

Galatians – Part V – How Not to be a Galatian – Galatians 4-5

FBC Nacogdoches – Sunday, March 1, 2020 – A.M. Message

Description

— Paul repeatedly warns the Christians in Galatia about going backwards in their Christian life. He warns against the deadly danger of abandoning the gospel and reverting back ceremony, self-effort, and adherence to the law. This doesn't sound like something that affects our everyday lives, but it is. Much of the stress, condemnation, guilt, and pressure we feel is because we need to learn the same lessons the Galatians needed to learn. In this message, we will see how we can set-aside the stress of struggling to please God in our own strength and truly experience Christ formed in us.

Introduction

- **Galatians 5:1** | *For freedom, Christ set us free. Stand firm then and don't submit again to a yoke of slavery. (CSB)*
- Well, in **Galatians**, Paul is writing to people who have developed some significant problems in their Christian faith.
 - The Galatians had begun the Christian life by grace through faith, but they quickly **ran that tractor into a ditch** and began to try to merit their standing with God.
 - They began to think that a person's acceptance by God was dependent on how well they kept a list of rules instead of by the work of Christ on the cross.
 - So, Paul writes this letter to correct their theology and unburden their Christian lives.
 - And the book does the same for us today.
 - And that is important because we all have a little "*Galatians*" in us.
- **Remember the old Jeff Foxworthy, "You might be a redneck if..." jokes?**
 - **If you have a very special baseball cap just for formal occasions, you might be a redneck.**
 - **If you've ever made change in the offering plate, you might be a redneck.**
 - **If you think the stock market has a fence around it, you might be a redneck.**
 - **If you bought a VCR because wrestling comes on while you're at work, you might be a redneck.**
 - **If you think a turtleneck is key ingredient for soup, you might be a redneck.**
 - **You might be a redneck if ...the blue book value of your truck goes up and down depending on how much gas it has in it.**
- So, here is a "Galatians" test...
 - **You might be a Galatian if...**
 - **You feel like you need to wait a few more days before you pray and ask God for something because of some sin you recently committed.**
 - **You think some Christians have better access to the Lord than you do.**
 - **You think you have better access to the Lord than other Christians.**
 - **You look at people with piercings or tattoos and think you must be closer to God than they are.**
 - **You secretly feel superior in any way to your divorced friend.**
 - **You have ever said, "I know Jesus loves everyone, BUT..."**
 - **Your recent conduct, sacrifice, or service makes you feel like you are on pretty good terms with God right now.**
 - **Your recent conduct makes you feel that you are on the outs with God right now.**
 - **You are reluctant to come to church because of what happened in your life over the weekend.**
 - **You are surprised that someone else has come to church today given what you know about what they did last week.**
 - **You think some people are too far gone to be saved.**
 - **You think some people are pretty close to being a child of God because of how they live and follow the rules.**
 - **You assume people are a child of God by how they live and follow the rules.**
 - **You distance yourself from church, Christian friends, and God until you can make a change or fix a problem in your life.**

— **You don't feel you can share your faith because of something embarrassing in your past.**

— So, Paul writes to the Galatians that the way in which they began the Christian life (grace through faith) is the way they should live the Christian life.

— But one problem the Christians in Galatia had is that they kept reverting back to thinking they had to merit the favor of God.

— **Like a car that needs a front-end alignment...**

— **When you let go of the steering wheel, the car immediately begins to drift out of the lane.**

— We all struggle with this problem.

— So, Paul warns the Galatians (and us) repeatedly.

— **Galatians 3:3** | *Are you so foolish? After beginning by the Spirit, are you now finishing by the flesh?* (CSB)

— **Galatians 4:9** | *But now, since you know God, or rather have become known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elements? Do you want to be enslaved to them all over again?* (CSB)

— **Galatians 5:1** | *For freedom, Christ set us free. Stand firm then and don't submit again to a yoke of slavery.* (CSB)

— So, it is clear that our focus in living the Christian life is not on how much we can do to change ourselves and live up to some standard by our own strength.

— Yet, we do want to honor God with our lives, our conduct, our attitudes...

