

Galatians 5 - Freedom in Christ; Freedom Not a License to Sin; Victory Over Sin; Works of the Flesh; Fruit of the Spirit

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Galatians 5

III. Practical (Gal 5:1–6:18)

(1) Balance in the Christian life (5:1-26)

In this chapter, Paul instructs us how to take the doctrinal principles that he has unfolded so far in this letter, and applies them to our daily life. He tells us how what we learn on Sunday morning applies to my life on Monday morning.

(A) No to legalism (5:1-12)

(a) Exhortation to reject legalism (5:1)

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.

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.

1 The Messiah has set us free so that we may enjoy the benefits of freedom. So keep on standing firm in it, and stop putting yourselves under the yoke of slavery again.

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

- "...therefore" - Paul's marker that tells us that we're no longer in the realm of doctrine, but now in the realm of practice

— Paul now tells us what he wants us to do with all of the doctrinal points that he made in Gal 1-4 (esp Gal 3-4)

- What Paul doesn't want us to do is return to legalism, because Jesus has set us free.

He's encouraging the Galatian believers to stand firm in the new freedom they have in Christ.

- For example, before the Emancipation Proclamation and the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments to the Constitution, slaves had to be slaves...they had no choice in the matter. But after these things, slaves were told that they no longer had to be slaves. Legally, they had the freedom to leave slavery.

— It is a historical fact that many slaves left their slave owners, but it is also a fact that many slaves stayed with their slave owners. Slaves were slaves in the post-Civil War era not because they had to be slaves, but because they wanted to be slaves. There were many reasons for this...maybe the slave owner treated the slave well, maybe for some type of economic security, or maybe the slave had no skills to make their way in the world on their

own. Whatever the reason, many slaves chose to continue to be slaves after they were declared free.

- If we understand this example, we can understand what Paul is saying here to Christians when we go back to legalism
- We are blood-bought saints, liberated from sin by the sacrifice of God Himself, but somehow what Jesus was done for me is not quite sufficient for me to mature in my daily walk, so I need to put myself back under a set of rules in order to develop into the Christian that God wants me to be.
- When we do this, we are just like slaves who have been set free, but who continue to be slaves by choice. We re-enslave ourselves by our choices, thinking that these "rules" that we force ourselves to follow will lead us to maturity. This is what Paul is condemning in this verse
 - Because every sermon urges us to be holy, but almost no sermons teach us how to be holy. Because we don't know any better, we think it's right to put ourselves under a set of arbitrary rules to follow rather than depending upon the power of the Spirit to grow in my faith, but I'm depending on a private set of rules that I manufactured in my own mind and put upon myself.
- Paul says that the moment we do that is the moment we are re-enslaving ourselves.

What is a Believer's Proper Relationship to the Law?

Calvin and many Reformed theologians have said that the ceremonial laws (animal sacrifices, dietary restrictions, feast days, etc.) are no longer binding on the Christian because of the death of Christ. However, the moral laws (10 Commandments) are still binding. God has done away with the moral laws only in the sense that they no longer condemn us (Rom 8:11). [Calvin, John, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1:2:11:4]

The problem with this explanation is that it makes a distinction between two parts of the Law that the text does not make. The text simply states that Christ is the end of "the Law" (Rom 10:4), not the ceremonial part of the law. If the Ten Commandments are still binding on us today, why have Christians throughout history (Acts 20:7; Cf. 1 Cor 16:2) met for worship on Sunday instead of Saturday (the Sabbath)? Some Reformed theologians, like Calvin, believe God abolished Sabbath worship along with the ceremonial laws, but this seems inconsistent.

Dispensational theologians suggest that God did away with the Mosaic Law completely: the civil, ceremonial and the moral parts. He terminated it altogether and replaced it with a new code: the "Law of Christ" (Gal 6:2). Some commandments of the Law of Christ are the same as those in the Law of Moses (nine of the Ten Commandments, excluding the command to obey the Sabbath). For example, parents will have various "laws" in the household with growing children. At different stages of maturity, new codes are instituted

and some of the same "laws" appear often. To say the former code is done away with is not a contradiction; it is as natural as growing up.

One of the tragedies of legalism is that it gives the appearance of spiritual maturity when, in reality, it leads the believer back into a 'second childhood'. [Wiersbe]

(b) Reasons to reject legalism (5:2-12)

After commanding believers to not return to legalism through arbitrary rules that we place upon ourselves, rather than growing into maturity by the power of the Holy Spirit, Paul now gives us five reasons why a Christian going back into legalism is a bad idea.

(i) Makes Christ unnecessary (5:2)

2 Look! I, Paul, tell you that if you have yourselves circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you.

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

2 Listen! I, Paul, am telling you that if you allow yourselves to be circumcised, the Messiah will be of no benefit to you.

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

- If either justification or sanctification can be achieved by human power, if they can be achieved by adherence to a set of rules (legalism) the way the Galatians were trying to achieve them, then why do I need Jesus Christ? Why do I need Jesus if I can solve the issue of my own personal holiness through following a set of rules (Cf. 2:21)?

— Paul is teaching that Jesus Christ alone is sufficient not only to bring you to justification, to declare you righteous and allow you to spend eternity with Him in heaven, but He alone is also sufficient for our growth/maturity in Christ

— If a Christian believes that they can grow to maturity by following a set of rules (legalism), then they become their own savior. They are basically saying, Thanks, but no thanks for the 39 lashes, for the spear in the side, for the nails in the hands and feet, for the crown of thorns thrust into your skull. That was all nice and well, but I'm going to attempt to grow in Christ by following some rules rather than the power of the Holy Spirit.

— The first thing Adam and Eve did after the fall was to clothe themselves (Gen 3:7). But God said, No, I'm going to clothe you, so He made garments of animal skin (Gen 3:21).

(ii) Obligates one to keep the whole Law (5:3)

3 And I testify again to every man who has himself **circumcised**, that he is obligated to keep the whole Law.

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

3 Again, I insist that everyone who allows himself to be circumcised is obligated to obey the entire Law.

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

- God says, If you want to go it alone, if you want to follow legalism, then you have to follow it completely

— God's standard of perfection in following the Law is not 99.9%...it is 100% perfection. God does not grade on a curve. We either fulfill the Law 100% our entire life, or we do not come to Him (Cf. James 2:10).

