

**GALATIANS**  
**Keep In Step with the Spirit**  
**Galatians 5:13-26**

Our study today from Galatians 5 is about all the practical FREEDOM that we have in Christ. But that freedom is not something that we experience as INDEPENDENCE or self-centered RECKLESSNESS. Furthermore, it is not about a series of strict REQUIREMENTS for spiritual PERFORMANCE, but about our RELATIONSHIP with a PERSON: The Holy Spirit! In Galatians 5, Paul is teaching us about how to live the life of GRACE, and that life is impossible apart from the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised that he was sending someone to us who will “teach you all things and will remind you of everything that I [Jesus] have said to you.” The Holy Spirit is Jesus, intimately present with each of his children. And as we relate to the Holy Spirit in humility and submission, we find that our FREEDOM is much more than we ever thought it could be. It is not the freedom to GO CRAZY without boundaries, but it is the freedom to experience CRAZY LOVE (to borrow a term from Francis Chan) with God and his people.

**THE HOLY SPIRIT ENABLES US TO FULFILL THE LAW OF LOVE**

[The ENTIRE LAW! Love is not a lifeless list of RULES, but a **relational lifestyle!**]

**Galatians 5:13-15 NIV**

13 You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. **But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.** 14 For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." 15 If you bite and devour each other, **watch out** or you will be destroyed by each other.

Freedom is both a PRIVILEGE and an OPPORTUNITY. I think of Adam and Eve in the garden. Like them, we have been given the PLACE [in Christ!] and the RESOURCES [by Grace] to experience LIFE in the way that God intended us to live it. We are no longer bound by **sin's dominion** or **shame's condemnation** (through the LAW). Instead, we have been CALLED to live in the freedom that Christ procured for us. **But we must STAND FIRM in that freedom, knowing that it WILL come under constant attack!** Liberty is a precious path, but it is bordered on each side with deadly DITCHES: LEGALISM and LIBERTY. Paul has spent most of his time talking about the dangers of legalism and the Law, but now he warns us about LICENSE by telling us not to use our freedom to INDULGE the flesh.

**-Indulge** = An opportunity, A base of operations, the resources we avail ourselves of in attempting or performing anything. **[This is a FOOTHOLD/STRONGHOLD!]**

Freedom is OPPORTUNITY. But how you USE that opportunity will determine the EXTENT of your freedom. **[Refer to the other thief on the cross who only wanted freedom, but did not desire CHANGE!]** Our CALLING to freedom is an **invitation into** and an **empowerment for** genuine LOVE. This means that **our freedom is actually a calling to SERVE one another through love.** It is the Christlike blessing of an INFINITE ability to POUR OUT because of an INFINITE SUPPLY of being! **We are**

actually free in Christ to GROW in love. We may not BE perfect in love right now, but we are in a PERFECT LOVE, and we can allow his Holy Spirit to lead us in that love in ways that are impossible on our own! [[Corrie Ten Boom on Forgiveness of a German Soldier](#)]

” Watch out” – \*”Bite . . . devour . . . consume.” This is a PROGRESSION.

**Bite** = to wound the soul, to lacerate, to rend with reproaches

**Devour** = to squander, waste, to strip one of his goods, to ruin (by the affliction of injuries)

**Consume** = to spend up, to use up, to destroy

Pay attention/be on guard against the counterproductive OUTCOMES of a WRONG use of our freedom. **What are the RESULTS of your current behaviors?** Am I using my freedom to serve Christ and others, or to serve myself? [[Talk about the JOY that Lisa and I have found in our MARRIAGE by learning to serve one another in love!](#)] It is possible to see your DIRECTION before you experience DESTRUCTION!

The very natures of LEGALISM [**Law**] and LICENSE [**Flesh**] led to a spirit of “biting, devouring, and consuming” in the Galatian churches. They were bitterly COMPARING and COMPETING against one another for “highest honors” and acting selfishly and sinfully without regard for one another. Thus, Paul gives them the correct ANTIDOTE for both evil actions: **“Serve one another in LOVE!”** So, **HOW does the Holy Spirit accomplish this?**

### **THE HOLY SPIRIT ENABLES US TO OVERCOME THE WORKS OF THE FLESH**

[This is the description of what the Spirit leads us AWAY FROM that is NOT LOVE.]

#### **Galatians 5:16-21 NIV**

**16 So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17** For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. **18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. 19 The acts of the flesh are obvious:** sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; **20 idolatry and witchcraft;** hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions **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.

