

# Galatians 5

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*A Translation with Interpretation by James Garriss*

# Table of Contents

<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Paul Described Christian Living</b> .....	<b>3</b>
Galatians 5:1-15 .....	<b>3</b>
Galatians 5:16-26.....	<b>17</b>
<b>Works Cited</b> .....	<b>28</b>

# Paul Described Christian Living

## Galatians 5:1-15

### Limits of the Text

Christ brings freedom, freedom from legalism on one extreme (5:1) and freedom from libertinism on the other (5:13). In between, Paul gave a personal word (5:7-12).

### Translation

1 Christ set us free **for freedom**; therefore, continue *in freedom*, and do not be subjected **to a yoke of slavery** again. 2 Listen! I, Paul, am telling you that if you are circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit **to you**. 3 I testify again to each one who receives circumcision: He is obligated to keep the whole law. 4 Those of you who are attempting to be declared righteous by law were released from Christ; you fell **from grace**. 5 For we ourselves through the Spirit, by faith, are eagerly awaiting **the hope of righteousness**. 6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, **but** faith working through love.

7 You were running well. Who prevented you from obeying **the truth**? 8 This persuasion *is* not from the one calling you. 9 A small amount of leaven leavens the whole batch of dough. 10 I myself have confidence about you in the Lord, that you will think **in no other way**; but the one throwing you into confusion will bear judgment, whoever he is. 11 But I, brothers, if I am still preaching **circumcision**, then the offense of the cross has been removed; so why am I still being persecuted? 12 How I wish those who are troubling you would also cut themselves off!

13 For **you** were called **to freedom**, brothers; only *do not convert your freedom* into a convenient set of circumstances for the flesh, **but** serve one another **through love**. 14 For the whole law has been summarized **in one statement**: "Love your neighbor as yourself." 15 But if you are biting and devouring **one another**, watch out *that* you are not destroyed **by one another**.

### Interpretation

In chapter 5, Paul began to write about the "so what?" of justification. If a true son of Abraham is one who is justified by faith and lives by faith, then what does that mean for living life? What does that look like in the real world? There are no connectives, so this starts a new section, though it does transition smoothly by picking up the word "freedom" from the allegory at the end of chapter 4.

1 Τῇ ἐλευθερίᾳ ἡμᾶς Χριστὸς ἠλευθέρωσεν· στήκετε οὖν καὶ μὴ πάλιν ζυγῶ δουλείας ἐνέχεσθε.

**1 Christ set us free for freedom; therefore, continue in freedom, and do not be subjected to a yoke of slavery again.**

Christ set us free for freedom. To set free (ἠλευθέρωσεν) means to liberate<sup>1</sup> or to cause someone to be released.<sup>2</sup> Christ had set them free from two forms of bondage. The first bondage from which Christ had freed them was legalism,<sup>3</sup> trying to work and earn their salvation.

Since Christ had seen them free, they had freedom, so Paul commanded them to continue in freedom and not be subjected to a yoke of slavery again. These two commands are really the positive and negative sides of the same command. To continue (στήκετε) means to be firmly committed in conviction or belief; it has the idea of standing firm and remaining steadfast.<sup>4</sup> Paul wanted his readers to hold firmly to their belief that justification came through faith in Christ alone. If they believed that they needed to obey the law, then the law would subject them to slavery;<sup>5</sup> it would control them, burden them, and load them down.<sup>6</sup>

Paul wanted his friends to “become what they are,”<sup>7</sup> to live in light of the reality of their justification. In the remainder of this paragraph (5:1-6), Paul gave five reasons why it was important for them to continue in freedom.

2 Ἴδε ἐγὼ Παῦλος λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ἐὰν περιτέμνησθε, Χριστὸς ὑμᾶς οὐδὲν ὠφελήσει.

**2 Listen! I, Paul, am telling you that if you are circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you.**

The opening words “Listen! I, Paul...” are added for emphasis; Paul had a strong point to make about freedom. The first reason to continue in freedom is that Christ could not help them if they chose to be circumcised. “Will be of benefit” (ὠφελήσει) means to provide assistance and emphasizes the resulting benefit.<sup>8</sup> Christ would be of no help, aid, or use to them if they chose to be circumcised.

Various theories have been put forth as to why the Judaizers were pushing circumcision upon the Galatians (as opposed to some other act of Mosaic law obedience), but knowing the exact reason isn't particularly important to understanding Paul's argument. Circumcision per se was not important; what was important was what circumcision represented: It was a means of becoming righteous without the cross. If the Galatians attempted to be righteous by means of good works, such as

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<sup>1</sup> Swanson, DBLG 1802.

<sup>2</sup> Louw, 1:488.

<sup>3</sup> The second bondage is in verse 13.

<sup>4</sup> Arndt, 944.

<sup>5</sup> Subjected is in the passive voice.

<sup>6</sup> Swanson, DBLG 1923.

<sup>7</sup> George, 352.

<sup>8</sup> Louw, 1:457.

circumcision—and Paul was not certain they would try this<sup>9</sup>—they would receive no help (in being made righteous) from Jesus. He operates salvifically in the sphere of faith alone, never through works.

3 μαρτύρομαι δὲ πάλιν παντὶ ἀνθρώπῳ περιτεμνομένῳ ὅτι ὀφειλέτης ἐστὶν ὅλον τὸν νόμον ποιῆσαι.

**3 I testify again to each one who receives circumcision: He is obligated to keep the whole law.**

The second reason to continue in freedom is that if they received circumcision, they must obey all of the law. Paul testified (μαρτύρομαι), like a courtroom witness, that if the Galatians chose to accept circumcision as a means of becoming righteous, then they must do everything written in the book of the law (3:10) and do so on their own strength and ability. He's already explained to them that they cannot do this (3:11).

The Galatians were already observing the cultic calendar (4:10), and it appears that the Judaizers had encouraged them to take the next step and be circumcised. They were obeying bits and pieces of the law, so Paul informed the Galatians that they could not do this piecemeal; either they obey all the law, or they were unrighteous.<sup>10</sup>

Why did they have to obey all of the law? Back in 3:10, Paul quoted Dt 27:26, which said a person was cursed if he was not doing the words of the law, which Paul understood to mean a person must do all of the law without exception. James understood it the same way, and in Ja 2:10 he said, "Whoever obeys the entire law, yet fails in one point, has become guilty of disobeying it all."<sup>11</sup> His reasoning was that as the nature of God is unity, so is the nature of his law (Ja 2:11).

4 κατηγορήθητε ἀπὸ Χριστοῦ, οἵτινες ἐν νόμῳ δικαιοῦσθε, τῆς χάριτος ἐξέπεσατε.

**4 Those of you who are attempting to be declared righteous by law were released from Christ; you fell from grace.**

The third reason to continue in freedom is that they were released from Christ and had fallen from grace. Paul described the Galatians' current condition using two verbs in parallel. First, they were released (κατηγορήθητε) from Christ, which means that they no longer had an obligation to Christ. To partially trust good works (the law) and partially trust Christ is the same as not trusting Christ at all, thus they no obligation to trust Christ. This is the same verb that Paul used in Ro 7:6 when he said that through Christ the Romans had died to the law, thus they were released from the law. Sadly, the Galatians had gone the other way.

