



THRU the **BIBLE**

with *J. Vernon McGee*

GALATIANS

BIBLE COMPANION



EPISTLES

READ THIS FIRST

This Bible Companion is a summary of Dr. J. Vernon McGee's teaching of the book of Galatians heard on THRU the BIBLE. These summarized lessons get to the heart of Bible passages and are intended to stir your own thinking, prayer, and study.



Begin with prayer. Dr. McGee said, "We are living in the day of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the day of grace, when the Spirit of God takes the things of Christ and reveals them to us." Before you start each lesson, ask the Lord to use it to grow you up in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as He is revealed in that section. Dr. McGee said, "This is the secret of life and of Christian living."



As you study, read the Bible passage first. Invite God to open your eyes and deepen your understanding of His Word. That's a request God loves to answer!



If you want to listen to Dr. McGee's complete teaching on any specific passage, go to TTB.org/Galatians (or any book of the Bible).

The corresponding audio messages are listed at the top of the summaries. You can also use this Bible Companion to follow along and take notes while you listen to Dr. McGee teach a book of the Bible on the radio or online.



After every lesson, several questions are listed for your personal consideration or, if you're reading this as a group, for your discussion. Ask the Spirit to help you take to heart what He wants to show you.

LET THE WORD OF CHRIST DWELL IN YOU
RICHLY IN ALL WISDOM AND TEACHING....

COLOSSIANS 3:16^A

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LESSON 1

WHAT DO YOU BRING TO GOD?



Begin with prayer



Read **Galatians 1:1-10**



Listen at [TTB.org/Galatians](https://www.TTB.org/Galatians) to ***Galatians Intro—1:1*** and ***Galatians 1:2-10***

How do you want to live your life in God? You have three choices: By the Law. By license. By liberty. The Law strangles you with rules, but license kills you with permissiveness. Only when you live as free as you are in Christ does life work out for you as God intended.

The apostle Paul wrote this letter to the Christians living in the region of Galatia (modern Turkey) on his third missionary journey. He had first visited the many young churches years before, when the church was first getting started in this large region. And now he'd learned some false teachers were telling the Galatians to go back to their old ways of following the Law.

These Judaizers attacked the heart of the gospel and the foundations for these Christians' new faith. Paul wanted to get them the message loud and clear: Faith is enough to save. This is Paul's *fighting* epistle. He won't tolerate legalism. This epistle declares freedom from the shackles of the Law and equips us with the most vital truth of the Christian faith against any attack.

Written around the same time as the epistle to the Romans, some say if Romans came from the head, then Galatians came from the heart. This epistle provides the backbone and background for every great spiritual movement and revival that has taken place in the past two thousand years. Its message revolutionizes lives. Here it is:

Not only is a sinner saved by grace through faith plus nothing, but the saved sinner *lives* by grace. Grace is a way *to* life and a way *of* life. These two walk hand in hand.

Galatians is God's declaration of independence against legalism of every kind. When God gave the Law to His people through Moses, it was for their good. It showed them how much they need God. But the Law didn't take them to God. Now in Jesus Christ, we have a path to God. You travel this route by faith. Our new song is "saved by faith through grace." Amazing!

"The just shall live by faith." Three times in the New Testament, Habakkuk 2:4 is quoted:

Romans 1:17 emphasizes *the just*.

Hebrews 10:38 emphasizes *shall live*.

Galatians 3:11 emphasizes *by faith*.

In this letter to the Galatians, Paul defends the gospel from those who were saying you need to add the old rules to your new faith. "Faith plus Law" was these Judaizers' mantra. "Simple faith isn't enough," they said. "Faith plus nothing" was Paul' answer. The gospel of grace is sufficient to save.

Since the Judaizers attacked Paul's authority, Paul greets the Galatians with his title: He is an apostle of Jesus Christ and of God who raised Him from the dead. He's not appointed by men, but by God. People had nothing to do with it.

Grace and peace ... the order of this typical greeting by Paul takes on significance in this letter dedicated to God's grace. This grace from God must be experienced before the peace from God the Father can be experienced.

[Jesus] ***gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.*** -v. 4

Nothing we can add to Jesus' sacrifice could make it more effective or valuable. Nothing! What do we have to give? Anything? Can you add anything to His sacrifice? He gave Himself. When you give yourself, you give everything—who you are, what you have, your time, your talent. Everything. When Jesus gave Himself, He couldn't have given any more.

Why did Jesus give Himself? For our benefit. "That He might deliver us from this present evil age." The present value of the gospel proves its power and genuineness to deliver you—*today*. Do you have some sin chained around your feet? Jesus can deliver you. The gospel is genuine. Jesus died for us and rose from the dead "that He might deliver us from this present evil age."

This deliverance is “according to the will of our God and Father.” God wants you to experience freedom from sin, but it doesn’t come from following the Law. After He has saved us, we don’t continue to live in sin. He *can* and *wants* to break that chain around our hearts. And that’s why Jesus gave Himself—so we can be set free. This has always been God’s will for us.

Isn’t this amazing? Paul agrees—and he stops to praise God. “To whom be glory forever and ever. Amen” (v. 5). “Forever and ever” begins right now and is going on right into eternity.

This is the gospel of grace and glory that the false teachers in Galatia are mutilating. No wonder Paul comes out fighting. He’s fighting for grace.

The fact of the gospel is the death, burial, and bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ. (See 1 Corinthians 15:3-4.) You haven’t preached the gospel until you state these facts. Next is the interpretation of these facts, the reason for this letter. The Judaizers were not challenging the fact of the gospel, but they cast a sly and subtle cloud over what it means. They said, “So you’re saved? On what basis? Oh, faith will get you started but you also need to keep Moses’ Law or you’re not really saved.” Paul says they are saved by faith plus nothing.

This is an old heresy that’s still with us today. Add something to the gospel of grace; *do* something rather than simply believe something. It is faith plus something rather than faith plus nothing. Every cult and “ism” has something for you to *do* in order to be saved.

Jesus told the apostles to preach the gospel of salvation by grace. They weren’t to do anything to gain their salvation, but they were to trust what Christ already had done for them. The gospel shuts down all works (Romans 4:5). You can never be good enough to be saved. You can’t try harder, improve a little. You come to Jesus a sinner because that’s who He came to save.

When you add anything to the gospel, you pervert it, you change it. When you change the gospel, you make it the opposite of what it really is. The Judaizers didn’t deny the facts of the gospel—that Jesus died and rose again. They denied this was enough. They insisted you have to keep the Law plus trusting Christ. But, Paul says, whoever tries to mingle law and grace—let him be damned! Why? Because that perverts the gospel.

Even the best we could do on our own is as filthy rags in God’s sight. The Law condemns us, and it must make us speechless before grace can save us. (See Romans 3:19.) Most of the time, the problem is not that people can’t

be “good enough” to be saved, but that they are not “bad enough” to be saved. Humanity refuses to recognize its lost condition before God. This is the human predicament.

No one can please both God and man. The preaching of the gospel is not pleasing to lost man. Many unsaved people hate the message that they’re sinners in need of a Savior. They hate the message of grace. They’d rather hear how valuable and loved and special they are. The gospel of grace puts us in the dust and makes us beggars before God. If you don’t admit you need a Savior, then all you need is a helper. But that’s not true: We need somebody to *save* us.

Without the gospel of grace, people try to compensate for not doing enough to be saved. They try to balance good works against sins and have enough on the plus side to be saved. But that never works.

