Introduction: Paul's usages of the term 'flesh' (*sarx*)

Paul uses the term 'flesh' in several ways throughout his letters. Sometimes he uses it to refer simply to the physical body (Gal. 2:20), while at other times he uses it to describe human beings in their weakness and mortality (Rom. 6:19). He also uses flesh to refer to humanity in its fallen condition, particularly our tendency to live independently of God according to our sinful desires (Rom. 8:5–8). In Galatians, Paul has emphasized the inability of the flesh to accomplish what only God can do through His Spirit (Gal. 3:3). As he turns to the practical implications of Christian freedom, he warns believers not to use that freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but rather to serve one another through love.

Main Point: We must guard ourselves from falling into the _____ of false teaching so that we live in the freedom Christ has secured for us and we then _____ one other for His glory.

Galatians 5:7-15

- **False teaching _____ the ability of believers to faithfully obey God. (vv. 7-10)**
  (1) Although the Galatians had started well, their _____ in the faith has been harmed by the false teachers.
  "You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?"

  (2) They are beginning to ignore the voice of God and are _____ to the false teachers.
  "This persuasion is not from him who calls you."

  "This is both a powerful statement on the one hand about God's unfailing love and devotion to those whom he calls and on the other hand to his working through Paul in the present moment to bring the Galatians back to himself." –Burer

  (3) The real danger of false teaching is that it _____ into all areas of a person's life.
  "A little leaven leavens the whole lump."

  (4) Paul trusts in Christ's ongoing _____ for the Galatian believers and his future _____ of the false teachers and those that follow them.
  "I have confidence in the Lord that you will take no other view, and the one who is troubling you will bear the penalty, whoever he is."

Key Point: The things that we truly _____ will ultimately affect how we choose to _____.

- **The cross of Christ is an _____ to those who have confidence in themselves. (vv. 11-12)**
  (1) Paul responds to an implied accusation that he has been _____ in his teaching.
  "But if I, brothers, still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted?

  (2) The _____ of the cross is removed when Law-keeping is made a requirement for righteousness.
  "In that case the offense of the cross has been removed."

  - The message of the cross is offensive both to Law-observant Jews (Rom. 9:33; 11:9) and to Gentiles, who considered it foolishness (1 Cor. 1:23-24).

(3) Confidence in the flesh leads to _____, and Paul wishes the opponents would take their views to an absurd conclusion so they might understand that.

"I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves!"

- Culturally, the Galatians would have been familiar with the cult of Cybele, whose priests would often castrate themselves as a sign of devotion to the goddess.
- It is likely that Paul is being both dramatic and _____ with his language. If the removal of some flesh brings them closer to God, why not go further and remove even more? The irony is that, according to the Law itself, such mutilation would exclude them from the assembly of the Lord (Deut. 23:1). Thus, in their efforts to secure righteousness through the Law, they would only further demonstrate their alienation from God which is already established by their failure to keep the whole Law (Gal. 3:10).

Key Point: Because of the _____ of our flesh, our confidence for salvation can only be in Christ crucified and raised for us.

- **The freedom Christ has secured for believers is to be _____ in acts of love. (vv. 13-15)**

(1) There is a particular _____ associated with a surface level understanding of freedom in Christ.

"For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh…"

- Freedom in Christ is not the absolute libertine freedom of the _____. Rather, we are set free by becoming the slave/servant (*doulos*) of a new Master (Rom. 6:15-19).

(2) To be the recipients of Christ's love means that we have a new _____ to one another.

"but through love serve one another."

(3) Paul then quotes from the Law itself to show _____ the Law is fulfilled.

"For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF."

- This quotation from Lev. 19:18 recalls Jesus own words (Matt. 22:24-40).

"The Law cannot be done, but it certainly can be fulfilled, that is, its purposes can be accomplished in Christ as the Spirit guides the body to love one another." – Burer

"We pursue the imperative to love without reference to the law, without the agency of it. Indeed, as we love, as we prefer one another, we fulfill the law, but Paul has not told the Galatians to use the law to pursue love. He has said the law's fulfillment will be a result of their pursuit of love." – Matthew Ferris

(4) If they do not _____ of themselves to one another in love, they will selfishly _____ from one another until they are ultimately destroyed.

"But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another."

Key Point: To walk properly in the love of Christ for us leads us to love _____ and _____ He loves.

Concluding Thoughts

1. **Most false teaching either _____ us in our sinful tendences or assures us that we can be declared righteous through our _____ _____.**

2. **The True Gospel compels us to look to _____ in faith and then to love and serve through the love that He has lavished upon us.**

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