



**Sunday School Lesson**  
**Gal. 5:1-24**  
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**Responsible Freedom**



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**Quick Links to the Study**

I. Context

- a. Historical
- b. Literary

II. Message

- a. Admonition One, 5:1-12
- b. Admonition Two, 5:13-24

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In this third study in Galatians, we continue building our commentary on the entire letter of Paul to the churches in the Roman province of Galatia. The flow of argument in the letter continues from the defense of Paul's commissioning as an apostle to preach the gospel to non-Jews (chaps. 1 and 2), to a defense of that gospel message, especially in its connection to the Law of God (chaps 3 and 4), to the last major emphasis in chapters 5 and 6 on the obligations that freedom in Christ brings to the believer in behavior consistent to the Christ who has provided salvation. One of the criticisms against Paul's message of salvation by grace through faith was that it imposed no serious obligation upon believers to conduct their lives by the strict standards of morality and holiness that were foundational to the centuries old Jewish religious heritage. When one carefully studies Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7 and Luke 6, it becomes clear that the standards of divine expectation were significantly raised in the teachings of Jesus, above even that of Judaism. But Paul's preaching of God's grace was sometimes twisted to imply that the believer in a faith only commitment was then free to "live like the devil" since salvation was a gift in response to faith. Later on in [Rom. 6](#), Paul had to address this issue in his "letter of introduction" to the Christian community in the imperial capital: "What then are we to say? Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it?" Clearly, this was not Paul's intent, and his gospel message did not imply this whatsoever.

I well remember a high school friend in the 1950s saying to me that he would like to be a Baptist because we Baptists taught that once you were saved by faith it didn't matter what you did afterwards, because you couldn't loose your salvation ever, no matter what you might do. Such a view, although popular among some so-called Christians, is about as false as is possible to be. Real faith implies a profound commitment of life to Christ. And growing out of that must come a life-long pattern of behavior that is consistent to the life of our savior. Otherwise, the faith expression is phoney and worthless before God.

In Galatians five and six Paul will set forth his "doctrine of the Christian life" in one of the more detailed and profound ways to be found in all of his writings. We will take two studies to cover this teaching.

**I. Context**

Once again, the context of chapter five plays an important role in understanding what Paul is getting at. The historical identification of his opponents becomes especially helpful here because of his stinging rebuke of them in chapter five. The literary setting of chapter five as an outgrowth of the emphasis in chapters three and four, especially 4:21-31, is crucial to correct interpretation of the material in chapter five.

**a. Historical**

Regarding the external history of Galatians, it remains the same as that in the first two studies.

Thus, we will build off the conclusions reached in the [first study](#) about the who, when, where, why questions about the writing of the letter (the **external history**). The summary of those conclusions is repeated here:

Thus, Galatians is Paul's letter of concern written to the churches established on the [first missionary](#) journey (AD 46-47) after he had revisited them on the [second missionary](#) journey (AD 48-51). Somewhere in Macedonia, he received word that teachers had arrived at Galatia from Palestine and were teaching that the apostolic gospel actually demanded that non-Jews must first convert to Judaism (circumcision and Torah obedience pledge) and then put their faith in Christ in order to become Christians. This violated the agreement reached at the Jerusalem Council meeting in AD 48, as well as represented a fatal misrepresentation of the revelation that Paul had received concerning the content of the gospel. Circumstances prevented Paul from traveling back to Galatia to confront these false teachers. So he did the next best thing; he wrote them a letter addressing the issues of his authority to preach the gospel as an apostle (1:11-2:21) and a defense of the content of the gospel message that he preached (3:1-6:10).

Of particular importance to the **internal history** is the identification of the opponents of Paul in the Galatian churches. Richard Longenecker in volume 41 of the *Word Biblical Commentary* has a helpful summation, after a lengthy retracing of the history of scholarship on this issue. His conclusions are quoted here:

The closest thing we get to a clear description of Paul's opponents in Galatians is in the opening statement of 1:6-9 and the postscript of 6:11-18. In the first of these passages we learn that the agitators were perverting the gospel and throwing believers into confusion, with the ironic allusion to "an angel from heaven" suggesting that they came with high qualifications and/or were appealing to a higher authority, than Paul. In the postscript we are told that they were promoting circumcision for Gentile Christians and that Paul views their motivation as being a desire to avoid persecution. It is, therefore, these two passages that must hold center stage in any attempt to characterize the opponents.

Various inferences, however, can also be drawn from other data in the letter, though with diminished clarity. For instance, from the way in which Paul defends his apostleship in 1:1 and 1:11-2:10, it may legitimately be inferred that his standing as an apostle was in some way a focus of the opponents' attack, and that it was being unfavorably compared to that of the "pillar" apostles at Jerusalem. Likewise, from the way in which Paul deals with (1) the futility of the Mosaic law as a means of salvation in 2:15-3:18 and (2) its purpose as a pedagogue in 3:19-4:7, it seems reasonable to assume that the opponents stressed the importance of observing the law not only for being fully accepted by God but also as a proper Christian life-style. Such features—coupled with Paul's specific counterarguments having to do with Abraham (3:6-9), righteousness vis-à-vis the law (3:10-14), the covenant and its promise (3:15-18), the purpose of the law (3:19-4:7), and the supremacy of "Jerusalem that is above" over "the present city, of Jerusalem" (4:21-31)—strongly suggest that the opponents had a Jewish background and a Jerusalem orientation. On the other hand, their preaching of a "gospel" message (1:6-7, which, of course, Paul calls "another gospel") and their desire to avoid persecution "for the cross of Christ" (6:12) point conclusively to their being Christians.

We conclude, therefore, that Paul's opponents were Jewish Christians—or, more accurately, Christian Jews—who came from the Jerusalem church to Paul's churches in Galatia with a message stressing the need for Gentiles to be circumcised and to keep the rudiments of the cultic calendar, both for full acceptance by God and as a proper Christian life-style. Undoubtedly they presented their message as being theologically based and claimed to be only interested in Gentiles being fully integrated into the chosen people of Israel, and so full recipients of the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant. Probably, as well, they claimed not to be opposing Paul but to be completing his message, and so bringing the Galatian Christians to perfection. Perhaps they also claimed to be representing James' pastoral concerns regarding Jewish-Gentile relations in the Christian communities outside of Palestine. Paul, however, accuses them of being primarily motivated by a desire to avoid persecution, and so to boast about Gentiles being circumcised (6:12-13).

In fact, Paul's evaluation of their motives in 6:12-13—"they want to put up a good show in the flesh" in order "to avoid being persecuted for the cross of Christ" and so "that they may boast about your flesh"—is probably the key to understanding the Judaizers. For, as Jewett points out, in the rising tide of Jewish nationalism in Palestine, with the antagonism of the Zealots being directed against all who had Gentile sympathies and all who associated with Gentile sympathizers:

If they could succeed in circumcising the Gentile Christians, this might effectively thwart any Zealot purification campaign against the Judean church!... The nomistic Christians in Judea would have ample reason to boast if they could induce the Gentile churches to enter the ranks of the circumcised, for such an achievement would release them from a mortal threat levelled against all who dared to associate themselves with the ungodly and the uncir-

circumcised. It was this hope of public recognition for their loyalty to the Torah which lay behind Paul's bitter words: "they wish to put up a good show in the flesh" (vi 12) (*NTS* 17 [1971] 206).

## 2. THE MESSAGE OF THE OPPONENTS

Having identified Paul's Galatian opponents as Jewish Christians from Jerusalem who were motivated by concern for the welfare of Palestinian Christians amidst the rising pressures of Jewish nationalism and so carried on a Judaizing campaign among Paul's converts in the Diaspora in order to thwart any Zealot purification campaign against the church back home, the question arises: Is it possible to go further and delineate the contours of their teaching in Galatia? The problem, of course, is that such an endeavor requires an even more extensive use of "mirror reading," and we cannot always be sure in Paul's letter where exposition alone is to the fore and where polemic or apology is dominant. Nevertheless, since exposition, polemic, and apology so often seem to merge, some inferences can be drawn. While an outline or order of presentation must remain obscure, some features of the Judaizers' message can legitimately be highlighted.