**“Walk”** – To make one’s way, make progress. To walk **BY** the Spirit means to navigate the daily challenges and opportunities of life by listening to and following the leading of the Holy Spirit’s guidance. Again, this is a RELATIONAL picture. The Love of God is displayed to us by the power and patience of the Holy Spirit within us as he leads us through life even when we struggle and stumble. **“There is NO FEAR IN LOVE,”** John tells us in his letter. **We are not being held under the unrelenting demands of a lifeless LAW, but we are being guided and instructed by our LOVING FATHER who knows our weaknesses as we grow to become more like Jesus.** This is a LIFESTYLE of love!

**“Gratify”** = To complete, perform, execute, fulfil, to bring to a close. \*Align this with James’s warning in **James 1:13-15** [“. . . lust . . . sin . . . death”]

**“. . . the flesh Desires”** = Long for, lust after, Covet, to fix upon a passion

**“In conflict with”** = To set over against, to oppose, to withstand

**This is an ongoing BATTLE.** The Spirit and the flesh will NEVER be in agreement. But we are not to suppose that this battle cannot be won on the side of holiness and good. The translation, **“so that you are NOT to do whatever you want,”** should actually be translated, **“so that you MAY not do whatever you want.”** [The verb is in the subjunctive mood, meaning that it speaks of POSSIBILITY and POTENTIALITY. The action may or may not occur, depending on the circumstances.]. This is important. **The presence of the Spirit within us makes the possibility of overcoming temptation very real and actual.** We can overcome! If do NOT walk by the Spirit, then we will live our lives in subjection to the law. **Its unceasing demands will lead us to LIE, to HIDE, or to ACCUSE OTHERS in an attempt to make ourselves look and feel better!**

**LOOK AT THIS LIST OF SINS: Which sins stand out to you?**

**It is quite possible that you see the sins of others, but fail to see the ones which you are courting! [Orgies Vs. Discord; Debauchery Vs. Selfish Ambition]**

**Sexual immorality** – Sexual activity outside of the bounds of marriage.

**Impurity** - Unclean in a moral sense, the impurity of lustful, luxurious, immoral living:

**Idolatry:** "idolatry," the sin of the mind against God (**Eph 2:3**), An "idolater" is a slave to the depraved ideas his idols represent, **Gal 4:8, 9**; and thereby, to divers lusts, **Tts 3:3** (see Notes on Thess. by Hogg and Vine, p. 44).

**Witchcraft** – “Pharmakeia” = Use of drugs to create altered state

**Debauchery** – Random acts or manners, as filthy words, indecent bodily movements, unchaste handling of males and females, etc."

**Hatred** – To live at odds, dissension, to be against

**Discord** – Quarreling, contentions, strife, wrangling

**Selfish Ambitions** – a desire to put oneself forward, a partisan and factious spirit which does not disdain low arts;: **Seeking to win followers**

**Dissensions** – To stand apart from, Divisions, to cause disunion

**Factions** - "a choosing, choice" (from *haireomai*, "to choose"); then, "that which is chosen," and hence, "an opinion," especially a self-willed opinion, which is substituted for submission to the power of truth, and leads to division and the formation of sects,

**Drunkenness . . . Orgies** – No explanation needed!

“. . . AND THE LIKE.” This list is NOT COMPREHENSIVE!

“. . . **you are not under the law.**” This means that our FOCUS need not be on the requirement [Demands/Threats] of the law or on the pressure of the flesh, but on the Holy Spirit who loves and leads us! Great place to remember **Hebrews 12:1-2 NIV**  
 1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, 2 **fixing our eyes on Jesus**, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

We run this race with our eyes fixed on Jesus. We may stumble and struggle, but we have him BEFORE us and WITHIN us, and our victory is sure. **But it is not so for the wicked!** “**Those who live like this will not inherit the Kingdom of God . . .**” This does not mean that a true believer never does anything like this, but it means that they do not LIVE this way as a continual PRACTICE. And when they DO sin in any of these ways, they experience conviction and will REPENT. **One who PRACTICES these “acts of the flesh” as a general course of life clearly DEMONSTRATES that he does not know the Lord Jesus!** But our life IN JESUS is far different, thank God!

### **THE HOLY SPIRIT ENABLES US TO PRODUCE THE FRUIT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.**

[This is a description of the lifestyle of LOVE that the Holy Spirit leads us into. There is NO LAW AGAINST this fruit! Everyone benefits from this kind of life!]

