

Galatians 5:13-18 – Walk by the Spirit and You Will Not Carry Out the Desire of the Flesh
Community Group Galatians Lesson 11

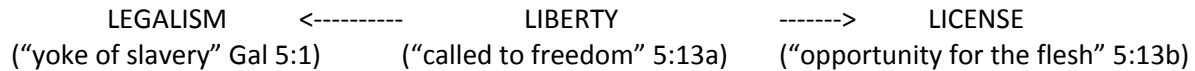
I. Review Galatians 1-5:12

- A. 1:1-10 – God sent me to correct you from distorting the gospel by adding to it.
- B. 1:11-2:10 – My gospel came from Christ Himself and was authenticated by the apostles.
- C. 2:11-21 – Later, even Peter had to be reminded that we are saved by faith alone.
- D. 3:1-14 – The gospel justifies everyone by faith in the promise, just like Abraham was.
- E. 3:15-29 – The law’s main role was to tutor us to faith in Christ.
- F. 4:1-18 – You are His child and heir and no longer under regulations of external control.
- G. 4:19-31 – Adopting the law puts you into slavery, but you were saved to be free!
- H. 5:1-12 – You have been set free! Do not subject yourself to a law that severs you from Christ.

II. You are now free to serve others through love Galatians 5:13-15

- A. *You have been called to a freedom that enables you to serve others* 5:13
 You are called to freedom and not to either the prison of legalism or the prison of ongoing sin. Your freedom as **children of God** and **heirs** is not an “opportunity for the flesh” (i.e., a pretext for living for yourself, cf., Romans 6:1). The gospel frees you from living for yourself, which is bondage to sin, as well as freeing you from the law, so you can **serve others through love**. Some Christians put themselves under the law. Others turn their freedom into an opportunity for the flesh to live for themselves. But maturity comes as we abide in Christ and see that we are set free to serve others by love.

Chuck Swindoll’s Insights for Living graph



- B. For **the law is fulfilled** in loving others the way you love yourself 5:14

“The whole law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself”” (cf., Ro 13:9, Jas 2:8). Here the doctrine he has taught for four chapters on the simplicity, sufficiency and purity of the gospel and our new identity in Christ as believers (Gal. 2:20;; 3:7,9, 26-29; 4:1, 5-7, 28, 31; 5:1) becomes very practical.

Paul explains that the law (which is a good thing, see Romans 7:7, 7:12, 7:14, 7:16) will actually be fulfilled in us and through us when we love others like Christ loved us. (See also Romans 8:4). Not *to be* accepted by God, but because we are accepted by God because of our faith in Christ Jesus who was our propitiation (1 John 2:2). Here he moves from the gift of justification (chapters 1-4) to the way sanctification is to be displayed in our lives. Sanctification was already accomplished by Christ on the cross (1 Cor. 1:2, 1:30), but our experience of sanctification comes through a) abiding in Him and b) serving others. Read Ephesians 2:10. There Paul tells us what we were made and saved for. And notice that it follows one of the clearest declarations of justification by faith you could ask for (Eph. 2:8-9).

That means that a man or woman or young person who has come to faith realizes that she/he was made for good works which God prepared before the foundation of the world and now they should walk in them. These works are not works you do to be accepted or to avoid punishment. You are already accepted and Christ already took your punishment. You GET TO BE INVOLVED IN THE WORK GOD IS DOING because He is extending mercy through you to others as the outworking of the gospel. Let’s take one moment to see this also in 2 Cor. 5:17-21.

C. Why is the ***gospel fulfilled*** when a person refuses to submit either to their own desires or to follow a law, but instead uses it to serve others? Let's look at the gospel and its prescriptive results.

1. *God raised Christ from the dead (1:1).*
2. *That happened after Jesus gave Himself for our sins (1:4).*
3. *He did that to rescue us from this present evil age (1:4).*
4. *God called you to Himself by the grace of Christ (1:6, 15).*
5. *Proper response to the gospel results in becoming a bond-servant of Jesus (1:10).*
6. *The gospel is not according to man but according to Christ (1:11-12).*
7. *God's goal was to justify us through faith in Him (2:16, 3:11, 3:24).*
8. *The result of being justified by faith was that we might live to God (2:19).*
9. *Living to God means realizing I am crucified with Christ and therefore, I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. [I have a new identity.] (2:20)*
10. *The life I live in this fleshly body, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself up for me (2:20).*
11. *I have been set free from the law (3:13, 4:28, 4:31) so that I would not be under its power or under the power of my own sin. Rather, I would be free to replay what Jesus did for me – namely, loving me and giving Himself up for my sake.*

One example of this is the food banks that have been operated mostly by churches and Christians. Another is by the spiritual, financial, and practical support that FBC has been to hundreds of churches in Kenya, Nigeria, Malawi, Togo, Ecuador, China, Pakistan, India and Nepal. Another is the FBC men and women who walk alongside other struggling people to point them to Christ and His Word through biblical counseling – both people from the community and from our church. Another is the Follow the Star event in December which proclaims Christ through the arts. Another is the plans to start another church in Woodstock. Another is the hundreds of people who help with the children's ministries and youth ministries to help plant the gospel into these young people.