For openers, it seems safe to say that the opponents made it a major feature of their presentation to discredit Paul's apostolic credentials. For from the way in which he so vigorously and extensively defends both the independence and the equality of his apostleship vis-à-vis that of the Jerusalem apostles in Gal 1–2—even to the point of recounting his opposition to Peter, the "men from James," and "even Barnabas" at Antioch (2:11–14)—it can be concluded that the opponents were arguing that Paul was, in fact, dependent on and subordinate to the leadership of the mother church at Jerusalem (from whence, of course, they came and were accredited representatives). F. F. Bruce aptly draws together what can be inferred from a mirror reading of Paul's defense on this matter, and so speculates that the Judaizers must have argued as follows:

"The Jerusalem leaders are the only persons with authority to say what the true gospel is, and this authority they received direct from Christ. Paul has no comparable authority: any commission he exercises was derived by him from the Jerusalem leaders, and if he differs from them on the content or implications of the gospel, he is acting and teaching quite arbitrarily. In fact," they may have added, "Paul went up to Jerusalem shortly after his conversion and spent some time with the apostles there. They instructed him in the first principles of the gospel and, seeing that he was a man of uncommon intellect, magnanimously wiped out from their minds his record as a persecutor and authorized him to preach to others the gospel which he had learned from them. But when he left Jerusalem for Syria and Cilicia he began to adapt the gospel to make it palatable to Gentiles. The Jerusalem leaders practised circumcision and observed the law and the customs, but Paul struck out on a line of his own, omitting circumcision and other ancient observances from the message he preached, and thus he betrayed his ancestral heritage. This law-free gospel has no authority but his own; he certainly did not receive it from the apostles, who disapproved of his course of action. Their disapproval was publicly shown on one occasion at Antioch, when there was a direct confrontation between Peter and him on the necessity of maintaining the Jewish food-laws" (*Galatians*, 26).

A further feature of the Judaizers' message must have been on being rightly related to Abraham and the Abrahamic covenant, and so on being legitimately Abraham's sons and experiencing fully the blessings of God's covenant with Abraham (and, by extension, the people of Israel). Paul's exposition of the faith of Abraham in 3:6–9 ("he believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness"; "all nations will be blessed in you"), his polemic on the nature of the covenant and the focus of its promise in 3:15–18 (established with Abraham apart from the law, with its promises being focused particularly on Abraham's Seed, "who is Christ"), his application of that polemic to the situation at hand in 3:29 ("if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise"), his allegorical treatment of Hagar and Sarah and their sons in 4:21–31, and his use of the expression "the Israel of God" for his Galatian converts in 6:16—all these, to judge by their prominence in Paul's argument, strongly suggest that Abraham and the Abrahamic covenant loomed large in the Judaizers' teaching.

Throughout his treatment of these matters Paul seems to be interacting with a typically Jewish attitude, as expressed most clearly in the Talmud, that truth comes in two guises, the first in an elemental form and the second in a developed form (cf. D. Daube, "Public Retort and Private Explanation," *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* [London: Athlone, 1965] 141–50)—and that he is countering in particular the Judaizers' application of this Jewish motif to the effect that Paul's message was an elemental form of the gospel proclamation while theirs is the developed. The Judaizers' argument could very well have run along the following lines: (1) while Paul directed the Galatians to Gen 15:6, they must realize that the developed form of God's covenant with Abraham appears in Gen 17:4–14, with its requirement of circumcision emphatically stated in vv 10–14; (2) while Paul spoke only of Abraham, the full development of Israel's religious legislation came with Moses; (3) while Paul spoke of the promises of the gospel, the promises were in actuality made to Abraham and to his "seed," which means the nation; and (4) while Paul assured his converts that by accepting the gospel they became sons of Abraham, the question must be raised as to which son they represent, for Abraham had two sons—the first being Ishmael, with Isaac born later.

To this line of argument, as we have seen, Paul responds by asserting that Christ and Christ's own are Abraham's true "seed" (3:16, 29). Furthermore, he insists that the covenant with Abraham was confirmed by God four hundred and thirty years before the giving of the Mosaic law, and so having been confirmed, it can neither be annulled nor added to by later developments (3:15–18). And in regard to the claim that his message represents an Ishmaelian form of truth, he responds in rather circumstantial and ad hominem fashion (note the two uses of μέν, "indeed," in vv 23–24) that he can allegorize as well: it is Hagar, who has contacts with Mt. Sinai (from whence came the law that the Judaizers so extol), who should be associated with the present Jerusalem, which explains the bondage of Jerusalem and her emissaries; it is, however, Sarah, Isaac, and spiritual Jerusalem who are involved in the promises of God, and we are children of promise in association with them (4:22–28).

Included as well in the Judaizers' presentation seem to be charges that Paul, as a matter of fact, actually did preach and practice circumcision, but that he withheld this more developed rite only so as to gain his converts' initial favorable response. Thus, in effect, he was more interested in winning their approval than God's approval (cf. 1:10), since he really did believe in circumcision and made it a part of his ministry elsewhere (cf. 5:11). So as they saw it, there was need for accredited emissaries from Jerusalem to bring Paul's truncated ministry at Galatia to completion (cf. 1:6–7). Perhaps the Judaizers charged Paul with advocating circumcision because of their garbled version of the Titus episode at Jerusalem (2:1–5)—or, if Galatians be dated later than we've proposed, because of Paul's circumcision of Timothy (cf. Acts 16:1–3), whose status in Jewish eyes stemmed from his Jewish mother. Perhaps the charge arose from their knowledge that Paul approved of Jewish believers in Jesus expressing their faith in the traditional forms of Judaism (cf. his later words on this matter in 1 Cor 7:17–20). Or perhaps they simply knew that Paul himself continued to live a basically Jewish life-style (cf. 1 Cor 9:19–23; see also my "The Problem Practices of Acts," in *Paul, Apostle of Liberty*, 245–63). What, however, they evidently failed to appreciate is that Paul made a distinction between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians—though, obviously, not at all in the same way as they did. So while he saw it as perfectly legitimate for Jewish Christians to express their faith in Jesus through the traditional Jewish practices, he strenuously opposed the imposition of these practices on Gentile Christians either for full acceptance by God or as a normative way of life.

On a practical basis, the opponents at Galatia must also have included in their message an emphasis on the Jewish law as the divinely appointed way to check libertinism within the church. Paul's emphases on (1) the pedagogical function of the law coming to an end with Christ, in 3:19–4:7, and (2) living by the direction of the Spirit (as opposed to life directed by law) as the antidote to libertinism, in 5:13–26, suggest that not only did the opponents argue circumcision as a prerequisite for being fully accepted by God but also that they asserted that life lived under the Torah—which meant for them a Jewish life-style—was the only way to bring the excesses of the flesh into line. The repeated mention of "the flesh" (σάρξ, or "the sinful nature") in 5:13–21 implies quite clearly that the Galatian churches were having ethical problems or at least were acutely conscious of ethical failures. For such problems the Judaizers offered a rather straightforward and seemingly God-honoring solution: accept a Jewish nomistic life-style and you will have clear guidance as to what is right and wrong, and so be able to live a life that pleases God. Just as Paul's message, they probably added, being only elemental in nature, was not able to relate you properly to Abraham and the Abrahamic covenant for full salvation, so it failed to relate you to the divine Torah and a Jewish lifestyle for proper Christian living. Thus you need to accept circumcision to be fully accepted by God into the Abrahamic covenant, and you need to take on a Jewish lifestyle in order to live in a manner that checks the excesses of your sinful, Gentile natures and enables you to please God in your lives. Their message was, therefore, in effect, one of both legalism for full salvation and nomism for Christian living (cf. my *Paul, Apostle of Liberty*, 78–83, on the use of "legalism" and "nomism").

From this summary, especially in the last paragraph above, we can glean that the ethical issues treated by Paul in chapters five and six grow out of a genuine concern by the apostle to distinguish between clear moral commitment to God through Christ over against the Judaizer insistence that the ethical demands of Torah obedience, as an addition layer of obligation in order to justify one's self before God, stands as crucial. It's not just the superficial appearance of external morality that counts. Rather, just like Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, it's what that's in the heart prompting the outward expression of moral behavior that counts before God. Outwardly the two patterns may seem very similar. Inwardly, however, a world of difference exists between the two. One is acceptable to God; the other is rejected by God. One promotes humility and gratitude; the other promotes arrogance and spiritual elitism. One is a true expression of the apostolic gospel; the other comes out of a perverted, false gospel. One saves; the other creates a false security that leads to disaster on judgment day.

