

Galatians 5:13–26 — Leader / Learner Guide

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Big Idea and Context

Big idea: Liberty is not license. Believers overcome the flesh by walking in the Spirit, not by going back under the law.

Galatians moves from personal defense (ch. 1–2) to 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 (6:8 picks up this week's text).

Law vs. Spirit — Three Anchor Verses

Verse	What it says	Teaching point
5:14	Love fulfills the whole law	Want to keep the law? Love your neighbor (Lev 19:18).
5:18	Led by the Spirit = not under the law	The law drives from behind; the Spirit leads from the front.
5:23	Against such there is no law	The Spirit produces what the law demanded but could never supply.

Audience is believers throughout: "brethren" (v.13), biting and devouring (v.15), the flesh-Spirit conflict (v.17, only in one who has the Spirit), "those who are Christ's" (v.24), "we" (v.25).

Look back to 3:1–5: they received the Spirit by hearing with faith, not by works of the law (3:2). "Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?" (3:3). Chapter 5 answers that question: the Spirit who came by faith is the same Spirit who now produces the walk (5:16, 25). See also 4:6 — the Spirit of His Son marks them as sons. (Study 06: Under a Spell)

Teaching Flow

1. **The Potential of Liberty (13–15).** Free positionally; now bring experience up to position. License or love? Foot-washing (John 13:3–15). Biting and devouring happens among believers.
2. **The Performance of Liberty (16–18).** Walk (*peripateo*) in daily life. The flesh remains and wars against the Spirit (Rom 7:15–25). Victory comes by dependence, not effort.
3. **The Pictures of Liberty (19–23).** Works of the flesh: sexual, spiritual, social sins. "Inherit" (v.21) means ruling with Christ, not entering the kingdom (Matt 19:29; Rev 2:26). Fruit is singular and grows from the root (orange tree).
4. **The Participation in Liberty (24–26).** Crucified with Christ: done (aorist), now counted true. "If" = "since" (v.25). Walk in rank (*stoicheo*), the Spirit as drill sergeant. Guard against conceit, provoking, envy.

Clarify While Teaching

- **5:18 note:** "the walk of faith in verse 20" should read verse 25.
- **Genesis 49:** Reuben, Simeon, and Levi lost birthright and blessing but stayed sons and tribes. That illustrates losing inheritance without losing sonship.
- **Orange tree:** fruit is something others may or may not see; however, assurance fully rests on Christ's promise, not on fruit.
- **5:24:** the crucifixion is already done; our part is to count it true daily (Rom 6:11), not to crucify ourselves.
- **"Three groups":** tie the conclusion to the three sins of v.26 — the factions the Judaizers stirred up.
- **Commandments:** say "the two tables" rather than "first five / second five".

Discussion and Close

1. Where is the choice between license and loving service hardest for you (v.13)?
2. Which fruit (vv.22–23) do you most need, and are you trying to produce it or asking the Spirit to grow it?
3. Where have conceit, provoking, or envy (v.26) quietly crept in?

Close: Point ahead to 6:8 — sowing to the Spirit is walking in the Spirit, applied. "Since we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."

Full study: [Walk in the Spirit — Galatians 5:13–26](#) · Source: Dr. C. Norman Sellers, [SellersBibleInstitute.com](#)