Grace admits you are a sinner and, by faith, turns to God. God doesn’t ask you to live the Christian life. He knows you can’t. He wants to live the Christian life through you. This is the message of the Epistle to the Galatians. First, we come to Jesus as sinners and are saved. You bring nothing to the table—He gives it all. He wants to take your sin and give you life (Romans 6:23). It’s as simple as that. Have you accepted God’s offer of life in Jesus Christ? This is where it all begins.

NEXT: Jesus accomplishes what the Law cannot.

7. Imagine being one of the Galatian believers who spent their lives keeping the Law before finally getting freedom after coming to faith in Christ. What would that feel like?

LESSON 2

FAITH PLUS NOTHING



Begin with prayer



Read **Galatians 1:11–3:5**



Listen at [TTB.org/Galatians](https://www.TTB.org/Galatians) to **Galatians 1:11-24**, **Galatians 2:1-14**, **Galatians 2:14-20**, and **Galatians 2:19–3:5**

Where did Paul get his authority to teach such a radical message to the Galatians? Was he one of Jesus' original 12 disciples? No.

When the Judaizers wanted to discredit Paul's message, they attacked him personally. *"He's no apostle,"* they said, casting a shadow on Paul's validity. But Paul shares three scenes from his life that prove his credibility.

Like other teachers, Paul didn't go to school to get his apostleship. Nor did other apostles lay hands on his head. Paul's apostleship and gospel came directly from Jesus Christ.

"You remember who I was," Paul said. *"A Pharisee of pharisees. Zealous for the Jewish religion. I persecuted anyone who threatened that. I systematically destroyed Christ-followers."*

"But then," Paul said, *"Jesus called me out of that life. He now tells me to go tell non-Jews about Him. Immediately after He called me, He sent me to the desert—to Arabia. I didn't talk with anyone before I left but received the gospel directly from Jesus Christ. Three years later I went to Jerusalem and compared what I knew with Peter and James."* (See Galatians 1:13-17; Acts 9:26-29.)

But Christians in Jerusalem couldn't believe Saul of Tarsus could be saved. With Barnabas' help Paul won their confidence. Now the issue to be settled was, is Paul preaching the same gospel as they were? Even Paul wanted that verified. Eventually, the church in Jerusalem approved Paul's gospel as the same.

Fourteen years later, Paul goes again to Jerusalem and he brings with him Titus, a young Gentile preacher. Likely this was the first great council in Jerusalem (Acts 15). The question this group needed to settle was how people are saved: By God's grace, or by obeying Moses' Law?

The Judaizers, the false teachers, said the Gentiles should live like the Jews. So why hadn't Paul forced Titus to be circumcised? Paul stood by his guns. *"Titus doesn't need to be circumcised to be saved. He is saved by faith apart from the Law, just like how you are saved."* Paul takes a courageous, huge stand for the gospel of grace.

We are saved by grace, not by anything else we do to please God.

Now Paul shares his third personal experience—this time with Peter in Antioch. Unlike in the Jerusalem church, most people in the Antioch church were Gentiles. In connection with the Lord's Supper, they also ate together afterwards. The Jews in the group had always eaten kosher and had never eaten meat that had been sacrificed to idols. The Gentiles weren't raised with either of these sensitivities. So, to accommodate those raised Jewish, they set up two tables. When Paul visited, he ate from the general table. When Peter visited, he ate from the kosher table.

Like a good Jew, Peter had never eaten anything unclean (even though the Lord told him he could—read his great story in Acts 10). Later, willing to embrace his new freedom in Christ, Peter decides to eat from the Gentile table. On his way to the table, he sees some elders visiting from the Jerusalem church and diverts to the kosher table instead. Paul saw him do that and called him on it, saying Peter was afraid of the legalist brothers from Jerusalem. *"You are free under grace, Peter. Don't turn from the freedom you have in Christ back to Judaism again."*

To a Jew in the first century, a Gentile would always be considered a sinner. Again, Paul took on the heroic challenge of changing the way people think. Jews thought they had a birthright advantage over everyone else. *"But remember,"* Paul said. *"Keeping the rules doesn't save you. Only a personal faith in Jesus Christ saves you."*

Self-improvement never saved anyone. They were saved because they trusted Jesus as the Messiah. To say you have to add *anything* to faith in Christ absolutely shreds the gospel. So, if Jews left the Law behind to embrace Jesus, why should we make Gentiles practice the Law? It doesn't work!

This was the topic of the great council of Jerusalem in Acts 15. Thankfully, guided by the Spirit of God, their conclusion was that Gentiles don't need the Law for salvation, nor for daily living. As Christians, we are called to a much higher plane.

For almost 1500 years, the Jews had the Law and had not been able to keep it. The Law does its job when it proves we are sinners and need God to save us. But the Law never saved a Jew. Why force a Gentile, who is saved by grace, to live like that? Paul then breaks apart every category of race, color, and social status and declares we are all on the same level before the Cross: We are all sinners in God's sight. You can't do anything to get God's favor. You're not a privileged group, you don't have to join a certain church or have a certain experience or be baptized to be saved, or eat or dress or speak any certain way to be saved.

When you come to Christ, He gives you everything you need in this life. He is the Alpha and the Omega. He is the Amen—so be it and done. Jesus Christ did it all. You are not saved by faith plus something; it is faith plus *nothing*. We are hell-doomed sinners. We trust Jesus as our Savior, and we receive perfect salvation from Him.

Leave all those rules behind and come to Jesus. Believe that what He did was enough.

When Jesus Christ took your place and died for you, He gave you life. *He came back from the dead*. The Law arrested, condemned, sentenced, and killed us—that's all the Law could do. Only Jesus can give you life. When He was crucified for us, in essence we were there with Him. And when He was raised back to life, we were there with Him, too. His life becomes our life. Now we are to live by faith in Him. Jesus' death was not only the *sacrifice* for your sin; He was your *substitute*, as well as for all who believe. (See the wonderful Galatians 2:20.)

Romans 6 tells us we have been buried with Christ by baptism, by identification, and we have been raised with Him in newness of life. We are joined to the living Christ. He's not walking around the Sea of Galilee; Jesus is alive today at God's right hand, the glorified Christ, and we are there with Him this moment. It doesn't get any better than that.

We now live in Christ with Him in glory, and He lives in us down here. We live this life by faith—saved by faith, live by faith, walk by faith. This is what it means to walk in the Spirit. We “live by the faith in the Son of God”—how tender is this—“who *loved me*, and gave Himself for me” (2:20).

Jesus Christ loves you, but He can't *love* you into heaven. He had to *give* Himself for you. The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus. When you receive any gift, you take it by faith. You believe the giver sincerely holds it out to you and says, “It’s yours.” You have to reach out in faith and take it before it belongs to you. God offers you the gift of eternal life in Christ Jesus.

Paul could remember the day he received God’s gift. *“There I was ridiculing Him, hating Him, but He loved me and He gave Himself for me!”* You can walk all over the precious blood of Christ by ignoring Him, turning away from Him, or turning against Him like Paul did, but there He was, loving you and giving Himself for you.

If there had been any other way to save sinners, God would have done it that way. If a law or a religion could have been given to save sinners, God would have given it. The only way a holy God could save us was to send His Son to die. He was willing to make the supreme sacrifice.

