

Walk in the Spirit

The Life the Law Could Never Produce

Galatians 5:14–6:18

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A Galatians Doctrinal Library

Booklet Nine

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Walk in the Spirit: The Life the Law Could Never Produce

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Where a verse is mentioned, it is written out in this edition, so the reader does not have to leave the page. This booklet is the ninth of nine readings from Paul's letter to the Galatians. The booklets may also be issued as one volume.

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Introduction

Paul has spent this letter setting believers free. Free from justification by Law. Free from the tutor. Free from slavery. Free from circumcision as an obligation for righteous standing.

But freedom raises a question: If I am no longer under Law, how do I actually live? Paul's answer is not: Go back to religious law. He does not resurrect Moses. He does not put the tutor back in the house. He does not replace the old list with a Christian version of the same system. He says: Walk in the Spirit.

That is where this final booklet begins. Paul is not moving us from Law to nothing. He is moving us from Law to Life with God. Christ lives in us. God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts. The sons are now led by the Spirit of the Son.

For some Christians, that freedom can feel frightening. If you were taught that rules were the only thing standing between you and disaster, grace may initially feel unsafe. If your Christian life was built around measurement, inspection, and fear, walking with God can feel less secure than living under a list. But Paul does not answer the danger of the flesh by returning the believer to Law. He answers flesh with Spirit.

This booklet follows that answer through the end of Galatians: walking in the Spirit, flesh and Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit, restoring the fallen, bearing one another's burdens, sowing and reaping, boasting in the Cross, new creation, and grace.

And for the wounded believer, there is something deeply important here. Paul does not deny that flesh is destructive. He does not call every desire holy. But neither does he tell frightened believers that maturity means rebuilding the system Christ set them free from.

THERE IS ANOTHER WAY TO LIVE.

Not by manufacturing righteousness. Not by attaching fruit to dead branches. Not by becoming better at running the factory.

By Life.

Think orchard, not factory. A factory runs on quota, inspection, and fear of the line stopping. An orchard lives because Life is already in the tree. Fruit is not a new checklist. It grows because Life is present.

That is Paul's final movement.

Walk in the Spirit.

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Part One — Walk in the Spirit

Paul's letter has argued that people are made right with God through Christ, not by keeping the Law of Moses. In the previous booklet, he told believers to stand in the freedom Christ gave them. Here he answers the next question: How does a free person live and love?

“For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ ... I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.”

Galatians 5:14, 16, NKJV

Not From Law to Nothing

Freedom from Law does not mean freedom from God.

Paul has not moved us from Law to nothing. He has moved us from Law to Life with God.

Christ lives in me. God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts. You have known God, or rather are known by God.

Now: Walk in the Spirit.

Love Is Not the New Law

After spending an entire letter explaining why believers are not under Law, Paul is not suddenly giving them a smaller Law. Ten commandments have not become one: *just love better*.

That would change the size of the rulebook without changing the system.

Paul is showing what God's Life looks like when it moves outward: Love.

You cannot continually give something you do not possess. You can imitate love, perform kindness, force patience, smile while angry, and serve while resentful. Eventually, the reservoir empties.

We serve others with the love we have received from God.

Instead of beginning every morning asking, *What must I do for God today?* We begin with, *What has God given me in Christ?*

Jesus said:

“As I have loved you, that you also love one another.”

John 13:34, NKJV

Receive, then give. Experience, then express.

God is not asking spiritually dead human flesh to manufacture His character. He gives His Life, and His Life begins expressing itself through the believer.

If I look at my life and find impatience, harshness, selfishness, bitterness, religion says, *Try harder to be loving*.

There is another question: *Am I receiving the love God is giving me?*

Absence of love may expose an area where I am not resting in what God has already provided.

When the Church Starts Eating Itself

“But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!”

Galatians 5:15, NKJV

Religion can produce this.

People become obsessed with one another’s performance. Who is right? Who is wrong? Who is obeying? Who is compromising? Who is more spiritual? Who should be condemned?

Soon everyone is inspecting everyone.

The church begins eating itself.

Wounded readers have sat in those rooms. The meeting was called discernment. It felt like hunting.

Paul is not surprised. Remove love as the overflow of Life, and people become projects. Weakness becomes evidence. A brother’s failure becomes content.

Paul saw it in Galatia and named it: *Bite and devour*.

Walking in the Spirit is not a mood that makes that room nicer. It is Life that refuses to feed on people.