— Fortunately, there's another way. Jesus Christ died for me 2000 years ago, and He fulfilled the Law 100% for me. All I have to do is accept His 100% fulfillment of the Law for me, He will take His work and transfer the benefits of it to me. Then, the 100% requirement is fulfilled. It wasn't me who did it, but Jesus did it for me.

— Paul is arguing that the Galatians should reject the former (keeping the Law 100% on our own) and instead accept the latter (Jesus' 100% fulfillment of the Law)

- The Judaizers appear to have been claiming that circumcision was a necessary step in the process by which people become acceptable to God. These steps were: faith in Christ, reception of the Spirit, circumcision of the flesh.

— Paul argued that anyone who submits to circumcision to gain acceptance with God really believes in salvation by law-keeping. And if someone believes in salvation by law-keeping, they must keep the entire law, not just the requirement of circumcision.

— The Law is a unit, and if a person puts himself under any part of it for justification, he is a "debtor" to the entire code with its requirements and its curse (Heb 3:10; James 2:10).

— The acceptance of circumcision is in principle the acceptance of the whole legalistic scheme

— Rather than gaining acceptance from God, circumcision would be the very thing that would separate them from Christ

Rom 11:6: But if *it is* by grace, *it is* no longer on the basis of works, since *otherwise* grace is no longer grace.

Rom 4:4-5:

4 Now to the one who works, the wages are not credited as a favor, but as what is due.

5 But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness,

(iii) Causes us to fall from grace (5:4-6)

4 You have been **severed from Christ**, you who are seeking to be justified by the Law; you have **fallen from grace**.

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

4 Those of you who are trying to be justified by the Law have been cut off from the Messiah. You have fallen away from grace.

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

- Arminianism loves this verse as a proof text of their belief that a person can do something to lose their salvation

— They say that these Galatians began in the Holy Spirit (3:3), but at some point they went too far in their rebellion against God that He cut them off at the knees and they lost their salvation

— However, as always, Arminianism (and Calvinism) must wrestle a verse that seemingly supports their flawed beliefs out of its context in order to make an argument validating their system. A text without a context is a proof text.

— To accurately interpret this verse, we need to understand the context. Paul is writing to believers, who have embraced legalism as their path to sanctification rather than the power of the Holy Spirit

- "...severed from Christ...fallen from grace" - does not mean a loss of salvation for falling back into legalism. It means that in the second tense of your salvation (sanctification), you are going to miss the grace of God.

— You've already received the grace of God in your justification and forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the grace of God in terms of your ultimate arrival in heaven, but in your daily life (sanctification) you will be missing the grace of God, the power of God in your life to help you grow as a Christian. It is in this sense that those who follow legalism have been "severed from Christ" and "fallen from grace."

— We think of John 14:6 as simply speaking of our justification...that Jesus is the only way to God for salvation, and that is true. But it is also true in the second tense of our salvation (our sanctification). If we don't consider Jesus as the only way/path/avenue to growing in Christ, we are forsaking God's grace and are severed from Christ, with no hope of growth toward maturity.

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

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

5 Through the Spirit by faith we confidently await the fulfillment of our righteous hope,

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

- Paul now begins to describe what the grace of God looks like in daily life...

- "...through the Spirit, by faith" - we are waiting for the "hope of righteousness," not by my own power or strength, but by the power of the Holy Spirit working in my life
- This is how the Christian life is lived...we are to live the Christian life under the power and control of the Holy Spirit. We are not to live the Christian life under a set of rules and regulations. If we do, we're missing the grace of God in our daily life.
- For example, if you wake up Monday morning and attempt to live out the responsibilities of that day through your own strength and power, you have missed the grace of God
- "...waiting" - *apekdechometha*, eagerly await; used 7x 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)
- In contrast with legalists, true believers by faith (not works) eagerly await the consummation of their salvation (Rom 8:18-25). Then the righteousness for which we hope will be fully realized (1 Peter 1:3-4,13).
- At the coming of Christ believers will be completely conformed to all the requirements of God's will. 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 by Him.
- "...the hope of righteousness" - this is the only prophetic reference in the entire epistle. This is rare, since Paul typically has something to say about the Rapture or Christ's coming to earth to establish His kingdom.

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

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

6 for in union with the Messiah Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision matters. What matters is faith expressed through love.

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

- "...faith working through love" - I can make up my mind that I'm going to be more loving, but I'm not going to be very successfully trying to be more loving out of the power of my flesh

— The means for me to be successful at being more loving is through faith, through the power of the Holy Spirit working in me

— There is something greater and more powerful at work inside of me than simply what my own sinful nature/flesh can muster up

— When I allow the Holy Spirit to display Christ's love through me, I don't miss the grace of God but rather I am in the grace of God

When you live by grace, you depend on the power of the Spirit; but under the Law, you must depend on yourself and your own efforts. [Wiersbe]

(iv) Thwarts spiritual progress (5:7-10)

- 7 You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth?
- 7 You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth?
- 7 You were running the race beautifully. Who cut in on you and stopped you from obeying the truth?
- 7 Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?
 - The fourth reason Paul wants us to reject legalism: because it thwarts our spiritual growth/progress
 - Paul tells the Galatians that they started out well, by the power of the Holy Spirit and faith alone in Christ alone, which is how you were saved
 - But as you began to grow in your Christian life, something hindered you from obeying the truth
 - Paul here is referring to the Judaizers, who began teaching the Galatians this false doctrine of legalism, the requirement that they put themselves under the Mosaic Law in order to grow in Christ

It is important to note that Paul never uses the image of a race to tell people how to be saved. He is always talking to Christians about how to live the Christian life. A contestant in the Greek games had to be a citizen before he could compete. [Wiersbe]

- 8 This persuasion *did not* come from Him who calls you.
- 8 This persuasion *did not* come from Him who calls you.
- 8 Such influence does not come from the one who calls you.
- 8 This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you.
 - Paul says that the Galatians did not get this idea of legalism that was preached by the Judaizers from God, they didn't get it from Paul, they didn't get it from the Holy Spirit, and they didn't get it from the teachings of Christ. And they didn't get this idea from the scriptures...they got it from somewhere else, which contradicted the scripture.
 - In this passage, Paul gives us three truths about false teachers (v8-10):
 1. They contradict revealed truth (v8)
 - God does not say one thing on Monday, then say something different on Tuesday. He does not have a schizophrenic personality. Everything that is true and from God must by necessity line up perfectly with what God has already said in the past (prior revelation).
 2. Their sin is contagious (v9)

3. They are destined for judgment (v10)

9 A little leaven leavens the whole lump *of dough*.

9 A little leaven leavens the whole lump *of dough*.

9 A little yeast spreads through the whole batch of dough.

9 A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.

- The picture here that Paul is painting is that a false teacher's false doctrine is contagious

— He pictures a loaf of bread that has a little yeast (false doctrine) added. The yeast then slowly makes its way through the entire loaf until it is fully corrupted.

