


## **Galatians - Living by the Spirit & Walking with the Spirit**

Good morning Southwest Family Fellowship, so good to be with you this morning and continue on in our Galatians series. Today we will be talking about Living with and walking with the Spirit. Paul wrote this letter to the Galatians with a lot of care and compassion. You can feel it in the words, you can feel it in the way he challenges them, rebukes them and corrects them. He wants them to succeed, he wants them to follow God and be rooted in his love and grace. And he desperately wants them to turn away from their idols and false gospels. His tone throughout the letter expresses urgency, passion, deep affection and genuine love as he corrects the Galatians.

Chey and I have two doggies at home, this is Sable and Cora.  There are

times that they both are stubborn, too amped, and reckless and we have to correct them out of love. They love playing intensely outside (even in this heat), running, play fighting, chasing squirrels and saying hello to neighbors along the fence line and sometimes they go too hard.

So out of love and care I will bring them in, I will close the doggy door, I will make them rest. And sometimes they don't like me for that, but there has also been a time where they over did it and they were crying and wanting to be consoled because they were so exhausted and out of breath. So after that time Chey and I monitor their physical exertion, not to be a bummer or punish them, but to protect and care for them. Paul was not correcting or rebuking the Galatians because he hated them or didn't care about them and just wanted to yell at them. He did it out of love, care and a desire for them to succeed and follow Christ the right way.

Let's dive into some historical background of this letter to the Galatians, it will help us understand more why Paul wrote what he did.

The letter to the Galatians was written by the Apostle Paul, likely around 49 or 50 AD, making it one of his earliest letters. To understand the historical background and setup of this letter, we need to consider the context in which it was written.

Paul had been actively involved in spreading the message of the Gospel to the Gentiles, particularly in the region of Galatia, which was located in modern-day central Turkey. [\(Turkey/Galatia Map\)](#) After Paul established churches in Galatia, he faced opposition from a group known as Judaizers.

The Judaizers were Jewish Christians who believed that Gentile believers needed to follow certain Jewish laws and customs, particularly circumcision and adherence to the Mosaic law,

in order to be fully accepted by God. They argued that faith in Jesus was not enough for salvation and that the Gentile believers needed to become Jews through circumcision. This controversy deeply concerned Paul because it threatened the core message of the Gospel. Paul's central teaching was that salvation is based on faith in Jesus Christ alone, apart from works of the law. He emphasized that both Jews and Gentiles are justified by grace through faith and are no longer under the bondage of the law.

The situation in Galatia became more complicated when the Judaizers began to undermine Paul's authority and question his apostleship. They spread false rumors and attempted to persuade the Galatian believers to abandon Paul's teaching and return to the observance of the Jewish law.

In response to these challenges, Paul wrote the letter to the Galatians as an urgent and passionate defense of the true Gospel. His primary purpose was to reaffirm the sufficiency of Christ's work for salvation and to confront the false teaching of the Judaizers. Paul defended his apostleship and authority, presenting himself as an authentic messenger of Jesus Christ, called directly by Him.

The Judaizers were threatened by Paul's influence and ability to relate with listeners. They did not abide by and believe in the grace model and salvation model that Paul did and wanted to spread their ideology amongst the Gentiles as well. I have seen undermining like this in lots of places but by far the most common is the sports world. Everyone believes their way is the best way, and they want to implement their way even if they are not in the position or spot to do so.

When I played football in high school we had Assistant varsity coaches who felt their methods and ideologies were better than the Head Coach's and they would teach and undermine the Head Coach's authority by promoting their methods over his. This eventually led to the Head Coach leaving and these Assistant coaches taking over the next year. Their plan worked, but our team wasn't any better, in fact for all of our talent we got worse. Our team didn't win any more games or improve in the ways that it was being assumed we would with these "better methods and coaching." Pretty much all it did was create division and strife in our team. The trust level went down.

In some of our other sports, especially basketball we had awesome coaches who were good at what they did but they were constantly undermined by the Booster club. Now I

understand that you need good Booster programs to have good equipment, jerseys, travel options, facilities, etc... But when Booster contributions influence coaching decisions and threaten coaches that don't abide by the Booster's recommendations it becomes a problem.