“So, what’s wrong?” Paul asked the Galatians. *“You’ve taken your eyes off of Jesus and what He’s done for you. You’ve forgotten the Cross.*

“Think about this, Galatians,” Paul said. *“How did you get this new life? By what you did or by hearing what Jesus did for you and believing it? If you were saved by faith through grace, then why would you try to live the Christian life another way? Do you think you could do it better? Look back over your story and ask yourselves some serious questions.*

“Did God make you His child and give you His Spirit because you tried so hard to keep the rules—or was it because you trusted Him to do whatever was necessary to make you His child? Or is your experience like Abraham’s? He believed God, and that act of faith turned into a life that was right with God.

“Why would you turn back to the Law for your confidence? It did nothing but tell you how bad you were. Turning to Jesus has been a sacrificial step for you—was it all for nothing?”

Paul reminded them of all they had been through together. He didn’t come to them as a Pharisee preaching the Law, but as an apostle preaching Jesus Christ. He preached the Word of God to them. He told them about the

Lord Jesus Christ as the One who died for them, was raised again, and the One they could trust. And they heard all this and responded in faith. And a miracle happened—they were born again. The Spirit of God made them new and began to live in them. And by the Spirit, Paul did miracles among them—he healed the sick and raised the dead. The people heard and saw all of this. Their experience testified to all of this.

The gospel is enough to save us and keep us and helps us live by faith believing it—our experience confirms that what Jesus did for us is enough. It's all true.

NEXT: What do we gain in Christ?

LESSON 2



FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

1. Paul was taught the gospel directly by Jesus. Today, how do we learn the gospel?
2. What can we learn from Paul's example of submitting what he had been taught for comparison with the other apostles?
3. Before he could do anything else, Paul had to change the way the Galatian Christians thought about God's grace, freedom, and other people. What is there that you might need to let the Holy Spirit change your mind about?

7. Imagine that you could read the book of Galatians to Abraham. How do you think he would react to seeing his faith as an example for all time?

LESSON 3

ONE STARRY NIGHT



Begin with prayer



Read **Galatians 3:4-29**



Listen at [TTB.org/Galatians](https://www.TTB.org/Galatians) to **Galatians 3:4-7**, **Galatians 3:8-17**, **Galatians 3:13-22**, and **Galatians 3:19-29**

Picture yourself standing in an open field at midnight. The sky is filled with stars overhead—more stars than you could count fill the expanse.

And there stands Abraham, one of the Old Testament's earliest, brightest stars, the man who has been called "father Abraham" by both Israel and Arab nations. But at that moment, Abraham and his wife had no children, frustrated by a lifetime of infertility. But God told him his family would be as numberless as the sand on the seashore and the stars in the sky. And Abraham believed what He said and that made him right with God (3:6; Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:3). God said, "*I'm going to do it,*" and Abraham literally said, "Amen."

This happened before God gave the Law to Moses, and before God told him to be circumcised. Abraham's faith required nothing else. All that circumcision does is say, "I belong to God," just like baptism today says, "I follow Jesus Christ." Neither circumcision nor baptism save us; they just make a statement.

Several years after that starry night, Abraham reminded the Lord, *“I don’t have a son and You told me I would.”* Abraham was a practical guy, and he talked straight to the Lord. He asked the Lord to “put it in writing,” and so the Lord did (Genesis 15:9).

In that day, a contract between parties was made by cutting an animal sacrifice in half, laying half on one side and half on the other. Then they would join hands and walk between the two halves. That sealed the contract.

So Abraham prepared the sacrifices and waited—all day. At sundown, God put Abraham to sleep and God passed between those two halves alone. God alone made the contract, the covenant, and it depended on His faithfulness. He did all the promising; Abraham’s part was only to believe God.

When Jesus Christ paid for our sins on the cross, He alone made the contract to save you. God made it right between them. You don’t have to do anything but believe. He is still asking us to believe Him. Put your trust in Christ and you will be saved.

God did this for Abraham before the Law was ever given. God wasn’t impressed by Abraham’s good works and thought he was worth saving. He told Abraham, *“I’ll do this for you if you believe Me,”* and Abraham said, *“I do.”*

When you trust Christ as Savior, you are saved the same way Abraham was saved—by faith. God asked Abraham to believe that He will do certain things for him. God asks us to believe that He’s already done certain things for us in giving His Son, Jesus Christ, to die for us.

This covenant with God was at the beginning of Abraham’s life of faith. Years later when Abraham had the son God promised, God told him to sacrifice him on an altar. *“What? Kill the miracle baby? The son born under an impossible situation?”* But Abraham believed God could raise Isaac, his son, from the dead to complete His promise. And so at the last moment, God stopped him from killing Isaac. Abraham had proven he believed God (see Hebrews 11:19). Apparently God also preached the gospel to Abraham, because the offering of Isaac is one of the finest pictures of the offering of Christ. Although God spared Abraham’s son, He did not spare His own Son but delivered Him up for us all.

For the rest of his life, Abraham obeyed God’s voice. He was willing to offer his son when God commanded it, and when God said stop, he stopped. He obeyed God’s voice and his faith led to actions. He believed God and God counted it as righteousness.

Our faith gives us something—eternal life. The Law couldn't ever save us; it only proved we needed God. It can't *remove* sin; rather, it *reveals* sin. We aren't so sophisticated or refined sinners as some would like to tell us. The Law reveals people are, by nature, sinners in the raw. The purpose of the Law was to keep a sinful people in the way of salvation until Jesus Christ (the descendant) came, inheriting the promises and distributing them to us. God made a way to take away sins: Jesus Christ, through His blood on the cross, paid the penalty for your sin. Your trust in Jesus saves you; nothing else can.

God made a promise, a covenant, with Abraham. When the Law came along 430 years later, it didn't change what God had promised (He never breaks a promise). In keeping with His three-fold promise, God gave Abraham a land (the nation of Israel and several other nations) and a son, Isaac, whose line led to the Lord Jesus Christ, the "Seed" (Galatians 3:16). God also promised Abraham He would make him a blessing to all people. The only blessing in this world today is in Christ—the supreme gift God made is that He would save those who would trust Christ.

So why was the Law given? So we could see that we are sinners, and we need a mediator—One to stand between us and God and help us out. If there had been another way of saving sinners, God would have done it. But the Law only brings death. Not the degree of sin but the fact of sin brings death. We are all equally dead and equally in need.

But the Law did one glorious thing—it made a place for mercy. That's why people brought sacrifices for sin. They needed forgiveness, and mercy could be found on the mercy seat. All the sacrifices for sin taught us we needed Jesus Christ.

"The law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (3:24). Instead of "tutor," the original word, *paidagogos*, means the servant or a slave who took care of the children in a Roman household. When this was written, half of the 120 million people in the Roman Empire were slaves. When a child was born, he was put in the custody of a servant who raised him. He dressed him in clean clothes, bathed him, and paddled him when he needed it. When the little one was ready to start school, this servant got him ready every morning and walked with him to school and entrusted him to a teacher. That is where the servant got the name of *paidagogos*—paid has to do with the feet (we get our word "pedal" from it) and *agogos* means "to lead."

Paul says the Law is our *paidagogos*. The Law said, “*Little fellow, I can’t do any more for you. I now want to take you by the hand and bring you to the cross of Christ. You are lost, and what you need is a Savior.*” The purpose of the Law is to bring people to Christ—not to build them up so they can walk around claiming they keep God’s commandments when they don’t. God says mankind is lost and must be saved. As much as this truth is denied today, if we’re honest, we all know down deep in our hearts something is wrong.

When we come to God through Jesus Christ, we get some benefits through faith that we could never get under the Law.

