

Galatians 5

The only way we can ever overcome the flesh is by yielding to the Holy Spirit's influence.

Key Verse: Galatians 5:16 (ESV) ... **walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.**

- I. Stand firm in the freedom that Christ has given us. 5:1-15
- II. Learn to walk by the Spirit; the flesh doesn't have to control us. 5:16-26

- I. Stand firm in the freedom that Christ has given us. 5:1-15

5:1-4 When people turn to the law for salvation or spiritual growth, they actually distance themselves from God, who is the very source of salvation and spiritual growth.

5:5-6 Paul's opponents were trying to become righteous or manufacture righteousness by their own efforts. It is really God who makes us righteous. We eagerly wait for His righteousness. We can expect more and more growth in this life, but God will complete our transformation, either on the day we go to be with Jesus or on the day that He returns.

Circumcision in itself is not wrong, but neither can it make us righteous. True faith, however, expresses itself through love, which reveals that God is working within our hearts.

5:8 ***Just read the Bible.*** *This is a very important Scripture! There are a lot of people who have a lot of weird interpretations of the Scripture. When I talk to those caught up in various cults and false religions, I often ask them, "Where did you get this idea? Where did you get this concept? I can guarantee you did not get it just by reading the Scriptures because you could read the Scriptures forever and never come up with that crazy interpretation. It isn't scriptural. Unless you had been taught it, you would never have come to it." The positions they hold are ones taught to them. They are not positions they have come to by reading the Scriptures. That is why cults are always promoting their own books because they know that if you would just read the Bible, you would not come to their persuasion. Paul said, "This persuasion did not come to you from the Lord." I encourage you to read the Bible. I'm not afraid of what you will come to believe by just reading the Bible. (Chuck Smith, Word for Today Bible)*

5:13-15 The law of love. When we serve one another in love, we fulfill the law.

The Christian life is not enslaving; far from it. But neither is it a life without moral standards. The Spirit-controlled life is really the only way to resist the various forms of bondage that the world offers. Christians really don't just do whatever they feel like doing (which may be the worst bondage available anywhere). Rather, by serving and loving others we escape from the bondage of our flesh, at the same time fulfilling the essential content of the law.

II. Learn to walk by the Spirit; the flesh doesn't have to control us. 5:16-26

Key Verse: Galatians 5:16 (ESV) ... **walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.**

The only way we can ever overcome the flesh is by yielding to the Holy Spirit within us.

5:16 *The only way to conquer the flesh is to yield to the Spirit. **Walk by the Spirit** implies both direction and empowerment; that is, making decisions and choices according to the Holy Spirit's guidance, and acting with the spiritual power that the Spirit supplies. To "walk" in Scripture regularly represents the pattern of conduct of all of one's life. **The desires of the flesh** would mean not just bodily cravings but all of the ordinary desires of fallen human nature (see examples in vv. 19–21). (ESV Study Bible)*

5:19-21 The Works of the Flesh: The flesh makes us do these things. These are our natural inclinations – the things that are in our DNA. We are not saying that each of us is equally prone to doing all of these things all of the time. Rather, these are the kind of things that, when they appear in our lives, we know that their source is in the flesh, that is, our old carnal, sinful selves – the person that we were before we were born again.

Many people persist in practicing such things. In other words, their lives are lived according to these patterns. They will not inherit the kingdom of God. Their consistent outward behavior reveals their inward spiritual state.

5:20 **sorcery** (*pharmakeia*) means the occult, sorcery, witchcraft, illicit pharmaceuticals, trance, magical incantation with drugs (*Complete Word Study Dictionary*)

Idolatry and **sorcery** show up on this list because they indicate a desire to have spiritual experiences or be in touch with the spiritual realm through humanly devised means.

5:20-21 **Hatred, etc., sins against other people** When people reject God's desires, they soon begin to turn on one another. Adam and Eve at first merely disobeyed God. In the very next generation, Cain hated Abel and killed him.

The Flesh Genetic components have been indicated in all of the following. Links go to recent articles:

- [Alcoholism](#)
- [Narcissism](#)
- [Kleptomania](#)
- [Violence and Delinquency](#)
- [Aggressive Behavior](#)
- [Unfaithfulness in men](#)
- [More on unfaithfulness in men](#), from a book largely about persistent unfaithfulness in the whole human race. The insight here being that faithful monogamy does not come naturally to people.

Since there are at least some biological factors that play into all of these, we can agree with Galatians 5 that they are, in other words, “works of the flesh”. From *ESV Study Bible*:

Works of the flesh means actions flowing out of fallen human nature and its desires. Apart from the transforming work of the Holy Spirit, these are the actions toward which sinful humans instinctively gravitate.

The good news is that Christ has freed us from this bondage. Our actions are not determined by genetic or biological factors alone. We may be prone to certain sins, and we are wise to not deny this, but these natural tendencies need not determine our destiny.

5:22-23 The fruit of the Spirit has its source in God the Holy Spirit. Like most fruit, however, it’s best when it’s carefully cultivated. This is where many people fail in the Christian life. They know that the Spirit produces the fruit, but they do not cultivate or nurture a Spirit-filled life. All of us struggle with this in one way or another. The result: the Holy Spirit’s abilities within us can be stifled or held back. Our lives appear fruitless, but only because we are not voluntarily cooperating with the Lord who works within us.

Longsuffering (*makrothumía*) Forbearance, long-suffering, self-restraint before proceeding to action. The quality of a person who is able to avenge himself yet refrains from doing so. Patience with respect to persons more than toward circumstances.

Kindness (*chrēstótēs*) is the grace which pervades the whole nature, mellowing all which would be been harsh and austere. The word is descriptive of one’s disposition, and not specific acts. Good actions would more be included in the next word **goodness**.

5:24-26 When we think of our flesh as crucified it is easier to deny it. It’s easier to embrace eternal life right now when we consider our old selves dead. Since these sins of our old nature will not be part of our eternity, we should reject them now, in order to become more of what God is ultimately making us.

Rom 6:11 *ESV* So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

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Conclusions:

How do we cooperate with the indwelling Holy Spirit? In a passage on spiritual warfare, Paul talks about “bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor 10:5)

When we find our minds absorbed in the things of the flesh, it's important to take control and say, "I don't want to think on those things." Start to sing a worship chorus or just turn your mind toward the Lord. Get into the Scriptures. We want to live in the Spirit. We want to walk in the Spirit. If we do, we will not fulfill the lusts of our flesh. (Chuck Smith, Word for Today Bible)

Php 4:4-9 ESV ⁴Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. ⁹What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

In order to really benefit from Paul's teaching in this passage, we need to truly buy into a few important ideas:

1. The joys and blessings of cooperating with the Holy Spirit, allowing Him to produce His fruit in our lives is really far better than not cooperating with Him and remaining under the influence of the flesh. I think sometimes we don't really believe this.
2. The devil is real and he is the enemy of our souls. He is engaged in a non-stop effort to neutralize believers in Jesus Christ. If he can make them unfruitful, they will also be ineffective and uninfluential in their witness for Jesus.
3. It is then a matter of cultivating the fruit of the Spirit through daily individual decisions in which we reject the flesh and yield to the Spirit. These decisions add up over time and put us on a trajectory to more productive Christian living. We are beginning to “walk by the Spirit”. (Remember: A “walk” implies both direction and empowerment.)

2 Peter 1:5-9 NKJV ⁵But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, ⁶to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, ⁷to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. ⁸For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.

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Final Passage: Galatians 5:22-26 NKJV