

# Galatians 5 Commentary

Galatians 4

Galatians 6

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Magna Carta of Spiritual Emancipation  
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See Also:

[Paul's First Missionary Journey](#)

[Paul's Second Missionary Journey](#)

[Paul's Third Missionary Journey](#)

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**SUMMARY CHART:**  
**EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS**

Gospel of Grace Defended		Gospel of Grace Explained			Gospel of Grace Applied		
Defense of the Gospel Gal 1:1-2:21		Freedom from Legalism Gal 3:1-4:31			Freedom to Love and to Serve Gal 5:1-6:18		
Labor		Liberty			Life		
Authority Not Opinion		Freedom Not Bondage			Spirit Not Flesh		
Personal Autobiography		Doctrinal Accuracy			Practical Application		
Paul the Apostle  (Gal 1:1-24)	Paul's Authority  (Gal 2:1-21)	Justified by Faith not Works (Gal 3:1-9)	Justified by Faith not the Law (Gal 3:10-4:20)	Grace and Law Cannot Co-Exist (Gal 4:21-31)	Position and Practice of Liberty (Gal 5:1-15)	Power of Liberty (Gal 5:16-26)	Performance in Liberty (Gal 6:1-18)
Vindication		Exposition			Application		
Testimonial and Apologetic		Doctrinal and Argumentative			Practical and Hortatory		
Biographical Explanation		Doctrinal Exposition			Practical Exhortation		
Authentication of Liberty		Argumentation for Liberty			Application of Liberty		
Style or Tone: Vigorous, blunt, aggressive, direct, corrective, urgent, brief, righteous anger, strong words							
Theme: Justification by Faith and not by Works of the Law							
Author: Paul in large letters (Gal 6:11)							
Recipients: Churches in Galatia (Gal 1:2) (Most likely the Southern Region)							
Christ in Galatians: Jesus is the Source and Power for the believer's New Life. (Gal 2:20, 5:16)							

CONTRAST OF  
GRACE AND LAW

LAW	GRACE
The law prohibits	Grace invites and gives
The law condemns the sinner	Grace redeems the sinner.
The law says DO	Grace says IT IS DONE.
The law says, Continue to be holy	Grace says, It is finished.
The law curses	Grace blesses
The law slays the sinner	Grace makes the sinner alive.
The law shuts every mouth before God	Grace opens the mouth to praise God.
The law condemns the best man	Grace saves the worst man.
The law says, pay what you owe	Grace says, I freely forgive you all.
The law says “the wages of sin is death”	Grace says, “the gift of God is eternal life.”
The law says, “the soul that sins shall die”	Grace says, Believe and live.
The law reveals sin	Grace atones for sin.
By the law is the knowledge of sin	By grace is redemption from sin.

The law was given by Moses	Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.
The law demands obedience	Grace bestows and gives power to obey.
The law was written on stone	Grace is written on the tables of the heart.
The law was done away in Christ	Grace abides forever.
The law puts us under bondage	Grace sets us in the liberty of the sons of God.

**Related Resource:** Purpose of the Law

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## **An Outline of Galatians - [D Edmond Hiebert](#)**

### THE INTRODUCTION (Galatians 1:1-10)

1. The salutation (Galatians 1:1-5)
  - a. The writer (Galatians 1:1-2a)
    - i. Paul, the Apostle (Galatians 1: 1)
    - ii. The brethren with him (Galatians 1:2a)
  - b. The readers (Galatians 1:2b)
  - c. The greeting (Galatians 1:3-5)
    - i. The contents of the greeting (Galatians 1:3a)
    - ii. The source of the grace and peace (Galatians 1:3b-4)
    - iii. The doxology (Galatians 1:5)
2. The rebuke (Galatians 1:6-10)
  - a. His astonishment at their fickleness (Galatians 1:6-7)
    - i. The reason for the astonishment (Galatians 1:6)
    - ii. The explanation of the departure (Galatians 1:7)
  - b. His assertion about its seriousness Galatians 1:8-9)
    - i. The seriousness asserted (Galatians 1:8)
    - ii. The seriousness reaffirmed (Galatians 1:9)
  - c. His attitude in the matter (Galatians 1:10)
- I. PERSONAL: THE VINDICATION OF HIS APOSTOLIC AUTHORITY (Galatians 1:11-2:21)

1. How he got his Gospel (Galatians 1:11-24)
  - a. The origin of his Gospel through revelation (Galatians 1: 11-12)
    - i. The assertion as to its nature (Galatians 1:11)
    - ii. The manner of its reception (Galatians 1:12)
  - b. The previous conduct of the one given the revelation (Galatians 1:13-14)
    - i. The manner of his former life known to them Galatians 1:13a)
    - ii. The description of his former life (Galatians 1:13b-14)
      - a. In relation to the Church of God (Galatians 1:13b)
      - b. In relation to Judaism (Galatians 1:14)
  - c. The description of the revelation received (Galatians 1:15-17)
    - i. The source of the revelation (Galatians 1:15)
    - ii. The subject of the revelation (Galatians 1:16a)
    - iii. The purpose of the revelation (Galatians 1:16b)
    - iv. The response to the revelation (Galatians 1:16c-17)
  - d. His independence of the Jerusalem apostles (Galatians 1:18-24)
    - i. The first visit to Jerusalem (Galatians 1:18-20)
      - a. The time of the visit (Galatians 1:18a)
      - b. The purpose of the visit (Galatians 1:18b)
      - c. The duration of the visit (Galatians 1:18c)
      - d. The scope of contacts during the visit (Galatians 1:19-20)
    - ii. The subsequent absence from Jerusalem (Galatians 1:21-24)
      - a. The place of his withdrawal (Galatians 1:21)
      - b. The lack of acquaintance with the Judean churches (Galatians 1:22)
      - c. The response of the churches to reports about him (Galatians 1:23-24)
2. How his Gospel was confirmed by the apostles at Jerusalem (Galatians 2:1-10)
  - a. The circumstances of its presentation to them (Galatians 2:1-2)

- i. The journey to Jerusalem (Galatians 2:1-2a)
  - ii. The presentation made at Jerusalem (Galatians 2:2b)
- b. The outcome of his presentation of his Gospel to them (Galatians 2:3-10)
  - i. The maintenance of his position, as seen in Titus Galatians 2:3)
  - ii. The conflict with the false brethren (Galatians 2:4-5)
    - a. The presence of the false brethren (Galatians 2:4)
    - b. The refusal to yield to their demands (Galatians 2:5)
  - iii. The approval of his Gospel by the Jerusalem leaders (Galatians 2:6-10)
    - a. Their failure to add anything to his Gospel (Galatians 2:6)
    - b. Their approval of his Gospel in full (Galatians 2:7-10)
      - 1. The basis of their approval (Galatians 2:7-9a)
      - 2. The expression of their approval (Galatians 2:9b)
      - 3. The one request with their approval (Galatians 2:10)
- 3. How he rebuked Peter's inconsistent conduct (Galatians 2:11-21)
  - a. The circumstances when giving the rebuke (Galatians 2:11-13)
    - i. The fact of his rebuke of Peter (Galatians 2:11)
    - ii. The reason for his rebuke of Peter (Galatians 2:12)
    - iii. The effect of the inconsistent conduct of Peter (Galatians 2:13)
  - b. The justification for giving the rebuke (Galatians 2:14-21)
    - i. His question of rebuke to Peter (Galatians 2:14)
    - ii. His explanation of his doctrinal position (Galatians 2:15-21)
      - a. The insufficiency of the law (Galatians 2:15-18)
        - 1. The discovery of believing Jews about justification (Galatians 2:15-16)
        - 2. The rejection of a conclusion from Peter's action (Galatians 2:17)
        - 3. The significance of a return to law-works (Galatians 2:18)
      - b. The new life in Christ (Galatians 2:19-21)
        - 1. The effect of the law led to the new life (Galatians 2:19)
        - 2. The nature of the new life (Galatians 2:20)
        - 3. The grace of God nullified by law-keeping (Galatians 2:21)
- II. DOCTRINAL: THE EXPOSITION OF JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH (Galatians 3:1-4:31)
  - 1. The elaboration of the doctrine of justification (Galatians 3:1-4:7)
    - a. The nature of justification as by faith, not law (Galatians 3:1-14)
      - i. The inconsistency of their conduct (Galatians 3:1-5)
        - a. The question about their turning from the crucified Christ (Galatians 3:1)
        - b. The question about the beginning of their Christian life (Galatians 3:2)
        - c. The question about their method of perfection (Galatians 3:3)
        - d. The question about their sufferings as believers (Galatians 3:4)
        - e. The question about the basis of God's work among them (Galatians 3:5)
      - ii. The example of Abraham's justification (Galatians 3:6-9)
        - a. The means of Abraham's justification (Galatians 3:6)
        - b. The identity of the sons of Abraham (Galatians 3:7)
        - c. The announcement to Abraham concerning Gentile justification by faith (Galatians 3:8)
        - d. The sharers in the blessings of Abraham (Galatians 3:9)
      - iii. The deliverance from law-works through Christ (Galatians 3:10-14)
        - a. The curse upon those under law-works (Galatians 3:10)
        - b. The inability of law-works to justify (Galatians 3:11-12)
        - c. The deliverance from the curse through Christ (Galatians 3:13-14)
          - 1. The fact of our deliverance through Christ (Galatians 3:13a)
          - 2. The means of our deliverance from the curse (Galatians 3:13b)
          - 3. The purpose in our deliverance from the curse (Galatians 3:14)
    - b. The limitations of the law and its relations to faith (Galatians 3:15-4:7)
      - i. The covenant with Abraham unaltered by the law (Galatians 3:15-18)
        - a. The illustration of a man's covenant as binding (Galatians 3:15)
        - b. The fact illustrated is the divine promise to Abraham (Galatians 3:16)
      - c. The application of the principle of an unalterable covenant (Galatians 3:17-18)
        - 1. The law did not alter the promise (Galatians 3:17)
        - 2. The inheritance is not through law but promise (Galatians 3:18)

- ii. The true place and purpose of the law (Galatians 3:19-29)
  - a. The temporary nature of the law (Galatians 3:19-20)
    - 1. The reason for the adding of the law (Galatians 3:19a)
    - 2. The time limit for the law (Galatians 3:19b)
    - 3. The manner of the establishment of the law (Galatians 3:19c-20)
  - b. The inability of the law to produce life (Galatians 3:21-22)
    - 1. The law not contrary to the promise (Galatians 3:21a)
    - 2. The law unable to produce life (Galatians 3:21b)
    - 3. The Scripture shut up all to faith in Christ (Galatians 3:22)
  - c. The law as a child-leader to Christ with His blessings (Galatians 3:23-29)
    - 1. The old position under law (Galatians 3:23-24)
      - a. The position of confinement under law (Galatians 3:23)
      - b. The function of the law as child-leader to Christ (Galatians 3:24)
    - 2. The new position in Christ (Galatians 3:25-29)
      - a. The nature of the new position (Galatians 3:25-26)
      - b. The entry into the new life (Galatians 3:27)
      - c. The effect of the new life (Galatians 3:28)
      - d. The fulfillment of the promise to Abraham (Galatians 3:29)

### **iii. The contrasted position under law and faith (Galatians 4:1-7)**

- a. The illustration of the position of the heir as a minor (Galatians 4:1-2)
  - b. The application of the illustration to believers (Galatians 4:3-6)
    - 1. The condition of bondage as minors (Galatians 4:3)
    - 2. The position as free sons through God's Son (Galatians 4:4-6)
      - a. The sending of the Son of God (Galatians 4:4-5)
      - b. The sending of the Spirit of God (Galatians 4:6)
    - 3. The conclusion for the believer (Galatians 4:7)
2. The appeal for them to drop their legalism (Galatians 4:8-31)
- a. The acceptance of Jewish legalism is a return to bondage (Galatians 4:8-11)
    - i. Their past condition of bondage (Galatians 4:8)
    - ii. Their present deliverance from bondage (Galatians 4:9a)
    - iii. Their legalism as a return to bondage (Galatians 4:9b-10)
    - iv. Their action a cause of concern to him (Galatians 4:11)
  - b. The appeal from his relations to them (Galatians 4:12-20)
    - i. The appeal for them to adopt his position (Galatians 4:12a)
    - ii. The reminder of his past relations to them (Galatians 4:12b-14)
    - iii. The change in their relation to him (Galatians 4:15-18)
    - iv. The travail he is undergoing for them (Galatians 4:19-20)
  - c. The appeal from the two contrasted covenants (Galatians 4:21-31)
    - i. The question to those desiring to be under law (Galatians 4:21)
    - ii. The story of Abraham's two sons (Galatians 4:22-23)
    - iii. The allegorical interpretation of the story (Galatians 4:24-30)
      - a. The two mothers representing two covenants (Galatians 4:24a)
      - b. The description of the two covenants (Galatians 4:24b-28)
        - 1. The one representing a covenant of bondage (Galatians 4:24b-25)
        - 2. The other representing a covenant of freedom (Galatians 4:26-28)
      - c. The expulsion of the slave woman and her son (Galatians 4:29-30)
    - iv. The conclusion from the story (Galatians 4:31)
- III. PRACTICAL: THE LIFE OF CHRISTIAN LIBERTY (Galatians 5:1-6:10)
- 1. The call to maintain their Christian liberty (Galatians 5:1)
  - 2. The peril to Christian liberty (Galatians 5:2-12)
    - a. The peril to them in circumcision (Galatians 5:2-6)
      - i. The consequences of accepting circumcision (Galatians 5:2-4)
        - a. It renders Christ useless to them (Galatians 5:2)
        - b. It makes a man debtor to do the whole law (Galatians 5:3)
        - c. It severs them from Christ (Galatians 5:4a)
        - d. It constitutes a fall from grace (Galatians 5:4b)
      - ii. The attitude of the true believer (Galatians 5:5-6)

- b. The condemnation of the false teacher (Galatians 5:7-12)
  - i. The explanation for their defection (Galatians 5:7)
  - ii. The characterization of the teaching (Galatians 5:8-9)
  - iii. The condemnation of the one troubling them (Galatians 5:10-12)
    - a. The confidence he has in them (Galatians 5:10a)
    - b. The troubler will bear his judgment (Galatians 5:10b)
    - c. The refutation of charges that he preaches circumcision (Galatians 5:11)
    - d. The wish that these teachers would go to the consistent end (Galatians 5:12)
- 3. The life of Christian liberty (Galatians 5:13-6:10)
  - a. It is directed by love (Galatians 5:13-15)
    - i. The believer called to liberty (Galatians 5:13a)
    - ii. The use of Christian liberty (Galatians 5:13b)
    - iii. The fulfillment of the law through love (Galatians 5:14)
    - iv. The results of the lack of love (Galatians 5:15)
  - b. It is a walk in the Spirit, not in the flesh (Galatians 5:16-25)
    - i. The command to walk by the Spirit (Galatians 5:16)
    - ii. The conflict between the Spirit and the flesh (Galatians 5:17-18)
    - iii. The contrasted products of the flesh and the Spirit (Galatians 5:19-23)
      - a. The works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21)
      - b. The fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23)
    - iv. The persons living by the Spirit (Galatians 5:24-25)
  - c. It is a life of mutual burden-bearing (Galatians 5:26-6:10)
    - i. The burden of moral faults (Galatians 5:26-6:5)
      - a. The warning against wrong attitudes towards others (Galatians 5:26)
      - b. The attitude of humility in restoring the fallen (Galatians 6:1)
      - c. The duty of mutual burden-bearing (Galatians 6:2)
      - d. The proper attitude toward self (Galatians 6:3-5)
    - ii. The burden of temporal needs (Galatians 6:6-10)
      - a. The exhortation to communicate with their teachers (Galatians 6:6)
      - b. The law of the spiritual harvest (Galatians 6:7-8)
      - c. The encouragement to well-doing (Galatians 6:9-10)

#### THE CONCLUSION (Galatians 6:11-17)

- 1. His reference to his large letters (Galatians 6:11)
- 2. His rebuke of his adversaries (Galatians 6:12-13)
- 3. His confidence in the cross (Galatians 6:14-16)
  - a. His glorying only in the cross (Galatians 6:14a)
  - b. His crucifixion through the cross (Galatians 6:14b)
  - c. His evaluation of things through the cross (Galatians 6:15)
  - d. His benediction upon those accepting this principle (Galatians 6:16)
- 4. His marks of apostleship (Galatians 6:17)

#### THE BENEDICTION (Galatians 6:18+)

**Galatians 5:1 It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.**

Phillips Paraphrase - Do not lose your freedom by giving in to those who urge circumcision. Plant your feet firmly therefore within the freedom that Christ has won for us, and do not let yourselves be caught again in the shackles of slavery.

Wuest - For this aforementioned freedom Christ set you free. Keep on standing firm therefore and stop being subject again to a yoke of bondage. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

Amplified - IN [this] freedom Christ has made us free [and completely liberated us]; stand fast then, and do not be hampered and held ensnared and submit again to a yoke of slavery [which you have once put off].

NET Galatians 5:1 For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not be subject again to the

yoke of slavery.

GNT Galatians 5:1 τ ῶς Χριστ ῶς λευθ ῶσεν· στ κετε ο ν κα μ π λιν ζυγ δουλε ας ν χεσθε.

NLT Galatians 5:1 So Christ has truly set us free. Now make sure that you stay free, and don't get tied up again in slavery to the law.

KJV Galatians 5:1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

ESV Galatians 5:1 For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

CSB Galatians 5:1 Christ has liberated us to be free. Stand firm then and don't submit again to a yoke of slavery.

NIV Galatians 5:1 It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

NKJ Galatians 5:1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.

NRS Galatians 5:1 For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

YLT Galatians 5:1 In the freedom, then, with which Christ did make you free -- stand ye, and be not held fast again by a yoke of servitude;

NAB Galatians 5:1 For freedom Christ set us free; so stand firm and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery.

NJB Galatians 5:1 Christ set us free, so that we should remain free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be fastened again to the yoke of slavery.

GWN Galatians 5:1 Christ has freed us so that we may enjoy the benefits of freedom. Therefore, be firm in this freedom, and don't become slaves again.

BBE Galatians 5:1 Christ has truly made us free: then keep y our free condition and let no man put a yoke on you again.

- **keep standing firm:** Pr 23:23 1Co 15:58 1 Cor 16:13 Eph 6:14 Php 1:27 1Th 3:8 2Th 2:15 Heb 3:6,14 Heb 4:14 Heb 10:23,35-39 Jude 1:3,20,21 Rev 2:25 3:3
- **freedom:** Ga 5:13 Gal 2:4 Gal 3:25 Gal 4:26,31 Ps 51:12 Isa 61:1 Mt 11:28-30 Jn 8:32-36 Ro 6:14,18 Ro 7:3,6 Ro 8:2 1Co 7:22 2Co 3:17 1Pe 2:16 2Pe 2:19
- **do not be subject again:** Ga 2:4 4:9 Mt 23:4 Ac 15:10 Col 2:16-22 Heb 9:8-11
- Dear saint free in Christ, take a moment and listen to this song by Jessa Myer [Freedom \(Galatians Song\)](#)"
- [Galatians 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## FREED BY CHRIST TO BE FREE

This **heading** sounds redundant at first reading, but it is not, for it serves as a necessary reminder to all believers, because our mortal bodies still harbor [the fallen flesh](#), that indwelling power which continually tries to deceive us into believing that we can live the "Christ life" in our own strength by keeping certain rules! I've got news -- we cannot live the life of freedom in Christ in dependence on ourselves but ONLY in continual, daily, moment by moment utter and total dependence on the supernatural enabling power of the indwelling Spirit of Jesus (Acts 16:7+)!

After explaining that the Galatians were not children of the bondwoman Hagar but children of the free woman Sarah, children of promise (Gal 4:28+), now Paul calls on the Galatian believers to live free in Christ by the power supplied by the Spirit of Christ (Ro 8:9+). Believers have been rescued (Col 1:13+), purchased out of the slave market with the payment of Christ's precious blood (cf Rev 5:9+, Rev 14:4+, 1 Pe 1:18,19+, 1 Cor 6:19, 20+, 1 Cor 7:23, Eph 1:7+, Titus 2:14+, Mt 20:28), and set free by the work of Christ and thus should continually walk in the light (1 Jn 1:7+) of the costly freedom that Christ purchased for us on Calvary's Tree.

Keep the context of the letter in mind (see also charts above) -

- Galatians 1-2 Paul Defended his apostleship - this is Paul's personal testimony that justification is by faith alone in Christ alone independent of human works. This is therefore a more personal and experiential defense of the Gospel of grace.
- Galatians 3-4 Paul Defended Justification by Faith Alone - This is Paul's Biblical defense of justification by faith based even on the Old Testament. This is a more doctrinal or theological defense based on the Word of God, God's "testimony" if you will.
- Galatians 5-6 Paul Defends the Normal Christian Life - Paul demonstrates that justification is true because of the moral transformation that it brings about in believers by virtue of the Holy Spirit.

In short, the normal Christian life is a life of liberty, lived through the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit and for the glory and honor of God. This was not a new teaching for in his second letter to the saints at Corinth Paul wrote

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty ([eleutheria](#) - also Gal 5:1, 13). (2 Corinthians 3:17)

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is present, there is freedom. (2Co 3:17NET)

Now we get to the more difficult part. I have spent several days meditating on Galatians 5:1-4 and reading numerous commentaries and sermons. I initially thought that Paul's statement "fallen from grace," was the most difficult and controversial phrase, but have discovered the difficulty is much more involved. Paul actually warns of 4 serious consequences for anyone who receives circumcision thinking it adds to their salvation. As explained below, he is not speaking of the neutral act of physical circumcision (even he had undergone circumcision), but he is speaking of circumcision as a meritorious work, a work of the flesh which was carried out to gain God's favor and to attain righteousness. Because this error is so serious, Paul gave 4 very sobering warnings to any person who would seek to be circumcised in order to obtain righteousness. Here are the 4 consequences:

1. Christ will be of no benefit to you - Gal 5:2
2. One obligates himself to keep the whole law - Gal 5:3
3. One has been severed from Christ - Gal 5:4
4. One has fallen from grace - Gal 5:4

## WHO IS PAUL ADDRESSING? BELIEVERS OR UNBELIEVERS OR BOTH?

Now here is where the interpretation becomes a bit "tricky." How one interprets these 4 serious consequences depends on who they feel was the intended audience - believers, unbelievers, mixed group? Most commentators feel that these warnings were directed to believers, those who had already been saved by grace through faith and thus were eternally secure in Christ. A few like John MacArthur feel that Paul was addressing a mixed group. And so **MacArthur** writes that "Paul had gone to Galatia, planted churches in a number of cities, and churches were flourishing. They had heard the gospel, believed the gospel. They had been justified."

So clearly **Dr MacArthur** sees some of these Galatians as genuine believers. Then along came the Judaizers who taught that faith alone in Christ alone was not sufficient for salvation, but that they also had to receive circumcision (and by implication keep the external aspects of Mosaic Law including rituals and ceremonies, etc). In other words the Judaizers were preaching salvation by faith plus works, and without the works (in context of Gal 5 specifically circumcision) the Gentiles could not be justified. MacArthur goes on to point out the pronoun "**you**" in Gal 5:2 and Gal 5:4 and he explains that "Paul is talking to someone, '**you**,' someone is a group that he's not a part of, because in Gal 5:5, he begins, '**For we**.'" It's very important that you see that distinction....There are people in this Gentile congregation who on the surface have come to understand the gospel, have to some degree accepted the truthfulness of it, but they are in danger of coming to the brink of salvation and turning away, and heading in the direction of law. Some of them had already made some moves." So MacArthur feels that some of the Galatian readers were not yet born again and for them Paul's warnings are very crucial. MacArthur goes on "If you get yourselves circumcised" – and this indicates that they hadn't yet gone this far – "if you do this, if you've come to the brink of salvation by faith and you turn and go the way of law, Christ is of no benefit. You've canceled Christ." This is a severe danger. This is a shocking statement. Somebody might say, "Well, I believe in Christ, but I also think works are a part of it." You've just canceled Christ. Christ is no benefit to you. There is no hybrid salvation. If you accept circumcision, thinking it necessary for your salvation, you just forfeited Christ....You say, "Well, can't you believe in some in your baptism, in your works, and the things that you do, the rituals that you go to, and your morality, and also believe in Christ?" No, no. If you're counting on any of that for your salvation you are severed from Christ. That is a violent word, a violent word. You are cut off from Him....Gal 5:5, notice the change in pronouns: "**For we**...." **Now he's speaking to believers, including himself.**" ([See full sermon](#))



**James Montgomery Boice** - "Before plunging into this third section of his letter, Paul interjects a verse that is at once a summary of all that has gone before and a transition to what follows. It is, in fact, the key verse of the entire Epistle. Because of the nature of the true gospel and of the work of Christ on his behalf, the believer is now to turn away from anything that smacks of legalism and instead rest in Christ's triumphant work for him and live in the power of Christ's Spirit. . . . The appeal is for an obstinate perseverance in freedom as the only proper response to an attempt to bring Christians once more under legalism." ([Expositor's Bible Commentary - 1976](#))

**MacArthur** introduces this section - Paul now applies that doctrine to practical Christian living (chaps. 5-6), emphasizing that right doctrine should result in right living. His subject is the sanctification that should result from justification. The life of genuine faith is more than the belief in divine truth; it is also the bearing of divine fruit. Especially in chapter 5 (Gal 5:5, 16-18, 25), the apostle emphasizes the personal ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer, without which genuine Christian living would be impossible. It is the Holy Spirit Who makes the life of faith work (cf Ezek 36:37+). Were it not for the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, the life of faith would be no more spiritually productive or acceptable to God than the life of law. The freedom for which Christ sets us free (Gal 5:1) is the freedom to live a life of righteousness in the power of the Holy Spirit. God's standard of holiness has not changed. As Jesus makes clear in the Sermon on the Mount, it requires not simply outward performance but inner perfection. Through His Holy Spirit, believers have the ability to live internal lives of righteousness. The final two chapters of Galatians are a portrait of the Spirit-filled life, of the believer's implementing the life of faith under the control and in the energy of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit-filled life thereby becomes in itself a powerful testimony to the power of justification by faith. ([MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Galatians](#))

**Jack Arnold's** introduction - Anybody who knows anything about the American Revolution knows the famous words of Patrick Henry: "Give me liberty or give me death!" Patrick Henry would have rather died than give up his civil liberties. He took a stand for liberty, believing with all his heart that death would be better than living under the bondage of British rule. Yet there is a liberty far more important than political liberty and that is the liberty of the soul. Liberty of the heart, mind, conscience, spirit and will from the bondage of law, works, sin, death and hell, and this is what the Apostle Paul is talking about in this section of scripture. Chapters five and six of Galatians deals with grace and sanctification (Christian living). It is not enough to know the doctrine of grace but it must be experienced in one's life. The legalistic teaching of the Judaizers had so penetrated the thinking of the Galatians that it was affecting the way they lived. Right doctrine brings right living and wrong doctrine brings wrong living. These Galatians, instead of trusting in the indwelling Holy Spirit to produce righteousness in them were trying to produce righteousness by depending upon self-effort through keeping of the Mosaic Law. The power for living the Christian life is not found in the Mosaic Law but in the Holy Spirit, and the Galatians were exhorted to put themselves under the Spirit's control. ([Liberty Not Legalism](#))

**Hansen** (IVP NT Commentary - Acts) - This declaration of our freedom is both a statement of an accomplished fact and a goal to pursue. Freedom is ours because of the accomplishment of Christ: Christ has set us free! Paul does not appeal to his readers to fight to be free. Our Christian freedom is not the result of our long march. We have not liberated ourselves by our efforts. We are not able to do so. But now that freedom has been given to us by Christ, that freedom is our goal and our responsibility. Imagine a prisoner who is suddenly surprised to find out that he has been pardoned and set free. He did nothing to accomplish this. He was not even aware that it had happened. But there he stands outside the prison walls, a free man. Now it is his responsibility to live as a free man. Charles Wesley captures the Christian experience of this liberation in one of his great hymns:

[Long my imprisoned spirit lay](#)

Fast bound in sin and nature's night;  
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray,  
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light.  
My chains fell off, my heart was free;  
I rose, went forth, and followed thee.

**McGee** sums up Galatians 5 - Sanctification by the Spirit; saved by faith and living by law perpetrates falling from grace; saved by faith and walking in the Spirit produces fruit of the Spirit...We come now to the practical side, which is sanctification by the Spirit. Justification is by faith; sanctification is by the Spirit of God....The method of sanctification is by the Spirit. In this section we see the Spirit versus the flesh. Either it is a do-it-yourself Christian life or somebody else will have to do it through you. His method is doing it through you. In this section we see liberty versus bondage. Any legal system puts you under bondage, and you have to follow it meticulously. ([Galatians 5](#))

**M R De Haan** points out that "the last word of the doctrinal section of Galatians (GALATIANS 3-4), FREE! FREE! **ΕΔ**: The very last word in Greek of Gal 4:31+ is [eleutheros](#) = FREE). The believer is free, set at liberty, delivered. Salvation by grace means deliverance and freedom. There is no bondage for those who are in Christ. Now as we shall see, liberty does not mean license to sin; freedom does not mean we are not accountable for our conduct." ([Studies in Galatians](#))

And then the first words here in Gal 5:1 are "[te eleutheria](#)" literally "**the freedom**." So Gal 4:31 ends with "**free**" and Paul immediately and emphatically repeats "**the freedom**," which has just been described in comparing the offspring of Hagar (the bondswoman) and Sarah (the free woman), the former not free, the latter free. And so Kenneth Wuest in his excellent paraphrase links the end of Galatians 4 with the beginning of Galatians 5...

**For this aforementioned freedom** (Gal 4:31), Christ set us free. Keep on standing firm therefore, and stop being held again by a yoke of bondage.

**Donald Campbell** on Galatians 5:1 - This verse summarizes chapter 4, where the theme is bondage and freedom. It also serves to introduce chapter 5. (Bible Knowledge Commentary)

**Swindoll** - We might translate this opening phrase this way: "To liberty Christ has liberated us." You see, Christ didn't set us free without purpose or to no end. Nor did He set us free so we could enslave ourselves to the nearest legalist or embark on a wild frenzy of immorality. Christ set us free so we could bask in the benefits of His salvation, living out our freedom in Christ without guilt or condemnation. This freedom offers us a new lifestyle. Now we have the ability to live by the Spirit's power. We're free to obey God and do His will joyfully. We can love and serve others. We're able to enter into the Lord's presence through prayer, experiencing a close, personal relationship with Him. Before salvation, we couldn't take advantage of any of these benefits. We were penniless, pathetic slaves to sin. But now, as wealthy freedmen and women, we can enjoy them to the fullest. Christ has set us free so that we may enjoy our freedom. ([Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary – Galatians](#))

**Todd Wilson- Legalism** is treating that which is good as though it were essential. Whenever Christians turn something valuable into something ultimate, legalism is at work and freedom is forfeited. On the other hand, we preserve our freedom in Christ when what is essential to God is essential to us, and everything else is kept in its place. ([Preaching the Word – Galatians: Gospel-Rooted Living](#))

**John Stott** writes "Our former state is portrayed as a slavery, Jesus Christ as a liberator, conversion as an act of emancipation and the Christian life as a life of freedom." How would you describe your life today? Are you truly living in the freedom found only in Christ Jesus? Paul is writing to tell you that you can because the Son has set you free, so you are free indeed!

## **NO LONGER SLAVES FREE FROM THE LAW**

**It was for freedom that Christ set us free**- "So Christ has truly set us free." (NLT) "Christ has freed us so that we may enjoy the benefits of freedom." (GWT) Christ set us free in order for us to be free. He freed us in order that we should have this freedom and maintain, exercise, and enjoy it, not lose it. Notice Paul's pronoun "us" referring to himself and the believers in Galatia. The implication is He set us free to stay free. For the Gentile believers they had just been rescued from slavery to sin, death, and the devil. Now they are being tempted by the Judaizers to go back into slavery, in this context, primarily slavery to the Law.

It is notable that the phrase "**for freedom**" was actually used in ancient times in a formal ceremonious setting in which literal slaves were set free from their former masters and from anyone who might attempt to force them back into slavery. This background would be especially applicable to Gentile believers who Christ had set free "**for freedom**" (same phrase) and from those who would then attempt to "**compel the Gentiles to live like Jews**." (Gal 2:14+).

The question arises, **freedom** from what? To be set free indicates one had been previously bound or enslaved. In spiritual terms every human being ever born is born a slave to **Sin, death and the devil**. These enemies are briefly mentioned below, but in Galatians **Paul's primary focus is freedom from the LAW**, freedom from the false idea that the Law is a way of salvation, freedom from the Law's condemnation and freedom from the Law as a rule of life.

All human beings still "in Adam" (1 Cor 15:22) are slaves to the dominating power of **Sin** (personified as a "King" or "Master" as in Ro 6:12-13+) and subject to the ruler of this world system, the Devil! (See [Sin "personified" as a "King"](#)). This freedom in Christ includes freedom from sin's power and sin's penalty.

In Romans 8 after declaring that "there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Ro 8:1+), Paul goes on to explain that

"the law (principle) of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (WHERE IS TRUE LIFE, TRUE FREEDOM?) **has set you free** ([eleutheroo](#)) from the law (principle) of **Sin** and of **death**. For what the **LAW** could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the **LAW** might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. (Ro 8:2-4+)

Paul describes the believer's freedom from **Sin** and **death** in 1 Corinthians writing...

O **DEATH**, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O **DEATH**, WHERE IS YOUR STING?" The sting of **death** is sin, and the power of sin is the law. but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Cor 15:55-57)

**Comment** - In other words Christ's "victory" over sin and death set us free from those enemies, for as believers we are now forever safely in covenant with Christ. And why is **Law** the **power of sin**? Because as Paul explains in Ro 7:5+ "the sinful passions" are aroused by the Law. The Law stirs up the [lusts of Sin](#) for Paul explains "sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead." (cf Ro 7:8+). Can you see the practical application of this principle? When you begin to vainly try to live the Christ life by placing yourself under some rule, guideline, regulation, etc, you have just in essence placed yourself under (subject to) the Law and the effect is to stir up your [old flesh nature](#) to commit sin. Beware! This can be very subtle, but it is an immutable principle! How many times have you seen a sign "WET PAINT. DO NOT TOUCH!" and something in you just had to touch it to see if it really was wet! That's the Law stirring up [the fallen flesh](#). But if you are filled with (controlled by) His Spirit (Eph 5:18+), walking by His Spirit, then His Spirit will overpower your [flesh](#) and enable you to walk on by without touching the paint! (see Gal 5:16). And so you keep on walking in the freedom in Christ Who set you free and you will not fulfill the desire of the [flesh](#)!

In Romans 6:14+ Paul writes...

For [Sin](#) shall not be master ([kurieuo](#) - "lord") over you, for you are not [under](#) (the enslaving power of) **LAW** but [under](#) (the transforming power of) grace.

In **Romans 7** Paul writes that the saints are to have nothing more to do with the Law writing

"But now (contrast with Ro 7:5+) **we have been released** ([katargeo](#)) **from the LAW**, having died to that by which we were bound ([katecho](#) = held fast), so that we serve in newness ([kainotes](#)) of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter (THE OLD WRITTEN CODE OF THE LAW)." (Ro 7:6+)

The **writer of Hebrews** describes the believer's liberation from enslavement to the devil and the fear of death...

Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He (JESUS CHRIST) Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He **might render powerless** ([katargeo](#) same verb used in Ro 6:6+ where "our body of [Sin](#) might be done away with") him who had the power of **death**, that is, the **devil** ([diabolos](#)), and might free ([apallasso](#) - release, liberate from a controlling state) those who through fear of death were subject ([enochos](#) from [enecho](#) [used below - "be subject"] - in spiritual bondage, under the control of) to slavery ([douleia](#)) all their lives. (Hebrews 2:14-15+)

**Comment** - The Greek word for **slavery** ([douleia](#)) describes that state of man in which he/she is prevented from freely possessing and enjoying his/her life and thus is a state opposed to the liberty or freedom which is found only in Christ.

In **Colossians** Paul writes

For He rescued ([rhuomai](#) - snatched to Himself from danger) us from the domain ([exousia](#) = the right and the might) of darkness (DEVIL), and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son (UNDER WHOSE DOMAIN WE HAVE FREEDOM NOW AND FOREVER) (Col 1:13+)

Compare **Paul's exhortation to Timothy** describing the liberating power of teaching the Word of Truth to those who are enslaved to the devil

With gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and **escape from the snare** ([pagis](#)) **of the devil** (OBTAINING FREEDOM IN CHRIST), **having been held captive** ([zogreo](#) = taken and held by the devil as his prisoner of war and under control) **by him** to do his will.(see 2 Ti 2:25, 26+, cf Jn 8:44, 1 Jn 5:19+)

Finally **John** describes the **freedom** believers have not only over the **devil** but over the power of **sin**...

the one who practices ([present tense](#) = habitually, not occasionally) sin is of the devil (THE DEVIL IS HIS FATHER, HIS MASTER); for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God (JESUS CHRIST) appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil (TO SET FREE THOSE IN BONDAGE TO THE DEVIL). No one who is born of God (TRUE BELIEVERS) practices ([present tense](#) = habitually) sin, because His seed (JESUS CHRIST) abides in him; and he cannot (([present tense](#) = continually) sin, because he is born

of God. (1 John 3:8-9<sup>+</sup>)

Here is a summary of the **Freedom** in which Christ set us free as Paul has described in the letter to the Galatians:

(Gal 1:4+) Who (CHRIST) gave Himself for (SUBSTITUTION FOR) our sins so that (PURPOSE) He might rescue ([exaireo](#) - pluck out, deliver from danger) us from this present evil age (WORD SYSTEM DOMINATED BY **DEVIL**), according to the will of our God and Father,

(Gal 2:20+) "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live (THE RULING POWER IN MY LIFE IS NO LONGER **SIN** - I HAVE BEEN SET FREE!), but Christ lives in me (THIS IS FREEDOM); and the life which I now live in the (PHYSICAL) flesh I live by faith in the Son of God (HOW TO LIVE FREE - BY FAITH IN JESUS), Who loved me and gave Himself up for (AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR) me.

(Gal 3:13+) Christ redeemed ([exagorazo](#)) us from the curse of the Law (OUR ENEMY **DEATH**), having become a curse for us—for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE"—

(Gal 4:4-5+) But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem ([exagorazo](#)) those who were under ([hupo](#) = signifies subject to the power of) the **Law**, that we might receive the adoption as sons (NO LONGER SLAVES BUT FREE SONS).

So from the letter to the Galatians we can see what Christ has done to set us free, so that we might be free indeed...

(1) We are rescued "from this present evil age,"

(2) We have been crucified with Christ so that we are saved from having to live according to our fallen flesh nature.

(3) We are redeemed from the curse of the Law which brings eternal death.

(4) We are redeemed from bondage to the Law

Now ponder the preceding passages and the list of Christ's accomplishments on our behalf and ask yourself, why would I ever want to go back under the Law in a vain attempt to please God or make myself more "spiritual?" But such is the persistent pleading of our fallen flesh. Every morning we awake, you can be assured that our fallen flesh is already "wide awake" and seeking some seductive temptation to draw us away from our freedom in Christ Whose Spirit enables us to "walk in newness ([kainotes](#) = EXTRAORDINARILY BRAND NEW, A NEVER BEFORE EXPERIENCED QUALITY) of life." (Ro 6:4<sup>+</sup>)

## THE BELIEVER'S DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

**Duncan** explains that "there were enemies of freedom in Galatia, who were troubling the believers there, confusing them about the Law and trying to bring them under it. So Paul must defend our freedom in these last chapters of the book. He has been doing that all through the book. Galatians is, as it has been called, a fighting epistle from beginning to end. And Paul takes up the fight for our freedom here at the beginning of chapter 5 by first declaring the fact of our freedom and then commanding the Galatians to stand firmly in it. He begins with a **declaration of our independence**." ([Sermon](#))

**MacArthur** asks "What kind of freedom is it? Well, it's freedom from the burden of sin, freedom from relentless guilt, freedom from an accusing conscience, freedom from the tyranny of our transgressions, freedom from the terrible pressure and frustration of trying to be something other than you can be, freedom from — in a word — "sin's dominance." "You've been set free, set free. And now don't go back into some kind of bondage."" ([Sermon](#))

The Greek word for **freedom** (eleutheria) was a technical phrase from a legal document in Paul's day for freeing a slave and thus Paul continues his illustration of being purchased from the slave market and then being given complete freedom in Roman society. When Christ purchased us from spiritual slavery, He did not do it in order to bring us into another form of bondage. It was for freedom that He purchased us and set us free!

**Freedom** (liberty) ([1657](#))([eleutheria](#) from **eleutheros** = that which is capable of movement, freedom to go wherever one likes, unfettered; see verb [eleutheroo](#)) describes the state of being free and stands in opposition to slavery or bondage. Eleutheria is used 3x in Galatians - Gal 2:4, Gal 5:1, Gal 5:13. The adjective eleutheros was used literally of becoming a Roman citizen and figuratively of becoming free in Christ to live in the power of His Spirit regardless of the circumstances.

**THOUGHT** - So Paul's great emphasis in this book is the believer's freedom from the Law. This does not mean to live a lawless life as some falsely propose. Genuine spiritual freedom in Christ is not the ability to do what we please, but the power to do what we ought and in so doing to please God!

**Eleutheria** refers to personal liberty but not license. The deceiving (and deceived - see 2Ti 3:13+) false teacher promise their listeners the freedom to live as they please. To the contrary, true liberty is living as we should not living as we please. Eleutheria was used especially Paul's day to describe the freeing of literal slaves.

Here are other uses of **eleutheria** that help shed some light on Galatians 5:1

(2 Co. 3:17) Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is **liberty**.

(Gal 2:4) But it was because of the false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our **liberty** which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage.

(Gal. 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.

(Jas. 1:25) But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of **liberty**, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.

(Jas. 2:12) So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of **liberty**.

(1 Pet. 2:16) Act as free men, and do not use your **freedom** as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God.

(2 Pet. 2:19) promising them **freedom** while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved.

**Chuck Swindoll** has an excellent illustration of the meaning of the word **eleutheria**

"Back in the nineteenth century our sixteenth president realized something radical must be done about slavery in our country. Unwilling to look the other way any longer, on September 22, 1862, he presented what came to be known as the [Emancipation Proclamation](#), an official document condemning human slavery. Abraham Lincoln, realizing that slavery is completely against human dignity, officially abolished it from the United States on that day. Tragically, little changed in the daily life of our nation, even though the slaves were officially declared free. You know why; you've read the stories. The Civil War was still going on. **The plantation owners never informed their slaves. The vast majority of the former slaves couldn't read, so they had no idea what the news was carrying.** There was no mass media then to announce those kinds of presidential pronouncements. And so for the longest time, slavery continued even though it had been officially brought to an end. The war ended in April 1865. Do you know when Lincoln's declaration was officially enacted? **When the people finally began to leave their enslaved lives and make their way toward freedom? December 18, 1865—more than three years after he first released his proclamation.** Lincoln had been dead for months. The word traveled out of the streets of Washington and down into the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, across the back roads of the Carolinas and into Georgia, then Alabama, then Mississippi, then Louisiana, then Texas, then Arkansas, announcing what had been true for more than a thousand days. **Even then the word somehow either wasn't believed or wasn't acted upon. Those officially emancipated people, thinking slavery was the way they were condemned to exist, continued to live in bondage though they had been declared free men and women since the fall of 1862.** ([Embraced by the Spirit The Untold Blessings of Intimacy with God - 2011](#))

**Gromacki:** "After the Civil War a great majority of the slaves became sharecroppers. Although they were free, they did not enjoy their freedom. In some cases they were worse off than before. Under the influence of the Judaizers, the Galatians were beginning to find themselves in a similar situation. Set free by the great emancipator of the soul, Jesus Christ, they soon were acquiescing to the demands of the legalists. The apostle wanted them to take a stand, to act like free men, not like slaves."

**Set us free** (1659) (**eleutheroo** = the ending "-oo" means not only will it be set free but it will be seen as set free) means to cause someone to be freed from domination. The picture is that of the **emancipation of slaves**. The idea is that the one set free is at liberty, capable of movement, exempt from obligation or liability, and unfettered. Although the act of setting free results in freedom and liberty we must understand that this new freedom is not a license to sin. In fact true liberty for the believer is now living as we should and not as we please.

**POSB** - When a person believes in Jesus Christ, he is freed from the law and its enslaving power. He no longer has to worry if he is good enough or if he has done enough good works or kept enough laws to be acceptable to God. Why? Because Christ has fulfilled the law for him (Ro 8:3-4). (The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible – Galatians)



## PAUL ISSUES

### TWO COMMANDS

**Therefore** - This is a crucial term of conclusion. Since Christ has set us free for freedom, Paul gives his desired conclusion in the form of two commands, first a positive command and then a negative command.

**Hansen** points out that "That [indicative](#) ("It was for freedom that Christ set us free") is followed by an [imperative](#), **Stand firm**, then. This may sound like a dull lesson in grammar, but it is actually central in Pauline ethics. What we must do (the [imperative](#)) is always based upon what God has already done (the [indicative](#)). Or to put it another way, what God has done gives us the opportunity and power to do what we must do. This indicative-imperative structure is seen here in verse Galatians 5:1 and also in verses Galatians 5:13 and Galatians 5:25." ([The IVP New Testament Commentary Series – Galatians](#))

**John Stott** on **standing firm** - We must not lapse into the idea that we have to win our acceptance with God by our own obedience.

**J B Phillips** has an interesting paraphrase - "Plant your feet firmly therefore within the freedom that Christ has won for us, and do not let yourselves be caught again in the shackles of slavery."

**Spurgeon** - God grant us grace to keep to grace! God grant us faith enough to live by faith, even to the end, as the freeborn children of God, for His name's sake! Amen.

**Keep standing firm** - This is a command in the [present imperative](#) calling for the Galatian believers to make this their lifestyle, their daily, habitual practice. As with all of the only NT commands, they needed to be aware (and we do too) that they cannot keep these commands by relying on their own strength. The only possible way to successfully obey Paul's command is not by relying on self, but by continually relying wholly on the Holy Spirit to supernaturally enable them (and us) to obey this supernatural command! And Paul practiced what he preached for he had stood firm in Gal 2:3-5 and did not give in to their pressure to make Titus, a Gentile convert, a Jew by circumcision declaring "we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel would remain with you." (Gal 2:5+).

#### Related Resource:

- [Discussion of our Need for the Holy Spirit to obey the NT commands](#) (or "How to Keep All 1642 Commandments in the New Testament!")

**Keep standing firm** (4739) ([steko](#)) can mean to **stand** literally (Mk 11:25) but 9/10 NT use **steko** figuratively calling for saints to stand firm in faith, to be constant, to persevere, to remain steadfast. In Jn 8:44 Jesus uses **steko** in a negative sense describing the fact that the devil absolutely does not **stand** in the truth. Below are 4 of Paul's other uses of **steko**. It is worth noting that 2 of these exhortations (1 Th 3:8, Php 4:1) call for the saints to stand firm in the sphere of the Lord, in His Name, in His power (and as we have proposed this predicates that we are relying on the Spirit of Christ for supernatural power to stand firm!).