Second, they fell (ἐξέπεσατε) from grace, which means they had been separated from

<sup>9</sup> This is a third class conditional (ἐάν + subjunctive).

<sup>10</sup> Longenecker, 226-227.

<sup>11</sup> My translation.

the grace of Christ. Instead of righteousness being given to them, they must now earn it. If they tried to earn righteousness, then they had separated themselves from the grace of Christ. Released from Christ and fell from grace are two different ways of describing the same result.

The grammar of this sentence is interesting. On the one hand, Paul said that the Galatians “are attempting” to be declared righteous, which is in the present tense. The implication is that the whole matter was still ongoing. If the Judaizers had persuaded them to follow the cultic calendar (4:10) and were currently in the process of persuading them to be circumcised (5:2), then indeed the whole matter was still ongoing. On the other hand the two main verbs of the sentence, released and fell, are both past tense; they were already been released from Christ and were already fallen from grace. The implication from these is that the whole matter was already decided. How is this combination possible?

The point of this verse is that Paul had evidence that they were beginning to trust in the law to make them righteous. While it was true that their transition from trusting in Christ alone to trusting in Christ plus full obedience to the Mosaic law was still progress, the moment they trusted at all in the law by beginning to obey it, they were released from Christ and fallen from grace.

5 ἡμεῖς γὰρ πνεύματι ἐκ πίστεως ἐλπίδα δικαιοσύνης ἀπεκδεχόμεθα.

**5 For we ourselves through the Spirit, by faith, are eagerly awaiting the hope of righteousness.**

The connective “for” (γὰρ) refers back to verse 1. Having spoken about “them,” the Galatians who were turning to the law, Paul returned back to “us,” believers who trusted in Christ alone. Christ set them free, and the fourth reason to continue in freedom is that they were awaiting the hope of righteousness.

Paul and his friends were awaiting the hope of righteous. Hope (ἐλπίδα) is “the looking forward to something with some reason for confidence respecting fulfillment.”<sup>12</sup> Paul waited for hope, and the object of his hope, righteousness, was confidently expected. Our hope will lead us to righteousness.<sup>13</sup>

As noted in 2:16, righteousness (δικαιοσύνης) can have one of three (related) meanings: A judicial declaration of innocence, a right relationship, and proper, moral behavior. In this eschatological context, righteousness refers to the completion of the judicial declaration; it is the final judgment of the eternal, righteous Judge. Believers will either be vindicated or condemned, and, of course, a sentence of vindication has already a given. The destination of the believer’s hope is righteousness. At the Bema Seat, God

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<sup>12</sup> Arndt, 319.

<sup>13</sup> This is genitive of destination; it is hope that is destined for righteousness.

will vindicate us; he will declare us to be finally, ultimately righteous. All our waiting will be over at that point.

How was Paul waiting in the mean time? He was waiting two ways. He was waiting through the Spirit (πνεύματι)<sup>14</sup> and by faith (ἐκ πίστεως).<sup>15</sup> This is a two-person participation. God's part is through the Spirit; Paul could wait through the enabling ability of the Holy Spirit.<sup>16</sup> He gives us the ability to continue waiting for something that has not yet happened. Paul's part was by faith. He had to choose to trust. We must decide to utilize the Holy Spirit's help and continue to wait. We must not decide that we can achieve righteousness on our own.

6 ἐν γὰρ Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ οὔτε περιτομή τι ἰσχύει οὔτε ἀκροβυστία ἀλλὰ πίστις διὰ ἀγάπης ἐνεργουμένη.

**6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.**

The fifth reason to continue in freedom is that only faith is important to God. Circumcision per se was not really important to God. God had required the Jewish people to be circumcised, but like the rest of the law obedience was a result of faith, not the other way around. Once the law had fulfilled its purpose (3:24), circumcision had no purpose or value. It did not signify those who were extra special or extra righteous before God; the Jews had no advantage. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (3:28). Religious and social inequalities are irrelevant when it comes to righteousness.

As Paul has said all along, faith is the only basis for righteousness. But that doesn't leave the believer without any moral compulsion or compass. Faith works through love. Faith operates through love. Faith is effective through love. Faith expresses itself through love. How does this love relate to morality? Paul would pick this point up again in 5:13 and develop it through the end of the chapter.

Paul wrote nearly the same thing in 6:15, "For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision are anything, but being a new creation is important." Faith working through love is what it means to be a new creation. In his natural condition, man does not have faith and does not love.

7 Ἐτρέχετε καλῶς· τίς ὑμᾶς ἐνέκοψεν [τῆ] ἀληθείᾳ μὴ πείθεσθαι;

**7 You were running well. Who prevented you from obeying the truth?**

Having explained how Christ set them free from legalism (5:1-6), Paul then took a

<sup>14</sup> This is genitive of agency; the Spirit enables waiting.

<sup>15</sup> This is genitive of means; faith enables waiting.

<sup>16</sup> The Galatians had begun this way (3:3).

parenthetical break from his application in 5:7-12. This is a personal section, similar to 4:12-20, in which Paul displayed a wide range of emotions (from love and concern to anger to sarcasm).

Paul began with a compliment: You were running well. Here, as he often did, Paul compared the Christian life to a race (2:2; 1 Co 9:24) and said the Galatians had started their race well.<sup>17</sup> They had been running well because they had been obeying the truth of the gospel. Obeying (πειθήσθαι) means follow someone because they have persuaded you.<sup>18</sup> They were so certain of the truth of the gospel that it changed what they believed and how they lived. Justification is not an isolated intellectual event; it is the beginning of a lifestyle of obedience that corresponds to the gospel. Sanctification always follows justification.

But someone had prevented the Galatians. Prevented (ἐνέκοψεν) literally means to knock in or incise, but here it has the metaphorical meaning of hindering or thwarting.<sup>19</sup> The imagery is of a runner stepping into the lane of another runner and impeding his progress. Although Paul asked a question here, it was rhetorical (similar to 3:1).

MacArthur paraphrased the verse like this, “How could you have allowed those men to overturn what I carefully taught and you eagerly accepted as God’s Word?”<sup>20</sup>

8 ἡ πεισμονὴ οὐκ ἐκ τοῦ καλοῦντος ὑμᾶς.

**8 This “obedience” is not from the one calling you.**

The Galatians had been obeying the truth, but now they had a new obedience. Obedience (πεισμονή) is a cognate to the verb obeying in 5:7; the word is typically translated as “persuasion,” but since it refers back the results of their persuasion, their obeying, I translated it as obedience. One could paraphrase it like this, “They were persuaded to obey the truth, but then someone else persuaded them to do something different,” or like this, “They had been obeying the truth, but this new obedience is not from God.”

Paul asserted that the call to do something different (i.e., circumcision & Judaism) did not come from God. The message of the Judaizers was not from God, despite their claims; in fact, they were working against God’s will and purpose. That’s why the obedience in this verse is in quotes; Paul’s tone is a bit sarcastic as this obedience wasn’t really obedience.

9 μικρὰ ζύμη ὅλον τὸ φύραμα ζυμοῖ.

