

GALATIANS

CHAPTER FIVE

1. From what are Christians set “free?”

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage” (Galatians 5:1).

The over all theme of the epistle indicates the entire Law of Moses, specifically including ordinances relative to circumcision, are the “yoke of bondage” one should not be “entangled” in, and from which Christ offers “liberty.”

2. Identify two consequences of becoming circumcised.

“Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace” (Galatians 5:2-4).

- 1) *“Christ will profit you nothing,” “you have become estranged from Christ,” and “you have fallen from grace.”* Reversion to the former covenant will nullify the effect of Christ for that person. That is to say that salvation will be forfeit! “Once saved, always saved” is proven false, once again.
- 2) *“A debtor to keep the whole law.”* One who is inclined to select portions of the Law of Moses is not authorized to cherry pick the parts he likes. He will be obligated to the entire system (James 2:10). The present covenant does not coincide with the previous, but has replaced it altogether (Hebrews 10:9).

3. How is righteousness obtained?

“For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love” (Galatians 5:5-6).

“Righteousness” is:

- 1) *“Through the Spirit,”* meaning the Holy Spirit who has revealed God’s will to man. It is not through oneself that righteousness is achieved (Romans 10:3).

- 2) *“By faith,”* meaning belief in that which God presently teaches, rather than reliance on an obsolete system (Romans 3:21-22). This is not faith in contrast to obedience, for Paul writes here of *“faith working,”* so it refers to faith in contrast to the Law.

4. What had the Galatians been doing that they were *“hindered”* from continuing?

“You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?” (Galatians 5:7).

Salvation is dependent on obedience (Hebrews 5:9). Whatever obstacles had arisen kept them on the side of falsehood, rather than truth.

5. Whom had their present persuasion come from?

“This persuasion does not come from Him who calls you” (Galatians 5:8). The One who called was God, through the gospel (2nd Thessalonians 2:13-14). Thus, the persuasion they were falling under came from someone other than Him and through some source other than His gospel, the implication being that it was damnable heresy from the devil.

6. Describe the potential of leaven.

“A little leaven leavens the whole lump” (Galatians 5:9). Whether for good (Matthew 13:33) or ill (Matthew 16:5-12; 1st Corinthians 5:6-8), leaven, that is yeast, represents influence and its far-reaching effects. In context, leaven is Judaism in the church, and Paul is warning about it.

7. What thoughts did Paul have about the two separate parties?

“I have confidence in you, in the Lord, that you will have no other mind; but he who troubles you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is” (Galatians 5:10).

Despite all his frustration heretofore, Paul actually expressed confidence in the Galatian brethren themselves, but anticipated judgment on the one who was troubling them. The apostle might have been unaware of the troubler’s identity, or he may simply have indicated the impartiality of divine judgment (Romans 2:11).

8. What was Paul experiencing and how did that confirm his stance on the subject?

“And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the cross has ceased” (Galatians 5:11).

Paul was still being persecuted, so he clearly was at odds with the Judaizers. If they tried to use him as an example of a circumciser (Acts 16:1-3) to justify themselves, it would not make sense that they opposed him so vociferously.

9. What did Paul wish the troublemakers would do?

"I could wish that those who trouble you would even cut themselves off!" (Galatians 5:12).

Some versions water down the sense of Paul's intent to make it seem he only wished they would separate themselves. Others, more accurately, convey the idea of emasculation. We don't need to try and make it sound nice because it wasn't. He was suggesting that if they were so focused on taking a knife to one's genitals that they would just cut the whole thing off and be done with it.

10. Is liberty in Christ absolute?

"For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another" (Galatians 5:13).

No, liberty is not so absolute that it carries no weight of responsibility. Liberty presents opportunity to serve and to do so with love. It does not free anyone to sin with impunity.

11. How is the law summarized?

"For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Galatians 5:14).

It is not that love negates all the other commands, but that love is the impetus for obedience to those commands (Matthew 22:37-40; Romans 13:8-10).

12. What is the predictable outcome of infighting?

“But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!” (Galatians 5:15).

It cannot continue long before souls are destroyed.

13. How may a Christian properly refrain from fleshly lusts?

“I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16).

It is insufficient to simply abstain from doing bad; he must also actively engage in good. Removing naughty habits is not enough; they must be replaced with righteous behavior (Luke 11:24-26).

14. What is the relation between *“the flesh”* and *“the Spirit?”*

“For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish” (Galatians 5:17).

They contradict one another. This should be obvious, self-evident, goes without saying, but far too many people claim to be Christians while living immoral lives totally consistent with the world and altogether opposed to the gospel.