(1 Th 3:8+) for now we really live, if you **stand firm** ([steko](#)) in the Lord.

(Phil. 1:27+) Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are **standing firm** in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;

(Phil. 4:1+) Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and crown, in this way **stand firm** ([present imperative](#)) in the Lord, my beloved.

(2 Th 2:15) So then, brethren, **stand firm** and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us.

Paul used this same verb [steko](#) in the closing section of his first letter to the saints at Corinth giving them 4 "staccato like" commands each in the [present imperative](#).

**Be on the alert** ([gregoreuo](#)), **stand firm** ([steko](#)) in the faith, **act like men** ([andrizomai](#)), **be strong** ([krataioo](#)).

(1 Cor 16:13)

**Paul** explained earlier the danger to which the believers in Galatia were vulnerable writing that "it was because of the false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in ([pareisaktos](#)) to spy out our **liberty** (same word [eleutheria](#) translated "freedom" in Gal 5:1) which we have in Christ Jesus, in order ([term of purpose](#) = THIS IS THEIR EVIL PURPOSE!) to **bring us into bondage** ([katadouloo](#))."  
(Gal 2:4+) In other words these "spiritual spies" snuck into the fellowship and sought to bring the believers back into slavery under the Law, the very thing from which Christ had liberated them!

**John MacArthur** writes "The spiritual descendants of Sarah and Isaac should live as they lived, **by faith**. "By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised" (Heb. 11:11+), and "**by faith** Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even regarding things to come" (Heb. 11:20+)." ([MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Galatians](#))

## **DON'T BE ENTANGLED AGAIN IN A LEGALISTIC YOKE**

**And do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery** (cf Acts 15:10+) - Think of how ridiculous it would be to see a mule that had been unhitched from pulling a plow to attempt to get back up under that yoke! Christ had set the Galatians free from a **yoke of slavery**, the "yoke" of the Old Testament law they considered to be the means of justification. Notice the time phrase **again**" (palin) indicating that this was in fact their and our condition before faith in Christ and His Gospel of Grace set us all free. "At one time we were under the yoke of the law, burdened by its demands which we could not meet and by its fearful condemnation because of our disobedience. But Christ met the demands of the law for us. He died for our disobedience and thus bore our condemnation in our place. He has 'redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us' (Gal 3:13). And now He has struck the yoke from our shoulder and set us free to stand upright. How" (Stott)

Why would we ever want to go back under the cruel yoke of spiritual bondage by seeking to obey the Law? And so Paul gives a second command in the [present imperative](#) (see [note above about how to keep this command](#)) this time modified by the negative particle ("*me*") which can be paraphrased, "stop being subjected or being entangled." It can also mean don't let this entanglement begin.

**Hansen** - The yoke of the law is a **yoke of slavery**, because it places us under the burden of commandments we cannot keep and under curses that we deserve for our disobedience. But God sent his Son to lift this heavy yoke from our shoulders and to take it upon himself: he was "born under law" (Galatians 4:4) and kept all its demands for us; he died under the curse of the law for us (Galatians 3:13). ([The IVP New Testament Commentary Series – Galatians](#))

**Jack Arnold** - Once a Christian gets into any legalistic system it is very hard to get out. Legalism is adding anything to salvation or spirituality, which scripturally is purely by grace through faith in Christ. Legalism brings pride, frustration and indifference to the Christian life. I do not believe Paul is saying it is wrong to use the moral law of the Old Testament as a guide for living or even a rule of conduct, as long as it is not used as a ground of acceptance with God, a means of salvation or a basis of spirituality. ([Liberty Not Legalism](#))

This is Paul's fourth and final metaphorical description of the Law - notice that #'s 1-2 are the positive effects the Law as it leads us to believe in Christ and experience spiritual freedom. #'s 3-4 are both negative effects and describe the enslaving effect of the Law.

1. Tutor in Gal 3:24,
2. Guardian in Gal 4:2
3. Bondwoman in Gal 4:22ff
4. A yoke of slavery Gal 5:1

**Be subject** (1758) (**enecho** from **en** = in + **echo** = to hold) means literally to hold in or hold upon and came to mean ensnare and then by implication to hold a grudge. In the passive voice as here in Gal 5:1 **enecho** means to be held in or by anything, and figuratively means to be entangled, in this context entangled by the "spiritual chains" from which they had been set free.

## **BE SUBJECT TO THE BEST YOKE!**

**Yoke** (2218) (**zugos or zygos**) literally was a crossbeam or crossbar. In farming, the yoke referred to a wooden bar which went over the neck of two animals and had collars that enabled them to pull together. Figuratively **zygos** spoke of "slavery, service, and control by someone else over your life; it may also represent willing service and submission to someone else. When God delivered Israel from Egyptian servitude, it was the breaking of a yoke (Lev. 26:13+). The farmer uses the yoke to control and guide his oxen, because they would not willingly serve if they were free." ([Wiersbe - Galatians](#))

The Jews referred to the "**yoke of the law**" (aka, "the yoke of the commandments," or "the yoke of the kingdom of heaven") as a good thing, which they falsely taught was the essence of "true religion." Think about the irony of the Jews referring to the Law as yoke, but being blind to the fact that they were enslaved by that **yoke**! In this passage Paul argued that for those who pursued

attempting to keep the Law would discover that the Law would actually become a **yoke of slavery**.

**Spurgeon** - "You are not under the law, but under grace. Do not subject yourselves, therefore, to legal principles. Do not live as if you were working for wages and were earning your own salvation. Do not submit yourselves to the ritual and commandments of men, **which would rob you of your liberty in many ways**. But having once become free men, never again wear the chain of a slave: 'Stand fast therefore in the liberty with which Christ has made us free.' Because you are the seed of Isaac, who was born according to the promise, you are not the children of the bondwoman; you are not Ishmaelites. Therefore, as you were born free, as Christ has made you free by virtue of your new birth, stand fast in that glorious liberty."

**Spurgeon** writes "It may seem remarkable that Paul, who was once the strictest of Pharisees, should become the most ardent champion of the doctrines of salvation by grace and justification by faith...Did not the Lord show great wisdom in selecting as the chief advocate of this truth a man who knew the other side, who had wrought diligently under the Law, who had practiced every ceremony, who was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and had profited above many under the Jews' religion, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of the fathers? He would know right well the bondage of the old system, and having felt its iron enter into his soul, he would the more highly prize the liberty wherewith Christ makes men free...The Lord, therefore, sent this mighty man of valor, this Saul the Benjamite, head and shoulders taller than his fellows, of sound heart and decided purpose and devout spirit, to wage war with the adversaries of free grace. ( "[Salvation by Faith and the Work of the Spirit](#)", Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 21:205-206, sermon 1228)

**Phillip Ryken** has a picturesque comment explaining that Paul "recognized that his people had become beasts of burden. They were so loaded down with the law that they couldn't even stand up straight. How could the Galatians take a firm stand for freedom when they, too, were doubled over by the yoke of the law? (Reformed Expository Commentary - Galatians)

And so in Gal 5:1 Paul uses zygos in a negative sense to picture the binding burden of the Law. The irony is that **zygos** has a positive meaning in Christ's famous invitation...

**Come** to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest (THE JEWS WERE WEARY OF TRYING TO KEEP EVERY MINISCULE DETAIL OF THE LAW AS ADVOCATED BY THE LEGALISTIC PHARISEES). **Take** My **yoke** upon you and **learn** from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For My **yoke** is easy (KIND, GRACIOUS) and My burden is light. (Mt 11:28-30<sup>±</sup>)

**Comment** - What is the **yoke** in context of Mt 11:29? Is it not His teaching, His teaching which is calculated to make disciples? To "**take a yoke**" in Jesus' day meant to become a disciple. When we submit ourselves voluntarily, willingly and wholly to Jesus Christ, we are yoked to Him. And instead of the enslaving yoke of the Law, we experience the liberating yoke of Christ! In fact, all believers have become eternally "yoked" to Christ the moment they entered the New Covenant in His blood by grace through faith.

Because Christ freely gives us **grace**, His yoke is easy and His burden "light". While the yoke of the Law enslaves us, the yoke of Christ frees us to fulfill His will and please His Father. What a wonderful **yoke grace** is compared to the pharisaical **yoke of the Law** that only weighs "men down with burdens hard to bear" (Luke 11:46+). Christ does not merely "touch the load with one of His fingers", but He shoulders it completely!

**Wiersbe** - The unsaved person wears a yoke of sin (Lam. 1:14); the religious legalist wears the yoke of bondage (Gal. 5:1); but the Christian who depends on God's grace wears the liberating yoke of Christ....To go back to Law is to become entangled in a maze of "do's and don'ts" and to abandon spiritual adulthood for a "second childhood." .([Galatians](#))

See additional notes on the [three "tenses" of come](#) and you will see it is a perfect antidote for becoming subject again to a yoke of slavery!

And as Jesus taught in John, this "**yoke**" is not restricting or binding (in a negative sense), for as He explained to the Jews who had professed faith (proven later to be false belief - cf their actions against Him in John 8:58-59 when He claimed to be God, the "I Am.")

So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free ([eleutheroo](#))."<sup>33</sup> They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, 'You will become free ([eleutheros](#))?' "<sup>34</sup> Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin. <sup>35</sup> "The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. <sup>36</sup> So if the Son makes you free ([eleutheroo](#)), you will be free ([eleutheros](#)) indeed. (John 8:31-36)



**Cereghin** - There are many Christians who make much of grace and liberty from the demands of the law, yet they voluntarily (but unnecessarily) submit themselves to man-made rules, regulations and rites of whatever church, fellowship or denomination they belong to. They are in spiritual bondage to man-made denominations and theological systems instead of enjoying the liberty and freedom that is found in Christ. ([Galatians Commentary](#))

**Slavery** (bondage) ([1397](#)) ([douleia](#) from [doulos](#) - slave) means slavery or bondage and describes that state of an individual in which they are prevented from freely possessing and enjoying their life, a state opposed to liberty. In the NT **douleia** is only used 5x and all figuratively describe a slavish spirit. The idea is that of an enslaved moral or spiritual condition characterized by fear of breaking rules and thus experiencing bondage and lack of freedom.

(Rom. 8:15) For you have not received a spirit of **slavery** leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"

(Rom. 8:21) that the creation itself also will be set free from its **slavery** to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

(Gal. 4:24) This is allegorically speaking, for these women are two covenants: one proceeding from Mount Sinai bearing children who are **to be slaves**; (SLAVES TO THE LAW) she is Hagar.

(Gal. 5:1) It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of **slavery**. (SLAVE TO THE LAW)

(Heb. 2:15) and might free those who through fear of death **were subject** ([enochos](#) from [enecho](#)) to **slavery** all their lives.

In the crucial Jerusalem Council Peter spoke against the very problem what had begun to plague the believers at Galatia, indicating that there was a group of Jews who paid no heed to the decision of the Jewish council in Acts 15. Luke records..

The apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter. 7 After there had been much debate, **Peter stood up and said to them**, "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe. 8 "And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; 9 and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. 10 **"Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?** 11 "But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are." (Acts 15:6-11+)

Although Paul uses a different verb and the context is not becoming entangled in legalism but in the world system, Paul warns Timothy of the **danger of entanglement** writing

**Suffer hardship** ([aorist imperative](#) only possible as we rely wholly on [the Holy Spirit](#)) with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. 4 No soldier in active service **entangles** (see below) himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier. (2 Ti 2:3-4+)

**Comment** - It is very easy to forget our freedom in Christ become entangled in all manner of life circumstances, through putting ourselves on a performance basis with our Lord, or through feeling that the keeping of laws will make us more spiritual.

John Piper says when a Christian soldier's "evenings and days off (begin to be) filled up with harmless, enjoyable diversions... the whole feel changes. The radical urgency fades. The wartime mentality shifts to a peacetime mentality. The lifestyle starts to get cushy. The all-consuming singleness of vision evaporates." Spurgeon adds that "Many of God's children are in this condition -- entangled, surrounded, captive, held fast!"

The Greek word for ENTANGLE is **EMPLEKO** (en = in + [pleko](#) = to weave) which literally means to "weave in" and thus to intertwine or interconnect closely as by wrapping or twisting together. Empleko means "to be involuntarily interlaced to the point of immobility." (BDAG) It was used in secular writings meaning "to ENTWINE one's hand in another's clothes, so as to hold him." Empleko was used to describe a runner entangled in his long robe, which would hinder his ability to run in such a way so as to win (cp Heb 12:1+, 1Cor 9:24-27+). Figuratively [empleko](#) means to become so entwined in an activity that it interferes with other activities or objectives. The related noun (emplotke) was used by Peter to describe the BRAIDING of hair (1Pe 3:3+). The root verb (pleko) described "WEAVING a crown of thorns" for Jesus' mock coronation (Mt 27:29). Can you begin to get a sense of why Paul warned soldiers of Christ to avoid becoming ENTANGLED "with the affairs of everyday life?" In the context of Paul's exhortation, [empleko](#) depicts one who becomes so entangled that they are hindered, even controlled, and

no longer free to function effectively as a Christian soldier. Clearly, "a good soldier of Christ Jesus" (2Ti 2:3), enabled by the Spirit, must continually choose to focus on eternal priorities, not temporal peripherals, holding the temporal loosely and prizing the eternal passionately. As F B Meyer explains "The less encumbered we are, the more easily shall we be able to execute the least command of our Great Captain."

"Let worldly minds the world pursue,  
It has no charms for me;  
Once I admired its trifles too,  
**But grace has set me free."**  
(John Newton)

#### Related Resource:

- [Are You Entangled?](#)

**Max Lucado** - With the glorious freedom offered under God's new covenant, why would anyone prefer the old? It's a good question with a complex answer. Some don't like grace because it's too wild and risky. Others cringe because it's too vast and hard to measure. Still others bristle at grace because it's "unfair." Really bad people forgiven? Completely? Without doing anything? Opposite of grace stands the law. Hard and fast rules. Concrete formulas. Clear, measurable goals for which a person can strive. **The law is a system that caters to human pride by promising to reward the hardest working, the most competitive.** But the true reward? **Bondage**, a pervading sense of obligation, fear, and guilt. And—in fine print—the guarantee of ultimate failure. No wonder Paul says, "We have freedom now, because Christ made us free. So stand strong. Do not change and go back into the slavery of the law" (Gal. 5:1NCV).

**John Piper** - "If you want God's favor, there are two ways to relate to him. You can relate to him as an heir, or you can relate to him as a slave. The difference is that a slave tries to become acceptable to his master by presenting him valuable service; but the heir trusts that the inheritance of his father is his by virtue of a will that was drawn up without his earning it at all. A slave is never quite sure he has done enough to please his master and win an honorable standing in the house. A son rests in the standing he has by virtue of his birth and the covenant his father made in his will to bless his children."

**Swindoll** - The yoke of legalism restricts us by convincing us that an inflexible list of "thou shalts" and "thou shalt nots" is the safest way to remain pure and acceptable to God. Believers caught in the yoke of legalism always search for partners to share the burden with them, recruiting more converts to the cause of slavery. The more legalists attached to the chain gang, the better—that's their mentality. Yet Paul's exhortation breaks the yoke before it catches us by the neck: Don't surrender your freedom; defend it with your life. ([Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary – Galatians](#))

**Martin Luther** - "Be steadfast, not careless. Lie not down and sleep, but stand up. Be watchful. Hold fast the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free." Those who loll cannot keep this liberty. Satan hates the light of the Gospel. When it begins to shine a little he fights against it with might and main.

**J Vernon McGee** - He is saying here that not only are we saved by faith rather than by law, but law is not to be the rule of life for the believer. We are not to live by law at all. The law principle is not the rule for Christian living. Paul is saying that since we have been **saved by grace** we are to continue on in this way of living. **Grace supplies the indwelling and filling of the Spirit to enable us to live on a higher plane than law demanded.** This all is our portion when we trust Christ as Savior. **It is in Christ that we receive everything—salvation and sanctification.** Don't tell me I need to seek a second blessing. When I came to Christ, I got everything I needed. Paul tells me that I have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus (Eph 1:3). Let's believe Him and start trusting. **Let's stop trying some legal system or rote of rules.** We have liberty in Christ. He does not put us under some little legal system. ([Galatians 5](#))

**Life Application Study Bible** Note - Christ came to set us free—not free to do whatever we want because that would lead us back into slavery to our selfish desires. Rather, thanks to Christ, we are now free and able to do what was impossible before—to live unselfishly. Those who appeal to their freedom so that they can have their own way or indulge their own desires are falling back into sin. But it is also wrong to put a burden of law-keeping on Christians. We must stand against those who would enslave us with rules, methods, or special conditions for being saved or growing in Christ.

**Phillip Ryken** - Freedom has as many joys and struggles in the spiritual realm as it does in human society. Dr. King knew this, for he borrowed his famous words from an old Negro spiritual: "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we're free at last!" The song's first and primary meaning was about freedom from sin through Jesus Christ. Freedom in Christ was the apostle Paul's concern as he wrote Galatians, a letter sometimes known as the **Magna Carta of Christian liberty**. Paul knew how precious

spiritual freedom is. He knew the price that Jesus paid on the cross to gain it. He also knew how easy it is to squander that freedom and return to spiritual bondage. This is why Paul wrote to the Galatians with such urgency. They believed the Gospel of the cross and the empty tomb. They had gained true spiritual freedom by putting their faith in Christ crucified and Christ risen. But now they were under the spell of teachers who wanted to add the law of Moses to the gospel of Christ (see Gal. 3:1). As a result, they were in danger of becoming enslaved all over again (see Gal. 5:1). (Galatians Commentary)

"Grace is the sweetest sound  
That ever reached our ears,  
When conscience charged and justice frowned,  
'Twas grace removed our fears."

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**ILLUSTRATION OF THE DANGER OF BEING ENTANGLED AGAIN** - In Brazil there grows a common plant which forest-dwellers call the [matador](#) or "murderer." Its slender stem creeps along the ground, but no sooner does it meet a vigorous tree (**ED**: just like the "false brethren" who sneak in - Gal 2:4+), than it sends out an **entangling tentacle**, which cleaves and climbs up the tree, at intervals sending out arm-like tendrils that further entangle the tree. As the "murderer" ascends, these ligatures grow larger and their clasp becomes tighter. Up and up the rogue vine climbs until the last loftiest spire is gained and fettered. Then, as if in triumph, the parasite shoots a huge, flowery head above the strangled summit, and there from the dead tree's crown, scatters its seed to begin its entangling work again. In a similar way listening to grace-killing teachers can entangle saints in effect neutralizing their effectiveness in the ongoing spiritual war with the world, the flesh and the devil. Spurgeon adds that "Many of God's children are in this condition -- entangled, surrounded, captive, held fast!" Are their any "matador vines" of grace neutralizing, legalistic tendencies in your life that are hindering you from running well?

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**ILLUSTRATION OF LEGALISM** - Legalism lurks in the shady corners of nearly every Christian community. This is why we can go for months, if not years, and never notice it's there. Legalism's lurking presence in our lives reminds me of a bizarre incident at one of the park district pools in the Chicago area. A nine-year-old boy went down a waterslide, plunged into the pool, and bumped into the dead body of a woman near the bottom of the pool. Much to everyone's horror and disgust, however, they discovered that the body had been in the pool for several days, even though the pool was open, lifeguards were on duty, and people were swimming. Health inspectors explained that because the pool was so murky no one could see the dead body submerged several feet under the surface. A dead body lurking in the murky waters of a pool—that's the way legalism works in the life of a church and in the life of a Christian. This is because legalism lurks in the corners of every Christian heart. And it is often the case that the most susceptible are the most intensely religious. Legalists lose sight of what ultimately counts. They start thinking that nonessentials are essential; they begin to insist that good things are in fact necessary. And the result is that they look with pity or suspicion on anyone who would think or do otherwise. (([Preaching the Word – Galatians: Gospel-Rooted Living](#)))

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**ILLUSTRATION** - How easy it is to take for granted and to fail to appropriate the freedom which we have. We can note this in great civilizations of days gone by who drifted from freedom back into bondage or slavery simply because they took their freedom for granted.

June Hunt in her book *Above All Else*, illustrates this when she says: Just before we were to leave West Berlin, we had an opportunity to climb a scaffold overlooking the Berlin Wall. I noticed a man on the platform frantically waving a white handkerchief. Looking past the rows of barbed wire and the steel barriers in the field, we saw a woman on the street about 150 yards away. From time to time she would hold up her baby for the man to see and then wave a handkerchief back at him. Our small group watched in hushed reverence. Tears streamed from the man's eyes as he watched the woman and child reluctantly back away and slowly disappear out of sight. He had stood and watched the two of them until he was staring at an empty street. What total emptiness we all felt in that moment. What did we personally know about freedom or the lack of it? Through the brief experience of a nameless man from another country, the value I placed on freedom multiplied before my eyes. (source unknown)

Just as it is possible to lose one's freedom through complacency and indifference in the country in which we live, so it is possible, likewise, to lose the freedom that ought to be ours in Jesus Christ through putting ourselves back into legal bondage. It is the desire of Christ, through His gracious act, to set us free from the bondage of sin and death and as His free sons to enjoy life more abundantly. ([Don Anderson](#))

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**Phillip Ryken** - The Princeton theologian Archibald Alexander (1772-1851) asked a question that continues to trouble thoughtful Christians today. He wanted to know why

"Christians commonly are of so diminutive a stature and such feeble strength in their religion."

There are many answers to this question, but here is the one that Alexander emphasized:

There is a defect in our belief in the freeness of divine grace. To exercise unshaken confidence in the doctrine of gratuitous pardon is one of the most difficult things in the world; and to preach this doctrine fully without verging towards antinomianism is no easy task, and is therefore seldom done. But Christians cannot but be lean and feeble when deprived of their proper nutriment. It is by faith that the spiritual life is made to grow; and the doctrine of free grace, without any mixture of human merit, is the only true object of faith.... Here, I am persuaded, is the root of the evil; and until religious teachers inculcate clearly, fully, and practically, the grace of God, as manifest in the Gospel, we shall have no vigorous growth of piety among professing Christians. ([Thoughts on Religious Experience - Page 336](#))

**Comment** - I agree with Alexander but would add that the believer's growth in **grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ** (2 Pe 3:18) must also include an accompanying growth in understanding and increasing reliance upon the source of the transforming power of free grace which is none other than the **Spirit of Grace** Himself (Heb 10:29)!

## THE GRAND INVITATION: COME! Matthew 11:28-30

**Come!** The greatest invitation that ever issued from a Man's lips. "**Come!**" **Come** the first time to salvation (**Justification**). In the context of Jesus' preceding words in Matthew 11, this is the primary interpretation of His call to come...

### COME TO JESUS FOR SALVATION

[Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy](#)

written by Joseph Hart  
(Sung by Fernando Ortega)

**Come**, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy  
Weak and wounded, sick and sore;  
Jesus ready stands to save you,  
Full of pity, love and power.

#### *Refrain*

*I will arise and go to Jesus,  
He will embrace me in His arms;  
In the arms of my dear Savior,  
O there are ten thousand charms.*

**Come**, ye thirsty, come, and welcome,  
God's free bounty glorify;  
True belief and true repentance,  
Every grace that brings you nigh

#### *Refrain*

**Come**, ye weary, heavy laden,  
Lost and ruined by the fall;  
If you tarry till you're better,  
You will never come at all.

#### *Refrain*

View Him prostrate in the garden;  
On the ground your Maker lies.  
On the bloody tree behold Him;  
Sinner, will this not suffice?

*Refrain*

Lo! th' incarnate God ascended,  
Pleads the merit of His blood:  
Venture on Him, venture wholly,  
Let no other trust intrude.

*Refrain*

Let not conscience make you linger,  
Not of fitness fondly dream;  
All the fitness He requireth  
Is to feel your need of Him.

*Refrain*

While there must be this initial coming to Jesus for **salvation rest**, by way of application, there is yet a need for every saint to daily "**Come**" and allow the **Spirit of Christ** to grow us in grace and Christlikeness (2Pe 3:18+) (**Sanctification** see **Three Tenses of Salvation**).

And then there will be a final invitation to "**Come!**" when Jesus invites us to **come up** to Him (if we are here to experience the Rapture - 1Th 4:16-17+, cf "I will come again and receive you." - Jn 14:3) and be with Him forever and ever in the **eternal rest** of Paradise! (**Glorification**). "Therefore **comfort** (present imperative-command to continually encourage) one another with" Jesus' invitation to "**Come!**". (1Th 4:18+)

**I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say**

I heard the voice of Jesus say,  
"**Come unto me and rest;**  
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down  
Thy head upon my breast."

I came to Jesus as I was,  
Weary and worn and sad;  
I found in Him a **RESTING PLACE**,  
And He has made me glad.  
-Horatius Bonar

Dear reader, at whatever stage of your life you find yourself, will you not hear the gracious invitation that falls from His perfect lips?

Will you not come dear struggling sinner, trying to make yourself acceptable to the Holy God?

Will you not come dear struggling saint, trying daily to earn your Father's approval, trying daily to defeat that besetting sin that only the Spirit of Christ can defeat as you learn to cooperate with Him (Ro 8:13-**note**)?

And dear saint, will you not live in the light of His final call to "Come !", allowing this firm anchor motivate a deep desire for daily purification (1Jn 3:3-**note**) and growth in likeness to Christ, your Lord?

And here is the great assurance that the One Who calls us to "Come" now will Himself come very soon, a coming for which we pray "Come Lord Jesus"...

He who testifies to these things says,  
"Yes, I am coming quickly." Amen.  
Come, Lord Jesus.  
The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.  
Revelation 22:20, 21  
The End!

**Come** - Not "do this" or "don't do that" but simply "Come". Note also that Jesus does not say come to the church, to a creed, to a clergyman, to a "denomination" or to anything but to Jesus Himself, to a vital, dynamic, radical relationship with the Living Lord. As **Oswald Chambers** says "Personal contact with Jesus alters everything." Do nothing else but **come** to Him, for He alone is **the way, the truth, the life** (Jn 14:6). There is **salvation rest** in no one else, for there is no other Name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved (the first time and then every day thereafter!). (Acts 4:12) Jesus is the narrow gate, the narrow way that leads to **the rest of eternal life** (Mt 7:13, 14). Inherent in Jesus' call to come is that the hearer **come now** and not

wait nor procrastinate - when you hear His invitation, that is the day of salvation (cp 2Cor 6:2).

## THE INSIDIOUS DANGER OF LEGALISM

**Warren Wiersbe** - It is legalism that is the dangerous doctrine, because legalism attempts to do the impossible: change the old nature and make it obey the Laws of God. Legalism succeeds for a short time, and then the flesh begins to rebel. The surrendered Christian who depends on the power of the Spirit is not denying the Law of God, or rebelling against it. Rather, that Law is being fulfilled in him through the Spirit (Ro 8:1-4). It is easy to see the sequence of thought in these closing chapters:

- I have been set free by Christ. I am no longer under bondage to the Law (Gal. 5:1-12).
- But I need something—Someone—to control my life from within. That Someone is the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:13-26).
- Through the Spirit's love, I have a desire to live for others, not for self (Gal. 6:1-10).
- This life of liberty is so wonderful, I want to live it to the glory of God; for He is the One making it possible (Gal. 6:11-18).

Now, contrast this with the experience of the person who chooses to live under Law, under the discipline of some religious leader.

- If I obey these rules, I will become a more spiritual person. I am a great admirer of this religious leader, so I now submit myself to his system.
- I believe I have the strength to obey and improve myself. I do what I am told, and measure up to the standards set for me.
- I'm making progress. I don't do some of the things I used to do. Other people compliment me on my obedience and discipline. I can see that I am better than others in my fellowship. How wonderful to be so spiritual.
- If only others were like me! God is certainly fortunate that I am His. I have a desire to share this with others so they can be as I am. Our group is growing and we have a fine reputation. Too bad other groups are not as spiritual as we are.

No matter how you look at it, legalism is an insidious, dangerous enemy. When you abandon grace for Law, you always lose. In this first section (Gal. 5:1-12), Paul explains what the believer loses when he turns from God's grace to man-made rules and regulations. [.\(Galatians\)](#)

## COMPARISON OF LAW AND GRACE

De Haan says: The perfect law can only show the nature of sin. The law condemns and says, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Gal. 3:10).

1. The **law** prohibits—**Grace** invites and gives.
2. The **law** condemns the sinner—**Grace** redeems the sinner.
3. The **law** says DO—**Grace** says IT IS DONE.
4. The **law** says, Continue to be holy—**Grace** says, It is finished.
5. The **law** curses—**Grace** blesses.
6. The **law** slays the sinner—**Grace** makes the sinner alive.
7. The **law** shuts every mouth before God—**Grace** opens the mouth to praise God.
8. The **law** condemns the best man—**Grace** saves the worst man.
9. The **law** says, pay what you owe—**Grace** says, I freely forgive you all.
10. The **law** says "the wages of sin is death"—**Grace** says, "the gift of God is eternal life."
11. The **law** says, "the soul that sinneth it shall die"—**Grace** says, Believe and live.
12. The **law** reveals sin—**Grace** atones for sin.
13. By the **law** is the knowledge of sin—By **grace** is redemption from sin.

14. The **law** was given by Moses—**Grace** and truth came by Jesus Christ.
  15. The **law** demands obedience—**Grace** bestows and gives power to obey.
  16. The **law** was written on stone—**Grace** is written on the tables of the heart.
  17. The **law** was done away in Christ—**Grace** abides forever.
  18. The **law** puts us under bondage—**Grace** sets us in the liberty of the sons of God.
- 

**Oliver Greene** has a similar list of **Grace/Law contrasts** writing

"I have found the following study very interesting and helpful. Please read all of these verses and study them carefully. They have to do with Law and Grace"

1. Under Law there was a dividing veil (Exodus 26:33) - Grace brought a rent veil (Hebrews 10:19-22).
2. Law blots out the sinner (Exodus 32:33) - Grace blots out the sinner's sin (Colossians 2:14).
3. The Law curses the offender (Galatians 3:10) - Grace covers the offender (Romans 4:7).
4. The Law cries out, "Do - and live!" (Deuteronomy 8:1) - Grace cries out, "It is done! It is finished! Receive Jesus and live!" (John 19:30; John 1:12).
5. The Law cries out, "Every mouth... stopped." (Romans 3:19) - Grace invites, "Every mouth opened." "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus" (Romans 10:9). "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord" (Romans 10:13).
6. The Law showed favor to the good (Proverbs 12:2) - The grace of GOD shows mercy and favor to the bad, the ungodly (Ephesians 2:1-6).
7. The Law was graven upon stone . . . outward (II Corinthians 3:3) - Grace is graven on the heart . . . inward . . . CHRIST in you (Colossians 1:27; Colossians 3:3; II Corinthians 3:3).
8. The Law says, "He added no more" (Deuteronomy 5:22) - Grace assures us, "Hath... spoken... by His Son" (Hebrews 1:2).
9. Law is inexorable in its demand (Joshua 7:25) - The grace of GOD is inspirational in its blessing (II Corinthians 5:17).
10. The Law brings judgment (Romans 5:18) - Grace brings justification (Romans 3:24).
11. Law cries out, "Keep the Commandments - all of them, in every minute detail" (James 2:10) - Grace assures us we are kept by the power of GOD (I Peter 1:5).
12. The Law demands love (Deuteronomy 6:5) - The grace of GOD exhibits love (John 3:16).
13. The Law moves the sinner to sin (Romans 7:8) - The grace of GOD removes sin from the sinner (Matthew 1:21).
14. According to the Law, nearness to GOD is impossible (Exodus 20:21) - In Grace, nearness to GOD is guaranteed (Ephesians 2:13).
15. The Law demands obedience - or no blessing (Deuteronomy 28:1-2) - Grace brings obedience because of the blessing (I John 4:19).
16. The Law cries out, "Stone the prodigal" (Deuteronomy 21:20-21) - Grace cries out, "Put the best robe on the prodigal . . . kill the fatted calf! Let us feast and be merry!" (Luke 15:20-23).
17. Law brings death (Deuteronomy 21:22-23) - Grace gives to us the quietness and assurance of peace (Romans 5:1).
18. The Law retaliates (Exodus 21:24) - The grace of GOD redeems (Galatians 3:13).
19. The Law demands sanctification (Leviticus 11:44) - Grace bestows sanctification (I Corinthians 1:30).
20. Because of the Law, three thousand were slain (Exodus 32:28) - Because of the grace of GOD, three thousand were saved (Acts 2:41).
21. The Law is unsatisfying to the conscience (Hebrews 10:1-2) - The grace of GOD is unfailing in its



forgiveness and remedy for sin (Hebrews 9:12-14; Hebrews 10:10-14).

22. The Law is the voice of consternation (Hebrews 12:18-21) - The grace of GOD is the voice of covenant, blessing, peace and assurance (Hebrews 12:22-24).

23. When the Law was given, Moses' face shown, and the people feared (Exodus 34:30) - Grace brought by JESUS CHRIST attracted the people to the face of JESUS (Mark 9:15).

24. The Law was a yoke of burdensome weight (Galatians 5:1) - Grace is to be in the yoke with JESUS, which makes the yoke easy and the burden light (Matthew 11:29-30).

25. The Law produced zeal (Romans 10:1-2), but no salvation (Philippians 3:6; Romans 10:1-8) - Grace imparts zeal, and brings joy unspeakable and full of glory because we are saved (Titus 2:14; I Peter 1:8).

I am so thankful that "Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone that believeth!" These facts are precious to me:

- We are "accepted in the Beloved" (Ephesians 1:6).
- We are "blessed . . . with all spiritual blessings" (Ephesians 1:3).
- We are called "the sons of God" (I John 3:1).
- We are "delivered . . . from the wrath to come" (I Thessalonians 1:10).
- We are the elect of GOD (I Thessalonians 1:4).
- We are forgiven by GOD (Ephesians 1:7) for CHRIST's sake (Ephesians 4:32).
- We are saved by the grace of GOD (Ephesians 2:5).
- We are "an holy priesthood" (I Peter 2:5).
- We are "hidden in Christ" (Colossians 3:3).
- We are justified in His sight without works (Romans 3:28).
- We are "preserved in Jesus Christ" (Jude 1).
- "Life eternal is given to us by JESUS" (John 10:28).
- We are "made nigh [near to GOD] by the Blood of Christ" (Ephesians 2:13).
- We are "ordained to eternal life" (Acts 13:48).
- We have "peace with God" (Romans 5:1).
- We are "quickened . . . together with Christ" (Ephesians 2:5).
- We are "redeemed . . . to God by thy [CHRIST's] Blood" (Revelation 5:9). [Stand Fast Therefore in the Liberty](#)

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## True Freedom

Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free. —Galatians 5:1

In 1776, the 13 British colonies in North America protested the limitations placed on them by the king of England and engaged in a struggle that gave birth to a brand-new republic. The infant nation soon adopted that now-famous document known as the Declaration of Independence.

Almost 2,000 years ago, the Lord Jesus cried out on the cross, "It is finished," proclaiming the believer's "declaration of independence." All of humanity was under the tyranny of sin and death. But Christ, the sinless One, took our place on Calvary and died for our sins. Having satisfied God's righteous demands, He now sets free for eternity all who trust in Him.

Paul wrote, "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us" (Gal. 3:13). Romans 8 assures us, "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus . . . For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death" (vv.1-2). Galatians 5:1 urges all who have been redeemed to "stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free."

We are thankful to God for any freedom we enjoy in a nation. But above all, believers everywhere can praise Him for the freedom that is found in Christ! By: Richard DeHaan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Now are we free—there's no condemnation!

Jesus provides a perfect salvation;

"Come unto Me," O hear His sweet call!

Come—and He saves us once for all.

—Bliss

Our greatest freedom is freedom from sin.



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## The Unpayable Debt We Owe

Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free. —Galatians 5:1

Our gratitude is deepened when we remember the price others paid to help obtain freedom. In the United States, one such person was Richard Stockton.

Stockton was one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. He was a prominent lawyer and a wealthy landowner. Because he supported the war efforts, he and his family were driven from their home. That home was sacked and burned. Stockton was imprisoned for several years and subjected to harsh treatment that broke his health. He died a pauper at the age of 51. Yet few Americans remember this hero who paid such a high price for the cause of liberty. His sacrifice is largely forgotten.

Even more important, have we become so familiar with the gospel that we fail to appreciate what our salvation cost the Savior? We rejoice in the spiritual freedom we enjoy by faith in the sin-canceling death of Jesus, but do we realize at least to some small degree the price He paid?

Are we truly grateful to Jesus for all He sacrificed to set us free spiritually? If so, we are to “stand fast . . . in the liberty by which Christ has made us free” (Gal. 5:1). No matter what else may be demanding our attention, let’s take time to remember the unpayable debt we owe Him. By: Vernon Grounds ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

But drops of grief can ne’er repay  
The debt of love I owe:  
Here, Lord, I give myself away—  
’Tis all that I can do!  
—Watts

Salvation is infinitely costly but absolutely free.

**Galatians 5:2 Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you.**

Phillips Paraphrase - Listen! I, Paul, say this to you as solemnly as I can: if you consent to be circumcised then Christ will be of no use to you at all.

Wuest - Behold, I, Paul, am saying to you that if you persist in being circumcised, Christ will be advantageous to you in not even one thing, ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

Amplified - I once more protest and testify to every man who receives circumcision that he is under obligation and bound to practice the whole of the Law and its ordinances.

NET Galatians 5:2 Listen! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you at all!

GNT Galatians 5:2 δε γ Παλος λγω μν πιν περιτμνησθε, Χριστς μς οδν φελσει.

NLT Galatians 5:2 Listen! I, Paul, tell you this: If you are counting on circumcision to make you right with God, then Christ will be of no benefit to you.

KJV Galatians 5:2 Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.

ESV Galatians 5:2 Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you.

CSB Galatians 5:2 Take note! I, Paul, tell you that if you get yourselves circumcised, Christ will not benefit you at all.

NIV Galatians 5:2 Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all.

NKJ Galatians 5:2 Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing.

NRS Galatians 5:2 Listen! I, Paul, am telling you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you.

YLT Galatians 5:2 Io, I Paul do say to you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing;

NAB Galatians 5:2 It is I, Paul, who am telling you that if you have yourselves circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you.

NJB Galatians 5:2 I, Paul, give you my word that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you at all.

GWN Galatians 5:2 I, Paul, can guarantee that if you allow yourselves to be circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you.

BBE Galatians 5:2 See, I Paul say to you, that if you undergo circumcision, Christ will be of no use to you.

- **Behold I, Paul:** 1Co 16:21 2Co 10:1 1Th 2:18 Philemon 1:9
- **that if you receive circumcision:** Ga 5:4,6 2:3-5 Ac 15:1,24 16:3,4 Ro 9:31,32 10:2,3 Heb 4:2
- [Galatians 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## TRUST IN CIRCUMCISION FORFEITS BENEFIT OF CHRIST'S WORK!

In this passage for the first time in the letter, Paul mentions by name the specific issue that was threatening the spiritual lives of the Galatian believers. And what was the danger? The issue of circumcision.

**Dan Duncan** asks "Now we might wonder why this is so crucial an issue, this issue of circumcision, so crucial that Paul would write a letter, but such a heated, vigorous letter as this, and give such dire warnings about it. After all, circumcision is a simple surgical operation performed only once and performed only on males. Why did Paul consider it so dangerous that if they received it, Christ would be of no benefit to them? The reason is because circumcision was more than a surgical operation. It was a theological symbol. It's always been a theological symbol. First of all, in a good sense, because it was a symbol given to Abraham, that he was to pass on to his descendants. He was to circumcise himself and his servants and all of his children, because it was a symbol of the covenant God had made with Him. But the meaning of that symbol had been twisted into something else, perverted. The theological symbol now with these Judaizers was that salvation is by ceremonies; it is by lawkeeping. And those who come under circumcision are devoting themselves to that idea. So men can be circumcised; women cannot. But a woman could come to believe that circumcision was necessary and a part of the gospel, and she too would come under this devotion to law keeping as a way of salvation...to keep that from hindering the gospel, he had Timothy circumcised (Acts 16:3+). But that had nothing to do with the gospel itself. Circumcision is, in and of itself, a non-issue. The issue here is the importance a person gives to circumcision. It is the theology of circumcision and salvation by works that is the issue." ([Sermon](#))

**MacArthur** - The basic doctrinal error of the Judaizers was works-righteousness, the same error that is the heart of every other man-made religious system. Jews were often referred to simply as *the circumcised* (Acts 10:45; 11:2; Gal. 2:7), because that was their most distinctive outward mark and the one in which they had the greatest pride and confidence. Rather than looking on circumcision as God had given it—as a symbol of His covenant of promise (Gen. 17:9-10)—most Jews looked on it as having spiritual value in itself. To them it was not a reminder of God's gracious and sovereign blessing but a means of humanly guaranteeing His favor. ([MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Galatians](#))

**Swindoll** - Paul now turns his attention to those who have begun to embrace legalism. ([Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary – Galatians](#))

**Behold** (Listen! Mark my words! Take note! Underline this. Pay very careful attention to what I'm about to say!) - Paul uses this interjection which is in fact a command to grab their attention and in Gal 5:2-4 (and probably through verse 12) he emphasizes the negative consequences of submitting to circumcision which he describes as a **yoke of slavery**, obviously with the view of strengthening his readers to resist any temptation to jettison their freedom in Christ.

**I, Paul, say to you** (cf "I, Paul" - 2 Cor 10:1, Eph 3:1, 1 Th 2:18) - I (ego) is very emphatic and stands in contrast to the false teachers. Paul is probably alluding again to his apostolic authority (cf "Paul, an apostle" = Gal 1:1+)

**Rapka** on **if you receive circumcision** - The [passive voice](#) "if you let yourselves be circumcised" is a third-class condition in the Greek text (can be used with the verb in the subjunctive mood), suggesting that the circumcision of the Galatians has in fact not yet occurred but is being seriously considered by them as a means of adhering to the Judaizers' teaching. (Expositor's Bible Commentary - Revised Edition)

**Boice** has a similar comment (and this helps understand the urgency of Paul's letter) - "In this verse the tense of the verb **to be**

**circumcised**" (receive circumcision) is important. It is a [present passive](#) (as it is in Gal 5:3), which gives the sense, "*If you should let yourselves be circumcised.*" This implies quite clearly that the Galatians had not yet taken this step but rather were just considering it, and therefore their motivation becomes the important thing. It also means that Paul was in no sense condemning those Jewish Christians who had always, as it were, been circumcised. His advice to such is given in 1 Corinthians 7:17–20. If a man who has been circumcised becomes a Christian, he should remain circumcised, not seeking to change his status. If he is uncircumcised, he should remain uncircumcised. The point, once again, is that particular forms of legalism are not themselves the important issues. The issue is works versus grace, or, as we will soon see, spirit versus flesh. Paul's concern was that nothing should cloud perception of this central Christian doctrine. ([Expositor's Bible Commentary - 1976](#))

**That if you receive circumcision** (cf 1 Cor 7:18) - "if you allow yourself to be circumcised." Any believer who undertook circumcision with the goal of "adding" to their salvation would in effect "subtract" from grace. They would nullify the effect and power of grace in their Christian life! In a sense they would be forced (by default) to live their Christian life in reliance upon their own strength! We've all been there! We have tried to control a sin for example in our own strength and may have succeeded briefly, only to discover that it was soon back with a vengeance! If this is the bulk of your Christian experience, then you might want to examine yourself to see if you have fallen into legalism of one sort or another. You might even consider praying Psalm 139:23-24. God will show you for He is faithful and His desire for us is to be trophies of His grace because thereby He receives the glory (see especially the phrase "all things" in 1 Pe 4:10-11<sup>+</sup>).

The false teachers were saying that the Gentile Christian converts had to be circumcised. Paul was not concerned about the physical act itself but what this act had come to signify to the Jews. It was not just an act but it signified a "theology" of keeping the Law to attain righteousness. And so these Judaizers were saying that faith in Jesus is important, but it was not enough for salvation. "According to the Judaizers, the only good Christian was a circumcised Christian." (Ryken) They taught that one needed to receive circumcision in order to gain merit before God and be fully saved.

**Boice** says "What Paul is condemning is the **theology of circumcision**—namely, the theology that makes works necessary for salvation and seeks to establish conformity to some external standards of behavior as a mark of spirituality." ([Expositor's Bible Commentary - 1976](#))

This false teaching had plagued the church from the beginning Luke recording that

"Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved....But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses." (Acts 15:1, 5+).

Sadly the Jews had turned what God meant to be a symbol into a human work they felt merited righteous standing before God. To them circumcision "stood for a particular type of religion, namely salvation by good works in obedience to the law." (Stott) But they were tragically mistaken for if one looks at the OT God made it clear that circumcision was only a symbol of what was to be an inner (spiritual) "circumcision" of their hearts (cf Dt. 30:6<sup>+</sup>; Jer. 4:4; 9:24-26). **See Excursus on Circumcision.**

**Spurgeon** - "The Galatians wanted to be more sure than faith could make them, and so they ran off to getting circumcised and observing days and weeks and months and all sort of carnal ordinances." ([Salvation by Faith and the Work of the Spirit](#))

**Receive circumcision** ([present passive](#))(4059) see below on [peritemno](#)

**Stott** writes the Judaizers "were thus declaring that faith in Christ was insufficient for salvation. Circumcision and law-obedience must be added to it. This was tantamount to saying that Moses must be allowed to finish what Christ had begun." (Ibid)

**Ryken** adds the Judaizers "were saying that Moses had to finish what Christ could only begin." (Ibid)

**Ryken** asks "If circumcision was only minor surgery, why did it become such a major issue? Because Paul understood that what was really at stake was the justification of sinners: What makes a person right with God? Getting circumcised was a way of saying that sinners have to do something to get right with God. This is what Paul meant when he spoke of those "who would be justified by the law" (Gal. 5:4). He was talking about circumcision as something that stood for the whole law of God....Either people are justified before God partly by what they do for themselves or they are justified exclusively by what Jesus Christ has done for them. When the Galatians were thinking about getting circumcised, they were really thinking about getting justified. According to F. F. Bruce, "They could seek justification through faith in Christ (and obtain it) or they could seek it through legal works (and miss it). To seek it through faith in Christ was to seek it on the ground of God's grace; to seek it through legal works was to seek it on the ground of their own merit." Circumcision was a way of saying that Jesus Christ was not enough for the Galatians, that they needed something more. Getting circumcised is one alternative to faith in Christ, but there are many others. Some people base their standing before God on the work they do in the church, or on the quality or frequency of their personal devotions. Others depend on the decision they made

for Christ when they walked down the aisle or raised their hand at an evangelistic rally, as if they were saved by that gesture. Still others seek to justify themselves by the fact that they are baptized and confirmed members of a Christian church. If we try to be justified before God by anything we do, no matter how small it is, we are not free. This is why justification must come by faith alone. What Jesus did on the cross and through the empty tomb justifies sinners all by itself. Therefore, if I am a Christian, my standing before God depends entirely on what Christ has done, not on anything that I have done. Otherwise, I am enslaved by my own works." (Ibid)

**Jack Arnold** - These Galatians had received Christ but were thinking about going back under the law to gain the approval of God. They felt they could not have the blessing of God unless they permitted themselves to be circumcised and perhaps some felt they could not be saved at all without circumcision, for this is what the Judaizers taught (Acts 15:1, 5, 10) Christ in His death delivered them from the law and to go back under the law would place them in a position where the benefits of Christ's death would not be of any advantage to them. They would not be in a position to receive the real blessings of Christ if they went back under the law. **By going back under the law, Christians are depriving themselves of the ministry of the Holy Spirit which Christ made possible through His death and resurrection and which ministry was not provided for under the law.** ([Liberty not Legalism](#))

**Christ will be of no benefit to you** - "Christ will be an advantage to you in respect to nothing." The Greek word for 'ho' (ouden) signifies absolute negation. Notice the Judaizers were not saying "Don't believe in Christ." They were saying in essence that Christ alone was not sufficient for salvation. But to the contrary Puritan William Perkins said, "He must be a perfect Savior, or no Savior."

