

***Walk in the Spirit Toward Spiritual Maturity!***  
**Galatians 5:16-26**

***“But I say, live by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desires of the flesh.”***  
**(Galatians 5:16)**

***The gospel is for Christians.***

This mini-series is about the Christian’s ongoing need for the gospel. Not just as the message that delivers us from the penalty of sin when we believed what it says about Christ’s sufficiency to save us, but also as the truth of Christ’s sufficiency to empower us to live for Him. ***It must not only be believed for salvation, but also applied for life.***

***Review of critical section about the power of the gospel in sanctification (life-change):***

Paul’s final section (5:1-6:10) demonstrates how this grace works in life. Grace works through liberty. Christ set us free to demonstrate His righteousness in ways that transcend any enslaving set of rules or moral codes (5:1-12). This liberty isn’t so that we can indulge the self-centered desires of our flesh as we did before we trusted in Christ. Using our freedom in that way will cause us to lose our inheritance in the coming kingdom (5:13-21). We’ve been set free to walk in the Spirit (5:16-18) so that we can display Christ’s righteousness through the fruit of the Spirit (5:22-25). But even this transformation isn’t about us; it’s about Christ and others. What we’ve really been set free to do is to love and serve others (6:1-10).

***The Most Practical Passage In Scripture Guiding You Toward Spiritual Maturity:***

In one of the most important passages on the Christian life in the Bible, Paul explains the grace gospel alternative to the law. By walking in the Spirit, Christians overcome the self-indulgent sins of the flesh and express their faith through love, a love that glorifies God by displaying the character of Christ:

***Walk in the Spirit to glorify God in your liberty!***

- I. Live by the Spirit and you will defeat the flesh, secure your inheritance in the Kingdom, and glorify God (5:16-26).
  - A. Command: Live by the Spirit to defeat the flesh instead of living as if you’re under the law (5:16-18).
    1. Simple Imperative: To “walk in the Spirit” is to live moment by moment submissively trusting in the Holy Spirit’s strength and desires rather than the self-indulgent and controlling flesh’s strength and desires.
    2. Amazing Promise: When we do what the Holy Spirit is telling us to do we will not do what the flesh is telling us to do.
    3. Constant Conflict: During our days on earth the Spirit and our flesh are always opposed to one another. This means that we are always conflicted, even when we walk in the Spirit. But we must trust the Spirit enough to do what He wants us to do.
    4. The Christian Alternative: We are led by the Spirit rather than living under the law.
  - B. Warning Against Living by the Flesh: Those Christians who live according to the self-centered and controlling flesh rather than the other-centered Spirit will be disinherited (5:19-21).
    1. The works of the flesh are obvious! Notice that the common thread to all these acts is that they are self-indulgent, controlling and against others. They are the opposite of the selfless love Paul has been teaching in this section (5:6, 13, 14).
    2. I don’t believe this is warning Christians against losing salvation for five reasons: 1) This would revoke the promises of God (John 3:16; John 6:47; Ephesians 2:8-9). Romans 8:29 tells us plainly that this will never happen. 2) Paul calls the readers *brothers and sisters* (v 11), even after telling them that those who are submitting to circumcision have “fallen from grace.” 3) This is

describing two contrasting systems of righteousness—law/grace; works/faith—not two states of being (saved/unsaved). 4) The verbs in 5:1-6 speak of losing *our* grip on something (grace) or rendering something useless (our resources in Christ). They do not speak of God losing His grip on us because that will never happen (John 10:29-30). 5) Logically, this would mean that even the slightest submission to legalism would mean loss of salvation. Note: An added reason is that it seems the Galatians, whom he calls “brothers and sisters,” are still engaged in some of these communal sins (5:26).

3. I believe this is a warning to true believers that if we persistently grieve and suppress the Spirit in lifestyles characterized by flesh-dominance, we lose intimacy with Christ and His people now (John 15) and rewards in the Millennial Kingdom (1 Corinthians 3:1-15; 2 Timothy 2:11-13; Revelation 2:26-27, 3:1).
4. ***Though I don't believe this is warning against losing our salvation, it does provide a diagnostic tool to help others.*** It's hard to give someone assurance who is living this type of lifestyle unconflicted! I would want to examine this person's belief to see if they really have trusted in Christ.

C. Result of Living by the Spirit: Those Christians who live by the Spirit display Christ's selfless love, not by following the law but by having crucified the flesh (5:22-24). This is the true fruit of liberty—love. We have been set free to live by the Spirit so that we can love with the type of love characterized by the eight characteristics listed (22-23). Since the law was given to constrain the flesh, there's no need for the law when we live by the Spirit (23b). When we trusted in Christ, the power of the flesh in our lives was crucified (24).

D. Recap and Specific Warning to the Galatians: “If you're led by the Spirit you'll live by loving one another well. That's not the way you're treating one another according to the reports I've heard” (25-26).

II. True spiritual maturity: Liberated Christians, living by the Spirit glorify God by their Christ like love.

- A. ***God's Spirit within you is always shouting, “Live for Christ and others by trusting the Spirit's power!”*** Whenever you're wondering what God wants you to do, know that His Spirit is telling you to do the selfless and loving thing. See also Philippians 2:13.
- B. ***Your flesh within you is always shouting, “Live for yourself by controlling your world!”*** Whenever you're wondering what God doesn't want you to do, know that your flesh is telling you to do the self-centered, controlling, and unloving thing. See also Colossians 3:11-15.
- C. ***But, you have the spiritual resources to do what the Spirit is telling you to do.*** Christ's work on the Cross rendered the flesh powerless. When you trusted in Him your flesh was crucified. See also Colossians 2:11-12 and Romans 6:14.
- D. ***If you feel as if it's impossible to do what the Spirit's telling you to do, something's wrong.*** Have you trusted in Christ? Do you have a secret life? Are you living in community?

### ***The Good News About Spiritual Maturity:***

***Attempting to manage my sin through the flesh inevitably leads to being soft on sin because it's destined to failure due to the weakness of the flesh. Trusting the original gospel by walking in the Spirit is not soft on sin, but it is a safe place to heal from the sins we've committed and the sins committed against us.***