— False doctrine is like cancer; once cancer is identified in a person, an oncologist tries to isolate the cancer, limit the spread, and sometimes remove it. If you don't isolate it, limit it, and remove it, it won't be long before the cancer spreads everywhere.

— Paul says that these false teachers who are teaching this false doctrine (legalism) are very quickly going to corrupt the entire assembly/church in Galatia

— This is why Paul, in 4:30, used the allegory of the casting out of Hagar and Ishmael. Paul is telling them to get these false teachers out of your life, out of your church, stop allowing them to have influence over your thinking. If you allow them to influence you in the area of legalism, it won't be long before the entire body of Christ in Galatia is corrupted from head to toe.

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 the punishment, whoever he is.

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.

10 I am confident in the Lord that you will take no other view of this. However, the one who is troubling you will suffer God's judgment, whoever he is.

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.

- Paul is optimistic that the Galatians will adhere to his warnings and not adopt the teaching of the Judaizers

- "...bear the punishment" - these false teachers (Judaizers) were destined to receive punishment/judgment from God

— If there is anything that the Bible is severe on, it's in the area of false teaching (Cf. James 3:1; Matt 23)

(v) Empties the cross of its offense (5:11-12)

11 But as for me, brothers *and* sisters, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? Then the **stumbling block of the cross** has been eliminated.

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

11 As for me, brothers, if I am still preaching the necessity of circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed.

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

- The fifth reason Paul gives to reject legalism is that it empties the cross of its offense/stumbling block

- "...stumbling block of the cross" - *skandalon*, God designed salvation (by faith alone) in a way that is offensive to sinful man

— Paul is saying that the gospel message is offensive. The offensive nature of the gospel is that it tells sinful man that there is not a thing they in themselves can do to "fix" themselves or to remedy the scourge of sin and rectify their relationship with the God who made them.

— It is only through the grace and mercy of God, provided through the cross, that we can "fix" ourselves and our situation

— The gospel is offensive because it says that man cannot save himself; man can do nothing to earn favor from God. And once you're a Christian, the gospel is offensive in the fact that we cannot even grow toward maturity under our own power.

— To the legalistic mind, this is an absolute offense. God has designed the gospel to strike deeply and directly at our human pride/ego. So in order to rectify our relationship with God, damaged by sin, we have to come to God exactly as He has prescribed, which is in abject humility (Cf. Rom 3:21).

— God has designed salvation in such a way that when we come to Christ, and when we grow in Christ, we can take absolutely no credit for it at all. Not even a little bit! And when you preach this message to an unsaved person, or even to a believer who is wrapped up in legalism, it is offensive to them.

— One of the tragedies of American churches today is the "seeker friendly" church. If an unbeliever can come into a church and feel comfortable, then the offensive gospel is not being preached.

— Understanding that the gospel is offensive to unbelievers (or believers wrapped up in legalism), we should eliminate any personal offenses in our dealings with them. We should be as nice as pie to them because we don't want to add in personal offense on top of the offense of the gospel (Cf. notes on 4:12).

12 I wish that those who are troubling you would even **emasculate** themselves.

12 I wish that those who are troubling you would even mutilate themselves.

12 I wish that those who are upsetting you would castrate themselves!

12 I would they were even cut off which trouble you.

- "...emasculate" - Paul wishes that the Judaizers, who were so enthusiastic about circumcision, would go the whole way and castrate themselves!
- Paul is using sarcasm here...he's so tired of the false teaching of the Judaizers, the legalism, that he makes a hyperbolic statement
- Perhaps the resulting physical impotence reflected Paul's desire that they also be unable to produce new converts!
- While circumcision had once been the sign of the covenant in Israel, it now had no more religious meaning than any other ritual of cutting and marking practiced by ancient pagans.

(B) No to license (5:13-15)

- (a) Our calling to freedom (5:13a)
- (b) What we are free to do (5:13b-15)
 - (i) To oppose the flesh (5:13b)
 - (ii) To serve one another (5:13c)
 - (iii) To love one another (5:13d)

13 For you were **called to freedom, brothers and sisters**; only do not *turn* your freedom into an opportunity for the **flesh**, but **serve one another** through **love**.

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.

13 For you, brothers, were called to freedom. Only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity to gratify your flesh, but through love make it your habit to serve one another.

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.

- "...called to freedom" - this is exactly what Paul said in v1: "It was for freedom that Christ set us free"

— Paul is saying that as believers, we are no longer under manmade requirements or human power in order to please God in our daily life. We are free/liberated from the need to do something out of our own power to please God.

— Believers are free from the legalistic, pharisaical system that tells people that they have to abide by a set of rules in order to please God. We are no longer slaves to that.

— "freedom" - in the Bible, "freedom" means something very different than what it means in the world today, especially in the United States

— In the US, I am free to do whatever I want to do. If I want to please myself and pursue happiness, I'm free to do that in just about any way I want to (Cf. Rom 13:8-10).

— But when you come to the Bible, "freedom" means something very different. Once we are liberated/freed, we are not free to do whatever I please. I'm "free" to do something

good, under the power of the Holy Spirit. I am free to please God in my daily life, under the power of the Holy Spirit.

- "...brothers *and sisters*" - "brethren"; shows that Paul is addressing believers. Everything Paul says about the sin nature in this passage, he is addressing to believers.

- In v13b-15, Paul lists five things that a believer is "free" to do:

1. To oppose the flesh (v13b)
2. To love one another (v13c)
3. To serve one another (v13d)
4. To fulfill God's moral law (v14)
5. To not harm others (v15)

- "...flesh" - *sark*, used by Paul for "sinful nature" 7x (Gal 5:13,16,17,19,24; 6:8). Specifically, Paul charged the Galatians not to use their liberty as a basis for sin to gain a foothold.