**ESV Study Bible on of no benefit to you** - The atoning sacrifice of Christ cannot benefit anyone who trusts in law and ceremony for salvation. (ED: This is a true statement, but assuming that Paul was writing to believers, this was not the main problem. In other words, they were justified by faith in Christ alone, but now would fall into the trap of attempting to be sanctified progressively by works and would experience no benefit from Christ.)

**Ryken** adds that "If we will not let Christ do everything for us, He can do nothing for us, at least as far as our justification is concerned. If we try to help ourselves, Christ will be no help at all."

**THOUGHT** - Again Ryken is referring in context to our sanctification, our growth in Christ-likeness. It is not even logical -- how could these Galatian believers or any believers for that matter expect to grow in Christ-likeness if Christ is of no benefit to them? It simply cannot happen! They will end up as "stunted" believers at best, lacking the fruit of the Spirit, etc. Little wonder that the life of legalistic Christian is without love, joy, peace, etc!

**Boice** quips that "God would put a minus sign before Christ in the lives of the Galatians if they put a plus sign before anything else." ([Expositor's Bible Commentary - 1976](#)) (ED: And that's exactly the effect legalism will have on the life of any genuine believer!)

**Be of...benefit** (of no value, no profit)([5623](#))([opheleo](#) from [ophéllo](#) = heap up or from [ophelos](#) = increase, profit) means to provide assistance, with emphasis upon the resulting benefit. It is used usually with the sense of gain, profit in both a material and non-material sense.

**John MacArthur** comments on how this statement **Christ will be of no benefit to you** applies to non-believers and to believers (keeping in mind that most commentators feels that Paul is addressing the Galatians as believers) - The atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus **Christ**, perfect and complete though it was, cannot **benefit** a person who trusts in anything else, because that something else, whether **circumcision** or any other human act or effort, then stands between him and **Christ**....To those who were not saved. (ED: [SEE NOTE ON WHO IS IN PAUL'S AUDIENCE](#)) he was saying that they could not be saved, they could not gain any eternal, saving **benefit** from Christ if they trusted in **circumcision**. To those who were saved he was saying that such behavior was inconsistent with their salvation and that certainly they could experience no benefit of growth in their spiritual lives if they began trusting in circumcision in addition to God's grace. (Ibid)

**THOUGHT** - Notice MacArthur's last statement above. It is possible for **genuine believers** to fall into legalism to such a point that they blunt the effect of God's grace and their progressive growth in Christ-likeness. If **Christ is of no benefit** to them as believers, then neither is the **Spirit of Christ**, Who is the primary Agent responsible for our growth in Christ-likeness (cf 2 Cor 3:18+, see also the believer's necessity of having access to the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit to live the Christ life in Gal 5:16-18, 22-25). **Can you see the practical implications of allowing yourself to fall into any practice, habit, discipline, etc, that smacks of legalism?** Legalism will always blunt grace. Legalism will quench/grieve the Spirit of grace (Heb 10:29b). Legalism will abort the growth of the Spirit's fruit in Galatians 5:22-23. Thus it is imperative if you are a believer to do inventory to make absolutely certain you have not fallen into the very subtle trap of legalism or "legalistic tendencies!" This is exactly what Paul had warned about in chapter 3 asking...

You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as

crucified? 2 This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? 3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected ([BEING PROGRESSIVELY SANCTIFIED](#)) by the flesh? (Gal 3:1-3+)

**Don Anderson** - This is the problem with many Christians. They LIMIT CHRIST to the saving of their souls and they think that it is their responsibility to keep themselves saved by doing certain things which are prescribed by the society in which they live. It was Ian Thomas who said: Godliness is nothing more than God's activity in our lives. It is God Himself behaving in and through you. (source unknown) Performance is often an excuse for not yielding. Many believers quench the Spirit by performing. If you have not yet entered into this rest, then you submit yourself to these outward regulations which you have chosen and you hope they will make you acceptable.

**Oliver Greene** on the practical application of how legalism is a grace killer so that Christ is of no benefit - I have been traveling for more than twenty-eight years in evangelistic work. I have been in churches that are supposed to be fundamental Bible churches, but beloved, the poor members there are under Law. They are bound to a little group of selfish, self-centered people who shout long and loud about the grace of GOD, and then submit to the commands and the demands of the denomination or the fellowship to which they belong! Some Christians shout, "Independent! Unaffiliated!" But when you dig below the surface you find they are not independent; they have a machine of their own, and the minister dictates to and commands the members. According to the New Testament, born again believers are led by the HOLY GHOST, not by the preacher in the pulpit. The preacher is the overseer, the leader - but he is not to command. He is to lead, and not to be "[lord] over God's heritage." He is to be an "[ensample] to the flock." Every true minister is the under-shepherd of the Lord. ([Stand Fast Therefore in the Liberty](#))

**Galatians 5:3 And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law.**

Phillips Paraphrase - I will say it again: every man who consents to be circumcised is bound to obey all the rest of the Law!

Wuest - and I solemnly affirm again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to do the whole law. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

Amplified - Notice, it is I, Paul, who tells you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no profit (advantage, avail) to you for if you distrust Him, you can gain nothing from Him].

NET Galatians 5:3 And I testify again to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law.

GNT Galatians 5:3 μαρτ ρομαι δ π λιν παντ νθρ π περιτεμνομ ν τι φειλ της στ ν λον τ ν ν μον ποι σαι.

NLT Galatians 5:3 I'll say it again. If you are trying to find favor with God by being circumcised, you must obey every regulation in the whole law of Moses.

KJV Galatians 5:3 For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.

ESV Galatians 5:3 I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law.

CSB Galatians 5:3 Again I testify to every man who gets himself circumcised that he is obligated to keep the entire law.

NIV Galatians 5:3 Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law.

NKJ Galatians 5:3 And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law.

NRS Galatians 5:3 Once again I testify to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obliged to obey the entire law.

YLT Galatians 5:3 and I testify again to every man circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law;

- **And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision:** De 8:19 31:21 Ne 9:29,30,34 Lu 16:28 Ac 2:40 20:21 Eph 4:17 1Th 4:6 1Jn 4:14
- **that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law.** Ga 3:10 De 27:26 Mt 23:16,18 Jas 2:10,11



- [Galatians 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## CIRCUMCISION OBLIGATES ONE TO THE WHOLE LAW

**And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision** - Notice the word **again** which could refer to the previous passage (which was certainly a solemn warning) or it could refer to a previous occasion. In any event Paul is now referring to receiving circumcision as a condition that must be met in order for one to be genuinely saved which is what the Judaizers taught.

**I testify** (3143)([marturomai](#) from **mártus** = witness) meant summon to witness and thus conveys the idea of making a strong, solemn protestation, a serious declaration (cf 2 uses describing Paul in Acts - Acts 20:26+, Acts 26:22+) Paul's words take on the character of a formal declaration under oath in a court of law. You can begin to sense Paul's passion rising - the previous verse had "**behold**" and now it is "**testify**," both calculated to arrest the attention of the Galatians.

**Receives circumcision** ([present passive](#))(4059)([peritemno](#) from **perí** = around + **témno** = cut off - see study of [peritome](#)) means literally to cut something off or away ("to cut off around"), signifying a removal of that which has been cut away. It means to cut off one's prepuce and was used of the rite performed on the 8th day after birth on all male Jewish infants. It was subsequently also applied to Gentiles who sought to be 'proselytes of righteousness' in converting to Judaism. And as noted above the [present passive](#) implies that the Galatians have not already taken the step, but are only considering it. It also means that Paul is in no way condemning those Jewish Christians who are already circumcised.

All NT uses of **peritemno** - Lk. 1:59; Lk. 2:21; Jn. 7:22; Acts 7:8; Acts 15:1; Acts 15:5; Acts 16:3; Acts 21:21; 1 Co. 7:18; Gal. 2:3; Gal. 5:2; Gal. 5:3; Gal. 6:12; Gal. 6:13; Col. 2:11

**That he is under obligation to keep the whole Law**- Here is the problem with receiving circumcision as a requirement for salvation. Paul says you can't stop there! You cannot select those things from the Law that you will accept like circumcision. No, the Law is viewed as a whole and you must take all or nothing! If one is going to live under part of the Law in hopes of attaining righteousness, the Law demands that one live by the totality of its precepts, not a portion of them! The Law is like a window pane - if you break part of the pane, you have broken the entire window pane.

This is similar to what **Paul** wrote earlier

For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM." (Gal 3:10+).

**Dan Duncan** comments that "God says, no, no, if you are going to be saved by law keeping, circumcision alone or baptism alone is not enough. The whole Law, all 613 rules, are to be kept and to be kept perfectly, both in deed and thought. Your thoughts must be pure. Your motives must be pure. All of your deeds must be pure, correct, perfect. Absolute perfection is what the Law demands. That should have concerned the Galatians. But if it didn't, then the third consequence would have. (see Gal 5:4)" ([Sermon](#))

As **MacArthur** says "Because God's standard was so obviously impossible to attain, that truth quoted from Deuteronomy 27:26 should have driven every Jew to seek His mercy." (Ibid)

**Swindoll** - Just as wedding vows place a person into a covenant relationship as a husband or wife, circumcision obligates people to follow the lifestyle it initiates. The Galatians couldn't choose just one small part of the Law. Once they chose any of it, they had really chosen all of it. ([Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary – Galatians](#))

**James** affirms this same principle writing

For whoever keeps the **whole law** and yet stumbles in **one point**, he has become **guilty of all**. (James 2:10)

**Obligation** (3781)([opheiletes](#) from [opheilo](#) = owe, conveying the basic meaning of owing a debt) means one who owes another (of one who owes another money) having a strong moral obligation and personal duty and so means a debtor, one who is bound by some duty, one who owes anything to another.

**Jack Arnold** - If the Christian submits to circumcision, then he must also keep the Sabbath on Saturday with all its prohibitions as set forth in the law. All the social, moral, ceremonial and religious aspects of the law must be kept also. All the Mosaic Law is binding or none of it is.... The law is like a window pane—if one section of the pane is broken the whole window is broken. So to break one point of the law is to break all, and to keep one point of the law one must keep all the law. ([Liberty not Legalism](#))

**Wayne Barber** - I shared with you recently about that lady that said, "Brother Wayne, I had the worse day in my whole life last Thursday." I said why? She said, "I didn't have my quiet time." What? You failed in the quiet time law? Well, then you've messed up in everything. You're just a total failure. That's what the law says, you see. ([Galatians 5](#))

**Galatians 5:4 You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.**

Phillips Paraphrase - If you try to be justified by the Law you automatically cut yourself off from the power of Christ, you put yourself outside the range of his grace.

Wuest - You are without effect from Christ, such of you as in the sphere of the law are seeking your justification. You have lost your hold upon [sanctifying] grace. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

Amplified - If you seek to be justified and declared righteous and to be given a right standing with God through the Law, you are brought to nothing and so separated (severed) from Christ. You have fallen away from grace (from God's gracious favor and unmerited blessing).

NET Galatians 5:4 You who are trying to be declared righteous by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace!

GNT Galatians 5:4 κατηργήθητε πρὸς Χριστόν, οἱ τινες ὧν μὴ δικαιοσθε, τὸς Χριστός ξεπσάτε.

NLT Galatians 5:4 For if you are trying to make yourselves right with God by keeping the law, you have been cut off from Christ! You have fallen away from God's grace.

KJV Galatians 5:4 Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

ESV Galatians 5:4 You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace.

CSB Galatians 5:4 You who are trying to be justified by the law are alienated from Christ; you have fallen from grace.

NIV Galatians 5:4 You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

NKJ Galatians 5:4 You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

NRS Galatians 5:4 You who want to be justified by the law have cut yourselves off from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.

YLT Galatians 5:4 ye were freed from the Christ, ye who in law are declared righteous; from the grace ye fell away;

NAB Galatians 5:4 You are separated from Christ, you who are trying to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

NJB Galatians 5:4 once you seek to be reckoned as upright through the Law, then you have separated yourself from Christ, you have fallen away from grace.

GWN Galatians 5:4 Those of you who try to earn God's approval by obeying his laws have been cut off from Christ. You have fallen out of God's favor.

BBE Galatians 5:4 You are cut off from Christ, you who would have righteousness by the law; you are turned away from grace.

- **You have been severed from Christ:** Ga 5:2 2:21 Ro 9:31,32 10:3-5
- **you who are seeking to be justified by law:** Ro 3:20 4:4,5
- **you have fallen from grace.:** Ga 1:6-9 Ro 11:6 Heb 6:4-6 10:38,39 12:15 2Pe 2:20-22 3:17,18 Rev 2:5
- [Galatians 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**CHRIST IS BECOME OF**

## NO BENEFIT TO YOU

The title above is modified slightly from the **KJV** rendering which accurately describes the state of all who would turn to the Law and receive circumcision as a meritorious work (thinking this act would gain God's favor!).

Imagine yourself as a Galatian reader who has believed in Christ for salvation and you are being wooed by the Judaizers to add Law (circumcision) to the grace! What Paul states here would be horrifying, frightening and hopefully would stop any believer in their tracks so that they would quickly shun any teaching that smacks of legalism.

**THOUGHT** - If you are a believer and someone is trying to draw you into some form of legalism, than this section is for you! You need to hear and heed Paul's strong words of warning! Sadly I have had occasion to speak to a number of Christians who are being drawn by charismatic, persuasive speakers into a form of "Christianity" (if you can call it that) in which they advocate a return to the Old Covenant. One such movement that I have encountered is called the **HEBREW ROOTS MOVEMENT**. Here is a synopsis from gotquestions.org:

What does the Hebrew Roots Movement believe? Essentially, their goal is to restore the Jewishness of Christianity. Those in the Hebrew Roots Movement argue that Christianity has strayed way too far from its Jewish roots. There is definitely some truth to this argument. For instance, western Christianity has no problem observing holidays the Bible does not mention, but virtually ignores the Jewish holidays the Bible does mention. But, the Hebrew Roots Movement is not just about the Jewish holidays. The ultimate goal of many in the Hebrew Roots Movement is to put Christians **under the bondage of the Old Covenant law**, with strict adherence to all of the commands, other than the sacrificial system. ([Full article](#); see also [What is the Hebrew Roots movement?](#) **Note:** This is not the same as [What is Messianic Judaism?](#))

**You have been severed from Christ** - This is a frightening statement. In English **to be severed** means to be cut off, so what Paul is saying simply is that you have been cut off from the life (and freedom) that only Christ gives. Most commentators see Paul making this statement to believers. In this context, these legalistic believers would experience a powerless Christian life! ([See note on who Paul is addressing](#) in Galatians 5).

**John MacArthur** on **how severed from Christ** related to **believers** - For a believer to start living again under the law to merit salvation is, in fact, to reject salvation by grace. Contrary to the teaching of the Judaizers, to add circumcision and other works of the law to what Christ accomplished by grace is not to raise one's spiritual level but to severely lower it. Legalism does not please God but offends Him. It does not bring a person closer to God but rather drives him away

**Jack Arnold** - You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; to go back under the law for justification and sanctification is to say that Christ's work on the cross is unnecessary and of no value and that the work of the Spirit is useless. An attitude of self-effort by law-works alienates (**have been severed**) the believer from Christ.

**Ryken** applies this to **believers** - The underlying principle is that if we try to justify ourselves before God on the basis of our own works, Jesus Christ becomes a stranger to us; we lose access to His grace.

**THOUGHT** - Ryken does not say we lose our salvation, but we do lose access to the transforming power of grace in our lives. Little wonder that legalistic believers are miserable believers, living with frequent failure to defeat sin, etc. How could they? they have been temporarily severed from Christ. Confess. Repent. Return. Experience the joy of the Lord found only when one lives in dependence on grace, not self works.

**Have been severed** (2673)([katargeo](#)) in this context means to cease or be done with used in a similar sense in Ro 7:6 (released [[katargeo](#)] from the Law) These individuals are in effect "*rendered inactive*" (another meaning of [katargeo](#)) in their relationship with Christ. They were not "living in a sphere (in which) Christ was operative." (Donald Campbell) **W E Vine** adds that "the essential effect of the preaching of the Cross would become inoperative by the preaching of circumcision."

**You who are seeking to be justified by law** - NET has "You who are trying to be declared righteous by the law." As discussed above circumcision was not merely a physical operation or just a ceremonial rite, but it was symbolic of salvation by good works, seeking to be justified by keeping the Law. Paul is writing to those Galatians who have begun to accept the legalistic principle and were seeking justification by following the law

**Justified** (1344)([dikaioo](#)) means to be declared righteous. **Dikaioo** describes the act by which a man is brought into a right state of relationship to God. **Dikaioo** is a legal term having to do with the law and the the courtroom, where it represented the legally binding verdict of the judge. This is the sense in which Paul uses **dikaioo** in this section in Romans (Ro 3:21-5:11) in which he unfolds the doctrine of justification.



Luke used the same verb **dikaioo** to show the contrast between faith and works of the Law writing that "through Him (CHRIST) everyone who believes is **freed** (or justified - dikaioo) from all things, from which you could not be **freed** (or justified - dikaioo) through the Law of Moses." (Acts 13:39+)

**Dikaioo in Galatians** - Gal. 2:16; Gal. 2:17; Gal. 3:8; Gal. 3:11; Gal. 3:24; Gal. 5:4

**Ryrie** - To use the impossible ground of justification by law is to leave, abandon, fall from the way of grace as the only basis for justification.

**Criswell** - This verse does not affirm the possibility of the losing of salvation. If the Galatians seek to be justified by the keeping of the law, they will have abandoned the sphere of God's grace wherein salvation is experienced and enjoyed. Any attempt to be justified by the law moves a man away from the grace of God. ([Believer's Study Bible](#))

**You have fallen from grace** - Note what Paul DOES NOT say -- He does not say "You have fallen from salvation." He says fallen from grace, and there is a difference. Paul is not saying that genuine believers can lose their salvation. The idea is to be fallen out of the sphere of God's grace, because you simply cannot mix grace and law. So if you are a believer ensnared by legalism in whatever form you have in effect "fallen from grace."

**Henry Morris** - Paul is not discussing the **security of one's salvation** here, but rather the two different proposed ways of achieving salvation. If we propose to earn salvation by the works of the law, we thereby reject the free grace of Christ, and He is "cut off" from saving us. In this sense only can we fall from grace. We are both saved by grace and kept saved by grace. We cannot cancel the grace which gives salvation by failing to keep working for it, for works could never earn God's grace in the first place. ([Defender's Study Bible](#))

**Duncan** - But he does say here that a person can fall from grace. What does that mean? It means that a person can fall away from the principle of grace as the method of salvation. Grace itself is not salvation. It is the means or the way to salvation. So a person falls from grace by falling into legalism by adopting the way of works for salvation and abandoning the way of grace. This is the danger that Paul warns of all through this book. Deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, the way of grace for a different gospel. That's how he begins 1:6. Now, ultimately a true believer cannot do that, and the Galatians had not yet done that. Paul believed they were true believers and would respond to his warnings. He had not given up on the Galatians. So in these verses, verses 2-4, he was giving them a wake-up call to renounce legalism for the gospel before they took that fatal step.

**Fallen from** (1601)(**ekpipto**) means basically to fall out of or down from or to lose one's grasp on something. In context **ekpipto** speaks of the loss of favor or grace, so that it is no longer experienced. Think of it this way -- they were trying to hold on to law but in so doing they lost their grip on grace. The point is that when one seeks to be justified by law, he/she in effect rejects the narrow way of God's grace. The **aorist tense** of fallen pictures this consequence as immediate! The moment you begin to dabble in the sphere of legalism, you immediately depart from the sphere of grace. The spiritual results are immediate and damaging. Just try to live a graceless Christian life! You can't! You will be miserable!

**Donald Campbell** applies this to believers - If the Galatians accepted circumcision as necessary for salvation, they would be leaving the grace system for the Mosaic Law system. The same error is repeated today when a **believer** leaves a church that emphasizes salvation by grace through faith and joins one which teaches that salvation depends on repentance, confession, faith, baptism, and church membership. (Ibid)

**Swindoll** - Once the Galatians chose the Law as their savior and lord, they cut their ties to Christ as Savior and Lord. Does this mean that the Galatians actually lost the eternal life they had received when they believed? Not at all! Paul is now discussing law and grace as two diametrically opposed rules of life. Notice that Paul doesn't say they had fallen from salvation. When somebody chooses the legalistic lifestyle, they've fallen from the lifestyle of grace and all of its benefits. They are seeking to be justified before God and men by their works done in the power of the flesh—their own abilities, unaided by grace—rather than by grace through faith by the power of the Holy Spirit. In short, when we take up the torch of the flesh, we scorch the work of the Spirit! ([Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary – Galatians](#))

**Todd Wilson** comments - If we try to do it all ourselves, we will be left to fend for ourselves. We won't have Christ's blood, we won't have Christ's life, and we won't have Christ's grace. All we'll have is our sinful, silly, little, dissatisfied self, which isn't all that much comfort. We know we've lost sight of what ultimately counts in the Christian life when we begin to lose the joy of living the Christian life. This is the telltale sign." ([Preaching the Word – Galatians: Gospel-Rooted Living](#))

**Luther** on "You have fallen from grace" illustrating it writing "For just as someone on a ship is drowned regardless of the part of the ship from which he falls into the sea, so someone who falls away from grace cannot help perishing. The desire to be justified by the law, therefore, is shipwreck; it is exposure to the surest peril of eternal death. What can be more insane and wicked than to want to

lose the grace and favor of God and to retain the law of Moses, whose retention makes it necessary for you to accumulate wrath and every other evil for yourself? Now if those who seek to be justified on the basis of the moral law fall away from grace, where, I ask, will those fall who, in their self-righteousness, seek to be justified on the basis of their traditions and vows? To the lowest depths of hell!"

**Timothy George** writes that "Contrary to the Arminian interpretation of this text, Paul did not here contemplate the forfeiture of salvation by a truly regenerated believer. He was writing to Christian churches that were founded on the doctrines of grace but that were in danger of forsaking that sound doctrinal bedrock for a theology that can only lead to ruin." ([New American Commentary – Volume 30: Galatians](#))

**Oliver Greene** explains what **fallen from grace** means to genuine believers - Here we learn that the moment a believer begins to work, to try to keep the Law or to be circumcised in order to keep himself saved, that person has **fallen from Grace**. The harder a person works to be saved or to keep saved, the further from Grace that person has fallen. It is utterly impossible to mix works with redemption. It is possible for a believer to **fall from Grace**, but it is **not possible** for a believer to fall from sonship if the believer is truly born into the family of GOD, is truly a son of GOD through the application of the blood of JESUS to the heart. GOD saves us through the power of the blood, covers us with the blood - and keeps us by the power of the Blood. The whole process is by Grace through faith plus nothing. I preach with all my heart that a Christian should do all the good, perform all the good works, he possibly can. A Christian should not be unfruitful (read Titus 3:14). We should bear fruit, more fruit, much fruit. We should not be satisfied with thirty-fold, or sixty-fold. We should strive for a hundred-fold . . . and according to I Corinthians 3:11-15 it is possible for a born again son of GOD to enter GOD's Heaven and completely lose his reward! Works do not save us, works do not help to save us; works do not keep us saved, works do not help to keep us saved. From the beginning to the end of a true experience with GOD, it is all Grace plus nothing. "AND IF BY GRACE, THEN IS IT NO MORE OF WORKS: OTHERWISE GRACE IS NO MORE GRACE. BUT IF IT BE OF WORKS, THEN IS IT NO MORE GRACE: OTHERWISE WORK IS NO MORE WORK" (Romans 11:6). If there is any one thing that is clear and understandable in the New Testament, it is the fact that Law and Grace do not mix . . . cannot mix. It is all of Grace - one hundred percent Grace - plus nothing. I know someone is asking the question, "**What happens to a believer who thus falls from Grace and returns to Law or works for justification?**" The answer is very clearly stated in Gal 5:4: "CHRIST IS BECOME OF NO EFFECT UNTO YOU, WHOSOEVER OF YOU ARE JUSTIFIED BY THE LAW; YE ARE FALLEN FROM GRACE." What the literal Greek language says here is simply, "Ye are severed from CHRIST. Ye who would be justified by the Law, ye are fallen away from Grace." The Greek translated by the Authorized Version as "become of no effect" has the same meaning as "severed...or brought to naught." The same expression is used by Paul in Romans 7:2 where the Authorized Version translates it "loosed [discharged]." Read Romans 7:6. **The effect of such loosing (discharging) or severing from CHRIST has nothing to do with sonship. What is meant is simply that during the time the believer is practicing Law, CHRIST becomes of no experimental effect. The believer's position in CHRIST has not changed, but the believer's liberty is lost and therefore his joy is lost. And if the believer continues in this state, the reward will be lost.** ([Stand Fast Therefore in the Liberty](#))

**Wayne Barber** on **fallen from grace** - Talking about falling from grace, losing your salvation, that's nowhere in Galatians. That's not even the context of what he's saying. **Galatians is written to believers who have lost that sense of blessing** They never rejected Christ as the means of their salvation. But what they did was reject Christ as the means of their sanctification. They thought now they could be perfected by law. In Gal 3:1-3, Paul talks about that. Well, how many of us have walked in and out of the sphere of grace again and again? Besides me, has anybody else done that since they've been saved? Now, do you understand what he's talking about? How in the world have you fallen out from under? And the word *pipto* for fallen is the word "stumble." How did you stumble out of that sphere of grace? What happened in your life that caused you to be over here? What's going on in your life that you're not living in the freedom you once had? ([Commentary](#))

**S Lewis Johnson** on **fallen from grace** - So the apostle here when he was, "If you try to be justified by the law you have fallen from grace." He does not mean fallen from salvation. He means fallen from the grace method of salvation. You have fallen into legalism. So how can we fall from grace? Why, my dear Christian friend, we fall from grace when we fall into law. That's the only way in which we can fall from grace, when we fall into law, when we fall into legalism. Well, what happens when a person does sin? Well, do you know that then a person sins he does not fall from grace, **he falls into grace**. He falls into the grace of a loving God who institutes in his family his system of discipline by which he restores us to fellowship with himself. Let me illustrate that....It is the conviction of all of us who teach here that when a person has come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and truly possesses eternal life, that he cannot lose that eternal life. Does not our Lord Jesus say in John 10:28-29, "And I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish." Did you notice the word never? Well, it's not even as strong as the original Greek expression. "They shall by no means ever perish neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father who gave them to me is greater than all and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." So we have affirmed that once we have possessed salvation we cannot lose that salvation. We believe in the **perseverance of the saints** because of the **preserving work of our Savior** who works in the hearts of those who have believed, and therefore, they **persevere in their faith**. ([Sermon](#))

**Jack Arnold** on **fallen from grace** - By going back under law, **these Christians had fallen from grace. They had not lost their**

**salvation but they had gone away from the teachings of grace for salvation and sanctification.** The word "fallen" means "to lose one's hold on" which indicates that these saved people had lost their hold upon grace for daily living by the power of the Holy Spirit. If a person seeks to be justified or sanctified by law, he has abandoned the grace principle and is operating outside of the sphere of grace. These Galatians had fallen from the grace method, Just because the Galatians lost hold of Christ in sanctifying grace does not mean that Christ lost hold of them for salvation. **A Christian can fall from grace** by going into any form of legalism, but he cannot fall from salvation, for Christ died for any and all sins of the Christian. If one could lose his salvation, this would make a mockery of Christ and His perfect death for sin. A person could be saved and then through false teaching think that circumcision, law keeping, baptism, church membership, walking an aisle or any physical act was necessary for salvation or sanctification. **The person would fall from grace but not salvation.** This person falls from the grace method or grace principle because he does not understand God's sovereign grace in salvation or the grace manifested by Christ in His completed and perfect death for sinners. A more common form of legalism in some Christian circles is to think that some man-made taboos are necessary for spirituality, such as style of hair, length of skirts, types of dress, involvement in certain amusements, being seen in certain places and so on. **This, too, is a form of legalism and is falling from grace** Legalists, whether saved or unsaved, are miserable people because they are filled with **pride** and have a **critical attitude** about any and everything they do not like. They want everyone to conform to their picky set of man-made rules and regulations even though the Bible has nothing at all to say about these things. This is why it is so important for the Christian to understand his **salvation was begun in grace and must continue in grace** (Acts 13:43+ "When the congregation was dismissed, many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who talked with them and urged them to continue in the grace of God."). ([Liberty not Legalism](#))

**MacArthur on fallen from grace** - Paul is **not dealing with the security of the believer** but with the contrasting ways of grace and law, works and faith, as means of salvation. He is not teaching that a person who has once been justified can lose his righteous standing before God and become lost again by being circumcised or otherwise legalistic. The Bible knows nothing of becoming unjustified. Those "whom [God] predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified" (Ro 8:30+). **Paul's primary point in this passage, as throughout the letter, is that law and grace cannot be mixed.** As a means to salvation they are totally incompatible and mutually exclusive. To mix law with grace is to obliterate grace. For a believer to start living again under the law to merit salvation is, in fact, to reject salvation by grace. Contrary to the teaching of the Judaizers, to add circumcision and other works of the law to what Christ accomplished by grace is not to raise one's spiritual level but to severely lower it. Legalism does not please God but offends Him. It does not bring a person closer to God but rather drives him away....Contrary to **justifying grace**, **sanctifying grace** is interruptible. **Living by the flesh** interferes with **living by the Spirit**, and living by the flesh may even involve doing the right things for the wrong reasons or in the wrong way. For example, to worship God from the heart and for His own sake is to live by the Spirit. But to worship Him only outwardly or to impress others with our supposed spirituality is to live by the flesh. To witness to a person while trusting in God to convict and convert him is to live by the Spirit. To witness with the intention of converting a person through our own knowledge of Scripture and powers of persuasion is to live by the flesh. No matter how worthy and God-ordained a person's outward activities may be, to perform them by the flesh is to live by the way of law and to forsake the way of grace. ([MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Galatians](#))

**Wil Pounds on fallen from grace** - The context of that statement is Jewish teachers who emphasized that a person had to keep the Law of Moses to be saved had confuse the Christians in the church at Galatia. They were insisting that all non-Jews must be circumcised and become Jews first. The apostle Paul had taught them clearly that salvation is by grace through faith in Christ (Gal. 1:10; 2:16-21; 3:1-14, 22-29; 5:5-6). Paul wrote his letter to the church admonishing the believers to stand firm against the bondage of legalism. The immediate context states Paul's conviction clearly, "Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace" (Galatians 5:2-4). **Paul is not saying, "You have lost your salvation." What happens when you fall from grace? You fall into law observance. You become legalists.** A. T. Robertson, writes, "'You left the sphere of grace in Christ and took your stand in the sphere of law' as your hope of salvation. Paul does not mince words and carries the logic to the end of the course. He is not, of course, speaking of occasional sins, but he has in mind a far more serious matter, that of substituting law for Christ as the agent in salvation." It is a very serious matter. Paul is concerned that if the Galatians accepted the right of circumcision as necessary for salvation, then they would be leaving the principle of grace and going back to the Mosaic Law. Here are two opposing approaches to God. One system based on legalism and the other on God's grace. The same error can be seen in a church that teaches that salvation depends on repentance, confession, faith, baptism, and church membership as opposed to one that emphasizes salvation by grace through faith. **There is nothing wrong with these teachings except when they become the means of salvation Baptism by immersion and church membership are not things you do in order to be saved. That is legalism at its worst scenario.** The biggest tragedy for the believer is that he is robbed of the spiritual wealth that is his by abiding in Christ. Legalists rob the Christian of his liberty. Legalists do not live by the Spirit, but by rules and regulations. He is bound to laws and traditions instead of walking by faith in Christ. Legalism gives a false sense of security, but it chokes the Christ-life out of the believer. ([Abide in Christ](#))

**Related Resources:**

- [Eternal security - is it biblical?](#)
- [What is the relationship of faith, works, and security in salvation?](#)
- [Is eternal security a "license" to sin?](#)
- [Did Old Testament believers have eternal security?](#)

**ILLUSTRATION** - The Methodist movement began in the mid-eighteenth century with a small band of intensely devout students at the University of Oxford. These were towering figures like John and Charles Wesley and George Whitefield. They would meet regularly for study and devotion; they were known as the Holy Club because they practiced strict methods of increasing their spiritual zeal for God. Yet amid all the religious devotion and moral striving, these men had lost sight of what ultimately counts. *In fact*, the Holy Club men knew little or nothing of grace as taught in the Scriptures. Their ironclad régime was one of human effort, that provided no assurance and left the all-important salvation of the soul a distant uncertainty. *Its practices brought little joy....* These ardent men strove on and on, yet saw no point of arrival. Following his conversion, George Whitefield admitted how he'd gotten off track by losing sight of what ultimately counts: "God showed me that I must be born again, or be damned! I learned that a man may go to church, say his prayers, receive the sacrament, and yet not be a Christian." ([Preaching the Word – Galatians: Gospel-Rooted Living](#))

**Galatians 5:5 For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness.**

Phillips Paraphrase - For it is by faith that we await in his Spirit the righteousness we hope to see.

Wuest - For, as for us, through the agency of the Spirit, on the ground of faith, a hoped-for righteousness we are eagerly awaiting, ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

Amplified - For we, [not relying on the Law but] through the [Holy] Spirit's [help], by faith anticipate and wait for the blessing and good for which our righteousness and right standing with God [our conformity to His will in purpose, thought, and action, causes us] to hope.

NET Galatians 5:5 For through the Spirit, by faith, we wait expectantly for the hope of righteousness.

GNT Galatians 5:5 με ς γ ρ πνε ματι κ π στεως λιπ δα δικαιοσ νης πεκδεχ μεθα.

NLT Galatians 5:5 But we who live by the Spirit eagerly wait to receive by faith the righteousness God has promised to us.

KJV Galatians 5:5 For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.

ESV Galatians 5:5 For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness.

CSB Galatians 5:5 For through the Spirit, by faith, we eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness.

NIV Galatians 5:5 But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope.

NKJ Galatians 5:5 For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.

NRS Galatians 5:5 For through the Spirit, by faith, we eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness.

YLT Galatians 5:5 for we by the Spirit, by faith, a hope of righteousness do wait for,

NAB Galatians 5:5 For through the Spirit, by faith, we await the hope of righteousness.

NJB Galatians 5:5 We are led by the Spirit to wait in the confident hope of saving justice through faith,

GWN Galatians 5:5 However, in our spiritual nature, faith causes us to wait eagerly for the confidence that comes with God's approval.

BBE Galatians 5:5 For we through the Spirit by faith are waiting for the hope of righteousness.

- **For we through the Spirit:** Joh 16:8-15 Eph 2:18
- **by faith, are waiting:** Ge 49:18 Ps 25:3,5 62:5 130:5 La 3:25,26 Ho 12:6 Ro 8:24,25 1Th 1:10 2Th 3:5
- **the hope of righteousness:** Ro 5:21 Php 3:9 2Ti 4:8 Tit 2:13
- [Galatians 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

Although Paul begins with a "for" (gar) which is normally a term of explanation, when compared with the preceding negative

consequences, this verse serves almost like a contrast. In fact it is notable that some of the translations begin the verse with **"but"** signaling they also see this as somewhat of a contrast (NLT, NIV).

**For (gar)** - "introducing the ground upon which the uncompromising statements of Gal 5:4 are made." (Vine)

**we** - **"We"** refers to Paul and the Galatians. "We Christians," we who repudiate the law and trust wholly in Christ for justification and the fulfillment of the promises of God.

**Boice** adds "Up to this point Paul has been talking only of the Galatians, using the pronoun "you." He has been warning them about what they seemed to be doing. Now the pronoun changes to "we" and is placed in an emphatic position—"we wait" and "we hope." It is as if Paul is saying, "But, on the other hand, we Christians do not choose legalism; rather, we wait in faith through the Spirit for the full realization of God's righteousness." (Expositor's Bible Commentary - 1976)

Note the striking contrast between a life lived by grace which birthed salvation in our soul...

- Through the Spirit, not the flesh.
- Through faith, not works.
- Through expectant waiting and sure hope, not anxious uncertainty.

**Through the Spirit** - Not through the flesh. The waiting Paul describes will be supernaturally enabled by the Holy Spirit. He will give us both the desire and the power (cf Php 2:13NLT+) to wait patiently and expectantly for this future hope, **the hope of righteousness**.

**John Piper** says **"through the Spirit"** means that what we do as we wait for our final transformation is depend on the Holy Spirit to help us do what we are supposed to do. **"Through the Spirit,"** means that we do not live in our own strength but in the strength that God supplies by the Spirit (**ED**: THIS IS NOT "LET GO, LET GOD" BUT "LET GOD, LET'S GO!"). Paul talks about this in three different ways in Gal 5:16, Gal 5:18, and Gal 5:22. Gal 5:16: "But I say, walk by the Spirit." So we walk - we act, we educate, and we exult - but it is **"by the Spirit."** Gal 5:18: "But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law." Here the stress falls on the work and initiative of the Spirit in our lives: we are **led by the Spirit**. That is how we educate and how we exult. The Holy Spirit takes the initiative and leads us. Gal 5:22: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace..." Here again the work of the Spirit is emphasized. The love and joy and peace that we experience are something the Spirit produces. They are His fruit. So in all four of these ways (Galatians 5:5, 16, 18, 22) of saying it, **the point is that the Spirit is the Source of our behavior that sustains and shapes what we do**. We wait for the hope of righteousness through the Spirit (verse 5), we walk by the Spirit (verse 16), we are led by the Spirit (verse 18), and we bear the fruit of the Spirit (verse 22). (Fulfilling the Law of Love)

**By faith** - What does Paul mean with **"by faith?"** In simple terms, we believe what God has told us He will do to us and for us in the future. As **Duncan** points out even this faith is a gift of the Spirit. We trust God's promise to do good to us in the future and we live accordingly. We live enabled by His Spirit as aliens and strangers who believe that God has prepared a better place for us.

**Boice** on **by faith** - This is the key word and stands in contrast to flesh, as all should be aware from the arguments of chapters 3 and 4. Circumcision is of the flesh. Faith denotes an entirely different approach. (Expositor's Bible Commentary - 1976)

**Spurgeon** on **by faith** - If I wanted to describe saving faith in one word, I would say that it is trust. It is so believing God and so believing in Christ that we trust ourselves and our eternal destinies in the hands of a reconciled God. As creatures, we look up to the great Father of spirits; as sinners, we trust for the pardon of our sins to the atonement of Jesus Christ; as being weak and feeble, we trust to the power of the Holy Spirit to make us holy and to keep us so. We venture our eternal interests in the vessel of free grace, content to sink or swim with it. We rely upon God in Christ.

**Faith** (4102)(**pistis** from **peitho** = persuade, be persuaded) properly is persuasion, God giving His *persuasion* about what pleases Him. Pistis is synonymous with trust or belief and is the conviction of the truth of something, in Scripture speaking of belief respecting man's relationship to God and divine things, generally with the included idea of trust and holy fervor born of faith and joined with it. Faith is not just mental assent but firm conviction, surrender to that truth and conduct emanating from that surrender. For believers **faith** is "the Lord's inworked persuasion." (Gleason Archer) In its biblical sense, **faith** is always received by believers (never self-generated). **Faith** is always the gift (work) of God, from the moment of conversion, to the end of sanctification (so Wm. Tyndale, M. Luther, J. Calvin, etc.).

**Duncan** adds on **through the Spirit by faith** - Glorification is something we receive as a gift, just as justification is a gift. In fact, glorification is the natural outcome and result of justification. And the gift of it is indicated by the fact that our faith is, Paul says, through the Holy Spirit. It is through His life giving power. We don't generate our own faith. We don't generate our own faithfulness. It is supernaturally given. The Law can't do that. It works death. The Spirit gives life (cf Jn 6:63). He gives faith, and in giving faith, joins



us to Christ and keeps us alive and waiting for the glorious promise of the future. That's what happens through the Spirit. That preposition "**through**" signifies the grace of God.

**Ryken** has an interesting interpretation of this verse writing that "When Paul speaks of waiting for righteousness, he is looking forward to the day of judgment, when God finally will render his verdict on every person who has ever lived." (Ibid)

**Are waiting for the hope of righteousness by faith** - Notice that we **wait** for it. We don't **work** for it! We wait by faith, not by law! It's not a matter of human effort, of striving to earn God's favor by our good deeds. Living under the Law brings a sense of condemnation. Only living by faith brings a sense of hope.

**Donald Campbell on hope of righteousness** - At the coming of Christ believers will be completely conformed to all the requirements of God's will (**ED**: THIS IS OUR HOPE - IT IS A SURE HOPE, NOT A HOPE SO!). The inward and forensic righteousness which began at justification will be transformed into an outward righteousness at glorification. God will then publicly acknowledge all believers' full acceptability with Him. (BKC)

**Hope** is absolute assurance of future good. In this case the hope is righteousness. What does Paul mean? It would seem that the most straightforward interpretation is that "**we** Christians" are waiting for righteousness in the future. In other words, "**we** Christians" are waiting by faith (we are trusting in God's promises) for the future glory when full righteousness will be realized (at [Glorification](#)) and each of us will be perfect, not only positionally perfectly righteous before God (as we are now because we are in Christ, positionally in [His perfect imputed righteousness](#) - 1 Cor 1:30, 2 Cor 5:21), but experientially perfectly righteous and this will be our experience forever and ever. Amen!

**Piper on through the Spirit by faith** explains that our life now

"is lived in the power of Another, not in our own power. There is a reason for this. The reason is that the giver gets the glory. And God designs all things so He gets the glory. Here is the way Peter makes this crystal clear (1 Peter 4:11): **"Whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ."** The Christian life is meant to be a life lived by the power of Another, namely, God the Spirit, so that God Alone will get the glory. Which leaves us the question: How do you live so that it no longer you who lives but the Spirit who lives through you (Galatians 5:5) - or Christ who lives in you (Galatians 2:20)? The answer is given in at least three different places in Galatians. One is right here in our text, Galatians 5:5, "For we through the Spirit, **by faith**, are waiting for the hope of righteousness." The answer is that we tap into the power of the Spirit when we trust Christ. Why do I say, "Trust Christ"? Because that is what Galatians 2:20 says, "'I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me [there's the sustaining shaping power of the Another - **ED**: THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST LIVES IN ME]; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God." So Christ lives in me, that is, I live by the Spirit - How? "I live by faith in the Son of God." So the way we live "through the Spirit" or "walk by the Spirit" or are "led by the Spirit" or bear "the fruit of the Spirit" is to live "by faith in the Son of God." But we can be more specific. The third place in Galatians where we are told how to live by the Spirit is Galatians 3:5, **"Does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?"** The Spirit is supplied and works in and among us **"by hearing with faith."** This means that the way to **wait** by the Spirit and **walk** by the Spirit and **bear** the fruit of the Spirit is to trust the Word - the promises of Christ. **"Hearing with faith"** implies that Christ says something to us and we believe it. And in that very faith in what we hear, the Spirit is being supplied to us so that the effect will be the fruit of the Spirit - especially love (Gal 5:22; Gal 5:13). ([Fulfilling the Law of Love](#))

**Wiersbe** explains what those who live by grace can look forward to in contrast to those who live by law - When the believer walks by faith, depending on the Spirit of God, he lives in the sphere of God's grace; and all his needs are provided. He experiences the riches of God's grace. And, He always has something to look forward to (Gal. 5:5) -- one day Jesus shall return to make us like Himself in perfect righteousness. The **Law** gives no promise for perfect righteousness in the future. The **Law** prepared the way for the first coming of Christ (Gal. 3:23-4:7), but it cannot prepare the way for the second coming of Christ. **So, the believer who chooses legalism robs himself of spiritual liberty and spiritual wealth. He deliberately puts himself into bondage and bankruptcy.** ([Galatians](#))

**Spurgeon on waiting** - Notice the posture that our hope takes. We are **waiting** for this hope—**waiting**. Would it not have been better to have said, "We are **working**"? No, it would have spoiled the sense altogether. To complete the foundation of our **hope of righteousness** by faith, we have nothing more to do except to wait for the reward of what is done. As far as justifying righteousness is concerned, we are as righteous as we shall be when, robed in light, we shall cast our crowns before the throne of God. We are at rest, waiting in peace. It is true we are working for other reasons and other purposes, but as far as the righteousness of faith is concerned, we are waiting, not working. Waiting—that is the posture of confidence. We are not hurrying, bustling, and running about

in anxiety, but we are at rest, knowing that the reward will come....As the workman when his six days' work is over goes up to his master's pay table and waits for his wage, we believe that the meritorious work by which heaven is procured for us is all done. Therefore, we are waiting in the name of Jesus to take the reward that as a matter of justice is due to Him, and has been by His dying testament transferred to us. ([See also related notes](#))

**Waiting** (eagerly) (553)([apekdechomai](#) from **apó** = intensifier [see Vincent below] + **ekdechomai**= expect, look for <> from **ek** = out + **dechomai** = receive kindly, accept deliberately and readily) means waiting in great anticipation but with patience (compare our English expression "wait it out"). To expect fully. To look (wait) for assiduously (marked by careful unremitting attention) and patiently. It is notable that **apekdechomai** is used seven times in the NT of the return of Christ: Rom. 8:19, 23, 25; 1 Cor. 1:7; Gal. 5:5; Phil. 3:20; Heb. 9:28)

**Apekdechomai** is in the [present tense](#) indicating this is a heavenly citizen's continual mindset and the [middle voice](#) which indicates the subject is the beneficiary of the waiting. Another way to think of the middle voice is it speaks of the subject's personal. In the use in Php 3:20 Wuest picks up on this nuance of the middle voice with the translation "**eagerly waiting to welcome** the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, **and to receive Him to ourselves**" where "to ourselves" is the reflexive aspect of the middle voice. What a beautiful picture of the Bride, His Church, waiting to receive Him to herself! A waiting, welcoming mindset will motivate the bride to keep herself pure and holy.

**Kenneth Wuest** explains that **apekdechomai** is "a Greek word made up of three words put together, the word, "to receive," ([dechomai](#)) which speaks of a welcoming or appropriating reception such as is tendered to a friend who comes to visit one; the word "off," ([apo](#)) speaking here of the withdrawal of one's attention from other objects, and the word "out," ([ek](#)) used here in a perfective sense which intensifies the already existing meaning of the word. The composite word speaks of an attitude of intense yearning and eager waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus into the air to take His Bride to heaven with Him, the attention being withdrawn from all else and concentrated upon the Lord Jesus." ([Philippians Commentary Online- Recommended](#))

**Hope** (1680)([elpis](#) from **elpō** - to anticipate, welcome) properly speaks of the expectation of something sure or certain. It is a looking forward with confidence to that which is good and beneficial and with reason for confidence respecting fulfillment. And so in Scripture **elpis** is not the world's definition of "I **hope** so", with a few rare exceptions (e.g., Acts 27:20) **Hope** is defined as a desire for some future good with the expectation of obtaining it. **Hope** is always an expectation of something good as well as descriptive of something for which we must wait. **Hope** is the opposite of despair. And the opposite of a "living hope" is a "dead hope." For believers, **elpis** ("hope, an active expectation") is always based on receiving the title-deed of faith, His inborn persuasion about what to expect (wait, hope for). Even as faith is always something received (generated by the Lord, never people), so biblical hope is always from God (about what He has spoken), and is not mere human optimism ("wishful thinking").