## b. Literary

The literary setting of chapter five is important to correct interpretation. In order to gain some sense of that setting the relevant parts of the [rhetorical outline of Galatians](#) is reproduced here:

HEADING:	STATEMENT:	REFERENCE:
<b>Exhortatio</b>	<b>140-191</b>	<b>5.1-6.10</b>
Admonition 1	140-159	5.1-12
Admonition 2	160-173	5.13-24
Admonition 3	174-191	5.25-6.10

In this study we will cover two of the three basic admonitions in the Exhortatio section. In [ancient Greek rhetoric](#), the Exhortatio served as a series of admonitions to the readers and/or listeners to follow the view of the speaker/writer. Often, they zeroed in on moral admonitions, usually along the lines of the ethical aspects of the particular philosophy being advocated. This was particularly the case in a deliberative speech or letter whose purpose was to persuade one to adopt a particular philosophy, more so than the judicial speech which was to argue a legal case in a court room setting. Little use of the Exhortatio was made in this second setting. Typically, the writer/speaker attempted to prove the superiority of his philosophy by demonstrating the superior lifestyle that flowed out of his philosophy.

The distinctive rhetorical structure of Paul's Exhortatio in Gal. 5:1-6:10 becomes clear with the realization that 5:1 is foundational to all three sets of admonitions: "For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery." This declaration is closely linked to the Sarah/Hagar allegory in 4:21-31 and grows out of it. But it also serves as the foundational header for the Exhortatio. The principle is stated in the first part: "For freedom Christ has set us free." Christian freedom here is deliverance from Torah obedience, not a blank check of freedom to do whatever one pleases. The imposition of the Law as a requirement for salvation enslaves the Christian into a legalistic approach, which can never answer the question, "Have I done enough?" Paul's Damascus Road experience had delivered him from such thinking. In Christ he had been liberated from this religious legalism so that now he could serve Christ out of love and devotion without being plagued by this legalistic question.

The second part of this header is the admonition to "Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery." To accept the Judaizers' demand of Torah obedience was to be enslaved again by religious legalism. Paul's passionate plea to the Galatians was to reject these demands, and to stand firm in the apostolic gospel that had set them free from this religious legalism. Inside each set of admonitions he will define both the critical importance of rejecting Torah obedience, as well as the moral implications of the apostolic gospel. In the process he sets forth his "doctrine of Christian living" in greater detail and with more profundity than anywhere else in his writings.

The signal for each section of the three admonitions will be a modified reproduction of this foundational admonition in 5:1. In 5:13, the header for that section plays off 5:1 as follows: "For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another." Again the principle followed by the admonition is the reproduced structure that sets the direction for verses 14-24. The third division is signaled in 5:25 as "If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit." In this conditional sentence (1st class protasis in the Greek) both the principle ("Since we live by the Spirit") and the admonition ("let us walk in lockstep agreement with the Spirit") are compressed into a single, short declaration. This sets the stage for the admonitions in 5:26-6:10.

A careful examination of the three sets of admonitions reveals a stair-casing effect. That is, the second set builds off the first set, and the third set builds off the second set. But all three sets are based upon the foundation header in 5:1.



## II. Message

We will look at the first two sets of admonitions in this study, and then the final set along with the Conclusio in the next study.

## a Admonition One, 5:1-12

### GNT

<sup>5.1</sup>τῇ ἐλευθερίᾳ ἡμᾶς Χριστὸς ἠλευθέρωσεν· στήκετε οὖν καὶ μὴ πάλιν ζυγῷ δουλείας ἐνέχεσθε. <sup>5.2</sup>Ἴδε ἐγὼ Παῦλος λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ἐὰν περιτέμνησθε, Χριστὸς ὑμᾶς οὐδὲν ὠφελήσει. <sup>5.3</sup>μαρτύρομαι δὲ πάλιν παντὶ ἀνθρώπῳ περιτεμνομένῳ ὅτι ὀφειλέτης ἐστὶν ὅλον τὸν νόμον ποιῆσαι. <sup>5.4</sup>κατηργήθητε ἀπὸ Χριστοῦ, οἵτινες ἐν νόμῳ δικαιοῦσθε, τῆς χάριτος ἐξεπέσατε. <sup>5.5</sup>ἡμεῖς γὰρ πνεύματι ἐκ πίστεως ἐλπίδα δικαιοσύνης ἀπεκδεχόμεθα. <sup>5.6</sup>ἐν γὰρ Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ οὔτε περιτομὴ τι ἰσχύει οὔτε ἀκροβυστία ἀλλὰ πίστις δι' ἀγάπης ἐνεργουμένη. <sup>5.7</sup>Ἐτρέχετε καλῶς· τίς ὑμᾶς ἐνέκοψεν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ μὴ πείθεσθαι. <sup>5.8</sup>ἡ πεισμονὴ οὐκ ἐκ τοῦ καλοῦντος ὑμᾶς. <sup>5.9</sup>μικρὰ ζύμη ὅλον τὸ φύραμα ζυμοῖ. <sup>5.10</sup>ἐγὼ πέποιθα εἰς ὑμᾶς ἐν κυρίῳ ὅτι οὐδὲν ἄλλο φρονήσετε· ὁ δὲ τάρασσων ὑμᾶς βαστάσει τὸ κρίμα, ὅστις ἐὰν ᾔ. <sup>5.11</sup>ἐγὼ δέ, ἀδελφοί, εἰ περιτομὴν ἔτι κηρύσσω, τί ἔτι διώκομαι. ἄρα κατήργηται τὸ σκάνδαλον τοῦ σταυροῦ. <sup>5.12</sup>ὄφελον καὶ ἀποκόψονται οἱ ἀναστατοῦντες ὑμᾶς.

### NASB

1 It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. 2 Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. 3 And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. 4 You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. 5 For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness. 6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love. 7 You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth? 8 This persuasion did not come from Him who calls you. 9 A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough. 10 I have confidence in you in the Lord that you will adopt no other view; but the one who is disturbing you will bear his judgment, whoever he is. 11 But I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? Then the stumbling block of the cross has been abolished. 12 I wish that those who are troubling you would even mutilate themselves.

### NRSV

1 For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. 2 Listen! I, Paul, am telling you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you. 3 Once again I testify to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obliged to obey the entire law. 4 You who want to be justified by the law have cut yourselves off from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. 5 For through the Spirit, by faith, we eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. 6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; the only thing that counts is faith working through love. 7 You were running well; who prevented you from obeying the truth? 8 Such persuasion does not come from the one who calls you. 9 A little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough. 10 I am confident about you in the Lord that you will not think otherwise. But whoever it is that is confusing you will pay the penalty. 11 But my friends, why am I still being persecuted if I am still preaching circumcision? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed. 12 I wish those who unsettle you would castrate themselves!

### NLT

1 So Christ has really set us free. Now make sure that you stay free, and don't get tied up again in slavery to the law. 2 Listen! I, Paul, tell you this: If you are counting on circumcision to make you right with God, then Christ cannot help you. 3 I'll say it again. If you are trying to find favor with God by being circumcised, you must obey all of the regulations in the whole law of Moses. 4 For if you are trying to make yourselves right with God by keeping the law, you have been cut off from Christ! You have fallen away from God's grace. 5 But we who live by the Spirit eagerly wait to receive everything promised to us who are right with God through faith. 6 For when we place our faith in Christ Jesus, it makes no difference to God whether we are circumcised or not circumcised. What is important is faith expressing itself in love. 7 You were getting along so well. Who has interfered with you to hold you back from following the truth? 8 It certainly isn't God, for he is the one who called you to freedom. 9 But it takes only one wrong person among you to infect all the others – a little yeast spreads quickly through the whole batch of dough! 10 I am trusting



## Notes:

As already described, 5:1 stands as the foundational thesis for not only verses 2-12, but for 5:2-6:10 as well. Because of this significant role, a careful consideration of its meaning needs to be given.

The first part sets forth the basic spiritual principle: “For freedom Christ has set us free” (τῇ ἐλευθερίᾳ ἡμᾶς Χριστὸς ἠλευθέρωσεν). In this axiom, the topic of [freedom](#) is central, but what does Paul mean here by “freedom”? The preceding [pericope of 4:21-31](#) is the defining parameter for Paul. Clearly, Paul is talking about freedom from the legalistic burden of Torah obedience added to one’s faith commitment as a prerequisite to salvation. One cannot interpret “freedom” here as political freedom, social freedom, economic freedom etc. The context unquestionably imposes a strict limit on Paul’s meaning.