Rather than liberty being used for lust, the real goal should be love.

— After Adam & Eve sinned, they passed on a deadly virus to the entire human race called sin. They passed on to every single descendant a basic propensity to sin.

— We are born into the world with a basic nature that is at war against God. You don't have to teach a child to sin, you have to teach them not to sin. To understand right from wrong, and choose to do right.

— My sin doesn't make me a sinner; I'm a sinner, therefore I sin. I sin naturally, without even thinking about it. I don't have to take a class on how to displease God.

- But once we become a Christian, our sin nature does not go away. According to Rom 6:6, the sin nature has been defeated (*katargeō*, done away with), but it hasn't been annihilated. It will once and for all be annihilated at our glorification (either our death or the Rapture) (Cf. Rom 7:24; 8:23; Phil 1:21-23).

— Paul is telling us to not make the choice to go back to/indulge our sin nature, because nothing good comes from indulging our flesh (Cf. Rom 7:18; James 1:14-15)

- Paul is now condemning a practice called "license." He had been condemning legalism; license is the opposite extreme.

— License is the idea that because I'm now free in Christ, I can do whatever I want. Paul's opponents (the Judaizers) falsely accused Paul of teaching license by removing any legal restraints around the activities or behavior of Christians.

— His opponents argued that if legalism was removed, the last line of defense against a life of license (sinning at will) would be removed. Paul responded to that in this verse by saying that he is not teaching license, and that freedom in Christ for a Christian means that we have the freedom to do good, not indulge our flesh.

— The first thing that we are to do with our freedom in Christ is to not indulge our pernicious desires

- "...serve one another" - one of the things Jesus did that blew the minds of the disciples was Jesus washing their feet
- The whole transaction of the cross chides us, implores us to do the same thing and show the same love for others that Jesus showed to us
- Jesus' love was never a word spoken, it was always an action performed. *Agapē* love thrusts itself into service for others (1 Peter 4:10).
- "...love" - *agapē*, the highest form of love; a love that is so compelling that we begin to live in a sacrificial way for the benefit of other people
- When Paul was asked why he continued on in ministry, despite every hurdle and persecution imaginable, he replied that the love of Christ could not be held back or constrained in his life. God's love through him was motivating and driving him to continue forward.
- So not only does our freedom in Christ allow us to not indulge our flesh, but it propels us to love one another through service
- Until I get a glimpse of how much God loves me, I have no idea how to love other people. But the more I focus and understand the cross and what Jesus did, His sacrificial love for me, the more I can understand (in a lesser but similar way) love other people.
- And Christians don't serve or love others in order to receive favor from God. We have already received favor from God, so we serve and love others because the love that God has shown us compels/motivates us to do so.

(iv) To fulfill God's moral Law (5:14)

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

14 For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the *statement*, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

14 For the whole Law is summarized in a single statement: "You must love your neighbor as yourself."

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

- The Mosaic Law, as outlined in the 10 commandments, as two aspects: Commandments 1-4 deal with our vertical relationship with God (Cf. Deut 6:5); Commandments 5-10 deal with our horizontal relationship with other people (Cf. Lev 19:18)

— To fulfill the vertical aspects of God's law, we simply need to follow Deut 6:5: And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. If we do this, Commandments 1-4 will mostly be fulfilled on their own.

— To fulfill the horizontal aspects of God's law, we simply need to follow Lev 19:18: You shall not take vengeance, nor hold any grudge against the sons of your people, but

you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD. If we follow these simple steps, we're well on our way to fulfilling Commandments 5-10 and the horizontal aspects of the law.

- Paul is saying that the grace-filled life, one that is prompted by and controlled by the Holy Spirit, will lead in a direction whereby we fulfill the moral requirements of the Law. The grace-filled life automatically leads to a quality of life whereby we are walking in obedience and subservience to the moral requirements of the Law.
- While Church Age believers are not under the Mosaic Law, including the 10 Commandments, nine out of 10 of the commandments are repeated in the NT. God gives NT believers a moral quality of life that we are to exhibit, which is based on the 10 Commandments.
- And Paul is saying that Church Age believers can fulfill these moral quality of life requirements by loving God with all of my heart, soul, and mind (Cf. Deut 6:5), and loving my neighbor as I love myself (Cf. Lev 19:18).
- The Judaizers whom Paul was battling with falsely accused him of antinomianism (being against the Law)
- Paul's response was that he was not against the Law, because the Spirit-filled life will produce a quality of life that automatically fulfills the moral requirements of the Law, without putting people back under a system that makes people think they have to obey the Law in order to please God.

(v) To not harm others (5:15)

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

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

15 But if you bite and devour one another, be careful that you are not destroyed by each other.

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

- In v13b, Paul warned about an excursion back into the flesh. Now, he is wrapping up this section by again warning against an excursion back into the flesh.

— The desire of the flesh is to harm others (Mark 7:20-23; James 4:1-2). An excursion back into the flesh will lead to conflicts, fights, quarrels, murder, etc. because that's all the flesh can do.

— Paul is saying that if you are walking in the flesh, and your fellow Christian is also walking in the flesh, and nothing good dwells in the flesh, then what will inevitably occur is that you

will bite and devour one another

- Christians walking in the flesh attack one another and will ultimately get to the point where you will consume one another
- So Paul says that we are free to avoid the flesh and its natural tendency to act out vindictively, mean-spiritedly, and aggressively against my brothers and sisters in Christ (Cf. James 3:16)

(C) Yes to the Spirit (5:16-26)

After Paul quashes the ideas of legalism (the idea that I have to put my flesh under a system of manmade rules in order to please God, v1-12) and license (the idea that just because I'm not under a set of manmade rules I can do whatever I want, v13-15), he now tells us how to live the Christian life through the Holy Spirit.

New believers often move very quickly into legalism because they don't know how to control their sin nature. Or, they will adopt a mindset that says, I'm a Christian, I'm free in Christ, so I can live any way I want. I can appease my sin nature anytime I want because God will forgive me.