**Righteousness** (1343)([dikaiosune](#) from **dikaioo**= being proper or right in the sense of being fully justified being or in accordance with what God requires) is the quality of being upright. In its simplest sense [dikaiosune](#) conveys the idea of conformity to a standard or norm and in Biblical terms the "standard" is God and His perfect, holy character. In this sense **righteousness** is the opposite of hamartia (sin), which is defined as missing of the mark set by God. **Dikaiosune** is rightness of character before God and rightness of actions before men. Righteousness of God could be succinctly stated as all that God is, all that He commands, all that He demands, all that He approves, all that He provides through Christ ([Click here](#) to read Pastor Ray Pritchard's interesting analysis of **righteousness** in the Gospel of Matthew).

**Jack Arnold** interprets the righteousness as present righteousness (sanctification), not future righteousness (glorification). While this is not certainly a reasonable interpretation, most commentators see this as a reference to our future righteousness which will be revealed when Christ returns. One strong support of this interpretation is that the verb **wait** is used 7/8x in the NT to refer to the return of Christ. With that background here is Arnold's comment on this passage -

In this verse, Paul gives the first mention a new kind of life the Christian is to live, not by law but by faith and through the Holy Spirit. This is the life of liberty in Christ Jesus. The "**righteousness**" in this context refers to **experiential righteousness** in one's life after conversion to Christ. This is the **practical righteousness** that one hopes for, as he is dependent on the Holy Spirit in his daily life. The true believer is constantly and continually looking for this **righteousness** to flow from his life. Every Christian should have an intense desire for, and an eager expectation of, **practical righteousness** which will be produced in the life as he yields to the Holy Spirit in his daily life. This, of course, is the answer to the accusation that grace teaching produces loose living because it does not demand that a person keep the Mosaic Law. The Christian has a new restrainer

other than the law. He has the Holy Spirit in him who is at work to produce righteousness. The law could only provide external righteousness, but the Holy Spirit works in the Christian to produce **internal righteousness**.

There is no strength or power in circumcision or uncircumcision when one is in Christ. The power is in God who loves and gives the power to exercise faith through the Holy Spirit. This "love" does not refer to man's love or we would have salvation or spirituality by works. It would be making faith the result of man's love. Faith is the result of God's love and this faith works because God is behind it. The doctrine of grace does not cause a person to be indifferent about his Christianity resulting in low morals and ethics, but real grace and love from God produces faith in the Christian. This could be translated, "But faith which is working by love." The Holy Spirit is working inside every Christian to produce holiness of life (Phil. 2:12b-13 "Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose."). The Christian does not work in order to be saved or keep himself saved, but he works by faith because he is saved. True faith works. The true Christian will prove with his life he is saved, but the power to exercise faith comes from God Himself, for He is working in the life of every Christian through the Holy Spirit. Works are not the cause of our salvation, but are the result of it. The Christian works as he is motivated by the Holy Spirit out of a deep appreciation of God's grace and love that has been shown him in Christ Jesus. Spirit-moved and faith-prompted works are necessary to prove, demonstrate and give evidence of true saving faith (James 2:14 "What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims (says) to have faith but has no deeds (works)? Can such a faith save him? (No!)").([Liberty not Legalism](#))

**Boice** sees this righteousness as present and future writing that "In the context, "the righteousness for which we hope" does not refer to that imputed righteousness the believer has in the present through faith in Christ's death, though the thought is not far away, but rather (in line with the ethical section to follow) to that actual righteousness the believer is to grow into (**ED**: THIS WOULD BE LIKE ARNOLD DESCRIBES ABOVE) and which he is to be perfectly conformed to in glory (**ED**: THIS WOULD BE GLORIFICATION). ([Expositor's Bible Commentary - 1976](#))

[Count Von Zinzendorf](#) beautifully describes our future righteousness...

Jesus Thy Blood and righteousness  
My beauty are, my glorious dress;  
'Midst flaming worlds in these arrayed,  
With joy shall I lift up my head.  
([Play Beautiful Vocal](#))

**Galatians 5:6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.**

Phillips Paraphrase - In Jesus Christ there is no validity in either circumcision or uncircumcision; it is a matter of faith, faith which expresses itself in love.

Wuest - for in Christ Jesus neither circumcision is of any power nor uncircumcision, but faith coming to effective expression through love. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

Amplified - For [if we are] in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith activated and energized and expressed and working through love.

NET Galatians 5:6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision carries any weight— the only thing that matters is faith working through love.

GNT Galatians 5:6 ν γ ρ Χριστ ἡσο ο τε περιτομ τι σχ ει ο τε κροβυστ α λλ π σις δι γ πης νεργουμ νη.

NLT Galatians 5:6 For when we place our faith in Christ Jesus, there is no benefit in being circumcised or being uncircumcised. What is important is faith expressing itself in love.

KJV Galatians 5:6 For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.

ESV Galatians 5:6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.

CSB Galatians 5:6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision accomplishes anything; what



matters is faith working through love.

NIV Galatians 5:6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

NKJ Galatians 5:6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.

NRS Galatians 5:6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; the only thing that counts is faith working through love.

YLT Galatians 5:6 for in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith through love working.

NAB Galatians 5:6 For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.

NJB Galatians 5:6 since in Christ Jesus it is not being circumcised or being uncircumcised that can effect anything -- only faith working through love.

GWN Galatians 5:6 As far as our relationship to Christ Jesus is concerned, it doesn't matter whether we are circumcised or not. But what matters is a faith that expresses itself through love.

BBE Galatians 5:6 Because in Christ Jesus, having circumcision or not having circumcision are equally of no profit; but only faith working through love.

- **For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision:** Ga 5:2,3 3:28 6:15 Ro 2:25-29 3:29-31 1Co 7:19 Col 3:11
- **but faith working through love:** Mt 25:31-40 2Co 5:14 1Th 1:3 Heb 11:8,17-19 Jas 2:14-26 1Pe 1:8 1Jn 3:14-20 4:18-21
- [Galatians 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## FAITH THAT WORKS

Paul's point in this passage is that men are right with God by faith alone and not by any added human rituals or performance, whether it is circumcision, food laws, or even moral living (which can be carried out in a very legalistic manner and blunt the flow of grace and work of the Spirit).

**For in Christ Jesus - In Christ Jesus** is the true sphere of salvation entered by grace through faith alone in Christ alone. For those safe **in Christ Jesus**, the status of circumcision is irrelevant. Nothing is needed for the believer to improve his or her standing before Christ, because they are positionally perfect in His beloved Son.

**Neither circumcision ([peritome](#)) nor uncircumcision ([akrobustia](#)) means anything** - External things (no matter how "spiritual" they may appear) mean absolutely nothing in regard to true spirituality and do not please God (cf Heb 11:6<sup>+</sup>; Ro 8:8<sup>+</sup>). Stated another way absolutely nothing done or not done in the **flesh**, included ornate religious ceremony, makes any difference in our relationship to God. What is external is immaterial and worthless, UNLESS it reflects genuine internal righteousness (Ro 2:25-28, 29<sup>+</sup>).

**MacArthur** - Nothing that is either done or not done in the flesh, not even religious ceremony, makes any difference in one's relationship to God. ([MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Galatians](#))

**Duncan** explains that "We might think as we read through this, "Well, it's really bad to be circumcised, and that means it's good to be uncircumcised." No, Paul's not saying that either. Uncircumcision doesn't matter. That's Paul's point in verse 6. You're not better off without circumcision. The issue doesn't matter. What is important, what is essential, is faith. And not just faith, but Paul says faith working through love – faith that is alive, faith that bears fruit, bears the fruit of love.

**Spurgeon** - The outward is disregarded and the inward becomes all-important. The flesh, like Ishmael, is sent away, and the newborn nature abides with the father, and inherits the covenant promises. All believers understand this riddle: can all of us in this household interpret it?

Paul made a similar assessment of **circumcision** and **uncircumcision** writing "For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation." (Gal 6:15)

**MacArthur** - Life in the Spirit is not static and inactive, but it is faith working through love, not the flesh working through self-effort. Believers are "created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10).

But their working is the product of their faith, not a substitute for it. They do not work for righteousness but out of righteousness, through the motivating power of love....The person who lives by faith works under the internal compulsion of love and does not need the outward compulsion of law. ([MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Galatians](#))

Notice that in Gal 5:5, 6 the great triumvirate - **“faith...hope...and love”** appear together (cf. 1 Cor 13:13, 1 Cor 1:4, 5; 1 Th 1:3).

**But faith (pistis) working through love** - **Working** is [present tense](#) indicating this is the continual activity of a vibrant faith. Saving **faith** proves its genuine character by works of **love**. Salvation is by faith apart from works, but genuine faith has works such as supernatural love. The one who lives by faith is internally motivated by love for God and Christ (Mt 22:37-40), which supernaturally issues forth (enabled by the indwelling Spirit) in reverent worship, genuine obedience, and self-sacrificing love for others. Paul clearly shows the relationship between faith and works emphasizing that good works are a result (not cause) of salvation (which is by grace through faith)...

For by grace you have been saved through **faith**; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good **works**, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. (Eph 2:8-10+).

As **Utley** says "It is Spirit-motivated (AND EMPOWERED) love that for believers sets the standard of conduct and gives the ability to obey. It is the new covenant, a new heart (cf. Jer. 31:33+; Ezek. 36:26–27+)."

**Faith** ([4102](#)) see note on [pistis](#)

**Working** ([1754](#)) ([energeo](#) from **en** = in + **érgon** = work. English = energetic) means to work effectively to cause something to happen. It means power in exercise, and is used only of superhuman power that works energetically, effectively and/or efficiently and produce results.

**Love** ([26](#)) see note on [agape](#)

**Duncan** - When Paul rejects the Law as the basis of our justification and salvation and the means of our sanctification, he's not denouncing godly moral conduct. He's not suggesting that saving **faith** is belief and no **works** need to follow that faith or be involved in it – not at all. For Paul, for all of the apostles, **true faith is a faith that works**, and it can't be otherwise. It cannot be otherwise, because Christ is a Savior Who works. His work of redemption for His people is the greatest work that has even been done and it is the greatest act of love that has ever been done, and it evokes love in us for Him and for others. The love of Christ for us constrains us to love Him in return and love others as He did with the same kind of self-denying love (2 Cor 5:14). It cannot be otherwise, since by faith we are joined to Him, we are placed in Him. We thereby partake of His life, which is a life of love, and that life of Christ transforms us. Because we're in Him, we receive His life and it's a supernatural transformation that takes place. So salvation is by faith, but genuine faith is living faith. It's faith that expresses itself in love, which is the expression of Christian freedom. We act in obedience because we want to, not because we have to. Grace does not preclude works. It promotes works. You might think that, well, the legalist has this advantage on the man of grace. He works harder. That's not the case at all. People who understand grace work harder than legalists, but work for them is not labor. It's service. It's service to God, it's service to men, it's what we want to do. It's what we need to do. It's within us to do that. **So grace promotes works.** ([Sermon](#))

**Jack Arnold** - There is no strength or power in **circumcision or uncircumcision** when one is in Christ. The power is in God Who loves and gives the power to exercise faith through the Holy Spirit. This **“love”** does not refer to man's love or we would have salvation or spirituality by works. It would be making faith the result of man's love. Faith is the result of God's love and this faith works because God is behind it. The doctrine of grace does not cause a person to be indifferent about his Christianity resulting in low morals and ethics, but real grace and love from God produces faith in the Christian. This could be translated, “But faith which is working by love.” The Holy Spirit is working inside every Christian to produce holiness of life (Phil. 2:12b-13 “Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.”). The Christian does not work in order to be saved or keep himself saved, but he works by faith because he is saved. True faith works. The true Christian will prove with his life he is saved, but the power to exercise faith comes from God Himself, for He is working in the life of every Christian through the Holy Spirit. Works are not the cause of our salvation, but are the result of it. The Christian works as he is motivated by the Holy Spirit out of a deep appreciation of God's grace and love that has been shown him in Christ Jesus. Spirit-moved and faith-prompted works are necessary to prove, demonstrate and give evidence of true saving faith (James 2:14 “What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims (says) to have faith but has no deeds (works)? Can such a faith save him? (No!)”).([Liberty not Legalism](#))

**Spurgeon** - Faith is like a metalworker who is about to prepare some work of fine art, such as smiths used to produce in the days of wrought iron. Faith, like a strong and vigorous smith, has love as its arm. Faith does not lift a finger without love. Faith believes and resolves, and then it proceeds to action, but the power with which it can work lies in love. Faith without love would be a cripple without arms. More than this, love is not only faith's arm but its tools. Love is faith's hammer, file, and anvil—its every implement.

You have seen a wrench that can be made to fit every nut and bolt, however large or small. Love is just such a tool, for love will teach a little child or evangelize a nation. Love can stand and burn at the stake, or it can drop two coins into the offering box. Love hopes all things, endures all things (1 Cor 13:7): nothing comes amiss to it. A wonderfully handy tool is this sacred grace that faith has adopted to work with. It can strike and cut; it is good for uniting and good for breaking. It will do anything faith wishes it to. Only let faith wield love as its instrument, and it can fashion whatever divine wisdom tells it to form.

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**ILLUSTRATION** - The story is told of an aspiring artist who was commissioned to do a large sculpture for a famous museum. At last he had the opportunity to create the masterpiece he had long dreamed of. After laboring over the work for many years, he saw it grow not only in shape but in beauty. But when it was finished he discovered to his horror that it was much too large to be taken out a window or door and that the cost for tearing down part of the building in order to remove it was prohibitive. His masterpiece was forever a captive to the room in which it was created. That is the fate of all human religion. Nothing a person does to earn God's favor can leave the room of this earth where his self-made works are created. (MacArthur)

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### **Faith Working by Love C. H. Spurgeon.**

#### **I. FAITH ALWAYS PRODUCES LOVE.**

1. By a necessity of faith's own nature.
2. By the discoveries of beauty in Christ which faith is sure to make.
3. By its appropriation of the love of Christ.
4. By its enjoyment of mercy, leading the heart to a grateful acknowledgment of the source of mercy.
5. By the familiarity with God and the congeniality of disposition which it breeds in the heart.

#### **II. LOVE IS ENTIRELY DEPENDENT ON FAITH.**

1. No man loves a Saviour in whom he reposes no confidence.
2. Love cannot flourish except as faith flourishes.
3. Love cannot work without faith.

#### **III. FAITH DISPLAYS ITS POWER BY LOVE. Compare faith to an artificer in metals.**

1. Love is faith's arm.
2. Faith's tools.
3. Faith's furnace.
4. Faith's mould.
5. Faith's metal, for into the mould of love faith pours love itself.
6. Faith's burnisher.

#### **IV. LOVE REACTS ON FAITH AND PERFECTS IT.**

1. Love leads the soul into admiration and so increases faith.
2. Love forbids unbelief.
3. Perfect love casts out fear. In conclusion
  - (1) Faith works: let us as a Church work because we have faith.
  - (2) A working Church must be a loving Church, for faith works by love.
  - (3) But if you are to be a working and a loving Church you must be a believing Church, for that is the bottom of all.

### **Galatians 5:7 You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth?**

Phillips Paraphrase - You were making splendid progress; who put you off the course you had set for the truth?

Wuest - You were running well. Who cut in on you and thus hindered you from obeying the truth? ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

Amplified - You were running the race nobly. Who has interfered in (hindered and stopped you from) your heeding and following the Truth?

NET Galatians 5:7 You were running well; who prevented you from obeying the truth?

GNT Galatians 5:7 τρ χετε καλ ς· τ ς μ ς ν κοψεν [τ] ληθε μ πε θεσθαι;

NLT Galatians 5:7 You were running the race so well. Who has held you back from following the truth?

KJV Galatians 5:7 Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?

ESV Galatians 5:7 You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?

CSB Galatians 5:7 You were running well. Who prevented you from obeying the truth?

NIV Galatians 5:7 You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth?

NKJ Galatians 5:7 You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?

NRS Galatians 5:7 You were running well; who prevented you from obeying the truth?

YLT Galatians 5:7 Ye were running well; who did hinder you -- not to obey the truth?

NAB Galatians 5:7 You were running well; who hindered you from following (the) truth?

NJB Galatians 5:7 You began your race well; who came to obstruct you and stop you obeying the truth?

GWN Galatians 5:7 You were doing so well. Who stopped you from being influenced by the truth?

BBE Galatians 5:7 You were going on well; who was the cause of your not giving ear to what is true?

- **You were running well:** Mt 13:21 1Co 9:24 Heb 12:1
- **who hindered you,** Ga 3:1
- **from obeying the truth:** Ac 6:7 Ro 2:8 6:17 10:16 15:18 16:26 2Co 10:5 2Th 1:8 Heb 5:9 Heb 11:8 1Pe 1:22
- [Galatians 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## PAUL CHIDES THE GALATIANS

Paul is giving the Galatians what **McGee** calls "a gentle rebuke."

**Dan Duncan** says here Paul "compares the Galatians' past progress with their present confusion. Paul was fond of athletic metaphors, and if you read through the New Testament, read through his letters, you read of his statements about running and wrestling and boxing. He mentions these aggressive kinds of athletic endeavors to bring out the fact that the Christian life is an active life. In fact, it's combative in its nature – not in a bad sense; in a good sense. It calls for vigor. It calls for a life of discipline if it's going to be lived properly and well, of concentration and adherence to the rules and to the life of Christ. And early on the Galatians showed all of that. They were like runners who began the race well. The gun went off, they heard the gospel, they believed it, and they began to run the race with vigor and they were running straight. They were running well. They not only believed the gospel, but they living it. Then someone cut into their lane and forced them off the track, off their course. Now when we see that happen during a sporting event – and occasionally you see in a track meet, runners will collide. It's a violent collision. They fall down, they're sprawled out on the track, they're skinned up, they're hurt, they're dizzy. Well, that's what Paul is describing here, but he doesn't describe it as having happen violently as it might have in a race, but persuasively. It's how he describes this in verse 8. He describes this interference as a persuasion."

**You were running well** - If you have ever run a marathon (I have only run one), the start is so exhilarating with 1000's of other eager runners charging off the starting line with the sound of the gun! But about mile 20 or so I begin to "hit the wall" and was no longer running so well! The Christian life is like that. It is not a sprint or dash but a spiritual marathon, a race that will not end until we enter glory. Indeed, Paul would call all of us to imitate him (1 Cor 11:1<sup>+</sup>), and run this "once in a lifetime" race with endurance (Heb 12:1-2<sup>+</sup>), so that we might be able to confidently say as we prepare to cross the "finish line" in this life "I have fought the good fight, I have finished **the course** (THE RACE), I have kept the faith." (2 Ti 4:7<sup>+</sup>).

Paul frequently compared our Christian life to an athletic race (Gal 2:2; Ro 9:16; 1Co 9:24, Php 3:14). What Paul is saying is that at the outset of their "race," the Galatians were living their Christian life by grace through faith and were doing fine.

**Spurgeon** - Some pilgrims faint because the way is so very long. We can do a great deal at a spurt, but we are not able to keep it up. There are a great many people who enter the church and are splendid fellows for a short time. If they could get to heaven in a one-mile race, they would surely win the prize; but they have no staying power in them. What is needed is perseverance in well doing; perseverance under slights, misrepresentations, and slanders; perseverance when it means tugging and toiling at the oars;

perseverance when there is no smile of recognition, but when there is many a frown from those who misjudge your work. It is under such difficulties that men are apt to faint.

**Who hindered you** - This is a rhetorical question, for Paul has already alluded to their spiritual adversary. They ran well for a time and were making good progress until legalism hindered them. Legalism is always a hindrance, never a blessing.

**THOUGHT** - There are many believers who ran well when they first came to Christ. But somewhere along their Christian journey, legalism began to sneak in and instead of running they began limping, because they no longer were partaking of the grace that saved them in the first place (cf Gal 3:2-3+). They have fallen into the trap of trying to live the Christian life on their own (by keeping rules, by trying to be good enough, by trying to do enough good works to make sure they pleased God, etc, etc) instead of relying wholly on the Holy Spirit for the supernatural power to live this supernatural life in Christ and for the glory of God!

**MacArthur** writes that "The question was not about the identity of the false teachers but about their having been able so easily and quickly to deceive and mislead the Galatian believers. "How could you have allowed those men to overturn what I carefully taught and you eagerly accepted as God's Word?" ([MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Galatians](#))

If you have ever raced, you can appreciate the picture of another runner stepping in front of you and causing you to break stride and even to stumble and fall. So the implication is the readers were not running well at the time Paul wrote this letter. And notice that Paul does not ask "*what*" hindered you but "*who*" hindered you? The Greek pronoun (tis) is actually masculine singular and suggests there may have been some specific man who was the ringleader in Galatia trying to get those running the grace race off track or tripped up. Watch out! They're still around.

The idea is that someone has hindered the Galatians' spiritual race. A Jew (or Jews) where was a Judaizer was leading the readers away from the way of grace and faith and enticing them back into the way of law and works (Gal 1:6,7+). The result was that they were not running well spiritually.

**THOUGHT** - I have been a follower of Christ for 34 years and have sadly seen others who seemingly were **running well**, only to have some false teacher begin to lead them astray from obeying the truth of God's Word. One young man had all the trappings of a great evangelist in Mexico for he was filled with passion and zeal for Jesus and even shared Christ with the border guards as we crossed from Texas into Mexico! It was not long after we returned from one evangelistic trip to Mexico that he became involved (primarily through his wife's influence) with a cult and other than a brief interaction in which I attempted unsuccessfully to speak the Truth to them, I have never seen nor heard from Miguel and Sylvia again. And they had seemed to be running so well! Save them Lord if they are lost! Amen.

**Hindered** (thwarted) ([1465](#))([egkopto/enkopto](#) from **en** = in + **kópto** = cut down, strike) strictly means to knock or cut into, to impede one's course by cutting off his way; and hence to hinder, impede, thwart or interrupt. All 5 uses are in a spiritual context (Acts 24:4; Rom. 15:22; Gal. 5:7; 1 Thess. 2:18; 1 Pet. 3:7) - Paul's course hindered (1 Th 2:18, Ro 15:22), the progress of the Gospel hindered (1 Cor 9:22), the prayers by a husband who mistreats his wife (1 Peter 3:7). In sum, **egkopto** means to interfere with the activity or progress of something, the word hindered stressing harmful and/or annoying delay or interference. Most of you reading probably cannot identify with this illustration but this word reminds me of cutting in old days when telephone lines had to be shared, and someone cut in on you while you were talking on the telephone.

**MacArthur** explains that **egkopto** "is a military term referring to digging a trench or breaking up a road. One of the countermeasures an ancient army would take against the opposition was to dig a massive trench that would prevent enemy troops from reaching its men. Another way to frustrate the enemy's progress would be to tear up a brick or stone road so that he could not traverse it. Thus Paul depicted the powerful devil as supernaturally obstructing the apostle's strong desire to revisit Thessalonica. (1 & 2 Thessalonians Commentary)

**From obeying the truth?** - While this phrase can refer to the initial "obedience" to the Gospel (1 Pe 1:22, Acts 6:7 compare the antithesis Ro 2:8, 2 Th 6:7), in context it would seem to be better interpreted as continuing to live in conformity with the truth of the Gospel, living by grace through faith (the same way we were initially saved is the same way we should continue to live the Christian life).

Peter uses a similar phrase in 1 Pe 1:22 "Since you have in **obedience to the truth** purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart."

In Ro 2:8 Paul writes that "those who are selfishly ambitious and **do not obey the truth**, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation."

**MacArthur** explains that "**Obeying the truth** could refer to the true **Gospel**, that is, the way by which men are saved (cf. Acts 6:7;

Ro 2:8; Ro 6:17; 2 Th 1:8). Or the phrase (**obeying the truth**) could refer to the true way in which the saved live out their redeemed lives in obedience to God's Word and Spirit (cf. Ro 6:17; 1 Pe 1:22). Paul seems to be using the phrase in both senses, because the legalism of the Judaizers was preventing the unsaved from coming to Christ in faith and the saved from following Him in faith. The church has always faced the **danger of legalism**, because the inclination of the flesh is always to live for its own purposes and in its own power. But **"though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh"** Paul warns, **"for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses"** (2 Co 10:4). The false teachers who were leading the Galatians astray were far from well-intentioned. Their purpose was to gain a following for themselves (Ga 4:17) and **"to make a good showing in the flesh"** (Gal 6:12). They were forerunners of all the self-promoting false teachers who have plagued the church throughout its history and will continue to do so until the Lord returns. **"There will also be false teachers among you,"** Peter warns, **"who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves"** (2Pe 2:1). Paul warns that **"the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron"** (1Ti 4:1-2). They are **"always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. ... These men also oppose the truth, men of depraved mind, rejected as regards the faith"** (2Ti 3:7-8)."

**Obeying** (3982)(**peitho**) means literally to persuade or induce by words to believe. Notice it is in the [present tense](#), which necessitates continual dependence on the Spirit to continually obey the truth rather than trying to obey legalistically.

**Swindoll** writes "The Judaizers had placed an obstacle in their path, tripped them up, and waylaid their progress. Bruised and battered, they were leaving the track and strapping heavy weights of the Law around their ankles and chests. Paul wanted them to realize the egregious error they were making. Instead of running free toward the crown of life, they were panting laboriously on the treadmill of fruitless endeavor." ([Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary – Galatians](#))

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**Spiritual Declension** - When visiting a gentleman in England, I observed a fine canary. Admiring his beauty, the gentleman replied, "Yes, he is beautiful, but he has lost; his voice. He used to be a fine singer, but I was in the habit of hanging his cage out of the window, the sparrows came around him with their incessant chirping, gradually he ceased to sing and learned their twitter, and now all that he can do is to twitter, twitter." Oh! how truly does this represent the case of many Christians; they used to delight to sing the songs of Zion, but they came into close association with those whose notes never rise so high, until at last, like the canary, they can do nothing but twitter, twitter. (D L Moody)

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**Various Hindrances** - Never censure indiscriminately; admit and praise that which is good, that you may the more effectually rebuke the evil. Paul did not hesitate to praise the Galatians, and say, "Ye did run well." It is a source of much pleasure to see saints running well. To do this they must run in the right road, straight forward, perseveringly, at the top of their pace, with their eye on Christ, etc. It is a great grief when such are hindered or put off the road. The way is the truth, and the running is obedience; men are hindered when they cease to obey the truth. It may be helpful to try and find out who has hindered us in our race. (See [Spurgeon's Notes on evidence of hindrance, on who has hindered you, your need to mend your pace, etc](#)).

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**Signs of Backsliding** - Among the evidences of backsliding are these —1. Indifference to prayer and self-examination. 2. Trifling or unprofitable conversation. 3. Neglect of public ordinances. 4. Shunning the people of God. 5. Associating with the world. 6. Neglect of the Bible. 7. Gross immorality. ([C Buck](#))

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**A Sailor Remarks** - "Sailing from Cuba, we thought we had gained sixty miles one day in our course; but at the next observation we found we had lost more than thirty. It was an under-current. The ship had been going forward by the wind, but going back by the current." So a man's course in religion may often seem to be right and progressive, but the under-current of his besetting sins is driving him the very contrary way to what he thinks. (Cheever.)

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### Galatians 5:8 This persuasion did not come from Him who calls you.

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Phillips Paraphrase - That sort of "persuasion" does not come from the the one who is calling you.

Wuest - This persuasion is not from the One who calls you. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

Amplified - This [evil] persuasion is not from Him Who called you [Who invited you to freedom in Christ].

NET Galatians 5:8 This persuasion does not come from the one who calls you!

GNT Galatians 5:8 πεισμον ο κ κ το καλο ντος μ ς.



NLT Galatians 5:8 It certainly isn't God, for he is the one who called you to freedom.

KJV Galatians 5:8 This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you.

ESV Galatians 5:8 This persuasion is not from him who calls you.

CSB Galatians 5:8 This persuasion did not come from the One who called you.

NIV Galatians 5:8 That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you.

NKJ Galatians 5:8 This persuasion does not come from Him who calls you.

NRS Galatians 5:8 Such persuasion does not come from the one who calls you.

YLT Galatians 5:8 the obedience is not of him who is calling you!

NAB Galatians 5:8 That enticement does not come from the one who called you.

NJB Galatians 5:8 It was certainly not any prompting from him who called you!

GWN Galatians 5:8 The arguments of the person who is influencing you do not come from the one who is calling you.

BBE Galatians 5:8 This ready belief did not come from him who had made you his.

- [Galatians 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## A FALSE PERSUASION

**Persuasion** is defined in English as the process by which a person's attitudes or behaviour are, without duress, influenced by communications from other people. The addressing of arguments to someone with the intention of changing their mind or convincing them of a certain point of view, course of action etc.

**Cereghin** quips that "It is amazing how often disobedient Christians will claim that "The Lord led me" to do something that is so contrary to Scripture. The Galatians seemed to fall back to this line of defense against Paul- "The Lord led us to do it!" (How many times have you heard that?) No He did not. Paul asserted. The Lord gets blamed for a lot of things that He did not do. We do a thing, knowing God has not commanded it or approved of it, and then seek God's rubber stamp on it." ([Commentary](#))

**Rapka on this persuasion did not come from Him** - Their (PERSUASIVE) teaching had moved the Galatians from "running" along the path of the law-free gospel Paul had preached to them (Gal 1:6–10; Gal 3:1–2) to the nomistic (LEGALISTIC) course made up of belief in Jesus plus the incorporation of law observance. But, Paul says, this version of the Gospel is not from God, Who had called them; this is an artifice of the Judaizers, designed to ensnare the Galatians for the Judaizers' own purposes. (EBC - revised)

**This persuasion did not come from Him Who calls you**- In the present context what was "**this persuasion?**" This is a description of the false teaching regarding circumcision (aka "legalism") that had hindered the Galatian believers from **obeying the truth**. It wasn't a violent pushing them aside out of their proper running lane as might happen in a crowded race. No, this hindrance came very persuasively, but it not come from God, from His Spirit.

**Spurgeon** - Somebody else has called you aside, some false shepherd, who is but a wolf in sheep's clothing, and who would destroy you if he could."

**Did not come from Him Who calls you**- This **persuasion** was not from God. It was from "false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage." (Gal 2:4+).

(Ga 1:6) I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel;

**Persuasion** (only here in NT)([3988](#))(**peismone**) refers to the means or the process of convincing. **Robertson** says it refers to "the art of persuasion," implying that these smooth talking Jews had honed their skills and thus presented a very convincing argument for the necessity of circumcision in order to be saved. **Vincent** adds "The sense is not passive, *your being persuaded*, but active, the persuasion *which the Judaizing teachers exert over you*"

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**E H Andrews** an believing English physicist and engineer offered a practical grid we can all apply to persuasive teaching -

Here is a most valuable test, which can be applied to all or any teaching purporting to be Christian. Any belief

or 'persuasion' which does not testify to 'the grace of Christ', is not from God. Here are twin pillars of the truth, namely the person and work of Christ, and the grace of God in Christ. They support and underpin all truly Christian teaching. No matter how attractive or pious a doctrine may appear, it is not to be received as coming from God unless it passes this double test, namely:

1. Does it make Christ central, and glorify him?
2. Does it exalt the grace of God, over against the activity of man?

Whether it be instruction in salvation, in worship, in service, or in living for God, its precepts are only to be received if they flow from the grace of Christ. Had the Galatians applied this test to the teachings of the Judaizers, they would soon have realized that they detracted from Christ's perfect, finished and sufficient work of atonement. (Free in Christ: The message of Galatians)

### Galatians 5:9 A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough.

Phillips Paraphrase - Alas, it takes only a little leaven to affect the whole lump!

Wuest - A little yeast is permeating the whole lump. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

Amplified - A little leaven (a slight inclination to error, or a few false teachers) leavens the whole lump [it perverts the whole conception of faith or misleads the whole church].

NET Galatians 5:9 A little yeast makes the whole batch of dough rise!

GNT Galatians 5:9 μικρὸ ζῆμὴν τὸ φράμα ζυμοῖ .

NLT Galatians 5:9 This false teaching is like a little yeast that spreads through the whole batch of dough!

KJV Galatians 5:9 A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.

ESV Galatians 5:9 A little leaven leavens the whole lump.

CSB Galatians 5:9 A little yeast leavens the whole lump of dough.

NIV Galatians 5:9 "A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough."

NKJ Galatians 5:9 A little leaven leavens the whole lump.

NRS Galatians 5:9 A little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough.

YLT Galatians 5:9 a little leaven the whole lump doth leaven;

NAB Galatians 5:9 A little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough.

NJB Galatians 5:9 A pinch of yeast ferments the whole batch.

GWN Galatians 5:9 A little yeast spreads through the whole batch of dough.

BBE Galatians 5:9 A little leaven makes a change in all the mass.

- Mt 23:33 16:6-12 Mk 8:15 Lu 12:1 13:21 1Co 5:6,7 15:33 2Ti 2:17
- [Galatians 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### BE WARY OF EVEN THE SMALLEST DOCTRINAL ERROR!

Paul now proceeds to use a common saying to illustrate the destructive influence these **persuasive** but false teachings had caused in the Body of Christ in Galatia (see especially the effect in Gal 5:15).

**Spurgeon** - One man's influence may mislead thousands; one piece of false doctrine may taint our whole creed. If you have a wrong ground of confidence, you are wrong altogether.

**Cereghin** - A little leaven of false doctrine or false practice leads to greater errors later. Today it is legalism. What will that lead to? What will it be tomorrow? Full-blown apostasy always starts small- a doctrine compromised a bit here, an unscriptural practice introduced there. The Galatians had been leavened by legalism. If they did not purge out this leaven of false doctrine now, they

stood in danger of greater problems in the future. ([Commentary](#))

**A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough** - Paul's point is that even a little error introduced by a persuasive person could spread throughout the body -- permeating, corrupting, affecting everyone it "touches." It would be subtle and imperceptible at the outset, but eventually it would spread throughout and effect all the believers. Doctrinal error spreads just like yeast spreading in a lump of dough.

**THOUGHT** - Think about the effect of a "little yeast" and a "little error." There is no such thing as a *little* error. Have you ever been around someone who expressed just a "*little*" heresy. And others said, don't worry it's such a *little* issue! How foolish people can be, for all it takes to cause a massive forest fire is one *little* spark! So think of the Body of Christ you belong to as a "lump of dough," a whole with individual parts. And it is everyone's obligation to be on guard constantly for "*little*" heretical errors! And learn from Paul's description that this heresy may be very persuasive to some and it must be removed. Small persuasive errors can produce big catastrophic consequences!

**Duncan** comments that "Benjamin Franklin put it this way: For want of a nail, the shoe was lost; for want of a shoe, the writer was lost; for want of a writer, the battle was lost; and for want of a battle, the kingdom was lost. All this for want of horseshoe nail. Circumcision seems like a small thing, and it's persuasive. It's Biblical. Abraham was circumcised. The word of God commanded circumcision for those in Abraham's family and for the Jewish people. But wrongly taught, it is deadly. It brings a person under obligation to the whole Law and severs him from Christ. Neglecting small errors results in big problems. Paul warns of that."

**Leaven** (yeast) ([2219](#)) ([zume](#) probably from **zeo** = to heat, as in fermentation of dough when leaven is mixed) was literally a small portion of dough that was retained in order to start a new batch of dough. In ancient times, when bread was about to be baked, a small piece of dough was pulled off and saved. That **leaven** or yeast would then be allowed to ferment in water, and later kneaded into the next batch of fresh dough to make it rise. **Leaven** throughout Scripture was used figuratively to describe permeating power or influence, usually the influence of evil, but also of good in Mt 13:33 and Lk 13:21 referring to the growth or expansion of the Kingdom of God. **Zume** is was used proverbially to demonstrate great effect from little causes. Paul uses the term two times here in Galatians to describe the effect of the false doctrine of legalism (of which circumcision was only the "tip of the legalistic iceberg"), of mixing of Law and Grace. Writing to the believers at Corinth, in 1 Corinthians 5:6, it refers to immorality in personal life, which, continually tolerated by the Corinthian church, was a dangerous thing for the whole church.

**Zume** in the NT - Matt. 13:33; Matt. 16:6; Matt. 16:11; Matt. 16:12; Mk. 8:15; Lk. 12:1; Lk. 13:21; 1 Co. 5:6; 1 Co. 5:7; 1 Co. 5:8; Gal. 5:9

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### Little Nicks—Big Trouble!

A little leaven leavens the whole lump. —Galatians 5:9

We couldn't figure it out. My son and I had purchased an old powerboat for fishing and couldn't make it run properly. We were unable to get it up to speed, and it shuddered when we tried to go faster. We figured that the trouble was with the fuel system, so we adjusted the carburetor and changed the fuel filter. But that still didn't solve the problem.

When we took the boat out of the water, my son found the cause of the trouble. One of the propeller fins had a 3/4-inch (2 cm) nick in it. That can't be it, I thought. That nick is too small. But when we installed a new propeller, what a difference it made! We had been slowed down by a tiny nick.

A similar problem is often at work in our lives as Christians. Sinful practices like those described in Galatians 5:16-21 have their roots in the seemingly insignificant thoughts and attitudes of the heart (Matthew 5:28; 15:18-19). If we ignore or tolerate these "little" sins, they will eventually grow, corrupting more of our thoughts and actions—even harming people around us. Just as a little yeast leavens a whole lump of dough (Galatians 5:9), so also a "little" sin can eventually weaken our service for Christ and the ministry of His church.

Remember, little nicks can cause big trouble. By: David C. Egner ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

One little sin, what harm can it do?  
Give it free reign and soon there are two.  
Then sinful deeds and habits ensue—  
Guard well your thoughts, lest they destroy you. —D. De Haan

Little sins won't stay little.

**Galatians 5:10 I have confidence in you in the Lord that you will adopt no other view; but the one who is disturbing you will bear his judgment, whoever he is.**

Phillips Paraphrase - I feel confident in the Lord that you will not take any fatal step. But whoever it is who is worrying you will have a serious charge to answer one day.

Wuest - As for myself, I have come to a settled persuasion in the Lord with respect to you, namely, that you will take no other view than this. But the one who troubles you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

Amplified - [For my part] I have confidence [toward you] in the Lord that you will take no contrary view of the matter but will come to think with me. But he who is unsettling you, whoever he is, will have to bear the penalty.

NET Galatians 5:10 I am confident in the Lord that you will accept no other view. But the one who is confusing you will pay the penalty, whoever he may be.

GNT Galatians 5:10 γὰρ πιστοῦμαι ἐν κυρίῳ ὅτι οὐδὲν ἄλλο φρονεῖτε· ὁ τὰρ σῶν μὲς βαστᾷ τὸ κρῖμα, οἱ σὺν αὐτῷ.

NLT Galatians 5:10 I am trusting the Lord to keep you from believing false teachings. God will judge that person, whoever he is, who has been confusing you.

KJV Galatians 5:10 I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded: but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be.

ESV Galatians 5:10 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.

CSB Galatians 5:10 I have confidence in the Lord you will not accept any other view. But whoever it is that is confusing you will pay the penalty.

NIV Galatians 5:10 I am confident in the Lord that you will take no other view. The one who is throwing you into confusion will pay the penalty, whoever he may be.

NKJ Galatians 5:10 I have confidence in you, in the Lord, that you will have no other mind; but he who troubles you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is.

NRS Galatians 5:10 I am confident about you in the Lord that you will not think otherwise. But whoever it is that is confusing you will pay the penalty.

YLT Galatians 5:10 I have confidence in regard to you in the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded; and he who is troubling you shall bear the judgment, whoever he may be.

NAB Galatians 5:10 I am confident of you in the Lord that you will not take a different view, and that the one who is troubling you will bear the condemnation, whoever he may be.

NJB Galatians 5:10 But I feel sure that, united in the Lord, you will not be led astray, and that anyone who makes trouble with you will be condemned, no matter who he is.

GWN Galatians 5:10 The Lord gives me confidence that you will not disagree with this. However, the one who is confusing you will suffer God's judgment regardless of who he is.

BBE Galatians 5:10 I am certain about you in the Lord, that you will be of no other mind; but he who is troubling you will have his punishment, whoever he is.

- **I have confidence in you in the Lord:** Ga 4:11,20 2Co 1:15 2:3 7:16 8:22 2Th 3:4 Phm 1:21
- **but the one who is disturbing you:** Ga 1:7 2:4 3:1 4:17 6:12,13,17 Ac 15:1,2,24 1Jn 2:18-26
- **will bear his judgment,:** Ga 5:12 1Co 5:5 2Co 2:6 10:2,6 13:10 1Ti 1:20
- **whoever he is.:** Ga 2:6 2Co 5:16
- [Galatians 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**PAUL'S ENCOURAGING  
WORDS**

**I have confidence in you in the Lord** (John 6:39, 40; 10:28, 29; Rom. 8:31-39; Phil. 1:6, 7) - Note that Paul does not say he has confidence in the Galatian believers in themselves alone, but he does have confidence in them as they lean on the Lord and surely His Spirit Who alone could enable them to accurately and effectively "filter" out the persuasive false teaching.

**Duncan** - Paul didn't seem to have any good reason in these Galatians. The Galatians were a weak vacillating people, under the spell of false teachers. They'd been swept away early on. He was amazed that they were so quickly deceived by all of this, he says at the beginning of the letter. There's little reason for him to have confidence in them. But then Paul's confidence really was not in them. His confidence is in the Lord. "I have confidence in you in the Lord." And the Lord is faithful, even when we are not. We are all like sheep. We go astray. He is the good shepherd who goes out after His sheep and finds them. And those who are truly His will be found and they will be brought back into the fold. "My sheep, hear my voice. And they know Me and they follow Me." Well, He goes out and gets the lost sheep through the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit does that through us. Later in 6:1, Paul will say, "You who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness." The Lord works through us and Paul was confident that the Spirit of God would work through him to restore the Galatians to the truth, because he was confident that they were true believers. God works through us to restore one another to the truth by the warnings that we give against error by alerting people to the error that they are in and that they are flirting with.

**Have confidence** (3982)(**peitho**) means convinced or persuaded and includes the components of confidence, reliance, and hope. Here **peitho** is in the [perfect tense](#) indicating that this is Paul's steadfast persuasion regarding the Galatian believers. **Wuest** translates it this way - "I have come to a settled persuasion in the Lord"

**That you will adopt no other view** - That you will have no other opinion. This confidence parallels that Paul expressed to the saints at Philippi

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. 7 For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of grace with me. (Phil 1:6-7<sup>+</sup>)

**Cereghin** has an interesting definition of **legalism** - "Living the Christian life in your own strength and power without the aid of the Holy Spirit or the faith of Christ." I like that. I think it is sadly an accurate description of how many genuine disciples of Jesus are living their Christian life - their strength, not His! My experience over 35 years of walking with Jesus is that one of the main reasons for this "subpar" life, is that many believers simply have not been taught accurately about the role of the Holy Spirit and their daily need for Him, Who alone can enable a supernatural life. And this is not a "second blessing," but really the "first blessing" (so to speak), that blessing you experienced at the outset when you were **running well!**

**Related Resource:**

- [The Holy Spirit-Walking Like Jesus Walked!](#)

## PAUL'S WORDS OF JUDGMENT

**But the one who is disturbing you** - **Disturbing** in the present tense (continually disturbing) and is masculine singular suggesting this is a specific individual.

**NET Note** - In context Paul is referring to the confusion and turmoil caused by those who insist that Gentile converts to Christianity must observe the Mosaic law.

**Disturbing** (stir you up) (5015)(**tarasso**) literally means to shake back and forth and therefore to agitate and stir up (like the pool in John 5:4,7, Lxx = Ezek 32:2, 13, Isa 51:15). To shake together, stir up, disturb, unsettle, throw into disorder (Lxx = Ps 46; 2Sa 22:8 = of earth shaking). Most of the NT uses of **tarasso** are figurative and describe the state of one's mind as stirred up, agitated or experiencing inward commotion. The passive voice is always used in the NT with a negative meaning, conveying the sense of emotional disturbance or inner turmoil, so that one is unsettled, thrown into confusion, or disturbed by various emotions, including excitement, perplexity, fear or trepidation. **Tarasso** conveys the idea of to disturb mentally or to cause a deep emotional disturbance and thus refers to an unsettled mind, as when Herod heard of the birth of Jesus (Mt 2:3), Zacharias' fear when he saw the angel (Lk 1:12), the terror of the disciples when they witnessed Jesus walking on the water (Mt 14:26), Jesus' reaction to the lack of faith among the people before He raises Lazarus (Jn 11:33), in Jesus' command to not let their hearts be troubled (Jn 14:1) and of disturbing the faith of someone (Gal 5:10). **Tarasso** emphasizes the intensity of the Lord's reaction to His impending death (Jn 12:27) and His response to Judas' imminent betrayal. **Tarasso** is a strong word, meaning "to deeply upset," "to deeply disturb," "to perplex," or "to create fear." **Tarasso** also describes the potential effect of false teaching in Galatians 1:7 and Gal 5:10.

**Spurgeon** - Depend upon it, every man who troubles a church with false doctrine is amenable to the High Court above. Sooner or later he may expect even a temporal judgment here below.

**MacArthur** comments that "The destiny of believers is secure. "They shall never perish," Jesus said; "and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand" (John 10:28-29). They will not reject their true salvation for a false one (John 10:4-5,14). They will both persevere and be preserved. But that is not the destiny of ungodly teachers who lead the Lord's people astray. "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble," Jesus said, "it is better for him that a heavy millstone be hung around his neck, and that he be drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matt. 18:6). ([MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Galatians](#))

**Will bear his judgment, whoever he is** - Paul is leaving the just judgment of the false teacher in the hands of God. The Judaizers will not get by with placing leaven in the assemblies in Galatia. In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul wrote "Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness (ED: JUST AS THE JUDAIZERS DID AMONG THE GALATIANS!), **whose end will be according to their deeds.**" (2 Cor 11:15).

**Bear** (941)([bastazo](#) from **basis** = foot) generally means to take up and hold or to bear (Mt 3:11, Mk 14:13, Lk 22:10). Metaphorically bastazo means to bear, endure the punishment incurred by being foolish (Gal. 5:10).

Peter similarly described the fate of false teachers declaring...

Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; **their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep**....9 then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and **to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment**, (2 Pe 2:2-3<sup>+</sup>, 2 Pe 2:9<sup>+</sup>)

**Galatians 5:11 But I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? Then the stumbling block of the cross has been abolished.**

Phillips Paraphrase - And as for me, my brothers, if I were still advocating circumcision (as some apparently allege!), why am I still suffering persecution? I suppose if only I would recommend this little rite all the hostility which the preaching of the cross provokes would disappear!