Now what is this freedom from Torah obedience? For those in Paul’s day it meant that in order to be a Christian conversion to Judaism as a proselyte was a requirement for salvation. This meant the imposition of a vast system of rules and regulations upon both Jew and non-Jew as an integral part of the salvation experience. These governed virtually every waking moment of every day. These rules came from outside the individual as an expression of God’s decree and will. The motivation for the believer was that these must be sufficiently observed if one was to be acceptable to God in final judgment. The strict demand for obedience taught by the scribes led to the speculation that very few individuals would make it into Heaven. Paul began his adult life with a commitment to this religious system, but when he met the resurrected Jesus on the road to Damascus his life was radically changed forever. He realized the ineffectiveness of this religious system, and thus turned against it. What he discovered was that Christ’s death and resurrection dealt with one’s sinfulness adequately. Thus, in Christ the believer experiences deliverance from this impossible religious burden of a works kind of righteousness. Therefore he declares to the Galatians, that Christ has set us free in order to enjoy this freedom from legalistic religion. With the backdrop of 4:21-31, he is arguing that the message of the Judaizers is a reenslavement into this legalism, and thus defeats the very thing that Christ has died for.

The admonition part of this foundational thesis is the encouragement to reject the Judaizers’ message: “Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery” (στήκετε οὖν καὶ μὴ πάλιν ζυγῷ δουλείας ἐνέχεσθε). The present tense usage in both verbs of the Greek text emphasizes that this standing firm and refusal to be enslaved represent ongoing positions, not just a momentary stance. The antithetical nature of this twofold admonition (stand firm=positive side, and do not submit=negative side) represent two sides of the same coin. The Galatians are to dig in at the point of their commitment to the apostolic gospel. At the same time this, means a firm rejection of the Judaizer message.

How important is the adoption of such a position? Verses 2-6 indicate that one’s eternal destiny is at stake over this issue. Through a series of declarations Paul solemnly declares that to adopt this alternative message means eternal damnation, since grace and works can’t be mixed and stand mutually exclusive of each other.

Note the first declaration in verse 2: “Listen! I, Paul, am telling you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you” (“Ἴδε ἐγὼ Παῦλος λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ἐὰν περιτέμνησθε, Χριστὸς ὑμᾶς οὐδὲν ὠφελήσει). The language here is solemn and very serious” Ἴδε ἐγὼ Παῦλος λέγω ὑμῖν. The content of the warning is couched in a hypothetical situation (3rd class conditional protasis in the Greek), meaning that Paul is not assuming that the Galatians are yet doing this. For an individual who might submit to circumcision, which signifies adoption of Torah obedience, then Christ becomes of no spiritual value or benefit to such an individual. Implied here is the mutual exclusiveness of these two approaches to salvation.

The second declaration extends the solemnity of the situation in verse 3: “Once again I testify to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obliged to obey the entire law” (μαρτύρομαι δὲ πάλιν παντὶ ἀνθρώπῳ περιτεμνομένῳ ὅτι ὀφειλέτης ἐστὶν ὅλον τὸν νόμον ποιῆσαι). Torah obedience means a commitment to

the Lord to bring you back to believing as I do about these things. God will judge that person, whoever it is, who has been troubling and confusing you. 11 Dear brothers and sisters, if I were still preaching that you must be circumcised – as some say I do – why would the Jews persecute me? The fact that I am still being persecuted proves that I am still preaching salvation through the cross of Christ alone. 12 I only wish that those troublemakers who want to mutilate you by circumcision would mutilate themselves.

total obedience to the Law as Paul had already declared in [3:10-12](#). As he affirmed there, this approach means to be under God's curse, not His blessing.

If this approach puts one under God's curse, the logical conclusion to that is reached in verse 4: **"You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace."** (κατηργήθητε ἀπὸ Χριστοῦ, οἵτινες ἐν νόμῳ δικαιοῦσθε, τῆς χάριτος ἐξεπέσατε). To adopt the Torah obedience route means to cut oneself off from Christ. This means clearly that we have placed ourselves beyond the reach of God's grace. This because God's grace flows into one's life only through Christ. To be cut off from Christ is to stand beyond the reach of that divine grace. The whole discussion of the Calvinism vs. Armenianism about whether one can lose his salvation as a saved believer, which flows in part out of this verse, is irrelevant to what Paul is talking about here. Paul sees the apostolic gospel of salvation by faith apart of works of law versus the Judaizer message of Jewish conversion then Christian faith expression as two entirely different ways of approaching salvation. They are mutually exclusive of one another. One must choose one or the other; he can't choose both. To choose the Judaizer version is to choose God's curse and to place oneself beyond the reach of God's grace found only in Christ.

Thus Paul comes back to emphasize the apostolic gospel approach in verses 5-6: **"5 For through the Spirit, by faith, we eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. 6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; the only thing that counts is faith working through love."** (<sup>5.5</sup>ἡμεῖς γὰρ πνεύματι ἐκ πίστεως ἐλπίδα δικαιοσύνης ἀπεκδεχόμεθα. <sup>5.6</sup>ἐν γὰρ Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ οὔτε περιτομή τι ἰσχύει οὔτε ἀκροβυστία ἀλλὰ πίστις δι' ἀγάπης ἐνεργουμένη.) For believers the confidence in standing before God in final judgment with acceptability comes out of our faith commitment to Christ. This finds its strength and direction from the Holy Spirit. This means that circumcision is irrelevant. It makes no difference whether we're Jewish or non-Jewish. The one criteria that matters is faith being energized by love. This link between faith and love will be explored in greater detail in the second admonition, vv. 13-24. For Paul, this was of critical importance. To alter or to change this central tenant of the gospel was to create a false gospel that would bring its adherent into eternal damnation. Thus the assertion in the [Exordium](#) in 1:6-10 is explained here in greater detail.

In the second part of this admonition one, Paul turns again to his opponents (vv. 7-12) with some of bluntest language found anywhere in the New Testament.

With an athletic metaphor in verse 7 he raises the issue of who is putting obstacles out on the race track to hinder the Galatians from continuing to finish the race that faith has begun: **"You were running well; who prevented you from obeying the truth?"** (Ἐτρέχετε καλῶς· τίς ὑμᾶς ἐνέκοψεν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ μὴ πείθεσθαι;). Now the gospel is defined as divine truth. The throwing of obstacles onto the race track is designed to keep the Galatians from obeying that truth. Verses 8-9 continue that theme but with a cooking metaphor: **"8 Such persuasion does not come from the one who calls you. 9 A little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough."** (<sup>5.8</sup>ἡ πεισμονὴ οὐκ ἐκ τοῦ καλοῦντος ὑμᾶς. <sup>5.9</sup>μικρὰ ζύμη ὅλον τὸ φύραμα ζυμοῖ.). A play on words in the Greek can't be reproduced in the English translation. Their μὴ πείθεσθαι (v. 8) leads to ἡ πεισμονὴ (v. 9). The noun and the verb come from the same root stem. The desire to get them to not obey the true gospel results in a different persuasion, one that doesn't originate from the God who first called them into salvation. Then the cooking metaphor of the evil influence that false teaching can have, just like yeast that spreads quickly saturates a batch of flour. Paul now becomes personal with the Galatians in verses 10-12. He first expresses confidence in the Galatians: **"I am confident about you in the Lord that you will not think otherwise"** (ἐγὼ πέποιθα εἰς ὑμᾶς ἐν κυρίῳ ὅτι οὐδὲν ἄλλο φρονήσετε). He continues the play off the Greek stem, πείθω, which can't be reproduced in the English. His confidence is expressed by the Perfect tense form of this verb, πέποιθα. The real impact of the Judaizer message was to get the Galatians to not obey the truth (μὴ πείθεσθαι) because it represented a different persuasion (ἡ πεισμονὴ) not from God, which stood in stark contrast to Paul's persuasion about the steadfastness of the Galatians (πέποιθα). Next, Paul declares the personal liability of these Judaizers before God: **"But whoever it is that is confusing you will pay the penalty"** (ὁ δὲ ταρασσὼν ὑμᾶς βαστάσει τὸ κρίμα, ὅστις ἐὰν ᾖ.). Once more using the same descriptive language as in the [Exordium](#) (the one troubling you...) Paul asserts that they will face the wrath of God for their actions. Paul then asserts the confirmation of his message by the suffering that he is experiencing: **"But my friends, why am I still being persecuted if I am still preaching circumcision? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed."**



