

Date: Wednesday May 12, 2021 **Scripture:** Galatians 5

Link: [Who are the Galatians](#)

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Introduction

Galatians chapter 5. Howard Hendricks has said, “If you are not thinking correctly, you are not living correctly. What you believe will determine how you behave.” Pretty simple. What you believe will determine how you behave, and Paul knows this.

Paul knows this truth, which is why he writes his letters the way that he does. He starts off... if you read through the epistles, the letters that Paul writes...he starts off with doctrine and then, towards the end of his book or his letter, he moves on towards duty... the Christian’s duty. He starts off with doctrine and then he gets into *duty* --that is what we are to do.

And in Galatians he started off with doctrine. It was all about doctrine. He was trying to set straight the Galatians and the things that they were believing. The false things that they were believing about what it means to be saved. But now in chapter 5 here he gets into the duty. What are they supposed to do with this knowledge now that they have?

He doesn't just want to teach on what you should know, but also in how you should apply that knowledge to your life. And that should be with all of us. We don't just need to be students of God's Word, we need to be students of God's Word, but not just students --we need to be doers of God's Word as well. And Paul knows this.

Paul knows this. Howard Hendrix has said that you must *think* correctly in order *to live* correctly -- and that's why it is so important for us to know doctrine... to understand the Word of God so that we might then apply that to our lives and live it out. What you believe does determine how you behave. What you believe determines how you behave.

And so here in chapter 5, we're going to break this chapter down into three sections, here tonight, and I want you to notice the action words that Paul uses here in this chapter as he's encouraging these Galatians to live out what they know to be true. Look at what he says in verse 1. He says,

“Therefore, keep standing firm” (Gal 5:1)

Keep standing firm. Now you might think standing is not an action word, but it is an action word. He's calling them to do something, that is, they must stand firm. And then we see in verse 7 where he says, *“you were running well” (Gal 5:7)*. They were running well in the Christian life. And then we see in verse

16 he says, "...walk by the Spirit." You are to "walk by the Spirit". And so we're going to use these action words. These three action words here to divide up this chapter.

1. Our first point will be **to stand in the truth**. We'll see that in verses 1-6
2. Our second point will be **run in obedience**. We'll see that in verses 7-15
3. And then lastly, we'll see **walk by the Spirit** in verses 16-26.

And so let's look at our first section here.

1. Stand in the Truth

Look at what Paul says in verse 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." (Gal 5:1)

Now in America we love freedom, right? We love our freedoms.

- We have Lady Liberty -- a symbol of our freedom.
- We say in the Pledge of Allegiance at the end of it, we say, with liberty and justice for all. I don't think kids say the Pledge of Allegiance anymore, but they should, right? We had to do that growing up. The Pledge of Allegiance *"with liberty and justice for all."*
- On the Liberty Bell is the phrase, *"proclaim Liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof."*

But when Paul talks about Christ setting us free and the freedom that we have, he's not talking about freedom in a national sense. He's speaking about freedom as a spiritual reality for us as believers. Why? Because before we were saved we were in bondage to what? Sin. We were in bondage to sin. An that sin that we were under that we were in bondage to, it continued to condemn us. Our sin condemned us.

But now, through Christ, we have been set free from the curse, and the condemnation of the law, as we recognize that striving to uphold the law will not save us. Come to know that. And that's what Paul has been hammering with the Galatians. You can't work your way to heaven. You are not good enough. No one can uphold the law, it's impossible.

Paul is telling the Galatians here...You know this to be true. You know that you cannot uphold the law and be saved. Not only did I teach this to you when I was with you in Galatia, but I just spent four chapters telling you the same thing again. You can't work your way into heaven, it's impossible. And he says, you know this truth, and you need to keep standing firm in this truth.