Our first benefit, faith gives you a new nature and makes you God’s legitimate son (3:26).

The Law never could give a believer the *nature* of a son of God. Only by faith in Christ are you made a true son of God. That’s *all* it takes. Not faith plus something equals salvation, but faith plus nothing makes you a son of God.

An individual Israelite under the Law in the Old Testament was never a son, only a servant. God called Moses His friend but only called him a servant, not a son. David was a man after God’s own heart, yet God calls him “David my servant” (1 Kings 11:38).

Even if we were able to keep the hundreds of requirements under the Law, it still wouldn’t compare to God’s righteousness. He gives us the power (authority, the right) to become His sons (see John 1:12) by doing no more nor less than simply trusting Him.

When our Lord confronted Nicodemus, He said, “You must be born again” (see John 3:3). Nicodemus was genuine and obedient to the Law. As a Pharisee he fasted twice a week, gave a tenth of all he possessed, and did everything else required of a Pharisee. He was religious to his fingertips, but the Lord said to him, “*Religion won’t help you. You can’t even see the kingdom of heaven until you have been born again.*”

Contrary to a lot of “feel-good” teaching, God is not everyone’s “Father” and we are not all God’s children. When the religious Pharisees came to Jesus claiming, “We have one Father—God.” Jesus said, “You are of your father the devil” (John 8:41-44). You become a child of God only through faith in Jesus Christ.

Another benefit we have in Christ that we didn't have under the Law is we are made one in Christ (3:28). In Christ's body of believers there are no racial lines. There are no capital, nor cultural, nor sexist lines. Any person in Christ is your brother or sister.

Another way we benefit in Christ takes us back to that starry night with Abraham. Because Abraham was saved by *faith*, we can be saved by *faith*. If you are in Christ, then you belong to Abraham's seed. We are both heirs to God's promise.

God blessed Abraham to make him a blessing. And He did! Abraham's descendent, Jesus Christ, brought salvation to the world.

NEXT: More of what you get in Christ.

7. Imagine you had lived during the time when committing a sin meant needing to offer a sacrifice. What would it feel like to constantly be thinking about the cost of your own sins?

THE SAVED SINNER
LIVES BY GRACE.

GRACE IS A WAY *TO* LIFE
AND A WAY *OF* LIFE.



THRU the BIBLE

LESSON 4

FAITH PLUS NOTHING EQUALS SALVATION



Begin with prayer



Read **Galatians 4**



Listen at [TTB.org/Galatians](https://www.TTB.org/Galatians) to **Galatians 4:1-7**, **Galatians 4:6-24**, and **Galatians 4:9-31**

There's nothing cuter than a baby, especially a baby you're related to. But there's nothing cute about an adult acting like a baby—that's embarrassing (especially if you're related to them). When people live under the Law, their spiritual growth keeps them spiritual babies. These metaphors all speak to the spiritual immaturity of those under the Law compared with how our spiritual freedom in Christ grows us up.

If you believe in Jesus Christ, you have something the church, religion, and the Law can't give you. You have the authority to be called a son of God. When Paul wrote to the Galatians, he compared our position in Christ to the tradition of a son "coming of age." When a boy was a child, he was no different than a servant, "though he is master of all." But then he grows up under his tutor's care until, one day, his father recognizes he's become a young man, usually around 15 years old. The time has come for the father to adopt the son—meaning, to place him as his son into his family.

In the Roman world, all the family comes 'round for the ceremony of the *toga virilis*, when the father wraps his boy in a toga, a robe. The ring had a signet of his father, equivalent to his signature, and gave him the father's authority. (In the prodigal son parable, this is what is meant when the father says, "Put the robe around him and a ring on his finger." See Luke 15:22.)

Compare that to how we become spiritual sons. When the time was right, God the Father sent His Son, who grew up under the Law and can fully identify with us, so that He could redeem us. Under Christ, we can experience our rightful heritage and be declared to have the full authority of a son. A believer is placed in God's family as a full-grown son, with all rights and privileges. Then the Lord gives us a guarantee of His ownership, His Spirit alive in us, so we can understand spiritual truth. The Spirit of God bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God and cries out, "Abba, Father" (v. 6).

When translating the Greek New Testament, the editors didn't translate the word *Abba*. It's too personal. It means "my daddy." We don't talk that way about God—He is high and holy, but the Spirit of God can call Him that. He will whisper to you how close and tender the Father is to you. He does this especially in your times of darkness and crises.

The Spirit also dives into the depths of God and brings out things no one's ever seen or heard. (See 1 Corinthians 2:9-10.) He teaches and interprets God's Word for us.

Ever wonder why brilliant people can be experts in history, archaeology, and in Hebrew and Greek but still miss what the Bible says? Why? Because the Spirit of God is the teacher. If you don't have God's Spirit to interpret the Word for you, you miss the fullness of its meaning. If you want to know about Jesus Christ, only the Spirit of God can reveal Him to you. Even a mature Christian who has been in the Word for years is as helpless in studying the Bible as a new believer in Christ, because the Spirit of God needs to be the One to teach us.

If you are God's child, He has adopted you into the position of a full-grown son. Nothing is quite as wonderful as that! The Spirit of God will lead you and guide you into all truth if you want to know it—if you are willing for Him to be your teacher.

Because you are God's own, His Spirit lives with your spirit and confirms to you that you belong to Him. (See Romans 8:11-16.) One evidence that you are His is your desire for Him to lead you in living right. The flesh may get victory now and then, but it never makes you happy. You're never satisfied with living your own way, because you remember what it was like and never want to go back. When you realize you've drifted from God, you turn around and cry out, "*Abba, Father—'my Daddy!'*"

Some say you've got to *really* be holy to experience that kind of intimacy with God. But that's not true. When you are a child of God—no matter if you're new or weak in your faith—you belong to Him. You can call on Him and He will answer. The Law could never give you access to God. But now you have it.

By the way, people who think they've reached some superior level of spirituality are just fooling themselves. All of us are God's foolish little children. We fill ourselves with stubbornness and sin and fears and weaknesses. *We* are never wonderful; *the Lord Jesus* is wonderful, and faith in Him will give us an experience of intimacy and access and grace. Ask anyone who has walked with God for a long time, through the highs and lows of their own maturity, and they will tell you He has been with them all the way through.

God makes Himself real to His children during times of distress. He stands by us. (See 2 Timothy 4:16-17 and Hebrews 13:5.) He will stand by you.

These three benefits are yours as a child of God: Your nature changed. Your lineage changed; you're now an heir of Christ. Your personal experience changed.

So why would you turn back to your old ways?

Like their whole culture, the Galatians had worshipped idols before they turned to Jesus Christ. In another letter, Paul called idols, "dumb idols"—they were nothing and could say nothing. They can't make themselves real nor can they become real when they are worshipped. So Paul is completely perplexed. *"Now that you know the real God, why would you want to go back to your old ways?"*

But instead of idols, the Galatians now were worshipping the Law. They were still Christians—saved by grace—but they weren't living like it. They believed the Judaizers who wanted to control them with the Law.

"You never practiced Moses' Law before, so don't do it now. Did I waste my time teaching you?"

The problem, of course, was the false teachers were whispering error in the Galatians' ears. These teachers were making a profit off these Christians and didn't want it to end. They had to turn them against Paul, even when he was telling them the truth.