After refuting these two extremes, Paul now gives us the right balance right in between legalism and license: life through the power of the Holy Spirit. Gal 5:16-26 is the quintessential passage in the entire Bible on how to live the Christian life. It answers the question, How do we live for God now that we have come to Christ?

(a) Promise of victory (5:16-18)

(i) Command (5:16a)

(ii) Promise of victory over the flesh (5:16b)

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

16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

16 So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will never fulfill the desires of the flesh.

16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

- "...walk" - *peripateo*, to walk about, to pursue one's daily activities (compare to "walk" (*stoicheo*) in v25)

— Imperative mood, a command; present tense, indicating continuous action (walk and keep on walking). To "walk" has the idea of progress and dependence.

— If you're walking somewhere, you're making progress toward your destination

— For dependence, a great illustration is an elderly person with a walker. That person is dependent upon that walker in order to walk, to progress, to move to a new location.

— To "walk by the Spirit" means that the believer is to be dependent upon the Holy Spirit on a moment-by-moment basis in the same way an elderly person is dependent upon a walker to move from point A to point B

- Walking in the Spirit cannot occur unless we become students of the book that the Holy Spirit wrote
 - As a new believer who needs to know how to live for God, I find that there are these impulses within me to sin. My first reaction is to put myself under a set of rules and regulations to "reign in" my sin nature. This is legalism, which Paul is condemning throughout this epistle.
 - But the Bible says, forget about legalism, forget about putting yourself under a set of manmade rules to get control of your sin nature, and instead make yourself a student of the Book that the Holy Spirit wrote and you will have principles for living the Christian life
 - Furthermore, live your life as if you were an elderly person completely dependent upon a walker. We should have this type of moment-by-moment dependence on the Holy Spirit to empower me in daily life.
- The fact that Paul is giving us a command (imperative mood) to walk shows that walking by the Spirit is not automatic in life of a believer. Many Christians believe and teach that because the Holy Spirit indwells every believer (Cf. Rom 8:9), they will automatically walk by the Spirit.
 - However, the fact that Paul has to command a believing audience to walk by the Spirit is indicative of the fact that the walk of the Spirit is not something that comes automatically to every believer. It is something we need to develop, to mature in, to grow in.
 - "...by the Spirit" - means living moment-by moment, submissively trusting in the Holy Spirit rather than in self; to be under the direction, control, and guidance of the Spirit.
 - As a believer walks through life he should depend on the indwelling Holy Spirit for guidance and power. But the Spirit does not operate automatically in a believer's heart. He waits to be depended on.
 - There is no mention in Scripture of the sanctification of the old nature
 - Our heart is never cleansed: it is replaced with a new one. Thus, while no believer will ever be entirely free in this life from the evil desires that stem from his fallen human nature, he need not capitulate to them, but may experience victory by the Spirit's help.
 - When a Christian does yield to the Spirit's control, the promise is that he will not in anywise (the double negative *ou me* is, in Greek, emphatic) gratify (*teleo*, "complete, fulfill" in outward action) the desires of the sinful nature.
 - "...you" - second person plural pronoun
 - The key to understanding how the "vice list" in v19-21 applies to the believer; when compared with "those" in v21 (vs. "you" in v16), it shows that Paul is not stating that if *you* do those things, you lose your salvation, or that you never had it, or that you're not going to enter the millennial kingdom. See note on v21.
 - The command to walk by the Spirit is immediately followed by a promise: if I walk in the Spirit, God promises me that I will not carry out the desires of my sin nature

- "...will not" - *ou mē*, a double negation, the strongest negation in the Greek language
- If a believer walks by the Spirit, they absolutely will not, under any circumstance, carry out the desire of the flesh. It simply can't happen.
- The flesh cannot be controlled by legalism, and it cannot be satisfied by license, but it can be kept under submission by the believer's moment-by-moment dependence upon the Holy Spirit
- "...carry out" - subjunctive mood, the mood of possibility
- Whether I fulfill the lusts of the flesh or not depends largely upon me. I can choose to fulfill the lusts of the flesh any time I want, but at the same time if I am walking according to the Holy Spirit, I cannot fulfill the lusts of the flesh.
- My decision is whether I'm going to be under the control of the Holy Spirit or under control of my flesh
- "...flesh" - *sarx*, our sin nature; the nature that was transmitted from Adam to every member of the human race
- Every person ever conceived since Adam has been plagued by this disease of the sin nature. The mortality rate is 100% and consequently I'm born with a nature that hates God (Cf. Rom 8:7-8).
- Then there comes a time in your life where you hear the gospel and you place your trust in Christ. At that moment, you are baptized (identified) into the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Christ.
- It is at that point that we have the ability to say No to our sin nature. Our new identity is in Christ, seated in the heavenlies.
- So the question is, How do I gain victory over this *sarx*, this inherent sin nature inside of me?
- The first way we do this is to acknowledge the truth of Rom 6, that the sin nature and its power/lusts have been broken. In Christ, I now have the power say No to my sin nature, whereas I did not have that power before Christ.
- The second way we gain victory over the flesh is explained by Paul here: we walk by the Holy Spirit.

(iii) Conflict described (5:17)

- 17 For the desire of the flesh is against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, in order to keep you from **doing whatever you want**.
- 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.
- 17 For what the flesh wants is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit wants is opposed to the flesh. They are opposed to each other, and so you do not do what you want to do.

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.

- Whether we like it or not, whether we believe it or not, there is a war being waged inside of every believer between the Spirit and the flesh

— Every Christian has two natures, a sinful nature received at birth, a genetic defect inherited from fallen Adam, and a new nature received at regeneration when they became a participant in the divine nature (Cf. 2 Peter 1:4).

— Both natures have desires, one for evil and the other for holiness. Thus they are in conflict with each other, and the result can be that they keep a believer from doing what he otherwise would.

— No matter which way you go, you're going to please one and you're going to disappoint the other. If you want to please the flesh, you're going to disappoint the Holy Spirit. And if you want to please the Holy Spirit, you're going to disappoint the flesh.

— Mere determination on the part of the Christian will never control the flesh or produce the fruit of the Spirit. Paul amplifies this theme in Rom 7, where he shows that the believer's determined attempts to please God in his own strength are destined to fail.

