

Love Letters

Lesson 4: Galatians 5

It was Paul's preaching the Lord had used to free the Galatian believers from slavery to the law; yet these same individuals were choosing to return to the unnecessary yoke of slavery. Here in chapter 5, Paul moves from the personal into the practical part of his letter. Up until now, he persisted in making the case that salvation is the free gift of God—we cannot earn it. Jesus purchased the believer's freedom on the cross, accomplishing for us what we cannot do for ourselves. Accepting God's gift of grace means trading our yoke of slavery for one of Christian liberty; but that does not mean we can go on sinning. The transforming work of salvation ushers in the sanctifying process of daily working out the crucified life.

Day One: Christ Has Set Us Free!

Read Galatians 5:1–26.

Everyone is a slave to something; whether it is something bad or good determines a person's choices as well as their direction in life.

1. Personal: From your initial reading of this passage, pinpoint the verses that have to do with the flesh and the Spirit. Since we tend to become like the one(s) we follow, with which do *you* most readily identify—*flesh* or *Spirit*? Please explain.

Paul has the answer to the believer's dilemma, exhorting them in Galatians 5:1, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage" (NKJV). The specific issue at stake here for the Galatian believers is the matter of circumcision.

2. Since Christ died to set people free from their sin, what immediately becomes the responsibility of every Christian (verse 1)?
3. According to Paul's perspective in verse 6, it has nothing to do with self-effort and everything to do with what?
4. Paul makes it very clear that adherence to Christ and adherence to circumcision are contrary to one another. What additional insight has Paul already given in Galatians 2:21?

Memory verse: Galatians 5:13 NKJV

Write the verse out below; repeat it each day to commit it to memory.

“For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.”

Selah ~

Taking hold of key words set forth by Paul in this chapter, use your resources to write a definition for the following:

- Estranged (Galatians 5:4):

- Hindered (Galatians 5:7):

- Offense (Galatians 5:11):

Think about it: Paul could easily have diluted the gospel to appease his hearers and avoid persecution, but he was not willing to do that. It was offensive to many that the instrument of our salvation—the cross—was an instrument of suffering and punishment. “For the message of the cross is foolish to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Corinthians 1:18 NKJV). What about *you*? There’s room at the cross for you . . . What does it mean to you today? Write your thoughts below.

Day Two:

Responsible Freedom

Reread Galatians 5:7–15.

1. In this week's chapter, Paul lists several harmful consequences of returning to the law before he guides the believers towards responsible freedom. What are they?

a. Verse 2: _____

b. Verse 3: _____

c. Verse 4: _____

d. Verse 9: _____

e. Verse 11: _____

There is a freedom that all persons have the right to possess because they are human beings—their God-given right by birth. There is also the freedom that is uniquely Christian—born by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

2. There is both a *negative* and *positive* aspect to Christian liberty Paul mentions; what does he say (verse 13)?

a. *Negative*:

b. *Positive*:

3. What is Paul's summation regarding the law (verse 14)?

a. Personal: Cite an example of how you are fulfilling the law in a positive way.

4. Paul refers to the same *law of love* mentioned in the Old Testament Law of Moses and also introduced in the New Testament by Jesus. Look them up; briefly note your findings.

▪ Leviticus 19:18b

▪ Matthew 22:35–40

▪ Luke 6:27–36

▪ John 13:34–35

Lesson: If we learn to live by the JOY principle (Jesus—Others—You, in that order), we would fulfill the essence of the law and our Christian responsibility.

Day Three: Walk in the Spirit: No to Sin; Yes to God!

Reread Galatians 5:16–21.

The liberty to love others and the freedom from the law—these are the reality of God’s Spirit at work in our lives. But there is another reality also at work: the sin nature that is continually at conflict with the Spirit in us to tempt us to disobey. The question to answer is which one will dominate: flesh or Spirit?

1. What does Paul reveal as key to overcoming the flesh (verse 16)?
2. In your own words, summarize the dilemma in verse 17.
3. The law does not give the power to overcome; what does give the believer victory (verse 18)?

In verses 19–21, Paul provides an explicit list of behaviors that stem from the old nature, contrasting it with the fruit of the Holy Spirit in verses 22–23. A careful review of these verses will enable you to group the behaviors into the categories mentioned below.

Acts of Sinful Nature

Which are unbalanced sexual practices?

Which are perverted religions?

Anti-social behaviors?

Personal failures?

Acts of the Spirit

Behaviors depicting a relationship with God?

Relationships with fellow believers?

Relationship with oneself?

Selah ~

Personal: Now take personal inventory [application] of the exercise you just completed above. Look over both lists again carefully. Underline the behaviors that pertain to you from both sides. How are *you* doing? Based on what you’re learning, where can *you* improve?

Day Four:

The Fruit of the Spirit

Review Galatians 5:22–26.

“If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (verse 25). Our freedom in Christ does not give us the right to do as we please, but rather the liberty to do as we *ought*: to say “no” to sin and “yes” to God! Saying “yes” to God means walking and living in the Spirit of God.

1. From your learning through this week’s lesson, recap why your freedom in Christ does *not* give you the freedom to enjoy the sinful pleasures of this life.

2. What are some of the ways *you* keep *in step* with the Spirit of God?

“Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure” (1 John 3:2–3 NKJV). The Holy Spirit empowers you to be transformed into the character likeness of Jesus Christ; making it possible for you to live the life He would live if He were walking in your shoes. How?

- a. 2 Corinthians 3:18

 - b. Philippians 2:13
3. Write out the *fruit of the Spirit* listed in verses 22–23. Circle the one you need most right now.

Paul states in verse 23, “Against such there is no law.” In other words, those who manifest these qualities are fulfilling the law more than those who pursue the works of the flesh (verses 19–21) or rites, rituals, and self-fulfilling efforts.

4. Walking and living by the spirit affects absolutely every area of the Christian life. Consider what impact the Spirit makes on these important spiritual components; record your thoughts.
 - Prayer to God?

 - Reading of His Word?

 - Building of your faith?

 - Your obedience factor?

Day Five:

In Touch with Jesus ~

This section of the lesson is intended to be a review of what you have learned and what God has spoken to you this week. Go back over your lesson with a marking pen or highlighter and mark those places and points that stand out to you. Use the margins to make personal notations. Be sure to indicate which points or questions you'd like to share with your discussion group.

1. *LISTEN*: In what way did the Lord Jesus meet *you* in His Word this week? Be specific.

2. *LEARN*: How can you apply this understanding to your daily Christian walk?

3. *LIVE*: Take the next step of obedience and record the difference it makes in your life.

Prayer Requests ~
