

Commentary on Galatians 5, by Chuck Smith 2.4.24

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February memory verse **Galatians 6:7 (NKJV)** Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.

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Shall we turn now to Galatians chapter five. The whole concept is: how do I establish a righteous standing before God? Can I be righteous by keeping the law? Or am I righteous by my simple faith in Jesus Christ? Now, Paul taught righteousness through faith. There followed Paul teachers, Judaizers who brought another gospel, which was not really a gospel. For they were saying that was it was necessary to be circumcised and to keep the law of Moses in order to be righteous before God, to be saved. And so Paul is standing against this teaching in his letter to the Galatians, and in chapter five, he said,

Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage ([Gal 5:1](#)).

Now, in the fifteenth chapter of the book of Acts, when this same issue had arisen in the church in Antioch, when certain of the brethren came down from Jerusalem and were hassling the Gentile saints in Antioch and said, "You can't be saved unless you are circumcised and keep the law of Moses," Paul and Barnabas and others from Antioch took these brothers right back to Jerusalem, because they came under the pretense of, "We have the authority of the Jerusalem church to declare these things." So, they went right up to settle the issue, and the church had one of the first church councils and gathered to settle a dispute, a problem within the church.

And in the fifteenth chapter of Acts, we read how that Peter stood up and told the brethren how that the Lord had called him to go to the Gentiles to the house of Cornelius. And how the Holy Spirit had come upon those of the house of Cornelius who had known nothing really of obedience to the law. And Peter said, "I suggest that we not place a yoke of bondage on them which neither we, nor our fathers were able to bear" ([Acts 15:10](#)). So, Peter uses this same phrase to describe the law as a yoke of bondage. He said, "We haven't been able to keep the law, why should we put them under it?" And so, Paul is picking up, now, the same phrase. No doubt he heard Peter use it there in [Acts 15](#), and he said, "Stand fast in the liberty wherein Christ has set you free."

Now, let us not believe or think that this liberty that we have is the liberty to do anything we might want to do in the flesh. That is not the liberty that we have as Christians. The liberty that we have is not to do the things of the flesh. Thank God Jesus Christ has set me free from my bondage to my flesh. I once was in horrible bondage to my flesh. But now I have liberty in Christ Jesus, for I don't have to follow after the flesh anymore. So "stand fast in that liberty wherein Christ has made you free." He has set you free from

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the power of the flesh. Don't be entangled again with rules, regulations, a yoke of bondage.

Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing ([Gal 5:2](#)).

That is, if you are circumcised ritually for the purpose of having a righteous standing before God. If that is the purpose, you're thinking that it's going to make you righteous before God, you think it's going to make you acceptable before God, Paul said, "Christ will profit you nothing," if that's your mental attitude towards your circumcision.

For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law ([Gal 5:3](#)).

In other words, if you're going to take this as an act of righteousness to make you righteous before God, as being a part of the law, then it will be necessary for you to keep the entire law in order to be righteous before God. For if a man "keeps the whole law, yet he offends in one point, he is guilty of all" ([James 2:10](#)). So "cursed is the man that continues not in the whole law to do that which is written therein" ([Galatians 3:10](#)).

Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you who are justified [or seeking to be justified] by the law; ye are fallen from grace ([Gal 5:4](#)).

Very powerful words for those who would seek justification through the law, through rules, through keeping rules, through keeping ordinances. If you're looking to that as a righteous standing before God, then you are not experiencing the grace of God in your life. Now, the whole idea is to be righteous before God in order that I might have fellowship with God. "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?" ([2 Corinthians 6:14](#)) How can I really fellowship with God if I'm unrighteous? So I must be righteous in order to have fellowship with God.

Now, there are two ways that I can be righteous. I can say, "Well, this, these are the rules of righteous living. You've got to do this, and this, and this, and this, and this. And you can't do this, and this, and this, and this, and this." And I can set up these rules, and I can get out my little gold stars. And at the end of each day, I can paste my gold stars on those that I've kept. But if I have a whole page of gold stars but yet there's one little point over here where I blew it and I can't put a gold star, then I'm unrighteous. I violated. "If you keep the whole law yet offended in one point, you're guilty of all."