15. Where does the law fit into the life of a Spirit-led person?

“But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law” (Galatians 5:18).

Because the Holy Spirit moved the apostles and prophets (2nd Peter 1:21) to record in Scripture that the law has been terminated (Romans 7:4; 10:4), those who are led by the Spirit know they are not under that law.

16. List the “evident” “works of the flesh” and be prepared to define each one.

“Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are” (Galatians 5:19-21):

- 1) *“Adultery”* (KJV & NKJV only): Unlawful intercourse with the spouse of another. Even if the Holy Spirit did not include it in this list, it is mentioned many other times in the New Testament, so its sinfulness is indisputable (Hebrews 13:4). While it starts in the heart (Matthew 5:28), it is not merely a thought, but an action (John 8:4). It is most often committed in marriage following divorce (Romans 7:1-3; Luke 16:18).
- 2) *“Fornication”*: Illicit sexual intercourse, including adultery, homosexuality, bestiality, and heterosexual copulation without the benefit of marriage (1st Corinthians 6:12-7:5; 1st Thessalonians 4:3-8).
- 3) *“Uncleanness”*: In a physical sense, just dirtiness (Matthew 23:27), but applied to behavior with implications concerning morality (1st Thessalonians 2:3), almost always mentioned morally in the context of sexual purity (2nd Corinthians 12:21; Ephesians 4:19; 5:3; Colossians 3:5; 1st Thessalonians 4:7). It is an intentionally generic word meant to cover a broad range of immorality, especially conduct that would suggest sexuality without being specific. Thus, when an unmarried couple wonders if they’ve “gone too far,” the answer is almost certainly affirmative.

- 4) *“Lewdness”*: Indecent bodily movements, unchaste handling of males and females. This is not quite as vague as *“uncleanness”* as it does particularly indicate physical contact, but it certainly doesn’t require completion of a sexual deed. It falls on the spectrum between sexual thought – lust (Matthew 5:28) and sexual intercourse – fornication (1st Corinthians 6:9). Applications include groping, feeling up, and most modern dancing. *“Women equate dancing to sex”* (Will Smith, *“Hitch,”* 2005).

Having mentioned three or four sins of a sensual nature, which Paul would expect his readers to readily agree are wrong, he moves to sins of a religious sort:

- 5) *“Idolatry”*: The worship of false gods. While anything that comes between man and God is an idol, such as covetousness (Colossians 3:5), and that notion must be applied widely, the reality is that actual worship of false gods is still a real problem. It causes an irreconcilable problem for Christians (1st Corinthians 10:14-22). It is totally unreasonable (Romans 1:22-25).
- 6) *“Sorcery”*: From the same Greek word that gives us *“pharmacy”* in English, it refers to the use of drugs to cause people to believe in magic. The condemnation of this sin applies to both non-medicinal drug use, as well as forays into the dark arts, spiritism, witchcraft, and such (Deuteronomy 18:10; Revelation 21:8; 22:15).

After quickly addressing certain religious sins that both Christians and Jews should comprehend as wrong, the apostle then points to several problematic attitudes that would characterize some members in a divided church:

- 7) *“Hatred”*: Definitely, this is the opposite of love (1st John 2:9-11; 3:15; 4:20; Matthew 5:43-48).

- 8) *“Contentions”*: Strife, quarrel, especially rivalry, contention, wrangling.
- 9) *“Jealousies”*: Unfavorable zeal.
- 10) *“Outbursts of wrath”*: Passion, angry heat, fierceness.
- 11) *“Selfish ambitions”*: Party-making, seeking to win followers.
- 12) *“Dissensions”*: Disunion. Standing apart.
- 13) *“Heresies”* : Opinion substituted for truth, leading to division and the formation of sects.
- 14) *“Envy”*: Displeasure at the prosperity of others.

After mentioning so many sinful mindsets that seemed to be present in Galatia, the apostle returns to certain immoral behaviors he would expect all Christians to comprehend as worldly. It would seem that he bookended this list with sins he would expect his audience to recognize and disapprove of to gain their agreement, and then sandwiched the troubles they were involved in between those things.

- 15) *“Murders”* (KJV & NKJV only): Even if the Holy Spirit did not include it in this list, it is mentioned many other times in the New Testament, so its sinfulness is indisputable.
- 16) *“Drunkenness”*: Intoxication, which starts with the first drink (Proverbs 23:31; 20:1; 1st Timothy 5:23; Ephesians 5:18).