A closer to home example is the Dallas Cowboys. It has been speculated for years that Jerry Jones, the owner, doesn't always allow his head coaches to coach to their full extent. He and his son undermine the process at times by demanding keeping certain players, paying certain players, trading and drafting certain players, and other decisions that typically are left up to the coach. Now whether you believe he is overstepping or not, when the owner and coach are on different pages, it typically doesn't bode well for the team. The Cowboys have tons of

talent every year but they haven't been able to make the Super Bowl in a while and I would say this division and undermining plays a key role in that.

This can happen in stores and businesses as well, store managers who clash with the direction of the owner, assistant managers who undermine and cause dissension towards the manager, and many other examples. It even happens often in churches, staff, pastors or volunteers undermine and cause dissension with the Lead Pastor. The person in charge is not always what's best for an organization, team, business, etc... But what's even worse is when those under that person cause dissension and undermine them without the proper authority or position.

The Judaizers were undermining Paul from an earthly understanding of the gospel and an earthly ordained authority. They thought their way of doing things was better and more righteous and so they felt it was their duty to undermine his authority and teachings for selfish gain. Because the reality is whenever people undermine authority and influence ideology and practice by going behind peoples' backs and causing dissension, it is rooted in selfishness and arrogance. There ARE going to be times that the person with authority needs to step down or step aside but that needs to be handled and approached in a better way than undermining and causing dissension. Paul was teaching from a heavenly authority and a righteous authority.

Knowing all of this that went down between Paul and the Judaizers let's dive into our first scripture passage for today, Galatians 5:1-10, it says,

“1 It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. 2 Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. 3 Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. 4 You who are trying to be justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. 5 For through the Spirit we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope. 6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love. 7 You were running a good race. Who cut in on you to keep you from obeying the truth? 8 That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you. 9 “A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough.” 10 I am confident in the

Lord that you will take no other view. The one who is throwing you into confusion, whoever that may be, will have to pay the penalty.”

Paul was reminding the Galatians that salvation and grace are received and lived out through faith in Jesus Christ alone. Their obedience and works are not what achieves that salvation and grace, but rather their obedience and good works are a reflection of the heart change and life change caused by God’s grace and love.

That leads us into our first point for today, Our freedom through Christ leads us to live a life of obedience, not to live however we want to please ourselves.

We no longer have to be consumed by anxiety, guilt or shame because of our inability to achieve freedom on our own, but we get to live out of this freedom by happily and joyfully seeking obedience and trusting God. Our salvation and righteousness being fully from God and a free gift that we receive does not allow us to just live sinfully and amorally. It does not give us the green light to just go out and do whatever. That is a false understanding of this theology as well. The freedom takes the burden of having to do it on our own off our plate but still leads us and draws us in, to be obedient and try to live a just and fruitful life because of the freedom we have received.

There is a great insecurity and feeling of lack of worth when we put righteousness, holiness and our own salvation on our own merit. It becomes a life driven by fear and rooted in fear.

Paul hammers home this idea of freedom and salvation being rooted in Christ's sacrifice and what he did, rather than what we do, because it is important to understand and crucial to our faith to know why we believe, why we follow, why we act the way we act, and how we are saved.

Why we follow God is because he loves us, created us and has a special purpose for our lives and eternal existences. We follow him because of his divine promises, unconditional love and complete redemption. We act the way we do because in reaction to his divine love, grace and redemption, we want to act out of love and obedience to trust him, commune with him and follow him. And the way we are saved is fully by what Jesus did on the cross in redemption of us. It's not that the way we are saved gives us a

free pass in life to act and live however we want, it's that when we ground ourselves in its true reality and live out of that knowledge we see the value, and power, and love in it, and we want to obey, love, and trust God.

Verses 1-5 is Paul again reminding and encouraging the Galatians that they do not need to cling to the Law and abide by it. The things that the Judaizers are trying to convince them of are wrong and anti-gospel. Timothy Keller explains how Paul was correcting them and defending the gospel against the Judaizer's teachings, he explains, "And Paul wants the Galatians to remember that you can't add to Christ without subtracting Christ. He is either all their value, or He is without value. If law obedience becomes part of their system of salvation, it is their only system, so they are "required to obey the whole law "; which, as

we've seen is simply impossible. Justification through law is self salvation; it is to be "alienated from Christ." We cannot hold onto Grace if we are living by works."