**9 A small amount of leaven leavens the whole batch of dough.**

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<sup>17</sup> See 3:2-5; 4:14-15 for examples of how they had started well.

<sup>18</sup> Zodhiates, G3981.

<sup>19</sup> Louw, 1:164.

<sup>20</sup> MacArthur, 139.



This is a proverb that Paul was apparently fond of quoting. Its point is that something that appears insignificant can have significant influence.<sup>21</sup> The imagery may have originated in the Old Testament, where a little leaven in the house made it unready for Passover. In 1 Co 5:6 Paul quoted this proverb to explain how one incestuous man can negatively influence an entire church. In Lk 13:20 Jesus compared the kingdom of God to leaven, explaining how it was to influence the entire world. This proverb is similar in thought to the one in 1 Co 15:33, “Bad company corrupts good morals,” and to our modern day proverb, “One bad apple spoils the lot.”

The point of the verse is that the Judaizers’ teachings on circumcision, insignificant as it might seem, would influence their running of the Christian race. It wouldn’t just cut in on them; it would stop them from racing altogether.

10 ἐγὼ πέποιθα εἰς ὑμᾶς ἐν κυρίῳ ὅτι οὐδὲν ἄλλο φρονήσετε· ὁ δὲ ταράσσων ὑμᾶς βαστάσει τὸ κρίμα, ὅστις ἐὰν ᾖ.

10 I myself have confidence about you in the Lord, that you will think **in no other way**; but the one throwing you into confusion will bear judgment, whoever he is.

Abruptly, Paul expressed confidence that they would choose to think rightly. In this letter he is at times very pessimistic, at times very optimistic, and at times very uncertain; I think he really didn’t know what the outcome would be. Why did Paul suddenly appear so confident? George argues that his confidence came from the phrase “in the Lord,” which is a reference to the perseverance of the saints.<sup>22</sup> Those who are genuinely saved *will* remain faithful to the truth of the gospel. In Php 1:6 Paul wrote, “For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.”

In what way was Paul confident that they would think? This looks back to 5:8; Paul expected that they would come to realize that their new “obedience” was not really obedience after all.

Paul was equally confident that the one who had preventing the Galatians from obeying the truth (5:7) would bear judgment. Who is this person? The verb “throwing into confusion” (ταράσσων) was used in 1:7; it’s a substantival participle used to describe the Judaizers’ actions without actually naming them. In other verses Paul referred to them in the plural (1:7, 5:12), so there must have been more than one Judaizer, yet here the grammar is singular. Some scholars think Paul was referring to their ringleader;<sup>23</sup> others think this is not a literal singular, but a generic singular, thus referring to all Judaizers as one.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Leaven does not always refer to sin.

<sup>22</sup> George, 367.

<sup>23</sup> George, 367.

<sup>24</sup> Longenecker, 232.

Whether Paul was referring to one person or many, he was confident that he (or they) would receive divine, eschatological judgment from God. In 1:8-9 he promised a curse on anyone who preached another gospel. In Lk 17:1 Jesus said, "It is inevitable that stumbling blocks come, but woe to him through whom they come!" In causing the Galatians to stumble, the Judaizers had stored up for themselves judgment from God.

11 Ἐγὼ δέ, ἀδελφοί, εἰ περιτομὴν ἔτι κηρύσσω, τί ἔτι διώκομαι; ἄρα κατήργηται τὸ σκάνδαλον τοῦ σταυροῦ.

**11 But I, brothers, if I am still preaching **circumcision**, then the offense of the cross has been removed; so why am I still being persecuted?**

In this verse Paul appeared to be responding to a charge from the Judaizers. Apparently they claimed he had been preaching circumcision to some people (i.e., Jews) but not to others (i.e., Gentiles), thus he had a double standard. There is some truth to this accusation; that is, Paul found it perfectly acceptable for a Jewish Christian to continue obeying Jewish laws with one caveat: They could obey the law so long as they realized it had nothing to do with their salvation. But to force Judaism onto Gentiles as a means of salvation was wrong, thus Paul didn't preach circumcision to them. Paul addressed this same issue in his letter to the Corinthians when he wrote, "Was any man called when he was already circumcised? He is not to become uncircumcised. Has anyone been called in uncircumcision? He is not to be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but what matters is the keeping of the commandments of God" (1 Co 7:18-19). It was to this mischaracterization of his actions that Paul was responding.<sup>25</sup>

In this sentence, Paul used a first class condition, a construct whereby he assumed something to be true for the sake of argument. Suppose it was true that Paul was preaching that circumcision (and obedience to the Mosaic law) was required for Jewish people to be saved. If that were true, then the cross would not be offensive to them. "The cross was a stumbling block to the Jews partly because they could not accept the idea of a suffering, much less crucified, Messiah. But it was even more an offense to them because it robbed them of their most distinctive outward signs of Jewishness, the Mosaic law and circumcision."<sup>26</sup> The Jewish people could probably accept faith in Jesus plus circumcision, but they found it very difficult to accept faith in Jesus alone. So if Paul had been teaching the former, his message should have been well received by the Jewish people.

But it wasn't, and that's where this argument broke down. In his missionary journeys,

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<sup>25</sup> Longenecker, 232-233.

<sup>26</sup> MacArthur, 141-142.

Paul was frequently persecuted by Jewish people.<sup>27</sup> For example, in Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra, it was Jewish people who rejected the gospel and stirred up opposition to his preaching (Acts 13-14). If Paul had preached Jesus plus obedience to the law, then the Jews probably would not have persecuted him. Thus Paul repudiated the claim that he had preached a different message—circumcision was required—to Jewish people.

12 Ὅφελον καὶ ἀποκόψονται οἱ ἀναστατοῦντες ὑμᾶς.

## 12 How I wish those who are troubling you would also cut themselves off!

Paul ended his parenthetical break (5:7-12) with this biting, sarcastic comment. There are two streams of thought on what he was referring, depending upon how one understand the verb *apokopto* (ἀποκόπτω). Its literal meaning is to cut off, but its figurative meaning is to cause separation; what is cut off or separated must be determined by the context.

The first possibility is that the context is the circumcision of 5:11. In this case, Paul used a very crude play on words. If a little cutting of the male sexual organ (i.e., circumcision) is good, then he wished they'd go all the way and cut the whole thing off.<sup>28</sup> This is not polite language. From a cultural point of view, Paul may have also had in mind the goddess cult of Cybele, where the priests literally castrated themselves. If the Judaizers think a little cutting is good, be like the Cybeline priests and cut it all. The point of the matter would be a restatement of 5:6; in Christ, circumcision doesn't mean anything; it has no salvific merit.

The second possibility is that the context looks back to the exclusion of Paul from the Galatians in 4:17. The Judaizers were trying to separate Paul from the Galatians, and in a similar manner Paul wished they would separate themselves from the Galatians.<sup>29</sup> The point here would be that Paul wished the Judaizers would leave the Galatians alone.

Either of these is possible, but the context of the first is much closer than the context of the second, so I lean towards it. If that's right, then this sentence emphasizes the anguish that Paul felt towards the Galatians, much as he had expressed in 4:19 where he said he was experiencing birth pangs for them.