Notice what he says at the end of verse 1, *"and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery"*. That is, don't go with the Judaizers and try to live under the law again. Why would you do that? Don't go with them, it's a false system. Why would you want to go with them, and put yourself back into slavery? You shouldn't do that. If you do that, you won't be free anymore. You'll be back in bondage. You'll be condemned again as you try to uphold the law, and you will continue to fail and fail and fail and fail. Because that's all the law tells us that we can do. Or that we are, right? Just a bunch of failures...that's the purpose of the law...to say that you can't do it -- and to drive us to Christ.

And so Paul says, don't go back. Don't go back there. On the top of your worksheet is the illustration of a mule going back to the yolk. That bar that would bind the mules together to pull the plow. And if a mule was released and then decided to go back to that yoke to tell its owner "I want to be locked up again under this yoke, under this bar," you would think that there was something wrong with that mule, right? What's wrong with you mule? You've just been set free. Why do you want to go back?

And Paul is saying here, if you go back under the law and think that you can be saved by going back under the law, that is foolish. It's foolish. There's something wrong with you. That's what Paul is saying here.

And what will happen if you do that? Look at verse 2. He says,

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

What's the result of that? Christ will be of no benefit to you if you go back under that system. If you deny that salvation is by faith alone in Christ alone, and you go back to a system of works and try and think that you can earn your way to heaven, he is saying, then Christ has become of no benefit to you. You have lost all of the benefits that you had in Christ.

You might name the name of Jesus and think that you're a Christian, but Paul says that if you think in any way that you can earn your salvation, then the atonement of Christ is not applied to you. You cannot be saved because Christ is of no benefit to you. And if you turn to circumcision, that's what he's talking about here, believing that circumcision adds to your salvation in any way, then you lose Christ, and you lose all of His benefits. You've walked away.

And if you go back to circumcision, Paul then goes on in verse 3, then you are "*under obligation to keep the whole law.*" (Gal 5:3) Which is impossible to do. None of us can do it right? We can't keep the whole law, which is also why believing that you can be saved by upholding the law is foolishness, because you can't do it. It's impossible to do.

Which is what we would say to Roman Catholics, and to Jews, and to anyone else who would think that doing good works can save them. You have put yourself under the law and now are obligated to keep the entire law. That's what these false systems are doing. They're putting themselves under the whole entire law, but you can't do that. You can't keep the whole law and therefore you are not saved. That's what Paul is telling the Galatians here.

And this is a common occurrence that happens when we're witnessing to people, right? You will ask them the question, "Why will you get into heaven?" and what's the common answer? "Because I'm a good person." Right? That's their answer, because I'm good. I'm not like the murderer who's locked up. Or the rapist who's locked? No, I'm not like them. I'm a good person. You know what that person has just done? They've just put themselves under the law. That's why we take the law to them to say, "Well...let's see how good you actually are...You think you're so good? Well, let's test it out here."

They put themselves under the whole law, to keep the whole law, and it's impossible they can't do it. But Paul makes it clear what has happened to those who go back under the law. Look what he says in verse 4, "*you have been severed from Christ.*" (Gal 5:4) You who are seeking to be justified by law. You have fallen from grace. You have severed yourself from Christ.

Not that they were saved in the first place, it just goes to show that they were never truly saved. They never had true genuine saving faith. That person who has been severed from Christ. They have fallen from grace. Grace is receiving something that you don't deserve. And in this case, it's receiving salvation that we don't deserve. It's the Galatians receiving salvation that they don't deserve. But those who try to earn their salvation have been separated from Christ and from His saving grace. They've been severed from Christ.

But we know that salvation is by faith alone. Which is what Paul says in verse 5. He says that there in verse 5, and because of that faith we have hope, and *"the hope of righteousness,"* (Gal 5:5) The hope of righteousness, not a righteousness of our own, but the righteousness that is from Christ. And this is only credited to our account through *faith*, imputed righteousness. We've talked about that on Sunday mornings in equipping hour. The righteousness of Christ imputed to us through faith. It's all through faith and therefore we have the hope of righteousness.