(ἐγὼ δέ, ἀδελφοί, εἰ περιτομὴν ἔτι κηρύσσω, τί ἔτι διώκομαι. ἄρα κατήργηται τὸ σκάνδαλον τοῦ σταυροῦ.). This suggests an unworthy motive for the Judaizers' preaching of their alternative message. What is implicit here will be made explicit in [6:12](#): "It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that try to compel you to be circumcised—only that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ." That Jesus was crucified by the Romans as a criminal could bother some folks. Paul saw it as God's means of salvation, but the Judaizers wanted to de-emphasize this aspect. This would make the gospel easier for people of that day to accept. It would make them less likely to suffer persecution from both the synagogue and the Romans. It amounted to a first century "cheap grace" that Paul saw as possessing fatal flaws. Finally, in verse 12 Paul expresses his true feelings toward these people: "I wish those who unsettle you would castrate themselves!" (ὄφελον καὶ ἀποκόψονται οἱ ἀναστατοῦντες ὑμᾶς.). Most English translations, of necessity, tame down Paul's expression here because of cultural proprieties in our age. Literally Paul declares: "O that these troublers would cut their entire penes off!" It plays off the circumcision background along these lines: If cutting off the foreskin does so much good, then why not cut off the entire penes! What is expressed here is Paul's complete disdain for the message of the Judaizers. They have focused on the external and have missed the point of God's grace entirely.

What lessons can we learn from these verses? One that comes to my mind is the importance of centering our religious commitments squarely on the apostolic gospel. That gospel means an authentic faith commitment to Jesus Christ who died on Calvary for our sins. To add other requirements for salvation to that central message is to risk developing a Judaizing gospel that becomes a false doctrine leading people to God's curse, not His blessing. Our conversion faith commitment, assuming it was genuine, has put us in a race with the finishing line being God's ultimate salvation at the end of the track. We must run that race to its completion with the same faith commitment that we started with. Nothing must be allowed to interfere with that race of faith. Many distractions exist in our world today. For us as Baptists in the South, the so-called SBC controversy stands as a huge obstacle placed on that track. For many on the right-wing side the obstacles of a false elevation of the role of the Bible in our faith blocks the way of faith in Jesus, as does the Baptist Faith and Message. For many Christians, mostly outside of Baptist ranks, the opposite obstacle stands in the way. A watered down view of Jesus, largely remade in the image of a modern spineless American preacher who wants to be inclusive so badly that sin is discarded, threatens their race. If we stand for an authentic faith in the tradition of Paul and Jesus, we must be prepared to take criticism and opposition. Paul would not compromise his gospel in order to reduce the opposition and hostility coming against him. Neither should we.

### b. Admonition Two, 5:13-24

#### GNT

<sup>5.13</sup> Ὑμεῖς γὰρ ἐπ' ἐλευθερίᾳ ἐκλήθητε, ἀδελφοί· μόνον μὴ τὴν ἐλευθερίαν εἰς ἀφορμὴν τῆ σαρκί, ἀλλὰ διὰ τῆς ἀγάπης δουλεύετε ἀλλήλοις. <sup>5.14</sup> ὁ γὰρ πᾶς νόμος ἐν ἐνὶ λόγῳ πεπλήρωται, ἐν τῷ Ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτόν. <sup>5.15</sup> εἰ δὲ ἀλλήλους δάκνετε καὶ κατεσθίετε, βλέπετε μὴ ὑπ' ἀλλήλων ἀναλωθῆτε. <sup>5.16</sup> Λέγω δέ, πνεύματι περιπατεῖτε καὶ ἐπιθυμίαν σαρκὸς οὐ μὴ

#### NASB

13 For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. 14 For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." 15 But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another. 16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and

#### NRSV

13 For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. 14 For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 15 If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another. 16 Live by

#### NLT

13 For you have been called to live in freedom – not freedom to satisfy your sinful nature, but freedom to serve one another in love. 14 For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." 15 But if instead of showing love among yourselves you are always biting and devouring one another, watch out! Beware of destroying one another. 16 So I advise you to live according to your new life in the Holy Spirit. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. 17 The old

τελέσητε. <sup>5.17</sup> ἢ γὰρ σὰρξ ἐπιθυμεῖ κατὰ τοῦ πνεύματος, τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα κατὰ τῆς σαρκός, ταῦτα γὰρ ἀλλήλοις ἀντίκειται, ἵνα μὴ ἂν ἐὰν θέλητε ταῦτα ποιῆτε. <sup>5.18</sup> εἰ δὲ πνεύματι ἄγεσθε, οὐκ ἐστὲ ὑπὸ νόμον. <sup>5.19</sup> φανερὰ δὲ ἐστὶν τὰ ἔργα τῆς σαρκός, ἅτινά ἐστιν πορνεία, ἀκαθαρσία, ἀσέλγεια, <sup>5.20</sup> εἰδωλολατρία, φαρμακεία, ἔχθραι, ἔρις, ζῆλος, θυμοί, ἐριθείαι, διχοστασίαι, αἰρέσεις, <sup>5.21</sup> φθόνοι, μέθαι, κῶμοι καὶ τὰ ὅμοια τούτοις, ἃ προλέγω ὑμῖν καθὼς προεῖπον ὅτι οἱ τὰ τοιαῦτα πράσσοντες βασιλείαν θεοῦ οὐ κληρονομήσουσιν. <sup>5.22</sup> Ὁ δὲ καρπὸς τοῦ πνεύματος ἐστὶν ἀγάπη χαρὰ εἰρήνη, μακροθυμία χρηστότης ἀγαθωσύνη, πίστις <sup>5.23</sup> πραῦτης ἐγκράτεια· κατὰ τῶν τοιούτων οὐκ ἔστιν νόμος. <sup>5.24</sup> οἱ δὲ τοῦ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ τὴν σάρκα ἐσταύρωσαν σὺν τοῖς παθήμασιν καὶ ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις.



#### Notes:

These verses are perhaps at the top of the list as some of the richest and most important verses in the entire Bible. No where else in Paul's writings does he go into as much detail about the role of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life. In these verses we get a detailed glimpse into how faith produces a life of loving devotion to both God and others.

The foundation for these verses is in verse 13: "For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another" (Ἵμεῖς γὰρ ἐπ' ἐλευθερίᾳ ἐκλήθητε, ἀδελφοί· μόνον μὴ τὴν ἐλευθερίαν εἰς ἀφορμὴν τῆ σαρκί, ἀλλὰ διὰ τῆς ἀγάπης δουλεύετε ἀλλήλοις.). The axiom is essentially the same as in 5:1a. Our calling is to the freedom that is found only in Christ. The advancement comes in the negative/positive admonitions that grow out of the basic spiritual principle. This freedom is not to be turned inward to self gratification. Instead, it becomes the basis for reaching out to others in the same selflessness that marked Jesus' ministry to others. Here a fundamental distinction between the authentic gospel and the Judaizing message surfaces. Legalism

you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. 17 For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. 19 Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, 21 envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. 24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its pas-

sions and desires. the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, 21 envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. 24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its pas-

sions and desires. sinful nature loves to do evil, which is just opposite from what the Holy Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are opposite from what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, and your choices are never free from this conflict. 18 But when you are directed by the Holy Spirit, you are no longer subject to the law. 19 When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, your lives will produce these evil results: sexual immorality, impure thoughts, eagerness for lustful pleasure, 20 idolatry, participation in demonic activities, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, divisions, the feeling that everyone is wrong except those in your own little group, 21 envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other kinds of sin. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God. 22 But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. Here there is no conflict with the law. 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there.

always turns inward toward individual spiritual accomplishment that then becomes a basis for pride and arrogance. This is the opposite of the example of Jesus and the gospel that grows from him. For Paul, this legalism appeals to the fleshly side of us, that is, the old carnal self. This side must not receive affirmation. The genuine faith expression is energized by love, which then becomes the basis for serving others. Out of this foundational set of affirmations the flows a series of declarations and admonitions that we need to hear in profound ways.