Was it appropriate to speak in such a crude manner? Consider what is at stake. If the Galatians embraced Judaism, then they abandoned the true gospel, rejected Jesus, and consigned themselves to eternity in hell. With such dramatic and severe consequences on the line, imprecatory language was acceptable.

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<sup>27</sup> There's a bit of irony in Paul's use of the word persecuted (διώκομαι). In 1:13, he persecuted the church. In 5:12, he was persecuted by Jewish people. In 6:12, he accused the Judaizers of trying to avoid persecution.

<sup>28</sup> This uses the literal meaning of *apokopto*.

<sup>29</sup> This uses the figurative meaning of *apokopto*.

To summarize this break (5:7-12): Paul wanted his young believers to return to running the race well and obeying the truth. He boldly attacked the Judaizers, presenting them in no uncertain terms as those who will be judged by God for their actions.

13 Ὑμεῖς γὰρ ἐπ’ ἐλευθερίᾳ ἐκλήθητε, ἀδελφοί· μόνον μὴ τὴν ἐλευθερίαν εἰς ἀφορμὴν τῆ σαρκί, ἀλλὰ διὰ τῆς ἀγάπης δουλεύετε ἀλλήλοις.

13 For **you** were called **to freedom**, brothers; only *do not convert your freedom into a convenient set of circumstances for the flesh*, **but serve one another through love**.

With his personal break concluded, Paul picked up his main thought of freedom from verse 1.<sup>30</sup> Christ had set the Galatians free, and he wanted them to stay free. The second bondage from which Christ had freed them was libertinism, “throwing off moral restraints and indulging the lusts of the flesh.”<sup>31</sup> If freedom meant they were not to be slaves to laws (5:1), it also meant they were not to be slaves to selfishness.

They had been called by God to freedom; God initiated salvation.<sup>32</sup> To what does freedom refer? It refers back to the theme of the book in 2:16. The Galatians did not have to earn their righteousness; only God could give it when they trusted him. But Paul also added a new dimension in this section on Christian ethics: Freedom is also the liberation from the domination of sin.

Paul prohibited his readers from converting their freedom into a convenient set of circumstances for the flesh. There is no verb in this sentence, so it must be implied from the context.<sup>33</sup> As they were turning one thing, freedom, into another, a set of circumstances, verbs like convert or exchange are probably good. Since freedom means righteousness comes from God by faith and not by obeying the law, it’s not hard to see how some of the Galatians took this to the other extreme, a tendency to say, “I don’t have to obey any rules.” When they cast off all restraints, that led them to the self-pleasure and self-satisfaction of libertinism. “No rules” is a convenient set of circumstances to please self. George calls this a horrible perversion and misuse of the gospel.<sup>34</sup>

Legalism and libertinism are opposites; “I have God’s righteousness so I can do what I want (pleasing myself)” is the opposite of “I get God’s righteousness by doing what God wants (obeying the law).”

Instead of serving their flesh, Paul commanded the Galatians to serve one another

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<sup>30</sup> The connective “for” (γὰρ) connects this sentence back to 5:1.

<sup>31</sup> George, 376.

<sup>32</sup> The verb called is passive voice, indicating that God initiated their salvation.

<sup>33</sup> There are some hints as to what it should be. μὴ implies it will subjunctive. ἀδελφοί from the first clause and ἐκλήθητε and δουλεύετε from the third clause are all 2nd person plural, implying it should be likewise. The second and third clauses are contrasted with the ἀλλὰ, so the force of the verb in the second clause is probably similar to the force of the δουλεύετε in the third clause, which is imperative. This all points to a 2nd person plural subjunctive verb; the prohibitive subjunctive fits the bill.

<sup>34</sup> George, 376.

through love. The conjunction “but” (ἀλλὰ) is a strong contrast; serving self and serving others are opposites. The verb serve (δουλεύετε) means to voluntarily choose to conduct myself as if I were a slave to other believers. This is the verb form of the well-known known *doulos* (δοῦλος), a bond-servant. Paul often described himself as a bond-servant to Jesus (1:10); Jesus is described as a bond-servant in Php 2:7. Exodus 21:5-6 is helpful for understanding how the word is used; to be a bond-servant is to voluntarily choose to permanently serve one who is greatly loved. While it might be easier to choose this for Jesus who died for me, it’s harder to choose this all believers. Not all believers deserve this. Not all believers are even likable.

It should be obvious that this is an impossible to keep command, which is exactly why Paul added the prepositional phrase “through love.” Paul did not mean “serve each other in a loving manner” (as opposed to serving one another in a hateful manner?). He meant the only way it will be possible for one believer to serve another is if the love of Christ is flowing through them.<sup>35</sup> This is the “Christ is living in me” from 2:20 in action, which is possible only because Christ loved us and gave himself for us.

Note that serving is a continual (present tense) command (imperative mood). Believers are never free from the obligation to serve one another.

To be fair, there seems to be a contradiction. How is serving freedom? If I am not free, I am a slave to the constant need to earn my righteousness. If I am free, I have the freedom to love and thus to serve others.

14 ὁ γὰρ πᾶς νόμος ἐν ἐνὶ λόγῳ πεπλήρωται, ἐν τῷ· ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτόν.

**14 For the whole law has been summarized in one statement: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”**

The “for” (γὰρ) connects this verse to the previous one by answering the question “why?” Why should the Galatians serve each other through love? They should serve each other because love is the summation of the entire law. The verb “has been summarized” (πεπλήρωται) can mean fulfill or complete,<sup>36</sup> and this could be Paul’s intention here; if so, the idea is that love is how one obeys the law. But this verb can also mean to summarize, and that seems to fit here better,<sup>37</sup> because the verb is not in the present tense, which would indicate ongoing action, but rather is in the perfect tense, which means that this action has already been completed and remains in effect.

Interestingly enough, both of these ideas exist in a single cross-reference, Ro 13:8-10:

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<sup>35</sup> This is genitive of means, how we get from the point of not wanting to serve someone to the point of serving them.

<sup>36</sup> So NASB95, ESV, HCSB, LEB.

<sup>37</sup> So NET, ISV.

Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. For this, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

Who summarized the law in one statement? One possibility is Jesus, though he actually summarized the law in two statements (Mt 22:34-40). Perhaps Paul had in mind only the second of Jesus’ two statements, assuming the first as a given.<sup>38</sup> Another possibility is God, who said, “You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord” (Le 19:18). These commands are in the middle of various laws concerning people.

Paul’s point is that the essence of the law (at least where it concerned interpersonal relationships) was about serving each other not about serving self. He was not saying that obeying the law was a requirement for justification, which would be a contradiction to everything he has written, but rather that love for others is its logical conclusion. The law was based upon the characters of God, and God was love before the law.

15 εἰ δὲ ἀλλήλους δάκνετε καὶ κατεσθίετε, βλέπετε μὴ ὑπ’ ἀλλήλων ἀναλωθῆτε.