Not through circumcision or upholding any other law to try and save ourselves. But it's through faith alone. And the Galatians are taught this truth. And we have been taught this truth. And what is Paul's message for us? His practical advice? Stand firm in this truth don't waver in this. This is key doctrine right here. This is heaven and hell doctrine, right here. Do not waver on this, but stand firm in this truth. Salvation is by faith alone.

Let's look at our second point, 2nd.

Secondly, he tells us to

2. Run in Obedience

Run in obedience. Look at verse 7,

"You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth? This persuasion did not come from Him who calls you. 9 A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough." (Gal 5:7-9)

Paul went on from standing now to the illustration of running. And he was so proud of them and how well they were running. They were running so well when he was with them...They understood this doctrine of salvation by faith alone in Christ alone. And he says, "you guys were doing a good job. You were running the race of the Christian life so well." But it's as if someone has come into their lane, on that track that they're running in, and has cut them off. That's what the Greek word *hinder* means. That Greek word *hinder* means to cut off. Paul here is actually using a play on words.

With circumcision and living the Christian life. Who has cut you off? Who has caused you to swerve off of the track? Notice Paul asked this question, *"who hindered you from obeying the truth?"* Now we would expect that Paul would ask the question this way, who has hindered you from believing this truth, right? That's what we would expect from him. Somebody has taught you something else and you're now believing them?

But notice Paul doesn't say that...he doesn't say *believing* there. He doesn't say who has hindered you from *believing* the truth, but he says who hindered you from *obeying* the truth. Why? Because, as we said earlier, what you believe will determine how you behave. You see that? That's what Paul is after. If you are not obeying the truth, it shows that you don't believe it. That's what Paul is saying here.

Those that are there in Galatia are being tempted to follow after the Judaizers. But if all those in Galatia truly believed that salvation is by faith alone, then they wouldn't be tempted to be sidetracked by the Judaizers.

Paul says in verse 7 that this persuasion is not from God, which implies what? That the Judaizers are not from who? God. The Judaizers are not of God. Paul lays down a verdict here on the Judaizers, and he says, "Those guys are false teachers. Those guys that teach faith and works... they are not of God." And whatever they are teaching is very dangerous. It's a dangerous doctrine.

How do we know that? Because he says, he gives an illustration here of the leaven. "*Because a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough*" (Gal 5:9).

And that's why it's so important to know the truth and be discerning. For all of us we have to know God's Word, study God's Word, be in God's Word to know it...so that we can be discerning. Because Satan wants to feed us lies and he wants to feed us lies that sound Christian. That's how he gets in here. That's how he gets into the church...is to feed lies that sound Christian.

But we have to be discerning people... to say no! Stop! Wait! Does that line up with God's Word? If it does, receive it. If it doesn't, reject it, get it out. Because Paul says a little leaven, just a little bit, leavens the whole lump of dough. If we allow any kind of deviant teaching into the church, the whole church will be infected. Do you realize that? The whole church will be infected with it. We need to be discerning here at Faith Bible Church and guard and protect the truth, and guard and protect the church. Because we love one another because we care for one another guard and protect the truth. We must stand up for it. And guard it. And not allow any lies to come in to infect the whole church.

In fact that's even the job of the elders here. Our job as elders is to guard and protect you. To guard and protect you from the lies of the enemy. Because he wants you, you realize that? The enemy wants you. And he wants to get you to believe the lies. But our job is to protect you and that's why we're here. Because we love you. We care for you. We want you to know the truth of God's Word.

Paul then offers encouragement to those who are true believers in the church, in verse 10. Look at what he says there,

"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." (Gal 5:10)

Paul knows that God will guard and protect His own. God will not allow His children to be deceived by heresy that draws the false converts away. Those that are truly His, God will guard and protect. But God is going to judge those who are drawing or trying to draw true believers away. God will judge them. And their judgment will be severe. Eternal punishment by God Himself. That's what they're headed for... destruction.