Now, the other way to be righteous is through faith in Jesus Christ, receiving that grace of God through Him, where God accounts me, as He did Abraham, righteous because I believe. Now, that righteousness depends upon the work of Jesus Christ as my sacrifice, as my substitute. It is predicated upon the work of God. Therefore, that righteousness is perfect. It will stand. And it is given to me through my faith in Jesus Christ. That's what God accounts, the righteousness of Christ accounted to my account through my faith in Jesus Christ.

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Now, because I can't keep the first, I have opted for the second. Because I can't and haven't kept the whole law, I'm thankful that God accounts me righteous and I can have fellowship with the righteous God because of Jesus Christ and my faith in Jesus Christ. Now, if you're trying to be justified before God or being made righteous before God by the keeping of the law, then Christ is of no effect to you. You can't be both.

For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith ([Gal 5:5](#)).

That's the position where we stand. By the Spirit of God, we're waiting for that hope of righteousness through faith.

For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision avails any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love ([Gal 5:6](#)).

Now Paul said,

Ye did run well ([Gal 5:7](#));

Again, you remember he said, "You did start well. What did hinder you? Ye did run well." Having begun in the spirit, you did all right in the beginning, but

who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you ([Gal 5:7-8](#)).

In other words, you did not get this from God. I really like to say that to the Jehovah Witnesses that come to my door. "This persuasion didn't come from Him who called you." You couldn't believe the things the Jehovah Witnesses believe, unless you read their screwy attitudes and ideas in their books. I mean, you never get it from reading the Bible and waiting upon God. Your mind has to be bent in that direction through their writings. And so with the Mormons. You never come to believe in what the Mormons believe through reading the Bible. It comes by reading the book of Mormon. "This persuasion, this ideas that you have, they don't really come from God, from the One who called you. They are ideas that have been planted in your mind by men."

A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump ([Gal 5:9](#)).

You open the door for a little error, and it will soon magnify because you see, as you've opened the door for this error, then as you are challenged on the flaws of the error, you're going to have to develop further doctrines to cover or further concepts to cover, and pretty soon, you're going to be way out in left field.

"A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." Now Paul said,

I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded ([Gal 5:10](#)):

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Now Paul is now saying, "Oh, who did hinder you, you know, and this teach and all. But I have confidence in you that you're not going to be persuaded by this. That you're not going to be otherwise minded."

but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be. And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offense of the cross ceased ([Gal 5:10-11](#)).

Now, evidently these Paul people were saying, "Well, Paul was circumcised and he's preaching circumcision. You ought to be circumcised, you know." And Paul said, "Hey, wait a minute. I have not. If I preach circumcision, then why would they keep persecuting me? The offense of the cross would cease." Paul was preaching that Jesus paid the complete price for your redemption on the cross. There's nothing that you can add to what Jesus paid. That it is His sacrifice for your sins that brings you redemption and the forgiveness of sins. No effort, no work on your part. You can't do anything to buy redemption. You can't do anything to buy forgiveness. The forgiveness of your sins and your redemption is totally predicated upon the finished work of Jesus Christ upon the cross.

These people were adding to it. "The death of Christ for you isn't sufficient. You got to walk the tight rope. You got to keep the law. You got to be circumcised." The message of redemption through the cross was offensive. People were trying to add to it. And that's why Paul was persecuted by the Jews, because he was saying, "The law of Moses is not necessary for righteousness or for salvation. You are saved through the finished work of Jesus on the cross. The cross paid it all."

Paul closes this little section on the idea of circumcision and all and he gets a little testy with those. He said,

I would [wish that] they were even cut off which trouble you ([Gal 5:12](#)).

For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another ([Gal 5:13](#)).

Again, it is not a liberty to do anything I please. It isn't a liberty to live after my flesh. That is not what Christian liberty is about. And if you have interpreted it that way, you have completely missed the message of the scripture. "You've been called unto liberty." That is, liberty in Jesus Christ. Liberty from the law and from the bondage of the law, because that cannot make you righteous. But the liberty is not a liberty to indulge my flesh in anything that I may desire to do after the flesh. It is the liberty not to do those things which the flesh once forced me to do. So, "do not use your liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love," the real key is love, "serve one another."