Walk in the Spirit

Paul knows the flesh is real. He knows believers can make destructive choices. He knows freedom can be abused.

YET HE STILL DOES NOT SAY, “RETURN TO LAW.”

He says: Walk in the Spirit.

The religious instinct says: Flesh is dangerous, therefore Law.

Paul says: Flesh is dangerous, therefore Spirit.

If we miss that, we can understand justification by grace while rebuilding the entire Christian life upon Law.

Walk is an ordinary word. It is not a trance. It is not a personality type. It is Life with God in motion—here, in the flesh, on a Tuesday, inside actual relationships.

Paul has already said:

“The life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God.”

Galatians 2:20, NKJV

Now he names that same Life from another side: the Spirit of the Son leading the sons. But walking in the Spirit only makes sense if we understand what Paul means by flesh.

Part Two — Flesh and Spirit

When Paul says “flesh,” he is speaking about human life attempting to run on its own resources. A believer belongs to Christ and has received the Spirit, yet familiar desires and learned habits can still pull. Paul describes that conflict without making the flesh the believer’s identity.

The Flesh Is No Longer Your Nature

The flesh is not another nature living inside you.

You are a new creation in Christ. You have one nature—the new Life you received from God.

Paul’s word is *sarx*—flesh. It describes human life operating through the physical person apart from dependence upon God. That includes the body and brain, with their appetites, memories, learned responses, habits, and desires.

Before the Spirit gave you Life, you lived from that human source. Your body desired. Your brain remembered pleasure, pain, approval, rejection, power, fear, and self-protection. You learned ways of thinking and responding without the indwelling Life of God.

When you were made alive in Christ, God did not give you a second nature to compete with the first. He gave you new Life.

You are now a child of God. You are in Christ. You have been crucified with Christ. You are a son and an heir. The Spirit of God lives in you.

But your physical body and brain did not lose every old appetite, memory, habit, or learned response the moment you received the Spirit. The flesh can still remember what once brought pleasure. It can still desire control, approval, status, sex, power, comfort, revenge, or self-protection. It can also express itself religiously through self-effort, comparison, pride, and the desire to prove oneself.

Those desires are real.

But they are not another nature.

They are the flesh.

Sometimes the flesh looks obviously sinful. Sometimes it looks highly religious. But in both cases, the source is the same: me trying to produce life from myself rather than receiving Life from God.

That is why Paul does not tell the believer to discover which nature is stronger. He says:

“Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.”

Galatians 5:16, NKJV

The flesh may pull. The brain may remember. The body may desire. Old patterns may still speak loudly, but they do not define who you are.

You are a child of God, alive in Christ, indwelt by His Spirit.

The answer to the flesh is not a better flesh. It is not religious Law. It is not self-effort. It is walking in the Spirit.

Two Different Phrases

Works of the Law and works of the flesh are not identical phrases in the text. The connection is theological, not lexical.

One expression of flesh indulges: I want pleasure, sex, power, control, revenge. I want what I want.

Another attempts to perfect flesh: I will master myself. I will make myself righteous. I will prove my spirituality.

Neither necessarily requires God.

“For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another ... But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.”

Galatians 5:17–18, NKJV

Two sources. Two directions. Two ways of living.

Human self-resource, or dependence upon God.

The Christian life is not learning to make flesh sufficiently religious. It is learning to walk with God, led by His Spirit.

Led—Not Under

Read verse 18 slowly.

Led by the Spirit.

Not under the Law.

Paul does not say the Spirit helps you keep yourself under Law more successfully. He describes two different governing relationships.

Many Christians function as though the Christian life is fifty percent Law and fifty percent Spirit: Use Law to tell me what to do, then use the Spirit to help me accomplish it.

That is not Paul's language.

Earlier, we saw why the tutor's authority was temporary. Now Paul gives us the positive reality: The son is led by the Spirit of the Son.

This can be frightening if you have spent your entire Christian life depending upon rules. Rules feel concrete. You can see them, measure them, and check them.

Walking with God requires relationship, trust, dependence, growth, discernment, patience, and obedience to His voice. That can feel less secure.

But sons do not mature by remaining forever beneath a tutor. They mature by learning to know their Father.

If you were wounded by a church that called the Spirit unpredictable and the system safe, hear Paul. He does not trust flesh with liberty. He also does not return the sons to Law.

The safer-feeling option is not always the Christian one.

The Works Are Evident—Also in Church

Read this list honestly, but do not read it as an orphan trying to find out whether he still belongs. Paul is exposing what flesh produces. He is not handing sons a new panic-based inspection system.

“Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like ... those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

Galatians 5:19–21, NKJV

Notice the word: Works.

The flesh works. It produces, strives, acts, generates. And its results are destructive.

Religious people should read the whole list. Drunkenness, sexual immorality, and sorcery are easy to condemn.

Hatred. Contentions. Jealousies. Outbursts of wrath. Selfish ambitions. Dissensions. Envy. Those can live quite comfortably inside religion.

A church can be outwardly moral and still be filled with competition, anger, division, envy, control, and religious ambition.

The flesh does not become Spirit-led simply because it enters a church building.

We should not weaken Paul’s warning. The life he describes is contrary to the kingdom of God.

Neither should we rip this verse out of the argument and turn it into a new performance system. Paul has spent the letter establishing inheritance through promise, sonship, and Christ. His point is not that sons earn inheritance by producing sufficient moral performance. His warning exposes the radical incompatibility between a life dominated by flesh and the Life of God’s kingdom.

A wounded person who practiced hidden sin and a wounded person who practiced hidden rivalry are both in this list. Paul will not let either hide behind the other’s obviousness.

Rivalry Wearing Church Clothes

Read the middle of the list slowly.

Hatred. Contentions. Jealousies. Outbursts of wrath. Selfish ambitions. Dissensions. Envy.

Those works do not need a nightclub. They need a hallway after the service. A staff text thread. A comparison that never quite becomes prayer.

Religious people can condemn drunkenness and still live here all week.

If that is the air you learned to breathe, walking in the Spirit will include telling the truth about it. Not as a new confession system. As honesty with the Father who already knows.

**THE SPIRIT DOES NOT PRODUCE A QUIETER RIVALRY.
HE PRODUCES A DIFFERENT SOURCE.**

Having exposed what the flesh produces, Paul now shows what only the Spirit can grow.

Part Three — Fruit, Not Works

Paul has just named the damage that flesh can produce, including anger, envy, and divisions within a church. He now names the fruit the Spirit produces. Fruit grows from a living source; it cannot be forced into existence by a better inspection system.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.”

Galatians 5:22–23, NKJV

Do Not Turn Fruit Into a Factory

Paul does not say, “But the works of the Spirit are ...”

He says: Fruit.

That word matters.

Galatians 5:22–23 must not become a replacement checklist of works of the Spirit.

The fruit belongs to the Spirit. It is what He produces.

Imagine an apple tree. No apple tree wakes up in panic: *I have to make apples today*. It does not tape plastic apples to its branches. It remains connected to soil, water, sunlight, life. And because Life is present, fruit grows.

Religion can turn the Christian life into a factory: Rules. Quotas. Inspections. Performance reviews. Try harder and produce holiness.

The Spirit works more like an orchard. Life enters. Roots receive. Growth occurs. Fruit appears.

LEGALISM MANUFACTURES. THE SPIRIT GROWS.

Fruit of the Spirit—not fruit of discipline, Law, willpower, church attendance, or accountability. Those things may have appropriate places. But this fruit has a Source: the Spirit of God.

It is not the fruit of you. In other words, fruit is evidence of Life, not a replacement system of Law.

If your Christian life was a factory, walking can initially feel like unemployment. No quota. No inspection. The nervous system looks for the next list.

Paul does not give you one.

He gives you a Person already in you, and he tells you to keep in step.

Keep in step is slower than panic and faster than apathy.

It sounds like: Father, I am about to answer this person from the old source. I do not want to. I am about to hide. I do not want to. I am about to use ministry to feel real. I do not want to.

That is walking.

Not a mood. Dependence practiced in real time.

After a factory church, the quiet can feel like you have left God.

You have not.

Stay with the Person.

Fruit will not always arrive on the old schedule. The orchard grows differently than the factory worked.

Receive, Then Look Like Him

Love: Before asking, *Am I loving enough?* ask, *How has God loved me?* He loved while we were sinners. He gave His Son. He forgave. He adopted. He brought us near. He calls us sons. He knows us. The Spirit begins filling the heart with the reality of God's love. Then that love has somewhere to go.

Joy: Religion can produce correct behavior with a miserable heart. Joy is not a command painted on the outside. It is fruit growing from within.

Peace: Peace is not merely, *I avoided sin today, therefore God is not angry.* The relationship has been established through Christ. The Spirit allows that settled relationship to become experienced reality.