Now according to verse 11, it is believed that the Judaizers are telling the Galatians that Paul taught that one must be circumcised in order to be saved. Look at what he says there, in verse 11,

"But I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? Then the stumbling block of the cross has been abolished. 12 I wish that those who are troubling you would even mutilate themselves." (Gal 5:11-12)

Paul says, "I do not believe that and I do not teach that. I am not teaching circumcision as a way to be saved. I am not teaching that you must uphold the law in order to be saved. I would never teach that." Maybe in his early days he taught that, as a Pharisee. But as a believer, as a true apostle, He's saying "no way, that has never been my gospel that I've come to preach to you." In fact, those those guys who are telling you these lies... that are saying that I'm saying this stuff... I wish that they would go all the way and just castrate themselves. Wow, Paul. Tell us what you really think...

Now, why castration? Castration was a practice of the cults. It was a Pagan practice. And Paul says here are those Judaizers who are telling you that I am teaching faith and works, faith and circumcision since they believe that circumcision will somehow please God? Why don't they just go all the way and really, please God? By just going the ways of the pagans and mutilating themselves. Because really, anyone who thinks that they can earn salvation is no better than the pagans.

Do you see that? Anyone who believes that they can earn their way to heaven is no better than the pagans who are practicing self-mutilation. They're no better than them. They act just like them. Thinking that somehow they can save themselves.

Verse 13, he says,

"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. 14 For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the *statement*, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." 15 But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another. (Gal 5:13-15)

Now in verse 13, Paul says that we as believers are called to what? To freedom. We are called to freedom, but that doesn't mean that we are free to act however we want. Then that's something that's common amongst so-called Christians today. They think that they can go out and just do whatever they want..."because I've got freedom in Christ and you can't tell me what to do." We can hold you to the Biblical standards, which is what all of us are called to do. To hold each other to the Word of God, we can't just go out and act and do whatever we want to do.

We are free in Christ, meaning that we are free from sin and the condemnation of sin. But remember this, we are also slaves of Christ, right? We're slaves of Christ. Which means that we must do what? Obey Him. We must do what He tells us to do. As we run the race of the Christian life, our allegiance is not to our flesh, or to our nation, or to anything else other than Christ alone. He is the one that we stand before. He is our master and we are slaves of Him.

So how do we act then, as those who are free in Christ? What does he say? Love one another and do what? Serve one another. We're called to love one another and serve one another. In fact, that's exactly how Jesus said the world would know that we are His disciples. Listen to what He says in John 13:35 "*by this all men will know that you are my disciples. If you have love for one another.*" That's how we show the world that we are disciples of Christ. By the way that we love one another. We love each other. We care for each other.

In fact, if you want to sum up the whole law and fulfill the whole law, Paul gives us one statement here. Here it is. It's pretty simple. Love your neighbor as yourself. There you go. There's the whole law, summed up into one statement. Love your neighbor as yourself.

Now, does Paul mean that fulfilling this will then earn them salvation if they're loving their neighbor? Of course not. It's not what he's saying here. Fulfilling the law here is *a response to* the salvation that we have been given. It's a consequence of those who have received salvation, of those who have been justified. We respond with love for one another. When we're saved, we desire to love one another because of the Spirit's work in us.

Paul goes on to say that those who do not love and serve one another like this are like savage wolves who bite and devour one another. You ever been to a church like that? They just bite and devour one another, and he says that shouldn't be happening in the church. We as brothers and sisters in Christ are called to love one another to care for each other, to serve one another. Don't bite and devour one another.

You need to run the Christian life in full obedience to Christ. And love each other and care for each other as Christ calls us to love one another. Not to earn our salvation, but in response to the salvation that we have been given. What does that look like?

Paul helps us with that in verses 16 through 26 which leads to our third and final point. We are to

3. Walk by the Spirit.

We're to walk by the Spirit, look what he says in verse 16.