15 **But if you are biting and devouring one another, watch out that you are not destroyed by one another.**

This warning is connected back to verse 13; it describes what happens when believers convert their freedom into a convenient set of circumstances for their flesh and do not serve each other through love. As they satisfy their own desires and passion, they will bite and devour each other. Biting (δάκνετε) has a metaphorical meaning of harm, and devouring (κατεσθίετε) of devastating. The metaphor is of animals fighting, biting and tearing each other to pieces.

Paul’s conclusion was if live like this, then they would destroy (ἀναλωθῆτε) one another. God has designed the church to be a community of believers who love each other, serve each other, build each other up, support each other, etc. If they satisfy their flesh, they will destroy this community. This is often why churches split; they are full of people who are satisfying their own flesh, not serving one another, and not loving as themselves.

To summarize 5:13-15: Since believers have freedom, they should not satisfy themselves but serve each other through love instead. This is what the law is all about. If they choose to satisfy themselves, they will destroy their Christian community.

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<sup>38</sup> George argues that loving your neighbor is proof that you are already loving God (380-381).

## Structural Diagram

Christ set us free **for freedom**;  
therefore  
continue *in freedom*  
and  
not be subjected **to a yoke of slavery**

if you are circumcised  
Christ will be of no benefit **to you**

each one who receives circumcision  
He is obligated to keep the whole law

Those of you were released from Christ  
who are attempting to be declared righteous by law  
you fell **from grace**

For  
we ourselves are eagerly awaiting **the hope of righteousness**  
For  
neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything  
**but**  
faith working through love

You were running well

Who prevented you from obeying **the truth**  
This persuasion *is* not from the one calling you  
A small amount of leaven leavens the whole batch of dough

you will think **in no other way**  
but  
the one throwing you into confusion will bear judgment  
But  
if I am still preaching **circumcision**  
then the offense of the cross has been removed  
so  
why am I still being persecuted?

How I wish those who are troubling you would also cut themselves off!

(Christ set us free vs 1)

|  
For  
**you** were called **to freedom**  
*do not convert your freedom into a convenient set of circumstances*  
for the flesh

**but**  
serve one another **through love**

For  
the whole law has been summarized **in one statement**  
Love your neighbor as yourself

But  
| if you are biting and devouring **one another**  
watch out *that* you are not destroyed **by one another**

## Tracing the Argument

**External** – Having finished his explanation of justification (3:1-4:31), Paul then transitioned to how one who has been justified should live. This is Paul's typical move from theology to practice.

**Internal** – On the one extreme, Paul wanted his readers to avoid being subjected to the law. On the other extreme, Paul wanted them to avoid casting off all rules and restraint. Between these extremes, Paul spoke a personal word to his friends.

### **Textual Outline**

1. Christ set the Galatians free, and Paul wanted to stay free and not turn to Judaism (5:1-6).
  - a. Christ could not help them if they chose to be circumcised (5:2).
  - b. If they received circumcision, they must obey all of the law (5:3).
  - c. They were released from Christ and had fallen from grace (5:4).
  - d. They were awaiting the hope of righteousness (5:5).
  - e. Only faith is important to God (5:6).
2. Christ set the Galatians free, and Paul was unhappy that the Judaizers were confusing them (5:7-12).
3. Christ set the Galatians free, and Paul wanted them to serve each other through love not their flesh (5:13-15).

### **Central Truth of the Text**

Paul wrote Galatians 5:1-15 in order to command Galatians believers to stay free.

### **Teaching Outline**

Through faith in Christ we have been set free, and today I want you to ask yourself this question: Am I living free? From our text in Galatians we are going to see 3 ways to lose your freedom.

1. Stay free; don't try to earn God's grace (5:1-6).
2. Stay free; be careful to whom you listen (5:7-12).
3. Stay free; don't indulge your desires (5:13-15).



## Galatians 5:16-26

### Limits of the Text

This section is marked by contrast. Instead of satisfying the desires of the flesh, those who have been justified will walk by the Spirit.

### Translation

16 But I say walk **by the Spirit**, and you will definitely not satisfy **the desire of the flesh**. 17 For the flesh desires against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do what you desire. 18 But if you are led **by the Spirit**, you are not under law. 19 And the works of the flesh are **obvious**: sexual immorality, impurity, licentiousness, 20 idolatry, magic, hatred, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of rage, selfish ambitions, dissensions, divisions, 21 envy, drunkenness, uncontrollable partying, and the like, of which I am warning you—just as I warned *you* before—that the ones doing these things will not inherit **the kingdom of God**. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, *and* self-control; there is no law **against such fruit**. 24 And those belonging to Christ Jesus crucified **the flesh** with its lusts and cravings. 25 If we are living by the Spirit, let us live in conformity to the **Spirit's** standard. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying one another.

### Interpretation

16 Λέγω δέ, πνεύματι περιπατεῖτε καὶ ἐπιθυμίαν σαρκὸς οὐ μὴ τελέσητε.

16 But I say walk **by the Spirit**, and you will definitely not satisfy **the desire of the flesh**.

In 5:13-14, Paul commanded the Galatians to serve each other through love instead of serving their own fleshly desires. In these verses (5:16-26) Paul unpacked how that was possible and what it would look like.

Walk by the Spirit is the command that controls this section. Walk (περιπατεῖτε) can literally mean walk around, but Paul here used a figurative extension of the word that referred to how one conducts their life<sup>39</sup> or lives as a habit.<sup>40</sup> In order for his readers to walk the way he wanted, they would have to do so “by the Spirit” (πνεύματι); that is, if they were going to love each instead of serving their flesh, they would have to have the enabling of the Holy Spirit.<sup>41</sup> This cannot be done through willpower or determination. To walk by the Spirit means to live every area of life by means of the indwelling Holy Spirit; it means to live righteously by the power of the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>39</sup> Swanson, DBLG 4344.

<sup>40</sup> Arndt, 803.

<sup>41</sup> This is dative of means.

The result of walking by the Spirit is the absolute certainty of not satisfying the desire of the flesh; this is a strongly worded promise.<sup>42</sup> To satisfy (τελέσητε) means “to carry out an obligation or demand.”<sup>43</sup> Paul said their flesh was constantly making demands that wanted to be fulfilled, but these demands would not be fulfilled when they were walking by the Spirit.

17 ἢ γὰρ σὰρξ ἐπιθυμεῖ κατὰ τοῦ πνεύματος, τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα κατὰ τῆς σαρκός, ταῦτα γὰρ ἀλλήλοις ἀντίκειται, ἵνα μὴ ἂ ἐὰν θέλητε ταῦτα ποιῆτε.

**17 For the flesh desires against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do what you desire.**

Paul clarified his statement by explaining more about this conflict between the flesh and the Spirit.<sup>44</sup> The flesh desires against the Spirit; their desires are contrary (in opposition to) to each other. If the flesh wants to go left, then the Spirit wants to go right. This is why an unredeemed person is a slave to sin; he has no Spirit to desire a godly direction, and without that opposition he will obey the desires of his flesh.

Because of this conflict, the believer cannot always do what he desires. This phrase can be interpreted two different ways. It might mean that the Spirit prevents us from fulfilling our sinful desires, or it might mean that our flesh prevents us from fulfilling our righteous desires; the latter seems to be the more natural reading.<sup>45</sup>

18 εἰ δὲ πνεύματι ἄγεσθε, οὐκ ἐστὲ ὑπὸ νόμον.