— And we are commanded to.

— In fact, Paul said that his goal for the Galatians was that Christ would be formed in them.

— **Galatians 4:19** | *My children, I am again suffering labor pains for you until Christ is formed in you.* (CSB)

— So, how is this possible?

— How do we live out the Christian life?

— How do we see the character of Christ formed in us without making this a self-help system?

— Let's look into **Galatians**.

— We are going to cover a lot of verses today.

— First, we will quickly see three unhelpful ways to honor God and see the character of Christ formed in us.

— Then we will come to some specific counsel and instruction for how to live out the Christian life.

— Wrong paths to godliness...

A. Religious ceremony

— Read **Galatians 4:8-11**.

— **Galatians 4:8-11** | *But in the past, since you didn't know God, you were enslaved to things that by nature are not gods. But now, since you know God, or rather have become known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elements? Do you want to be enslaved to them all over again? You are observing special days, months, seasons, and years. I am fearful for you, that perhaps my labor for you has been wasted.* (CSB)

— This referred specifically to the Jewish festivals of Yom Kippur, Passover, Tabernacles, and Rosh Hashanah, and the year of Jubilee.

— Nothing wrong with religious ceremonies as long as you see their purpose as an expression of worship or to better attune your heart to God.

— But they are counterproductive if you see them as...

— A way to be accepted by God.

— A way to earn **brownie points** with God.

— A way to feel superior to someone who doesn't practice that religious ceremony.

— What is Paul saying?

— Religious ceremonies don't make you accepted by God nor do they ultimately form the character of Christ in you.

— These false teachers were saying to the Galatian Christians that if they would just keep the Sabbath rules... If they would just do the Feast of the Tabernacles...

— Then God would be pleased with them.

— The same thing happens today.

— **People going to church on Easter Sunday even though they don't go other Sundays...**

— **Forty days of Lent leading up to Easter...**

— **Baptism as a form of penance...**

- Why can a religious ceremony not improve your standing before God?
- Because you cannot improve on grace!

B. Self-effort

- Read **Galatians 4:31**.
 - **Galatians 4:31** | *Therefore, brothers and sisters, we are not children of a slave but of the free woman. (CSB)*
 - Tell the story of Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, and Isaac...
 - Abraham and Hagar attempted to produce an heir through their own human ability, since Sarah couldn't have children. But Isaac was born supernaturally, in the sense that this was something that could only happen if God intervened with a miracle between a 100-year-old man and a 90-year-old woman.¹
- We are not made right with God by our human effort or human devices *at the beginning* of the Christian life nor *any day* of the Christian life.

C. False teachers

- **Galatians 5:7** | *You were running well. Who prevented you from being persuaded regarding the truth? (CSB)*
 - There were false teachers who were insisting that the Christian faith was about a list of rules and expectations.
- **Galatians 5:10-12** | *I myself am persuaded in the Lord you will not accept any other view. But whoever it is that is confusing you will pay the penalty. Now brothers and sisters, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished. I wish those who are disturbing you might also let themselves be mutilated! (CSB)*
 - Paul is pretty upset.
 - Paul says these false teachers will pay a penalty.
 - Paul says he wished these false teachers so bent on insisting that men be circumcised to be accepted by God would go circumcise themselves all the way.
 - Paul's logic...
 - If the false teachers were so concerned about zeal for the law, maybe they shouldn't stop at circumcision but go the whole way and castrate themselves. According to their own logic, wouldn't this make them even holier?²
 - JB Translation...
 - Tell those who are disturbing you I would like to see the knife slip.
- Why is Paul so angry and upset?
 - This perversion of the gospel, while it may seem in some ways to be minor, completely destroys the gospel and separates people from God.
- So, what does that mean for us?
 - Should we refuse to listen to people who preach hard against sin?
 - No!
 - **Hebrews 12:1** | *Therefore, since we also have such a large cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us lay aside every hindrance and the sin that so easily ensnares us. Let us run with endurance the race that lies before us, (CSB)*
 - The **New Testament** is filled with strong admonitions and warnings.
 - Should we be shy away from pastors who try to call us to greater commitments to the Lord?
 - No!
 - **Philippians 3:12** | *Not that I have already reached the goal or am already perfect, but I make every effort to take hold of it because I also have been taken hold of by Christ Jesus. (CSB)*
 - **Philippians 3:14** | *I pursue as my goal the prize promised by God's heavenly call in Christ Jesus. (CSB)*
 - **Philippians 3:15** | *Therefore, let all of us who are mature think this way. And if you think differently about anything, God will reveal this also to you. (CSB)*
 - **Philippians 3:16** | *In any case, we should live up to whatever truth we have attained. (CSB)*

