# Galatians 5:13-26 (Free to Live)

Today is a discussion Sunday, so after this introduction, we will split up into small groups (<6) at tables and discuss this passage. Remember, this is your opportunity to worship God with your mind and voice, but just don’t monopolize the conversation. There are no designated leaders, so someone just get the ball rolling with one of the questions provided. Or share from your heart if you feel God speaking to you through something you’ve heard this morning. It’s a little less structured service, but we pray that the Holy Spirit will keep order.

If you were here last week, Jason began the teaching of the 5th chapter in the book of Galatians. And if you remember the video he showed of the 3 prisoners who were set free from their sins and their fears by Christ. And Paul answers the natural next question: Ok, now what? What should I do with my freedom? **<Arrow>**

*You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”*

And Paul gives a strong warning here not to follow the wrong path of freedom towards ‘indulging or flesh’ or some translations say ‘satisfying your sinful nature’. Instead, he says stay on the path that Christ taught to serve each other humbly in love. This sounds like good advice, but why don’t we do it all the time? Why do we sometimes live for the flesh?

But before I try to answer that question let’s look at a very practical description by Paul of what are acts of the flesh. **<Arrow>**

*The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

Some people group these into 4 categories: sexual sins, relational sins, religious sins, and sins of excess. When I think about this list, I see people who are looking for happiness or fulfillment, but in all the wrong places. They believe in that sexual pleasure is something to live for and that it will be enough. You see people that believe fighting to get ahead in the world and have it better than others will bring them happiness through wealth or feeling important. You see people looking for magical experiences to get them through the drudgery of life. I see people looking for great parties or the best that the culture has to offer to find their meaning in the world and it just won’t satisfy. And Paul adds, this isn’t an exhaustive list, so whatever else besides Christ that you try to look for to find your ultimate fulfillment or happiness, you can add that here. Do you live for computer games or online sex?

So, the reason we pursue these things is that we believe that they can bring us happiness. And this is what the culture around us says is the Answer, right? Just look at advertising and you see lots of these things. And if we pursue these and we build our life around them, when we live like this, then you have missed the boat completely and you will not enter Heaven or God’s Kingdom. Tough words here, but true.

And the sad truth is that these things don’t bring you happiness or comfort or peace. Think about a person who spends the majority of his life pursuing some of these things. Let’s say 30-50 years spent trying to find happiness in sexual gratification. What will that person’s life look like at the end of their life? Broken relationships, loneliness, serious health complications like kidney failure. We knew someone personally who died in their late 30’s due to complications from various STDs.

Think about how many people become alcoholics or drug addicts and they destroy their lives in the pursuit of that high and those few moments of pleasure before all the consequences begin to catch up with them and they lose jobs, families, health.

Now, it can get trickier to see a life impacted by fits of rage to control others around you or letting deep hatred for others become your reason to live. You can focus your attention on all those around you and get so caught up in those relationships that you miss out on life. I think about some of these junky reality TV shows where it’s all about who said what to whom or how they will get even with so and so for what they did. And now multiply that by 30 or 50 years in a person’s life. What will that look like in the end? It will be ugly and that is someone you never want to spend time with. Have you ever met someone like that who is so bitter and angry and they make everyone around them miserable as well.

This is living your life apart from God and Paul warns us clearly that people like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. In other words, they won’t get into Heaven. Harsh words, but true.

Now, you may wonder, but I thought our salvation is not based on our good deeds, so how can Paul be so sure they aren’t Christians? And we have heard this message clearly in this letter, that we don’t earn our salvation, it is a free gift of God through faith in Jesus Christ who sets us free from our sins. The problem is that this type of life reflects what is in the heart and you don’t see the Spirit of Christ anywhere in this as a consistent long term lifestyle. These persons don’t have the Spirit of Christ in them.

Now that doesn’t mean that a true Christian won’t ever fall into any of these sins, but the difference is that you won’t consistently build your life in pursuit of these things. It just is incompatible with the Spirit filled life. **<Arrow>**

*the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other*

It’s like water and oil, they just don’t mix. Now, what is really interesting is the strategy that Paul says you should use to fight this battle. You might expect him to say you need to stand strong and really focus on avoiding these sins, but actually that is not what he says. **<Arrow>**

*So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh*

Paul says to focus on walking by or walking in step with the Spirit. If you focus on that, then you cannot gratify the desires of the flesh. Paul uses a double negative here to indicate that it absolutely won’t happen. And I think he is right. If you only try to avoid sin, you will likely fail. Haven’t you already figured that out in your own life? I have. And when I know that I am walking by the Spirit, then these old sins in my life become quieter and less interesting.

And I think it gets to this fullness of life and the easy yoke that Jesus promises us. When we do the Father’s will, we will get a deep inner happiness and peace and fulfillment, so that when that old sin comes knocking at our door, it’s not interesting to us because we have found something so much better. God doesn’t want us to not desire happiness, He created us like this, but He wants us to find our fulfillment and our life in Him and in step with His Spirit who lives in us and guides and speaks to us. We just need to learn to listen to that voice and to be obedient to it. And when you do that, this is what it will look like. **<Arrow>**

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.*

These will be the things that mark your life when you live in step with the Spirit. And just trying to follow the rules will not result in these things. We have to belong to Christ Jesus. And that is the main message of Galatians. This life is through the work of Jesus Christ of the cross who paid the penalty for my and your sins. It is a transformation into the family of God that is irreversible and complete. It is incompatible with the former life which was crucified with Christ.

And for you young people here, I would like to testify to you today that I was trying to gratify my flesh before I came to Christ about 30 years ago. And Christ set me free from my own sin where I was trying to pursue my own happiness, but I came to understand that instead of freedom, I was becoming a slave to this desire. And today, I can’t tell you how happy and satisfied and truly grateful I am for the life that I have in Christ. It was the best decision that I ever made and I pray that you find that peace in your own life. What is really scary to me is thinking what my life might have looked life after 30 years of pursuing my own path to happiness. Any life apart from Christ will not give you happiness in the end. Take my word for it. Don’t find that out for yourself and live a life with regrets.

Let’s end there and pray for God’s blessing on the discussion groups. PRAY

When it is about 10 minutes after 12, you can start closing down your discussion and someone ask for prayer requests from the group and close in your own prayer.

Galatians 5:13-26

You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

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

# Galatians 5:13-26 Questions

1. Do you think most Christians focus more on NOT giving into sin or on walking by the Spirit? Which is the better strategy? Why?
2. What prevents some people from walking in step with God’s Spirit?
3. How can someone know if they are following the Spirit or their own sinful flesh?
4. As a follower of Christ, I know that I am loved perfectly and completely by my Father in Heaven where I will go after I die. How can this knowledge help me to love others here?

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# Galatians 5:13-16 Questions

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