(iv) Victory over the flesh through the Spirit rather than the Law (5:18)

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

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

18 But if you are being led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.

18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

- If we learn to depend upon the Holy Spirit, moment-by-moment, this is what will give us victory over the flesh, not the Law

— If you go back under the Law, the only thing it's going to do is arouse your sinful appetite. There is no manmade system, including the Law, that will yield a life victorious over sin. The only thing the Law will do is make us hungrier for rebellion.

- "...if" - first class condition ("since"); this condition says that if something is true, and let's assume it's true for the sake of argument, then such and such (not being under the Law) will occur

- "...are led" - does not imply passivity on the part of the believer, but rather the need to allow oneself to be led

— Paul assumed that the Holy Spirit leads every believer. However, we should not conclude that the Spirit forces us to do God's will; He does not lead that strongly. The question is, will the believer follow His leading and walk after the Spirit or will they walk after the flesh?

— A believer does not turn to the Law for guidance, but to the Holy Spirit. The Spirit leads the believer in conformity with the Word of God.

- It was important for the Galatians to know that just as justification is not possible by works, sanctification cannot be achieved by human effort
- The response of faith is necessary—faith in Christ to save and in the Holy Spirit to sanctify
- Instead of writing “under the flesh,” Paul writes “under the law.” A Christian cannot overcome the desires of the flesh by remaining under the Law.
- In other words...staying with the old way of legalism vs the new way of the Spirit
- Since a Christian has the same sinful nature he possessed before salvation, he may fall prey to the sins that nature produces if he does not live by means of the Spirit.

(b) Works of the flesh (5:19-21)

Paul now lists 15 ways in which the flesh will manifest itself in our lives. If we're walking by the flesh, many of these sins will be evident in our life.

These 15 sins can be broken down into five categories:

1. Sexual sins
2. Religious sins
3. Social discord sins
4. Intemperate sins
5. Generic sins

(i) Sexual sins (5:19)

- (a) Immorality
- (b) Impurity
- (c) Sensuality

19 Now the deeds of the flesh are **evident**, which are: **sexualimmorality, impurity, indecentbehavior**,

19 Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality,

19 Now the actions of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity, promiscuity,

19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

- As a Christian, how do we know we're under the power of the Holy Spirit or under the power of the flesh? What are the signs or evidences of each?

- "...evident" - Paul lists the specific, obvious ways that the flesh expresses itself

- "...sexual immorality" - *porneia*, refers to all forbidden sexual relationships

— God has a crystal clear sexual standard: one man, one woman, within the confines of marriage, for life. Any sexual satisfaction that is outside of this standard falls into the category of sexual immorality.

- "...impurity" - uncleanness in thought, word, or deed
- "...indecent behavior" - sensuality or licentiousness; the idea of living in any way my sexual impulses desires direct me. It involves doing whatever I want to do, whenever I want to do it, from a sexual perspective.
- Paul begins his list of the works of the flesh with sexual sins because he is writing to a mainly Gentile audience. A Jewish audience, by contrast, would've had a background in the OT and the Mosaic Law and at least a general understanding of God's will concerning sexuality.
- The Gentiles, on the other hand, had a pagan background and would've had no such background and were wholly unaware of God's standard for sexual relationships.

- (ii) Religious sins (5:20a)
 - (a) Idolatry
 - (b) Sorcery
- (iii) Social discord (5:20b-21a)
 - (a) Enmities
 - (b) Strife
 - (c) Jealousy
 - (d) Outbursts of anger
 - (e) Disputes
 - (f) Dissensions
 - (g) Factions
 - (h) Envying

20 **idolatry, witchcraft, hostilities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions,**

20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions,

20 idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, rivalry, jealousy, outbursts of anger, quarrels, conflicts, factions,

20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,
- Religious sins are the worst type of sins imaginable...

— It was religious sins that nailed Christ to the cross

— It was religion that motivated the first murder (Cain murdering Abel)

— It was religious sins that the Galatians were moving back into, and that Paul is urging them to stay away from. Religious sins are essentially man's attempt to make himself acceptable to God.

— Man is either trying to climb a ladder of good works to make himself acceptable to God, or he is trying to

- "...idolatry" - worshiping anything in the place of God
- When we derive our worth or find our security in anything other than God, it is idolatry. Anything that I look to for my security, hope for my future, or my eternity, or in my daily life, other than God is an idol.
- "...witchcraft" - *pharmakeia*, anything that aligns you with the powers of evil
- It is the desire to tap into some sort of power, including spiritual power, that is outside of God. This also includes the use or misuse of any type of drugs, legal or not, including prescription drugs.
- Drugs lower our inhibitions and opens oneself up to the dark side
- "...hostilities" - arguments or fights between people or groups
- "...strife" - discord within the body of Christ
- "...jealousy" - covetousness; I want what someone else has
- "...outbursts of anger" - temper tantrums; when the flesh is not satisfied or doesn't get what it wants, it often explodes in anger
- "...selfish ambition" - disputes; strife caused because I didn't get my way
- "...dissensions" - developing a party or group based on similar viewpoints or position; the causing of division based on a side
- "...factions" - *airesis*, the original word for factions is "heresies"
- A heretic is someone who comes in teaching a strange doctrine, and that doctrine has a tendency to divide the body of Christ

- (iv) Intemperate sins (5:21b)
 - (a) Drunkenness
 - (b) Carousing
- (v) Generic sins (5:21c)
 - (a) "things like these"
- (vi) Conclusion (5:21d)
 - (a) "those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God"

21 **envy, 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.

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.

21 envy, murder, drunkenness, wild partying, and things like that. I am telling you now, as I have told you in the past, that people who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

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.

