Galatians Summary: **God cares about the heart, not external metrics**	1:1-2:14 'My message is true'	2:15-5:26 'Here's my message'	6:1-18 'Go and implement my message'

Galatians 5:1-26 (ESVUK) **Sunday 15 November 2026**

1. Conclusion of Paul's message: 'Be free; don't be enslaved'! (5:1-12)

5 For freedom Christ has set us free;
stand firm therefore,
and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

[2] Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision,
Christ will be of no advantage to you.
[3] I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision
that he is obligated to keep the whole law.
[4] You are severed from Christ,
you who would be justified[a] by the law;
you have fallen away from grace.

- 'don't cut yourself off from the Messiah just to make the cut *now*'

In Romans, Paul's usage of *justified* tends to focus on being counted righteous before God.

In Galatians, Paul is also concerned with the desire to be regarded as righteous by other people (4:17, 6:12-13), particularly through obedience to Jewish law.

[5] For through the Spirit,
[i.e.] by faith,
we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness.
[6] For in Christ Jesus
neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything,
but only faith working through love.

- 'instead, have faith; wait for God's *future* promises'

faith (A) being expressed through love & service of church family (B & C)
cf. 5:13-14

[7] You were running well.

Who hindered you from obeying the truth?
[8] This persuasion is not from him who calls you.
[9] A little leaven leavens the whole lump.

- 'this false teaching:
  5:8 is not from God
  5:9 will ruin everything!'

[10] I have confidence in the Lord
that you will take no other view than mine,

- 'I'm sure you'll come to my view'

and the one who is troubling you
will bear the penalty, whoever he is.

- 'the false teachers face God's wrath on judgement day'

[11] But if I, brothers,[b] still preach[c] circumcision,
why am I still being persecuted?
In that case the offence of the cross has been removed.

- 'I'm not pro-cutting anymore!'

[12] I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves!

- 'those who like cutting: go further!'

Paul's alarm
Why is Paul so alarmed and angry about the Galatians' situation? Do you think his reaction is proportionate?

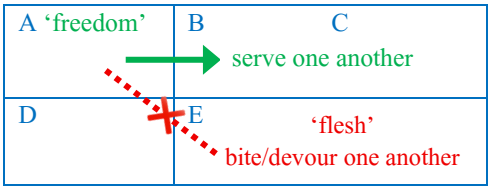
[a] Or ~~*counted*~~ *righteous*
[b] Or *brothers and sisters*; also verse 13
[c] Greek *proclaim*

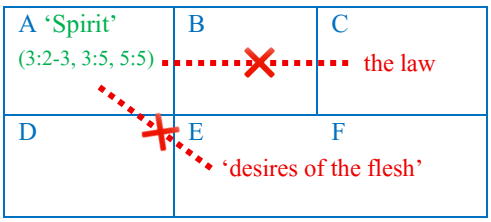
Next Sunday (22 Nov) | Galatians 6
AFC match day: use parking vouchers

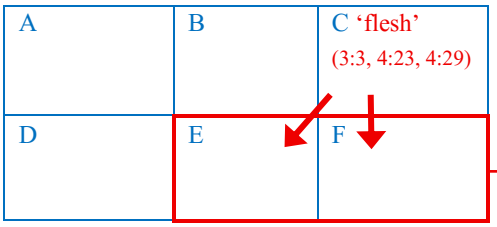
Andover Bible Church

2. What about godliness? (5:13-26)

'Godliness comes from faith; Law-focus leads to ungodliness!'





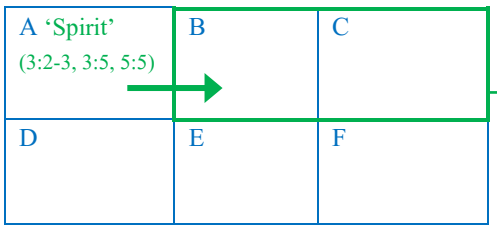


Works of flesh; *fruit* of Spirit

Note the lack of *commands* in 5:19 and 5:22.

Across the whole of 5:13-26, there are only *direct commands* in verses 13, 15, 16, 25 & 26.

This scarcity suggests that Paul's 'go and implement' section begins from chapter 6, where there are 6 direct commands in 6:1-7!



Performance-based church

If ABC were to primarily focus on tangible actions (category C), how might we end up with these relational fallouts: biting, devouring (5:15), enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy (5:20-21), conceit and provocation (5:26)?

[13] For you were called to freedom, brothers.
Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh,
but through love serve one another.
[14] For the whole law is fulfilled in one word:
"You shall love your neighbour as yourself." [Lev 19:18]
[15] But if you bite and devour one another,
watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

[16] But I say, walk by the Spirit,
and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.
[17] For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit,
and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh,
for these are opposed to each other,
to keep you from doing the things you want to do.
[18] But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

[19] Now the works of the flesh are evident:

sexual immorality,
impurity,
sensuality,
[20] idolatry,
sorcery,
enmity,
strife,
jealousy,
fits of anger,
rivalries,
dissensions,
divisions,
[21] envy,[a]
drunkenness,
orgies,
and things like these.

'I already know this…?'
The Galatians already know that 5:19-21 is a list of bad traits…

I warn you, as I warned you before
that those who do such things
will not inherit the kingdom of God.

[22] But the fruit of the Spirit is

love,
joy,
peace,
patience,
kindness,
goodness,
faithfulness,
[23] gentleness,
self-control;
against such things there is no law.