For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself ([Gal 5:14](#)).

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So, love is the fulfilling of the law. One of the lawyers one day challenged Jesus as to the greatest commandment. And Jesus said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind and with all thy strength; and thy neighbor as thyself. And in these are all the law and the prophets" ([Matthew 22:37-40](#)). Love is the fulfilling of the law. If I am walking in the Spirit, if I am walking in love, then there can be no law to regulate my life. You see, laws are for unprincipled people.

If a person is living by right principles, he doesn't need any laws. He is governed by principles by which he lives. Laws are necessary to restrain unprincipled people. Now, if you're walking in love, supreme love for God and supreme love for your fellow man, then there is no law. All of the law is fulfilled. For what the law is actually saying to you is that you should love God supremely and love your neighbor as yourself. That's all the law is saying to you.

But if ye bite and devour one another, [you better] take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust [desires] of the flesh ([Gal 5:15-16](#)).

So, Paul here exhorts us to walk in the Spirit and to live after the Spirit or on the spirit side of our lives. Now, man was created by God as a living spirit. Created by God, in fellowship with God. God is a superior Trinity; man is an inferior trinity. The superior Trinity is made up of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The inferior trinity is spirit, soul and body of man. And it is in the realm of the spirit where man meets God. That's where I come in touch with God. That's where God touches me. In my spirit, in the realm of the Spirit. His Spirit bears witness with my spirit that I am a child of God.

"God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" ([John 4:24](#)). Now when Adam sinned, his spirit died just as God had warned, "In the day that you eat, you will surely die" ([Genesis 2:17](#)). His spirit died, and Adam broke fellowship with God. For God would not fellowship with man dominated by his flesh. And of course, that's exactly what the temptation led Adam to is fleshly domination. He saw that the tree was pleasant to look upon, it was tasty to eat and it would make him wise as God. "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life" ([1 John 2:16](#)). And they ate, giving over to their fleshly appetites and in so doing, the flesh dominated. The flesh began to rule, and man's consciousness was now filled and absorbed with the body needs and the body appetites.

God did not intend man to live that way, because man living that way is alienated from God who is a Spirit. When the emphasis of man became on the physical fleshly side of him, he no longer was one with God, who is a Spirit and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth. And so in the fullness of time, God sent His Son to die for man's sin, in order that through Him man might be born again by the Spirit of God. And become again a spiritual being.

And so, when Nicodemus came to Jesus, Jesus faced him immediately with this issue. He said, "You've got to be born again." He said, "What do you mean? I can't go back to

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my mother's womb and be born again. What are you talking about?" Jesus said, "I'm not talking about that. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, but that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Don't marvel when I say, 'You've got to be born again.'" And Jesus talked to him about the spiritual rebirth, which takes place when a person by faith receives Christ as his Savior. There is a work of God's Spirit within his heart, and he is born of the Spirit, and now again has a spirit that is alive and is conscious of God. And this is the thing that you try to describe to people, and they don't understand.

The Bible says, "The natural man cannot understand the things of the Spirit: neither can he know them, they are spiritually discerned" ([1 Corinthians 2:14](#)). But he that is spiritual understands these things, though he is not understood. And to try to explain to people the things of the Spirit to the natural man, to try and explain the things of the Spirit has got to be one of the most frustrating things in the world. Because you have been born of the Spirit, you can see it, you can understand it; it's as plain as can be. But because they are not born of the Spirit and have no understanding of the spiritual dimension of life, you're talking riddles to them. You're talking nonsense.

It's amazing, isn't it, what difference being born of the Spirit really makes. In my attitude towards life. In my understanding of the word of God. In so many things. Suddenly, I have been born of the Spirit; things suddenly are illuminated. Things which were once a mystery and I couldn't understand are now very understandable. They're just revealed by the Spirit. The truth of God to our hearts.

So, you has he made alive who were dead because of your trespasses and sins. Who in times past you walked according to the course of this world. According to the prince of the power of the air, among whom we all had our manner of living. As we lived to fulfill the desires of our flesh and of our mind, and we were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God has made you alive in Christ Jesus. And now your spirit is alive. And your spirit being alive, again you can experience fellowship with God, the joy, the blessing of fellowship with God.