The first of these comes in verses 14-15: “14 For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ 15 If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.” (5.14 ὁ γὰρ πᾶς νόμος ἐν ἐνὶ λόγῳ πεπλήρωται, ἐν τῷ Ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτόν. 5.15 εἰ δὲ ἀλλήλους δάκνετε καὶ κατεσθίετε, βλέπετε μὴ ὑπ’ ἀλλήλων ἀναλωθῆτε.). These follow the core structure of axiom then admonition based upon the axiom.

Again, Paul appeals to an OT principle based on Lev. 19:18 (NIV): “Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.” Additionally, this principle is foundational to the teachings of Jesus (Mt. 5:43; 19:19; 22:39; Mk. 12:31; Lk. 10:27), and James (2:8). Paul also used it in a similar manner in Rom. 13:9. The central role is summed up in the way that Paul introduces the OT quote. Based upon that principle comes next his warning, couched in a first class conditional sentence in the Greek, which assumes the instance of the “if” clause. Using the metaphor of fighting animals, he assumes that the Galatians are fussing with one another like fighting animals. The presence of the Judaizing teachers in the churches has disrupted the peaceful fellowship of the churches. He warns them that if they keep it up the end result will be the destruction of the churches. This kind of activity means that the Galatians are using their freedom in Christ as “an occasion for the flesh” rather than serving one another in love. Thus, they are misusing their freedom in ways against Christ, and need to stop it.

The second application, vv. 16-24, constitutes the longest discussion about the Holy Spirit anywhere in the writings of Paul. As such, it stands in a central place for any [Doctrine](#) of the [Holy Spirit](#) in the writings of Paul. The foundational principle is found in verse 16: “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.” (NASB; Λέγω δέ, πνεύματι περιπατεῖτε καὶ ἐπιθυμίαν σαρκὸς οὐ μὴ τελέσητε.). Since the Galatians are using their freedom as an occasion for the flesh (v. 15), how best can they correct this and shift over to serving one another in love? Paul’s answer is the presence and leadership of the Holy Spirit. His admonition is introduced with solemnity: “But I say...” He is dead serious in what he is going to tell them. His admonition is framed in an ancient Jewish thought pattern: command / promise. The metaphor of living their life, that is, behaving themselves, is pictured as walking through life. Thus he commands them to walk through life under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. If they will do this, then Paul affirms that there is no way for them to give in to the cravings of the flesh. The double negative of the Greek, οὐ μὴ, intensifies the promise of no fleshly desire controlling them.

But what does the leadership of the Holy Spirit mean beyond guarding us from fleshly cravings? Verses 17-24 spell out the details. **First** (v. 17), Paul asserts the ongoing battle between our old nature (the flesh) and God’s Spirit: “For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want.” (ἡ γὰρ σὰρξ ἐπιθυμεῖ κατὰ τοῦ πνεύματος, τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα κατὰ τῆς σαρκὸς, ταῦτα γὰρ ἀλλήλοις ἀντίκειται, ἵνα μὴ ἂ ἐὰν θέλητε ταῦτα ποιῆτε.). This we must acknowledge, if we’re to get on top of this battle. **Next** (v. 18), the Spirit’s leadership can never be achieved through Torah obedience: “But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law.” (εἰ δὲ πνεύματι ἄγεσθε, οὐκ ἐστὲ ὑπὸ νόμον.). No externally imposed set of rules and regulations can replace the leadership of the Holy Spirit. When we are under the Spirit’s leadership, we are set free from such legalism. This goes back to Paul’s earlier assertion of the mutual exclusiveness of faith and Torah obedience. **Third** (vv. 19-23), Paul illustrates the consequences of being following the flesh (=works) and those of being led by the Spirit (=fruits). First, the works of the flesh: “19 Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, 21 envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” (5.19 φανερά δέ ἐστὶν τὰ ἔργα τῆς σαρκὸς, ἅτινά ἐστιν πορνεία, ἀκαθαρσία, ἀσέλγεια, 5.20 εἰδωλολατρία, φαρμακεία, ἔχθραι, ἔρις, ζῆλος, θυμοί, ἐριθείαι, διχοστασίαι, αἰρέσεις, 5.21 φθόνοι, μέθαι, κῶμοι καὶ τὰ ὅμοια τούτοις, ἃ προλέγω ὑμῖν καθὼς προεἶπον ὅτι οἱ τὰ τοιαῦτα πράσσοντες βασιλείαν θεοῦ οὐ κληρονομήσουσιν.). This [lengthy vice list](#) catalogues a series of attitudes

and actions that arise when our old nature is in charge of running our lives. This is in-line with the other vice lists found throughout the New Testament. Paul's final word here is chilling: "I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God." For those whose life is lived out under the control of the flesh filling their lives with these actions and attitudes, there is no salvation. Only God's wrath at the end of the road in final judgment.

But the leadership of the Holy Spirit produces wonderful consequences (=fruits), that Paul here lists as [a virtue list](#): "22 By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control." (5.22' Ο δὲ καρπὸς τοῦ πνεύματός ἐστιν ἀγάπη χαρὰ εἰρήνη, μακροθυμία χρηστότης ἀγαθωσύνη, πίστις 5.23πραῦτης ἐγκράτεια'). This also is in line with similar virtue lists in the New Testament. The emphasis in this list is upon specific dispositions toward other people as the foundation of actions toward them. One finds additional insight in comparing these vice and virtue lists in the NT with those found in the major philosophical movements active during Paul's day. [Stoicism](#) and [Epicureanism](#) were the two most popular and influential movements, although one must remember that both these movements together impacted perhaps ten percent of the people living in Paul's day. One major teacher of Stoicism was [Seneca the Younger](#), whose life almost exactly paralleled that of Paul's. Many of the attitudes and actions in vice/virtue lists in these two movements will overlap what we find here in Galatians, as well as in most of the vice/virtue list elsewhere in the New Testament. But the profound differences emerge upon comparison of the details. For the Greek and Roman philosophers vices are the product of ignorance, and virtues are the result of self-disciplined education. Both are achievements of the individual. For Paul, on the vices are "works of the flesh." That is, the result of individuals securing to their old sinful nature. The virtues, however, are not human achievements. Instead, they are the products (fruits) of the leadership of God's Spirit in the lives of redeemed believers. For the philosophers, the pursuit of the virtues lead to happiness and peace. For Paul the goal of the Spirit's leadership is the glory of Christ. Peace and happiness are by-products, not goals.

Paul's concluding observation about these fruits is "There is no law against such things" (κατὰ τῶν τοιούτων οὐκ ἔστιν νόμος). At first, this may seem puzzling. But upon closer examination, it becomes clear that Paul is linking the fruits of the Spirit back to his declaration about the Law in verse 18. The restrictiveness of Torah obedience for Paul couldn't find a way to repress these traits that result from the leadership of the Holy Spirit over our lives. Probably, what Paul is getting at is the negativism that naturally grows out of strict religious legalism. If you look around you to observe the individuals driven even in our world by such strict legalism, not much of the fruit of the Holy Spirit will be found. More often, the opposite of these traits will dominate the lives of these individuals.

**Finally** (v. 24), Paul concludes this emphasis with a summary declaration: "And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." (οἱ δὲ τοῦ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ τὴν σάρκα ἐσταύρωσαν σὺν τοῖς παθήμασιν καὶ ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις.). To belong to Christ Jesus in genuine conversion means to have put to death the old nature (the flesh) along with its cravings. Paul's conversion metaphor is "[crucify](#)." Of the four uses in Galatians (2:19; 3:1; 5:24; 6:14), the last one throws light on this second use: "But may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." Christ [died on a cross](#) to redeem us, and we in our commitment to him must die to self and to our old nature as Paul declares in [2:19-20](#): "19 For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; 20 and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Eugene Nida (*Translator's Handbook on Galatians*) has some interesting comments:

*Have put to death* is literally "crucified." It is, of course, a figurative expression, suggesting a connection between this action of the believer and the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. The verb is in the aorist tense, suggesting either that the action took place in the past (at conversion or baptism), or that the action resulted in a complete and decisive change. Since this action is presently reflected in the experience of every believer, it is better to translate it in the perfect tense, as in *TEV* and most other translations.

When we commit to Christ, little do we realize what is taking place. A death occurs; a new life begins. But this new life is lived out in the power of and under the leadership of God's Holy Spirit. The product of that is a wonderful life bringing glory to Christ and thus the fulfillment of our purpose in creation. Praise be to God!