#### **Galatians 5:22-25 NIV**

**22 But the fruit of the Spirit** is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23** gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. **24** Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. **25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.**

The fruit of the Spirit is the revelation of the presence of God in our broken lives! It is fruit that can ONLY be produced by him, and it will ALWAYS bring GLORY to him. It is not the result of our WORK (“works” are what the FLESH does.). **Would you like for these qualities to be present in your life?** If you belong to Jesus, they ALREADY ARE; you just have to SUBMIT to the Spirit to experience them!

This fruit is often described as a triad of 3 expressions of grace:

GODWARD FRUIT:

“**Love, Joy, Peace**” – These are all divine qualities that become the foundational base of all the other virtues. When one experiences the unconditional love of God, then the joy of the Lord and the peace of God are GIFTS that are all poured out within their own

soul, and we are freed to express ourselves in love toward others, and consistent love within our own spirit as well.

MANWARD FRUIT:

**“Patience, Kindness, Goodness”** – These speak of the way the Spirit enables us to interact with others as we are filled with the grace-gifts of love, joy, and peace.

**Patience** – Not just patience within, but patience in manner toward others. [Long-suffering]

**Kindness** – Doing good to others through gentle means, a tender kindness

**Goodness** – Doing good to others through sterner means.

INWARD FRUIT:

These speak of the way that the Spirit enables us to live a life of INTERNAL INTEGRITY.

**Faithfulness** – Trustworthiness, Fidelity, Integrity

**Gentleness** – Meekness, Gentleness of disposition,

**Self-Control** – Strength, Mastery of one’s desires and passions, esp. of his sensual appetites.

One of the most MARVELOUS aspects of FRUIT = SEEDS! **(Next week: Harvest!)**

When Paul finishes describing the fruit of the Spirit, he indicates that, **“Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh . . .”** This is what Paul wrote in Gal. 2:20, **“I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live . . .”** This means that the FLESH no longer rules us, the SPIRIT now does. Paul wrote about this in Romans by describing the “crucifying of the flesh” as that of YIELDING yourself to God in everything. **Romans 6:11-14 NIV**

**<sup>11</sup> In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. <sup>12</sup> Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. <sup>13</sup> Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness. <sup>14</sup> For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace.**

**“Since we LIVE by the Spirit let us walk in the Spirit” KJV** – The idea here is that since the Spirit has made us alive and keeps us alive, then we must rest in him and look to him for our every need and action. It is another way of saying, “YIELD to the Spirit!” But the word, “walk” in Gal. 5:16 is different from the word in Gal. 5:25. Here, to “walk” is much more than just the daily conduct of our lives, but is instead focused on our direct relationship with the Lord Jesus and of **diligently following his every move**. It is a “lock-step” action that requires our constant and devoted attention, and indicates a sense of divine direction as he moves us toward Christlikeness in every aspect of life. You do not live this life CASUALLY. It is an ACTIVE relationship with the Lord Jesus.

Does this describe your life? It can!

Let's pray.

FOOTNOTES:

**Gentleness . . . denotes "meekness."** In its use in Scripture, it consists not in a person's "outward behavior only; nor yet in his relations to his fellow-men; as little in his mere natural disposition. Rather it is an inwrought grace of the soul; and the exercises of it are first and chiefly towards God. It is that temper of spirit in which we accept His dealings with us as good, and therefore without disputing or resisting; it is closely linked with the word *tapeinophrosune* [humility], and follows directly upon it, it is only the humble heart which is also the meek, and which, as such, does not fight against God and more or less struggle and contend with Him. This meekness, however, being first of all a meekness before God, is also such in the face of men, even of evil men, out of a sense that these, with the insults and injuries which they may inflict, are permitted and employed by Him for the chastening and purifying of His elect" (Trench, Syn. xlii).

It must be clearly understood, therefore, that the meekness manifested by the Lord and commended to the believer is the fruit of power. [From Vines Expository Dictionary]

"Works, a plural term, may be used to indicate the chaos of riotous vices which are produced by the uncontrolled "flesh"; while "Fruit" in the singular number, may intimate the harmonious, united, organic product of the indwelling Spirit." [Charles Erdman – **Commentary on Galatians**]

Trench . . . **illustrates Goodness by the act of Christ in cleansing the temple**, [Mat 21:12, 13](#), and in denouncing the scribes and Pharisees, [23:13-29](#); but **Kindness by His dealings with the penitent woman**, [Luk 7:37-50](#). Lightfoot regards chrestotes as a kindly disposition towards others; agathosune as a kindly activity on their behalf. [From Vines Expository Dictionary]

"The fruit of the Spirit is SINGULAR to express the idea that they are "all PRESENT within the believer who lives under the control of the Holy Spirit." [The Bible **Knowledge Commentary – P. 608**]