Wuest - And I, brethren, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I in spite of this fact still being persecuted? Then the stumbling block of the Cross has been done away. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

Amplified - But, brethren, if I still preach circumcision [as some accuse me of doing, as necessary to salvation], why am I still suffering persecution? In that case the cross has ceased to be a stumbling block and is made meaningless (done away).

NET Galatians 5:11 Now, brothers and sisters, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed.

GNT Galatians 5:11 γ ὃ , δέλω , ε περιτομὴν τι κηρσσω, τ τι δι κομαι; ρα κατ ῥηγται τ σκ νδαλον το σταυρο .

NLT Galatians 5:11 Dear brothers and sisters, if I were still preaching that you must be circumcised-- as some say I do-- why am I still being persecuted? If I were no longer preaching salvation through the cross of Christ, no one would be offended.

KJV Galatians 5:11 And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased.

ESV Galatians 5:11 But if I, brothers, still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed.

CSB Galatians 5:11 Now brothers, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished.

NIV Galatians 5:11 Brothers, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished.

NKJ Galatians 5:11 And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the



offense of the cross has ceased.

NRS Galatians 5:11 But my friends, why am I still being persecuted if I am still preaching circumcision? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed.

YLT Galatians 5:11 And I, brethren, if uncircumcision I yet preach, why yet am I persecuted? then hath the stumbling-block of the cross been done away;

NAB Galatians 5:11 As for me, brothers, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case, the stumbling block of the cross has been abolished.

NJB Galatians 5:11 And I, brothers -- if I were still preaching circumcision, why should I still be persecuted? For then the obstacle which is the cross would have no point any more.

GWN Galatians 5:11 Brothers and sisters, if I am still preaching that circumcision is necessary, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the cross wouldn't be offensive anymore.

BBE Galatians 5:11 But I, brothers, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still attacked? then has the shame of the cross been taken away.

- **if I still preach circumcision:** Ga 2:3 Ac 16:3
- **why am I still persecuted:** Ga 4:29 6:12,17 Ac 21:21,28 22:21,22 23:13,14 1Co 15:30 2Co 11:23-26
- **the stumbling block of the cross:** Isa 8:14 Ro 9:32,33 1Co 1:18,23 1Pe 2:8,9
- [Galatians 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## FALSE CHARGES AGAINST PAUL

**But I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision ([peritome](#)), why am I still persecuted?** - This is the twisted irony - False teachers persecute truth teachers! "If I preach to please people, then why am I persecuted?" Why does Paul make this statement? The fact that he has to write this denial supports the premise that the false teachers were saying that Paul agreed with their false teaching. Clearly the fact the false teachers sought to persecute Paul and call into question his teachings was clear evidence that he himself was not **preaching** circumcision. He suffered a lot for preaching a Law-free gospel.

As **MacArthur** points out "False religion has always been and will continue to be the most aggressive and dominant persecutor of the church (cf. John 16:1-3; Rev. 17:5-6). Satan fights God, and satanic religion fights the true faith." (Ibid) (**Ed**: Indeed this has been my personal experience that the most painful persecutions I have experienced in 34 years have come from some of the most "religious" men in the church! I will mention no names, but leave the judgment to God!)

**Cereghin** - Paul is responding to the charge that he was preaching what he was (salvation without works) in order to simply please men. He was charged with preaching an easy gospel that would appeal to everyone. But if that was true, then Paul asks why he was being persecuted. Men-pleasing preachers who preach cheap and easy gospels don't suffer any persecution, since everyone would like that message. But Paul suffered great persecutions because his gospel did not appeal to the religious nature of man (and especially the Jews), thus disproving the charge that Paul was nothing more than a man pleaser.

**Duncan** - He responds to the false charges made by the Judaizers, because they accused Paul, and this is one way they tried to undermine or subvert his authority as an apostle. They said that Paul preached circumcision when it suited him. Well, he'd go when he was preaching in the synagogue or to a Jewish group. He'd say, "Yeah, you've got to be circumcised." But when it came to the Gentiles, he changed his message and cut out the part about circumcision in order to make the gospel easier to accept.

**Preach** (proclaim) ([2784](#))([kerusso](#) from [kerux/keryx](#) = a herald - one who acts as the medium of the authority of one who proclamation he makes) means to proclaim (publicly) or to herald or act as a public crier - the town official who would make a proclamation in a public gathering. Paul used this same verb earlier in Gal 2:2+ to describe "the gospel which I **preach** among the Gentiles."

**Persecuted** (present tense - continually being) ([1377](#))([dioko](#) means to chase, harass, vex and pressure and was used for **chasing down criminals**. It conveys the picture the hounds on the hunt and pursuing after the fox and implying a continuing effort to overtake them (and destroy them).

**Spurgeon** - "The stumbling block of the cross" is that it sets up faith in the infinite merit of Christ's atonement and knocks down all confidence in outward rites and ceremonies. Paul says that if he had preached the flesh-pleasing doctrines of men, he would not have been persecuted. But the fact that he was persecuted was a proof that he was standing fast in the liberty with which Christ had made him free.

**Then the stumbling block of the Cross has been abolished** - "If I were no longer preaching salvation through the cross of Christ, no one would be offended." (NLT) Why would the Judaistic teachings abolish the stumbling block? **Cereghin** puts it this way "The Judaistic gospel brought no offence because everyone likes salvation by works. It exalts man's role in his own salvation (**ED**: And thus his pride) and minimizes God's work. But strip a man of all his religious works and maintain that salvation is all of grace and all of God and what the fur fly! Man's religious pride has been punctured so he will naturally attack the gospel of grace that Paul preached. We must keep this offence of the cross before our congregations at all times. If the message is not offensive then it is not the Gospel. It must be offensive to sinners (and even saints!) because the Gospel and its claims of discipleship naturally are in opposition to the natural mind. Men may want to be saved but only on their own terms. To accommodate this desire is compromising the Gospel, the sin the Judaizers were guilty of. They preached a popular message- work for it. Men like to work for their salvation. That message carries no offence and is thus not the Gospel. To suppose a cross without an offence is folly."

**Duncan** - He would have nothing to fear from men. He would have made is peace with the world. He would be giving them a gospel that they can accept, because preaching circumcision or law keeping tells men that they can save themselves and that they have personal merit and people want to hear that. What men hate about the gospel is that they have nothing to offer God, that Christ alone saves, and that we must come to the foot of the cross with nothing but our sins and come humbly. In fact, if we add our works to Christ's work, we lose His work. Christ is of no benefit to us.

**J C Ryle** - The cross is the strength of a minister. I, for one, would not be without it for the world. I should feel like a soldier without weapons, like an artist without his pencil, like a pilot without his compass, like a laborer without his tools. Give me the cross of Christ. This is the only lever which has ever turned the world upside down hitherto, and made men forsake their sins. A man may begin preaching with a perfect knowledge of Latin, Greek and Hebrew, but he will do little or no good among his hearers unless he knows something of the cross. Never was there a minister who did much for the conversion of souls who did not dwell much upon the cross.

**MacArthur on the stumbling block of the cross** - 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. If the cross obliterated even the true Judaism of the Old Covenant, how much more did it obliterate the false, man-made Judaism represented by the scribes, Pharisees, and Judaizers? The early church Father Chrysostom commented that the cross was a stumbling block to Jews primarily because it failed to require obedience to their ancestral laws. When they attacked Stephen, he observed, they did not charge him with worshipping Christ but with speaking "against the holy place, and the law" (Acts 6:13). Paul confessed that when he "used to persecute the church of God beyond measure, and tried to destroy it," he did so because he was "extremely zealous for [his] ancestral traditions" (Gal. 1:13-14). The Jews were scandalized by the cross because it nullified not only the Mosaic law but also their highly revered rabbinic traditions. ([MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Galatians](#))

**Stumbling block** (4625)([skandalon](#) from a root meaning jump up, snap shut) was originally the piece of wood that kept open a trap for animals. Outside the Bible it is not used metaphorically, though its derivative skandalethron (e.g. a trap set through questions) is so used. The English word **scandal** is derived from the noun via the Lat. **scandalum**. Thus [skandalon](#) was literally, that movable part of a trap on which the bait was laid, and when touched caused the trap to close on its prey. **Skandalon** thus came to mean any entanglement of the foot. Figuratively, as used most often in Scripture, [skandalon](#) refers to any person or thing by which one is drawn into error or sin. (but see more detailed notes below)

### Short Excursus: Why is the cross so offensive?

1. Its doctrine of atonement offends man's pride. (esp his proud belief in works-righteousness)
2. Its simple teaching offends man's wisdom and artificial taste.
3. Its being a remedy for man's ruin offends his fancied power to save himself.
4. Its addressing all as sinners offends the dignity of the Pharisees.
5. Its coming as a revelation offends "modern thought."
6. Its lofty holiness offends man's love of sin. (Charles Spurgeon, Spurgeon's Sermon Notes 4:257)
7. It is an exclusive message, not acknowledging any other remedy to the sin question but instead, claims to be the only and exclusive truth

**Cross** (4716)([stauros](#) from **histemi** = to stand) was an an upright stake, especially a pointed one. Thayer adds the **stauros** was a

well-known instrument of most cruel and ignominious punishment, borrowed by the Greeks and Romans from the Phoenicians; to it were affixed among the Romans, down to the time of Constantine the Great, the guiltiest criminals, particularly the basest slaves, robbers, the authors and abettors of insurrections, and occasionally in the provinces, at the arbitrary pleasure of the governors, upright and peaceable men also, and even Roman citizens themselves. Paul used *stauros* 3x in Galatians - Gal. 5:11; Gal. 6:12; Gal. 6:14.

As Paul said in Galatians 6

But may it never be that I would boast, except in the **cross** of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. (Gal 6:14+)

**Abolished** (2673) ([katargeo](#) from **kata** = intensifies meaning + **argeo** = to be idle or inactive from **argos** = ineffective, idle, inactive from **a** = without + **érgon** = work) literally means to reduce to inactivity. The idea is to make the power or force of something ineffective and so to render powerless, reduce to inactivity. To do away with. To put out of use. To cause to be idle or useless. To render entirely idle, inoperative or ineffective. Cause something to come to an end or cause it to cease to happen. To abolish or cause not to function. To free or release from an earlier obligation or relationship. To no longer take place.

Play **Michael Card's** great song [Skandalon](#).

The seers and the prophets had foretold it long ago  
That the long awaited one would make men stumble  
But they were looking for a king to conquer and to kill  
Who'd have ever thought He'd be so weak and humble

#### **Chorus**

*He will be the truth that will offend them one and all  
A stone that makes men stumble  
And a rock that makes them fall  
Many will be broken so that He can make them whole  
And many will be crushed and lose their own soul*

Along the path of life there lies a stubborn Scandalon  
And all who come this way must be offended  
To some He is a barrier, To others He's the way  
For all should know the scandal of believing

#### **Chorus**

It seems today the Scandalon offends no one at all  
The image we present can be stepped over  
Could it be that we are like the others long ago  
Will we ever learn that all who come must stumble

**Galatians 5:12 I wish that those who are troubling you would even mutilate themselves.**

Phillips Paraphrase - I wish those who are so eager to cut your bodies would cut themselves off from you altogether!

Wuest - I would that they who are upsetting you would even have themselves mutilated. [Eerdmans Publishing](#))

Amplified - I wish those who unsettle and confuse you would go all the way and] cut themselves off!

NET Galatians 5:12 I wish those agitators would go so far as to castrate themselves!

GNT Galatians 5:12 φελον κα ποκ ψονται ο ναστατο ντες μ ς.

NLT Galatians 5:12 I just wish that those troublemakers who want to mutilate you by circumcision would mutilate themselves.

KJV Galatians 5:12 I would they were even cut off which trouble you.

ESV Galatians 5:12 I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves!

CSB Galatians 5:12 I wish those who are disturbing you might also get themselves castrated!

NIV Galatians 5:12 As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!

NKJ Galatians 5:12 I could wish that those who trouble you would even cut themselves off!

NRS Galatians 5:12 I wish those who unsettle you would castrate themselves!

YLT Galatians 5:12 O that even they would cut themselves off who are unsettling you!

NAB Galatians 5:12 Would that those who are upsetting you might also castrate themselves!

NJB Galatians 5:12 I could wish that those who are unsettling you would go further and mutilate themselves.

GWN Galatians 5:12 I wish those troublemakers would castrate themselves.

BBE Galatians 5:12 My desire is that they who give you trouble might even be cut off themselves.

- **would even mutilate themselves.:** Ga 5:10 1:8,9 Ge 17:14 Ex 12:15 30:33 Lev 22:3 Jos 7:12,25 Joh 9:34 Ac 5:5,9 1Co 5:13 Tit 3:10
- **those who are troubling you :** Ac 15:1,2,24
- [Galatians 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## PAUL'S CUTTING SARCASM

Clearly there is a pun intended in this title! Clearly Paul feels very strongly about the false teaching and those who were spreading this leaven.

**I wish that those who are troubling you would even mutilate themselves-** If the Judaizer who advocated obeying the Law, were so enamored of circumcision, they should go all the way and make eunuchs of themselves! This is a little like the law of sowing and reaping for spiritually, circumcision adds nothing to salvation and in fact takes away and "emasculates" spiritually speaking. So those who sowed a little leaven of circumcision should reap literal emasculation!

**Are troubling** (stirring you up) (387)(**anastatoo** from **anastatos** = made to rise up and depart from **anistemi** = to stand up) means to disturb, disquiet, unsettle, to disturb the balance or stability of, to incite to revolt, to cause to rebel, to instigate an uprising, to stir up sedition (Acts 21:38). Used in a letter of a bad little boy whose mother said, "He drives me mad." Used only 3x - Acts 17:6, 21:38 ("stirred up"), Gal 5:12 ("troubling you").

**Mutilate** was the word used of castration, such as in the cult of Cybele, whose priests were self-made eunuchs. Paul's ironic point is that since the Judaizers were so insistent on circumcision as a means of pleasing God, they should go to the extreme of religious devotion and mutilate themselves. Perhaps the resulting physical impotence pictured Paul's desire that they also be unable to produce new converts!

**Spurgeon** - It were better that they were cut off from the church than remain to sow false doctrine. As lepers must be put out of the camp, so must evil teachers be cast out of the church.

**Cereghin** - Strong words for strong apostates! Mean! Nasty! Go back to 1:8 and see where Paul calls down curses on these Judaizers! But when souls are at stake and the Gospel is being undermined, it is no time to be nice and polite. It is time to take out the Sword of the Spirit and start swinging for blood. These Judaizers were leading men to hell by their message and were perverting the Gospel. They deserved nothing better than to be cursed by God and to be cut off.

**MacArthur** on **mutilate** - The word was often used of castration, and that is clearly Paul's meaning here. He is probably referring to the [cult of Cybele](#), a popular pagan nature goddess in Asia Minor during Paul's day. Many devout male worshipers in the cult castrated themselves, and all its priests were self-made eunuchs. Paul was not expressing a crude and cruel desire for the Judaizers' punishment. God would take care of that (v. 10). He spoke rather of their mutilating themselves. His point was, "If the Judaizers are so insistent on circumcision as a means of pleasing God, why don't they go all the way and castrate themselves as the supreme act of religious devotion? If, like the pagans, they believe human achievement can earn divine favor, why don't they go to the pagan extremes of self-mutilation, like the Cybelene priests?" ([MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Galatians](#))

**Mutilate** (609)(**apokopto** from **apo** = from, dissociation + **kopto** = cut) means refers to bodily parts cut off (literally of Peter cutting off an ear in John 18:10, 26; used figuratively by Jesus to warn of the sobering seriousness of sin not repented of - Mk 9.43, 45), of ropes "cut away" (Acts 27.32). In Galatians 5:12 Paul is speaking sarcastically and figuratively of castration or emasculating oneself, the "effect" of carrying an error in doctrine to its logical extreme.

**Apokopto** - 6x - Mk. 9:43; Mk. 9:45; Jn. 18:10; Jn. 18:26; Acts 27:32; Gal. 5:12

**Duncan** - Paul probably had in mind the Law's penalty for self-mutilation, which was excommunication. A person who was in that condition could not be a part of the congregation of Israel, couldn't come into the tabernacle area or the temple. So he was wishing that these false teachers would be shut out from the Galatians. They'd lose their influence. It's rough language, but it puts circumcision in the right place. Now that the Law is ended and the old covenant is finished, circumcision is no more valuable than castration – rituals, ceremonies, works of any kind, add nothing to salvation. They cut people off from it. The only way to be saved, and the only way to advance in salvation, in holiness and obedience and love, is through grace, in Christ and through the Spirit. And so we must avoid legalism and look to Christ. Salvation is only through Him. Sanctification is only through Him. Have you believed in Him? If not, look to Christ who died for sinners. Believe in Him and be saved. May God help you to do that and help all of us to understand the grace of God and appreciate that work in our lives and stand firm in the freedom that it gives us and to rejoice in it.

**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.**

Phillips - It is to freedom that you have been called, my brothers. Only be careful that freedom does not become mere opportunity for your lower nature. You should be free to serve each other in love.

Wuest - For, as for you, upon the basis of freedom you were called, brethren. Only do not turn your liberty into a base of operations for the evil nature, but through love keep on constantly serving one another, ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

Amplified - For you, brethren, were [indeed] called to freedom; only [do not let your] freedom be an incentive to your flesh and an opportunity or excuse [for selfishness], but through love you should serve one another.

NET Galatians 5:13 For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity to indulge your flesh, but through love serve one another.

GNT Galatians 5:13 με ς γ ρ π λευθερ κλ θητε, δελφο · μ von μ τ ν λευθερ αν ε ς φορμ ν τ σαρκ , λλ δι τ ς γ πης δουλε ετε λλ λoις.

NLT Galatians 5:13 For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. But don't use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love.

KJV Galatians 5:13 For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

ESV Galatians 5:13 For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

ASV Galatians 5:13 For ye, brethren, were called for freedom; only use not your freedom for an occasion to the flesh, but through love be servants one to another.

CSB Galatians 5:13 For you were called to be free, brothers; only don't use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but serve one another through love.

NIV Galatians 5:13 You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.

NKJ Galatians 5:13 For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

NRS Galatians 5:13 For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another.

YLT Galatians 5:13 For ye -- to freedom ye were called, brethren, only not the freedom for an occasion to the flesh, but through the love serve ye one another,

NAB Galatians 5:13 For you were called for freedom, brothers. But do not use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh; rather, serve one another through love.

NJB Galatians 5:13 After all, brothers, you were called to be free; do not use your freedom as an opening for self-indulgence, but be servants to one another in love,

GWN Galatians 5:13 You were indeed called to be free, brothers and sisters. Don't turn this freedom into an excuse for your corrupt nature to express itself. Rather, serve each other through love.

BBE Galatians 5:13 Because you, brothers, were marked out to be free; only do not make use of your free condition to give the flesh its chance, but through love be servants one to another.

- **For you were called to freedom, brethren:** Ga 5:1 4:5-7,22-31 Isa 61:1 Lu 4:18 Joh 8:32-36 Ro 6:18-22
- **only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh** 1Co 8:9 1Pe 2:16 2Pe 2:19 Jude 1:4,10-12
- **but through love serve one another:** Ga 5:14,22 6:2 Mk 10:43-45 Joh 13:14,15 Ac 20:35 Ro 15:1,2 1Co 9:19 1Co 13:4-7 2Co 4:5 12:15 1Th 1:3 Jas 2:15-17 1Jn 3:16-19
- Dear saint free in Christ, take a moment and listen to this song by Jessa Myer [Freedom \(Galatians Song\)](#)"
- [Galatians 5:13-26 Legalism](#) - Ray Stedman
- [Galatians 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## DO NOT TURN LIBERTY TO LICENSE

In this next section in Galatians 5:13-15 Paul is seeking to convince the believers that the Law has no power to restrain the sinful flesh, and in fact the more one attempts to overcome the sinful flesh by keeping the Law, the more deeply enslaved one becomes to the sinful nature. Dear reader, don't fall into this trap.

**Mike Andrus** writes "Most social scientists today want us to believe people are basically good and all the evil we see is a result of environmental factors. But every one who has kids knows that isn't true. Sure, an evil environment will encourage the evil already in us; that's why slums breed crime. But even in the best of environments children exhibit rebellion and defiance at a very early age. It comes naturally; they don't even have to be taught....The problem is that the old nature with which we were born is not eradicated. Oh, there are some theologians who claim it can be eradicated in this life and that the believer can reach a state of total sanctification, sometimes called "[sinless perfection](#)." But I believe both Scripture and personal experience make it clear that the sinful nature remains with us, rearing its ugly head at the most inopportune times, begging for attention and demanding to be satisfied." ([Sermon](#))

As **Guzik** says "The great fear of the legalist is that liberty will be used as an opportunity for the flesh. The idea is that people will just go out and sin as they please, then say to a spineless God, "I'm sorry, please forgive me," and then go on doing whatever they want again. Paul recognized the danger of this attitude, so he warned against it here." ([Galatians 5 Commentary](#))

**Hansen** remarks that "Paul blasts out these trumpet calls of freedom to Christians who are in danger of putting themselves under a heavy yoke of slavery. Their immediate goal is circumcision—painful discipline under the law. Their larger purpose would then be, as Paul informs them in verse Galatians 5:3, the obligation to obey the whole law. Their total preoccupation would be to learn the Jewish traditions and keep the Jewish customs. Paul knows very well from his own experience (Galatians 1:14) that that road does not lead to freedom. So he repeats his declaration of freedom to emphasize the new purpose of their life in Christ: they are called to freedom from slavery under the law."...After the second declaration (THE CALL TO FREEDOM) Paul gives a command not to use freedom *to indulge your sinful nature* but *to serve one another in love*. In other words, we are first told not to **lose** our freedom by turning back to slavery; then we told to **use** our freedom by entering into slavery. (**ED**: The command below to serve is [douleuo](#) which means to be a slave) No doubt Paul sets up this apparent contradiction as a kind of warning signal. Paul clearly sees the danger that his teaching about freedom from slavery under the law might be interpreted to mean freedom to do whatever our selfish desires lead us to do. ([The IVP New Testament Commentary Series – Galatians](#))

**For you were called to freedom, brethren** - To freedom you were called. This repeats Paul's point in Galatians 5:1. God's call to the pagan Galatians was a call to salvation, a call from bondage to sin, death, Satan and a call to freedom in Christ to live a brand new manner of life only possible as they were enabled by the Spirit. Yes, believers are free from the Law. They are not free to live lawless, but enabled by the Spirit to live lawfully (not legalistically) and lovingly.

**Called** (2564) ([kaleo](#) from root **kal-**, whence English "call" and "clamour") literally means to speak to another in order to attract their attention or to them bring nearer, either physically or in a personal relationship. In this context called refers to God's call of sinners ("Divine call" of God to participation in salvation).

### Related Resources:

- [What is the effectual calling/call?](#)
- [What does it mean that God draws us to salvation?](#)
- [Irresistible Grace - is it biblical?](#)



**Freedom** (liberty) (1657) see note above on [eleutheria](#)

**Spurgeon** - Do not make license out of your liberty. Remember that liberty from sin is not liberty to sin. The apostle, in this epistle, had been urging the Christians of Galatia to stand fast in the liberty with which Christ had made them free, and never to be again entangled with the yoke of legal bondage. He warned them against that error into which many have fallen. But you know that it is often our tendency, if we escape from one error, to rush into another. So the apostle guards these Christians against that antinomian spirit that teaches us that freedom from the law allows indulgence in sin.

**Only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh**- Yes believers are free and there is the option or danger if you will that we can misuse our freedom in a way that pleases ourselves at the expense of others.

**Guzik** adds that "Because the context focuses on the way we treat one another, Paul has in mind using our freedom in a way that tramples on the toes of others... It is easy to think liberty is "the right to sin," or "the privilege to do whatever evil my heart wants to do." Instead, this liberty is the Spirit-given desire and ability to do what we should do before God." ([Galatians 5 Commentary](#))

**Swindoll** (see his diagram above) - Paul warns his readers against giving our flesh—our natural tendency toward sin—an "**opportunity**" by abusing our freedom. The Greek word translated "**opportunity**" is **aphormē**, referring to a "pretext." That is, God's grace should never be used as an excuse for sin. I'll repeat that statement so it will never be misunderstood: **The grace of God should never be used as an excuse for succumbing to temptation and sin.** Because I believe in and preach grace and freedom, I've occasionally been accused of preaching lawlessness and license. Nothing could be further from the truth. Paul says (and I wholeheartedly agree) that we have been freed from the power of sin. To return to the sinful lifestyle that God has forgiven would be to return to slavery. Instead, having been freed from the dark, shameful oppression of sin, we are to embrace our true calling to serve one another through love (5:13). **Liberty should result in love, not legalism or license.** ([Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary – Galatians](#))

**Opportunity** (occasion) (874)([aphorme](#) from **apó** = from + **horme** = start of rapid movement) means to make a start from a place and specifically is a place from which a movement or an attack can be made. **Aphorme** describes a starting point or base of operations for a military offensive in war. Paul is saying "**freedom**" might provide a base of operations from which their flesh could launch an attack on their soul. **A T Robertson** writes that **aphorme** describes "a starting place from which to rush into acts of sin, excuses for doing what they want to do (ED: THE SELFISH DESIRES OF THEIR/OUR FLESH)."

**The flesh** (NIV translates it "sinful nature")([sarx](#)) refers to the fallen flesh, the Adamic nature which is godless and intractably opposed to God and godliness. It is the old self (inherited from Adam), whose supreme desire is to do its own will and to satisfy its sinful appetites. Unfortunately this evil nature still inhabits our mortal bodies and continually seeks to seduce us to sin by many and varied godless lusts!

Paul use sarx 8x in Galatians 5-6 to refer to our fallen flesh - Gal. 5:13; Gal. 5:16; Gal. 5:17; Gal. 5:19; Gal. 5:24; Gal. 6:8; Gal. 6:12; Gal. 6:13;

**Hansen** has an interesting interpretation - Human nature apart from God's intervening grace is both a captive of sin and the source of "passions and desires" (Galatians 5:24) that lead to sin. No doubt one reason the Galatian Christians were attracted to the law is that they viewed the law as the only way to restrain and control the passions and desires of the flesh. They saw the law as a needed disciplinarian to keep them from being destroyed by their own sinful desires. The law's restraining power over sinful desires is a common subject in Jewish literature and must certainly have been a theme in the campaign of the false teachers who were trying to bring the Gentile Christians under the law. We can imagine them saying, "How can you ever hope to win the battle against your evil desires? There is only one way. Come under the yoke of the law. The law was given to guard, protect and keep you from evil. Live under it as your master and guide." But now in contrast to this message of the false teachers, Paul says that he has "died to the law" (Galatians 2:19), that "we are no longer under the supervision of the law" (Galatians 3:25) and that we should not let ourselves "be burdened again by a yoke of slavery," by which he means the law (Galatians 5:1). "Does this mean that we are free to follow the desires of our sinful nature?" the Galatians may have wondered. Paul, who was always sensitive to the questions in the minds of his readers, counters their misunderstanding with a strong prohibition: Do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature (v. Galatians 5:13). ([The IVP New Testament Commentary Series – Galatians](#))

**But** - Term of contrast. Paul has just described the potential danger of a believer using his or her **freedom** in Christ as a base of operations for committing sins. Now he contrasts that negative use of freedom with the positive use of freedom calling for them to use their freedom to serve one another in love.

**Spurgeon** - You are not to do anything because it pleases you, but you are to do everything because it pleases God. When a man is no longer a slave to sin, or self, or Satan, let him begin to serve his brothers: "through love serve one another." Oh, if that "one

word" were so engraved on our hearts as to influence all our lives, what blessed lives of love to God and love to men we should lead!

**Life Application Study Bible.** - Paul distinguishes between freedom to sin and freedom to serve. Freedom or license to sin is no freedom at all, because it enslaves you to Satan, others, or your own sinful nature. Christians, by contrast, should not be slaves to sin, because they are free to do right and to glorify God through loving service to others.

**Through love serve one another** - This is the antidote for using liberty as an occasion for the flesh. What does the fallen flesh want? It expects others to conform to our desires, and cares little about others. But when **through love** (we) **serve one another** the nasty nature of the flesh is conquered. Of course, this is not our natural bent, but calls for dependence on the Spirit (**Walk by the Spirit** - Gal 5:16) Who enables this supernatural (**agape**) love and creates in us a desire to serve (**douleuo**) others rather to be served just as did our Savior (cf Mk 10:45). **Guzik** adds that "This is exactly the pattern set by Jesus. He had more liberty than anyone who ever walked this earth did. Yet He used His liberty to **through love serve one another.**"

**Guzik** - The flesh expects others to conform to us, and doesn't care much about others. But when **wethrough love serve one another**, we conquer the flesh (**ED: MORE ACCURATELY THE SPIRIT WHO ENABLES THIS QUALITY OF LOVE EMPOWERS US TO CONQUER THE FLESH**). It isn't through an obsessive, contemplative attitude of navel-gazing that we overcome the flesh, but by getting out and serving others. This is exactly the pattern set by Jesus. He had more liberty than anyone who ever walked this earth did. Yet He used His liberty to through love serve one another. ([Galatians 5 Commentary](#))

**Love** (26)(**agape**) is unconditional, sacrificial love and Biblically refers to a love that God is (1Jn 4:8,16), that God shows (Jn 3:16, 1Jn 4:9) and that God enables in His children (see note on fruit of the Spirit - Gal 5:22+). Biblical **agape love** is the love of choice, the love of serving with humility, the highest kind of love, the noblest kind of devotion, the love of the will (intentional, a conscious choice) and not motivated by superficial appearance, emotional attraction, or sentimental relationship. **Agape** is not based on pleasant emotions or good feelings that might result from a physical attraction or a familial bond. **Agape** chooses as an act of self-sacrifice to serve the recipient. From all of the descriptions of **agape** love, it is clear that true **agape** love is a sure mark of salvation.

**Agape** love does not depend on the world's criteria for love, such as attractiveness, emotions, or sentimentality. Believers can easily fall into the trap of blindly following the world's demand that a lover **feel** positive toward the beloved. This is not **agape** love, but is a love based on impulse. **Impulsive love** characterizes the spouse who announces to the other spouse that they are planning to divorce their mate. Why? They reason "I can't help it. I fell in love with another person!" Christians must understand that this type of impulsive love is completely contrary to God's **decisive love**, which is decisive because He is in control and has a purpose in mind. There are many reasons a proper understanding of the truth of God's word (and of the world's lie) is critical and one of the foremost is Jesus' declaration that

"By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have **love** (agape) for one another." (John 13:35).

**Andrus** - The word **serve** is actually the Greek word for slavery. Isn't it ironic that, having urged his readers not to become slaves to the Law or to the sinful nature, Paul should now encourage them to become slaves of one another? It is a paradox for sure, but a valuable one. Slavery to the sinful nature is self-destructive. But slavery to one another is a deep source of joy. ([Sermon](#))

**Serve** (1398)(**douleuo** from **doulos** = servant) means to be a slave, to serve, to do service, to be in the position of a slave and thus act accordingly. It means to act or conduct oneself as one in total service to another. Serve is in the present imperative. Don't try to obey this reliance on your own strength for you cannot do it! This love is supernatural, God-like love and can only be produced as fruit enabled by a supernatural Source, the Holy Spirit.

#### Related Resource:

- [See discussion of the Need for the Holy Spirit to obey NT commands](#) (or "How to Keep All 1642 Commandments in the New Testament!")

**One Anothers in the NT** - most are positive but some are negative

Rom. 12:10; Rom. 12:16; Rom. 13:8; Rom. 14:13; Rom. 14:19; Rom. 15:5; Rom. 15:7; Rom. 15:14; Rom. 16:16; 1 Co. 6:7; 1 Co. 7:5; 1 Co. 11:33; 1 Co. 12:25; 1 Co. 16:20; 2 Co. 13:12; Gal. 5:13; Gal. 5:15; Gal. 5:17; Gal. 5:26; Eph. 4:2; Eph. 4:25; Eph. 4:32; Eph. 5:19; Eph. 5:21; Phil. 2:3; Col. 3:9; Col. 3:13; Col. 3:16; 1

Thess. 3:12; 1 Thess. 4:9; 1 Thess. 4:18; 1 Thess. 5:11; 1 Thess. 5:13; 1 Thess. 5:15; 2 Thess. 1:3; Tit. 3:3; Heb. 3:13; Heb. 10:24; Heb. 10:25; Jas. 4:11; Jas. 5:9; Jas. 5:16; 1 Pet. 1:22; 1 Pet. 4:8; 1 Pet. 4:9; 1 Pet. 4:10; 1 Pet. 5:5; 1 Pet. 5:14; 1 Jn. 1:7; 1 Jn. 3:11; 1 Jn. 3:23; 1 Jn. 4:7; 1 Jn. 4:11; 1 Jn. 4:12; 2 Jn. 1:5

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## Left Side Of The Road

For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." —Galatians 5:14

Growing up in the US, I always thought it interesting that in some countries motorists drive on the left side of the road instead of the right. Then, when I was in England, I heard a London tour guide explain one possible reason for this law: "In the 1800s, pedestrians as well as horse-and-carriages used the same roads. When a carriage was on the right side of the road, a driver's horse whip would sometimes hit a passerby. To remove this hazard, a law was passed requiring all carriages to travel on the left side of the road so the pedestrians could be kept safe."

Just as the rules of the road are for our benefit and protection, so are God's commands. Because He loves us, He has given them to us for our benefit. Paul writes: "For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Gal. 5:13-14).

As we apply God's Word to our hearts, let's keep in mind that the God of grace has given us His guidelines to help us grow in our love for Him and our concern for others. By: Dennis Fisher ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Thy Word is everlasting truth;  
How pure is every page!  
That Holy Book shall guide our youth  
And well support our age. —Watts

The Bible has treasures of wisdom to mine.

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## "Isn't There Anything Else?"

Through love serve one another. —Galatians 5:13

A prominent Christian leader was known for his willingness to help needy individuals with their social and financial problems. When asked why he took time out of his busy schedule to do this, he replied, "When I was a boy, I worked in our family grocery store. I was taught that I should never ask a customer, 'Is that all?' Instead, I was told to say, 'Isn't there anything else?'"

I have carried this philosophy over into my Christian work." That man of God was filled with so much love for others that he wanted to see them develop in all areas of their lives.

In Romans 16, the apostle Paul commended many in the church who were like this man. He singled out Priscilla, Aquila, Mary, Persis, and several others who had labored for the Lord with willing hands and loving hearts. They were not content to do minimal service but were always busy ministering to the needs of fellow believers.

When we have experienced the matchless grace of God, our hearts should be filled with compassion for our brothers and sisters in Christ. By extending to them a helping hand and assisting them in whatever way possible, we're actually saying, "God has given me so much. Isn't there anything else I can do for you?" By Henry G. Bosch ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Beautiful lives have they who bear  
The burdens of those heavy laden with care;  
Earnest are they who daily show  
Compassionate service wherever they go. —Anon.

You may serve God without loving Him, but you cannot love God without serving Him.

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## Dangerous Freedom

Do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. —Galatians 5:13

Freedom is dangerous in the hands of those who don't know how to use it. That's why criminals are confined in prisons with barbed

wire, steel bars, and concrete barriers. Or consider a campfire that is allowed to spread in a dry forest. It quickly becomes a blazing inferno. Unchecked freedom can create chaos.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the Christian life. Believers are free from the law's curse, its penalty, and its guilt-producing power. Fear, anxiety, and guilt are replaced by peace, forgiveness, and liberty. Who could be more free than one who is free in the depths of his soul? But here is where we often fail. We use freedom's luxury to live selfishly, or we claim ownership of what God has merely entrusted to us. We slip into patterns of self-indulgent living, especially in affluent societies.

The proper use of freedom is "faith working through love" to serve one another (Gal. 5:6,13). When we rely on the Spirit and expend our energies on loving God and helping others, the destructive works of the flesh will be restrained by God (vv.16-21). So let's always use our liberty to build up, not to tear down.

Like a raging fire, freedom without limits is dangerous. But when controlled, it is a blessing to all. By: Dennis J. DeHaan [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Christ came to give us liberty  
By dying in our place;  
Now with new freedom we are bound  
To share His love and grace.

—D. De Haan

Freedom doesn't give us the right to do what we please, but to do what pleases God.

#### **Galatians 5:14 For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF."**

Phillips -For after all, the whole Law toward others is summed up by this one command, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself'.

Wuest - for the whole law in one utterance stands fully obeyed, namely, in this, Love your neighbor as you do yourself. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

Amplified -For the whole Law [concerning human relationships] is complied with in the one precept, You shall love your neighbor as [you do] yourself.

NET Galatians 5:14 For the whole law can be summed up in a single commandment, namely, "You must love your neighbor as yourself."

GNT Galatians 5:14 ὅτι ὅλη ὁ νόμος ἐν ᾧ λέγεται πεπληρωται, ὅτι γὰρ σεὶ τὸν πλησὸν σου ὡς σεαυτὸν.

NLT Galatians 5:14 For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

KJV Galatians 5:14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

ESV Galatians 5:14 For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

ASV Galatians 5:14 For the whole law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

CSB Galatians 5:14 For the entire law is fulfilled in one statement: Love your neighbor as yourself.

NIV Galatians 5:14 The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

NKJ Galatians 5:14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

NRS Galatians 5:14 For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

YLT Galatians 5:14 for all the law in one word is fulfilled -- in this: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;'

NAB Galatians 5:14 For the whole law is fulfilled in one statement, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

NJB Galatians 5:14 since the whole of the Law is summarised in the one commandment: You must love your neighbour as yourself.

GWN Galatians 5:14 All of Moses' Teachings are summarized in a single statement, "Love your neighbor as you love yourself."

BBE Galatians 5:14 For all the law is made complete in one word, even in this, Have love for your neighbour as for yourself.

- **the whole Law is fulfilled in one word** Mt 7:12 Mt 19:18,19 Mt 22:39,40 Ro 13:8-10 Jas 2:8-11
- **YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF:** Lev 19:18,34 Mk 12:31,33 Lu 10:27-37 1Ti 1:5
- [Galatians 5:13-26 Legalism](#) - Ray Stedman
- [Galatians 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Andrus** comments that "Throughout this letter Paul has been arguing against a Law-based approach to God and in defense of the Gospel of pure grace. Now, in a most striking fashion, he returns to the Mosaic Law and seems to speak favorably of it....Perhaps the most important of those principles is the far-reaching one mentioned here in verse 14, "Love your neighbor as yourself." If we took the time to look back at Leviticus we would find dozens of detailed rules and regulations as to how to treat one's neighbor lovingly in every conceivable circumstance. But instead of repeating the details Paul picks up only the principle. He doesn't dismiss the moral law of God from our lives; rather he wants us to understand that the essence of it is found in principles of conduct, not detailed rules of conduct. Unfortunately there are some in our day who have misunderstood his point, perhaps on purpose. They tell us the only moral absolute we must obey is to love our neighbor as ourselves, and then they use that principle as a basis for actually violating the laws of God. For example, they say if you really love your neighbor, it's OK to indulge in premarital, extramarital or even homosexual sex with him or her. If you really love your neighbor, it may be OK to murder him, as in abortion and euthanasia. [Dr. Kevorkian](#), for example, portrayed himself as loving the people he killed." ([Sermon](#))

**For (gar)** is a term of explanation. What is Paul explaining? He is explaining why we should **through love serve one another**. "Freedom in Christ does not ignore the law, it fulfills its holy demands through that which is its essence, love for one's neighbor. "If you love people (because you love Christ), you will not steal from them, lie about them, envy them, or try in any way to hurt them." Keathley adds "Love from within through the ministry of the Spirit, with Scripture as our guide for how love acts, fulfills the Law." (Hampton Keathley)

**The whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement** - Paul says that the whole Law is fulfilled in one word: thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Here is a major misunderstanding of the Law. It's central thesis is not necessarily "**do**" but is rather "**love**". Love is at the center of the Law- love God and your neighbor. Yet how the Judaizers missed it!

**Spurgeon** - The legal spirit is all for expansion; it multiplies its commands and lays down its ritual for this and that and the other. But the gospel spirit is all for condensation. It has condensed the whole law into a single word, that is, "love." In the first table of the Ten Commandments, we are taught to love God, and the commands of the second table teach us to love our neighbor. This is more important than symbolic rites: To destroy love to preserve a ceremony is to kill a child in order to preserve its clothes.

**YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF** - Paul is quoting from Lev 19:18+ '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.

**You shall love** (25)(**agapao**) means to love unconditionally and sacrificially as God Himself loves sinful men (John 3:16), the way He loves the Son (John 3:35, 15:9, 17:23, 24). And since this is a verb, clearly agapao calls for action. In other words this quality of love is not an emotion but is an action initiated by a volitional choice in turn enabled by the indwelling Spirit Who gives us the **desire** and the **power** (cf Php 2:13NLT+) to carry out supernatural love! **MacArthur** adds that **agapao** "expresses the purest, noblest form of love, which is volitionally driven, not motivated by superficial appearance, emotional attraction, or sentimental relationship. ([ref](#)) **Wuest** writes that "**Agapao** speaks of a love which is awakened by a sense of value in an object which causes one to prize it (ED: cf THE WAY GOD LOVES = [agapao](#) in Jn 3:16)."

**Neighbor** (Near) (4139)(**plesion** from **pélas** = near, near to or from **plesios** = close by) literally means near (literal use only in Jn 4:5), quite near, nearby = position quite close to another position. Figuratively, **plesion** means to be near someone and thus be a **neighbor**. Eight of 17 uses of **plesion** occur in a citation of or allusion to Leviticus 19:18: "You shall love your neighbor (plēsion, Septuagint) as yourself" (Mt 5:43; 19:19; 22:39; Mk 12:31; Luke 10:27; Ro 13:9; Gal 5:14; Jas 2:8).

**Luther** - If you want to know how you ought to love your neighbor, ask yourself how much you love yourself. If you were to get into trouble or danger, you would be glad to have the love and help of all men. You do not need any book of instructions to teach you how to love your neighbor. All you have to do is to look into your own heart, and it will tell you how you ought to love your neighbor

as yourself.

**Galatians 5:15 But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.**

Phillips - But if freedom means merely that you are free to attack and tear each other to pieces, be careful that it doesn't mean that between you, you destroy your fellowship altogether!

Wuest - But if, as is the case, you are biting and devouring one another, take heed lest you be consumed by one another. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

Amplified - But if you bite and devour one another [in partisan strife], be careful that you [and your whole fellowship] are not consumed by one another.

NET Galatians 5:15 However, if you continually bite and devour one another, beware that you are not consumed by one another.

GNT Galatians 5:15 ε ὁ ἑλλήνων ὁ κνέτε καὶ κατέσθ' ἐτε, βλῆτε μὴ πᾶσιν ἑλλήνων νάλωθῇτε.

NLT Galatians 5:15 But if you are always biting and devouring one another, watch out! Beware of destroying one another.

KJV Galatians 5:15 But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

ESV Galatians 5:15 But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

ASV Galatians 5:15 But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

CSB Galatians 5:15 But if you bite and devour one another, watch out, or you will be consumed by one another.

NIV Galatians 5:15 If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

NKJ Galatians 5:15 But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!

NRS Galatians 5:15 If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.

YLT Galatians 5:15 and if one another ye do bite and devour, see -- that ye may not by one another be consumed.

NAB Galatians 5:15 But if you go on biting and devouring one another, beware that you are not consumed by one another.

NJB Galatians 5:15 If you go snapping at one another and tearing one another to pieces, take care: you will be eaten up by one another.

GWN Galatians 5:15 But if you criticize and attack each other, be careful that you don't destroy each other.

BBE Galatians 5:15 But if you are given to fighting with one another, take care that you are not the cause of destruction one to another.

- Ga 5:26 2Sa 2:26,27 Isa 9:20,21 Isa 11:5-9,13 1Co 3:3 6:6-8 2Co 11:20 2Co 12:20 Jas 3:14-18 4:1-3
- [Galatians 5:13-26 Legalism](#) - Ray Stedman
- [Galatians 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## "SPIRITUAL CANNIBALISM"

**But** - Term of contrast. What a contrast this is for on one side we read about the call to through love serve one another and thereby fulfilling the whole Law! But then we read about the reality in the Body of Christ in Galatia! Apparently the believers in Galatia were failing miserably at serving and loving one another. Paul does not state why they were in such a mess, but in context clearly they were not depending on the power of the Holy Spirit to enable selfless love rather than selfish infighting! Was this "rotten fruit" the product of the Judaizers telling the Galatians to live in conformity with the Law which in fact even exacerbated and stirred up their sinful flesh? Paul does not say specifically, but that is a possibility. In any even he had apparently received a distressing report about



their infighting and he would use this bad report as a launching to teach them about the good Spirit empowered life.

**Andrus** comments that "This spiritual cannibalism is probably a reference to malicious talk and degrading slander, but one can't be sure. Several years ago I came across an Associated Press article which stated that human bites had increased 77% in the previous ten years. Furthermore, according to Michael Callahan, chief of emergency medicine at the University of California at San Francisco, "Human bites are a worse problem than dog bites because they are much more likely to get infected." New York City reports that human bites used to rank third behind dogs and cats, but now rank second behind dogs. Maybe the Galatians were actually taking chunks out of one another. But whether these were literal or figurative bites, I think it is instructive to note that it was apparently the legalism introduced by the false teachers that brought this destructive spirit into the church. I think conflict and disunity are probably most common in legalistic churches. That shouldn't surprise us, because you can't have your focus on serving and loving people if you're constantly concerned with rules and regulations and who is failing to obey them. It's not an accident that the legalistic Pharisees were Jesus' greatest enemies. But there is the potential for spiritual cannibalism in any church, and we need to be vigilant against it. Sometimes we don't even realize how destructive our comments and attitudes can be to others. Christian freedom is not freedom to exploit my neighbor, but rather to serve him and love him. Christian freedom is not freedom to disregard the basic moral law of God." ([Sermon](#))

**if you bite and devour one another** - The "if" introduces a first class conditional statement which means that this disruptive, destructive interactions was beginning to take place in the Body of Christ. What does this tell us about the believers in Galatia? They were beginning to go back under the Law. How do we know? Because biting and devouring one another is typical of the behavior of saints who have begun to try to be sanctified (set apart progressively) by keeping the Law. The problem of course is that the Law cannot restrain the flesh. Legalism has absolutely no power to hold down the lusts of the flesh. Circumcision, ceremonies, new moons, festivals, feast days, etc, has no impact on one's hearts; and dear reader they (or reliance of things like them - baptism, church membership, keeping a list of do's and don't's, etc) will not have any impact on your new life in Christ either. To be sanctified you don't go back to the Law, for the Law focuses on our external behavior. Instead, you need to learn to walk by the Spirit which Paul in fact commands (it is an absolute necessity to live a victorious Christian life) in Gal 5:16. It is ONLY by the enabling supernatural power of the Holy Spirit that one can defeat the desires of the flesh that result in things like biting and devouring one another!

The verbs **bite** and **devour** were "two common and old verbs often used together of wild animals, or like cats and dogs. So the imagery is of wild animals savagely attacking and killing each other—a graphic picture of what happens in the spiritual realm when believers do not love and serve each other." (A T Robertson)

**Leon Morris** - "The loveless life is a life lived on the level of animals, with a concern only for oneself, no matter what the cost to other people."