Paul understood where the criticism was coming from. He comforted the Galatians with *“we are all believers, all in the body of Christ. Let’s be kind to each other.”* Paul thanked them for caring for him as he struggled with his “thorn in the flesh,” which was likely some sort of eye trouble. *“You would have given me your own eyes,”* he said. *“You received me so wonderfully when I was there teaching you and ignored how unattractive I was.”* He says this likely because false teachers are often very attractive and make great presentations. But they don’t teach the truth and didn’t like Paul exposing them.

Paul’s tone softened a bit. It was like he took a deep breath and said, “My little children ...” using the most tender terms. He had used some strong language with them, but really he felt very affectionate towards them. He describes himself with a mother’s love for them. In fact, he had agonized for them before when he brought them the gospel, but now he felt those same labor pains again. He wished he was there with them so they could hear his tone of voice. He loved them and wanted the best for them. He was just confused by their recent decision to put themselves under someone else’s control. They were free in Christ.

“You don’t even know what the Law is like,” Paul said. *“You want to be under its control? You don’t know what you’re asking!”*

When God called Moses to the mountain to give the Law, God told the people to stand back, way back. The mountain filled with smoke, thunder pealed, lightning flashed, and the earth shook. The giving of the Law was not beautiful and cozy, it was terrifying. We can’t conceive of how holy God is. We are renegades in His universe, lost sinners with no capacity to follow or obey Him. No wonder the children of Israel trembled and moved away from the mountain and said, “We will die.”

God is high and holy and lifted up and dwells in *glory*. We are down here making mud pies. Yet we, the ones He made, have the audacity to walk willfully outside of God’s will.

“You don’t know what the Law is all about. Perhaps ...,” Paul thought, *“a story from the Old Testament would help illustrate it.”* Everyone knew who Abraham was. Did they know about the two women in his life who represented this struggle between the Law and faith in Jesus Christ?

Hagar, a slave, represents the Mosaic Law. Sarah, Abraham’s wife, represents the grace we receive in Christ.

In this true story from Abraham's life, we learn an allegory from which Paul draws a message for us today. Both Hagar and Sarah had a son by Abraham. The Code of Hammurabi, which governed the culture in Abraham's day, stated the son of a slave woman was a slave. So Ishmael was Abraham's son, but he was still a slave.

Isaac, Abraham's son by Sarah, was the miracle child God promised Abraham on that starry night. Abraham was too old to father a child, and Sarah's womb was like a tomb, but out of death God brought life.

In Paul's allegory, Hagar is like the earthly Jerusalem, because she was still in slavery with her children. Jerusalem (representing the nation Israel) still lived in handcuffs of the Law.

Sarah represents "the Jerusalem above," which is the New Jerusalem from Revelation 20 that comes down from God out of heaven. As old Jerusalem is the mother city of those under the Law, so the New Jerusalem is the mother city of the believer under grace.

God is saving under grace more members of the human family than He ever saved under the Mosaic Law by the sacrificial system. Believers today are also children of promise. Our birth is a *new* birth, which comes about by our believing God's promise: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16, see also 1 Peter 1:23).

Paul concludes, "*But just like the slave of the Law (Ishmael) harassed the child of promise (Isaac), so are the false teachers trying to turn you back to the Law.*"

Don't do it! The legalist hates the gospel of the free grace of God. They insist that to be saved you have to *do* something or *seek* something from another source. Some say you need more of the Holy Spirit than you got when you were saved. Others says you need to go through some ceremony to get something you didn't get when you trusted Jesus Christ. Your salvation doesn't require any *doing* on your part. Because of that, it glorifies Christ and turns your eyes to Him.

To say you need to add anything to what Jesus did for you is to say His death on the cross was in vain. Christ was made a curse for us; but if you don't accept what He did for you, you are saying you aren't guilty, but He is.

Back to Hagar and Sarah—God told Abraham to kick Hagar and her son out. (See Genesis 21:10.) Today God says to us, “*Get rid of your legalism. Put all of your focus on Jesus Christ and what He did for you.*”

Abraham couldn't have both the son of Hagar and the son of Sarah; he had to choose. God has no arrangement for you to be saved by faith and by Law; you have to choose one. If you want to go by Law, you can try it—but God has already said you won't make it. You can't have a backup salvation plan, “Well, I go to church” or “I say my prayers.” If you are trusting these things to get you to heaven, you are not saved—you *cannot* be saved by them. It is only when you look to our wonderful Savior and trust Him wholly and totally.

On what basis do you know you are going to heaven? If you will trust Him, cast yourself on Him, He will save you. You don't have to *do* anything—only trust Him completely. Jesus Christ has done everything for your salvation. That's the way—the only way—He can save you. It is faith plus *nothing*.

NEXT: What if someone gave you the key to your handcuffs?

4. The Spirit can only teach us if we are willing to learn. What can we do to better practice willingness? Example?

5. Imagine you had been an idol worshipper before you came to Christ. What would have been appealing about a “god” that you could see and touch?

6. Paul described his affection for the Galatians as if he were their mother. What does this tell us about the kind of love Christians should have for one another?

7. We can't try to please God by faith and by the Law. Why is that so hard to remember in our thinking and actions?

LESSON 5

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE FREE?



Begin with prayer



Read **Galatians 5:1-16**



Listen at TTB.org/Galatians to **Galatians 5:1-4** and **Galatians 5:5-16**

If you are in handcuffs and helpless and someone offers you the key, would you take it?

The Law is like handcuffs that bind you to the strictest rules, Paul tells the Galatians. Grace is the key that sets you free.

The Law says, “No, thanks. I’d rather live with these handcuffs.”

You would never say this, nor would you ever choose this, but that’s what happens when you refuse the freedom God gives you in Christ.

When you came to Christ, you got all you need to live His way. Grace invites the Spirit to fill you with the power to live on a plane higher than the Law ever demanded. None of us can keep the Ten Commandments as a rule of life. When you say “no, thanks” to grace, you’re just not thinking straight.

When you live free in Christ, you don’t follow rules, you follow principles. Our primary purpose: We are to please Jesus Christ. Our conduct should please Him first. Christ has set us free to live a free life. So take your stand! Never again let anyone put “handcuffs” on you.

The Judaizers were telling the Galatians they needed to be circumcised in order to be saved. Circumcision was the Jewish badge of the Law; circumcision said, "I belong to the Law."

"If this is true, you need to be circumcised to be saved," Paul challenged, "Then what good is Jesus Christ? Did He die for nothing?"

If you trust Christ *plus something else*, you are not saved. You've made up your own system rather than trusting Jesus alone to save you. If you have been saved by trusting Christ and then take a step down and choose to live by the Law, you have fallen from grace.

"Falling from grace" doesn't mean you've fallen into some open sin or careless conduct that is so bad you have to be saved all over again. "Falling from grace" means you're choosing to live a lesser life because you've rejected God's grace as enough for you day by day.

God wants you to live by grace, not trying to *do* good, but to *live* good. Too often we think we need to get busy serving Christ and He will perhaps love us more. But that's the Law's way of thinking. Be more concerned about the manner of your life before God and your witness to the world. Your neighbor and your coworker see you are as busy as a termite, but you don't have a life of love and joy and depth to back up your testimony. If we focus on pleasing Jesus, you'll do good, too.

How does God make a saved sinner *good*? He starts by giving us a new nature. This new nature wants to live differently—higher, deeper, better. But it can't. It says, "I want to live like Jesus, but I mess up all the time. I'm so weary of trying and failing." (See Romans 7.) Defeated and discouraged, we go to God and ask, "What's wrong with me? Will You help me?"