- "...envy" - the twin sister of jealousy; it is jealousy magnified (on steroids)
- When jealousy reaches a point that it turns into action rather than just thinking. It when someone is jealous and they resort to desperate measures because their covetous nature is not satisfied.
- "...drunkenness" - under the influence of alcohol
- "...carousing" - orgies, parties associated with excessive eating and drinking
- It is a mindset that says that I'm going to indulge all of the various cravings of my sin nature
- "...things like these" - a generic "catch-all" to demonstrate that this is not a exhaustive list of sins of the flesh. It is just a handful of examples of how the sin nature manifests itself.
- "...you" - second person; Paul is referencing the Galatian church, a group of believers
- Paul uses the second person "you" throughout the context (v16-21a) to address the Galatian believers: "...you will not carry out the desire of the flesh"; "...you are led by the Spirit"; "...you are not under the Law"; "...I forewarn you"; "...I have forewarned you"
- "...those" - third person; Paul warns his readers (believers), as he had before, that *those* (unbelievers) who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God (Cf. 1 Cor 6:9-11; Eph 5:5)
- Notice the change in pronouns from "you" (in both v16 & here) referring to his audience, who were believers, to "those" referring to unbelievers. The difference between second person "you" and third person "those" makes it clear that Paul is switching subjects at the comma, from addressing his readers, who are saved, to describing the deeds of the unsaved.
- He changes the subject mid-sentence here because he is exhorting his readers (believers) to live according to their new identity in Christ. He is essentially saying, Why in the world would you entertain these vices in your life? That is what unsaved people do, and those unsaved people will not be present in the millennial kingdom (and you will be!).
- Paul is pointing out to them that because they are saved, their calling in life is different, their destiny in life is different, and their spiritual identity is different...so why in the world would you entertain such practices as these?
- "...who practice such things" - this is one of the most debated and misinterpreted verses in all of the Bible. There are three primary views:
 1. Those who practice these 15 sins have lost their salvation (Arminianism). These people were saved, but it's obvious that they have lost their salvation because these traits characterize their lives.

2. Those who habitually practice these things were never saved to begin with (Calvinism). They are unbelievers and were never believers, even though they thought they were; they are professors but not possessors. This is the majority view in Christendom today. This interpretation views Christians as people who would never indulge in these sins.
 - This view opens the door to the possibility that there are people who are professors but not possessors. There are people who say they are Christians, who profess the name of Christ, but who have never trusted in Him for eternal salvation.
 - Judas Iscariot is an example of a professor but not a possessor. He cast out demons, worked miracles, and preached the message of the kingdom just like the other apostles. When Jesus said that someone in the Upper Room was going to betray Him, all of the disciples did not point to Judas...they asked if it was them. Judas fit in perfectly with the disciples, yet he was never saved.
 - This interpretation equates heaven and inheritance. When it talks about having no inheritance, it's talking about unbelievers because they will not go to heaven.
3. Some "free grace" extremists teach that if a believer does the things on the list, they will be excluded from the millennial kingdom. They don't explain exactly where you will be, but you won't be dining with Christ or ruling and reigning with Him during the 1000-year kingdom period. But you're still saved. The problem with this view is that it confuses "inheritance" (something that is rightfully ours) with rewards (something we must earn).
4. The fourth view is a minority view: when v21 talks about those who do not "inherit" the kingdom, it's talking about an unrewarded believer. When Paul uses the word "inherit" regarding the kingdom of God, he's not talking about whether or not a person will go to heaven, he's talking about an inheritance or reward that a believer has the potential of receiving in addition to heaven.
 - For example, the Exodus generation in the wilderness was saved, but they did not receive their inheritance (the Land of Israel). That doesn't mean they didn't go to heaven when they died, it just means that God removed the "reward" (inheritance) from them due to disobedience and lack of faith.
 - When Paul uses the phrase "will not inherit the kingdom of God" he's not saying that someone is not saved, or that they have lost their salvation. He's saying that those who practice these things will not be fully rewarded when they enter heaven (Cf. 1 Cor 3:10-13).
 - Many people use this passage to teach the insecurity of salvation, that if you do any of these, you'll lose your salvation. This is resolved when you see the shift in pronouns ("you" to "those"; see note above).

- Paul's point is that Christians have the same potential to act like an unbeliever through these works of the flesh. Unbelievers act this way all the time, and since Christians are "dual-natured" (have the flesh and the new man), they have the potential to act just like an unbeliever.
- Paul is not stating that if you do these things you have lost your salvation, or that you never had it, or that you're not going to enter the millennium kingdom
- He's saying that believers should not imitate unbelievers, because they won't enter the kingdom; they will go to hell
- The overarching idea is that Paul is encouraging believers to make their behavior and character match their identity in Christ as believers. Don't imitate unbelievers in these acts because they aren't going to heaven.
- Paul says, Why would you as a believer go back to those works of the flesh, because that is not your identity? You have a completely different destiny as a believer than an unbeliever, so why would you act like them?

The common feature of all of these vices is the self-centeredness that underlies all of them.

Many people read these passages, in isolation from the rest of the book and out of context, and think, Gee, if I do any of these things, I've lost my salvation (Arminianism) or worse, I was never saved to begin with (Calvinism). Then you have "outer darkness theology" which teaches that if you don't have good works, and you do the things on this list, you won't inherit the kingdom, but instead will be in "outer darkness" (Protestant purgatory) during the millennium, then be released in time for the Eternal State.

The entire confusion on the interpretation of these verses is remedied when you simply look at the pronouns used..."you" is used in v16, but "those" is used in v21. Because of this pronoun switch, Paul isn't telling believers that they've lost salvation or they'll be punished in the millennium. What he's saying is that believers should not imitate unbelievers, because they (the unbelievers) aren't going to heaven. Basically, Paul is urging the Galatians to let their behavior match their new identity in Christ. Those who aren't going to heaven and do these things have a completely separate identity, outside of Christ.

(c) Fruit of the Spirit (5:22-23)

There isn't a self-help guru in the world who can create these attributes in us. There is no educational curriculum available, outside of Scripture, that can produce these character traits in us. These are not traits that we can work up inside of us under our own power. The only source of these traits in the life of a believer is the Holy Spirit working through us. These are traits that the Holy Spirit, whom Christ has already promised us is inside of us, will naturally begin to produce in us as we yield to Him moment-by-moment. Then once a

believer begins to demonstrate these traits on a daily basis, they're said to have "Christ-like character."