Appendix 5:<sup>1</sup>  
**STRUCTURAL OUTLINE OF GALATIANS**

HEADING:	STATEMENT:	REFERENCE:
<b>PRESCRIPTIO</b>		<b>1.1-5</b>
Superscriptio		1.1-2a
Adscriptio	1.2b	
Salutatio		1.3-5
<b>PROPOSITIO (PROEM)</b>	<b>1-7</b>	<b>1.6-10</b>
<b>BODY</b>	<b>8-192</b>	<b>1.11-6.10</b>
<b>Narratio</b>	<b>8-52</b>	<b>1.11-2.21</b>
Thesis	8-11	1.11-12
Evidences	12-52	1.13-2.21
1 Conversion	12-16	1.13-17
2 1st Jerusalem Visit	17-20	1.18-20
3 Return Home	21-24	1.21-24
4 Later Jerusalem Visit	25-35	2.1-10
5 Antioch Confrontation	36-41	2.11-14
Conclusion	42-52	2.15-21
<b>Probatio</b>	<b>53-139</b>	<b>3.1-4.31</b>
Conversion (1)	53-59	3.1-5
Abraham (2)	60-69	3.6-14
Law (3)	70-78	3.15-18
Excursus A	79-89	3.19-25
Baptism (4)	90-104	3.26-4.7
Experience (5)	105-108	4.8-11
Friendship (6)	109-121	4.12-20
Allegory (7)	122-139	4.21-31
<b>Exhortatio</b>	<b>140-191</b>	<b>5.1-6.10</b>
Admonition 1	140-159	5.1-12
Admonition 2	160-173	5.13-24
Admonition 3	174-191	5.25-6.10
<b>CONCLUSIO (ESCHOTOKOLL)</b>	<b>192-204</b>	<b>6.11-18</b>
Seal	192	6.11
Synopsis	193-201	6.12-16
Request	202-203	6.17
Benediction	204	6.18

<sup>1</sup>Taken from Lorin L. Cranford, A Study Manual of Paul's Letter to the Galatians: English Text (Fort Worth: Scripta Publishing, Inc., 1982), 159. All rights reserved.

## GNT

<sup>5.1</sup>τῇ ἐλευθερίᾳ ἡμᾶς Χριστὸς ἠλευθέρωσεν· στήκετε οὖν καὶ μὴ πάλιν ζυγῷ δουλείας ἐνέχεσθε. <sup>5.2</sup>Ἴδε ἐγὼ Παῦλος λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ἐὰν περιτέμνησθε, Χριστὸς ὑμᾶς οὐδὲν ὠφελήσει. <sup>5.3</sup>μαρτύρομαι δὲ πάλιν παντὶ ἀνθρώπῳ περιτεμνομένῳ ὅτι ὀφειλέτης ἐστὶν ὅλον τὸν νόμον ποιῆσαι. <sup>5.4</sup>κατηργήθητε ἀπὸ Χριστοῦ, οἵτινες ἐν νόμῳ δικαιούσθε, τῆς χάριτος ἐξέπεσατε. <sup>5.5</sup>ἡμεῖς γὰρ πνεύματι ἐκ πίστεως ἐλπίδα δικαιοσύνης ἀπεκδεχόμεθα. <sup>5.6</sup>ἐν γὰρ Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ οὔτε περιτομὴ τι ἰσχύει οὔτε ἀκροβυστία ἀλλὰ πίστις δι' ἀγάπης ἐνεργουμένη. <sup>5.7</sup>Ἐτρέχετε καλῶς· τίς ὑμᾶς ἐνέκοψεν τῇ ἀληθείᾳ μὴ πείθεσθαι. <sup>5.8</sup>ἡ πεισμονὴ οὐκ ἐκ τοῦ καλοῦντος ὑμᾶς. <sup>5.9</sup>μικρὰ ζύμη ὅλον τὸ φύραμα ζυμοῖ. <sup>5.10</sup>ἐγὼ πέποιθα εἰς ὑμᾶς ἐν κυρίῳ ὅτι οὐδὲν ἄλλο φρονήσετε· ὁ δὲ ταράσων ὑμᾶς βαστάσει τὸ κρίμα, ὅστις ἐὰν ᾔ. <sup>5.11</sup>ἐγὼ δέ, ἀδελφοί, εἰ περιτομὴν ἔτι κηρύσσω, τί ἔτι διώκομαι. ἄρα κατήρηται τὸ σκάνδαλον τοῦ σταυροῦ. <sup>5.12</sup>ὄφελον καὶ ἀποκόψονται οἱ ἀναστατοῦντες ὑμᾶς.

<sup>5.13</sup>Ἵμεῖς γὰρ ἐπ' ἐλευθερίᾳ ἐκλήθητε, ἀδελφοί· μόνον μὴ τὴν ἐλευθερίαν εἰς ἀφορμὴν τῆ σαρκί, ἀλλὰ διὰ τῆς ἀγάπης δουλεύετε ἀλλήλοις. <sup>5.14</sup>ὁ γὰρ πᾶς νόμος ἐν ἐνὶ λόγῳ πεπλήρωται, ἐν τῷ Ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτόν. <sup>5.15</sup>εἰ δὲ ἀλλήλους δάκνετε καὶ κατεσθίετε, βλέπετε μὴ ὑπ' ἀλλήλων ἀναλωθῆτε. <sup>5.16</sup>Λέγω δέ, πνεύματι περιπατεῖτε καὶ ἐπιθυμίαν σαρκὸς οὐ μὴ τελέσητε. <sup>5.17</sup>ἡ γὰρ σὰρξ ἐπιθυμεῖ κατὰ τοῦ πνεύματος, τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα κατὰ τῆς σαρκός, ταῦτα γὰρ ἀλλήλοις ἀντίκειται, ἵνα μὴ ἂ ἐὰν θέλητε ταῦτα ποιῆτε. <sup>5.18</sup>εἰ δὲ πνεύματι ἄγεσθε, οὐκ ἐστὲ ὑπὸ νόμον. <sup>5.19</sup>φανερὰ δέ ἐστὶν τὰ ἔργα τῆς σαρκός, ἅτινά ἐστιν πορνεία, ἀκαθαρσία, ἀσέλγεια, <sup>5.20</sup>εἰδωλολατρία, φαρμακεία, ἔχθραι, ἔρις, ζῆλος, θυμοί, ἐριθείαι, διχοστασίαι, αἰρέσεις, <sup>5.21</sup>φθόνοι, μέθαι, κῶμοι καὶ τὰ ὅμοια τούτοις, ἃ προλέγω ὑμῖν καθὼς προεῖπον ὅτι οἱ τὰ τοιαῦτα πράσσοντες βασιλείαν θεοῦ οὐ κληρονομήσουσιν. <sup>5.22</sup>Ὁ δὲ καρπὸς τοῦ πνεύματος ἐστὶν ἀγάπη χαρὰ εἰρήνη, μακροθυμία χρηστότης ἀγαθωσύνη, πίστις <sup>5.23</sup>πραῦτης ἐγκράτεια· κατὰ τῶν τοιούτων οὐκ ἔστιν νόμος. <sup>5.24</sup>οἱ δὲ τοῦ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ τὴν σάρκα ἐσταύρωσαν σὺν τοῖς παθήμασιν καὶ ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις.

## NASB

1 It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. 2 Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you. 3 And I testify again to every man who receives circumcision, that he is under obligation to keep the whole Law. 4 You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. 5 For we through the Spirit, by faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness. 6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love. 7 You were running well; who hindered you from obeying the truth? 8 This persuasion did not come from Him who calls you. 9 A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough. 10 I have confidence in you in the Lord that you will adopt no other view; but the one who is disturbing you will bear his judgment, whoever he is. 11 But I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? Then the stumbling block of the cross has been abolished. 12 I wish that those who are troubling you would even mutilate themselves.

13 For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. 14 For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." 15 But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another. 16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. 17 For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. 19 Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, 21 envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. 24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

## NRSV

1 For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. 2 Listen! I, Paul, am telling you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you. 3 Once again I testify to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obliged to obey the entire law. 4 You who want to be justified by the law have cut yourselves off from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. 5 For through the Spirit, by faith, we eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. 6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; the only thing that counts is faith working through love. 7 You were running well; who prevented you from obeying the truth? 8 Such persuasion does not come from the one who calls you. 9 A little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough. 10 I am confident about you in the Lord that you will not think otherwise. But whoever it is that is confusing you will pay the penalty. 11 But my friends, why am I still being persecuted if I am still preaching circumcision? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed. 12 I wish those who unsettle you would castrate themselves!