"But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh." (Gal 5:16)

Now we know that the Christian life is a constant battle, right? Can I get an Amen? Yes, it is a constant battle between the flesh and the Spirit. And we know that unbelievers will never act in accordance with the Spirit because they don't have the Holy Spirit living within them. And so they will never, ever be able to conquer sin in their life. It's impossible for them 'cause they don't have the Holy Spirit living in them.

But we do. We have the Holy Spirit in us, and therefore we have the ability to conquer sin in our lives. And what is the flesh here that Paul is talking about? It's simply the mind, the will, and the emotions of the person. It's what makes us us. It's what makes you you.

And even as believers, we still have a bent towards sinful tendencies of the flesh. But unlike the unbelievers, we have the ability to overcome these sins in our life. We have the ability to conquer these sinful behaviors in our lives. How? Through the Spirit. As we walk according to the Spirit. We yield our lives to the Holy Spirit as we are guided by Him.

Have you ever had a battle with a certain sin in your life? And then you wake up one day and you're going, wow. I didn't sin like I did before. How did that happen? It wasn't because you mustered up enough faith, or enough strength in yourself, to overcome that. No, it's because the Holy Spirit is working in you. It's because you yielded yourself over to the power of the Spirit in your life. And therefore you were able to overcome that sin. The way that you were able to overcome is because you chose to walk in the Spirit. To walk in the Spirit, and therefore you didn't fulfill the desires of the flesh.

Because this... Paul says the Spirit and the flesh are opposed to one another. They're opposed. They are mutually exclusive. You either live by the Spirit and live a life that results in righteous behavior, or you will live under the law which only produces unrighteousness and deeds of the flesh.

Which Paul lists out for us in verses 19-21. I won't go through all of those here tonight. We don't have enough time. But notice the list there. The deeds that people act out upon. These actions are the result of an unredeemed heart. And notice what he says at the end of verse 21.

"Those who practice such things." (Gal 5:21)

And that's the keyword there... practice. Practice means a continual habitual action. Somebody who continually habitually practices these things. That is, someone who is under the law, who is a slave to the law. They live according to their flesh and will practice these sins. Now they may not practice every single one of them that's listed there, that Paul lists out. They might not do every single one of these, or do them habitually, but they will practice them. They will be enslaved to those, and it will be something that they practice in their life.

What are the results of those who practiced these deeds? What does he say? They won't inherit the Kingdom of God. They won't inherit the Kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit found in verses 22-23 are those which come from those who are born again and walked by the Spirit.

And notice these here are not actions, but they're what? Attitudes. Notice that. Those are not actions there, they are attitudes. They have to do with character. And when the believer has these attitudes, he will then produce actions that will follow.

Notice what Paul says about the fruit. *"Against such things there is no law" (Gal 5:23)* that means there is no external law that is causing us to produce this in our lives. We produce it because of the Spirit who lives within us. And this is therefore what pleases God. Because it's done not by our own works, but by faith alone, in Christ alone, who gives us His Spirit, so that we can then produce this fruit in our lives.

Now just a quick note about the fruit. I hear people say often that they struggle with the fruits of the Spirit. In the Greek that word *fruit* there is singular, singular. It means it's not just one thing within this list that will be seen in the believer's life, but all of them will be working at the same time. They're all being worked out in our lives.

They might show themselves in differing degrees, but the Spirit works all of these out in the believers' lives. It's not as if a believer will produce love and never have patience. Right? "Well, I you know. Been struggling with that fruit, but I put that fruit over there...patience? I don't have it." No, that patience needs to be working in our lives alongside of the love. We might have greater love than patience, but as we submit ourselves to the Spirit and walk in the Spirit, then that patience will grow. It'll grow in our lives, and God desires that we continue to grow and produce greater fruit in our lives. That's what we're called to do.

