- (7) In fact, these virtues are among those that regulate the conscience so that the believer functions as a vessel of honor.
- (8) They give a summary of a supernatural way of life that is energized and maintained by supernatural power. By means of these virtues and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit the believer is able to emulate Christ.

- (16) These nine dispositions of thought in the soul of the believer magnify his production under the ministry of the Holy Spirit.
- (17) The disposition of one's conscience becomes a silent attack on the Word of God when, out of fellowship, their thoughts are controlled by the sinful nature's lust patterns and influenced by doctrines of demons.
- (18) Earlier in Galatians 5, Paul addresses this problem. Some of the indicators of a corrupted conscience are contained in this paragraph.
- (19) The context is stressing the unconditional love made possible under the filling of the Holy Spirit.
- (20) Those who allow their sinful natures to override unconditional love are not filled with the Spirit and their resultant behaviors cannot be distinguished from those of the unbeliever.
- (21) The mentality that leads to this mind-set is developed in the paragraph that begins in:

Galatians 5:13 - For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. (NASB)

- (1) The key to understanding this paragraph is the word "called," the aorist passive indicative of the verb **καλέω (kaleō)**: elected.
aorist: Culminative, signifies effort or progress denoting the attainment of the end of such effort or process.
passive: This is the voice of grace; the subject received election by means of grace.
indicative: A statement of fact.

- (2) The propositional phrase “to freedom” is introduced by the preposition **ἐπί (epi)**: usually translated “to,” or “unto,” but when followed by a noun in the dative case then it is translated, “for the purpose of”: “For you have been elected for the purpose of ...”
- (3) The purpose is freedom, the dative case of the noun: **ἐλευθερία (eleutheria)**.
- (4) Freedom to do what? The answer is discerned by understanding the doctrine of election.
- (5) Election of the believer occurred in eternity past according to:

Ephesians 1:4 - God the Father has elected us for Himself in Christ before the beginning of the world, i.e., in eternity past, for the purpose that we keep on being sanctified [**ἅγιος (hagios)**] and blameless before Him.

- (6) Since we are born with a sinful nature it is impossible for a believer to remain perfectly sinless post-salvation.
- (7) At the moment of salvation the believer is positionally sanctified by being baptized into the body of Christ with accompanying top-circle assets.
- (8) In phase two, through the filling of the Holy Spirit, the believer is able to maintain periods of blamelessness during which time he progresses in the area of experiential sanctification
- (9) Since we receive election as a grace imputation from God and since we are sanctified by our election, then our status quo is said to be freedom.
- (10) The purpose of this freedom is to serve God and the Lord Jesus Christ as a royal priest and royal ambassador.

- (11) However, much too often we use this freedom as an opportunity to submit to the desires of the flesh. The word “opportunity” in Galatians 5:13 is a good translation of the Greek noun **ἀφορμή (aphormē)**. More insight into this word is provided by this excerpt:

ἀφορμή: The term is used in the sense of “cause” or “starting-point.” In particular in the papyri the word has the sense of “occasion,” “cause,” “suitable opportunity.” (p. 472)

ἀφορμή is thus the “occasion” or “starting-point” of something inasmuch as it evokes a movement of will and also provides the material which is exploited in this movement.”

In Galatians 5:13 the **σάρξ [sarx: flesh; sinful nature]** occupies the position of the malicious opponent and seeks a “pretext” in **ἐλευθερία [eleutheria: freedom]**. What offers a “starting-point” or “occasion” is not in itself bad [e.g.], **Christian freedom.** (p. 473)

The opponents of the Christian community, the power of Satan, sin and the flesh which lies behind them, take the good gifts of God in creation, or indeed the Christian freedom ..., and make them into a deceitful occasion for leading men astray.¹ (p. 474)

- (12) One of the arguments that some theologians present to refute salvation by faith alone is that it provides opportunity for licentious behavior, i.e., the person assumes he has the “liberty” to sin since he is saved.
- (13) **ἀφορμή** therefore provides a “starting-point” or an “opportunity” for the flesh: **σάρξ (sarx)**.
- (14) Divine discipline is imposed on believers who misuse their freedom designed to serve God as a carte-blanche privilege to sin with impunity.
- (15) Bertram points out correctly in his commentary that **ἀφορμή** “evokes a movement of will” that results in sinful action.

¹ Georg Bertram, “ἀφορμή,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1967), 5:472–74.

- (16) Paul mandates against this. He uses the negative conjunction of prohibition **μή (mē)**, translated “not” which is followed by an ellipsis.