— **Philippians 3:17** | *Join in imitating me, brothers and sisters, and pay careful attention to those who live according to the example you have in us.* (CSB)

— We should not allow people to raise any standard for someone to be accepted by God that is not simple grace through faith.

— And we should be very careful that we do not communicate any other standard.

— Intentionally or unintentionally

— Does that mean that people who live ungodly lifestyles can have a legitimate claim to be a child of God?

— No!

— And that is the point of the end of the chapter (verses **22-26**) which we will get to in a couple of weeks.

— So, back to our question...

— If our goal is to have Christ formed in us and the path to this end is not...

— Religious ceremony

— Self-improvement

— Or the false gospel of false teachers...

— Then how can Christ be formed in us?

— Read **Galatians 5:16-17**.

— **Galatians 5:16-17** | *I say then, walk by the Spirit and you will certainly not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is against the Spirit, and the Spirit desires what is against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you don't do what you want.* (CSB)

— These are such important verses.

— I suggest everyone memorize **Galatians 5:16**. That exercise will pay real dividends in your Christian walk.

— Let's learn three things from these two verses about how Christ can be formed in us.

How can Christ Be Formed in You?

I. We must recognize the battle that rages in us.

— Don't be surprised at the battle that rages.

— Surprise about the battle is the beginning of why many Christians feel estranged from the Lord.

— Paul called himself the chief of sinners.

— **1 Timothy 1:15** | *This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"—and I am the worst of them.* (CSB)

— Listen to Paul's testimony of the battle that rages in him...

— **Romans 7:15-24** | *I don't really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do what I hate. But if I know that what I am doing is wrong, this shows that I agree that the law is good. So I am not the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it. And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can't. I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway. But if I do what I don't want to do, I am not really the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it. I have discovered this principle of life—that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. I love God's law with all my heart. But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death?* (NLT)

— **Romans 7:25a** | *Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord...* (NLT)

— Look more closely at **Galatians 5:17**...

— *The flesh desires what is against the Spirit...*

— *The Spirit desires what is against the flesh...*

— *You don't do what you want...*

— Just knowing and embracing this fact, allows us to come boldly before the throne as SONS.

II. We must recognize the victory that is available to us.

— Look closely at **Galatians 5:16**...

— *Walk by the Spirit and you WILL NOT carry out the desire of the flesh.*

— This truth is widely declared in Scripture...

— You have died to the authority of sin!

— **Romans 6:6-7** | *For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be rendered powerless so that we may no longer be enslaved to sin, since a person who has died is freed from sin.* (CSB)

— Greater is he who is in us than he who is in the world!

- **1 John 4:4** | *You are from God, little children, and you have conquered them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. (CSB)*
- He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion!
 - **Philippians 1:6** | *I am sure of this, that he who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. (CSB)*
- You can change! You can become more Christlike! You can be free from your most debilitating sin!
 - Sure, it is going to be a battle and it is going to be a lifelong process.
- Just knowing and embracing that promise of God changes our walk.

