



Galatians: No Other Gospel!

The Gospel Life of Sanctification Galatians 5:16-25

Introduction

The Christian Must Walk by the Spirit

❖ *Galatians 5:16 - But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.(ESV)*

1. Flesh – Three different types referenced in the New Testament – here the Greek *sarx*

❖ Romans 6:6 – We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

❖ Colossians 3:9-10 - Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

2. Walk by the Spirit – Here the Greek is *peripateo* – going from place to place. This is more than a guide pointing the way. Figuratively this is the Holy Spirit with his arm under yours, holding you up, but you are **walking**.

❖ Phillipians 2:12,13 - Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

❖ 1 Thessalonians 5:23-34 - Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.

The Struggle with Sin

❖ *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. (ESV)*

1. Verse describes the war within, the constant conflict raging inside the human heart. Paul expands one side of this in his letter to the Romans:

❖ Romans 7:15, 18-19 - For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.... I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.



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2. At the same time, Holy Spirit fights to prevent the flesh from indulging its sinful desires. Source for sermon quote: E. De Witt Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1921)
3. “...to keep you from doing the things you want to do.” This only applies to the believer.
4. As believers, we should not be surprised by sin, nor should sin cause us to doubt our salvation.

✿ Galatians 5:18 - *But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. (ESV)*

1. The verb for being led is related to the word “pedagogue.” Holy Spirit becomes our pedagogue, our guide, teaching us how to handle our newfound freedom.
2. Holy Spirit brings three kinds of freedom: Freedom from sin, freedom to serve, freedom to fulfill the law.
 - ✿ Jeremiah 31:33b - I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.
 - ✿ James 1:25 - But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.
 - ✿ Romans 8:2-4 - For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

The Works of the Flesh

✿ Galatians 5:19-21 - *Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, 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. (ESV)*

1. Christians need to know the difference between flesh and Spirit, hence this list of vices.
2. Not the only list of vices – other examples in the New Testament (e.g. Rom 1:29-31, 2 Tim 3:2-5).
3. Sexual immorality. Fornication. Any kind of sexual sin, homosexuality, bestiality, but especially sexual relations between a man and a woman not married to one another.
4. Impurity. Sexual sin but also any kind of uncleanness.
5. Sensuality. Indecency.
6. Idolatry. Worship of other gods.



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7. Sorcery. Worship of what is evil, contemporary forms of the occult. In the Greek, *pharmakeia*, where we get “pharmacy.” In the ancient world, witches prepared and administered lethal poisons. Today’s equivalent would be wrong use of over the counter medications, illegal drugs, and drugs used for abortion and euthanasia.
8. Enmity. Hatred. Political, racial, religious hostility.
9. Strife. Rivalry, discord.
10. Jealousy. Wrong kind of zeal, fits of anger.
11. Rivalries. Getting ahead at the expense of others. This isn’t good-natured competition. This is lying, cheating, blackmailing, anything to get an advantage over someone.
12. Dissensions, Divisions. Taking sides. Greek for “divisions” *haireseis* - heresy
13. Envy. Unhappiness when others succeed, rejoicing in the misfortunes of others.
14. Drunkenness. Drinking to excess.
15. Orgies. Today we may think of the sexual connotation, but this also includes eating to excess, wild partying.
16. And things like these. This is not an exhaustive list.
 - ❖ Romans 1:29-31 - They were filled with all manner of **unrighteousness, evil, covetousness**, malice. They are full of envy, **murder**, strife, **deceit, maliciousness**. They are **gossips, slanderers**, haters of God, **insolent, haughty, boastful**, inventors of evil, **disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless**.
 - ❖ 2 Tim 3:2-5 - For people will be **lovers of self, lovers of money**, proud, arrogant, **abusive**, disobedient to their parents, **ungrateful**, unholy, heartless, **unappeasable**, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, **treacherous, reckless**, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, **having the appearance of godliness**, but denying its power.
17. “Those who do such things.” Greek is *prassontes*, which means those who do these things habitually, not occasionally.

The Fruit of the Spirit

- ❖ *Galatians 5:22-23 - But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. (ESV)*
 1. Likewise, Christians need to know what they should be demonstrating in their lives
 - ❖ Matt 12:33 - Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit.
 2. Not the only list of virtues.