And the Lord says, *"Of course; I thought you'd never ask."* God gives us a new principle called "the fruit of the Spirit." This is the life He wants us to live—by *faith*. We are saved by grace; we are to live by grace. Of course we will not reach perfection in this life, but we put all our hope in Jesus Christ and wait expectantly for the hope of righteousness we'll have someday in heaven.

Nothing else works in the Christian life. We could keep up all religious pretense the best we can, but it doesn't amount to anything. What matters is what is going on inside us: Faith expressed in love. That is the way to live the Christian life. Faith expressed with love. And the love is the fruit of the Holy Spirit at work in our lives.

The Galatians were on the right track living God's way until the Judaizers came along. They listened to something other than the gospel. It didn't come from Christ but from a different source. Paul compared the source to leaven.

In both the Old and New Testaments, leaven always illustrates the principle of evil. (See Matthew 13:33, 16:6.) Legalism says that when Christ died on the cross for us, He did not give us a full package of salvation, but that we have to jump through other hoops to get the rest of it. That is evil hidden in the gospel. The trouble is, mankind likes it. It tastes better to us to have to work for our salvation, just a little. The gospel, by itself, is not acceptable to the natural man. So, the Judaizers say, add some of the old rules to your salvation.

This false teaching made Paul crazy because the rumor was that he still preached "the old ways." Either way, the legalists condemned Paul. But Paul stuck to his guns. *"I preach Christ alone. His Cross is enough to save me."*

Mankind rejects the Cross because we think we don't need it.

We pride ourselves in our morality and say our good works can save us. We pride ourselves on our philosophy even when God's truth convinces babies. We pride ourselves on our status, but God chooses to save the poor and humble. The Cross offends us because it calls for an unconditional surrender. It offends our pride because it shows off our sinful heart and tells us we need to be born again. Many don't want to be born again—they feel like they're good enough as they are. The Cross is insulting to the proud heart.

Even though the Cross does insult people's pride, don't water it down! Don't minimize the offense. God is doing a supernatural work; don't get in the way. Now, sometimes we become offensive in the way we give the gospel. Let the gospel offend, not us.

Paul had confidence that eventually the Galatians would come back to the gospel they first believed. They would eventually see the leaven in the lump. They would eventually see the treasure that was theirs in the gospel of grace.

The Christian life can't be lived by legalism. You can keep every commandment and still not live the Christian life. You can not only keep all Ten Commandments, you can follow every commandment others put down for you to live by, and you still would not be living the Christian life.

The Christian life also can't be lived by license—the extreme, *I'll sin however much I want then I'll ask for grace*. No, you can't live in sin and be a Christian. Now you may fall into sin, but you will get out of it. (See Romans 6.)

What does the gospel of grace do for the believer? It frees us from doing wrong and allows us to do right. Grace doesn't set us free *to* sin, but it sets us free *from* sin. We want to please God, not because we must please Him like a slave must please his master, but because we are His sons and daughters and we *want* to please our Father. We want to follow God, not because we fear to do otherwise like an enemy, but because we want to.

We serve God because we *love* Him. Jesus said that if we love Him, we'll obey Him (John 14:15). Love is the foundation for our obedience. The Law could never bring us to that place. It only produces a negative goodness, a *legal* goodness. You can say, "I don't do this and I don't do that." But what *do* you do? Do you do things to please God for the very love of pleasing Him? He wants us to live for Him that way.

NEXT: The fruit of the Spirit.

7. If you could go back in time to ask Paul about God's grace, what would you ask?

LESSON 6

HOW DO YOU WALK IN THE SPIRIT?



Begin with prayer



Read **Galatians 5:16-26**



Listen at TTB.org/Galatians to **Galatians 5:16-21** and **Galatians 5:22-26**

Whatever you say about Christianity, it is freedom from bondage. And we praise God for that. Jesus paid our penalty to set us free to live a free life. Don't let anyone put you back into slavery again. Don't let the legalists steal your treasure. That's what was happening to the Galatians.

We are called to freedom. Freedom from what? From the overwhelming power of sin and the devil.

Jesus rescued you from this evil world (1:4). You don't have to serve it.

Jesus rescued you from the Evil One. Before you believed Jesus Christ, you were a victim to demons' beck and call. You followed them. No more.

Jesus rescued you from a frustrated Christian life (2:20). You have been freed to obey. You are free to live without guilt, without fear, without an accusing conscience.

Jesus rescued you from the curse of the Law (3:13). He redeemed you from its impossible demands.

Because Jesus rescued you, you don't have to live chained to the desires of the flesh (4) but instead, you can walk in the Spirit.

Because you are free, you can go boldly to the Lord in prayer (Hebrews 4:16).

In all these ways, you are free. But are you free to do anything you want? Are you free to run wild? *"I'll be forgiven, so why not?"* Like Romans 6 prompts, *"Am I free to sin that grace may abound? God forbid."* Christian freedom is freedom *from* sin, not freedom *to* sin.

To sin like that is not freedom at all, but one of the most deceptive kinds of bondage. So what are the right kind of limitations you can place as bumpers around your life? Often, this kind of license is really just our pride talking. *"I did it my way"* But that's not God's plan. He says to walk in the Spirit and make it your habit to seek Him and respond to Him. Then it will be easier to ignore the desires of a sinful nature—which if left on its own would act impulsively and without a thought about God.

This is the how-to of the Christian life. Walk *by means of the Spirit*. "Walk" means "to walk up and down" like the philosophers in Athens did when they taught. When we walk by the Spirit, we can walk past the desires of the flesh, many of which are not wrong, but can easily take the place of spiritual things. Hobbies, entertainment, media—if taken to an extreme, are desires of the flesh. If it takes you away from going after spiritual things, then it is wrong for you.

Deep down inside you is a tug of war, a civil war between your two natures. The flesh and the Spirit oppose each other. You'll never face a day when you don't have a battle, a raging fight, and you'll never grow out of it or get rid of the flesh. It's a mistake to think you'll ever "get over" that old nature (see 1 John 1:8). If you are a Christian, you are a human battle ground. Paul described this turmoil of his two natures in Romans 7. Are you prone to wander, prone to leave the God you love? The answer is yes, whether or not you admit it. But your new nature is also prone to worship the Lord. Have you ever been riding alone in your car, singing some worship song, and you just cry out to the Lord, "Oh, Lord, You are so wonderful!" That's your new nature talking.

Your old nature and new nature are at war, every day. But there is a way through this struggle. You can let the Spirit lead you to a higher plane. Before we get to the details on what that life looks like, let's be clear what the works of the flesh are.

Look down this list in Galatians 5:19-21; it's by no means exhaustive, but there's enough ugliness there to turn your stomach. There are sensual sins (adultery, fornication, uncleanness), religious sins (idolatry, "magic"—drugs that simulated religious experiences—hatred, quarrels), social sins (jealousy,

temper, divisions), and personal sins (addictions, immorality). This list could go on and on to describe the battles we all go through. You can fill in the ones you struggle with consistently. To be clear, everyone sins, but when these sins have a grip on your life and you practice them regularly, you've got to ask yourself if you have God's life in you.

You can be a child of God and still produce works of the flesh in your life, but it brings nothing but discontentment. Because if the works of the flesh are appearing in your life, you are not living in the Spirit's control. Whatever it is you are sowing in your life, you will reap. That's the simple law of the harvest. This law of God is just as sure as the law of gravity. If a farmer sows corn, you can be sure he'll reap corn. *"If you are sown to the flesh, you will reap corruption. But if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap everlasting life."* No way around it.

