

Galatians—Grace Above the Law
Our Freedom in Christ

Lesson 9—Galatians 5.16-26

Continuing from our last study...

Prayer

Start by praying over the passage and asking the Holy Spirit to give you fresh insights and wisdom in understanding it. Then read through the entire passage two or three times.

Scripture Meditation/Memorization

One of the most fundamental and rewarding Christian disciplines that pays back in full spiritual dividends is Bible meditation/memorization. It is an absolutely fundamental in the formation of your spiritual development, spiritual walk and faith growth. In Psalm 1:1-2 (NLT), the Psalmist warrior, King David said,

*“Oh, the joys of those who do not follow the advice of the wicked,
or stand around with sinners, or join in with mockers.
But they delight in the law of the Lord,
meditating on it day and night.”*

Use the suggested verse(s) to meditate on during the course of this week's study.

Memory Verse

*“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.”—
Galatians 4:16*

Galatians 5:16-21—Walking in the Spirit

When we accept Christ we are not suddenly free to sin. We've always had the freedom to sin because of our free will. It is only after our spiritual rebirth that through the power and indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we are free not to sin—no longer obligated to the bondage of sin in our lives (2 Peter 2:18–21). I recently had two young men from Teen Challenge visit my house and share their testimonies with me. They said that prior to accepting Christ no treatment program could free them from the bondage of drug addiction but when Christ became Lord of their life, in their new nature they no longer had the desire to sin. That is the freedom Paul speaks of in this passage.

1. Verse 16 is the key to a victorious Christian life. What does it mean to walk in the Spirit (NKJV) or live in the Spirit (NIV)? Note: walk (*peripateo*) is a command (imperative) in the present tense—meaning it is to be continuous, ongoing, and habitual.

2. How does Paul describe the spiritual conflict that goes on in the life of believers? (See verse 17 or, for a longer and more personal view of Paul's own struggle, read Romans 7.)

3. What is the key to determining the winner in the battle for our behavior (flesh or Spirit)?
 - a. According to Galatians 5:18

b. According to Romans 8:1–4

4. The deeds, acts, or works (depending on your translation) of the flesh are listed for us in verses 19–21, and read like the ills of our society. This shouldn't surprise us as John MacArthur says this list reflects the sinful desires of unredeemed (unsaved) humanness. While the Bible teaches that the natural or carnal man is basically sinful, humanists teach that man is basically good and only external factors lead them to commit sinful acts. Of note, witchcraft (included in the list) is from the Greek word *pharmakeia* implying drug usage.

a. Why do you think Paul included this list in his letter to Galatians? (Deuteronomy 30:19–20 might help.)

b. Sin ultimately is against God and while we may make a hierarchy of sin, viewing some sins as more heinous than others, anything short of God's perfection is sin. MacArthur believes the sins in this list fall into three general categories of sex, religion, and relationships. List the sins in each of these three categories.

c. Do you have any additional insights as you read over this laundry list of sins?

Galatians 5:22-26—*Fruit of the Spirit*

Have you ever met someone that you immediately knew was a Christian because of the evidence of the fruit listed in this passage in their life? These characteristics of a Spirit-filled life are not reserved for pastors or some group of super saints. These are intended for all believers who live a Spirit-controlled life. These traits are the evidence of an intimate relationship with Jesus and allowing the Holy Spirit to control our life. The world is watching and our lives are the only gospel that many nonbelievers will ever read.

1. Why does our walk matter?

a. Matthew 7:16–18

b. 1 Peter 2:12

2. How is our walk a reflection of our relationship? See John 15:4, 7–8.

3. Below are listed the nine fruit of the Spirit. In your own words, describe what they mean to you.

a. Love

b. Joy

c. Peace

d. Longsuffering

e. Kindness

f. Goodness

g. Faithfulness

h. Gentleness

i. Self-control

4. What do you feel is the key to bearing this fruit in your life (see verses 24–25)?

5. Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, addressed the spiritual struggle between flesh and Spirit and gave a simple battle plan for victory through a strategy he called Spiritual Breathing.

a. Exhale: when we become convicted of sin in our life because we have allowed the flesh to control us we need to exhale (confess our sins). What does 1 John 1:9 say about this?

b. Inhale: when we accept Christ the Holy Spirit indwells us; however, as J. Vernon McGee once said we are leaky vessels and need to be refilled. This involves asking in prayer for a fresh refilling of the Holy Spirit. What does Ephesians 5:18 teach about this (best in the Amplified Version)?

6. *Given *your* personality, which godly character traits are most challenging for you? Which are easier?¹

7. *How can you take responsibility for developing godly character this week? What do you need to do?²

Lesson 9 Summary/ Take Away

If one of your friends at work or a neighbor were to ask you what you did on Tuesday, you would tell them you went to a Bible study. The next question would likely be, “What did you learn?” We often summarize an entire athletic contest or a movie in a few brief sentences and easily convey the essence of the event. Now apply these same skills to give a summary of the passage in a sentence or two. Then, in an additional sentence or two, describe what impact this passage will have on how you live.

Memory Verse

*“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.”—
Galatians 4:16*

¹ Jerry Bridges, *The Fruitful Life-The Overflow of God’s Love Through You*, NavPress, 2006

² Jerry Bridges, *The Fruitful Life-The Overflow of God’s Love Through You*, NavPress, 2006

Key Words/Phrases

Write out the definition of these key words. You can use a regular dictionary or go to one of the Greek sources listed in the Tool Box at the end of the study. You may also use a concordance to see where else and how the word is used in the Bible. *How would these phrases instruct or encourage us today?*

Walk in the Spirit (Galatians 5:16)

Lusts of the Flesh (Galatians 5:16)

Chart Comparing and Contrasting Works of the Flesh with Fruit of the Spirit

Work(s) of The Flesh	Definition	Fruit of Spirit	Definition Of Fruit	Seen In God	Seen In Believers
Adultery	Extramarital relations in heart/actions; includes pornography	<i>Love (agape)</i>	<i>Sacrificial unselfish expressions</i>	Romans 5:8	John 13:34
Fornication	Sexual relations before marriage.	<i>Joy</i>	<i>Inner happiness not dependent on circumstances</i>	Ps. 104:31	1 Peter 1:8
Unclean-ness	Physical and moral impurity	<i>Peace (eirene)</i>	<i>Harmony with all</i>	Heb. 13:20	Eph. 2:14
Lewdness	Wanton unrestrained lust	<i>Patience</i>	<i>Putting up with others</i>	1 Peter 3:20	Heb. 6:12
Idolatry	Anything a god besides God	<i>Kindness</i>	<i>Doing for others</i>	Eph. 2:7	Eph. 4:32
Witchcraft	Occult including drugs	<i>Goodness</i>	<i>Showing generosity to others</i>	Mk. 10:18	2 Th. 1:11
Hatred	Self-righteous anger	<i>Faithfulness</i>	<i>Trustworthy and reliable</i>	1 Jn. 1:9	Tit. 2:10
Variance	Contentious, divisive spirit	<i>Gentleness</i>	<i>Meekness and humility</i>	Mt. 11:29	Col. 3:12
Emulations	Jealousy, selfish ambition	<i>Self-control</i>	<i>Victory of sinful desires</i>		2 Peter 1:6
Wrath	Rage, violent anger				
Strife	selfish contention				
Seditions	Undermining authority				
Heresies	False doctrine				
Envy	Displeasure over success of others				
Murders	Killing with malice				
Drunkenness	Under influence				
Reveling	Boisterous indulgent partying				

