

**Text: Gal 5.25-26**

We come to the end of the “Living by the Spirit” section of Galatians 5:

- I. Introduction 1:1–10
- II. Personal defense of Paul’s gospel 1:11–2:21
- III. Theological affirmation of salvation by faith 3:1–4:31
  - A. Vindication of the doctrine ch. 3
  - B. Clarification of the doctrine ch. 4
- IV. Practical application to Christian living 5:1–6:10
  - A. Balance in the Christian life ch. 5
    - 1. Living without the Law 5:1–12
    - 2. Living without license 5: 13-15
    - 3. Living by the Holy Spirit 5:16–26<sup>1</sup>

We are still thinking today about our relationship to the Holy Spirit.

**First**, we are “born again” by the Spirit, that’s the foundation of the “Living without the Law” section.

**Second**, the new life in the Spirit by no means includes living by license — salvation by faith doesn’t mean opportunity to indulge the flesh.

**Finally**, living by the Spirit means overcoming the flesh by a new, dependent relationship to the Holy Spirit for the desire and power to overcome the flesh.

This last point is what the fruit of the Spirit section emphasizes. The concluding verses are no exception, they underscore the matter by offering a dramatic choice... a daily choice, I would add.

*The Christian's Daily Choice*

Read Gal 5.25-26

**I. The starting premise (25a)**

A. Conditional sentence structure

- 1. First class condition: protasis assumed to be true

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<sup>1</sup> Tom Constable, *Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Galatians, Introduction, Outline.

2. In this case, "If we live by the Spirit"
  - a. Could be "if we live **in** the Spirit"
    - 1) By = "means"
    - 2) In = "sphere"
  - b. Main point: someone who lives in or by the Spirit is born again

#### B. Paul's assumption in writing

1. He writes to Christians
2. He assumes genuine Christian testimony
3. The assumed testimony is the basis for the choice that follows

"If you live by the Spirit (if you are born again), *and you are...* then..."

Or more simply, "Since you live by the Spirit..."

## II. The startling choice (25b-26)

#### A. The reality of a choice

1. Let us walk by the Spirit (25)
2. Let us not become boastful, etc. (26)

Both focus on the same choice, but the reality is that a believer can make the wrong choice: *i.e.* move the negative to v. 25 and out of v. 26.

It is possible for a Christian to get out of sorts with the Spirit and walk by the flesh instead.

#### B. The walk by the Spirit

1. The word here is a unique one for "walk"
  - a. A military term
  - b. Means "Keep in step with," "draw up in a line," "stand in a row"

## 2. If we will walk by the Spirit, we will arrange ourselves in line with the Spirit

Rm 12.1-2 ¶ Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is your spiritual service of worship.* <sup>2</sup> And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

- a. We are after conformity to God
- b. Transformation of our mind and ways

## 3. This means studying the Spirit's ways and conforming our thoughts to them

### C. The walk of boastfulness

#### 1. The meaning of the three words

- a. Boastful: “κενόδοξος, ov pert. to having exaggerated self-conceptions, *conceited, boastful*”<sup>2</sup>
- b. Challenging one another: “to call out to someone to come forward, freq. in a hostile sense *provoke, challenge*”<sup>3</sup>

“‘Provoke’ (prokaleomai) is a word used in athletic contexts with the idea of challenging another to a contest of strength. When our focus is on self and on earthly glory, we never can have enough and are always dissatisfied and envious.”<sup>4</sup>

- c. Envying one another: “to experience a feeling of ill will due to real or presumed advantage experienced by someone else - ‘to be envious, to be jealous.’”<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

<sup>3</sup> Bauer.

<sup>4</sup> Grant R. Osborne, *Galatians: Verse by Verse*, Osborne New Testament Commentaries (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2017), 196.

<sup>5</sup> Johannes E. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, 2 vols. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996).

2. We can see that these are all works of the flesh: it is a self-oriented point of view

“This is a very instructive verse because it shows that our conduct to others is determined by our opinion of ourselves.”<sup>6</sup>

#### D. Back to the premise of the passage

1. If you live by the Spirit (if you are born again)
2. (Then) Let us
  - a. Walk by the Spirit
  - b. Not become boastful

### III. The simple question

“In short, the secret is the Holy Spirit. He alone can give us that ‘fifth freedom’—freedom from sin and self. He enables us to fulfill the law of love, to overcome the flesh, and to bear fruit. Will you yield to Him and let Him work?”<sup>7</sup>

A. Will you let the Spirit work?

B. Or will you still insist on being ruled by your passions (your flesh)?

#### Conclusion:

My emphasis throughout this section is learning to depend on the Spirit.

If you find yourself indulging in the works of the flesh...

- Anger
- Boastful pride
- Provoking one another
- etc.

You need to make a change in your thinking. Get close to God, learn his ways, imitate his Spirit.

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<sup>6</sup> Stott, *Only One Way*, 156, cited in Timothy George, *Galatians*, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville, Tenn: B&H, 1994), 406.

<sup>7</sup> Warren W Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 1 (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1996), 720.