

Galatians 5:1–12 — Leader / Learner Guide

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Big Idea and Context

Big idea: Christ has set believers completely free from the law. Adding anything to grace — however small, however sincere — forfeits its benefit, invites new bondage, and demeans the cross.

Galatians turns from doctrine (ch. 3–4) to practice (ch. 5–6). Chapter 5 guards liberty against two opposite dangers.

- **5:1–12, legalism:** don't go back under the law; stand fast.
- **5:13–26, license:** don't turn freedom into a base for the flesh; walk in the Spirit.
- **6:1–10, liberty in community:** restore, bear burdens, sow to the Spirit.

Stand Fast — Three Anchor Verses

Verse	What it says	Teaching point
5:1	Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free	A decision believers must make. Standing is not automatic, or Paul would not need to command it.
5:4	You have fallen from grace	Their fellowship was broken, not their relationship. They left the heights of grace for a law that had already ended.
5:6	Faith working through love	Under law, people worked from fear; under grace, believers work from love for Christ (2 Cor 5:14).

Not saved by works, but for works: Ephesians 2:8–9 is followed by 2:10.

Sanctification is the race: salvation starts at the finish line; the race is daily growth (1 Cor 9:24–27).

Teaching Flow

1. **The Request to Stand Fast (1).** A positive command — stand (1 Cor 16:13; Phil 1:27; 4:1) — and a negative one: don't take on any yoke again (Acts 15:10).
2. **The Results of Submitting to the Law (2–4).** Christ profits you nothing; you owe the whole law (James 2:10); you have fallen from grace.
3. **The Reality of the Spirit-Filled Life (5–6).** We wait by the Spirit for the hope of righteousness — no instant spirituality (2 Cor 3:18) — and faith works through love.
4. **The Reputation of the Law Teachers (7–12).** They cut in on the runners, their persuasion is not from God, a little leaven spreads, judgment is God's, and they twist Paul's past to slander him.

Clarify While Teaching

- **5:1 and chapter 4:** chapter and verse numbers were added centuries later, so 5:1 can naturally close chapter 4.
- **Sabbath-keeping groups:** the principle is any single law-practice made required. Some Sabbath-keeping believers do not claim it is needed for salvation, so avoid painting every group the same.
- **"Hope of righteousness" (5:5):** Sellers sees here the righteousness of the coming kingdom, gained through faithful service (2 Tim 2:12). Justification is already settled; this hope concerns reward.
- **"Faith working through love":** Sellers reads this as love for Christ as the motive for service (2 Cor 5:14), in contrast to the law's motive of fear. Love for neighbor follows in 5:13–14.
- **"Punishment is Mine":** the verses read "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay" (Deut 32:35; Rom 12:19; Heb 10:30).

Discussion and Close

1. Why does adding one small requirement to grace undo the whole thing?
2. Who has "cut in" on your race? How do you get back in your lane?
3. Are you serving Christ more from fear or from love? What would change if it were love?

Close: Point ahead to 5:13–26: having warned against legalism, Paul now warns against the opposite ditch — liberty is not license. Don't build your works in the basement where they can never get out.

Full study: [Taking a Stand in Liberty — Galatians 5:1–12](#) · Source: Dr. C. Norman Sellers, [SellersBibleInstitute.com](#)