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3. Wonderful visual in the word “fruit”. Sweet, tangy, juicy (except bananas)—it’s good, pleasant to the taste. And it has seeds! This is fruit that multiplies in the corporate setting, when we’re assembled.
4. Love. “but the greatest of these is love” (1 Cor 13:13b), which is the highest of all the virtues and the foundation for all godliness. “Love is not one virtue among a list of virtues, but the sum and substance of what it means to be a Christian” (C.B. Cousar, *Galatians*, Interpretation (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982)). The Greek for love here is agape – a selfless, sacrificial affection that enables us to serve one another in love, and one that our Lord Jesus demonstrated so perfectly.
5. Joy. Not so much happiness as contentment. It is not a spontaneous response to some temporary pleasure. It does not depend on circumstance at all. It is based on rejoicing in one’s eternal identity in Jesus Christ.
6. Peace. A sense of wholeness and well-being.
7. Patience. Long-suffering in the face of hardship; the ability to endure through adversity. A patient person is steadfast, persistent, willing to suffer aggravation or even persecution without complaint.
8. Kindness. More than a random act of consideration. It is a constant readiness to help, the extension of God’s grace to the people around us through practical actions of caring.
9. Goodness. Closely related to kindness, complete moral excellence, generosity.
10. Faithfulness. Trustworthiness that comes from trusting the God of the Bible. A faithful person is reliable for important tasks, loyal to friends, dependable in emergencies.
11. Gentleness. Meekness. Power under control. A gentle person has a sweet temper of spirit toward God, others and the daily frustrations of life, not prone to anger, but humble, sweet and mild.
12. Self-control. Temperance or moderation, especially in sensual matters like eating, drinking and sex. This virtue prevents liberty from becoming license in the Christian life.
13. ...such things... Not an exhaustive list of virtues, it’s about the entire lifestyle they represent.
14. “Against such things there is no law.” Christians who practice them fulfill the law.
15. It’s “fruit”, not “fruits”.
16. Two considerations for further study:
 - 1) contrasting the fruit of the Spirit with the works or “weeds” of the flesh. Each fruit has it’s opposite, a weed that tries to choke it out, such as enmity choking out love, or sensuality crowding out self-control. John W. Sanderson develops this in *The Fruit of the Spirit* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1985), particularly in the chart on page 43.
 - 2) compare the fruit of the Spirit to the character of God. Love, peace, goodness, faithfulness—these are all divine communicable attributes. We see them displayed in the work of God the Son, who was patient in suffering, faithful to his disciples, and loving in his kindness to sinners. James Dunn rightly calls Galatians



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5:22-23 a “character-sketch” of Christ (James D.G. Dunn, *The Epistle to the Galatians* (London: A & C Black, 1993)).

Application

✦ *Galatians 5:24 - And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. (ESV)*

1. Mortification of the flesh – thought, word and deed. Paul was talking about mortification when he told the Romans:

✦ Romans 6:11 - So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

2. Consider how appropriate it is for our sinful nature to be crucified.

✦ Crucifixion was a *shameful* way to die.

✦ Crucifixion was a *painful* way to die.

✦ Crucifixion was a *gradual* way to die.

✦ Crucifixion is always *final*.

3. Who is doing the crucifying? Let’s look at the connection between Gal 2:20 and 5:24

✦ Galatians 2:20a - I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.

✦ Galatians 5:24 - And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

God’s own people are the executioners. “Have crucified” is not just past tense here, but present perfect progressive tense. It is “have crucified” and “are continuing to crucify”. “Have crucified” because our sinful nature was first crucified at our conversion, when we came to faith in Jesus Christ and were united to him in His death. “Are continuing to crucify” because we still need to put our sins to death. Why?

4. We keep reviving it! This has to stop! Stop it!

✦ *Galatians 5:25 - If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. (ESV)*

1. Vivification – the coming to life of the regenerate nature. At the same time we are putting our flesh to death, the Holy Spirit is reviving us. These two aspects of sanctification—mortification and vivification—go together. As Calvin put it, “The death of the flesh is the life of the Spirit.”



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2. Those who belong to Jesus live in the Spirit. Yet we must keep on living in the Spirit, which is what the Galatians were failing to do. Paul had already asked them:
 - ❖ Galatians 3:3 - Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?
3. Keep in step with the Spirit. Greek for “keeping in step” is *stoichōmen*, which comes from the military for staying in formation. Holy Spirit rarely works in extraordinary ways (ie miracles). Instead he uses the ordinary means of grace to bring spiritual growth: the reading and preaching of God’s Word, personal and group Bible study, personal and corporate prayer, fasting, the sacraments of baptism and communion, service to the church body and community, and evangelism.

Summary

Paul calls the Galatians, and us, to mortify the flesh, to crucify our sin nature, and to let it die. He also calls the Galatians, and us, to vivify our regenerate nature, to work alongside Holy Spirit through ordinary means of grace, mostly corporately, so that our Spiritual fruit may grow, sweeten, attract a lost world and glorify God. Let’s get on with it!