D. What are we **free from** and what are we **free for**? (Swindoll's *Living Insights*)

FREE FROM

God's Wrath & Condemnation (Ro 5:9, 8:1)
 Mastery by temptations & sin (Ro 6:22 1 Co 10:13)
 Power of Satan & demons (Co. 1:13, 1 Jn.4:4)
 Curse of the law (Gal 3:13)
 Terror & dread before God (Eph. 3:12, Heb. 4:16)
 Tyranny of others' legalistic demands (1 Co 10:29, 31)

FREE FOR

Righteousness & Hope (Ro 6:18, 15:13)
 Generosity & Concern for Others (1 Co 12:25 2 Co 9:6-11)
 Following God's Will (1 Pe 4:2, 1 Jn 2:17)
 Reconciliation w/ God and others (2 Co 5:18-20)
 Life in authentic community (Rom 12:4-5, Eph 4:16)
 Transformation into the image of Christ (Rom 8:29)

E. *But if you bite and devour each other, you will consume each other* 5:15

The opposite of serving through love is to "bite and devour each other." This can certainly occur when people are pushing legalism – criticism, pride, etc. If I am under the law, I am likely to bite and devour. But if I am using my freedom to serve my own desires, I will also bite and devour others, and end up being consumed. When I see myself in a "bite and devour" relationship, I know – whatever may be true about the other person, I have to guard myself from living as they do.

III. **Walk by the Spirit and you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh** Galatians 5:16-18
A. *Walk by the Spirit and you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.* v. 16

This is the most succinct New Testament command for how to live as a Christian. This protasis/apodosis (*If you do this, this will happen*) is a command with a promise. Paul declares a new idea (*Walk by the Spirit*) and promises that *those who obey it will not fulfill their fleshly desires.*

B. **Walk by the Spirit**

Thirteen times in Galatians the Holy Spirit is mentioned. The other verses say that we receive the Spirit (3:2), begin by the Spirit (3:3), are provided the Spirit (3:5) and are promised the Spirit (3:14). We were sent the Spirit (4:6), born according to the Spirit (4:29), and wait for the hope of righteousness by the Spirit (5:5). They also say that the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit and vice versa (5:17) and that we can be led by the Spirit (5:18). Those verses declare that the fruit (results) of the Spirit in our lives are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (5:19-21), and teach us that we can sow to the Spirit and reap from the Spirit (6:8).

C. In the NT, **this clause (*Walk by the Spirit*)** is mentioned only here and Gal. 5:25. The focus in 5:16 is this brand-new command – *Walk by the Spirit*. *Walk around or walk up and down* is the idea. It sort of means, as you are going.... “Walk by the Spirit” is an expression like “abide” which involves dependency on the righteousness of Christ, knowing that I have died with Him and been raised to a new life (Romans 6:2-11) and that I have been seated at his right hand (Colossians 3:1-3). It involves abiding with Christ (John 15) in faith, neither focusing on fulfilling my pleasures nor on putting myself under a law. Rather, I trust the Lord to work righteousness in and through me the same way that He granted me His righteousness at justification. I am *living by the Spirit*.

D. It results in “not fulfilling the desires of the flesh” (5:16). The flesh is our natural tendency to sin. So “not fulfilling the desires of the flesh” is to say, “not sin.” Since “in my flesh there dwells no good thing” (Romans 7:18), “sowing to the flesh reaps corruption” (Galatians 6:8), the “mind set on the flesh is death” (Romans 8:6), and “the mind set on the flesh is hostile towards God” (Romans 8:7), it is easy to see that “walking in the flesh” or “walking according to the flesh” or “walking by the flesh” means that you live according to what seems right to your sinful self (Proverbs 16:25), and not what is right to God. [*There is another NT phrase “in the flesh” which sometimes describes someone’s identity, and it means to be unsaved as in Romans 7:5 or 8:8-9. That is, as long as it is without an antecedent descriptive verb like “walk” or “make a good showing” or “boast” since those all refer to something else such as how we live.*]

E. *For the flesh sets its desires against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh, for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the thing you please.* v. 17
Here Paul explains why one must walk by the Spirit if she/he is to not fulfill the lusts of the flesh (Luke 9:23). Every time my flesh rises, it will fight the Spirit. And every time I live in the Spirit, the flesh will attempt a takeover. These are completely hostile towards each other and will be until heaven. Our flesh (natural tendency to sin even after coming to Christ) wants to either perform to satisfy its urge to affirm itself (go under the law) or to use freedom to satisfy itself (license to sin). Both of these are in opposition to the Spirit, because the Spirit wants to magnify the grace of God and bring glory to God.

- F. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. v. 18
This is the closest thing we have to a commentary on “walk by the Spirit.” It says that those who are “led by” the Spirit will not be under law. So perhaps to say it the best, “walking by the Spirit” is being led by the Holy Spirit as we align ourselves with the scriptures. Led by the Spirit DOES NOT MEAN under pressure to perform. It means that as I walk in faith, trusting the Lord, knowing His forgiveness, and move in a direction God has prescribed, I won’t be under a law and I won’t live for myself.

IV. Galatians 5:19-26 - *Next week* we will see how walking by the Spirit and walking by the flesh manifest themselves.

V. Discussion and Homework

- A. There seem to be three main points to today’s passage.
1. We are free, and not under the law. But that freedom from the law is not freedom to serve ourselves, but rather freedom to serve one another through love.
 2. The law – God’s righteous rule – will be fulfilled in our lives if we serve one another because loving one another as Christ did fulfills the law.
 3. If we walk by the Spirit, we will not fulfill fleshly lusts/desires. Therefore, walking by the Spirit will show itself in the ways we love others.
- B. How do you walk in love towards others (through service) without making it a “law” – a “you-have-to-do-this-because-Christians-should”? What would it look like for you?
- C. Discuss what you think it means to walk in the Spirit and when you think you have experienced it?
- D. How do Galatians 5:13 and 1 Peter 2:16 relate to one another?
- E. This week, read Galatians 1-5 out loud in one sitting – preferably with a family member. Then, tell one another what stands out to you the most from that reading. (Should take about 15-20 minutes to read those five chapters, and then however long you share.)