…and that 5:22-23 is a list of good traits!

Why, then, does Paul introduce these lists *at this point in his argument*?

[24] And those who belong to Christ Jesus
have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

[25] If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.
[26] Let us not become conceited,
provoking one another,
envying one another.

[a] Some manuscripts add *murder*

Applying Paul's letter to the Galatians

Approach #1: Be freed from the Galatian error!

"You must do **these** particular Cs, to express A. If you don't do those specific Cs, you are at least a lower-tier Christian, possibly not even Christian at all!"

A. True theology/worldview e.g. 'God promises a new creation!'	B. Godly attitude e.g. love, joy, patience	C. Godly completable works e.g. 'go to church', 'read your Bible'
D. False theology/worldview e.g. 'This creation is all there is'	E. Ungodly attitude e.g. envy, malice, selfishness	F. Ungodly specific works e.g. lying, stealing, using porn

For each question below, place yourself between 1 and 4. Answer from your actual reactions, preferably remembering a recent example. And beware the danger of using this exercise to *signal your goodness*!

1. Bible study prep
   You've done the 'optional' prep questions, and later, in a group setting, you have no choice but to signal that you are familiar with the questions. What's your truest motivation for the signal?

   I want others to benefit from the prep too — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — I feared the disapproval or criticism of others

2. Spiritual health
   A more mature Christian raises a specific concern about your faith. Which question occupies you more?

   Could they be right? Do I need to do business with God directly? — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — Who else thinks this about me? How can I change their impression?

3. Wrong answer in Bible study
   You give a wrong answer in Bible study, and it feels like everyone has noticed. What do you do next?

   Keep learning, even if that means asking another basic question — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — Stay silent for the rest of the session, in case you say more reputation-lowering things

4. Pub
   You are at the pub after church on a Sunday. Why are you there?

   I want to help people grow in their faith (A) — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — To be seen; at least nobody can say I don't make an effort

5. Confession
   You confess that you are very C-focussed during a Galatians Bible study. Why?

   I want to come to Jesus and enjoy being in a state of receiving grace — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — If I don't confess, people might consider me a *bad* ABC member

6. Attendance
   You realise that your ABC attendance record isn't stellar, but suspect that Y's attendance is flakier than yours.

   Pray to God about diary changes that might help you get to church more — 1 — 2 — 3 — 4 — Highlight Y's record, so *if* there's any attendance-related criticism, it's directed to Y

Approach #2: Care about the same things as Paul, following the weighting of his argument

(we will focus more on this next week!)

Care about A; **really, really do NOT care about C**! Caring about C leads to E and F! Once you grow in A, you will do less E and F, and you'll be free to do all sorts of C.

A. True theology/worldview e.g. 'God is holy' 'God promises a new creation!' ✅✅✅	B. Godly attitude e.g. love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness ✅	C. Godly completable works e.g. 'go to church' 'read your Bible' ❌❌❌ ❌❌❌❌❌❌❌❌
D. False theology/worldview e.g. 'God won't punish sin' 'This creation is all there is'	E. Ungodly attitude e.g. envy, malice, selfishness	F. Ungodly specific works e.g. lying, stealing, looking at pornography

Putting next week's application under the knife

1. Is the purple summary above correct?

2. Are these following steps coherent, and do they fit Paul's letter to the Galatians?
   i. Assumption #1: everyone has a limited 'Believers Energy And Natural Stamina' ('BEANS') capacity
   ii. Assumption #2: most people conflate *any* Christian (or Christian-adjacent) activity as using up BEANS
   iii. Conclusion: Paul is very against using up BEANS with C, when we ought to use BEANS on A
   iv. Cool benefit: Growing in A expands BEANS, giving more capacity for C!

Getting back into Galatians 5

5:1-6
1. Paul begins with a triumphant declaration of freedom (5:1), but immediately delivers three devastating warnings (5:2-4). What effect does this sudden change in tone have?
2. Compare 5:2-4 with 5:6. If circumcision is meaningless, why might accepting it nevertheless mean becoming 'severed from Christ'?
3. If the Galatians are getting circumcised due to the false teachers wanting to keep up appearances (4:17, 6:12-13), and they are only obeying certain laws about Jewish festivals (4:10), then what do you make of Paul escalating from 'accepting circumcision' (5:2-3) to 'you who would be justified by the law' (5:4)? How can Paul make that leap?
4. Do we think of category A (faith) or category C (godly complete actions) more as aligned with the work of the Holy Spirit (5:5)? Why?

5:7-12
5. Notice the succession of images, accusations and emotional changes throughout these verses: running a race, being hindered, spreading leaven, Paul's confidence, persecution, and his furious wish in 5:12. What impression is Paul trying to leave on his readers?
6. What do you make of Paul's language in 5:10-12? Does anything strike you as excessive or unkind?

5:13-18
7. Paul has been fiercely defending *Christian freedom*, but in 5:13 he immediately tells his readers to 'serve one another'. How does this limit his definition of *Christian freedom*?
8. In 5:14, Paul appeals to the law, even though he has been warning against being under the law. How would you explain this to someone who thought Paul was contradicting himself?

5:19-26
9. What do you make of the works of the law (5:19-21) being so weighted towards relational conflict?
10. How measureable/completable are the fruit of the Spirit (5:22-23) list feel?
11. 'Those who belong to Christ Jesus *have* crucified the flesh' – why does Paul write *have* in the past tense?