These works of the flesh are *what you do*. But the Spirit of God produces fruit in your life that shapes *who you are*.

How can you let the Spirit of God produce His fruit in your life? If you are a child of God, your purpose in this life is to bear fruit. Not only did He choose you to bear fruit, but He keeps you in the world so you will accomplish it. He even makes it a condition for hearing and answering your prayers (John 15:8, 16).

But only the Holy Spirit can produce fruit in your life. The moment you trusted Jesus Christ for your salvation, you were indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9; Galatians 2:20). Think about that for a moment: God lives *in* you. You are never asked to live the Christian life. So while your flesh may fail at times and you fall into sin, you can't continue in that direction for too long because the Spirit in you is *holy*. The time will come when your new nature longs for His holiness to be seen in your life, and you'll turn from your sin. (See 1 Thessalonians 4:7, 8.)

But that new nature doesn't have the power to produce fruit—it's only in the power of the Holy Spirit that we're able to live for God at all. The secret of fruit-bearing is *yielding* to the Holy Spirit who lives in us. He will produce the fruit of His Spirit. The good news is victory is obtainable when we place ourselves at His disposal.

For a moment let us look at the fruit of the Spirit that should characterize the lives of believers. No one is judging you, but we can be fruit inspectors. What kind of fruit is your life producing?

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. -vv. 22-23

LOVE: “The fruit of the Spirit is love.” He didn’t mean to say the fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, and so on. The fruit (singular) is love, because all other fruit stems from love. Love is the most important one of all (see John 13:35). Only the Holy Spirit of God can give you this kind of love for God, but also for other believers.

There is “no law” against them, and no law which will produce them. Have you ever tried being meek? If you tried being meek, and accomplished it, you would be proud you became meek, and then you would lose your meekness and humility.

JOY: God’s kind of joy does not depend on circumstances, but on the working of the Holy Spirit within. Many of us lose our joy as soon as the way gets difficult. As a child of God, the most valuable thing in the world you can have is joy in your life produced by the Holy Spirit.

This joy is not some “just smile” philosophy; it’s something in the heart. Actually, we can be in deep sorrow and at the same time rejoice. God wants you to rejoice, and you can’t rejoice in the circumstances down here unless the Spirit of God is producing fruit in your heart and life. Is He doing that in yours?

PEACE: Peace of heart, peace in the storms of life—this is the kind of peace our Lord gives (see John 14:27; Romans 5:1). Religion can never give this to you. Only Christ can give you deep-down peace.

There was a storm on the Sea of Galilee, and the disciples—who were fisherman accustomed to storms at sea—cried out in a panic. Where was Jesus? *Asleep in the boat* (see Mark 4:38). We need this kind of peace when the storm rages.

That’s the kind of peace the Holy Spirit produces—peace that endures when the storms beat upon our little boat. Every follower of Jesus needs this kind of fruit. And every follower of Jesus has access to it though the Spirit that lives in them.

PATIENCE: James 1:3 says “the testing of your faith produces patience.” God has a purpose in your trials (Romans 5:3-4). Patience is evidence you’ve become a full-grown Christian, but you will never become patient simply by trying. Patience comes through suffering and testing.

KINDNESS: A real born-again child of God is kind. That little word may be simple, but it includes being gracious, courteous, well-mannered. It can't be mustered out of one's own will or taught in charm school. Never confuse kindness for weakness. "Love suffers long and is kind" (see 1 Corinthians 13:4, Ephesians 4:32). Love without kindness is like a fire without heat—not possible.

GOODNESS: Like kindness, goodness does not mean weakness. Goodness is the strength of moral character. It does what is good. Many believers have never done anything spectacular, but they are simply good, upright, moral people. That's a fruit of the Holy Spirit demonstrated in their lives.

FAITHFULNESS: If you are a child of God, you will be faithful wherever you are and in whatever you do. The writer of Hebrews proved Jesus was superior to everyone, including Moses. Jesus "was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all God's house" (Hebrews 3:2). Moses was called to do something, and he was faithful—dependable, reliable—in doing it.

Of course, Moses made mistakes. His temper got him into trouble. But in the end, God didn't remember Moses' mistakes—He remembered his faithfulness. The Lord Jesus will commend our faithfulness by saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21).

Regardless of what work or task the Lord has given you to do, are you faithful in completing it?

GENTLENESS: Many think being a Christian means compromising on everything. But meekness means to stand strong for what God stands for, but without brutality. Jesus called Himself "gentle and lowly in heart" (Matthew 11:29), yet remember Him in the temple full of merchants, swinging a whip He made of rope? Everybody got out of His way that day. He was meek, and anything but weak. Only the Holy Spirit can produce gentleness in you.

SELF-CONTROL: When an athlete trains for an event, they will refrain from certain things—not because they are wrong, but because the training demands discipline. Paul said, "*As a Christian, I am in training. And since I want to win a crown, I don't do certain things*" (see 1 Corinthians 9:24, 25). The standard for a believer is, "Do I want to please Jesus? Do I want His approval? Do I want to lay aside everything—every weight and sin—that holds me back, and run with endurance the race that is set before me, looking to Jesus (see Hebrews 12:1, 2)?"

As a follower of Jesus, self-control is not a question of right and wrong, but of yielding your choices to God's control. The victory is not by struggling but by surrendering to Christ. Does your life illustrate that you want to please and live for God?

This is the key to it all: "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (v. 25).

Earlier in Galatians 5:16 the word for walk meant "to walk up and down," but here in Galatians 5:25, walk just means "to learn how to walk." Just as we learned to walk physically by trial and error, so are we to begin to walk by the Spirit.

It's a learning process. Walking is putting one foot in front of the other. Sometimes you walk tall, sometimes you fall down. We learn to walk in the Spirit the same way—by trial and error. You get up again. You keep trying.

Do you want to walk in the Spirit? Why not start now? Say, "I am going to walk in the Spirit. I am going to depend upon the Holy Spirit to produce His fruit in my life." You will fall down. It will hurt. But you'll learn. And you'll get better and better at it. You'll cultivate the habit of thinking upon the flesh as that which is crucified, and you'll leave it nailed there. And you walk in the power of the Holy Spirit who regularly and faithfully is there to pull off His life through you.

The Christian life is not a balloon ascending into the clouds. Rather it is a daily walk, putting one foot ahead of the other in dependence on the Holy Spirit.

NEXT: Keep following Jesus.

7. The list of the fruits of the Spirit isn't meant to be exhaustive. There are other things that could be listed. If you were writing Galatians, what else might you have included?

Faith expressed in love.

— THAT IS THE WAY TO LIVE —
THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.




THRU the BIBLE

LESSON 7

KEEP AT IT



Begin with prayer



Read **Galatians 6**



Listen at TTB.org/Galatians to **Galatians 6:1-5**, **Galatians 6:6-11**, and **Galatians 6:11-18**

Keep following Jesus. Keep doing good.

In this letter to the Galatians, Paul holds up a warning sign. “*Don’t fall from grace (by living under the Law)*” was written on one side and “*Walk in the Spirit*” was on the other.

When you walk in the Spirit, you will sometimes fall flat on your face, but you get up and keep going. That’s how the fruit of His Spirit grows in your life.

What happens when we mess up? If someone stumbles in some sinful way—what should be done? Some will want to beat them with a baseball bat. Some would rather criticize and condemn rather than restore them. But praise God, we don’t lose our salvation when we sin. Instead, if a Christian is stuck in sin, a stronger Christian should restore them in the spirit of meekness, a fruit of the Spirit.