Longsuffering: Before asking whether you are sufficiently patient with others, consider how patient God has been with you.

Kindness and goodness: God does not merely tolerate His children. His kindness is not manipulation. It is His character.

Faithfulness: His promises do not depend upon His mood. Receive, then express.

Gentleness: Gentleness will become immediately important when someone is overtaken in a trespass. Spirituality becomes visible in how we treat people when they fail.

Self-control: Self-control is not self-salvation. It is not flesh conquering flesh. The Spirit produces a new capacity to say no—not because God is threatening rejection, but because the heart is increasingly satisfied with something better.

“Against such there is no law.”

Galatians 5:23, NKJV

Law is unnecessary against love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

The Spirit is producing the very kind of Life religious systems keep trying to manufacture externally.

“And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”

Galatians 5:24–25, NKJV

Notice the identity: Those who are Christ's.

There has been a Cross.

Then the sequence: Live then walk.

Life precedes behavior. That is the Gospel pattern. Religion reverses it: *Walk correctly so that perhaps you can have Life.*

The Gospel says: God gives Life. Now walk in the Life you have received.

**THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS NOT BEHAVIOR PRODUCING LIFE. IT IS LIFE
PRODUCING BEHAVIOR.**

“Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.”

Galatians 5:26, NKJV

Spirituality changes how we treat people.

Conceit, provocation, and envy are flesh wearing religious clothes.

Part Four — Restore and Bear

The fruit of the Spirit becomes visible when someone fails. In Galatians 6, Paul brings the teaching into the church family: the person overtaken in a trespass needs gentle restoration, and people with burdens need others to help carry them.

“Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted. Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

Galatians 6:1–2, NKJV

Spiritual People Restore

Performance religion knows what to do with sinners.

Expose. Distance. Shame. Make an example. And require enough visible payment before treating the person as acceptable again.

Paul says: *Restore*.

Restore is a different verb from condemn. The goal is recovery of a brother, not victory over him.

And notice how: *in a spirit of gentleness*.

That is why gentleness was named as fruit. Spirituality is not measured by how loudly we denounce failure. “Considering yourself lest you also be tempted.”

The restorer is not a different species. He is a son who knows he too can be overtaken.

If You Were the Example

You already know the other approach.

You were not restored. You were used. Your name became a warning. Your tears became a lesson for the room. People spoke about holiness while they passed your story around as proof that the system still worked. That is not Galatians 6:1. That is a factory making use of a wound.

Paul’s picture moves in the opposite direction. The spiritual person moves toward the one overtaken. Not to collect a confession for the file. Not to stand three feet farther from the sin so everyone can see the distance. Toward *in a spirit of gentleness*.

“Considering yourself lest you also be tempted.” Bearing a burden does not mean calling sin good. It means the family does not leave a failing brother in the hallway until he has earned the right to come back in.

If a church only knows how to expose, it has not yet believed the Gospel it preaches.

Look for the gentle person, not merely the impressive one. The impressive one may still be running a factory. The gentle one remembers. Become that person as the Spirit grows you.

The series does not end with you becoming an inspector of other people’s liberty. It ends with you becoming a restorer.

The Law of Christ

Paul has spent five chapters insisting that the believer is not under the Mosaic Law as a governing relationship. He is not now installing a new Mosaic code under a kinder name.

The law of Christ is Christ defining the new Life: His Life expressed toward one another. Christ lives in me. That Life bears burdens. It does not become a second tutor. Every person still has responsibility.

“For each one shall bear his own load.”

Galatians 6:5, NKJV

Community does not erase personal walking with God. The pastor cannot walk with God for you.

Good teaching matters.

“Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches.”

Galatians 6:6, NKJV

Support what gives Life.

Do not confuse that with making a teacher the Source of Life.

Part Five — Sow to the Spirit

Sowing is a farmer's picture: what we plant has consequences, and growth takes time. Paul uses it after establishing that our place in God's family rests on Christ. His warning about harvest tells sons how to live; it does not turn every hard day into a trial of whether they are still sons.

“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.”

Galatians 6:7–8, NKJV

Grace Is Not a Denial of Harvest

Grace is not denial of consequences.

Paul has removed Law as the basis of standing. He has not said choices do not matter.

Sow to the flesh—live from self-resource, whether indulgent or religious—and corruption follows.

Sow to the Spirit—live from dependence upon God—and the harvest is Life.

That protects two wounds at once.

The person who was told grace means nothing you do matters, needs to hear: Harvest.