**18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.**

Paul brought this discussion of living by the Spirit back to the Galatians. If they were led by the Spirit, then they were not under law. “Led by the Spirit” (πνεύματι ἄγεσθε) is pretty much synonymous with “walk by the Spirit” (5:16), though it emphasizes the leading of the Spirit. Not only does the Spirit give the ability to live right, but he also guides in the direction of the right choices, leads towards God’s will, and makes straight paths (Pr 3:6).

Being led by the Spirit is not the same as being under the law<sup>46</sup> and obeying a list of rules—this is the legalism he referred to back in 5:1—no matter how good that list is. The Spirit leads us to live by a new set of values (5:22-23), which results in serving by love (5:13-14). The final action might be the same in both cases, but the path to obedience is different; one is a path of self-help, but the other of Spirit-leading and Spirit-enabling.

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<sup>42</sup> The double negative is part of the emphatic negation subjunctive, a very strong negative, which is why I added the “definitely” in English.

<sup>43</sup> Arndt, 997.

<sup>44</sup> Both prepositional phrases (κατὰ τοῦ πνεύματος, κατὰ τῆς σαρκός) are genitive of opposition.

<sup>45</sup> George, 387. For a fuller treatment of this subject, see Ro 7:14-25.

<sup>46</sup> This is accusative of subordination and could be translated as “under the rule of.”

19 φανερά δέ ἐστὶν τὰ ἔργα τῆς σαρκός, ἅτινά ἐστιν πορνεία, ἀκαθαρσία, ἀσέλγεια, 20 εἰδωλολατρία, φαρμακεία, ἔχθραι, ἔρις, ζῆλος, θυμοί, ἐριθειῖαι, διχοστασίαι, αἰρέσεις, 21 φθόνοι, μέθαι, κῶμοι καὶ τὰ ὅμοια τούτοις, ἃ προλέγω ὑμῖν, καθὼς προεῖπον ὅτι οἱ τὰ τοιαῦτα πράσσοντες βασιλείαν θεοῦ οὐ κληρονομήσουσιν.

19 And the works of the flesh are **obvious**: sexual immorality, impurity, licentiousness, 20 idolatry, magic, hatred, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of rage, selfish ambitions, dissensions, divisions, 21 envy, drunkenness, uncontrollable partying, and the like, of which I am warning you—just as I warned *you* before—that the ones doing these things will not inherit **the kingdom of God**.

In 5:16-17 Paul said that walking by the Spirit is in opposition to satisfying the desires of the flesh. In these next verses (5:19-23), he further explained this opposition through a pair of contrasting lists, a technique common in his culture. “The catalogue form of virtues and vices had its origin in [the] Greek ethical teaching of Aristotle, the Stoics ...and Philo.”<sup>47</sup>

The works of the flesh are the results of fulfilling the desires of the flesh (5:16), which is the same as the libertinism of 5:13. These works are obvious (φανερὰ), which means to be readily known or plainly seen. This list is not a secret, and no one is surprised by what’s here. Sin is obvious. If I had to summarize these items, it would be like this: I am in control (egocentric), and I will please myself (self-satisfying).

Sexual immorality (πορνεία) is a very broad word and covers a wide variety sexual sins, including adultery, fornication, prostitution, homosexuality, bestiality, and pornography. Longenecker notes “this vice was so common in the Greco-Roman world of Paul’s day that it was not regarded as particularly reprehensible, except when carried to excess.”<sup>48</sup>

Impurity (ἀκαθαρσία) literally means dirty. When used physically, it means to be filthy; when used medically, it means to be unsterile; and when used ceremonially, it means to be unclean. The word was typically used in a figurative sense to mean morally impure, thus it was very similar to sexual immorality, but the emphasis of the word is less on the action and more on the result: Sexual immorality makes one impure, and because impurity is the opposite of God’s character of holiness, it separates one from him. This word could be paraphrased as “any sexual behavior that separates one from the holiness of God.”

Licentiousness (ἀσέλγεια) is another word with sexual overtones, though the emphasis is less on what is done and more on how it is done. It means to engage in sexual immorality with reckless abandon and to cast off all moral and social restraints. It

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<sup>47</sup> Longenecker, 250-251.

<sup>48</sup> Longenecker, 254.

might even have the idea of being animal-like, capitulating to base desires. It takes the philosophy of “if it feels good, do it” to its logical conclusion. Longenecker quotes Barclay: “A love of sin so reckless and so audacious that a man has ceased to care what God or man thinks of his action.”<sup>49</sup>

Idolatry (εἰδωλολατρεία) means to worship the image of another god or to worship another god represented by the image. The motivation behind idolatry is a desire to have something more; it is a lack of satisfaction with the Living God, thus desiring another god, a dead one, one who is more manageable and less stringent. In Co 3:5, Paul equated greed to idolatry, “because the thing coveted becomes an object of worship.”<sup>50</sup> In 1 Co 10:14, he equated eating at the feasts in pagan temples as idolatry.

Magic (φαρμακεία) a fairly broad word meaning to practice magic, sorcery, or witchcraft. It can include using of drugs and poisons—which is why the modern word “pharmacy” is derived from this word—being in a trance, and participating in occult activities.

Hatred (ἔχθραι) is both the attitude of hating someone and the resulting actions of hostility and antagonism. Its base was probably hatred towards God (Ja 4:4; Ro 8:7)

Quarreling (ἔρις) starts when people have differences of opinion on some matter but devolves into arguing and hostility and results in discord and rivalry.<sup>51</sup>

Jealousy (ζῆλος) is a word that can be either a good thing or a bad thing, but the context demands that it is bad. It is intense feelings of resentment over another person’s success or accomplishment. It can be the motivation that leads to quarreling. “At the root of all sentiments of jealousy is the basic posture of ingratitude to God, a failure to accept one’s life as a gift from God.”<sup>52</sup>

Outbursts of rage (θυμοί) comes from another word that can be good (i.e., passionate) or bad depending upon the context. Here it means intense, external outbursts or explosions of anger, wrath, and fury upon other people. Aristotle used it of “dogs which start barking before waiting to see if one is a friend or not.”<sup>53</sup> Today we say, “He just blew up on me!” or, “She has an Irish temper!”

Selfish ambitions (ἐριθειαι) originated in politics, where Aristotle used it to mean a “self-seeking pursuit of political office by unfair means.”<sup>54</sup> It is a selfish, self-seeking, and self-interested motivation; it is the opposite of love, which acts on behalf of others.

Dissensions (διχοστασία) means to divide into two. The result may be one group with

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<sup>49</sup> Longenecker, 254.

<sup>50</sup> Bruce, 247.

<sup>51</sup> Louw, 1:494.

<sup>52</sup> George, 395.

<sup>53</sup> Quoted in Bruce, 248.