When we add to grace, or add to Christ we remove our trust and adherence to his sufficient grace. The Judaizers were adding qualifications and items on the checklist in order to be saved and redeemed by grace. In these first five verses Paul reminds them to ***stand firm*** in their righteousness and know that Christ's redemption is sufficient and that through the Spirit we eagerly await by faith the righteousness for which we hope. Meaning this righteousness is already promised and we eagerly await it. And the Spirit works alongside us as we live out our faith through obedience and trust in God. We need not be anxious or nervous about it, and we

don't need to fret about how to do it ourselves either.

Paul goes on in this passage and explains that acts and works themselves do not make you any more saved or less saved, they don't hold value compared to a faith rooted in Christ's redemption.

In verse 6 it says, "6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love."

Faith expressing itself through love is what counts. Our acts and works themselves do not hold value in our righteousness levels or if we have received salvation or grace. They are merely a reflection of the heart change caused by this grace and salvation received.



Tim Keller explains this well, stating,

“Neither moral exertion, nor moral failure counts. Period. Why? First, neither religion nor lack of religion count toward establishing a relationship with God. Paul is saying: my good performance does not make me right with God, nor does my bad performance really make me any more lost, and hopeless. I'll stand equally lost, and equally able to be saved.”

It's an encouraging thing, and more importantly a freeing thing that our good and bad performance alike do not really make us any more lost and hopeless, we are all equally able to be saved, and we are all equally able to be led by the Spirit.

That leads us into our second point for today, and that is **Our freedom in Christ leads us, and sets us up to live by the Spirit.**

Life by the Spirit requires living with and practicing the fruits of the Spirit.

The Fruit of the Spirit are laid out in Galatians 5:22-26, let's read that together,

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance (patience), kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

Galatians 5:22-23 presents the well-known list of the fruit of the Spirit: (WRITE ON BOARD) love, joy, peace, patience (forbearance), kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. This passage highlights the transformative work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. As believers, we are called to exhibit these qualities as evidence of our faith.

Here, the "fruit" represents the visible manifestations or outcomes of the Holy Spirit's work within the life of a believer. It is not something we produce through our own efforts, but rather the natural result of a life surrendered to and guided by the Spirit.

Love: Love is listed as the first fruit of the Spirit. It is a selfless, unconditional, and sacrificial love that seeks the well-being and best interests of others. This love reflects the very

nature of God and is the foundation of all the other aspects of the fruit.

Joy: Joy refers to a deep and abiding sense of inner gladness and delight that is not dependent on external circumstances. It is a state of contentment and rejoicing in the Lord, regardless of the challenges or trials we may face.

Peace: Peace represents a state of harmony, tranquility, and well-being that comes from being reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. It also encompasses the restoration of relationships with others and the absence of inner turmoil.

Patience: Patience, or long-suffering, is the ability to endure difficult circumstances, delays, or the shortcomings of others without becoming easily angered or frustrated. It involves a steadfastness and perseverance that trusts in God's timing and purposes.

**Kindness:** Kindness is a compassionate and considerate attitude toward others. It involves showing genuine care, empathy, and generosity in our actions, words, and interactions.

**Goodness:** Goodness refers to moral excellence and integrity. It involves doing what is right, just, and honorable in all aspects of life, reflecting the character of God.

**Faithfulness:** Faithfulness represents reliability, loyalty, and steadfastness. It involves being trustworthy and true to one's word, commitments, and relationships.

**Gentleness:** Gentleness, also translated as meekness, is not weakness but rather strength under control. It involves humility, patience, and a gentle disposition in our interactions with others.

**Self-Control:** Self-control is the ability to exercise restraint over our desires, impulses, and

actions. It involves living with discipline and moderation, allowing the Holy Spirit to govern our thoughts, emotions, and behaviors.

These qualities collectively demonstrate the transformative work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers.

As we surrender to the Spirit's guidance and allow Him to **produce His fruit in us**, our lives increasingly **reflect the character of Christ**, impacting our relationships, attitudes, and witness to the world.

All of these qualities make our relationships with others better. If you didn't notice these fruits of the Spirit show up somewhere else in the Bible, its a very famous passage that gets used for weddings often. 1 Corinthians 13, its a passage about love and the character of God and describes how love and God are rooted in

these fruits. The practice of these fruits produces better relationships in our lives.