One of the beautiful things said about Jesus Christ in prophecy is that through all you may suffer, He suffers too (see Isaiah 63:9). He goes along with you in life and delivers you when you stumble and fall down. He doesn’t fall, but in His love and mercy He picks you up, brushes you off, and tells you to begin again.

BEAR EACH OTHER'S BURDENS

“Restore” means to set a broken bone. If someone falls and breaks their leg, do you leave them there? God says, *“If you love the Lord, set the person’s broken bone. Get them back on their feet again.”*

This all is to be done in the spirit of meekness, evidence that the Spirit is in control of your life. And that’s a good place to be, because you are not immune from doing the same kind of sinful something.

“Help carry each other’s burdens,” Paul encourages us. All of us have burdens—something heavy to carry—but they may each look different. Some can be shared, but other burdens must be carried alone.

For some, these burdens are a “fault,” a weakness. We all have them. So, help each other where you are most vulnerable. Support each other in the tensions of life.

We can also share each other’s burden of grief, of tragedy, of sorrow, of disappointment. These burdens are inevitable in the family of faith. When you feel sad, you need somebody to stand with you, to come to you in your sorrow. Be alert to each other’s griefs and help each other.

The burdens we carry alone:

- Practically speaking, we should each do our own work. We should shoulder our own pack.
- Certain problems will also need to be faced alone. You will suffer alone. Much of our pain occurs in our internal life. We will be discouraged, disappointed, maybe even bitter, though no one else may know our pain.
- We will also all face death alone. We will travel through the valley of the shadow of death, and we will go alone.
- Lastly, we will all stand alone before Jesus Christ, our judge. He will evaluate our lives at the Bema (see 2 Corinthians 5:10). At this judgement seat, your salvation will not be in question—that was settled for the believer at the cross of Christ, but the Bema will determine your rewards (see Romans 14:12).

The burden you can neither bear nor share:

You also can’t share the weight of sin with anyone else. Nor is it a burden you can carry yourself. (See Psalms 38:4; 55:6.) Have you ever felt like a bird that can fly away from it? Or an athlete that can run away from it? But you can’t, because with your sin comes guilt, shame, and consequences.

There's only one place to get rid of your sin—at the cross of Christ. The Lord Jesus said “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). He alone can lift the weight of your sin off your life. He paid the penalty for it, and He alone can take it from you.

Today your burden is either on you, or by faith you have received Christ as your Savior and it's on Him. It can't be both places. And Christ does not *share* it—He bore it all. What will you do with your burdens today?

WHAT YOU SOW, YOU REAP

One of the most remarkable verses in Scripture teaches us an undeniable, unmovable, unalterable law that operates in every sphere of life: *What you sow, you will reap*. If you plant cotton, you grow cotton. You will never pick a squash off of a walnut tree. In the moral sphere, if you sow unfaithfulness, you will reap unfaithfulness.

The Old Testament is full of examples. Jacob deceived his father, Isaac, in Genesis 27-29, and years later his uncle deceived him. Ahab and Jezebel hatched a plot to steal Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings 21). God sent Elijah to tell them God saw them murder Naboth and someday soon they would be killed. (And they were.)

As a Christian you will reap what you sow. What has your life been since you accepted Christ? Are you planting seeds of sinfulness? It only will grow. Are you sowing seeds of godliness? That, too, will grow.

“Don't be deceived,” Paul said, *“God is not mocked. You won't get by with it.”* Sow to your flesh and you'll rot. Sow to the Spirit and you'll harvest an everlasting life. If you are going to live in the flesh, you will produce the things of the flesh. You won't lose your salvation, but you will lose your reward, which will make it a day of shame and regret when you stand before Him.

That was God putting up a red light. Now He puts up a green light.

“Keep doing good,” He says. At the right time you will harvest a good crop if you don't give up or quit. Right now, therefore, every time you get the chance, serve the body of Christ.

Sow the right seed and be patient. After all, you can't harvest grain in the winter. Wait until the time of reaping comes. You may have problems and difficulties today, but just keep sowing the Word of God. (See Isaiah 55:10-11.) Walk in the Spirit and keep doing good.

As Paul wraps up his letter, he calls attention to his own handwriting. The letters are large. Some guess Paul's "thorn in the flesh" was eye trouble (see 2 Corinthians 12:7). When Paul wrote his Epistle to the Romans, he dictated it to a secretary. But when Paul wrote this letter, he was mad. He had heard the Galatians were mixing the gospel with Law—destroying God's message of grace. He couldn't wait for a secretary, so he penned this letter himself. Because he didn't see clearly, he wrote with large letters, stressing how important this message is.

The Judaizers who were pulling at the Galatians wanted them under the Law where it's easier to control them. The purpose of any law is to curb us. It appeals to our natural tendencies, since we all want the other guy to obey the law. We also like a law we can obey. Legalists want to clear the hurdle, but don't set the bar too high. God's grace doesn't appeal to them; in fact, the human heart finds the Cross repulsive.

When you heap on the laws, it's easy to create a pecking order. I do better than you. But Paul says, *"I can't boast about anything but the Cross of Jesus Christ."*

Between Paul and the world—there was a cross. As a follower of Jesus Christ, that is where we all stand today. The Cross will shape your conduct more than anything else. You won't boast in your goodness or your faithfulness or your church or your service. You won't *boast* of anything. You will just *glory* in the Cross and the One who died there.

Speaking of handwriting, the practice of circumcision was like a signature on the body in Paul's day. It said you belonged under the Abrahamic covenant. It had no value except that. The essential thing is: Has the Spirit of God come into your life and made you a new creature in Christ Jesus? This can come about *only* through faith in Christ.

This "only" condition is what the legalizers had against Paul. He wouldn't have been in trouble if he had presented the gospel as a religious competitor, that "Judaism is good, but Christianity is better." But he didn't. He said faith in Christ is the *only* way.

The legalizers said you had to be circumcised to be saved. But Paul said circumcision is nothing, it didn't matter. Only the handwriting of the Holy Spirit across your life matters.

As he closes, Paul points to the marks on his own body as the handwriting of Jesus.

“I bear in my body the scars, the stigmata, of Jesus.” If you want to know where those scars came from, read 2 Corinthians 11:23-27 for a long list of what Paul endured for the sake of the Lord Jesus.

In Paul’s day, a stigmata was a brand. If a runaway slave was returned, he was branded on his forehead. Also soldiers who belonged to famous companies had the names of their commanders tattooed on their foreheads. Strict religious pagans also branded their goddesses’ name on their bodies.

“I have on my body the stigmata of the Lord Jesus.” In effect, Paul says, *“I have written to you out of deep emotion and with great conviction. If you want to know if I truly believe what I have written and if these things are real in my own life, read my body—look at my scars.”*

Paul bore the brand marks of the Lord Jesus on his body and on his life. The Lord Jesus still writes His name on the lives of His own. His branding iron is on our hearts for eternity. Do you proudly wear His stigmata for His sake?

As a final appeal, Paul entrusts these people he loves to God’s grace.

7. What is keeping you from being willing to sacrifice as much as Paul for the sake of the gospel?

A photograph of two men, one Black and one white, smiling and talking to each other outdoors. They are both gesturing with their hands as if in conversation. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people in a park-like setting.

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A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a smartphone. The phone screen displays a webpage with several articles and 'Download' buttons. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with a wooden surface.

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