<sup>54</sup> Arndt, 392.

two factions who are arguing or may be one group that has split into two groups. They are in opposition to one another, which creates discord and division. For example, some in the church might cultivate an atmosphere of exclusive elitism, dividing the church into those who have it and those who don't.<sup>55</sup> It is synonymous with the next sin, divisions.<sup>56</sup>

Divisions (αἰρέσεις) comes from the verb "to choose" and has the general idea of differing philosophies or schools of thought. For example, Sadducees, Pharisees, and Essenes are divisions of Judaism; in this sense, the word is not pejorative. In the context, however, it has more of the idea of divisions or factions that come from false teaching,<sup>57</sup> thus it the result of a heretical way of thinking. Heresies eventually lead to splits and schisms in the church.

Envy (φθόνοι) is "a state of ill will toward someone because of some real or presumed advantage experienced by such a person."<sup>58</sup> It is "pain felt and malignity conceived at the sight of excellence or happiness."<sup>59</sup> It appears to be synonymous with jealousy in 5:20.

Drunkenness (μέθαι) means to be inebriated and intoxicated from consuming alcoholic beverages. It is probably related to the next sin, as Paul said in Ep 5:18, "Stop getting drunk with wine, which leads to wild living" (ISV).

Uncontrollable partying (κῶμοι) has its origin in festive activities honoring a god, such as Bacchus, the god of wine.<sup>60</sup> It leads to excessive eating and drinking and sexual immorality (e.g., orgies). Words like "revelry" or "carousing" might be good translations, but "uncontrollable partying" is more clearly understood in our culture. Events like a college frat party or Mardi Gras might be modern equivalents.

At the end of his list Paul added "and the like," indicating that this is not an exhaustive list, but rather a representative list. There are many other works of the flesh.

Paul concluded this section with a warning: People whose lifestyle is one of constant obedience to the works of the flesh are not in the kingdom of God. Paul had told the Galatians this when he was among them,<sup>61</sup> and he was repeated this warning to them now. This doesn't mean Christians never sin or never commit the sins on this list, but it does mean is that there is a sense of opposition, a sense of struggle. There is some evidence that there is an indwelling Holy Spirit who is helping the believer to struggle against these sins.

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<sup>55</sup> Whatever "it" might be.

<sup>56</sup> Zodhiates, G1370.

<sup>57</sup> The English word "heresy" comes from this word (George, 396).

<sup>58</sup> Louw, 1:759.

<sup>59</sup> Zodhiates, G5355,

<sup>60</sup> Zodhiates, G2970.

<sup>61</sup> Some postulate that Paul write a previous letter to the Galatians, one that has not survived.

22 ὁ δὲ καρπὸς τοῦ πνεύματός ἐστιν ἀγάπη χαρὰ εἰρήνη, μακροθυμία χρηστότης ἀγαθωσύνη, πίστις 23 πραΰτης ἐγκράτεια· κατὰ τῶν τοιούτων οὐκ ἔστιν νόμος.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, *and* self-control; there is no law **against such fruit**.

The result of salvation, the visible demonstration and expression of a godly life is the fruit of the Spirit. It refers to attitudes and actions both. The lack of such fruit evidences the lack of the Spirit's indwelling.

As Longenecker observes, it is interesting to note that there are no specific actions; taking care of widows or feeding the poor isn't on the list. "It appears that Paul is not so concerned with precisely how each of these matters works out in practice, but with the underlying orientation of selfless and outgoing concern for others."<sup>62</sup>

*Agape* (ἀγάπη) is one of four Greek words for love; it's the word least used in classical Greek writings. This love has the best interests of another at heart, whether they realize it or not. It is self-sacrificing love that results in service (action) for another (Jn 3:16; Ro 5:8); it is less of an emotion and more of a decision (choice). Love originates in God's love for mankind (Jn 3:16) and disseminates into the Christian's actions towards other Christians in particular (Jn 13:34) and everyone they interact with in general (5:14).<sup>63</sup>

Joy (χαρὰ) gladness (perhaps even happiness) that results not from pleasant circumstances but from the state of being righteous before God, from knowing that all is well with the Lord.<sup>64</sup> It is a freedom from worry and fear, and it can exist even in the midst of persecution and suffering.

In Greek thinking, peace (εἰρήνη) meant the absence of pain or difficulties. In Jewish thinking, peace was expressed in the term *shalom*, which referred to "a condition of wholeness and well-being that includes both a right relationship with God and loving harmony with one's fellow human beings."<sup>65</sup> It was this latter term, not the former, that carried into Christian thinking, thus peace has the idea of being in a right relationship with God that results in tranquility and a state of well-being. Peace and joy both flow from a right relationship with God, and they can both exist despite unpleasant circumstances; peace is more of an emotion, while joy is more of a state of mind.

Patience (μακροθυμία) has the idea of remaining steadfast in the face of unmerited provocation or persecution; it is "the calm willingness to accept situations that are irritating or painful."<sup>66</sup> A patient man does not respond in anger or with vengeance.

Kindness (χρηστότης) has the idea of dealing with others in a spirit of tenderness and

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<sup>62</sup> Longenecker, 267.

<sup>63</sup> Read more in 1 Co 13.

<sup>64</sup> MacArthur, 166.

<sup>65</sup> George, 402.

<sup>66</sup> MacArthur, 167.

gentleness, as opposed to a spirit of harshness or quarrelsomeness. “The word is descriptive of one’s disposition and does not necessarily entail acts of goodness,”<sup>67</sup> though the result of kindness may be the providing of something beneficial to another person as an act of benevolence,<sup>68</sup> thus including the idea of generosity.

Goodness (ἀγαθωσύνη) is similar to kindness in that it is expressed in benevolent, active good for others, but there is more to goodness. Goodness does not spare sharpness and rebuke to cause good in others. A person may display his goodness, his zeal for truth, in rebuking, correcting, and chastising. Christ’s righteous indignation in the temple (Mt 21:13), for example, showed His goodness, but not His gentleness.<sup>69</sup>

Faithfulness (πίστις) is “the state of being someone in whom complete confidence can be placed.”<sup>70</sup> Synonyms include dependability, reliability, trustworthiness, loyalty, and fidelity.

According to Aristotle, gentleness (πραΰτης) is staying between two extremes: Getting angry without reason and not getting angry at all. Zodhiates defines it as “getting angry at the right time, in the right measure, and for the right reason.”<sup>71</sup> It suggests power and strength that is under God’s control. The result is that people are dealt with in a spirit of humility and consideration, not a spirit of harshness; it does not suggest the idea of being a wimp.

Self-control (ἐγκράτεια) was used often by the Greeks as an ethical term. Plato referred to it as being the opposite of overindulging in food and sex; Aristotle said it was the ability to keep powerful passions under control. It is a “restraint of one’s emotions, impulses, or desires.”<sup>72</sup> It seems to be the opposite of drunkenness and uncontrollable partying in the list of works of the flesh.

τοιούτων (such fruit) – This is a generic word, which is why it is often translated “such things.” But we know from 5:23 that the “things” are the fruit, thus my translation.

Paul finished his list by stating that there is no law against such fruit. There are no laws, neither from the local government nor from the Mosaic Law, that oppose people living like this, which seems like an incredibly obvious statement. Longenecker, in fact, believes it to be “an understatement given for rhetorical effect;”<sup>73</sup> you can almost hear Paul say this in a wry tone of voice. Why did he add this? The Judaizers wanted the Galatians to obey the Law to please God, yet Paul noted that living a life like this went far beyond the requirements of the Law, so far that Law could not regulate it. If they

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<sup>67</sup> Zodhiates, G5544.