Tim Keller says it well, “Only the gospel makes us neither self-confident nor self-disdaining, but both bold and humble. That works itself out in relationships with everyone. Rather than comparing ourselves with those “above” or “below”, we look only at our own responsibility to take what we have and are, and offer it to God as a sacrifice of gratitude for what Christ has done.”

When we live by the Spirit and live with the fruits of the Spirit we no longer compare ourselves to others, we are better able to love those above and below us, the homeless person we see on the corner, as well as the politician or rich executive at our job. We treat others better, as well as ourselves. We deny a life of self

absorption, we are not envied with those “above” us or conceited towards those “below” us. We are secure in our place in life and in the kingdom of God. Living by the Spirit is rooted in living with gratitude. (WRITE GRATITUDE) As we live with gratitude for what Christ has already given us and done for us, we begin to live by the Spirit through the fruits of the Spirit, and that allows us to walk with the Spirit.

Let’s read verse 25 again, 25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Or another translation says, “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”

Has anyone here ever played the video game It Takes Two (picture of game, scene from game)? Cheyy and I have played this game before because its supposed to be fun, but also its all about working together and walking step in

step together. You can't move on to the next part of the map or game until your partner or teammate is right there alongside you, walking step in step with you. There are also parts of the game where one person has to go to a certain part to set-up or provide a way for the other one to get there too.

The Holy Spirit is like our teammate on that game, walking step in step with us. Helping us get through the obstacles of life, encouraging us and experiencing the difficulties with us. But when we choose to not walk step in step with the Holy Spirit we get away from that guidance, that protection, that hope and that influence. When we align our lives with the Holy Spirit it helps lead us where we need to go, and helps us walk in obedience to God's will.

In this verse Paul is urging believers to align their lives and actions with the guidance of

the Holy Spirit. It implies that if someone has received the Holy Spirit, they should allow him to lead and influence their thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors. Living in the Spirit means being transformed by his power, walking in obedience to God's will, and exhibiting the character traits described as the fruit of the Spirit.

Living by the Spirit calls us to live out the freedom of our salvation, and the grace we have received, through exhibiting the fruits of the Spirit, and demonstrating obedience to Christ out of love. The Holy Spirit works with us and through us, to display these things, and as he does this we begin to walk him.

This leads us into our third point for today, Our freedom in Christ allows us to walk with the Spirit.

Walking with the Spirit is walking in freedom. Walking in freedom is exhibiting the fruits of the Spirit, walking in obedience to God's will, and refraining from indulging the flesh.

What's cool about the Fruits of the Spirit are they are inevitable to develop and grow in the lives of Christians. They don't happen overnight but rather grow gradually. If a person is saved by faith they will have the Fruits of the Spirit grow and develop in their lives. And that is part of walking with the Spirit, we are promised growth and development and we will want to walk in obedience with the Lord.

Let's read Galatians 5:13-21, to see what Paul says about Walking with the Spirit,

13 You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in

love. 14 For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." 15 If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other. 16 So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. 19 The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

There's a lot to unpack in these passage and we won't have time to digest it all but first let's start with verse 16. Verse 16 says "Walk by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh." This requires us daily crucifying the desires of our flesh and a daily connection to the heart and character of Christ. These are things we need the Holy Spirit walking step in step with us to accomplish. Crucifying the desires of our flesh and remaining in constant contact with the guide of the Spirit is what allows us to do this.

When we are instructed as believers to walk by the Spirit, it means that as followers of Christ, we are to live in constant dependence on the Holy Spirit, allowing Him to guide and direct our lives. Walking by the Spirit involves surrendering our own desires, wants, and ambitions to God's will. It means seeking His guidance in decision-making, relying on His

strength in times of weakness, and trusting His wisdom in all areas of life. We must seek to walk step in step with the Spirit every day because walking by the Spirit leads to a life of obedience, intimacy with God, and spiritual growth.

Verse 16 begins with a call to walk. This signifies a continuous, intentional, and purposeful journey with the Lord. Walking by the Spirit means living in constant communion with Him, allowing Him to influence and direct our thoughts, words, and actions. The Spirit of God, who dwells within every believer, is our guide, helper, and source of power.