**Spurgeon** - When dogs and wolves bite one another, it is according to their nature; but it is sad indeed when sheep take to biting one another. If I must be bitten at all, let me rather be bitten by a dog than by a sheep. That is to say, the wounds inflicted by the godly are far more painful to bear, and last much longer, than those caused by wicked men. Besides, we can say with the psalmist, "It was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it." It is natural that the serpent's seed should nibble at our heel and seek to do us injury. But when the bite comes from a brother—from a child of God—then it is peculiarly painful. I have lived long enough to see churches absolutely destroyed, not by any external attacks, but by internal contention. This man finds fault, the other must have his own way, a third is for something quite new, a fourth is for nothing but what is antique, and so they fall to squabbling and quarrelling.

**Devour** (consume) ([2719](#))([katesthio](#) from **kata** = down + **esthio** = to eat) means to eat up, consume, devour (Lk 8:5). Figuratively **katesthio** means to destroy by fire (consume, burn up) (Rev 11:5), by illegal exploitation (rob, take complete advantage of - Mk 12:40) or as in the present passage by strife within a group which caused great division (Gal 5:15). It means to engage in spiteful partisan strife.

**Take care that you are not consumed by one another** - Paul issues a command in the [present imperative](#), one that can only be obeyed in the power of the Holy Spirit. [See discussion of the Need for the Holy Spirit to obey NT commands](#) (or "How to Keep All 1642 Commandments in the New Testament!")

**Take care** (beware, take heed) ([991](#))([blepo](#)) means simply to see or look at but in this context means to have one's eye on so as to beware of. To watch, to take heed, to take care. To see with the mind's eye, to discern mentally, to turn the thoughts or direct the mind to a thing. It speaks of "a more intentional, earnest contemplation" of something.

**Guzik** - This reminds us of a pack of wild animals. That's how the church can act when it uses its "liberty" as a platform to promote selfishness. If you want to see some action, put two selfish people together. Selfish people will eventually **be consumed by one another**. ([Galatians 5 Commentary](#))

**Consumed** (355) (**analisko** from **ana** = away + **halisko** = to take) means literally to take away, , to destroy, to use up and so when spoken of fire meant to consume or burn up. Figuratively it describes the destruction of the Antichrist by the Christ (2 Th 2:8KJV not NAS or ESV). In the passive voice as in this passage **analisko** describes the effects of strife within a group and thus meant to be ruined or destroyed (Gal 5.15)

**Robertson** - There is a famous story of two snakes that grabbed each other by the tail and each swallowed the other.

**Oliver Greene** writes "I sometimes use this verse when preaching to believers on the subject of "Cannibal Christians." Churches devour themselves by fussing and back-biting because of jealousy, envy and strife. Instead of being childlike in faith and practice, they are childish, acting like children fussing in the sandbox in the back yard! Churches often devour themselves - they devour each other - as a result of disturbances within the church over petty doctrines. Whichever side wins keeps the building, the other crowd moves out and starts a new building program - and in reality both sides lose . . . no one gains, reproach is brought on the church. I believe we should come out from liberals and modernists, but Paul is speaking here to born again believers who are being confused and frustrated by legalistic preachers. If these believers begin to bite and devour one another, they will be consumed of each other . . . which is what the devil wanted. That is the reason Paul gives warning against such living. ([Stand Fast Therefore in the Liberty](#))

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## Cannibalism

If you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another! —Galatians 5:15

A number of years ago, I had a night out with my 4-year-old son. Halfway through our hamburgers, I detected rumblings in the booth behind me. The muffled anger in a man's voice soon erupted in a snarl, "What did you say?" A woman shot back, "I said I'd never come crawling to you. I couldn't get that low." I cringed as he cursed at her and said, "I don't know why I ever brought you to this restaurant tonight." "I do," she said. "You've got a guilty conscience!"

Ben was staring over my shoulder, so I asked him what he was thinking about. "Oh, I'm thinking about Jesus," he said, "and how He died for our sins."

Ben's response left quite an impression on me. As the angry man and woman finished their meal by chewing up one another, I had to admit that I too knew about anger and a bad conscience. Then my own child reminded me that Christ came into this world to rescue us from our sin.

We have no excuse for falling back into the kind of cannibalism that took place in that restaurant. We have been forgiven and have received a spirit of love. And we have the example of Jesus. His ways are as practical and life-changing as we're willing to let them be. By Mart DeHaan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

If you'd be truly happy  
And keep your peace of mind,  
Then guard yourself from hatred  
And words that are unkind. —Anon.

It's better to swallow your pride than to eat your words.

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**Galatians 5:16 But I say, **walk** by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.**

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Phillips Paraphrase - Here is my advice. Live your whole life in the Spirit and you will not satisfy the desires of your lower nature.

Wuest - But I say, Through the instrumentality of the Spirit habitually order your manner of life, and you will in no wise execute the passionate desire of the evil nature, ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

Amplified - But I say, walk and live [habitually] in the [Holy] Spirit [responsive to and controlled and guided by the Spirit]; then you will certainly not gratify the cravings and desires of the flesh (of human nature without God).

NET Galatians 5:16 But I say, live by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desires of the flesh.

GNT Galatians 5:16 Α γω δ , πνε ματι περιπατε τε κα πιθυμ αν σαρκ ς ο μ τελ σητε.

NLT Galatians 5:16 So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful

nature craves.

KJV Galatians 5:16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

ESV Galatians 5:16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

CSB Galatians 5:16 I say then, walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

NIV Galatians 5:16 So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

NKJ Galatians 5:16 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

NRS Galatians 5:16 Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh.

YLT Galatians 5:16 And I say: In the Spirit walk ye, and the desire of the flesh ye may not complete;

NAB Galatians 5:16 I say, then: live by the Spirit and you will certainly not gratify the desire of the flesh.

NJB Galatians 5:16 Instead, I tell you, be guided by the Spirit, and you will no longer yield to self-indulgence.

GWN Galatians 5:16 Let me explain further. Live your life as your spiritual nature directs you. Then you will never follow through on what your corrupt nature wants.

BBE Galatians 5:16 But I say, Go on in the Spirit, and you will not come under the rule of the evil desires of the flesh.

- **But I say** Gal 3:17; 1Cor 7:29
- **walk by the Spirit** Gal 5:25; 6:8; Romans 8:1,4,5,12, 13, 14; 1 Pe 1:22; 4:6; Jude 1:19, 20, 21
- **and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh:** Ga 5:19-21 Ro 6:12 13:13,14 2Co 7:1 Eph 2:3 Col 2:11 3:5-10 1Pe 1:14 2:11 4:1-4 1Jn 2:15,16
- [Galatians 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Galatians 5:13-26 Legalism](#) - Ray Stedman
- [The Perfect Model of a Spirit-Empowered Life](#) - Excellent discussion of Jesus walking by the Spirit giving us a model

## ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT VERSES IN THE BIBLE!

**NOTE:** For a much more in depth discussion of this verse click [Galatians 5:16 Commentary](#)

- [Thomas Constable](#) writes "This is one of the most important and helpful verses on Christian living in the Bible"
- J Vernon McGee adds that "This verse states the great principle of Christian living—walk by means of the Spirit." ([Galatians 5](#))
- Platt on Galatians 5:16 - This passage is very important in light of a Christian's desire to spiritually grow. (Exalting Jesus in Galatians)

Keep the context in mind. What has Paul just been speaking about to the Galatians? On one hand he has advocated a God-like love of one another (Gal 5:13-14) and on the other hand he has warned against biting and devouring one another (Gal 5:15). The question arises as to how can one accomplish these things? And Paul says it is only possible in one empowered by the Spirit.

**Andrus** summarizes the preceding context -

- Christian freedom is not the freedom to indulge the sinful nature; it is the freedom to control the appetites of the sinful nature.
- It's not the freedom to exploit one's neighbor; it is the freedom to serve and love one's neighbor.
- It's not the freedom to disregard the law of God; it is the freedom to fulfill the spirit of the law. ([Sermon](#))

But how? What is the secret to finding victory in this war within ourselves so that we can exercise true freedom without sliding into either legalism or moral anarchy? The key is found in Gal 5:16 and Gal 5:18....There is an active side—walking with Him—and a passive side—being led by Him. If we walk by the Spirit we will not carry out the desires of our old nature. If we are led by the Spirit, we will not be weighed down by the law. ([Sermon](#))

**But** - Term of contrast. Instead of consuming one another, motivated by desires of their fallen flesh.

**I say** - Paul as an apostle speaks. He speaks in contrast to the persuasive false teachers who were speaking in the ears of the Galatian believers.

Paul uses a common figure of speak with the word walk as the OT frequently described a person's life or lifestyle as a "walk". E.g.

"How blessed is the man who does not **walk** in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers!" (Ps 1:1). Every person alive is on a path and traveling to their final destiny, either heaven or hell (Mt 7:13, 14). Paul calls on the saints who are on the path to Heaven to walk in the power of the Spirit, allowing Him to guide you. In context, the Judaizers were trying to get the Galatian believers off the narrow path of faith in Jesus by adding the laws from Moses. As we have repeatedly seen, that "hybrid" type of walk will never work, it will never lead to freedom (liberty), but will always lead to defeat, bondage, slavery. While the Law can give us directions much like a yoke directs the oxen, the yoke of the Law provides no power to carry out the directions. Only the internal working of the Holy Spirit can give believers a desire to obey and the power to follow through on that desire and in the preceding context the desire and power to show supernatural love to one another. Only the Spirit can produce this fruit in our hearts (Gal 5:22) and when He produces that love in our hearts, it is also a love toward God, and thus a love that motivates us to obey (out of love, not legalism) and walk in a manner pleasing to the Lord.

**Dan Duncan** illustrates this love motivated obedience explaining that "There are really **three ways to live**: under the law, without law, or Paul's way, which is with the Author of the Law (THE HOLY SPIRIT). All three can be illustrated from three different kinds of dogs....I think anyone who owns a dog can appreciate the analogy. One dog lives on a leash. Whenever it goes out, it must be on the leash. And as he goes out, he pulls against the leash. He resists it, and doesn't like it. My dog doesn't like it and must be jerked back into line and put back on the path. Well, that's a picture of a **person under the Law**. The second dog lives without the leash. He wanders about freely in the neighborhood without a master, without guidance, getting into trash, getting into fights and ending up in the pound or run over by a car. That's a picture of a **lawless person** (ED: see [antinomianism](#)). The third is the ideal dog. He comes out of his house with his master and without a leash. He goes about freely, but returns at his master's command. He is **bound by love** to his master. **That is the person who walks by the Spirit He or she obeys out of love** That's the position of the believer in Jesus Christ. So Paul says to these believers in Galatia, walk with Him. Go on with Him wherever He goes. Be under His control and guidance and the promise is "As we do, we will not carry out the desire of the flesh." ([Sermon](#))

## WHY WALK IN THE SPIRIT?

**John MacArthur** gives **3 reasons why believers should daily walk in the Spirit--**

Now, there are a number of reasons why you have to walk in the Spirit - let me just give you three you can think about on your own.

**Number one**, because of God's impossible standard; because of God's impossible standard. 1Pe 1:16: "... be holy, as I am holy." I might achieve - I don't know - some level of satisfaction in the religious community if I live a certain way. I might be accepted by moral people and religious people and even Christian people if I guard my life from certain overt kinds of sin. But the standard that is laid out for us in the Scripture is, "**be holy** (ED: [aorist imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)), for I am holy" - that great Levitical demand of God that is repeated by Peter in 1 Peter 1:16+. This impossible standard takes it way out of my power; way out of my power. So, we need to walk in the Spirit, because the standard is otherwise impossible.

**Secondly**, our foe is formidable; our foe is [formidable](#) (ED: inspiring fear or respect through being impressively large, powerful, intense, or capable). And what do I mean by that? The flesh - so, let's say the flesh is formidable; the flesh is formidable. "There is in my flesh," says Paul, "no (ED: "OU" = ABSOLUTE NEGATION) good thing." (Ro 7:18KJV+) [Formidable](#) because it's powerful, **formidable** because it's ever-present (ED: cf 1Pe 2:11b+ - "wages war" = present tense = CONTINUALLY), **formidable** because it is easily activated (ED: EVEN AROUSED BY THE LAW - Ro 7:5+ and Ro 7:7-8+), and that takes me to the third reason for walking in the Spirit.

First, because of God's impossible standard, second, because of the formidable nature of our flesh, and **thirdly**, because of the relentless operation of [Satan](#) (ED: cf Eph 6:11+, 2Cor 2:11+, 1Pe 5:8-9+). Satan tweaks and turns the system to assault the flesh, which is the beachhead on which he lands his temptations.

So, we have a serious battle facing us, and if we are going to win that battle, we need to walk in the power of the Spirit. 2Co 6:16+, you are "the temple of the living God... as God has said, 'I will dwell in them and walk in them.'" It's a case of God walking in us and we walking with Him, and walking always means daily, progressive conduct. The Spirit of the Almighty God of the universe lives in you. You are the temple of the Holy Spirit (ED: cf 1Co 6:19+). He is alive in you. (ED: THIS MESSAGE IS A "MUST LISTEN" or READ - [The Essential Ministry of the Holy Spirit, Part 3 Galatians 5:16-25](#))

**Walk by the Spirit** - Don't invert the order of this verse which your fallen (deceptive) flesh will tempt you to do. In other words, don't say "I will not carry out the lusts of my old flesh and in that way I will be able to walk by the Spirit!" You would be surprised at how

many saints have misread this verse in that manner. And the result of course is that they continue to have the desires of the flesh. In fact when you tell the flesh "No," it's "natural" reaction is to rebel. As Ro 7:5+ says the sinful passions of the flesh are not suppressed but actually aroused or stirred up by the law (like saying "I won't do this" or "I won't do that again.") When you think like that, you actually place yourself under "laws" (of your own making, but laws nevertheless).

**Walking** means we take one step at a time, moment by moment, for there is not one moment when our flesh is not seeking to carry out its sinful desires! This is why it is so critical to be careful to not grieve (Eph 4:30+) or quench (1 Th 5:19+) the Holy Spirit, for in so not we short-circuit His power in our lives! But walking is not just fighting off the negative (the lusts of the flesh), but it is also growing in the positive (growing more like Christ). Paul explains how the Spirit does this in Second Corinthians writing "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.." (2 Cor 3:18+) Paul is saying that as we behold the Lord's glory (and His glory is most clearly seen in His Word) and we walk in obedience (even this obedience enabled by His Spirit) to His revealed will (in His Word), the Holy Spirit does a miraculous internal work on our hearts, progressively changing us into the image of Christ from one degree of glory to the next. That's a simple summary description of how every believer should be living their Christian life! We don't grow in Christ-likeness by seeking to keep a list of rules which we will never be able to keep and which ultimately results in frustration and futility in our Christian walk. Remember that everything that God desires to carry out in and through us begins on the inside, not on the outside, which is where legalism seeks to work. So walk by the Spirit, not a set of rules you or someone else has made up ostensibly to make you more holy! Only by the Spirit will you gain victory over sin on a practical, daily basis.

**MacArthur on walking** - Among other things, walking implies progress, going from where one is to where he ought to be. As a believer submits to the Spirit's control, he moves forward in his spiritual life. Step by step the Spirit moves him from where he is toward where God wants him to be. So while it is the Spirit who is the source of all holy living, it is the believer who is commanded to walk. **This is the apparent paradox of the divine and human that is seen in salvation"**

- See related discussion of "[Paradoxical Principle of 100% Dependent and 100% Responsible](#)" (100/100)

**Walk** (like **take care** in the Gal 5:15) is in the [present imperative](#), a command to make this one's lifestyle, and clearly a command that can only be obeyed in the power of the Holy Spirit. Isn't that fascinating (and somewhat paradoxical) that the only way to obey the command to walk by the Spirit is to first be filled with the Spirit (see Eph 5:18+). [See discussion of the Need for the Holy Spirit to obey NT commands](#) (or "How to Keep All 1642 Commandments in the New Testament!")

**Matthew Henry** - The best antidote against the poison of sin is to walk in the Spirit.

**Vos** has a very interesting comment on a subtle difference that one preposition potentially makes in the dynamics of the Spirit enabled walk -- **walk by the Spirit** versus **walk in the Spirit** - The apostle's goal in this passage is to describe liberty in daily life and how it is to be achieved. "Walk by the Spirit" (v. 16) is the preferred translation. The difference from the Authorized Version -- "Walk in the Spirit" -- is important. **Walking in the Spirit** implies more dependence on self; **walking by the Spirit** properly emphasizes the energizing power within. To walk by the Spirit is to allow the Spirit to be the governing principle in one's life. If the believer permits the Spirit to control, he shall not "fulfill (give effect to or allow to be accomplished) the lusts of the flesh (the natural man or old nature, distinct from physical body)."

**Don Anderson** - "WALK BY MEANS OF THE SPIRIT." Here Paul states the SECRET OF VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIVING. The Christian must cease from his struggling and simply trust the Holy Spirit to live out the life of Christ through him, to do within him what he cannot do for himself. The focus of the words "BY MEANS OF" is upon: DEPENDENCE and SUBMISSION. We also need to include here that this is a PRESENT IMPERATIVE so therefore it is something that we are commanded to do on a daily basis: CONTINUALLY BE WALKING BY MEANS OF THE SPIRIT In like measure to the yieldedness of the individual to the Spirit, so in like measure will be the experience of victory over the law of sin and death. We can say that it is VICTORY THROUGH DEPENDENCE. Consider for a moment the LIGHT BULB. To it an unseen current flows which makes it light. It is not correct to say that the bulb is giving light, for it has no power to do so apart from the current it receives. So all we need is the divine power of the Spirit flowing through us to make us godly. It takes this and nothing else will do. It is the Spirit who energizes the new nature within us. Satan convinced Adam that he could light the bulb by himself through his flesh. And when he rebelled, God threw the master switch and out went the light and also the life. Now when the Holy Spirit comes in, He brings life and light. In like manner, as we allow the current to flow, so will our light shine. But we have the ability to quench the Spirit and to grieve the Spirit in our lives, and as we do, this divine current is not allowed to flow. By our will we can flip the switch and quench and grieve the Holy Spirit. ([Notes](#))

**Pinnock** points out: How are the Galatians to check their tendency to devour each other? How can they control their runaway self-centeredness and learn to give themselves freely in loving service to others? The answer is the Spirit controlled life (v. 16). If they would walk in the Spirit, they would not have to answer the call of the lower nature. Paul is not telling them to do something they have not done before. He is urging them to keep on walking in the Spirit day by day. This is the secret of Christian holiness. Paul



describes the Christian life as a conflict of opposing forces. What the Spirit yearns for in our lives is antithetical to what the lower nature desires (v. 17). A civil war rages within the believer. Peter wrote about it: "Beloved, I beseech you as aliens and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh that wage war against your soul" (1 Peter 2:11). The Spirit and the flesh are implacable foes. Paul's teaching makes it impossible to accept "quietism," the theory that sanctification does not require effort or struggle on our part. All we have to do is surrender to God and let Him have the victory over sin. While it is true that God sanctifies us, it is not true that a person being renewed by the Spirit exists in a state of passive surrender. God has done everything to make our sanctification possible, but we must make our calling and election sure by putting to death the old life and walking in the Spirit.

**Gutzke** points out: Consider this. If a person had a vacant lot, what could be expected to grow on that vacant lot naturally without any attention? There would be only weeds! It would be an unsightly affair. But if that person was to put in a garden there, cultivating and planting it, there would be vegetables. Or think of a person being responsible for the care of a group of boys. If that person was to turn that group of boys loose, and they were to spend two, three, or four hours together in some place, there could be trouble. On the other hand, those boys could have a wonderful time playing baseball, if someone was channeling their energies into a constructive program. This is what Paul means when he writes: "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh" (5:16).

**Bartlett** says: IN THESE VERSES we have clearly depicted the struggle between the old nature and the new nature which is the common experience of Christians everywhere. And this conflict is a war to the death. There can be no cessation of hostilities until we are called home to glory. A truce is out of the question. Appeasement policies are futile. We may as well recognize the situation at the outset....Herein lies the key to conquest—not through the terrors of the law, but through the Spirit of the Lord will victory over the flesh be won. The spirit of the law and the law of the Spirit are poles apart. The injunction to walk in the Spirit implies power of choice on the part of the believer (**ED: YES BUT SEE Phil 2:13NLT+ WHERE THE SPIRIT GIVES US THE DESIRE AND POWER - OF COURSE WE STILL HAVE TO CHOOSE HUNDREDS OF TIMES A DAY BUT IT IS ON THE BACKGROUND OF SUPERNATURAL PROVISION - MYSTERIOUS? YES. BUT TRUE! SEE RIDDERBOS BELOW**), whether to submit to the bondage of sin or to enter into that freedom in the Spirit which is rightfully his as a child of God. ([Galatians 5:16-23 - Practical Application](#))

**Ridderbos** says: He must walk by the Spirit, that is, he must in fellowship with Christ let himself be ruled by the Spirit. **The principle of the Spirit does not make human effort unnecessary, but arouses it and equips it to put all its forces into the service of the Spirit.**

**Harrison** says: Now we have reached the climax of our prolonged antithesis, or, we may better say, we have this antithesis reduced to its final terms, summed up in two comprehensive words: flesh and Spirit. On Our Side it is flesh; on His Side it is Spirit. These are the two antithetical elements of life, the two opposing resources upon which life must depend. If we are living our life, it's flesh; if we are living His life, it is Spirit. ([Galatians 5:16 Spirit versus Flesh](#))

**MacArthur** says: Just as Jesus Christ is the primary Person behind **justification**, the Holy Spirit is the primary Person behind **sanctification**. A believer can no more sanctify himself than he could have saved himself in the first place. He cannot live the Christian life by his own resources any more than he could have saved himself by his own resources. In its most profound yet simple definition, the faithful Christian life is a life lived under the direction and by the power of the Spirit. That is the theme of Galatians 5:16-26, in which Paul tells believers to "walk by the Spirit" (Gal 5:16, 25) and to be "led by the Spirit" (Gal 5:18). The opening paragraph (Gal 5:16-18) of this section introduces the passage by setting forth the command and the conflict of the Spirit-led life. ([MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Galatians](#))

**Lucado** says: The Galatian letter argues that there are only two approaches to God. One is man-centered—calling on people to do certain things to merit God's approval. This way, Paul insists, is an exercise in futility. The other way is the good news that acceptance with God is possible because of what Jesus has already done for sinners. What's more, those who embrace this gospel receive God's Spirit to enable them to live a new kind of life.

**Ironside** says: THE present section of this epistle brings before us the truth, in a very marked way, of the two natures in the believer. It is important to remember that when God saves us He does not destroy the carnal nature which we received at our natural birth. The new birth does not imply the elimination of that old carnal nature, neither does it imply a change in it, but rather the impartation of an absolutely new nature born of the Holy Spirit of God, and these two natures abide side by side in the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. This explains the conflict that many of us have known since we have been converted. In fact, I need not have said, "many of us," for all converted people know at one time or another something of that conflict between the flesh and the Spirit. Jesus said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh"—that is, the old nature—"that which is born of the Spirit is spirit"—that is the new nature, and these two natures abide side by side until we receive the redemption of the body which will be at the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ, when He will transform this body of our humiliation and make it like unto the body of His glory. ([Galatians 5 Commentary](#))

**Machen** says: In this third main division of the epistle Paul exhibits the practical working of faith. Paul's gospel is more powerful than



the teaching of the Judaizers. Try to keep the law in your own strength and you will fail, for the flesh is too strong. But the Spirit is stronger than the flesh, and the Spirit is received by faith.

**Hendriksen** paints a metaphorical picture of the work of the Spirit - It takes the tender leaves of early springtime to rid the oak tree of the remnants of last autumn's withered foliage. It is only the living that can expel the dead. It is only the good that can push out the bad. ([Commentary](#))

- See the same principle which has been called the [Expulsive Power of a New Affection](#)

**Wiersbe** says: At the close of an important speech to Congress on January 6, 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt shared his vision of the kind of world he wanted to see after the war was over. He envisioned four basic freedoms enjoyed by all people: freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear. To some degree, these freedoms have been achieved on a wider scale than in 1941, but our world still needs another freedom, a **fifth freedom**. Man needs to be free from himself and the tyranny of his sinful nature. The legalists thought they had the answer to the problem in laws and threats, but Paul has explained that no amount of legislation can change man's basic sinful nature. It is not law on the outside, but love on the inside that makes the difference. **We need another power within, and that power comes from the Holy Spirit of God...**Life, not law, changes behavior; and as you yield to the Spirit, Christ's life is manifest in the fruit of the Spirit. Law works by compulsion from without, but grace works by compassion from within. ([Galatians](#))

**Dunnam** says: Paul is urging the Galatians to remember that, as Christians, they have received the Spirit and they are to walk in the Spirit. The Spirit is the supreme energizing and regulative force in their lives. If they walk in the Spirit, there is no danger that their Christian liberty will become an opportunity for the flesh. For Paul, the Spirit is more than the manifestation of a supernatural power, more than the giver of dramatic gifts, more than an explosive force erupting in the believer now and then. The Spirit is the daily sustaining, inspiring, and guiding power of the Christian's life. The Spirit is the domain of power, the sphere of influence which replaces the flesh as the energy force of our lives

**J. B. Phillips** "Every time we say, 'I believe in the Holy Spirit,' we mean that we believe there is a living God able and willing to enter human personality and change it."

**Spurgeon** - Walk under the Spirit's power, following His guidance. The Spirit never leads a man into sin. He never conducts him into self-indulgence and excess. Be obedient to that great principle of the Spirit that goes with the doctrine of grace and salvation by faith, and then you will not be obedient to that lusting of the flesh that is in you by nature.

It is the FLESH that is the PERFORMER.

It is the SPIRIT that is the TRANSFORMER.

**And you will not carry out the desire of the flesh**- Although "not" is a small word in this passage, it is absolutely critical to the dynamic of defeating the flesh. In other words "not" is a strong double negative, which in effect makes the wonderful declaration that when we are walking enabled by the Holy Spirit we **ABSOLUTELY WILL NOT** carry out the desire of the flesh! This is good news beloved. If the Spirit is like "oil", carrying out the lusts of the flesh is like "water." They simply cannot mix! Notice that Paul does not say we won't still have the lustful thoughts, but as long as we are walking by the Spirit, the Spirit will give us "victory" over those temptations and enables us to not act on those lustful thoughts. It is not a sin to be tempted, but only a sin when we make the bad choice to act upon the temptation!

[Lightfoot](#) says: In this passage the Spirit is doubly contrasted, first, with the **flesh**, and secondly, with the **law**. (Gal 5:18) The flesh and the law are closely allied: they both move in the same element, in the sphere of outward and material things. **The law is not only no safeguard against the flesh, but rather provokes it; and he who would renounce the flesh, must renounce the law also.** (See Ro 7:5) We have here germs of the ideas more fully developed in the Epistle to the Romans.

[Calvin](#) says "Now follows the remedy. The ruin of the church is no light evil, and whatever threatens it must be opposed with the most determined resistance. But how is this to be accomplished? By not permitting the flesh to rule in us, and by yielding ourselves to the direction of the Spirit of God."

**Comment** - Now note what Calvin said about how this evil is to be defeated. Notice his first statement "By not permitting the flesh to rule in us." While I shudder to disagree with this pillar of Christianity, I think he is wrong on two accounts. First, he mentions dealing with the flesh first before emphasizing the Spirit, but that is not Paul's pattern - Spirit first, then flesh. Second, his statement seems to imply we have some power to not permit the flesh to rule in us. It suggest we have some innate power. Clearly that is not true for the **ONLY WAY** to not permit the flesh to rule is to allow the Spirit to rule and then, and only then, do we have the supernatural power to shun the flesh. This may sound like it is nit picking but I have taught this verse to young men and ask them

how do you walk by the Spirit? Their answer was that you walk by the Spirit by not carrying out the deeds of the flesh. That is the wrong answer. That is backwards! That is placing one's self back under the law ("I won't do this sin, and by not doing it I will be walking in the flesh!")

As **De Haan** says "Our hope of victory lies not in the law, or our **good resolutions and intentions**, but in complete submission and yielding to the Spirit's word of grace. How clearly it is stated in Titus 2:11, 12, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us (WHAT IS TEACHING US? In context it is Grace - see "Spirit of Grace" Heb 10:29) that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world (Titus 2:11, 12). ([Studies in Galatians](#))

**Spurgeon** - The Holy Ghost, when He comes into us, is the author of all our desires after true holiness. He strives in us against the flesh. The holy conflict that we wage against our corruption comes entirely from Him. We would sit down in willing bondage to the flesh if He did not bid us strike for liberty.

James describes this relationship between temptation and sin...

Let no one say when he is **tempted**, "I am being **tempted** by God"; for God cannot be **tempted** by evil, and He Himself does not **tempt** anyone. But each one is **tempted** when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust (ORIGINATING FROM HIS FALLEN FLESH). Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. (James 1:13-15+)

**Barclay** says: No man was ever more conscious of the tension in human nature than Paul. As the soldier in Studdert Kennedy's poem said;

I'm a man and a man's a mixture  
Right down from his very birth;  
For part of him comes from heaven,  
And part of him comes from earth.

For Paul it was essential that Christian freedom and liberty should mean not freedom to indulge this lower side of human nature, but freedom to walk in the life of the Spirit.

#### Related Resource:

- [Galatians 5:16 What is the Flesh?](#)

**Remember** for much more in depth notes click [Galatians 5:16 Commentary](#)

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#### Kenneth Wuest - The Christian and Trench Warfare

But I say, walk ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) by the Spirit, and you (DOUBLE NEGATIVE = ABSOLUTELY) will not carry out the desire of the flesh. 17 For (EXPLAINS THAT THIS SPIRITUAL WARFARE **NEVER** CEASES EVERY DAY OF OUR LIFE ON EARTH! DON'T GET LAX! STAY ALERT!) the flesh sets its desire against ([epithumeo](#) in present tense - continually sets its strong desires against) the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition ([antikeimai](#) in present tense - continually in opposition = ongoing war until the day we die!) to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. ([Wuest Word Studies - Eerdmans Publishing Company Volume 1, Volume 2, Volume 3](#) - used [by permission](#))

THERE ARE some interesting word studies in Galatians 5:16–17. Those we will study are **“walk, Spirit, lusteth, against, contrary, cannot.”**

The Christian is exhorted to walk in the Spirit. The word **“walk”** is used in an early Greek manuscript in the sentence, “I am going about in a disgraceful state.” The writer of this sentence was commenting upon the kind of life he was living, how he was conducting himself. The form in the Greek shows that it is a command to be constantly obeyed. “Be constantly conducting yourselves in the Spirit.” The word “Spirit,” referring here to the Holy Spirit, is in the locative of sphere (See article on locative of sphere), and could be charted by a dot within a circle. The dot is ensphered within the circle. The exhortation therefore is, “Be constantly conducting yourselves in the sphere of the Spirit.” That is, determine every thought, word, and deed by the leading of the Spirit through the Word, and think every thought, speak every word, and do every deed, in an attitude of entire dependence upon the Holy Spirit's empowering energy, “Bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5+).

#### Related Resource:

- See study on meaning and significance of [locative of sphere](#)

"If we do this, we have God's guarantee and promise that we shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. The word "flesh" refers here to the fallen depraved nature with which we were born, but whose power was broken when we were saved. The word "lust" has changed its meaning. Today it refers to an immoral desire. When the Authorized Version was translated, it meant what the Greek word means from which it is translated, simply a desire. The desire may be a good one or a bad one, according to the context. The word in the Greek has in this verse a preposition prefixed which intensifies its meaning. It is not only a desire, it is a craving. But as we determine our conduct by what the Spirit leads us to do, and yield to Him for the divine energy with which to do it, we have God's promise that we will not; there is a double negative in the Greek which strengthens the negation, we will absolutely not fulfill the cravings of the fallen nature.

The explanation of how we are delivered from those cravings and the actions which would satisfy those cravings, is found in verse seventeen. The fallen nature lusts against the Holy Spirit. The same word for "lust" is used as in the previous verse. The flesh has a strong desire against the Spirit. The word "against" is from a Greek preposition which literally means "down." The idea is one of defeat, suppression. One could render the sentence, "The flesh has constantly a strong desire to suppress the Spirit." The work of the Holy Spirit in the believer is two-fold, namely, to put sin out of the life and to produce His own fruit. The fallen nature has a strong desire to suppress the Holy Spirit in the work of His office. But the Holy Spirit has a strong desire likewise to suppress the fallen nature in its attempt to cause the believer to obey its behests. They are contrary to one another. The words "one another" are a reciprocal pronoun in the Greek. The Spirit and the flesh reciprocate the antagonism each has for the other. The word "contrary," speaks of a permanent attitude of opposition toward each other on the part of both the flesh and the Spirit. The picture in the Greek word is that of two opposing armies, each digging a system of trenches for the purpose of holding the land they have and conducting a trench warfare. They have dug themselves in for a long drawn-out contest.

This contest is going on all the time in the heart of every child of God. It continues until the death of the believer. The Holy Spirit is the divine provision for victory over sin, "so that ye may not do the things that ye would desire to do." The part the Christian must play in this trench warfare is found in our previous verse, namely, to be constantly determining his every thought, word, and deed by the leading of the Spirit, yielding to Him for the energy to act in the premises. The entire translation could read, "But I say, be constantly conducting yourselves within the sphere of the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the cravings of the flesh. For the flesh has constantly a strong desire to suppress the Spirit, and the Spirit has as constantly a strong desire to suppress the flesh, and these are entrenched in a permanent attitude of opposition to one another, so that ye may not do the things that ye would desire to do." (Golden Nuggets)([Wuest Word Studies - Eerdmans Publishing Company Volume 1](#), [Volume 2](#), [Volume 3](#) - used [by permission](#))

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### Morning and Evening by Charles H. Spurgeon

**Walking implies continuance.** There must be a perpetual abiding in Christ. How many Christians think that in the morning and evening they ought to come into the company of Jesus, and may then give their hearts to the world all the day: but this is poor living; we should always be with Him, treading in His steps and doing His will.

**Walking also implies habit.** When we speak of a man's walk and conversation, we mean his habits, the constant tenor of his life. Now, if we sometimes enjoy Christ, and then forget Him; sometimes call Him ours, and anon lose our hold, that is not a habit; we do not walk in Him. We must keep to Him, cling to Him, never let Him go, but live and have our being in Him. "As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him;" persevere in the same way in which ye have begun, and, as at the first Christ Jesus was the trust of your faith, the source of your life, the principle of your action, and the joy of your spirit, so let him be the same till life's end; the same when you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, and enter into the joy and the rest which remain for the people of God.

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### The Battle Within

Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. —Galatians 5:16

In his letter to Christians in Galatia, Paul tried to get them to understand the inner conflict that all who belong to Christ will experience. This battle is between "the flesh" (our sinful human nature) and the Holy Spirit who lives within us (Galatians 5:17).

Because our self-centered nature wants its own way, it fights the rule of Christ within us. So we often end up doing our will rather than God's (v.17).

Once I prayed in desperation, "Lord, please show me how to overcome!" God directed me to Paul's words in Galatians 5:16—"Walk in the Spirit." I kept reading, and came to recognize my own "works of the flesh"—my envy, anger, hatred, and selfish ambitions

(vv.19-21).

I asked God for forgiveness, and I came to understand that I have been crucified with Christ (2:20). The power of my sinful flesh has been broken (5:24; Romans 6:6-7). I've gradually learned to bring this "death" into effect by allowing my flesh no more rights than a corpse! So I resolve daily to recognize and obey Christ's will alone. I sometimes fail, but repentance puts me back in step with the Holy Spirit.

We face this conflict every day, but the Spirit can overcome our sinful desires and win the battle. Which side is winning in your life?

By: Joanie Yoder ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Lord, grant me strength from day to day—  
How prone I am to go astray!  
The passions of my flesh are strong;  
Be Thou, my God, a shield from wrong.  
—D. De Haan

God will give us the victory, but we must be willing to fight.

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## Underrated Values

Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. —Galatians 5:16

Why is it that some of the best things in life can sound so unappealing to us—things like holiness, obedience, Spirit-control, and faith, for instance? Why do they so often trigger a sudden yawn rather than wet eyes of thankful emotions? Could it be that we've underrated their value?

Think how much these values can do for us. A truly Spirit-controlled person won't cheat on a spouse, abuse a child, or fudge on an income tax return. A Christ-controlled person isn't even likely to kick the family dog, or watch the best of intentions evaporate while lounging in front of a television.

Every believer in Christ faces a constant challenge to live a pure life (Gal. 5:17). Has that moment-by-moment walk under the Holy Spirit's guidance seemed too difficult lately? It's possible we've been underrating what should be of greatest value to us. The cost to ourselves and our loved ones may be tremendous.

If we find ourselves yielding to temptation again and again, perhaps we need to take stock of what's really important. It's time to learn to walk in the Spirit instead of sacrificing life's best for the shortsighted, self-destructive desires of the flesh. By Mart DeHaan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Help me, Lord, to live my life  
Free from selfishness and strife  
So that others clearly see  
Changes You have made in me. —Sper

If we take a stand for Christ, we're not likely to fall for the devil.

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## Mixed Signals

Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. —Galatians 5:16

Our society sends mixed signals. I got a letter from my credit card company, saying, "Mr. Egner, you are one of our most valued customers. We would like to raise your buying power by \$3,000." The next day, because I was late in sending a payment of \$36.96, I got another letter from the same company. It made me feel like a terrible person. It seemed to be saying that if I didn't pay up immediately, they would take action against me.

Which am I? A valued customer or a terrible person? Even more, how am I going to handle these mixed signals? On one hand, I was urged to go out and spend a lot more money. On the other, I felt threatened because I was late making a payment. It's like the signals our society sends young people. In some ads, movies, and videos they're told to indulge themselves now—with sex or alcohol. Yet at other times they are warned about AIDS and drinking while driving.

Our society sends many conflicting messages; the Bible does not. The Word of God tells us not to listen to our lusts but to follow God's ways, depending fully on the Spirit (Gal. 5:16). If we do that, we will not live with the anxiety that results from following mixed signals. By David C. Egner ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

[reserved](#))

Present your life to Christ today,  
Give Him your all without delay;  
You'll know true joy and gladly say,  
"I've found the way to live!" —JDB

God's signals are meant for our protection, correction, and direction.

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## **A Lesson From The Oak Tree**

Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. —Galatians 5:16

Have you ever noticed that in winter some oak trees retain their crisp, dry leaves long after the maples, the elms, and the walnuts have become bare skeletons? Even the strong winter winds and the early spring rains do not completely strip the oak branches of all their old leaves. But as springtime progresses, warmer winds blow and something wonderful begins to happen. Tiny buds start appearing at the tips of the twigs, and the dried remnants of the preceding season fall off. New life replaces the old.

At times, old habits cling to our lives with the same tenacity as those oak leaves. Even the winds of adversity do not remove all the lifeless leftovers of our fallen human nature.

But Christ, who dwells in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, is at work. His life within us continually seeks to push off the old habits—renewing us when we confess our sins, steadying us when we falter, and strengthening us to do His will.

When every effort to cast off an old sinful habit ends in failure, remember the mighty oak. Thank God for His Spirit who lives in you. Keep saying yes to His gentle urging to be kind, loving, compassionate, honest, and faithful. Those "lifeless old leaves" will eventually drop off. By: Dennis J. DeHaan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

When stubborn sins tenaciously  
Hold to their former place,  
We must rely on Jesus' strength  
And His unfailing grace. —Sper

To get rid of a bad habit, start a good one—trust God.

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## **Make It Personal**

Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. —Galatians 5:16

During my days as a teacher and coach at a Christian high school, I thoroughly enjoyed interacting with teenagers, trying to guide them to a purposeful, Christlike life—characterized by love for God and love for others. My goal was to prepare them to live for God throughout life. That would happen only as they made their faith a vital part of life through the help of the Holy Spirit. Those who didn't follow Christ floundered after they left the influence of Christian teachers and parents.

This is demonstrated in the story of King Joash of Judah and his uncle Jehoiada. Jehoiada, a wise counselor, influenced Joash to live a God-honoring life (2 Chron. 24:11,14).

The problem was that Joash did not embrace an honorable life as his own. After Jehoiada died, King Joash "left the house of the LORD" (v.18) and began to worship in a pagan way. He turned and became so evil that he had Jehoiada's son murdered (vv.20–22).

Having someone in our lives to guide us toward faith and Christlikeness can be good and helpful. Even better is getting to know the Lord ourselves and learning to rely on the Holy Spirit to be our guide (Gal. 5:16). That is making our faith personal. By: Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Lord, thank You for the people in my life who  
influence me toward following You. Help  
me not to depend on them primarily—but to  
depend on Your Holy Spirit to guide me.

The faith of others encourages; a faith of our own transforms.

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## Walking with the Spirit

Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. Galatians 5:16

Today's Scripture & Insight: Galatians 5:13–18

Ten thousand hours. That's how long author Malcolm Gladwell suggests it takes to become skillful at any craft. Even for the greatest artists and musicians of all time, their tremendous inborn talent wasn't enough to achieve the level of expertise that they would eventually attain. They needed to immerse themselves in their craft every single day.

As strange as it might seem, we need a similar mentality when it comes to learning to live in the power of the Holy Spirit. In Galatians, Paul encourages the church to be set apart for God. But Paul explained that this couldn't be achieved through merely obeying a set of rules. Instead we're called to walk with the Holy Spirit. The Greek word that Paul uses for "walk" in Galatians 5:16 literally means to walk around and around something, or to journey (peripateo). So for Paul, walking with the Spirit meant journeying with the Spirit each day—it's not just a one-time experience of His power.

May we pray to be filled with the Spirit daily—to yield to the Spirit's work as He counsels, guides, comforts, and is simply there with us. And as we're "led by the Spirit" in this way (v. 18), we become better and better at hearing His voice and following His leading. Holy Spirit, may I walk with You today, and every day! By: Chin Peter w. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Reflect & Pray

While being indwelt by the Holy Spirit when we receive salvation is a one-time event, how does this differ from being filled or walking with the Spirit? How have you been exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit?

Father, help me to experience the presence and leading of the Holy Spirit today, so that I might walk with You and live in a way that pleases You.

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**THE TROUBLE WITHIN** I see another law in my members, . . . bringing me into captivity to the law of sin. – Romans 7:23

A monk who had a quick temper was known to "pass the buck" for his fits of anger – always blaming his fellow monastery residents. So he decided to move to a place of absolute solitude in a desert, thinking that if he got away from the others he could be victorious. One morning he accidentally knocked over a pitcher of water. A few minutes later he bumped it again, and once more it fell on its side and spilled its contents. Losing his temper, the monk picked up the pitcher and hurled it to the ground. As it broke into smithereens, the truth hit him: he couldn't blame others for his flareups. The real trouble was within him. How true of all of us! The apostle Paul was keenly aware of the outworking of sin in his life. He cried, "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Rom. 7:24). But he was confident of final victory, for he answered his own question, saying, "I thank God – through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (v. 25). We can triumph over "the law of sin" right now, because Jesus "condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:3) through His death on the cross. All who believe in Him are given new life. As we endeavor to do God's will, with the guidance and help of the Holy Spirit, we increasingly overcome the trouble within. – R.W.D. ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

When sin within us rears its head  
And seeks its former place,  
We must rely on Jesus' strength  
And His unchanging grace.  
– Sper

THE HEART OF THE PROBLEM IS THE PROBLEM OF MAN'S HEART.

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**Galatians 5:17** For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

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Phillips Paraphrase - For the whole energy of the lower nature is set against the Spirit, while the whole power of the Spirit is contrary to the lower nature. Here is the conflict, and that is why you are not free to do what you want to do.

Wuest - for the evil nature constantly has a strong desire to suppress the Spirit, and the Spirit constantly has a



strong desire to suppress the evil nature. And these are entrenched in an attitude of mutual opposition to one another so that you may not do the things that you desire to do. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

Amplified - For the desires of the flesh are opposed to the [Holy] Spirit, and the [desires of the] Spirit are opposed to the flesh (godless human nature); for these are antagonistic to each other [continually withstanding and in conflict with each other], so that you are not free but are prevented from doing what you desire to do.

NET Galatians 5:17 For the flesh has desires that are opposed to the Spirit, and the Spirit has desires that are opposed to the flesh, for these are in opposition to each other, so that you cannot do what you want.

GNT Galatians 5:17 γ ρ σ ρ ξ πιθυμε κατ το πνεματος, τ δ πνεμα κατ τ ς σαρκ ς, τα τα γ ρ αλλοις ντ κειται, να μ ν θ λητε τα τα ποι τε.

NLT Galatians 5:17 The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions.

KJV Galatians 5:17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

ESV Galatians 5:17 For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

ASV Galatians 5:17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are contrary the one to the other; that ye may not do the things that ye would.

CSB Galatians 5:17 For the flesh desires what is against the Spirit, and the Spirit desires what is against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you don't do what you want.

NIV Galatians 5:17 For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.

NKJ Galatians 5:17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.

NRS Galatians 5:17 For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want.

YLT Galatians 5:17 for the flesh doth desire contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit contrary to the flesh, and these are opposed one to another, that the things that ye may will -- these ye may not do;

NAB Galatians 5:17 For the flesh has desires against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you may not do what you want.

NJB Galatians 5:17 The desires of self-indulgence are always in opposition to the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are in opposition to self-indulgence: they are opposites, one against the other; that is how you are prevented from doing the things that you want to.

GWN Galatians 5:17 What your corrupt nature wants is contrary to what your spiritual nature wants, and what your spiritual nature wants is contrary to what your corrupt nature wants. They are opposed to each other. As a result, you don't always do what you intend to do.

BBE Galatians 5:17 For the flesh has desires against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; because these are opposite the one to the other; so that you may not do the things which you have a mind to do.

- **For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit** Ps 19:12,13 51:1-5,10-12 65:3 119:5,20,24,25,32,35,40,133,159 Ps 119:176 Ec 7:20 Isa 6:5 Mt 16:17,23 26:41 Joh 3:6 Ro 7:18,21-25 8:5,6,13 Jas 4:5,6
- **these are in opposition to one another:** Ga 3:21 Mt 12:30 Ro 7:7,8,10-14 8:5-8
- **so that you may not do the things that you please** Ps 119:4-6 130:3 Mt 5:6 Lu 22:33,46,54-61 Ro 7:15-23 Php 3:12-16 Jas 3:2 1Jn 1:8-10
- [Galatians 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**NOTE: For much more in depth discussion of this verse click [Galatians 5:17 Commentary](#)**

**John MacArthur** makes the observation that "Along with many others in the New Testament, these two verses (Galatians 5:17-18) make it obvious that walking by the Spirit is not simply a matter of passive surrender. The Spirit-led life is a life of conflict, because it

is in constant combat with the old ways of the flesh that continue to tempt and seduce the believer. ([Galatians. Chicago: Moody Press](#))

**For** (gar) - Term of explanation. Paul is explaining the urgency and necessity of walking by the Spirit. Paul next explained the need for a life that is controlled and energized by the Spirit. The explanation is found in the fact that each Christian has two natures, a sinful nature received at birth, inherited from fallen Adam, and a new nature received at regeneration when said Christian became a participant in the divine nature (cf. 2 Peter 1:4). Both natures have desires, the one for evil and the other for holiness.