III. We must embrace the **Holy Spirit** who is **within** us.

- Look closely again at **Galatians 5:16**...
 - *WALK by the SPIRIT and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.*
- The key is walking by the Spirit.
- There are two parts to this...
 - The Spirit
 - The walking
- The Spirit...
 - The Holy Spirit...
 - Who does several things for/in us...
 - Guides
 - Convicts
 - Comforts
 - Empowers
 - The Spirit is the key to living this life.
- The walking...
 - What does it mean to *walk by the Spirit*?
 - There are actually four ways this is described at the end of **Galatians 5**.
 - Walk by the Spirit (**16**)
 - Led by the Spirit (**18**)
 - Live by the Spirit (**25a**)
 - Keep in step with the Spirit (**25b**)
 - I think there are three key steps in walking by the Spirit.
 - A. Exercise faith in the presence of the Holy Spirit.**
 - Be consciously aware of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit moment by moment.
 - B. Make decisions by the leading of the Holy Spirit.**
 - Ask (in prayer) throughout the day where is the Spirit leading.
 - Make this a practice and habit.
 - We constantly consult our conscience. Let's constantly consult the Spirit.
 - C. Submit to the Holy Spirit step by step.**
 - Don't overcomplicate walking by the Spirit.
 - Just trust and submit one step at a time.
 - Thoughts that war against this step by step obedience...
 - **“Well, I really failed in this area recently...”**
 - **“I'm worried about the eventual consequences or my long-term ability to do the right thing...”**
 - To *“keep in step with the Spirit”* (**25b**) is not about the past or the future.
 - It is about the now... The next step...

Conclusion

- Here is the call today from Scripture...
 - Uncomplicate your Christian life today.
 - It's not about ceremony, self-effort, and the instructions of false teachers...
 - It is...
 - **Galatians 5:16** | *I say then, walk by the Spirit and you will certainly not carry out the desire of the flesh. (CSB)*

Discussion Guide

Connect

- What are some ways that legalism creeps into our thinking?

Discover

- Which statement or experience stood out to you from the worship service?
- Read Galatians 4:8-11.
 - Why do you think the Galatians kept turning back again to the “weak and worthless” ways of living the Christian life?
 - How can observing special days, months, seasons, years, and other religious celebrations/traditions be a return to works-oriented or law-based acceptance by the Lord?
 - How can observing special days, months, seasons, years, and other religious celebrations/traditions be a blessing to a God-honoring life?
- Read Galatians 4:21-26.
 - How can you explain this story? What was Paul’s point?
 - What are some ways not already mentioned that people today attempt to take their standing with God into their own hands?
- Read Galatians 5:7-12.
 - What do you think was the motivation of these false teachers?
 - Why was Paul so serious about refuting and destroying the influence of these false teachers?
 - What did Paul mean in verse 12? Why was Paul so graphic?
- Read Galatians 5:16-18.
 - Who is the Christian’s partner in living out the Christian life?
 - What does this passage promise will happen if you walk by the Spirit?
 - Describe how you see and experience the battle between the flesh and the Spirit in your life?

Respond

- What religious practices in your Christian life lead you to a greater understanding of the gospel and what practices lead you, like the Galatians to move away from the gospel?
- What advice would you give a Christian who is struggling under the weight and pressure of living a godly Christian life? How would you use Galatians 5 to encourage that person?

Bonus for Thinkers

- Paul reacts so strongly against circumcision. Why did God command circumcision in the first place? What role did circumcision play? What is the role today?

Outline Ideas...

- **#1: Moving forward in the Christian life...** (Avoiding **3:3** and **5:1b**)
 - Don’t go backwards. Don’t regress.
 - Not by observing special seasons... (**4:10**)
 - Not by taking things into your own hands... (**4:21-31**)
 - Listening to those who would impose rules and standards... (**5:7-12**)
 - Don’t turn this on its head (**5:13**).
 - Walk by the Spirit... (**5:16-17**)
- **#2: How to Not Be a Galatian? // How can Christ Be Formed in You?** (**4:19**)
 - How to avoid **3:3, 4:9, 5:1b**...
 - Steps...
 - Don’t abandon grace through faith.
 - By observing special seasons... (**4:10**)