<sup>68</sup> Swanson, DBLG 5983.

<sup>69</sup> Zodhiates, G19.

<sup>70</sup> Louw, 1:376.

<sup>71</sup> Zodhiates, G4240. See also 1 Co 7:9.

<sup>72</sup> Arndt, 274.

<sup>73</sup> Longenecker, 263.

wanted to please God, they should walk by the Spirit and let him produce his fruit in their lives.

24 οἱ δὲ τοῦ Χριστοῦ [Ἰησοῦ] τὴν σάρκα ἐσταύρωσαν σὺν τοῖς παθήμασιν καὶ ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις. 25 Εἰ ζῶμεν πνεύματι, πνεύματι καὶ στοιχῶμεν.

24 And those belonging to Christ Jesus crucified **the flesh** with its lusts and cravings.

25 If we are living by the Spirit, let us live in conformity to the **Spirit's** standard.

Paul concluded the section on walking by the Spirit with two statements of reality. The first statement is that those who belong to Jesus crucified the flesh. Back in 2:19 Paul said that he had died to the Law and had been crucified with Christ. In 5:24 he used this same language, but connected this crucifixion to the lusts and cravings of the flesh. When Paul placed his faith in Jesus alone, God applied the benefits of the crucifixion to him;<sup>74</sup> one of those benefits was that Paul was no longer a slave to sin, and that included being a slave to his own flesh. His mandatory obedience to self-gratification was removed by Jesus' actions on the cross, and thus libertinism is not an acceptable lifestyle for the believer.

The second statement is that those who live by the Spirit live in conformity to the Spirit. Verse 25 is a first class condition in Greek, which could be paraphrased like this, "Assume for the sake of argument that we are living by the Spirit; if that's true, then we should be living in conformity to the Spirit." We are living (ζῶμεν πνεύματι) is identical in meaning to walking by the Spirit back in 5:16; both refer to a Spirit-empowered life. If a Christian is living by the Spirit's power, then he should be living<sup>75</sup> in conformity the Spirit's standard (πνεύματι καὶ στοιχῶμεν). This word for living (στοιχῶμεν) literally means to stand in a line or march in rank; the word was often used in a military context to refer to the orderly arrangement and movement of soldiers. Paul uses it here in a figurative sense meaning to be in line with a standard of conduct,<sup>76</sup> to live in conformity with a standard,<sup>77</sup> or to live according to rules or duties.<sup>78</sup> So it means to behave in conformance to a standard, and it could be translated to follow, to conduct accordingly, or to keep in step with.

What is the Spirit's standard? What kind of lifestyle accords with walking by the Spirit? The Spirit's standard is a life that evidences the fruit of the Spirit. Because sin's power is broken, a libertine lifestyle cannot be lived, and a life conforming to the Spirit's standard must be lived.

This section (5:16-26) has four verbs regarding life in the Spirit. The Spirit empowers

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<sup>74</sup> See my notes on 2:20 for other benefits.

<sup>75</sup> The verb is in the hortatory subjunctive, meaning it's an exhortation.

<sup>76</sup> Arndt, 926.

<sup>77</sup> Louw, 1:504.

<sup>78</sup> Zodhiates, G4748.



(5:16, 24), the Spirit gives direction (5:18), and Spirit sets the standard of conformance (5:25). A Christian who lets the Jesus live through him (2:20) by means of the Holy Spirit and follows the Spirit's direction will visibly demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit.

26 μὴ γινώμεθα κενόδοξοι, ἀλλήλους προκαλούμενοι, ἀλλήλοις φθονοῦντες.

**26 Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying one another.**

This is a transitional verse, moving from the abstract exhortation to demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit to the concrete command to restore the brother caught in sin (6:1). Paul commanded them to not become conceited (κενόδοξοι), which comes from the words “empty” and “glory” and means to have an exaggerated view of oneself<sup>79</sup> or to be proud without reason.<sup>80</sup> Being conceited is the opposite of being gentle (5:23), and it leads to the ongoing activities like provoking and envying. To provoke (προκαλούμενοι) means to challenge and irritate a person.<sup>81</sup> To envy (φθονοῦντες) means to experience a feeling of ill will due to real or presumed advantage experienced by someone else.<sup>82</sup> If we are being conceited, then we won't be demonstrating the fruit of gentleness, which is necessary for restoration (6:1).

Presumably Paul gave this exhortation with a specific situation in mind at Galatia, and it was probably related to the sin that called for restoration, but we have no idea what that historical situation was.

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<sup>79</sup> Arndt, 539.

<sup>80</sup> Louw, 1:765.

<sup>81</sup> Swanson, DBLG 4614.

<sup>82</sup> Louw, 1:762.

## Structural Diagram

( Biting and devouring v15 )  
But  
walk **by the Spirit**  
and  
you will not satisfy **the desire of the flesh**  
For  
the flesh desires against the Spirit  
and  
the Spirit against the flesh  
for  
these are in opposition to one another  
so that  
you may not do what you desire  
But  
| if you are led **by the Spirit**  
you are not under law  
And  
the works of the flesh are **obvious**:  
    sexual immorality  
    impurity  
    licentiousness  
    ...  
    and the like  
But  
the fruit of the Spirit is love  
                                joy  
                                peace  
                                ...  
there is no law **against such fruit**  
And  
those belonging to Christ Jesus crucified **the flesh**  
  
    If we are living by the Spirit  
let us live in conformity to the **Spirit's** standard  
  
Let us not become conceited

## Tracing the Argument

**External** – In 5:13-14, Paul commanded the Galatians to serve each other through love instead of serving their own fleshly desires. In these verses (5:16-26) Paul unpacked how that was possible and what it would look like.

**Internal** – Paul commanded the Galatians to walk by the Spirit, which would enable them to avoid satisfying the desires of their flesh (5:16-18). He then gave two lists, vices (works of the flesh; 5:19-21) and virtues (fruit of the Spirit; 5:22-23). He finished with two concluding statements (5:24-25), and then transitioned to the next section (5:26).

## Textual Outline

1. Paul commanded the Galatians to walk by Spirit, then they would not satisfy their fleshly desires (5:16-18).
  - a. If they did not, they would demonstrate the works of the flesh (5:19-21).
  - b. If they did, they would demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit (5:22-23).

2. Paul concluded that believers have crucified the flesh and conform to the Spirit (5:24-25).
3. Paul transitioned to the next section, which is on restoration (5:26)

### **Central Truth of the Text**

Paul wrote Galatians 5:1-15 in order to command Galatians believers to walk by the Spirit.

### **Teaching Outline**

God's people walk by the Spirit, and today I want to begin walking by the Spirit. From our text in Galatians we are going to see 3 reasons to walk by the Spirit.

1. Walk by the Spirit, so you won't satisfy the desires of your flesh (5:16-21).
2. Walk by the Spirit, so you will have the fruit of the Spirit (5:22-23).
3. Walk by the Spirit, so you will conform to his standard (5:24-26).

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