So, "walk in the Spirit." That is, walk in fellowship with God. Walk on the spiritual side of your nature. And if you do, you will not be fulfilling the desires of your flesh. The flesh will not be ruling over you anymore. The fleshly desires will not be dominating your life, but your life will be dominated by the Spirit, and thus, by God.

For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would ([Gal 5:17](#)).

There is a warfare that goes on in the life of the believer. Once the spirit has come alive, now there comes this striving for the mastery of me. Will I be mastered by the Spirit or will I be mastered by the flesh? If I am mastered by the flesh, then I have the mind of the flesh. That is, my mind is constantly upon fleshly things. And the mind of the flesh is alienated from God; it cannot know God. The mind of the flesh is death.

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But if my life is dominated by the Spirit, then I have the mind of the Spirit. And I'm thinking of God, and I'm thinking upon spiritual things, and the result of life and joy and peace in the holy Spirit. The mind of the flesh is death, but the mind of the Spirit is life and joy and peace. The warfare going on. Am I going to yield to my flesh, or am I going to yield to the Spirit? And this comes up every day in many situations, and I have actually the choice in this situation. I can yield to my flesh and I can blow off steam and I can get in and I can fight and I can get into the striving and the whole issue. Or I can walk after the Spirit and say, "Oh Lord, it doesn't matter. Help me, Lord, to just keep the right attitude." And I can just go and pass it by.

And so, another issue arises in five minutes. Uh-huh, you did that five minutes. All right, you know. And I can choose whether or not to walk in the flesh, or then again, to commit it and walk after the Spirit. You see, it isn't a once-in-forever kind of a thing. It is once that I have reckoned myself to be crucified with Christ when I accepted Him. I was crucified with Christ, but now I have to reckon it in so many situations everyday.

"Hey, that old nature, that old Chuck is dead. Let him alone. Don't revive him. Crucified with Christ. Reckon that to be. That's just my old flesh that's upset. That's my old prideful nature. That's the old nature that wants its way, that wants to insist on its own way and all. That's the old nature, reckon that to be dead. That died with Christ. It doesn't really matter, I'm going to walk after the Spirit and I'm going to please God in this. I'm going to walk in love." And so, I have to reckon the old man to be dead each day, and oftentimes, many times through the day.

The flesh is lusting against the Spirit. The Spirit against the flesh. They're contrary, and I do not always walk after the Spirit. There are times when I lapse into the flesh. I get an attitude that is not of the Lord. I say something that is not of the Lord. Do you know what happens? Immediately the Spirit speaks to me and says, "That was wrong." "Yeah, but I had the right to do it." And I'll argue with Him for a while. "You don't know how long I've been taking it, Lord. I tried." And you keep dealing with me until I'll finally say, "Oh, God, I'm sorry. I was wrong. Forgive me, Lord. Help me, Lord. Thank You, Jesus, for Your forgiveness and for Your love and for Your grace to me."

And I'm washed and I'm cleansed and I go on. You see, I don't always do the things that I would. But when I do fail, the Spirit is right there, and that's why I know I'm a child of God. You see, if I weren't a child of God, He would just let me go. He wouldn't bother correcting me. It's sort of comforting, you know. David said, "Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me" ([Psalm 23:4](#)). The rod was the thing the shepherd used to hit the sheep on the flanks when they started getting out, you know, roaming out. All right, I'm still one of His sheep, you know. He's just whacked me with the rod. Oh, I'm comforted by that. I'm still His child. Don't despise the chastening of the Lord. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourges every son whom He receives" ([Hebrews 12:6](#)).

But if ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these ([Gal 5:18-19](#)),

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And he gives to us here a listing, incomplete to be sure, because he ends it by saying, "And do such things." And so, such things leaves an unending list of things of the flesh. But he lists some of the works of the flesh. These works of the flesh, of course, are related to our body drives, so many of them.