The person who was told every choice rewrites standing, needs to hear: Harvest is not the same thing as eviction from the family.

Sons still sow. Sons still reap. Sons are still sons.

Consider a servant who has spent years saying *yes* because a leader's approval seemed to determine whether God was pleased. A free response may include serving with joy, admitting exhaustion, or taking time to rest. The question is whether fear is directing the next step or whether this person is learning to depend on the Spirit.

A harvest grows over time; it is not a daily report card.

“And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.”

Galatians 6:9–10, NKJV

Fruit takes time. Do not grow weary. Do good to all.

The family of faith is not a closed fortress, but it is a household.

Weary is a word a wounded servant recognizes. Doing good may have become the way you stayed acceptable. Paul is not recruiting that exhaustion. He is telling free people not to quit love because love is slow.

Due season is orchard language. It is not payroll language.

If you are weary because you were used, rest is not the same as losing heart. If you are weary because love costs, stay. The harvest still belongs to God.

Paul now brings the whole letter back to its final contrast: human religious showing, or the Cross and new creation.

Part Six — New Creation

As he closes the letter, Paul returns to the pressure that began the conflict in Galatia. Teachers wanted Gentile believers circumcised so they could display a visible sign of religious success. Paul points instead to the Cross and to the new creation God gives in Christ.

“See with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand! As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these would compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. ... But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.”

Galatians 6:11–15, NKJV

A Good Showing in the Flesh

Paul takes the pen. The large letters are personal.

A good showing in the flesh.

Religious pressure can be driven by fear. It can also be driven by the need to measure success visibly. They want to boast in your flesh. Circumcision would give them a visible scoreboard and spare them persecution for the Cross.

What does Paul boast in?

The Cross.

The Cross destroys the scoreboard.

“But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Galatians 6:14, NKJV

If you were ever someone else’s good showing—the testimony, the statistic, the restored example—you can hear the violence in that phrase.

Paul will not let your body become another man’s résumé.

Modern scoreboards can be quieter. Testimonies used as proof. Restorations used as advertising. Weary servants displayed as fruit.

Paul points somewhere else.

The Cross.

The last boast in this letter is not the performance of man. It is the Cross of Christ.

A New Creation

“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.”

Galatians 6:15, NKJV

That refrain returns from Galatians 5:6 now with one of the deepest words in the letter's closing: *New creation*.

This is why the Law could never produce Christianity.

Law can command, expose, confine, and tutor. It cannot create.

**CHRISTIANITY IS NOT OLD CREATION PLUS RELIGION.
IT IS NEW LIFE IN CHRIST.**

“And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God. From now on let no one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.”

Galatians 6:16–18, NKJV

Peace and mercy. Not upon those who win the flesh contest. Upon those who walk according to this rule: New creation.

The marks that matter on Paul's body are the marks of the Lord Jesus, not a religious showing.

And then Paul closes the letter.

Not with Law.

Not with flesh.

Not with another checklist.

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.”

Galatians 6:18, NKJV

Grace.

Conclusion — The Life the Law Could Never Produce

Paul began this letter astonished that believers were turning away so soon from the One who called them in the grace of Christ to a different gospel.

He ends it with grace.

Between those two points, he has dismantled every attempt to add human achievement to Christ.

Not from men → Not justified by works of Law → Crucified with Christ → The Spirit received by faith → The Law given for a purpose and for a time → Sons, not slaves → Known by God → Stand fast in liberty → Walk in the Spirit → Fruit, not manufacture → Restore, do not devour → Bear one another → Sow to the Spirit → Boast in the Cross → New creation → Grace.

The Christian life does not begin with Christ and then graduate into human self-production. The same Gospel that gives Life is the Gospel in which we walk.

Galatians does not leave the believer under Moses, under flesh, under fear, or under religious inspection. It leaves the believer in Christ, indwelt by the Spirit, walking in freedom, bearing fruit that Law could never produce.

I did not write these pages so you would become impressive. I wrote them because I know what it is to serve Jesus and still live as if the line might stop.

If you are tired, you do not have to leave this letter impressive.

Leave it located. In Christ. Known by God. Free. Led by the Spirit.

May the Father keep you from the yoke that calls itself maturity.

May the Spirit grow what Law could never produce.

May you become a restorer, not an inspector.

The orchard is His.

The factory is closed.

The last word is grace.

That is the Life the Law could never produce.

That is the Life Christ gave.

Stand fast in it.

Walk in it.

Do not give it back.