**Don Anderson** - Within the child of God there is this TUG-OF-WAR going on between: OUR FLESH, OUR OLD NATURE, and THE SPIRIT who energizes the new nature. Paul describes this in: Romans 7:15-25 The law stirs up the flesh, and grace is operative through the Spirit. To live for yourself is to walk after the flesh. To live for God is to walk after the Spirit. To be dominated by the flesh is to be dominated by the devil. To be dominated by the devil. To be dominated by the Spirit is to be controlled by God. It is in the areas of our lives where we feel fully capable to move out on our own that the flesh gets a stronghold. It is those areas where we feel that we can make it on our own that we feel to lose Christ in that area would not affect us. It is in those areas where we are not dependent that we are vulnerable. All that the flesh needs to move into action is to be placed before God on a basis of performance or the fulfillment of certain legal requirements. This is where so few Christians seem to understand that our Christian life is not by our flesh doing anything, but Christ living through us. The Holy Spirit in all of His power is forming the life of Christ within each of us....We, through the flesh, try to do what only the Spirit of God can do and that is why we are so frustrated. We set up certain standards of legalism and then try in the flesh to perform properly and, failing to do so, become depressed, guilty and defeated. This is certainly the desire of Satan for each of us as God's children, that we endeavor to please God by our personal performance. This was the danger that was facing these Galatian Christians. We want so badly to overcome the law of gravity. And we can stand there and jump and jump and we will never do it. For as we jump, we find that the law of gravity takes over and brings us back to earth. Now there is a greater law, the law of aerodynamics that will do that which we cannot do for ourselves. As we step into the plane and sit in the seat, we find that before long, we are skyward, overcoming the law of gravity, not in our ability; for if we decided to step outside the plane and see how personally we could overcome the law of gravity, we would find that the law of gravity would immediately take over. If our Christian life can be explained in terms of our own effort, then it can be safely said that we are living in the flesh....So Paul tells us that the flesh and the Spirit war within us for the right of domination and our only participation is to whom we yield. Austria and Prussia, in the time of Frederick, warred for Cilicia. Cilicia felt the shock of the conflict for it was fought upon her soil, but mightier contestants were deciding the issue. And so it is in the life of the Christian. (from [155 Page of Study Notes](#))

**Wuest** says: When the flesh presses hard upon the believer with its evil behests, the Holy Spirit is there to oppose the flesh and give the believer victory over it, in order that the believer will not obey the flesh, and thus sin. When the Holy Spirit places a course of conduct upon the heart of the believer, the flesh opposes the Spirit in an effort to prevent the believer from obeying the Spirit. The purpose of each is to prevent the believer from doing what the other moves him to do. The choice lies with the saint. He must develop the habit of keeping his eyes fixed on the Lord Jesus and his trust in the Holy Spirit. The more he says **NO** to sin, the easier it is to say **NO**, until it becomes a habit. The more he says **YES** to the Lord Jesus, the easier it is to say **YES**, until that becomes a habit. ([Wuest Word Studies - Eerdmans Publishing Company Volume 1, Volume 2, Volume 3](#) - used [by permission](#))

**COMMENT:** I DON'T COMPLETELY AGREE WITH **WUEST** HERE -- WHILE **WUEST** DOES NOT SAY THIS IS THE SPECIFIC ORDER - **NO** TO FLESH, **YES** TO SPIRIT - THE WAY HE SAYS IT DOES AT LEAST LEAVE THAT IMPRESSION TO THE UNWARY. BUT THE KEY IS **FIRST** SAYING "**YES**" TO THE SPIRIT, FOR HOW ELSE CAN WE HAVE THE POWER TO SAY "**NO**" TO SIN. SPIRIT FIRST, THEN THE FLESH. GO BACK AND LOOK AT THE ORDER IN Galatians 5:16 - SPIRIT FIRST, THEN FLESH. DON'T INVERT THE ORDER!)

**the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh**- Phillips paraphrase is picturesque - " For the whole energy of the lower nature is set against the Spirit, while the whole power of the Spirit is contrary to the lower nature."

**Bartlett** says: It is imperative for our spiritual growth that we grasp the fact that the old nature is not removed or reformed at regeneration. Failure to understand this elementary fact frequently plunges the new convert into needless bewilderment and even despair of his standing before God when, after a peaceful period of triumph and fellowship with Jesus, he stumbles into the old sins and faults he fancied had been vanquished forever. With older Christians this error often operates to effect quite different results. Persuaded that they cannot sin, adherents of the [heresy of sinless perfection](#) will deny that those practices are sinful which the Word of GOD plainly denounces as sinful. He who thinks he has reached perfection is the victim of an illusion indicating that he is desperately in need of a new pair of glasses to forestall threatening blindness. ([Galatians 5:16-23 - Practical Application](#) )

**Ian Thomas** illustrates this by pointing out: Our human heart is the royal residence of the Holy Spirit. In this royal residence is the grand piano of personality. Man has the key. One day Satan convinced Adam that he could play the piano just as good as the Holy Spirit. While Satan and Adam were talking, not known to Adam, the devil's sidekick, the flesh, slipped into the music room and began making a terrible racket by pounding away in discord at the grand piano that was meant to bring forth beautiful music. Sure

Adam, now you can pick your own tune, play whatever you want. Well at that moment, Adam began to quarrel with Eve, Cain murdered Abel, and the whole vile thing has been going on ever since. ([Quoted by Don Anderson](#))

**MacArthur** - So here we are, and we have a new life, a new nature, new longings, new loves, new desires. We have the Holy Spirit empowering us and restraining the flesh that is in us, but the flesh is still clinging to us. [Sin](#) is present, but it is no longer dominant.

For if (SINCE) we have become united with Him (CHRIST) in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection (WE HAVE EXPERIENCED A RESURRECTION), knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to [Sin](#) ([SIN IS NO LONGER OUR MASTER](#)) (Ro 6:5-6<sub>+</sub>)

But [Sin](#) is still present in our mortal bodies and its desire is always to rule us and urge us to carry out the deeds of the flesh...

Therefore (bc of Ro 6:11<sub>+</sub>) **do not let Sin reign** ([present imperative with a negative](#) - stop this or don't begin) in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting ([present imperative with a negative](#) - stop this or don't begin) the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but **present yourselves** ([aorist imperative](#) - "Just do it!") to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. (Ro 6:12-13<sub>+</sub>)

Paul goes on to command believers to

**present** ([aorist imperative](#) - "Just do it!") your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification. (Ro 6:19)

**MacArthur**- So therein lies the issue. We have died with Christ, we have risen with Christ. We are like Lazarus, but have a dead body still tied to us (A MURDERER WOULD HAVE THE CORPSE TIED TO HIM UNTIL IT DECAYED AND KILLED HIM), and we can't shake it in this life. We don't get rid of it ([flesh](#)) until the redemption of our body when we leave this world and enter the Lord's presence. (Read MacArthur's full sermon for a very interesting discussion of Christian perfectionism and the rotten fruit of Charles Finney's ministry - [The Believer's Lifelong Battle for Holiness](#)).

#### Related Resources:

- [See discussion of the Need for the Holy Spirit to obey NT commands](#) (or "How to Keep All 1642 Commandments in the New Testament!")
- [Filled with His Spirit/Richly Indwelt with His Word](#) - Chart Comparing

**Flesh** (4561) see discussion of [sarx](#) - The "flesh" is our mind, will and emotions acting independently of God and in defiance against Him! Someone has called it that "anti-God" energy within each of us. And remember that even as we grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Pe 3:18), the flesh is not dissipated, destroyed, or rendered inactive! In short the flesh is not remediable in any way. The upshot is that we will never become so Christ-like in this short life that we outgrow our desperate, daily need for the Holy Spirit! Sadly, I have discovered that many of God's saints have a very "fuzzy" understanding of the Spirit and their need to rely on Him daily to live this Christian life.

Russian writer **Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn** alludes to our fallen flesh in this quote:

"If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?"

**Spurgeon - Spirit against the flesh** You are pulled about by two contrary forces: You are dragged downward by the flesh, and you are drawn upward by the Spirit. They will never agree. These two powers are always contrary one to the other. If you think that you can help God by getting angry, you make a great mistake. You cannot fight God's battles with the devil's weapons. It is not possible that the power of the flesh should help the power of the Spirit.

**Spurgeon** - THE worst enemy we have is the **flesh**. Augustine used frequently to pray, "Lord, deliver me from that evil man, myself." All the fire which the devil can bring from hell could do us little harm if we had no so much fuel in our nature. It is the powder in the magazine of the old man which is our perpetual danger. When we are guarding against foes without, we must not forget to be continually on our watch-tower against the foe of foes within. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit." On the other hand, our best friend, who loves us better than we love ourselves, is the Holy Spirit. We are shockingly forgetful of the Holy Ghost, and therein it is to be feared that we greatly grieve Him; yet we are immeasurably indebted to Him: in fact, we owe our spiritual existence to His divine power. It would not be proper to compare the love of the Spirit with the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, so as even by

implication to set up a scale of degrees in love; for the love of the regenerating Spirit is infinite, even as is the love of the redeeming Son. But yet for a moment we will set these two displays of love side by side.

**For these are in opposition to one another** - This opposition or internal conflict is every believer's lot until the day we take our last breath. This is not like wars between nations where it is not uncommon for there to be a pause in the conflict (e.g., winter weather in WW II resulted in such a pause). No, this supernatural war is ongoing. Ponder that thought a moment. You get a great night's sleep, wake up refreshed and feel ready to conquer the world. What we often forget is that the fallen flesh was up before we were and it was already planning strategies to take us down spiritually. Peter alludes to this unceasing warfare writing to the saints in his first epistle "Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul." (1 Peter 2:11+) Notice the verb "**wage war**" which in Greek is the verb [strateuomai](#) which describes a soldier fighting a war and in context an "enemy soldier" we cannot even see, and whose "command center" is inside the fortress of our mortal body! Not only that, but the verb is in the [present tense](#) signifying that this warfare with our "**fleshly lusts**" is unceasing! Does this picture help you understand why our "commanding general" Paul is ordering us to continually be filled with the Holy Spirit in order to victoriously fight this Holy War?

**Are in opposition** (480) ([antikeimai](#) from [anti](#) = against, opposite + [keimai](#) = to be placed, to lie or be laid down) means literally to line up against or to lie opposite to, both ideas giving us a vivid picture of the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit.

The [present tense](#) emphasizes that this opposition is a continuing conflict with no truce in sight (until we reach glory!).

**So that you may not do the things that you please** - Amplified says "so that you are not free but are prevented from doing what you desire to do." **The things that you please** are the manifestations of your fallen [flesh](#). These are those sinful things we wanted before we were a Christian and they reflected the natural innate longings of the self-centered human heart that seeks self-fulfillment and self-gratification. As an aside if you remove the "h" from "flesh" and reverse the letters, it spells "self!" Similarly note what the middle letters of sin and pride are -- both are the bid "l" the person dominated by the fallen nature.

As **John MacArthur** says "The Holy Spirit is in every believer (Ro 8:9+) as the Restrainer. The Holy Spirit's role, yes, to empower you in the direction of righteousness, but also to restrain you from just doing the things that you please. That's how you lived your life before you were a believer. You did whatever you pleased, and you were going down a path of damnation, because the things that pleased you were sinful things, because they had no recognition of the glory and honor of God. So the Holy Spirit is given to you to restrain those natural desires. God understands that there is fallen flesh, and it has its desires for what it pleases. And God has given us His Holy Spirit to restrain that, so that our lives are changed. It doesn't mean that we never sin. What it does mean is we don't always sin. And as you grow spiritually and become more and more like Christ, sin decreases and righteousness increases. The Spirit of God trains you with the Word of God, so that you sin less and you obey more; and that's spiritual growth. That is the basic diagnosis of the heart and soul of a Christian. There is a war going on there between your fallen sinful flesh that wants what it wants, and the restraining power of the Holy Spirit stopping you from going in that direction. ([The Believers Lifelong Battle of Holiness](#))

**William MacDonald** has an interesting thought on this conflict between the Spirit and the flesh - God could have removed the fleshly nature from believers at the time of their conversion, but He did not choose to do so. Why? He wanted to keep them continually reminded of their own weakness; to keep them continually dependent on Christ, their Priest and Advocate; and to cause them to praise unceasingly the One who saved such worms. Instead of removing the old nature, God gave us His own Holy Spirit to indwell us. God's Spirit and our flesh are perpetually at war, and will continue to be at war until we are taken home to heaven. The believer's part in the conflict is to yield to the Spirit. ([Believer's Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#))

**Dan Duncan** emphasizes the unceasing war between the Spirit and our flesh writing that "We cannot live above the struggle, though many have tried to do that. People down through history have thought that if they could just get away from the temptations of this world, they could gain the upper hand and be able to prevail in this ongoing battle. That's what a lot of the early monks did. They left the urban areas to live in the deserts alone in caves and on mountains, away from the attractions and distractions of society. Jerome, one of the great scholars of the early church and a contemporary of Augustine did just that. He followed the monks into the wilderness where the days are hot and the nights are cold – a very harsh climate. And there with only the scorpions and wild animals for company, he hoped to escape the lurid temptations of the city, but he didn't. He wrote that even there, living in complete isolation, he imagined himself among the dancing girls of Rome! He wrote "My face was pale from fasting. My mind burned with passionate desires within my freezing body." A man can take himself out of the fight, but he can't take the fight out of himself, because this is an inner conflict. It is the struggle between the flesh and the Spirit. It goes wherever we go, and it is unrelenting. So the danger we face is either being complacent about it or thinking that we can manage it in our own strength by our techniques or by rules and regulations (ED: Subtle forms of legalism which blunt the word of the Spirit of grace - Heb 10:29). The flesh is too strong for us!" ([Galatians 5:16-26 The Flesh And The Spirit](#))

**J C Ryle** - Sin Looks Pleasant at First - We are too apt to forget that temptation to sin will rarely present itself to us in its true colors,

saying, "I am your deadly enemy, and I want to ruin you forever in hell." Oh no! Sin comes to us like Judas, with a kiss; like Joab, with outstretched hand and flattering words. The forbidden fruit seemed good and desirable to Eve; yet it cast her out of Eden. Walking idly on his palace roof seemed harmless enough to David; yet it ended in adultery and murder. Sin rarely seems [like] sin at first beginnings. Let us then watch and pray, lest we fall into temptation.

**NOTE:** For much more in depth discussion of this verse click [Galatians 5:17 Commentary](#)

#### **Galatians 5:18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.**

Phillips Paraphrase - But if you follow the leading of the Spirit, you stand clear of the Law.

Wuest - But if you are being led by the Spirit you are not under law. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

Amplified - But if you are guided (led) by the [Holy] Spirit, you are not subject to the Law.

NET Galatians 5:18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

GNT Galatians 5:18 ε δ πνευματι γεσθε, ο κ στ π ν μον.

NLT Galatians 5:18 But when you are directed by the Spirit, you are not under obligation to the law of Moses.

KJV Galatians 5:18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

ESV Galatians 5:18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

ASV Galatians 5:18 But if ye are led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

CSB Galatians 5:18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

NIV Galatians 5:18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.

NKJ Galatians 5:18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

NRS Galatians 5:18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law.

YLT Galatians 5:18 and if by the Spirit ye are led, ye are not under law.

NAB Galatians 5:18 But if you are guided by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

NJB Galatians 5:18 But when you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.

GWN Galatians 5:18 If your spiritual nature is your guide, you are not subject to Moses' laws.

BBE Galatians 5:18 But if you are guided by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

- **But if you are led by the Spirit** Ga 5:16,25 4:6 Ps 25:4,5,8,9 143:8-10 Pr 8:20 Isa 48:16-18 Eze 36:27 Joh 16:13 Ro 8:12,14 2Ti 1:7 1Jn 2:20-27
- **you are not under the Law.:** Ga 4:5 Ro 6:14,15
- [Galatians 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**NOTE:** For in depth discussion of this verse click [Galatians 5:18 Commentary](#)

**But if you are led by the Spirit** - In simple terms we are to yield to the Spirit and allow Him to lead us in our daily life. We are not to place ourselves under (subject to) the Law, which is what Paul has been saying throughout the book and especially in Galatians 5. Freedom is found in Christ alone and is enabled by His Spirit. It is not found in the Law. Note that the verb are led is passive voice which implies that the action occurs on us from a Source without. And yet while it is passive voice, that does not mean we are to be passive participants. In fact we have the choice to yield to His guidance so it is better seen as as a passive/active relationship. The Spirit of course takes the initiative for this is the pattern of God's grace. God takes the initiative and in this case His Spirit guides us and leads us. However we must actively choose to stand with Him against the flesh and follow His direction.

**Duncan** asks "how does He give this, leading this direction? How does He guide us? He always leads according to the principles of the word of God. The leading of the Spirit does not take place in a vacuum. He is the divine author of scripture, of the Law, of the gospels, of all 66 books of the Bible. So His leading is always according to that and is never arbitrary. It occurs in the heart of the believer. He works upon our mind and upon our will, first by renewing our minds in regeneration, and then renewing through sanctification. He does that principally through the reading and teaching of the Word for Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. (Ro 10:17) He enlightens us about the goodness of God and the wickedness of sin and creates within us a desire to



oppose indwelling sin at the same time giving us the power to oppose that sin, and enabling us to do that gladly, joyfully in obedience to God's commands. He enables us to do that (supernaturally), because that mindset is not natural within any of us. ([Galatians 5:16-26 The Flesh And The Spirit](#))

**Spurgeon** - The Spirit never brings the soul into bondage. The terrors and the fears that come of legal slavery are not the work of the Spirit of God. Where He works, holiness is delight and the service of God is a continual joy. Oh, that we may be thus led by the Spirit!

**Don Anderson** - If the Spirit is leading, then it does not depend upon your performance and you are not under law. It is the law which brings the flesh into action, and we are living on the basis of performance, endeavoring to produce within the flesh that which was intended to be produced in the power of the Spirit. (from [155 Page of Study Notes](#))

**Luther** used to say: . . . "My flesh seems to be on a warpath against the Spirit again. Go to it flesh, and rage all you want to. But you are not going to have your way. I follow the leadings of the Holy Spirit."

**Luther** says: When the flesh begins to cut up the only remedy is to take the sword of the Spirit, the word of salvation, and fight against the flesh. If you set the Word out of sight, you are helpless against the flesh. I know this to be a fact. I have been assailed by many violent passions, but as soon as I took hold of some Scripture passage, my temptations left me. Without the Word I could not have helped myself against the flesh. ([Galatians 5 Commentary](#))

**Wiersbe** says: The solution is not to pit our will against the flesh, but to surrender our will to the Holy Spirit. This verse literally means "But if you are willingly led by the Spirit, then you are not under the law." The Holy Spirit writes God's law on our hearts (Heb. 10:14-17; see 2 Cor. 3) so that we desire to obey Him in love. "I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart" (Ps. 40:8). Being "led of the Spirit" and "walking in the Spirit" are the opposites of yielding to the desires of the flesh. .([Galatians](#))

**You are not under the Law** - Under is [hupo](#) which in this context conveys the sense of under subjection to the authority, rule or power of the Law. It pictures one in bondage to the Law. Believers are no longer to live under the Law, for as Paul wrote in Gal 4:5+ "that He might redeem (pay the price to set free from slavery for) those who were under ([hupo](#)) the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons."

[Anders](#) says: In summary, Paul tells us that victory over sin is not the result of living under the law. Instead, it is the result of actively yielding to the Spirit. Therefore, both the first step of salvation and its ongoing steps (sanctification, growth in holiness) are brought about within us by God's Spirit working through faith. To be saved, we must have faith in Christ. To walk in God's way, we must have faith in the Holy Spirit, for he empowers us to walk in obedience

[Bickel & Jantz](#) say: Even though the Holy Spirit is in us, it is our responsibility to surrender our will to Him so He can direct our desires, enabling us to produce the thoughts and actions that please and glorify God. Without God's strength and enablement to help us in our weakness and frailty, we are at the mercy of the desires that come from the flesh. Another way to say it is this: If we don't follow the leading of the Spirit, we will follow the leading of the flesh, with the result that we will gratify the desires of the flesh.

**Bartlett** says: Turning to the brighter side of the picture, it holds gloriously true that the more we say yes to Jesus the easier will it be, until finally it becomes a fixed habit. Precious and weighty, then, is our responsibility for cultivating response-ability to Jesus. ([Galatians 5:16-23 - Practical Application](#))

**Dan Duncan** explains that "The Law is not the means of producing righteousness in the believer. The Law was given to show the unbeliever that he has no righteousness. The Law doesn't have the power to produce righteousness. And it is helpless against the flesh. It results in bondage and condemnation for those who seek by the yoke of the Law to gain God's approval. Paul has made that very clear throughout this book. But every believer in Jesus Christ has the Holy Spirit. At the moment of faith, as Paul explains in Ephesians 1:13, at that very moment we are sealed permanently with the Holy Spirit, who is our protector and who is our guide. Not the Law that's our guide. It is the Holy Spirit a person directs and empowers us, so that by siding with Him, the Christian overcomes the flesh. And remember, the one we side with, the one we walk with, is omnipotent, an omniscient, all wisdom and all loving. So by following Him we do overcome the desires of the flesh. Now our relationship to His guidance is stated here in verse 18 in a passive voice, a passive form. We are led by the Spirit. We don't lead the Spirit; the Spirit leads us. So there's a passive sense about this. But the idea that Paul is conveying here in this passage is not that we are only passive in this leading. We must submit ourselves to His leading."([Galatians 5:16-26 The Flesh And The Spirit](#))

**Galatians 5:19** Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality,



of mind, sensuality,

Wuest - Now the works of the evil nature are well known, works of such a nature as, for example, fornication, uncleanness, wantonness, ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

Amplified -Now the doings (practices) of the flesh are clear (obvious): they are immorality, impurity, indecency,

NET Galatians 5:19 Now the works of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity, depravity,

GNT Galatians 5:19 φανερόν ὁ σὶν τὸ γὰρ τῆς σαρκὸς, τὶν σὶν πορνείᾳ, καθαρεύσῃ, σὺλγείᾳ,

NLT Galatians 5:19 When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures,

KJV Galatians 5:19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

ESV Galatians 5:19 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality,

ASV Galatians 5:19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

CSB Galatians 5:19 Now the works of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, moral impurity, promiscuity,

NIV Galatians 5:19 The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery;

NKJ Galatians 5:19 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness,

NRS Galatians 5:19 Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness,

YLT Galatians 5:19 And manifest also are the works of the flesh, which are: Adultery, whoredom, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

NAB Galatians 5:19 Now the works of the flesh are obvious: immorality, impurity, licentiousness,

NJB Galatians 5:19 When self-indulgence is at work the results are obvious: sexual vice, impurity, and sensuality,

GWN Galatians 5:19 Now, the effects of the corrupt nature are obvious: illicit sex, perversion, promiscuity,

BBE Galatians 5:19 Now the works of the flesh are clear, which are these: evil desire, unclean things, wrong use of the senses,

- **Now the deeds of the flesh are evident** Ga 5:13,17 6:8 Ps 17:4 Joh 3:6 Ro 7:5,18,25 8:3,5,9,13 1Co 3:3 1Pe 4:2
- **immorality, impurity, sensuality** Eze 22:6-13 Mt 15:18,19 Mk 7:21-23 Ro 1:21-32 1Co 6:9,10 2Co 12:20,21 Eph 4:17-19 5:3-6 Col 3:5-8 1Ti 1:9,10 Tit 3:3 Jas 3:14,15 1Pe 4:3,4 Rev 21:8 22:15
- [Galatians 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## HOW TO TELL IF YOU ARE FOLLOWING THE FLESH!

**NOTE:** For in depth discussion of this verse click [Galatians 5:19 Commentary](#) - each of these sins is dealt with in depth.

The acts of the flesh symbolize spiritual death,  
but the fruit of the Spirit is evidence of spiritual life.

**Don Anderson** - Have you noticed that the terminology has changed here from the WORKS (DEEDS) OF THE LAW to the “WORKS (DEEDS) OF THE FLESH”? As soon as there is an introduction of law in my relationship to the Lord, immediately the flesh gets into the act. If we think we are going to be made righteous by the works of the law, it would be well for us to take a look at a few of its products as we by the flesh try to perform it. Back in verse 16 Paul COMMANDS us to “walk by means of the Spirit.” We do that by: DEPENDENCE, SUBMISSION, and OBEDIENCE. Whereas, when we get down to verse 19, the terminology has changed and it is: “THE WORKS OF THE FLESH.” The FOCUS is: off of DEPENDENCE and on DOING. It is: PERFORMING, CARRYING OUT THE CURRICULUM, and DOING THE DEMANDS OF THE LAW. Paul is now going to make a list of these “WORKS OF THE FLESH” in the next couple of verses. We will find there are FIFTEEN “WORKS OF THE FLESH” that are listed. (from [155 Page of Study Notes](#))

**Now the deeds of the flesh are evident** - Evident ([phanerós](#)) means that which can be plainly seen and known. These sins are not subtle! And so these next 3 verses help us assess whether we are being led by the Spirit or are choosing to be led by our fallen

flesh. Gal 5:19-21 clearly point out what a flesh-led life looks like. If these unholy deeds are active in our life, then we can know unequivocally that we are not submitting to the control of the Holy Spirit.

**Evident** (5318)(**phanerós** = manifest, visible, conspicuous, from **phaino** = give light; to make to shine, to cause to become visible from **phos** = light; Study verb **phaneroo**) means made visible as an external manifestation to senses. Phaneros stresses what is visible to sight.

**Bartlett** says: "Now, the works of the flesh are EVIDENT. . ." Let us pause right here. "The works of the flesh are EVIDENT"—that is to say, they are going to be shown for what they really are, in all their naked hideousness. The Word strips of glamour the sins that the world clothes with glamour. We do well from time to time to gaze upon the loathsome picture of sin which Scripture paints. ([Galatians 5:16-23 - Practical Application](#))

**De Haan** says: Notice just two words, WORKS (DEEDS) and FRUIT. Works of the flesh—Fruit of the Spirit. Works speak of effort, mechanics, toil and labor. Works result in weariness, faintness, and often frustration. It is accompanied by much fleshly effort, and much display and noise of hammer and saw. But FRUIT! How different! It does not involve work, but is the result of just RECEIVING, YIELDING, ACCEPTING. It means having no confidence in the flesh, but an honest confession of our weakness, an earnest plea for forgiveness, and a surrender to the will of God. ([Studies in Galatians](#))

**Barker & Kohlenberger** say: That **pneuma** and **sarx** are in conflict is now illustrated by contrasting lists of the works of the sinful nature and of the fruit of the Spirit. At the same time, the lists are more than a mere proof of what he has written earlier. For by raising these particulars of conduct, he also provides a checklist for measuring the conduct of those who consider themselves spiritual. If one's conduct is characterized by the traits in the first list, then he or she is either not a believer or else a believer is not being led by God's Spirit.

**Spurgeon** - A black catalogue, but sin is very prolific. There are four classes of sins mentioned here. First Paul mentions sins of lust. Next, idolatry and witchcraft. Then follows a third set, which may be classed under the head of sins of temper. Lastly Paul mentions sins of appetite. We must take care that we avoid each one of these works of the flesh, or else we shall give no proof that we are led by the Spirit of God and possess the grace of God. No matter what they profess, or what sacraments they may partake of, those who live in these sins are not alive unto God.

**Spurgeon on sexual immorality** - Any kind of sensual indulgence, whatever it may be—a lustful glance, the cherishing of an unclean desire, the utterance of a foul expression—all this is condemned, as well as the overt acts of adultery and fornication.

**Sexual Immorality** (4202)(**porneia** from root verb **pernao** = to sell, **porneuo** = to play the harlot; **pornos** = male prostitute) originally referred to any excessive behavior or lack of restraint, but eventually became associated with sexual excess and indulgence, of every kind of extramarital, unlawful, or unnatural sexual intercourse.

**Don Anderson on impurity** - "UNCLEANNES"—it began by meaning physical and material dirt. Then it came to mean the quality of that which is soiled and dirty. A mind can be like this and soil everything that passes through it. It can reduce the finest action to the meanest motive. It can defile the purest things with a dirty joke. It is that which separates a man from God. How many have said as a result of participating in illicit sexual relationships, "I feel so dirty and unclean." Someone has described sex outside of marriage as like taking a handful of dirt and throwing it on the carpet. This is not where it belongs and the carpet has been defiled. This is sex outside the bounds of marriage. Whereas dirt in the garden where it was designed to be becomes soil in which it is possible for the production of a crop. This is sex within the bounds of marriage. (from [155 Page of Study Notes](#))

**Impurity (uncleanness)** (167)(**akatharsia** from **a** = without + **kathairo** = cleanse) is a broad term referring to moral uncleanness in thought, word, and deed. It describes a state of moral impurity, especially sexual sin. The term **akatharsia** refers to filth or refuse. Paul's point here is that sin defiles us, producing corruption and degradation of the sinner. The sinner is never a winner!

**Barclay** says: In this word **akatharsia**, then, there are three ideas. i. It is the quality of that which is soiled and dirty. . . . ii. In this impurity there is a certain repulsive quality. It awakens disgust and loathing in any decent person who looks at it. . . . iii. In this word there remains the idea of that which separates a man from God. ([Galatians 5 Commentary](#))

**Spurgeon on sensuality** - The outward uncleanness that society condemns, yet often practices. This includes all conversation that excites the passions, all songs that suggest lewdness, all gestures and thoughts that lead up to unlawful gratification. All works of art that are contrary to modesty are here condemned, and the most pleasing poetry if it creates impure imaginations. These unclean things are the

works of the flesh in the stage of putridity—the very maggots that swarm within a corrupt soul.

**Sensuality (lasciviousness)** (766) (**aselgeia** from **aselges** = licentious <> **a** = negates next word + **selges** = continent) originally referred to any excess or lack of restraint but came to convey the idea of shameless excess and the absence of restraint, especially with sexual excess. Thus like **koite**, **aselgeia** was used almost exclusively of especially lewd sexual immorality, of uninhibited and unabashed lasciviousness. It refers to the kind of sexual debauchery and abandonment that characterizes much of modern society and that is often flaunted almost as a badge of distinction! **Aselgeia** refers to uninhibited sexual indulgence without shame and without concern for what others think or how they may be affected (or infected).

**Anderson** on **sensuality** - “INDECENCY”—this is a general uncleanness of the whole personality, tainting every sphere of life; a love of sin so reckless that a man has ceased to care what God or man thinks of his actions. It has no respect for people or the rights of anyone else, complete indifference to public decency and opinion. (from [155 Page of Study Notes](#))

**Barclay** says: . . . **aselgeia** indicates a love of sin so reckless and so audacious that a man has ceased to care what God or man thinks of his actions. A man, he says, may be **akathartos**, impure, unclean, and hide his sin, for public opinion and public decency still have some hold upon him; but a man does not become **aselgēs** (the adjective) until he shocks public decency. As **Lightfoot** sees it, the essence of **aselgeia** is that it has come to such a stage of sinning that it makes no attempt whatever to hide or cloak its sin; it is sin lost to shame.

**The Agony of Deceit edited by Michael Horton** - When Jimmy Swaggart defied the orders of the Assemblies of God to refrain from preaching for one year, he assured the public that he was free of moral defect, for, he said, Oral Roberts had cast out the demons from his body over the phone. Oral Roberts confirmed Swaggart's report, insisting he saw the demons with their claws deeply embedded in Swaggart's flesh. Now that the rascals were gone, Swaggart and Roberts asserted, Swaggart could get on with preparing the way for Christ's return. Evidently, personal responsibility for sin can be dismissed by blaming it on an external force. Yet Flip Wilson's famous quip, “The devil made me do it” is hardly comedy when we're talking about the biblical view of sin. For these metaphysical evangelists, even personal sins can be attributed to the bad god, since he is, after all, sovereign over this earthly realm as the good god is relatively in charge of the spiritual domain. Here again, then, is the echo of the Gnostics of old. When that heresy was revived toward the end of the medieval period, Calvin said, “They made the devil almost the equal of God.” In this way, the problem of sin is replaced with the problem of Satan. It is facing Satan, not my own sin and rebelliousness, that becomes the great task of the Christian life. I'm not the problem—the Devil is! (See [Deceitfulness of Sin](#))

**Galatians 5:20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions,**

Phillips Paraphrase - worship of false gods, witchcraft, hatred, quarrelling, jealousy, bad temper, rivalry, factions, party-spirit,

Wuest - idolatry, witchcraft, enmities, strife, jealousy, angers, self-seekings, divisions, factions, ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

Amplified - Idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger (ill temper), selfishness, divisions (dissensions), party spirit (factions, sects with peculiar opinions, heresies),

NET Galatians 5:20 idolatry, sorcery, hostilities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish rivalries, dissensions, factions,

GNT Galatians 5:20 ε δωλολατρ α, φαρμακε α, χθραι, ρις, ζλος, θυμο, ριθε αι, διχοστας αι, α ρσεις,

NLT Galatians 5:20 idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division,

KJV Galatians 5:20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

ESV Galatians 5:20 idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions,

ASV Galatians 5:20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, parties,

CSB Galatians 5:20 idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambitions, dissensions, factions,

NIV Galatians 5:20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions,

factions

NKJ Galatians 5:20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies,

NRS Galatians 5:20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions,

YLT Galatians 5:20 idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, strifes, emulations, wraths, rivalries, dissensions, sects,

NAB Galatians 5:20 idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, rivalry, jealousy, outbursts of fury, acts of selfishness, dissensions, factions,

NJB Galatians 5:20 the worship of false gods and sorcery; antagonisms and rivalry, jealousy, bad temper and quarrels, disagreements,

GWN Galatians 5:20 idolatry, drug use, hatred, rivalry, jealousy, angry outbursts, selfish ambition, conflict, factions,

BBE Galatians 5:20 Worship of images, use of strange powers, hates, fighting, desire for what another has, angry feelings, attempts to get the better of others, divisions, false teachings,

- **Sorcery:** Eze 22:18 De 18:10 1Sa 15:23 1Ch 10:13,14 2Ch 33:6 Ac 8:9-11 Ac 16:16-19
- **factions:** 2Co 11:19 Tit 3:10 2Pe 2:1
- [Galatians 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**NOTE:** For in depth discussion of this verse click [Galatians 5:20 Commentary](#) - each of these sins is dealt with in depth.

**Idolatry** (1495)(**eidololatreia** from **eidolon** = idol + **latreia** = service, worship) (See multiple Bible dictionary articles on **idolatry**) speaks of extreme admiration or reverence for something other than God. **Idolatry** more specifically is the worship of something created which is in direct opposition to the worship of the Creator Himself. Originally, a physical idol helped visualize the god it represented but later people worshipped the physical object itself (Ro 1:19; 20; 21; 22; 23 see **notes** [Ro 1:19](#); [20](#); [21](#); [22](#); [23](#)).

**Sorcery** (5331) (**pharmakeia** from **pharmakeus** = one who prepares or uses magical remedies; from **pharmakon** = a drug or spell giving potion, but also used of medicinal drugs; English - pharmacy, etc) primarily signified the use of medicine, drugs, spells, then, poisoning and finally sorcery. It was used to describe the use of magic which often involved the taking of drugs. **Sorcery** per se describes an occult practice in which the adherents claim to have supernatural powers and knowledge, including the ability to foretell the future and to summon evil spirits through charms and magical spells.

**MacArthur** says: **sorcery**. The Greek word **pharmakeia**, from which the English word **pharmacy** comes, originally referred to medicines in general, but eventually only to mood-altering and mind-altering drugs, as well as the occult, witchcraft, and magic. Many pagan religious practices required the use of these drugs to aid in communication with deities.

**ENMITIES**—this is the attitude that puts up the barriers and draws the sword. It is the opposite of love that holds out the hand of friendship and the arm of love.

**Enmities** (note it is PLURAL!)(2189)(**echthra** from **echthros** = speaks of an enemy in an active sense, of one who is hostile to another) means **antagonistic**, expressing **enmity** (this word suggests positive hatred which may be open or concealed, expressing deep-rooted hatred or irreconcilable **hostility** (this word suggests an enmity showing itself in attacks or aggression) or expressing antagonism (actively expressed opposition or hostility). In its essence **echthra** is the opposite of love. It describes being the enemy of another.

**STRIFE**—“ENMITIES” is the state and attitude of mind toward other people and “STRIFE” is the actual outcome of such an attitude in daily life—broken and interrupted personal relationships strewn along the pathway of those who are out of fellowship with the Lord.

**Strife** (**quarrels**) (2054)(**eris**) means contention, wrangling, quarrels. It refers to engagement in rivalry, especially with reference to positions taken in a matter. **Strife** is a general term that carries the ideas of all kinds of self-centered rivalry and contentiousness about the truth. **Strife** is an expression of enmity with bitter sometimes violent conflict or dissension.

“JEALOUSIES”—this is the envy that casts grudging looks because someone has something that we want or feel that we should have. Never before has a culture been so committed to the buy now, pay later philosophy. Bumper stickers used to read, “It may not be much, but at least it’s paid for.” Now flashy imports sport this message, “I owe, I owe, so off to work I go!” I recently saw a bumper sticker in San Diego that said, “I want it all, and I want it now.” For too many people, the key to having it all now is easy credit.

**Jealousy** (2205) (**zelos** from **zeo** = to be hot, to boil [from the sound of bubbling water], figuratively to be fervent or show great enthusiasm; see related studies [zeleo](#); [zelotes](#)) was originally a good word which described fervour in advancing a cause or in rendering service but with a negative connotation it describes a reaction which borders on extreme or fanatical.

“Outbursts of anger”—it is like fire in straw, quickly blazing up and then, just as quickly, dying out. It is explosive and can blow things to ruin. Someone has said: Men are like steel—when they have lost their temper they are of no good.

**Outbursts of anger** (2372) (**thumos** from **thúo** = move impetuously, particularly as the air or wind, a violent motion or passion of the mind; move violently, rush along) describes **passion** (as if breathing hard) and so speaks of an agitated or “heated” anger that rushes along (impulse toward a thing). **Thumos** describes a tumultuous welling up of the whole spirit; a mighty emotion which seizes and moves the whole inner man. **Thumos** (especially when accompanied by breathing violently or hard) pictures a “panting rage”. We’ve all seen individuals in whom there was a sudden outburst of this type of passionate anger. You can even see their nasal passages widening to take in more air in the heat of their passion. As Paul taught in verse 16, walking in the Spirit provides an excellent preventative against this type of sudden, explosive rage.

**Disputes (selfish ambition)** (2052) (**eritheia** means self seeking, strife, contentiousness, extreme selfishness, rivalry and those who seek only their own. In a word, **eritheia** is the desire to be number one no matter the cost! **Eritheia** describes personal gratification and self-fulfillment at any cost, which are the ultimate goals of all fleshly endeavors. **Eritheia** has no room for others, much less genuine humility. It is that ultimate self-elevation rampant in the world today which is the antithesis of what the humble, selfless, giving, loving, and obedient child of God is called to be in Christ and only possible in the power of His Spirit.

**Dissensions** (1370) (**dichostasia** from **dicha** = asunder, apart + **stasis** = a standing) means literally a standing apart which is a picture of dissension, discord, disunity, contention, division into opposing groups. The idea of dissension is disagreement which leads to discord. Dissension is strife that arises from a difference of opinion and stresses a division into factions (especially factions in the early church).

**DIVISIONS**—it is a state of things in which men are divided, in which feuds flourish and in which unity is destroyed. A state in which all fellowship and togetherness is gone. When the tide in the ocean goes out, every crab has his own little puddle. But when the great tide of the love of the Spirit flows in, everyone is together in one big puddle. “United we stand, and divided we fall.”

**FACTIONS** or “outbreaks of selfishness”—this has to do with self-ambition. This is a person who is only in any type of thing for what they can get out of it. It is a political word for a man who has as his motive party or personal ambitions. It is the self devotion to one’s own interests.

**Factions** (sects, heresies) (139) (**hairesis** from **haireo** = to choose, elect, prefer; only in the middle voice = to take for oneself; see word study of [hairetikos](#)) denotes a choosing or a choice. It came to mean an opinion chosen or a tenet (a principle, belief, or doctrine generally held to be true) and then came to refer to a sect, party or faction that held tenets distinctive to it.

**Spurgeon - idolatry** To bow in worship before an “altar” so-called, or a cross, or an image or picture of a saint, or before a real or supposed “holy” relic, or anything of the kind, is nothing but sheer idolatry. Yet multitudes are committing this great sin under the notion that they are doing God service. There is a form of idolatry that is not as gross as this, yet it is also sinful—the idolatry of loving ourselves, or our wife, or husband, or child, or father, or mother, or sister, or brother, more than we love the Lord. **Sorcery** By this is intended all real or pretended communion with evil spirits or with the dead. Necromancy, spiritualism, and everything of the kind are absolutely forbidden to all who desire to “inherit the kingdom of God.” **Enmities** The apostle mentions a habitual enmity, usually combined with a selfish esteem of one’s own person. Certain men cherish a dislike of everybody who is not of their clique, while they detest those who oppose them. They are contemptuous, ready to take offense at the weak, and care little whether they give offense or not. They delight to be in minorities of one. The more wrongheaded and pugnacious they can be, the more are they in their element. **Strife** If you give way to a contentious spirit, foster disagreements, are filled with hatred and envy, so that you cannot bear to know that others prosper more than you, and desire to drag them down to your level; if you give way to bursts of passion or indulge in backbiting, for that is strife—you are sowing to the flesh. I grieve to say that these evil things abound all around us. But, O men and women of God, keep clear of all these things! **Jealousy** Jealousy in all its forms is one of the works of the flesh. Is it not cruel as the grave? There is a jealousy that sickens if another is praised and pines away if another prospers. It is a venomous thing and stings like an adder. It is a serpent by the wayside, biting the horse’s heels so that his rider falls backward. **Outbursts of anger** This is the fury of angry passion and all the madness that comes of it. “But I have a quick temper,” says one. Are you a Christian? If so, you are bound to master this evil force, or it will ruin you. If you were a saint of God to the very highest degree in all but in this one point, it would pull you down. Indeed, at any moment an angry spirit might make you say and do that which would cause you lifelong sorrow. **Disputes** The continual love of contention, the morbid sensitiveness, the overweening regard to one’s own dignity, which join together to produce strife, are all evil things. What is the proper respect that is due to poor creatures like us? I believe that if any one of us got our “proper respect,” we would not like it long. We would think that bare justice



was rather scant in its appreciation. We desire to be flattered when we cry out for “proper respect.” Respect, indeed! If we had what we deserved, we would be in the lowest hell! **Dissensions** As far as our church life is concerned, this evil shows itself in an opposition to all sorts of authority or law. Any kind of official action in the church is to be railed at because it is official; rule of any sort is objected to because each desires to have the preeminence and will not be second. God save us from this evil leaven! **Factions** This is the kind of hate that makes every man set up to create his own religion, write his own Bible, and think out his own gospel.

Someone has said: When we are out of fellowship with the Father, it will manifest itself in our relationship to our brothers and sisters within the body of Christ. This is so true because when the flesh gets in it produces selfishness and enmity and strife and all sorts of difficulties that are not present when the Lord’s children are dominated by the Spirit.

**Galatians 5:21 envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.**

Phillips Paraphrase - envy, drunkenness, orgies and things like that. I solemnly assure you, as I did before, that those who indulge in such things will never inherit God's kingdom.

Wuest - envyings, drunkenness, carousings, and the things of such a nature which are like these things, respecting which things I am telling you beforehand even as I told you in advance, that those who are in the habit of practicing things of that nature shall not inherit the kingdom of God. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

Amplified - Envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like. I warn you beforehand, just as I did previously, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

NET Galatians 5:21 envying, murder, drunkenness, carousing, and similar things. I am warning you, as I had warned you before: Those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God!

GNT Galatians 5:21 φθνοι, μιθαι, κμοι κα τμοια τοις, προλγω μν, καθ ς προεπον τι ο τ τοιατα πρ σσοντες βασιλε αν θεο ο κληρονομ σουσιν.

NLT Galatians 5:21 envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

KJV Galatians 5:21 Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

ESV Galatians 5:21 envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

ASV Galatians 5:21 envyings, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of which I forewarn you, even as I did forewarn you, that they who practise such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

CSB Galatians 5:21 envy, drunkenness, carousing, and anything similar. I tell you about these things in advance-- as I told you before-- that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

NIV Galatians 5:21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

NKJ Galatians 5:21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

NRS Galatians 5:21 envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

YLT Galatians 5:21 envyings, murders, drunkennesses, revellings, and such like, of which I tell you before, as I also said before, that those doing such things the reign of God shall not inherit.

NAB Galatians 5:21 occasions of envy, drinking bouts, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

NJB Galatians 5:21 factions and malice, drunkenness, orgies and all such things. And about these, I tell you now as I have told you in the past, that people who behave in these ways will not inherit the kingdom of God.

GWN Galatians 5:21 envy, drunkenness, wild partying, and similar things. I've told you in the past and I'm



telling you again that people who do these kinds of things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

BBE Galatians 5:21 Envy, uncontrolled drinking and feasting, and such things: of which I give you word clearly, even as I did in the past, that they who do such things will have no part in the kingdom of God.

- **drunkenness:** De 21:20 Lu 21:34 Ro 13:13 1Co 5:11 6:10 Eph 5:18 1Th 5:7
- **carousing:** 1Pe 4:3
- **that those who practice such things:** Isa 3:11 Ro 2:8,9 8:13 1Co 6:9,10 Eph 5:5,6 Col 3:6 Rev 21:27 Rev 22:15
- **will not inherit the kingdom of God** Mt 25:34 1Co 6:10 15:50 Eph 5:5
- [Galatians 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**NOTE:** For in depth discussion of this verse click [Galatians 5:21 Commentary](#) - each of these sins is dealt with in depth.

**Envy** (5355)([phthonos](#)) describes pain felt and malignity conceived at the sight of excellence or happiness. It means not just wanting what another person has, but also resenting that person for having it. It is an attitude of ill-will that leads to division and strife and even murder. When we envy, we cannot bear to see the prosperity of others, because we ourselves feel continually wretched. The English word **envy** is interesting as it is derived from the Latin *in* = against and *video* = to look, "to look with ill-will," etc., toward another, and obviously is an evil strongly condemned in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. To **envy** is to feel a grudging discontent aroused by the possessions, achievements, or qualities of another along with the desire to have for oneself something possessed by another. To **envy** another is to show spiteful malice and resentment over another's advantage. To **envy** is to possess a discontented feeling that arises in one's selfish heart in view of the superiority of another, and being nearly tantamount to the expression of jealousy. The one who envies possesses a malignant passion that sees in another qualities that it covets, and can even degenerate into hatred for their possessor. When we feel **envy** towards others our basic desire is to degrade them, not so much because we aspire after elevation as because we delight in obscuring those who are more deserving. It follows that **envying** while seemingly just an "innocent" sin is in fact one of the most odious and detestable of all vices.

**Drunkenness** (3178)([methe](#)) is the Greek word most often was used of intentional and habitual intoxication. It is worth noting that in two of the three NT uses of **carousing** and **drunkenness** are found side-by-side, which is not surprising to see one sin begat another.