Adultery, fornication, uncleanness [sexual impurities], [wantonness] lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft [drug abuse] ([Gal 5:19-20](#)),

The Greek word is pharmakeia, translated here witchcraft, because in the sorceries, they're into witchcraft. They often use drugs, potions; the potions that you'd take, you know, and it'd have their drug related experiences.

hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies ([Gal 5:20](#)),

Interesting to me that heresies is here mentioned as a part of the works of the flesh. And I was challenged by that for a while. I began to think it through and I thought, "Yes, it is a work of the flesh, because usually a person gets into heresy to attract attention to himself." You know, you come up with some heretical teaching, you get everybody excited and everybody's listening, everybody's beginning to discuss what you're teaching. And the old flesh likes to get people excited and stirred up like that. And people to follow after me, you know. Here I've got this new twist on the scripture. No one's ever seen this before but oh, bless God, He's revealed it to us in these days. And you develop your own little following, which really appeals to your flesh. The works of the flesh.

Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like ([Gal 5:21](#)):

So, the such like covers a lot of things.

of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God ([Gal 5:21](#)).

This is indeed strong language for you who want to live after the flesh. As we go down these things here, these are the things that God will exclude from His kingdom. These things are not allowed in the kingdom of God. If you want to be a subject in God's kingdom, then you cannot do these things. You cannot be ruled and dominated by your flesh.

Now, it is interesting, a list similar to this is given to us in Revelation the twenty-first chapter, as it tells us those who are going to be excluded from heaven and outside were those who were doing these things: "The fearful, the unbelieving, the abominable, the murderers, the whoremongers, the sorcerers, the idolaters, and the liars," those who are outside. And so, [Revelation 21:8](#) if you want the reference on that. And then there's another reference also in Revelation, "but outside or the dogs and adulterers and so forth."

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This is heavy. The works of the flesh. It's a solemn warning to every one of us who would live after the flesh or would want to live after the flesh to know that you cannot do these things and inherit the kingdom of God.

But the fruit of the Spirit ([Gal 5:22](#))

Now, "walk in the Spirit, you'll not fulfill the lust of the flesh." Be led by the Spirit, you're not under the law. The law forbids these things, but the law of love also forbids them. "But the fruit of the Spirit"

is love ([Gal 5:22](#)),

Now notice, works of the flesh, works plural. So all of these things fall under the category of works of the flesh, but the "fruit of the Spirit," fruit is singular. So there's only one real fruit of the Spirit, that is love. These other words are defining what the agape love actually is. So, joy is love's consciousness. You ever seen a person in love and all of the joy that they have?

peace ([Gal 5:22](#)),

You remember as Paul defined love for us in I Corinthians chapter thirteen, he uses longsuffering. "Love suffereth long and is kind." This agape love is gentle; it is good. The word faith here is trusting. It is... it has a, perhaps, a naiveté about it in that it does trust.

You know I've been burned so many times by trusting men, but I pray, "God, never make me jaundiced." I'd rather trust and be burned than not to trust. True to the Spirit. This kind of love is a trusting love. Not to the place of being ridiculous.

Meekness ([Gal 5:23](#)),

"Blessed are the meek" ([Matthew 5:5](#)).

temperance ([Gal 5:23](#)):

Now, the word temperance is one we have a little difficulty with. We don't understand that word too much. Let's use an opposite word, intemperant. A person doesn't lose his temper. He's temperant. Now,

against such there is no law ([Gal 5:23](#)).

I mean, if you're walking in love, what rules can you lay down? What can you say to a guy? You see, you don't need any laws. All of the bases are covered. They're covered by the fact that you're walking in love.

And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh ([Gal 5:24](#))

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Paul had written in the earlier part, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me" ([Galatians 2:20](#)). Romans chapter six, "Know ye that the old man was crucified with Christ? Therefore reckon ye yourselves to be dead with Christ, but alive unto God through Him" ([Romans 6:6,11](#)). So, they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh.

with the affections and lusts [with its desires]. [For] if we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vainglory ([Gal 5:24-26](#)),

Now, these men who were coming with this teaching were really out to get notches on their belts. The kind that were always talking about numbers. "We had ten thousand souls saved last week. Look at all the notches on my belt." Men that have followed after my perverse teachings. "Desirous of vainglory,"

provoking one another, envying one another ([Gal 5:26](#)).

Glory, the glory of man is indeed empty; it's vain. Don't seek after it. You'll be disappointed. It will create a lot of enemies. It will create a lot of envy and a lot of provocation.