- (i) Mental or God-ward attributes (5:22a-b)
 - (a) Love
 - (b) Joy
 - (c) Peace
- (ii) Interpersonal and man-ward attributes (5:22c)
 - (a) Patience
 - (b) Kindness
 - (c) Goodness
- (iii) Personal or self-ward attributes (5:22d-23a)
 - (a) Faithfulness (5:22d)

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,
- The result of being filled with the Spirit is that believers become more like Jesus
- "...fruit" - singular, indicating that these qualities constitute a unity, all of which should be found in a believer who lives under the control of the Spirit (Cf. 2 Cor 3:18; Phil 1:21)
- "...of the Spirit" - the fruit here is not produced by the believer, but by the Holy Spirit working through a Christian who is in vital union with Christ (Cf. John 15:1-8)
- "...love" - *agapē*, a self-sacrificial love; it is something the Holy Spirit creates in us when we begin to have the desire to sacrifice in some way for the good of another
- "...joy" - an inner feeling that manifests itself in the life of a believer, regardless of their current circumstances
— A believer's circumstance could be very good, and that person would be characterized by joy. However, a believer's circumstance could be very bad (a unfavorable medical report, loss of job, loss of loved one, financial hardship, strained relationships, etc.) and that person would still have the same level of joy in spite of those negative circumstances in your life.
— Joy is very different than happiness. The word "happiness" comes from "happenstance"; it refers to and is dependent upon one's circumstances. A synonym for "happiness" is "luck."
— No matter what happens in your life, or around you, good or bad, those who walk in joy have an abiding sense that God is at work

- A great example of joy is in Acts 16:22-25. Paul and Silas were beaten and thrown in prison, yet they were praising the Lord nonetheless, and it resulted in people trusting in Christ (the Philippian jailer and his entire household).
- Paul and Silas had something abnormal, something that didn't come from in and of themselves. They had something that didn't come from submission to the Law (legalism) or license, but something that the Holy Spirit produced in them.
- "...peace" - *eirēnē*, an inner tranquility despite the negative circumstances in our life
- Jesus told the disciples in the Upper Room (John 14:27): **Peace I leave you, My peace I give you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled, nor fearful.**
- The peace that the Holy Spirit produces in us is very different than the peace that the world pursues. This world is totally and completely dependent upon circumstances for inner tranquility. Everyone is looking for and hoping that the circumstances in their life will go the right way.
- If their circumstances are going the right way, from their perspective, they have peace. But if their circumstances are not going in their favor, the world has no peace. And we all know that life in this sinful world tends to throw curve balls at us all the time.
- But the peace that the Holy Spirit desires to replicate in our life, as we allow and are dependent upon Him, is a peace that transcends whether or not the chips are falling my way or not.
- "...patience" - forbearance under provocation
- Anyone can be patient when they are not provoked, but what happens when we are provoked? How do we react when circumstances become hostile?
- The Holy Spirit desires to create in us a forbearance or an attitude of patience when we're provoked. He desires for us to "hang in there with God" when the world or our circumstances provoke us toward anger.
- "...kindness" - benevolence; it's much more than just good-hearted intentions toward someone. It is serving in such a way that their needs are met either through service, finances, or some other form.
- "...goodness" - constructive action toward other people. I see other people and I have the desire within me to bless them or to be a benefit to them in some way.
- I don't desire to be jealous or envious of them, I don't have a desire to scheme on how to somehow tear them down. Goodness is my looking at them and having in my thoughts how I can bless them in some way, even those who completely disagree with me theologically, politically, or have a worldview that is in complete opposition to mine.
- When I look at them or consider them, the Spirit of God is creating in me a desire to bless them

- "...faithfulness" - reliability or dependability; many people only pray when they need God to do something for them, when they need Him to come through
- But the Holy Spirit wants to develop in us a reliability and a dependability in my prayer life, in my Bible reading and study, and in my church attendance and fellowship with other believers

- (b) Gentleness (5:23a)
- (c) Self control (5:23a)
- (iv) Conclusion (5:23b)

(a) "against such things there is no law"

23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

23 gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things.

23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

- "...gentleness" - being considerate of other people; courtesy

- "...self-control" - the ability to master oneself; the ability to take our sin nature, which constantly wants to express itself through our actions and words

— Self-control is the power of the Holy Spirit to keep our sin nature, our flesh, in check

— The hardest part of the sin nature to keep under control is our tongue (Cf. James 3:2). If we can learn to control our tongue, the words that demonstrate what is in our heart, then every other thing that we need to control is easy in comparison.

— "...against such things there is no law" - it is not the Law or some kind of 12-step program or self-help principles that will produce these traits in the life of a believer. The only way to produce these traits in our life is through Jesus Christ living His life through me by means of the Holy Spirit.

— This is the spiritual life!

- (d) Provision for victory (5:24-26)
- (i) Provisions (5:24-25)
 - (a) Co-crucifixion with Christ (5:24)

24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

24 Now those who belong to the Messiah Jesus have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires.

24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

- Beyond what has already been described in v16-23, believers have two additional resources to allow us to overcome our sin nature:

1. We are crucified with Christ (v24; Cf. Rom 6) - because of my "baptism" (identification) into the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ, the power of my sin nature has been broken. I still have this sin nature, that never leaves me alone, but now I have the power to say No.
2. Follow (be controlled by) the Spirit (v25) - full circle from v16; walking by the Spirit and being controlled by the Spirit are not things that automatically happen to a believer. If they did, Paul would not give us these commands.

(b) Holy Spirit (5:25)

25 If we live by the Spirit, let's **follow the Spirit** as well.

25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

25 Since we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also be guided.

25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

- Paul goes full circle back the command of v16: walk in the Spirit

— Walking by or being controlled by the Spirit do not come automatically to a believer

(ii) Flesh to be conquered (5:26)

(a) Pride

(b) Dissension

(c) Envy

26 Let's not become **boastful, challenging one another, envying one another**.

26 Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.

26 Let's stop being arrogant, provoking one another and envying one another.

26 Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

- "...boastful" - arrogance; the idea that we're trying to lift ourselves up or promote ourselves in the eyes of others on the basis of what we have done

- "...challenging one another" - dissension or challenging one another; argumentation between two people/groups that doesn't try to get to the truth, but rather just trying to prove themselves right or the other person wrong

- "...envying" - jealousy on steroids (see note on v21); jealousy that works itself out into evil deeds in an effort to either get what the other person has, or to take something away from someone else

In addition to a divine judgment of the sinful nature, there is a divine enablement in the Person of the Holy Spirit. He made the believer alive by regeneration (John 3:5-6), so each believer is exhorted to "walk," keep in step (*stoichomen*, translated "follow" in Gal 6:16)

with the Spirit. Step by step, one's Christian walk should conform to the Spirit's direction and enablement, lest believers become conceited, provoking, and envying each other.