



Galatians - Chapter 5:17

The Flesh and the Spirit in Opposition

Holly Hills Bible Church – February 8, 2026



What is Galatians all about?

Correcting Christians who were putting themselves under law.



- **Galatians 5:13-18 (NASB)**

¹³ For you were called to freedom, brethren; only *do* not *turn* your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. ¹⁴ For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the *statement*, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF."

¹⁵ But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another. ¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.



- **Romans 7:4-6 (NASB)**

⁴ Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God. ⁵ For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were *aroused* by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death. ⁶ But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.

The Christian's Relationship to the Law



The Law was given to *Israel* as their rule of life. (Deut 4:44-45)

And, though the law is righteous and holy and good... (Deut 4:8, Rom 7:12)

You (as a Christian) are not under law but under grace. (Rom 6:14)

For what the law could not do weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending his own son... (Rom 8:3)

For

The power of sin is the law... (1Cor 15:56)

And my sinful passions were aroused by the law... (Rom 7:5)

Therefore it was necessary that I be “redeemed from the curse of the law” through the cross of Christ (Gal 3:13)

Now, in Christ, I am free to count myself dead to sin; free from its power. (Romans 6:11)

For do you not know brethren...that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives? (Rom 7:1)

BUT

I have been crucified with Christ! It is no longer I who live! **BUT CHRIST LIVES IN ME** (Gal 2:20)



What did Paul introduce in verse 13 that is important for understanding today's verse?

Galatians 5:13 (NASB)

¹³ For you were called to freedom, brethren; only *do not turn* your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

Paul does not want the Galatians to think that because they are not under the law then they are free to live any way they want. (The error of licentiousness.)



“opportunity” (ἀφορμή)

Romans 7:8 (NASB)

But sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin *is* dead.

Galatians 5:13 (NASB)

¹³ For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

The flesh can operate both under law and free from the law.

Grace is a new kind of life that is not of the flesh!



What is the flesh?

σάρξ

the soft substance of the living body, which covers the bones and is permeated with blood (straightforward literal sense)

1 Corinthians 15:39 39 All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one flesh of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fish.

“Flesh” stands for the sin nature that we have as being part of Adam’s race.



What are the two “desires” that Paul contrasts in verse 17?

Galatians 5:17 (NASB)

¹⁷ For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

Two different desires are at play in the believer, and they are totally contrary to each other.



What is the desire of the flesh, and what is the desire of the Spirit?

The desire of the flesh is to glorify and serve ME!

The desire of the Holy Spirit is to glorify JESUS! (John 16:14)



What does the phrase “so that you may not do the things that you please” mean?

“...so that you may not do whatever you desire.”

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. V.16

The reason the Lord has put His Holy Spirit in us with His own desires is so that we will ***not*** carry out the selfish desires of our flesh.



How exactly does the Holy Spirit fulfill His desire to glorify the Lord Jesus in us?

He produces the “fruit of the Spirit”.

Galatians 2:20 (NASB)

²⁰ "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

The fruit of the Spirit is the life of Christ in me.



Verse 6

Through *what* does faith accomplish this work?

Faith working through LOVE.

A perfect, pure and totally selfless love is what the life of Christ is all about.

It's a love that WE DON'T HAVE!

But it is exactly what He will produce in us if we will let Him.