13 For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another. 14 For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." 15 If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another. 16 Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, 21 envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. 24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

## NLT

1 So Christ has really set us free. Now make sure that you stay free, and don't get tied up again in slavery to the law. 2 Listen! I, Paul, tell you this: If you are counting on circumcision to make you right with God, then Christ cannot help you. 3 I'll say it again. If you are trying to find favor with God by being circumcised, you must obey all of the regulations in the whole law of Moses. 4 For if you are trying to make yourselves right with God by keeping the law, you have been cut off from Christ! You have fallen away from God's grace. 5 But we who live by the Spirit eagerly wait to receive everything promised to us who are right with God through faith. 6 For when we place our faith in Christ Jesus, it makes no difference to God whether we are circumcised or not circumcised. What is important is faith expressing itself in love. 7 You were getting along so well. Who has interfered with you to hold you back from following the truth? 8 It certainly isn't God, for he is the one who called you to freedom. 9 But it takes only one wrong person among you to infect all the others – a little yeast spreads quickly through the whole batch of dough! 10 I am trusting the Lord to bring you back to believing as I do about these things. God will judge that person, whoever it is, who has been troubling and confusing you. 11 Dear brothers and sisters, if I were still preaching that you must be circumcised – as some say I do – why would the Jews persecute me? The fact that I am still being persecuted proves that I am still preaching salvation through the cross of Christ alone. 12 I only wish that those troublemakers who want to mutilate you by circumcision would mutilate themselves.

13 For you have been called to live in freedom – not freedom to satisfy your sinful nature, but freedom to serve one another in love. 14 For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." 15 But if instead of showing love among yourselves you are always biting and devouring one another, watch out! Beware of destroying one another. 16 So I advise you to live according to your new life in the Holy Spirit. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. 17 The old sinful nature loves to do evil, which is just opposite from what the Holy Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are opposite from what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, and your choices are never free from this conflict. 18 But when you are directed by the Holy Spirit, you are

no longer subject to the law. 19 When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, your lives will produce these evil results: sexual immorality, impure thoughts, eagerness for lustful pleasure, 20 idolatry, participation in demonic activities, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, divisions, the feeling that everyone is wrong except those in your own little group, 21 envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other kinds of sin. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God. 22 But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. Here there is no conflict with the law. 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there.





## Greek Text Diagram

140 5.1 τῇ ἐλευθερίᾳ ἡμᾶς Χριστὸς ἠλευθέρωσεν·  
οὖν

141 στήκετε  
καὶ

142 μὴ πάλιν ζυγῷ δουλείας ἐνέχεσθε.

5.2 Ἴδε

143 ἐγὼ Παῦλος λέγω ὑμῖν

ἐὰν περιτέμνησθε,  
ὅτι...Χριστὸς ὑμᾶς οὐδὲν ὠφελήσει.

5.3 δὲ

144 μαρτύρομαι...ἀνθρώπῳ  
πάντι  
πάλιν περιτεμνομένῳ

ὅτι ὀφειλέτης ἐστὶν  
ὅλον τὸν νόμον ποιῆσαι.

145 5.4 κατηργήθητε  
ἀπὸ Χριστοῦ,  
οἵτινες ἐν νόμῳ δικαιοῦσθε,  
145 τῆς χάριτος ἐξεπέσατε.

5.5 γὰρ

146 ἡμεῖς...ἐλπίδα δικαιοσύνης ἀπεκδεχόμεθα.  
πνεύματι  
ἐκ πίστεως

5.6 γὰρ

147 οὔτε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ  
οὔτε  
147 περιτομή τι ἰσχύει

148 οὔτε  
ἀκροβυστία ---  
ἀλλὰ

149 πίστις ---  
δι' ἀγάπης  
ἐνεργουμένη.

150 5.7 Ἐτρέχετε καλῶς·

151 τίς ὑμᾶς ἐνέκοψεν  
τῇ ἀληθείᾳ μὴ πείθεσθαι.

152 5.8 ἡ πεισμονὴ οὐκ (ἐστίν)  
ἐκ τοῦ καλοῦντος ὑμᾶς.

153 5.9 μικρὰ ζύμη ὅλον τὸ φύραμα ζυμοῖ.

154 <sup>5.10</sup> *ἐγὼ πέποιθα*  
εἰς ὑμᾶς  
ἐν κυρίῳ  
ὅτι οὐδὲν ἄλλο φρονήσετε·  
δὲ  
155 *ὁ ταρασσὼν ὑμᾶς βαστάσει τὸ κρίμα,*  
ὅστις ἐὰν ᾖ.  
<sup>5.11</sup> δὲ  
ἀδελφοί,  
εἰ περιτομὴν ἔτι κηρύσσω,  
156 *ἐγώ...τί ἔτι διώκομαι.*  
ἄρα  
157 *κατήγγηται τὸ σκάνδαλον τοῦ σταυροῦ.*  
<sup>5.12</sup> ὄφελον καὶ ἀποκόψονται οἱ ἀναστατοῦντες ὑμᾶς.  
<sup>5.13</sup> γὰρ  
ἐπ' ἐλευθερίᾳ  
159 *Ἵμεῖς ἐκλήθητε,*  
ἀδελφοί·  
160 *μόνον μὴ τὴν ἐλευθερίαν -----*  
εἰς ἀφορμὴν τῆ σαρκί,  
ἀλλὰ  
διὰ τῆς ἀγάπης  
161 *δουλεύετε ἀλλήλοις.*  
<sup>5.14</sup> γὰρ  
ἐν ἐνὶ λόγῳ  
162 *ὁ πᾶς νόμος...πεπλήρωται,*  
ἐν τῷ  
Ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου  
ὡς σεαυτόν.  
<sup>5.15</sup> δὲ  
εἰ ἀλλήλους δάκνετε καὶ κατεσθίετε,  
163 *βλέπετε*  
ὑπ' ἀλλήλων  
μὴ ἀναλωθῆτε.  
<sup>5.16</sup> δὲ  
164 *Λέγω*  
πνεύματι περιπατεῖτε  
καὶ  
ἐπιθυμίαν σαρκὸς οὐ μὴ τελέσητε.

5.17 γὰρ  
165 ἡ σὰρξ ἐπιθυμεῖ  
κατὰ τοῦ πνεύματος,  
δὲ  
166 τὸ πνεῦμα -----  
κατὰ τῆς σαρκός,  
γὰρ  
167 ταῦτα ἀλλήλοις ἀντίκειται,  
ἃ ἐὰν θέλητε  
ἵνα μὴ... ταῦτα ποιῆτε.

5.18 δὲ  
168 εἰ πνεύματι ἄγεσθε,  
οὐκ ἐστὲ  
ὑπὸ νόμον.

5.19 δὲ  
169 φανερὰ ἐστὶν τὰ ἔργα τῆς σαρκός,  
ἅτινά ἐστιν πορνεία,  
ἀκαθαρσία,  
ἀσέλγεια,  
5.20 εἰδωλολατρία,  
φαρμακεία,  
ἐχθραὶ,  
ἔρις,  
ζῆλος,  
θυμοί,  
ἐριθείαι,  
διχοστασίαι,  
5.21 αἰρέσεις,  
φθόνοι,  
μέθαι,  
κῶμοι  
καὶ  
τὰ ὅμοια τούτοις,  
ἃ προλέγω ὑμῖν  
καθὼς προεῖπον  
/-----|  
ὅτι οἱ τὰ τοιαῦτα πράσσοντες  
βασιλείαν θεοῦ οὐ κληρονομήσουσιν.

5.22 δὲ  
170 Ὁ καρπὸς τοῦ πνεύματος ἐστὶν ἀγάπη  
χαρά  
εἰρήνη,  
μακροθυμία  
χρηστότης  
ἀγαθωσύνη,  
πίστις  
πραΰτης

5.23

ἐγκράτεια·

κατὰ τῶν τοιούτων  
171 οὐκ ἔστιν νόμος·

5.24 δὲ  
172 οἱ τοῦ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ τὴν σάρκα ἐσταύρωσαν

σὺν τοῖς παθήμασιν  
καὶ  
ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις·