Carousing (2970)([komos](#)) originally referred to a band of friends who accompanied a victor in a military engagement or athletic contest on his way home, singing with rejoicing and praises to the victor. But the word "degenerated:" until it came to mean "carousal" or a noisy, nocturnal and riotous procession of half drunken revelers and frolicsome fellows who after supper paraded through the streets at night with torches and music in honor of Bacchus or some other deity, singing and playing before houses of male and female friends (and causing a major public disturbance). Hence **komos** generally refers to feasts and drinking parties that are protracted till late at night and indulge in revelry.

**Forewarn** (foretell, tell in advance) (4302)([prolego](#) from **pró** = before + **lego** = to say) means literally to say or tell beforehand (in advance and so to predict), to foretell or to forewarn (the idea is the to warn in advance). Forewarned is forearmed!

**Practice** (4238)([prasso](#)) means doing something as a regular practice or as a routine habit, and is distinguished from [poieo](#) which means "to do" which focuses more on the end/achievement of the action. In contrast **prasso** focuses on the process or habitual effort to arrive at the end/achievement, and thus refers more to the course of conduct. Paul uses the [present tense](#) which emphasizes not just an occasional lapse but a lifestyle! And the [active voice](#) emphasizes this is their conscious, volitional, deliberate choice to commit these sins (and others like them). No one coerced them.

**That those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God** - **Practice** is the verb [prasso](#) which means in essence that they are actively carrying out ("accomplishing") one or more of these sins. **Prasso** is in the [present tense](#) indicating that they are carrying out these sins continually, as a way of life, as their habitual practice. In short, they are not believers.

**Anderson** - Here in these "works of the flesh" we see the POWER OF EVIL to take: that which is GOOD and to twist it into that which is EVIL, that which is BEAUTIFUL and so deform it that it is UGLY, and the FINEST THINGS and to make them AVENUES FOR SIN. (from [155 Page of Study Notes](#))

**Spurgeon - envying** - Not so much the desire to enrich oneself at another's expense, as a wolfish craving to impoverish him and pull him down for the mere sake of it. This is a very acrid form of undiluted hate and leaves but one stronger form of hate. To desire another's dishonor merely from envy of his superiority is simply devilish and is a sort of murder of the man's best life. **Drunkenness** It is not merely that you may drink to excess, but you may eat to excess, or clothe your body too sumptuously, or there may be some other spending of money upon your own gratification that is not according to sober living.

**Spurgeon on those who practice such things** - All who commit any of the sins in this long black catalogue are sowing to the flesh,

and not to the Spirit. When a man sows to the flesh, what will the harvest be? “The one who sows to his own flesh will reap corruption” (Gal 6:8)—putridity, rottenness, death! The sin that the sinner thought was sweet as honey turns bitter as gall to him. There are many men and women in this world who have lived in sin until it has become its own punishment, and if it is not so in this world, it will be so in the world to come.

**Luther** says: This is a hard saying, but very necessary for those false Christians and hypocrites who speak much about the Gospel, about faith, and the Spirit, yet live after the flesh. But this hard sentence is directed chiefly at the heretics who are large with their own self-importance, that they may be frightened into taking up the fight of the Spirit against the flesh.

**Anders** says: While a Christian may intermittently get pulled into these sins, those who live like this (habitually, continually) are not Christians and will therefore not inherit the kingdom of God.

**Barker & Kohlenberger** say: Paul adds a solemn warning, saying that those who habitually practice such things will never inherit God’s kingdom. This does not mean that if Christians fall into an isolated lapse into sin through getting drunk or some such thing, they thereby lose their salvation. Rather, Paul is referring to a habitual continuation in sins of the sinful nature, and his point is that those who continually practice such sins give evidence of having never received God’s Spirit. When he says that he warned the Galatians of this previously (presumably when he was among them), he reveals that his preaching was never what one might call mere evangelism but that it always contained a strong dose of the standard of morality expected from Christians.

**Bartlett** says: As well expect a fish to live on dry land as to imagine for a moment that a sinner could ever be happy in heaven. ([Galatians 5:16-23 - Practical Application](#))

**Bickel & Jantz** say: Worst Ad Campaign Ever There is an ad campaign for a well-known city in Nevada that says, “What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas.” That has to be the worst advertising slogan ever developed, because it blatantly tells people that satisfying their fleshly desires is perfectly okay—and even encouraged—as long as no one you know and respect (like your family) finds out about it. Wrong! Everything we do to satisfy the flesh has consequences, even if “nobody” sees.

**Lovett** says: INHERIT. As we scan the works of the flesh, we realize we all do some of these things in varying degrees. One might then conclude, “Since I do some of these things am I excluded from heaven?” No. Which nature does them? The old. Indeed the corrupted nature cannot enter heaven. Our true (spiritual) circumcision in Christ removes the old nature from the soul so that it passes away with the flesh at physical death (Rom. 2:29; Col. 2:11). The “old man” cannot enter heaven. Only the new man does. The Christian, clothed with his new nature, inherits the kingdom. The unsaved man dies with his old nature still attached to enter eternity a child of Satan forever (John 8:24). Paul’s words could be translated, the old nature does not inherit the kingdom of God.

**Duncan** comments on these sins in the life of saints -- “Now that doesn’t mean that Christians don’t practice these things at all. It doesn’t mean that Christians cannot fall into any one of these sins. Christians do fall into these sins and others. In fact, we do that every day. (ED: BUT HOPEFULLY WE KEEP “SHORT ACCOUNTS” AND CONFESS AND REPENT LEST WE CONTINUALLY GRIEVE/QUENCH THE SPIRIT OUR ONLY HOPE OF VICTORY OVER THESE SINS!). That’s the struggle that Paul is describing here. It’s a battle that we are in. But such sins are not characteristic of the Christian life. They are not the bent of our life, and that’s the force of this statement who practice such things, because Paul puts that in the [present tense](#), which indicates habitual, continual conduct in fleshly sins, not periodic lapses in sin. This describes a person who has no real struggle against these sins. It’s just the pattern of one’s life. (ED: DUNCAN GIVES AN EXCELLENT CAVEAT) **That doesn’t mean that we can look at a person’s life when we see this pattern and determine whether he or she is a child of God or not.** We don’t have that ability and I don’t think Paul is setting this forth here in order for us to take it upon ourselves to examine everybody’s life and see who is or who isn’t a child of God. As I say, we cannot do that, but **we can examine our own lives** and we can look at ourselves in light of these two lists, these two groups of virtues and vices and see where we stand. In fact Paul tells the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 13:5 to do that very thing. But if we’re a child of God, we’ll see a pattern in our life that fits the fruit of the Spirit, because the salvation that Christ obtained is not only a salvation from the penalty of sin, but from the power of sin. So a salvation, as Dr. Johnson once put it, that does not result in practical holiness is not His. That is, it’s not Christ’s salvation. Salvation He has obtained for His people has power. The power of sin’s been broken. ([Galatians 5:16-26 The Flesh And The Spirit](#))

**Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,**

Phillips Paraphrase - The Spirit however, produces in human life fruits such as these: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, fidelity,

Wuest - But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

Amplified - But the fruit of the [Holy] Spirit [the work which His presence within accomplishes] is love, joy (gladness), peace, patience (an even temper, forbearance), kindness, goodness (benevolence), faithfulness,

NET Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

GNT Galatians 5:22 ὁ καρπὸς τοῦ πνεύματος οὗτός ἐστιν ἡ ἀγάπη, ἡ χαρὴ, ἡ εἰρήνη, ἡ μακροθυμία, ἡ χρηστότης, ἡ γαθήνη, ἡ πίστις

NLT Galatians 5:22 But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

KJV Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

ESV Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

ASV Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

CSB Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith,

NIV Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

NKJ Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

NRS Galatians 5:22 By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness,

YLT Galatians 5:22 And the fruit of the Spirit is: Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith,

NAB Galatians 5:22 In contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness,

NJB Galatians 5:22 On the other hand the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness,

GWN Galatians 5:22 But the spiritual nature produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

BBE Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, a quiet mind, kind acts, well-doing, faith,

- **the fruit:** Ga 5:16-18 Ps 1:3 92:14 Ho 14:8 Mt 12:33 Lu 8:14,15 13:9 Joh 15:2,5,16 Ro 6:22 7:4 Eph 5:9 Php 1:11 Col 1:10
- **love:** Ga 5:13 Ro 5:2-5 12:9-18 15:3 1Co 13:4-7 Eph 4:23-32 5:1,2 Php 4:4-9 Col 3:12-17 1Th 1:3-10 5:10-22 Titus 2:2-12 Jas 3:17,18 1Pe 1:8,22 2Pe 1:5-8 1Jn 4:7-16
- **goodness:** Ro 15:14
- **faithfulness:** 1Co 13:7,13 2Th 3:2 1Ti 3:11 4:12 1Pe 5:12
- [Galatians 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**NOTE:** For in depth discussion of this verse click [Galatians 5:22 Commentary](#) - each of these virtues is dealt with in depth.

**But the fruit of the Spirit** - Paul now gives 9 virtues that are evidence of being led by the Spirit. Note the designation is **fruit**, not deeds. Deeds or works, speak of what man can do, as with the works or the deeds of the Law. On the other hand **fruit** must grow out of life and in the case of the believer, it grows out of the life of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us and produces His fruit in and through us. Notice also that while deeds are plural, fruit is singular stressing the fact that all 9 virtues compose a uniform whole, a unity. Think of them as a cluster of grapes which are all attached to one branch. The point is that ALL of them are to be found in the believer.

**Spurgeon on but** - That “but” is placed here because the apostle has been mentioning certain works of the flesh, all of which he winnows away like chaff, and then sets forth in opposition to them “the fruit of the Spirit.” The apostle has just used no less than seventeen words to describe the works of the flesh. Human language is always rich in bad words because the human heart is full of the manifold evils that these words denote. Nine words are here used to express the fruit of the Spirit, but to express the works of the flesh—see how many are gathered together!

**Duncan** says that “If one is missing, then we do not have the fruit of the Spirit.”

**Spurgeon on fruit of the Spirit** - The great artist has sketched fruit that never grows in the gardens of earth until they are planted by the Lord from heaven. Oh, that every one of us might have a vineyard in his bosom and yield abundance of the love that is “the fruit of the Spirit.” The text (Gal 5:22) speaks of “fruit,” and fruit comes only from a rooted abiding. It could not be conceived of in

connection with a transient sojourning, like that of a traveler. The stakes and tent pins that are driven into the ground for a nomad's tent bear no fruit, for they do not remain in one place. Inasmuch as I read of the "fruit of the Spirit," I take comfort from the hint and conclude that He intends to abide in our souls as a tree abides in the soil when fruit is borne by it.

**Duncan on love** - The first that is listed is love, and we would expect that, because God is love, 1 John 4:8. Love is the greatest of the virtues; Paul tells us that in 1 Corinthians 13. Love fulfills the whole Law, as he has just instructed us in the previous passage. And it is the distinguishing mark of the disciple. That's what Jesus said in John 13. "By this all men will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another." And so love naturally leads the list of the fruit of the Spirit. It is what the world is to see preeminently in our lives as we act in love toward one another, and not only in love toward one another, but in love toward the world around us. Most importantly though, love is directed toward God. It is the motivation for all that we do. It's private. It is characteristic of our personal relationship with Him, reflected in our life of study and prayer, and just the way we live. So first and foremost, fundamentally it is love for God and it grows within us as we understand what God in Christ has done for us. ([Galatians 5:16-26 The Flesh And The Spirit](#))

**Spurgeon on love** - Love is first in the list of the fruits of the Spirit because in some respects it is best. First, because it leads the way. First, because it becomes the motive principle and stimulant of every other grace and virtue. You cannot conceive of anything more forceful and more beneficial, and therefore it is the first. Love is a grace that has to do with eternity, for we will never stop loving Him who first loved us. But love has also to do with this present world, for it is at home in feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, nursing the sick, and liberating the slave. Love delights in visiting the fatherless and the widows, and thus it earns the encomium: "I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me as a guest, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you cared for me, I was in prison and you came to me" (Matt 25:35–36). Love is a very practical virtue, and yet it is so rich and rare that God alone is its author. None but a heavenly power can produce it; the love of the world is sorry stuff.....Fruit does not start from the tree perfectly ripe at once. First comes a flower, then a tiny formation that shows that the flower has set. Then a berry appears, but it is very sour. You may not gather it. Leave it alone a little while, and allow the sun to ripen it. By and by it fills out, and you have the apple in the full proportions of beauty, and with a mellow flavor that delights the taste. Love springs up in the heart and increases by a sure growth. Love is not produced by casting the mind in the mold of imitation, or by fastening grace to a man's actions as a thing outside of himself. There are people who have borrowed an affectionate mannerism and a sweet style, but they are not natural; they are not true love. What sweet words! What dainty phrases! You go among them, and at first you are surprised with their affection: You are a "dear sister" or a "dear brother," and you hear a "dear minister," and you go to the "dear church" and sing dear songs to those dear tunes. Their talk is so sweet that it is just a little sticky, and you feel like a fly caught in molasses. This is disgusting; it sickens one. Love is a fruit of the Spirit. It is not something assumed, but something growing out of the heart. True love, real love for God and others, comes out of a man because it is in him, wrought within by the operation of the Holy Ghost, whose fruit it is. The outcome of regenerated manhood is that a man lives no longer unto himself but for the good of others.

**"LOVE"**—this is the love of Jesus Christ controlling us. This is the godlike kind of love—AGAPE love. The idea of whether love is deserved or not has passed out of sight. It flows to the deserving and undeserving alike. It is the love that is willing to sacrifice one's best interest in order that it might flow freely to others.

**"JOY"**—this is the distinguishing atmosphere of the Christian life. Joy is the result of a right relationship with the Father and is a product of the Holy Spirit. This is a keynote of the book of Philippians. Independent of circumstances this "JOY" is the manifestation of the Spirit in the life of the child of God. "JOY" is the evidence that THE KING IS IN RESIDENCE. Joy is the flag that flies from the castle when the king is in residence. One of the first things to depart as EVIDENCE OF OUR WALK WITH GOD when we are out of fellowship with Him is our "JOY."

**Duncan on joy** - It's been said that joy is the virtue in the Christian life corresponding to happiness in the secular world. There's a big difference between the two. Joy is reliable; happiness is not. Happiness is dependent on the circumstances. Joy is dependent on the Lord, who is above the circumstances and controls them for our good. In fact, that's the reason that we can have joy in the midst of affliction, because we know that God is sovereign. He rules over every aspect of life. He is King over this world and over our lives at every moment of our existence, so everything that comes into our life is, Paul tells us in Romans 8:28, is for our good. We may not understand it. It may puzzle us greatly, but we can rejoice in the midst of it, because by faith we know that the God who has allowed these things into our life, He's using them for our good. And again we have joy because of what Christ has done for us and what He has obtained for us. Whatever pains or losses we have in this world, they're only temporary. They won't last. Heaven is real and eternal and it will be our possession shortly. ([Galatians 5:16-26 The Flesh And The Spirit](#))

**"PEACE"**—this is serenity or tranquility. The perfect contentment of the life which is happy and secure. It describes the perfection of human relationships. Peace is right relationship in every sphere of life. This "PEACE" points in THREE DIRECTIONS. It is "PEACE": 1. UPWARD—in the sense that I am right with God. 2. INWARD—in that I know there is nothing hidden within about which I am feeling guilty. 3. OUTWARD—in my relationship to other brothers and sisters in the body of Christ.

**De Haan** says: These are not FRUITS but FRUIT. The “works” of the flesh are plural and Paul enumerates seventeen of them in detail. But the “fruit” of the Spirit is singular and consists of three groups of virtues: 1. Personal fruit—love, joy, peace. These have to do with our own subjective personal life. 2. Outreaching fruit to others—longsuffering, gentleness, goodness. This is our attitude in grace toward others. 3. Up-reaching fruit—toward God. They are faith, meekness, temperance. Nine parts of one fruit, all supplied by the Spirit. It covers our complete responsibility toward God, our fellow man, and others. ([Studies in Galatians](#))

#### **Related Resources:**

- [What is the fruit of the Holy Spirit?](#)
- [What is love?](#)
- [What is joy?](#)
- [What is peace?](#)
- [What is patience?](#)
- [What is kindness?](#)
- [What is goodness?](#)
- [What is faithfulness?](#)

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#### **Going Home**

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace . . . —Galatians 5:22

In an article for the Atlanta Journal-Constitution titled “Hassled For The Holidays,” Bill Hendrick describes the tensions of the Christmas season. For millions of people, he writes, “going home for the holidays has become an arduous, stress-filled ordeal in which grown men and women unconsciously revert to childish roles, elderly parents bark orders like tyrants, and somebody else . . . makes all the decisions.”

Even in the best of families, holiday reunions can be a stressful time when we experience anything but peace. But Galatians 5 says that as new persons in Christ, we have a choice about our thoughts and actions, no matter where we are. If we live according to our sinful nature, the result is “hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions” (v.20). But if the Holy Spirit controls us, we can show “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (vv.22-23). When we get together with our families, these Spirit-filled qualities can be seen as we “through love serve one another” (v.13).

A lot of people are longing for “peace on earth, goodwill toward men” during this holiday season. Let’s take it home with us, and by the power of the Holy Spirit give to family and friends the gift of God’s peace. By: David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

When the Holy Spirit fills us,  
He will energize our life;  
He will help us serve each other,  
Spreading peace instead of strife.  
—Sper

To be a peacemaker, let the peace of Christ reign in your heart.

---

#### **"Joy Stealers"**

He who has begun a good work in you will complete it. —Philippians 1:6

Why do many Christians fail to experience real joy, which is listed as a fruit of the Holy Spirit in Galatians 5:22?

In his book *Laugh Again*, Charles Swindoll suggests three common “joy stealers”—worry, stress, and fear. He defines worry as “an inordinate anxiety about something that may or may not occur.” (And it usually doesn’t.) Stress, says the author, is “intense strain over a situation we can’t change or control.” (But God can.) And fear, according to Swindoll, is a “dreadful uneasiness over danger, evil, or pain.” (And it magnifies our problems.)

Swindoll says that to resist these “joy stealers” we must embrace the same confidence that Paul expressed in his letter to the Philippians. After giving thanks for the Philippian believers (1:3-5), the apostle assured them “that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ” (v.6).

Whatever causes you worry, stress, and fear cannot ultimately keep God from continuing His work in you. With this confidence we

can begin each day knowing that He is in control. We can leave everything in His hands.

Resist those “joy stealers” by renewing your confidence in God each morning. Then relax and rejoice. By: Joanie Yoder [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Although our joy will wane at times  
From worry, stress, and fear,  
God keeps on working in our heart  
And tells us He is near.  
—D. De Haan

Happiness depends on happenings; joy depends on Jesus.

---

### **Rejoice, No Matter What!**

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! —Philippians 4:4

A Christian friend of mine, now in her eighties, has kept a joyful spirit throughout her life. During World War II, in spite of dangers and separations, she and her husband were still able to laugh together at home. She recalls a summer when their laughter was overheard by a cynical neighbor. “What on earth do you two find to laugh about?” she grumbled.

Author Colleen Townsend Evans has an idea about why some can maintain joy, while others can’t. “This kind of tough joy can irritate those who might want it very much but, not knowing how it comes, choose to scoff instead.” Evans continues, “Joy is okay, the world seems to say, if we have some excuse for it. Like when your favorite team wins or you get a raise in pay. If we have no obvious reason for our joy, we’re likely to be judged.”

The Bible doesn’t say joy is a fruit of circumstance; it clearly states that joy is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). To live a joy-filled life, we must “walk in the Spirit” (v.25). Then we can rejoice in spite of our circumstances. Paul was in prison when he said, “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!” (Philippians 4:4).

Your choice to rejoice may irritate some, but it will encourage others and glorify God. By: Joanie Yoder ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Because life’s circumstances change,  
Our happiness may not remain;  
But if we’re walking with the Lord,  
Our inner joy He will sustain.  
—Sper

Joy comes from the Lord who lives within us, not from what’s happening around us.

---

### **Tried And True**

Most men will proclaim each his own goodness, but who can find a faithful man? —Proverbs 20:6

We are often disappointed by the unfaithfulness of people. A family member promises to write, but months go by without a letter. A pastor says he will visit when we are sick, but he doesn’t make it to the hospital or to our home. A friend agrees to be there for us in our bereavement but doesn’t even call. Others tell us they will pray for us but quickly forget our need. Someone promises to do an important task for us but never follows through. We ask ourselves, “Who can find a faithful man?” (Proverbs 20:6).

We can do very little about the unfaithfulness of others. But we can do a lot about our faithfulness to others. When we make a promise we must keep it. When we tell someone we will pray for them, we need to follow through and do it. When we proclaim our loyalty and love for others, we can do little things that show them we mean it.

The apostle Paul said that one fruit of the Spirit is faithfulness (Galatians 5:22). God will create in us a steadfast spirit if we take seriously what we tell others we will do for them, and if we follow through.

Ask God to make you a person whom others can count on—a person who is tried and true. By: David H. Roper ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Lord, grant to me a faithfulness  
In what I say and do



So others will be confident  
That I will follow through.  
—D. De Haan

Faithfulness in little things is a great thing.

---

## Better Than Happiness

The fruit of the Spirit is . . . joy. —Galatians 5:22

Mark was 21 and dependent on drugs. Finding happiness was his big goal in life, a goal that had eluded him. Once, while talking with our family, his frustration erupted: “Look, all I want in life is happiness. I want to feel happy. Is that asking too much?”

Sadly, Mark was asking for too little of life. What he really was seeking but hadn’t realized was not happiness but joy. He couldn’t accept that real joy is a fruit of something, or Someone, much greater than happiness. He came very close to Jesus Christ—close enough to taste the life that results in the joy he so deeply craved. But eventually he walked away, only to remain unhappy.

According to Bible scholar Ian Barclay, “Happiness is not a biblical word at all. It is derived from the root to happen. Clearly, what happens to us will affect our happiness.” Joy, on the other hand, is a fruit of God’s Spirit and is not affected by good or bad happenings. Joy is not dependent on our circumstances. It is dependent, as we ourselves need to be, on God Himself who dwells within us.

We should desire to have this joy in our lives, without chasing after it. Let’s live and walk in the Spirit so that the fruit of joy will naturally burst forth. By Joanie Yoder ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Because life's circumstances change,  
Our happiness may not remain;  
But if we're walking with the Lord,  
Our inner joy He will sustain.  
—Sper

Happiness depends on happenings; joy depends on Jesus.

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## A To-Do List

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness. —Galatians 5:22

What’s on your to-do list today? Cleaning out an overstuffed closet? Calculating a financial report at work? Paying your monthly bills?

We all have things we need to get done today, whether we’ve written them down or not. They’re important for us to accomplish.

While a to-do list is helpful, another type of list is even more valuable: a “to be” list.

Albert Einstein said, “Try not to become a man of success but rather to become a man of value.”

The apostle Paul encouraged the Galatian believers, and now tells us, to be concerned with our character. He said that if we’re controlled by the Holy Spirit, God will produce in us the characteristics of “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (5:22-23).

As you look at those character traits, which are you needing most in your life? More patience with a co-worker or a child? A little more gentleness and kindness toward a neighbor? As you draw near to God, He will enable you to be the person He wants you to be.

Perhaps at the top of your to-do list today you could put: Spend time praying and reading God’s Word. That would be a good start in helping with your “to be” list. By: Anne Cetas ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

The hidden person of the heart  
Must take priority  
Because our inner character  
Determines who we’ll be.

—Sper

It's not what you do but who you are that's most important.

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## **Fragrant Fruit**

Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example. —1 Peter 2:21

We were privileged to be the guests of some friends who live in the mountains. When we entered our room, we were pleased to find a lovely basket of fresh fruit on the table. The grapes, pears, apples, and strawberries looked refreshing and delicious. But it was not until we cut or bit into the fruit that we experienced the full aroma and flavor.

Paul likened the characteristics of the Holy Spirit's work in our lives to fruit (Gal. 5:22-25). The delectable arrangement he described includes love, joy, peace, and kindness. Like the fruit in our guestroom, the full "flavor" is best released under cutting or trying circumstances.

Love, for example, is most beautiful when encountered by hatred. Peace is most welcomed when it blossoms in the midst of conflict. Longsuffering and self-control are sweetest in the face of bitter persecution and temptation.

One reason God allows us to experience trials is that through our godly response the true value of the fruit of the Spirit is released as a witness to the world.

The next time we are tested, may our deepest desire be to allow the Holy Spirit to produce in us fragrant fruit for the glory of God. By David C. Egnor ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

We shrink from the purging and pruning,  
Forgetting the Husbandman knows  
The deeper the cutting and paring  
The greater the fruitfulness grows.  
—Anon.

The Spirit's keen paring knife enhances a Christian's fruit-bearing life.

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## **The Fruit Stealer**

Put on the whole armor that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. —Ephesians 6:11

Four young men crept silently through the late-evening shadows toward the unattended farm market. One picked up a ripe watermelon and slipped to the edge of the darkness. He handed it to the second young man, who relayed it to the third. The fourth put it into the trunk of their car. In a few minutes they had taken a dozen watermelons, and they sped off.

Fruit-stealing happens more often than we realize, not only with real fruit but also with what the Bible calls spiritual fruit. The apostle Paul told believers to develop the fruit of the Spirit, which includes love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22-23). But Satan doesn't want that fruit to be on display in our lives. As soon as we begin to develop these spiritual virtues, the devil uses his wiles to "steal them away" from us by tempting us to sin.

The next thing we know, Christlike character traits are replaced by un-Christlike ones. Our fruit is gone. To protect ourselves, we need to focus on the truths of the Bible, choose to do what is right, remember our purpose as God's redeemed children, trust God, and pray always (Eph. 6:13-18).

As we do these things, we will be fruitful and not be victims of the fruit-stealer. By David C. Egnor ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

You can trust the Savior's power  
To protect from Satan's snare;  
But you must be ever watchful—  
Of the robber be aware!  
—Hess

To bear the Spirit's fruit don't let sin take root.

## Galatians 5:23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Phillips Paraphrase - tolerance and self-control - and no law exists against any of them.

Wuest - meekness, self-control. Against such things as these there is no law. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

Amplified - Gentleness (meekness, humility), self-control (self-restraint, continence). Against such things there is no law that can bring a charge].

NET Galatians 5:23 gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

GNT Galatians 5:23 πρατης γκρ τεια· κατ τ ν τοιο των ο κ σπιν ν μος.

NLT Galatians 5:23 gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!

KJV Galatians 5:23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

ESV Galatians 5:23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

ASV Galatians 5:23 meekness, self-control; against such there is no law.

CSB Galatians 5:23 gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law.

NIV Galatians 5:23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

NKJ Galatians 5:23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

NRS Galatians 5:23 gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things.

YLT Galatians 5:23 meekness, temperance: against such there is no law;

NAB Galatians 5:23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

NJB Galatians 5:23 gentleness and self-control; no law can touch such things as these.

GWN Galatians 5:23 gentleness, and self-control. There are no laws against things like that.

BBE Galatians 5:23 Gentle behaviour, control over desires: against such there is no law.

- **self-control:** Ac 24:25 1Co 9:25 Tit 1:8 2:2
- **against such things there is no law:** 1Ti 1:9
- [Galatians 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**NOTE:** For in depth discussion of this verse click [Galatians 5:23 Commentary](#) - each of these virtues is dealt with in depth.

**Duncan** - All of these are fruit. And fruit, as you know, has seeds. So fruit begets more fruit. And the fruit of the Spirit does that. Love begets more love. Joy begets more joy and so on. It reproduces itself. It is living. It grows naturally and increases as we live under the control and guidance of the Holy Spirit. And in that way it is in contrast to the deeds of the works of the flesh, which suggest labor and effort and toil. Spiritual fruit is not our work. It is a gift of the Spirit, and that's the main point. These virtues are a product of grace. We can't produce them in our own strength. We can't produce them by putting ourselves under some legal code. Only the Spirit can do that, and He does that. He produces this. And for those who are being led by the Spirit, these virtues are as natural as fruit on a vine. So we have to ask ourselves, are we living under the control of the Spirit? Husbands, are you loving your wives? Mothers and fathers, are you being patient with your children? Children, are you being obedient to your parents? Do people look at us and say, "Those people have joy"? Is our conduct and way of life such that it would draw people to Christ? Are we kind to one another? Are we kind to those around us? When we go to a restaurant, are we kind to the waiter or the waitress? These little things in life are where the fruit of the Spirit are displayed. And they will be displayed if we're walking by the Spirit. Well, this is what we need to ask ourselves and this is how we need to examine ourselves and this is what we need to pray for, for ourselves and for one another, that the Lord will produce in us His fruit. This is what we need to seek to emulate in our lives. This is truly the good life. It's the best life. It's the highest life, as Paul says, against such things there is no Law. ([Galatians 5:16-26 The Flesh And The Spirit](#))

**"FAITHFULNESS"**—this is the quality of reliability or trustworthiness; a person upon whom you can utterly rely and his words you can trust. "He who is faithful in little will be allowed to be faithful in much."

### Related Resources:

- [What is gentleness?](#)
- [What is self-control?](#)

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## Under Control

He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty. —Proverbs 16:32

When the head coach of a university baseball team retired, one sportswriter noted an amazing statistic. While winning 1,466 games, 22 conference championships, and 2 national titles, this coach was never ejected from a game by an umpire. A former player described his coach as “a legend, a winner, but above everything else, he’s a gentleman, on and off the field.”

That tribute made me stop and consider my behavior in the game of life. Amid daily pressures and confrontations, how do I react to people at home, at work, or on the highway? Are my words and actions consistent with my profession of faith in Christ?

It’s clear from Scripture that God places great value on self-control: “He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city” (Prov. 16:32). A patient person receives greater commendation than a powerful warrior. A person whose temper is under control rates higher marks than a conquering hero.

One fruit of the Holy Spirit listed in Galatians 5:23 is self-control. That quality enables us to stay composed when anger flares all around us. And that’s one of the most important victories we could ever win. By David C. McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Thinking It Over

When do you become angry? What happens to you

and to others when you lose self-control?

What happens when you keep your temper in check?

The person who loses his head is usually the last one to miss it.

**Galatians 5:24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.**

Phillips Paraphrase - Those who belong to Christ have crucified their old nature with all that it loved and lusted for.

Wuest - And they who belong to Christ Jesus crucified the evil nature with its dispositions and cravings once for all. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

Amplified - And those who belong to Christ Jesus (the Messiah) have crucified the flesh (the godless human nature) with its passions and appetites and desires.

NET Galatians 5:24 Now those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

GNT Galatians 5:24 ο ὁ τοῦ Χριστοῦ [ἡσο] τὴν σὰρκά σταύρωσαν σὺν τοῖς παθμασιν καὶ ταῖς πιθυμαις.

NLT Galatians 5:24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there.

KJV Galatians 5:24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

ESV Galatians 5:24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

ASV Galatians 5:24 And they that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof.

CSB Galatians 5:24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

NIV Galatians 5:24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.

NKJ Galatians 5:24 And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

NRS Galatians 5:24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

YLT Galatians 5:24 and those who are Christ's, the flesh did crucify with the affections, and the desires;

NAB Galatians 5:24 Now those who belong to Christ (Jesus) have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires.

NJB Galatians 5:24 All who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified self with all its passions and its desires.

GWN Galatians 5:24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified their corrupt nature along with its passions and desires.

BBE Galatians 5:24 And those who are Christ's have put to death on the cross the flesh with its passions and its evil desires.

- **Now those who belong to Christ Jesus** Ga 3:29 Ro 8:9 1Co 3:23 15:23 2Co 10:7
- **have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires** Ga 5:16-18,20 6:14 Ro 6:6 8:13 13:14 1Pe 2:11
- [Galatians 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**NOTE: For in depth discussion of this verse click [Galatians 5:24 Commentary](#)**

**Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires-** Every believer has crucified the flesh. What is the significance of that statement? Well, think about crucifixion. What was the result? Death. And so now as new creatures in Christ, our prior relationship to the flesh is dead. The verb **have crucified** is aorist tense meaning that it happened at a point in time. What was that point for believers? Obviously it was the moment we believed in Christ as our Savior. At that very moment we were justified, we were clothed in Christ's righteousness, we were placed into an unbreakable covenant with Christ and at that moment a definitive break with the past occurred. This is what Paul says in Galatians 2:20 "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me."

**Spurgeon on crucified the flesh** - Condemned it to die, nailed it up to the cross, and kept it in a dying, mortifying posture. A crucified Christ is the leader of a crucified people. Let it never be forgotten that the grand object for which we lay hold of Christ is the death of sin. If you believed in Christ so that you might escape the pangs of hell, you have a very poor idea of what Jesus Christ has come into the world to do. He is proclaimed to be a Savior who "shall save his people from their sins" (Matt 1:21). This is the object of His mission. True, He comes to give pardon, but He never gives pardon without giving repentance with it. He comes to justify, but He does not justify without also sanctifying. Oh, to have all the affections and lusts of the flesh nailed up! They may not be actually dead, for those who are crucified may still live on for some hours. But they are doomed to die; their life is a very painful one, and it is hastening to a close. A man who is crucified cannot get down from the cross to do what he wills. It is a great blessing to have our sinful self thus nailed up. It may struggle, but it cannot get down; it may strive and cry, but its hands and feet are nailed. You cannot go into active, actual sin. The Lord grant that the nails may hold very fast, that none of the struggles of our old nature may be able to pull out those nails that have fastened it up to the cross! And happy indeed shall that day be when it shall be wholly dead.

**Dan Duncan** explains **have crucified the flesh** - "So the death of the old man and the power of the flesh, which Christ secured for us through His crucifixion. Because at the cross, salvation was settled. It was accomplished at the cross and all of the benefits of it were secured for us, not just our justification, but our death to sin and death to the old man and the power of sin was broken there at the cross. That's where it was accomplished. But that became our experience. It became a reality in our life at the moment of faith and conversion. As a result, we no longer belong to the flesh. We belong to Christ. Our desires are to be directed by Him alone, through the Holy Spirit. So the unexpressed command or instruction or exhortation that follows from this is the way that we find in Romans 6:11+, where Paul writes, "**Reckon** (present imperative) yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus." As you read through Paul's letters, you see a very definite and clear pattern. All through his writings he states **doctrine** and he explains that doctrine extensively. And only then, after he has explained his doctrine, does he draw from it an **exhortation**, does he give **instruction**. That statement of Romans 6:11 is the first command given in the book of Romans. That means we have five and a half chapters of doctrine before there's every a command or an instruction on behavior given. Now the implied exhortation here in what Paul has said in Galatians 5:24 is to **reckon this crucifixion to have taken place in our lives, realize that we are dead to the flesh, consider that to be true, and live like it**. Don't be mastered by the flesh. It's defeated. That's the implication of Paul's statement in verse 24. ([Galatians 5:16-26 The Flesh And The Spirit](#))

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### Attitude Check

Those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. —Galatians 5:24

In a television interview, a Christian spoke of a certain well-known man as having "a solid relationship with Christ." That statement raised a large question mark in my mind since the man's life is marked by vulgar speech, alcohol abuse, and flagrant womanizing. I felt the need for evidence that he hates his lifestyle and wants to be different.

The Bible clearly shows that the inner being of a Christian is a battlefield where sinful desires clash with the indwelling Holy Spirit. Sometimes sinful tendencies win, but it is in the attitude toward sin that the genuine believer and the pretender show their true colors.

The counterfeit Christian is quite comfortable with his sin. But the child of God hates his sin, confesses it, and desires victory over it. This is because "those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (Gal. 5:24). The Christian can find no peace until he confesses his sins and repudiates them. As he relies on the Holy Spirit, he enjoys a pattern of victory over sin.

What about you? Take time for an attitude check. Are you comfortable with sin in your life? If you are, you need to examine your relationship with Christ (2 Cor. 13:5). By Herbert Vander Lugt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Thinking It Through

What is the conflict Paul discusses in Romans 7:15-23?

How can I gain victory over sin? (8:1-13).

How can I know I am a child of God? (8:14-17).

To love Christ is to hate sin.

### **Galatians 5:25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.**

Phillips Paraphrase - If our lives are centred in the Spirit, let us be guided by the Spirit.

Wuest - In view of the fact that we are being sustained in spiritual life by the Spirit, by means of the Spirit let us go on ordering our conduct. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

Amplified - If we live by the [Holy] Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. [If by the Holy Spirit we have our life in God, let us go forward walking in line, our conduct controlled by the Spirit.]

NET Galatians 5:25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also behave in accordance with the Spirit.

GNT Galatians 5:25 ε ζ μεν πνε ματι, πνε ματι κα στοιχ μεν.

NLT Galatians 5:25 Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives.

KJV Galatians 5:25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

ESV Galatians 5:25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

ASV Galatians 5:25 If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk.

CSB Galatians 5:25 Since we live by the Spirit, we must also follow the Spirit.

NIV Galatians 5:25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

NKJ Galatians 5:25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

NRS Galatians 5:25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.

YLT Galatians 5:25 if we may live in the Spirit, in the Spirit also we may walk;

NAB Galatians 5:25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also follow the Spirit.

NJB Galatians 5:25 Since we are living by the Spirit, let our behaviour be guided by the Spirit

GWN Galatians 5:25 If we live by our spiritual nature, then our lives need to conform to our spiritual nature.

BBE Galatians 5:25 If we are living by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us be guided.

- **If we live by the Spirit** Joh 6:63 Ro 8:2,10 1Co 15:45 2Co 3:6 1Pe 4:6 Rev 11:11
- **let us also walk by the Spirit.** Ga 5:16 Ro 8:4,5
- [Galatians 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**NOTE: For in depth discussion of this verse click [Galatians 5:25 Commentary](#)**

**Dan Duncan on If we live by the Spirit** - It is stated in the form of a condition ("If" clause). **If** we live by the Spirit, let us also walk



by the Spirit." But the sense of that is not questioning whether that's true or not. The idea is since this is a fact, since we do in fact live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. In other words, because the Holy Spirit gives us life and sustains us with His power, we are to be obedient to Him. We are to walk by the Spirit. Now we've noticed the word "walk" in Gal 5:16. This word ([stoicheo](#)) has the idea of walking in a line. It's a military term of marching in file to battle, of keeping in step behind the leader. The New International Version translates it, "Let us keep in step with the Spirit." He is our leader and we follow in His footsteps. So the idea is take steps. And as we do that, the Spirit leads us through this life. He knows the way to go far better than we do. He's omniscient. He knows this world. He knows time. He knows what's coming. He knows what's passed. He knows the future as well as the past. He knows everything. And if we can imagine ourselves walking through this world like a spiritual battlefield with pitfalls and minefields, He knows where all the mines are. He knows where all the pits are. He knows the way and so we're to follow Him, we're to trust Him, and He will lead us safely. We do that step by step, moment by moment. That's how we live the Christian life, by faith in this moment and in the next moment living by faith. That's the picture that Paul gives, and we do that the way a child learns to walk, by taking a first step and then a second step. And just as a child's first step is unsteady and the second step unsteady, you know that as a parent you have helped your children learn to walk and you remember how the first step was probably taken as he or she held onto a chair and then ventured out and took a step and then fell down. And what did you do? You helped him up, helped her up. You didn't scold him for not making that first step well. No, we're patient with our children. We help them along. And in the same way, the Spirit of God works with us. He is patient with us, helping as a parent helps his or her child along. He takes our hand, just like we would have done with our children, and led them along. And He helps us along and encourages us to follow. He is not a hard master. He is gentle and wants us to learn to walk and to follow Him. But we must do that. The child learns to walk by taking that first dangerous step and then recovering from that first fall and making that next step and recovering from the next fall, and so it is from us. We must follow. We must step. We must keep in step, as Paul says. We will never learn to walk by the Spirit if we don't take those initial steps, meaning if we don't act in obedience. We do that. We take those steps of faith by following the path of love, joy, peace, patience, and avoiding impurity, idolatry, anger, envy, all of the others. ([Galatians 5:16-26 The Flesh And The Spirit](#))

**Walk** (keep in step) (4748) ([stoicheo](#) from **stoichos** = row, line, rank) is literally to walk in line, walk in a straight line, proceed in a row, to follow in someone's footsteps. To keep in rank and file. To march in in file or in battle order. **BDAG** writes that **stoicheo** means "to be in line with a person or thing considered as standard for one's conduct."

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## Walking In Step

If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. —Galatians 5:25

When my daughter Ann was in the high school marching band, I loved to watch the young musicians march in step. Whether they were performing before a panel of judges at a district competition, at halftime during a football game, or on tour in Austria, they moved as one to the cadence of the drums and the lead of the drum major.

Galatians 5:25 states, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." That last phrase can also be translated, "Keep in step with the Spirit." It means that as we walk along in our Christian lives, we are to follow the Spirit's lead. We are to be in harmony with Him. If we get out of step, follow a wrong cadence, or stray off the correct pathway, the results will be obvious (vv.19-21).

How can we tell if we are walking in step with the Spirit? Paul spelled it out clearly in Galatians 5. We will not be guilty of the practices mentioned in verses 19 through 21. Rather, the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control—will be clearly evident in our lives (vv.22-23).

How would you rate yourself when it comes to walking in step with the Spirit? Are you in cadence? Or are you following a drumbeat of your own making? By David C. Egnor ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Oh, may the life of the Savior flow through us,  
Bearing rich fruit by the Spirit within,  
And may each longing for selfish enjoyment  
Be overcome lest it lead us to sin. —DJD

If you keep in step with God, you'll be out of step with the world.

**Galatians 5:26 Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.**

Phillips Paraphrase - Let us not be ambitious for our own reputations, for that only means making each other jealous.

Wuest - Let us stop becoming vain-glorious, provoking one another, envying one another. ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

Amplified - Let us not become vainglorious and self-conceited, competitive and challenging and provoking and irritating to one another, envying and being jealous of one another.

NET Galatians 5:26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, being jealous of one another.

GNT Galatians 5:26 μ γιν μεθα κεν δοξοι, αλ λους προκαλο μενοι, αλ λοις φθονο ντες.

NLT Galatians 5:26 Let us not become conceited, or provoke one another, or be jealous of one another.

KJV Galatians 5:26 Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

ESV Galatians 5:26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

ASV Galatians 5:26 Let us not become vainglorious, provoking one another, envying one another.

CSB Galatians 5:26 We must not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

NIV Galatians 5:26 Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

NKJ Galatians 5:26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

NRS Galatians 5:26 Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another.

YLT Galatians 5:26 let us not become vain-glorious -- one another provoking, one another envying!

NAB Galatians 5:26 Let us not be conceited, provoking one another, envious of one another.

NJB Galatians 5:26 and let us not be conceited or provocative and envious of one another.

GWN Galatians 5:26 We can't allow ourselves to act arrogantly and to provoke or envy each other.

BBE Galatians 5:26 Let us not be full of self-glory, making one another angry, having envy of one another.

- **Let us not become boastful:** Lu 14:10 1Co 3:7 Php 2:1-3 Jas 4:16
- **challenging one another:** Ga 5:15 Jas 3:14-16 1Pe 5:5
- [Galatians 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**NOTE: For in depth discussion of this verse click [Galatians 5:26 Commentary](#)**

Paul's point with these negative attitudes and actions is to point out that the Galatians were struggling in their first steps. The only way to overcome such problems and all of the deeds of the flesh is by following the Spirit, keeping in step with Him daily, moment by moment.

**Duncan** - We are living in a spiritual war zone and we are each engaged in great personal spiritual battles. Every one of you have issues that you're dealing with. We're all going through battles. I don't know what's going on in your life. We don't know what's going on in each other's lives, but there is a battle going on. We do that, because Paul sets that forth very clearly. The flesh and the Spirit are locked in a mortal struggle. All around there are temptations and dangers. But the struggle is not a stalemate. It is not pitted against two equal opponents. The Spirit is stronger than the flesh and as we follow Him, He will lead us through and give us victory. Back during the second World War, during the dark days of the German blitz, when London was being bombed night and day, King George VI gave the Christmas broadcast. In it he quoted a poem that began, "I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year, 'Give me a light that I may go safely into the unknown.' And he said to me, 'Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God and it shall be safer to you than any known way.'" Well, that's what we are to do. Trust the Lord. Follow the Spirit's lead. Walk by Him and He will give us guidance and we will live well, and it will be confirmed that we are children of God and heirs of the kingdom of God. Well, may God help us all to do that. And if you are here without Christ, if you've not trusted in Him, we invite you to do that. Believe in God's Son who became a man and died for sinners. All who do that are saved. They are sealed with a Holy Spirit and they began at that moment a life in which they're led by Him, guided by Him. Now that life is a life of struggle, but it's also a life of victory. It is a clean life and the good life. It is the very best life. It's eternal life and it's in Christ Jesus, so look to Him. May God help us all to do that. ([Galatians 5:16-26 The Flesh And The Spirit](#))

**Spurgeon on boastful** (or become conceited) - A very common sin—wishing to shine. We call it glory, but it is vain glory; it is marred by vanity if it arises from anything done by us. Glory for you or for me because of anything that we can do is too absurd an idea to be entertained for a moment. Do not let us want to be accounted as somebody; for, if we do, we prove that we are really nobody. Nobody is anybody till he is willing to be nobody. As long as he wants to be somebody, he is nobody and nothing.

**Spurgeon on envying one another** If each would strive who should do the greatest deeds of love, and each were willing to take the lowest place, then this evil would never be known again. Do Christian people need to be talked to like this? Indeed they do, for the best of men are but men at their best, and the godliest saint is liable to fall into the foulest sin unless the grace of God prevents it. Oh, that we could expel from the Church of Christ all vain glorying, all provoking of one another, and all envying of one another! How often, if one Christian brother does a little more than his fellow workers, they begin to find fault with him. If one is blessed with greater success than others are, how frequently that success is disparaged and spoken of slightly! This spirit of envy is, more or less, in us all. Though perhaps we are not exhibiting it just now, it only needs a suitable opportunity for its display, and it would be manifested. No man has any idea how bad he really is. You do not know how good the grace of God can make you, or how bad you are by nature, or how bad you might become if that nature were left to itself.

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### Standard Equipment?

Let us not become conceited, . . . envying one another. —Galatians 5:26

An intriguing 3-page automobile ad in the Wall Street Journal reminded me how the secular world capitalizes on our tendency to envy. Page 1 shows a 1960 Mark II Jaguar. The caption reads: “Just as this was the envy of the automotive world . . .” Then on pages 2 and 3 is a picture of a brand-new Jaguar, and the caption continues, “Once again envy will be standard equipment.”

Now, I know it’s not a sin to want a Jaguar. But if I become discontented and resentful toward my neighbor because he owns one and I don’t, I have a serious envy problem.

In Galatians 5:19-21, Paul ranked envy with the sins of adultery, murder, and drunkenness. This may surprise us until we consider the destructive power of this sinful attitude. Envy drove Joseph’s brothers to sell him into Egypt (Acts 7:9). Envy fueled Paul’s opponents in Thessalonica to start a riot to thwart the gospel (17:5). Envy motivated the chief priests to hand over Jesus to be crucified (Mk. 15:10). Even when it doesn’t lead to such cruel actions, envy takes the place of love and hurts relationships (1 Cor. 13:4).

We need the Lord to help us recognize envy and remove it from our hearts. We don’t want it to become standard equipment in our lives. By: Dennis J. DeHaan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

From seeds of envy in the heart  
Spring bitter weeds of hate;  
If they take root and get a start,  
Much strife they'll generate. —DJD

When you turn green with envy, you are ripe for trouble.