I also want you to notice the difference between the deeds of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit. Notice what Paul says there. He uses these words specifically. *Deeds of the flesh* and *fruit of the Spirit*. Why does he call them deeds of the flesh? Because these are the things that *man* produces, deeds, works. That's what we do. That's what man produces. This has to do with laboring and toiling for something. Those are the deeds of the flesh.

But fruit grows from life. Notice that. Fruit grows from life. We don't work for patience. It's something that is produced by the life that is in us and what is that life that is in us? It's the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit. We have to remember that we have crucified our flesh when we believed in Christ. We crucified

our flesh when we believed in Christ. Our flesh was crucified. That's why Paul says back in chapter 2, verse 20, *"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me"* (Gal 2:20). And it's His Spirit that is doing the work in my life as I yield and submit to the Spirit. We've said yes to Christ, and no to the flesh, when we believed in Christ. When we were born again, we said yes to Christ, and no to the flesh. We have to put that flesh to death. We must put it to death so that we might live for Christ by faith in Him alone.

Paul says in verse 25, *"If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit."* (Gal 5:25) Now in this verse, he's getting the Galatians to ask themselves this very question here. Do you live by the Spirit? That's what he's getting at. He wants to ask them this. Do you live by the Spirit?

And their implied response would be *"Well yes, of course Paul, we live by the Spirit."* To which he would then respond, then walk by the Spirit. If you claim to live by the Spirit, which means you've been made alive by the Spirit. Then your life must reflect that as you walk it out. You've been made alive by the Spirit. Now live in accordance with this Spirit. That's what we're called to do.

You can't live by the Spirit and then think you're going to please God by walking according to the law. It's not going to happen. We don't please God by upholding the law, we please God by walking in the Spirit. And fulfilling the things of the Spirit in our life. A Christian life is a life completely devoted to the Spirit of God as we become more and more like Christ. We've been made alive by Him and now we walk according to His ways.

And then we end the chapter with verse 26. Notice what Paul says there. Paul gives us some practical advice. And this verse here connects verse 25 with chapter 6, verse 1. There's a link that's going on here in this verse. It's a link between walking in the Spirit and living together as fellow believers in Christ. And what is the command there in verse 26?

He says, *"Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another."* (Gal 5:26)

Simply put, he says, don't be prideful. Don't be prideful. Which can happen to those who are growing in their spiritual walk, right? We can become puffed up. *"Yeah, I'm not fulfilling the desires of the flesh like I used to. I'm growing so much in my knowledge of God's Word. Look how great I am."* And become prideful in it. Paul says you can't. Don't become boastful. What does that do? It causes strife within the body. Challenging one another, envying one another.

Some people think they're more spiritual than others, and they begin to boast and become prideful. And that causes fighting within the church. And Paul says, don't do that. You are walking by the Spirit. You must walk humbly. By the Spirit.

Humble yourself before God and realize and recognize it's nothing that you are doing in and of yourself. It's the Spirit of God that is working in you that is accomplishing His work in your life, as you live that out as you walk by the Spirit and not fulfill the desires of the flesh. And so therefore, if we realize and recognize that, who are we to boast? Can I boast? I can't...I can't boast of myself. Because it's the Spirit of God who's doing all of the work in me and therefore who do I boast in? In Him, in Christ. We boast in Him. One who walks in the Spirit must be humble, and must serve others, and love them and care for them, which Paul will go into in more details as we pick up next week in chapter 6.

Let's pray. Father, thank You for our time here in Galatians chapter 5 tonight. Father, we thank You for the Spirit that You have given to us to help us to live this Christian life. It is Your Spirit that has redeemed us. It is Your Spirit that has caused us to be born again, and it is Your Spirit who lives in us and has sealed us for the day of redemption. Father, help us not to fulfill the desires of the flesh and the deeds of the flesh, but walk according to the Spirit, to love each other to care for one another. To be devoted to one another, as You have called us to do, as we walk in the Spirit, God help us to yield our lives fully and completely over to the Holy Spirit, to be pleasing and honoring in Your sight, we pray all of this in the name of Christ, Amen.