- By taking things into your own hands... (4:21-31)
- By listening to those who would impose rules and standards... (5:7-12)
- Walk by the Spirit (5:16-17).
 - There is a battle in each of us.
 - Flesh vs. Spirit
 - Seen in the times you do what you don't want to do.
 - How to walk in the Spirit?
 - It is a walk not a decision/pronouncement.
 - Requires time and association...
 - Four words...
 - Walk by (16)
 - Led by (18)
 - Live by (25a)
 - Keep in step with (25b)
- #3: How can Christ be Formed in You?
 - Walk with the Spirit (16)
 - Constant connection with...
 - Led by the Spirit (18)
 - Make decisions by consulting...
 - Live in step with the Spirit (25)
 - Submit a step at a time.
- #4: How can Christ be Formed in You? (5:16-17)
 - Recognize the battle.
 - We must not be complacent.
 - Recognize the victory.
 - Died with Christ... (Romans 6)
 - You can change, if...
 - Recognize the essential role of the Spirit.
 - Walk with, follow the lead, and keep in step with the Spirit.

Thoughts...

- Galatians 4:21-31
 - You cannot do the Christian life by your own effort.
 - There will always be a division between those living by faith and those by self-effort.
- Do you ever do what you don't want to do? (Galatians 5:17)
- How to be with the Spirit...
 - Walk by the Spirit (5:16)
 - περιπατέω^b; πορεύομαι^d: to live or behave in a customary manner, with possible focus upon continuity of action—'to live, to behave, to go about doing.'³
 - Led by the Spirit (5:18)
 - ἡγέομαι^b; προϊστάμαι^a; κατευθύνω; φέρω^d; ἄγω^d: to so influence others as to cause them to follow a recommended course of action—'to guide, to direct, to lead.'⁴
 - Live by the Spirit (5:25a)
 - ζάω^a; ζώη, ἦς *f*; ψυχὴ^b, ἦς *f*—'to be alive, to live, life.'⁵
 - Keep in step with the Spirit (5:25b)
 - στοιχέω: to live in conformity with some presumed standard or set of customs—'to live, to behave in accordance with.'⁶

General Notes

- Each time Paul writes of liberty he adds a warning that it can very easily be lost. Some relapse from liberty into bondage (5:1); others turn their liberty into licence (5:13).⁷
- But where does the believer acquire the resources for this kind of victorious Christian living? Modern religious pedagogy offers many answers: a winsome personality, one's innate abilities, advanced degrees in theological

education, special seminars on the higher Christian life, social activism, spiritual psychotherapy, and others. Paul's answer is the Holy Spirit. Only the Spirit of God who has made us free from sin and given us new life in regeneration can keep us truly free as we experience through walking in him the power of sanctification.⁸

- Here in Gal 5 Paul used four distinct verbs to designate the Spirit-controlled life of the believer, all of which are roughly equivalent in meaning: to walk in the Spirit (v. 16), to be led by the Spirit (v. 18), to live by the Spirit (v. 25a), and to keep in step with the Spirit (v. 25b). Each of these verbs suggests a relationship of dynamic interaction, direction, and purpose.⁹

Notes on Galatians 4:10

- “How is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles?” He mentioned that they had gone back to observing a special day (Sabbath), special months, seasons and years. This referred to the Jewish festivals of Yom Kippur, Passover, Tabernacles, and Rosh Hashanah, and the year of Jubilee. Those were all important to the Jews, but Paul called them “miserable principles” that enslave Christians. They're miserable principles because you'll be miserable trying to keep them all. Because when it comes down to it you can't perfectly obey all the rules and observe all the rituals.¹⁰
- What about “holidays?” I know I'm going to ruffle some feathers here. Why do you think it is that some people flock to church on Easter or Christmas Eve, but then they are pretty much AWOL the other 50 weeks of the year? I call them Chreasters—Christmas and Easter Christians. Maybe they consider themselves a Christian, but not a very good one; so to make up for it they'll make sure they show up for the special times. But frankly, we don't have any Sunday that's more special than another. We celebrate the resurrection every Lord's Day. They hope by showing up on a “Special Day” that they'll gain a little better standing with God. Besides it makes them feel better about themselves and makes their mother happy. Remember, legalism is the belief that you can improve your standing before God through religious performance.¹¹
- While I don't have any problem with special days like Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, or Good Friday, when you participate in those special holiday services, make sure you aren't doing it to make yourself feel better because of your piety.¹²
- Forty Days of Lent leading up to Easter can truly prepare your heart to celebrate the resurrection, but if you have a smidgen of legalism there, it can turn into a religious reason to lose weight, or a chance to let others know how spiritual you are by what you're giving up. Jesus said that when you fast, don't let anyone know you're fasting.¹³
- If you choose to participate in any of these “Christian holidays” make sure your motives are pure. Are you doing this to feel better about yourself, or to hoping to earn a few more brownie points with God? Or are you going into it with the pure motive of simply wanting to enter into a deeper intimacy with your Savior? Just remember that no religious observance, whether it's baptism, Communion, fasting, or Lent will improve your standing before God. Why? That's easy; you can't improve on grace. You are already a blood-bought child of God saved by grace and grace alone.¹⁴

