

From the January 4, 2010 Issue

## **With Great Freedom Comes Great Responsibility**

*A Trinitarian, Christ-centered reading of Galatians 5.13 – 6.18*

(5.13) You have been set free from your old self-centered darkness and isolation. USE YOUR FREEDOM. Not to enslave yourself again to your own desires, but through love to become joyful servants of one another! (14) For Papa gave us Torah to teach us this one thing: “Love your neighbor as you love yourself.” (15) For some time now, you’ve been practicing the “Eat thy neighbor” ethic. How’s that working out for you?

(16) The Holy Spirit lives in your spirit; He knows reality and how to live in it. Do what he says! Yes, I know your body doesn’t always agree with what your spirit knows. Your body is still learning. It still hears the echoes of your old way of thinking, and sometimes it wants to return to those old behaviors that were destroying you and the people you care about. Don’t give in to your old patterns! The Holy Spirit in you is strong enough to conquer your body. Don’t give up! (17) Your body (your outer self) fears the things you need most, the things the Spirit is drawing you toward. And the Spirit detests the unhealthy and dysfunctional things your body craves. What’s going on inside you is war, and I know how much it hurts.

(18) But if you follow the Holy Spirit, there is no more need for Torah to restrain you. (19) Because when you see and think with the clarity of the Spirit, it becomes obvious to you that what your body craves is deadly poison:

Having sex without real intimacy, vulnerability and commitment;

Disregarding the boundaries that keep you (and others) safe;

(20) Arranging your life around things that aren’t worth arranging your life around.

Trying to control things that aren’t yours to control;

Letting hard feelings fester under the surface of your relationships, instead of dealing with conflicts head-on;

Attacking and excluding people who have hurt you;

(21) Valuing things more than people;

Using pharmaceuticals and parties to avoid dealing with reality;

Etc...etc...etc...

Like I’ve told you many times, these things are poison because they are all ways to avoid receiving what we have been promised! The kingdom of God has been given to us, and these poisonous behaviors are all ways of running away from the gift! To avoid dealing with reality is to imprison yourself inside your own toxic myths. (22) Reality is worth dealing with, because reality is where the Spirit is at work. Here in the real world, he is taking the beautiful life of Jesus and putting it inside us:

Desiring good for all people

Enjoying everyday life

Living relaxed, ready to receive whatever the future brings

Feeling happy while we wait for things

Treating all God's creatures like beloved family members

Giving and receiving with open hands, because our stuff doesn't own us

Doing what we say we'll do

Taking care not to hurt those we are capable of hurting

Behaving according to well-thought-out choices, rather than according to the moment-by-moment fluctuations of brain chemistry

There's no law against any of THAT, is there? (24) To receive this new life from Jesus is to let go of our old life and its toxic cravings and behaviors. We know what results when we follow nothing but our own urges. (25) So now instead, let's try living by the Holy Spirit's impulses, and then watch what happens as a result! (26) If we do, we will start seeing each other, not as rivals, but as friends.

(6.1) And since you ARE friends, I want you to hold each other accountable. To live in the Spirit is to live in truth, and none of us can do it by ourselves. When you see your friend crossing the boundaries of healthy living, go talk to him about it. Not to manipulate or shame him, but to gently tell him the truth about his behavior and its effects. If you keep silent or enable him in some other way, you are just helping him destroy himself, and you're damaging yourself too. (2) As friends, we share our strengths AND our weaknesses. *We get to carry each other.* That's what "Love thy neighbor" is all about. (3) And remember you're no better than anybody else; everybody's got strengths and everybody's got weaknesses. Period.

(4) Remember, you're responsible for YOUR actions, not your neighbor's. Pay attention to your own behaviors, the ones you like AND the ones you don't, and then decide how you want to act in the future. (5) Take responsibility for your own life. Don't be a leech. Do your job. (6) If someone else's job is to teach you the gospel, it's your job to share your resources with your teacher. (7) Don't be confused: Papa has embraced you and included you in his life, but don't take that to mean that your actions no longer have consequences. Whatever kind of seed you plant in your garden, THAT is the plant that will grow there.

(8) If you seed your life with unhealthy thoughts and behaviors, you will reap a harvest of soul-disease. But if you plant in your life the knowledge and actions of the Holy Spirit, you will reap the infinite alive-ness He shares with Jesus and his Papa. (9) That's why we keep on scattering seeds of compassion in the world, even though it's hard work, and even though it's hard to see the results sometimes. We have faith that good seeds grow into good plants. (10) That's why we take every opportunity to extend compassion to all people, starting with those in our own community.

**(11) Holy cow! Check out my handwriting—Now you can see why I usually dictate my letters to a scribe! (12) Those guys who are trying to push you into wang surgery—they are just posers who are scared of bearing the cross**

of Jesus. (13) They don't really live by Torah; they just like bragging about their artificially sculpted wangs. They want you to undergo surgery so they can brag about YOUR wangs, and that's just weird.

(14) The only thing I brag about is the cross of Master Jesus. Because of the cross, the world cannot control me anymore, and I have lost all interest in controlling the world. (15) Because now I know that the things that divide us are nothing; but the new creation that unifies us is everything!

(16) Those who live by this truth will know the grace and peace of living as children of Papa. (17) From now on, don't let the religion-nazis make trouble for me. It doesn't matter whether or not my body has been marked by human surgery. Because my whole being has been marked by the wounds of Jesus.

(18) May your spirit overflow with the grace and peace of Master Jesus.  
AMEN.

*~ John Stonecypher*