17) *“Revelries”*: A nocturnal and riotous procession of half-drunken and frolicsome fellows who after supper parade through the streets with torches and music in honor of Bacchus or some other deity, and sing and play before the houses of their male and female friends.

17. Is the list exhaustive?

“And the like” (Galatians 5:21) indicates there could be more to fleshly living, but the list provides a gist of what it means to be fleshly-oriented. Anything similar to this does not need to be explicitly enumerated to be recognized as an *“evident”* sin.

18. What becomes of *“those who practice such things?”*

“Of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:21).

Similar lists of sins likewise conclude with warnings of condemnation (1st Corinthians 6:9-11; Ephesians 5:3-7; Revelation 21:8; 22:15).

19. How many fruits of the Spirit are there?

“But the fruit of the Spirit is” (Galatians 5:22) uses a singular, not plural form of the noun in both Greek and English; therefore only one fruit exists with its component elements. *“Love, joy, peace,”* etc. are not various fruits, but parts of the whole fruit. If any portion of this fruit is lacking, the Christian cannot be the productive disciple he needs to be.

20. List the component elements of *“the fruit of the Spirit”* and identify which *“works of the flesh”* each one contradicts.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is” (Galatians 5:22-23):

- 1) *“Love”*: It is the bond of perfection (Colossians 3:14) because it is the fulfillment of every law (Romans 13:8-10), which is why it comprises the first and second greatest commandments (Matthew 22:36-38). To know if love truly occupies one’s heart, read 1st Corinthians 13:1-8_a and replace the word *“love”* with one’s own name and consider if what is said is accurate.

This quality of the fruit of the Spirit stands in direct contrast to every one of the works of the flesh.

- 2) *“Joy”*: Cheerfulness, delight, gladness. This is not mere happiness, which depends on what is **happening**. It transcends circumstance inasmuch as we are to rejoice at all times (1st Thessalonians 5:16), in the Lord (Philippians 4:4), even during trial (James 1:2).

Hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, and envy all violate joy.

- 3) *“Peace”*: Tranquility, harmony, concord. This is stillness of the soul which comes from the Lord (John 14:27) and permeates our being despite outward conflict (16:33).

As with joy, so peace is in opposition to hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, and envy.

- 4) *“Longsuffering”*: Forbearance, endurance. It means putting up with ill treatment, not out of acceptance or approval, but in order to eventually

forgive, as God has done (1st Timothy 1:12-16). We look to Job and the prophets for our human examples (James 5:10-11).

Like the two preceding qualities, this one is in contrast to hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, and envy.

- 5) *“Kindness”*: Moral goodness, integrity, benignity. It is this quality on God’s part that makes man’s salvation possible (Romans 11:22; Titus 3:4).

It, too, contrasts against hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, and envy.

- 6) *“Goodness”*: Virtue, beneficence, uprightness of heart and life. It is quality which pursues knowledge and enables one to admonish others (Romans 15:14).

It encapsulates the entirety of the Spirit’s fruit (Ephesians 5:9-11), and so it opposes all the works of the flesh.

- 7) *“Faithfulness”*: Belief, persuasion, conviction, assurance. Faith is the firm trust a disciple has in the Master (Matthew 8:5-13; 21:21) that motivates action in accordance with that reliance (Hebrews 11; James 2:14-26). *“Faith,”* as the KJV has it, is probably more accurate here since *“faithfulness”* suggests being reliable, which is a different characteristic than reliance.

Since it is trust in God, the works of the flesh most directly at odds with faith would be idolatry and sorcery, which manifestly redirect faith away from the Almighty.

- 8) *“Gentleness”*: Mildness, humility. It is the opposite of harshness, but only when it comes from someone fully capable of harshness (1st Corinthians 4:21). Consider that Moses was the meekest of all men (Numbers 12:3), but even he was capable of physical force to the point of homicide (Exodus 2:12)!

As with the majority of this list, gentleness conflicts with hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, and envy.

- 9) *“Self-control”*: Contenance, self-restraint. It is personal discipline, mastery over the self, and is always goal-driven (1st Corinthians 9:24-27). There is no greater strength than self-control (Proverbs 16:32), but the person who lacks this quality has squandered his value (Proverbs 25:28)

A lack of self-control causes one to indulge in any of the works of the flesh.

21. Which law do the preceding virtues comport with?

“Against such there is no law” (Galatians 5:23).

The fruit of the Spirit is consistent with both the Old Law and the New.

22. What have *“those who are Christ’s”* done and what do those who *“live in the Spirit”* do?

“And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (Galatians 5:24-25).

23. What behaviors will be refrained from when living and walking in the Spirit?

*“Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another”
(Galatians 5:26).*