Notes on Galatians 4:19

- The metaphor shifts again, with the implication that the Galatians are the ones in whom gestation is occurring ($\mu\omicron\rho\phi\acute{o}\omega$ is sometimes used to describe the formation of an embryo; cf. BDAG 659–60).¹⁵
- “Formed” [Gk. root *morphē*] was used in a medical sense for fetal development. *Morphē* could refer to the abiding character of something. This text refers to their maturity in Christ (cf. Eph. 4:13), or in other words, their Christlikeness (cf. Rom. 8:28–29; 2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 1:4; 1 Thess. 3:13; 4:3).¹⁶
- Paul's goals would always be the same—until Christ is formed in you. Paul wanted each of his children to reach spiritual maturity in the faith. They would do so by having the likeness of Christ portrayed in their lives.¹⁷
- The imagery of Christ being “formed” within the Galatians suggests that Paul will not be content until Christ so dominates their lives that there can be no possible change from a settled spiritual condition.¹⁸
- “Formed in you” refers to a mother carrying an embryo until it is developed enough to be born.¹⁹

Notes on Galatians 4:21-31

- This final section in 4:21-31 serves as a closing summation of chapters 3 and 4.²⁰
- Abraham and Hagar attempted to produce an heir through their own human ability, since Sarah couldn't have children. But Isaac was born supernaturally, in the sense that this was something that could only happen if God intervened with a miracle between a 100-year-old man and a 90-year-old woman.²¹

- Paul is telling us that our status as sons, as children of faith in God’s promise, comes about by the Spirit and not by natural human effort.²²

Notes on Galatians 5:4

- Paul is not discussing here the question of whether a genuine believer can lose his or her salvation. He is only saying that people who may once have made a profession of faith, if they now are truly seeking to be **justified by the law**, must not really have a relationship with Christ and have fallen away from the grace that was offered and available to them.²³
- **estranged from Christ ... fallen from grace.** The Gr. word for “estranged” means “to be separated,” or “to be severed.” The word for “fallen” means “to lose one’s grasp on something.” Paul’s clear meaning is that any attempt to be justified by the law is to reject salvation by grace alone through faith alone. Those once exposed to the gracious truth of the gospel, who then turn their backs on Christ (**Heb. 6:4–6**) and seek to be justified by the law are separated from Christ and lose all prospects of God’s gracious salvation. Their desertion of Christ and the gospel only proves that their faith was never genuine (cf. **Luke 8:13, 14; 1 John 2:19**).²⁴
- In Greek, the order of this verse places the effect at the beginning of the sentence, increasing the emphasis (thus it would read, “You have been alienated from Christ, you who are trying ...”).²⁵
- Those who try to be justified by the law are *alienated* (separated, estranged) from Christ. God allows no middle ground—it is Christ *or* law, not both. Anyone deciding to *be justified by law* moves outside of Christ’s sphere, severing any relationship with him. Christ cannot save those who persist in saving themselves.²⁶
- Contrary to the Arminian interpretation of this text, Paul did not here contemplate the forfeiture of salvation by a truly regenerated believer. He was writing to Christian churches that were founded on the doctrines of grace but that were in danger of forsaking that sound doctrinal bedrock for a theology that can only lead to ruin.²⁷