When we walk by the Spirit, we acknowledge our need for divine guidance. We recognize that our own wisdom and understanding are limited, and we humbly submit ourselves to God's will and leading. It involves seeking His guidance through prayer,

studying His Word, and listening attentively to His voice.

The second part of the verse states, "and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh." By walking with the Spirit, we gain the power to overcome and resist the sinful desires of our flesh. This passage of scripture paints the picture of the war that goes on between our flesh and our Spirit. It is a constant battle where only one can be guiding and leading us. We cannot have both leading our hearts and minds, when we are led by the flesh we are led by selfish ambition, conceitedness and envy. When we are led by the Spirit we are led through love and humility.

How many of you have watched Olympic swimming races? They are intense and often times super quick. The thing that fascinates me the most is how close the races can be, sometimes within milliseconds of one another. And that determines who was in the lead. In the

2020 Olympics Caeleb Dressel won the Gold medal in the 50 m freestyle. But he only won by 0.48 seconds, from silver to bronze was 0.02

### Semifinals [\[ edit \]](#)







The swimmers with the best 8 times, regardless of heat, advanced to the final.<sup>[9]</sup>

Rank ↕	Heat ↕	Lane ↕	Swimmer ↕	Nation ↕	Time ↕
1	2	4	Caeleb Dressel	 United States	21.42
2	1	4	Florent Manaudou	 France	21.53
3	1	5	Bruno Fratus	 Brazil	21.60
	2	5	Kristian Gkolomeev	 Greece	

seconds. Those are hard times to even quantify.

### Final [\[ edit \]](#)

<sup>[10]</sup>

Rank ↕	Lane ↕	Swimmer ↕	Nation ↕	Time ↕
 1	4	Caeleb Dressel	 United States	21.07
 2	5	Florent Manaudou	 France	21.55
 3	3	Bruno Fratus	 Brazil	21.57

In the semifinals he beat second by only 0.11 seconds. But at the end of the day he was



still the one in the lead. In the qualifying heats there were 30 swimmers within 1 second of Dressel's top time. Just because it was close doesn't mean he shared the lead with the other swimmers. We must make an active choice who we want to lead us in this life, either our flesh which leads us into selfishness, envy and conceit or being led by the Spirit which leads us into freedom and through love.

When we choose to walk by the Spirit, the Holy Spirit empowers us to live victorious lives.

It's really interesting to me that this passage starts out in verses 13 and 14 saying, "13 You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. 14 For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Living free and walking with the Spirit leads us and calls us to serve one another humbly in love and to Love our neighbors as ourselves. We are not to indulge the flesh, which the flesh is rooted in envy, conceitedness, pride, arrogance, selfishness and greed. The flesh does not humbly serve others or love others. Walking with the Spirit is rooted in loving others and sacrificing our fleshly desires to serve others. Part of embodying the Fruits of the Spirit is using them to love others and serve others.

Walking with the Spirit is to Walk in love. (WRITE)

Living in the Spirit is to Live in love. (WRITE)

by

In the NIV Application Commentary on Galatians Scot McKnight says this about this passage, "My first point, then, is that we know love in the New Testament sense only because

we see it in the cross, my second point is that **to see this love** is to be **affected** by it. This is the love, Paul is talking about: **God's love for us** in Christ enables us to be **filled with God's spirit**, who then **generates the fruit of love** in us as we **relate to others**. Because it is the Spirit of God who awakens love in our hearts, it is not something we can claim as our own.”

Living with the Spirit leads us to live in a holy manner, and living with the Spirit leads us to live in a loving way. God's Spirit awakens love in our hearts and allows us to live in a way contrary to our flesh.

When we are set free from the bondages of sin and the law we are able to live set free with the Spirit and it is a wonderful thing. It seems simple and it is in explanation, but more profound in practice.

Living by the Spirit and Walking with the Spirit is rooted in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

These things allow us to live out a richer and more fruitful relationship with God but also with others. Walking with the Spirit leads us to Love our neighbors as ourselves. The Spirit empowers us to walk in love. My prayer for myself and for all of us today would be that we would see the love demonstrated on the cross and be affected by it, and through this be filled with the Spirit to live and to walk.

**Let's learn and strive to Live by the Spirit and Walk with the Spirit in love.**

Let's pray...