Notes on Galatians 5:12

- Paul said that **if the false teachers were so concerned about zeal for the law, maybe they shouldn’t stop at circumcision but go the whole way and castrate themselves** (see **Philippians 3:2**). According to their own logic, wouldn’t this make them even holier?²⁸
- The JB translates, **“Tell those who are disturbing you I would like to see the knife slip.”** M. R. Vincent also captures the sense of Paul’s startling statement in his paraphrastic translation of this verse: “These people are disturbing you by insisting on circumcision. I would that they would make thorough work of it in their own case, and instead of merely amputating the foreskin, would castrate themselves as heathen priests do. Perhaps this would be even more powerful help to salvation.”²⁹

Notes on Galatians 5:16

- **The phrase “and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh” is a promise.**³⁰
- **The way you deal with your sin is not simply by saying “no” to the flesh, but by also saying “yes” to the Spirit’s work.**³¹
- We must **daily yield to Him** so that we do not gratify the desires of the flesh.³²
- More simply, we may say that ‘the flesh’ stands for what we are by natural birth, ‘the Spirit’ what we become by new birth, the birth of the Spirit. And these two, the flesh and the Spirit, are in sharp opposition to each other.³³
- We do not deny that there is such a thing as moral conflict in non-Christian people, but we assert that it is fiercer in Christians because they possess two natures—flesh and Spirit—in irreconcilable antagonism.³⁴
- The phrase *live by the Spirit (pneumati peripateite)* conveys the meaning of the literal translation “by the Spirit keep on walking.” **Walking means “living” in this context, and it emphasizes the moment-by-moment contact with and guidance by the Holy Spirit for daily decisions and activities. Living “by the Spirit” should be a daily, continuous action by Christians. He is always present, but we must be in touch with him and stay open to his guidance and correction.**³⁵
- The use of the verb “walk” (περιπατέω, *peripateō*) to depict Christian conduct is common in the NT (thirty times in Paul), although this is its only occurrence in **Galatians**. The **NT usage reflects the common use of the Hebrew הָלַךְ (*hālak*, walk) in this way, depicting a way of life as a particular way or road to be followed.**³⁶
- The tense of the verb is present continuous action, so it conveys “keep on living” or “keep on walking” by the Spirit, portraying the Christian life as a process.³⁷
- **We do not obtain salvation by works; neither can we obtain sanctification (growing in the Christian life) by works.**³⁸
- **In Paul’s vocabulary, to walk in the Spirit or be led by the Spirit means to go where the Spirit is going, to listen to his voice, to discern his will, to follow his guidance.**³⁹

- The word *lusts* (epithumei kata) means *a yearning passion for*. Every person has experienced the flesh... yearning, pulling, desiring, wanting, craving, hungering, thirsting, longing, grasping, grabbing, taking. Every person knows what it is to have his flesh lusting after something, to have it yearning and yearning to lay hold of something. The flesh is very strong and difficult to control. This is the first reason why a believer's only hope to control the flesh is the Spirit of God.⁴⁰

Notes on Galatians 5:17

- **G. K. Chesterton once responded to a newspaper article that invited people to respond to the question, "What's wrong with the world?" His reply was simple: "I am" (Harvey, When Sinners Say I Do, 52).**⁴¹
- This verse is not a description of equal forces combatting each other, with the outcome indecisive. The flesh will continue always to assert its desires in opposition to the Spirit; nevertheless the Spirit who indwells every Christian asserts opposition to the flesh. Paul is certain who will emerge triumphant—and we can be certain if we *walk in the Spirit*.⁴²
- **In contrast with most recent commentators, but in keeping with more classical expositions (not only Luther and Calvin but also Lightfoot), it seems best to interpret the conflict between flesh and Spirit that Paul referred to here in terms of the similar tension he described in Rom 7:7–25.**⁴³
- So long as we remain in this present life, we never outgrow or transcend the spiritual conflict Paul was describing in this passage. **There is no spiritual technique or second blessing that can propel the believer onto a higher plane of Christian living where this battle must no longer be fought.**⁴⁴
- No Christians are so spiritually strong or mature that they need not heed his warning, but neither are any so weak or vacillating that they cannot be free from the tyranny of the flesh through the power of the Spirit.⁴⁵

Notes on Galatians 5:18

- It is probably best to translate "if" as "since" (Schreiner, *Galatians*, 345). Those who are "led" by the Spirit (cf. **Rom 8:14; Luke 4:1; Isa 63:11-15**) are not "under the law," meaning that they no longer belong to the old era of redemptive history (ibid.).⁴⁶

¹ David Platt, Tony Merida, and Daniel L. Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Galatians* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2014).

² Bruce B. Barton, *Galatians*, Life Application Bible Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1994), 171.

³ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 504.

⁴ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 464.

⁵ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 260.

⁶ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 504.

⁷ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Galatians: Only One Way*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England; Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 145.

⁸ Timothy George, *Galatians*, vol. 30, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 386.

⁹ Timothy George, *Galatians*, vol. 30, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 386.

¹⁰ David Dykes

¹¹ David Dykes

¹² David Dykes

¹³ David Dykes

¹⁴ David Dykes

¹⁵ Douglas J. Moo, *Galatians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 289.

¹⁶ Robert James Utley, *Paul's First Letters: Galatians and I & II Thessalonians*, vol. Volume 11, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, TX: Bible Lessons International, 1997), 49.

¹⁷ Bruce B. Barton, *Galatians*, Life Application Bible Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1994), 146.

¹⁸ Douglas J. Moo, *Galatians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 289.

¹⁹ Bruce B. Barton, *Galatians*, Life Application Bible Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1994), 146.

²⁰ David Platt, Tony Merida, and Daniel L. Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Galatians* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2014).

²¹ David Platt, Tony Merida, and Daniel L. Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Galatians* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2014).

²² David Platt, Tony Merida, and Daniel L. Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Galatians* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2014).

²³ Crossway Bibles, *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 2253.

²⁴ John MacArthur Jr., ed., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, electronic ed. (Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997), 1797.

²⁵ Bruce B. Barton, *Galatians*, Life Application Bible Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1994), 161–162.

²⁶ Bruce B. Barton, *Galatians*, Life Application Bible Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1994), 162.

²⁷ Timothy George, *Galatians*, vol. 30, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 360.

²⁸ Bruce B. Barton, *Galatians*, Life Application Bible Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1994), 171.

²⁹ Timothy George, *Galatians*, vol. 30, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 371.

³⁰ David Platt, Tony Merida, and Daniel L. Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Galatians* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2014).

³¹ David Platt, Tony Merida, and Daniel L. Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Galatians* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2014).

³² David Platt, Tony Merida, and Daniel L. Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Galatians* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2014).

³³ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Galatians: Only One Way*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England; Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 146.

³⁴ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Galatians: Only One Way*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England; Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986), 146.

³⁵ Bruce B. Barton, *Galatians*, Life Application Bible Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1994), 178.

³⁶ Douglas J. Moo, *Galatians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 352–353.

³⁷ Bruce B. Barton, *Galatians*, Life Application Bible Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1994), 178.

³⁸ Bruce B. Barton, *Galatians*, Life Application Bible Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1994), 178–179.

³⁹ Timothy George, *Galatians*, vol. 30, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 386.

⁴⁰ Leadership Ministries Worldwide, *Galatians–Colossians*, The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible (Chattanooga, TN: Leadership Ministries Worldwide, 1996), 80.

⁴¹ David Platt, Tony Merida, and Daniel L. Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Galatians* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2014).

⁴² Maxie D. Dunnam and Lloyd J. Ogilvie, *Galatians / Ephesians / Philippians / Colossians / Philemon*, vol. 31, The Preacher's Commentary Series (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Inc, 1982), 107.

⁴³ Timothy George, *Galatians*, vol. 30, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 387.

⁴⁴ Timothy George, *Galatians*, vol. 30, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 387–388.

⁴⁵ Timothy George, *Galatians*, vol. 30, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 388.

⁴⁶ David Platt, Tony Merida, and Daniel L. Akin, *Exalting Jesus in Galatians* (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2014).