

Galatians 5:24-26 | “Living According to Truth”
Preached on September 5, 2021 by Pastor Matt Brown

Please turn in your Bibles to Galatians 5, verses 24 through 26.

We are in the last week of our short mini series called, “Walking by the Spirit,” here in Galatians 5.

And in it, we have been learning about how we turn away from sin, and grow in godliness.

It’s not through self-effort, or Old Testament Law-abiding, but it’s through the power and direction of the Spirit dwelling in us as Christians. *[pause]*

So we have learned that our growth in our walk with the Lord is actually *supernatural*.

It’s God working through us, as we follow Him.

He gives us the power through His Spirit.

We could never do it on our own, but God must work and change us from the inside out.

And this ‘inside out’ work produces the fruit of the Spirit rather than the deeds of the flesh. *[pauseeee]*

So you could say that the last two weeks told us about the power and results of ‘walking by the Spirit’...

...And now in our passage this morning, Paul gives the prime motivations and methods we should keep in mind in our battle with the flesh.

I’LL READ THE PASSAGE. *[pauseeee]*

I want you to imagine a person wanting to become a bus driver.

As you know, you aren’t allowed to drive a bus full of people without passing a test and actually becoming a bus driver.

So this aspiring bus driver studies hard, practices driving, and finally they pass the course and exam and are now officially a bus driver. *[pause]*

The first day of driving the bus with people in it arrives, and all the people come aboard and take their seats.

It’s time to leave, but the bus driver is just sitting there not doing anything.

A man nearby, who was actually a friend of the bus driver, was confused because it was now 10 minutes after the time they were supposed to leave.

So the man speaks up and says, “Hey, what’s going on? I thought we were supposed to leave at 9AM?”

Is there an issue? Are we waiting for more people? Is something wrong with the bus? Are you nervous? What’s going on?”

And the bus driver simply replies, “I’m not allowed to drive the bus.”

The passenger gives him a confused look, and says, “But you have gone through the course, you passed the exams, and now you are a bus driver.

You are acting like you used to act before passing the exam. That’s in the past, now you are a bus driver, that’s what you are now. So drive!” *[pauseeee]*

You know, that’s a weird situation, isn’t it?

That’s because it doesn’t make sense for that bus driver to act like he isn’t a bus driver when he is.

He was a bus driver, so now he needed to act like one.

He needed to live according to the truth. *[pauseeee]*

What we find today in our passage is that Paul wants us to live according to the truth.

Because as we go through life, sometimes we act like that bus driver did.

Sometimes the way we live doesn’t line up with who we are in Christ and what He has done for us.

Sometimes we act like we are still slaves to sin, and we act like we don’t have the Spirit. *[pause]*

As that bus driver acted like he wasn’t a bus driver, so we act like we aren’t new creations in Christ.¹

And that’s what Paul brings out here in our text.

So let’s see what he says to help us in this area...First, from verse 24...

I. You have crucified the flesh, so remember that!

Paul explains, “Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”

So in this verse, you have a condition given: “Those who belong to Christ.” *[pause]*

This reminds us that victories over the flesh are only won for those who belong to Christ.

¹ See 2 Corinthians 5:17.

The flesh is only crucified for those who belong to Him. *[pause]*

This is the foundation for victory in the battle against sin - belonging to Jesus.

And how do we belong to Him? By repenting of our sins and trusting that He alone can save us through His death for our sins. *[pauseeee]*

There are numerous people all across the globe who believe in a higher power, yet can't seem to battle the sin that reigns in them.

And it's because they don't belong to Jesus.

They may believe in some higher power behind all of life, but they haven't believed in "the Way, the Truth, and the Life."² *[pauseeeee]*

Belonging to Jesus is the basis of spiritual growth, for everything hinges on His work and our union with Him.

That's because if we don't belong to Jesus, we are still a slave to sin, and incapable of pleasing God.

If we don't belong to Jesus, we don't have the Spirit, and therefore we are lacking the power for true change. *[pauseeee]*

So before I go any further, you need to know whether you belong to Christ or not.

Have you recognized your sinfulness and need to be made right with God by trusting in Christ's work on your behalf alone? *[pause]*

If you don't belong to Christ, then that's the first place to start.

If you do belong to Jesus, then praise God, you are able to rest in the truths of what Paul says next.

And what he says next is, "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." *[pause]*

What great news this verse is!

Jesus not only saves us from our sins, but in His death, He was our representative so that our old lives actually died with Him.

This is why Paul can say that our flesh has been crucified. *[pause]*

Since we are in union with Jesus through faith, then it was like our old selves died with Him on the Cross. *[pause]*

² John 14:6.

The flesh was judged on the Cross, so that it no longer has power or dominion over us.

Our flesh used to be our master, reigning and controlling what we do.

We used to love sin, hold onto our sin, and live for ourselves.

But that way of living has been nailed to the Cross when we said, “I repent and believe!” *[pause]*

Paul in Romans 6:6 makes this point, as he says...

“We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.” *[pause]*

In the moment of conversion, our old life and old way of thinking was given up and we jumped into the arms of our Savior to save us. *[pauseeee]*

Our old life died with Jesus.

The relationship we had with sin is different now.

The things we once loved, we now detest.

The sin we once held onto, we now desire to put it away.

This is exactly why when people are saved, there’s a drastic change in their mindset than it used to be.

You see this especially evident in those who get saved later in life.

They no longer want to serve sin, but they want to serve God.

Only Christ’s death on the Cross could accomplish this, and it *did* accomplish this in our being united with him by faith. *[pause]*

We are new creations in Christ, we are truly new people, for we have been born again.

God didn’t just change some things about our old selves, no, he created something new.

We died to the power of the sin, and Christ is our Lord. *[pause]*

When you placed your faith in Jesus Christ, in essence, you crucified your flesh.

You have given an absolute, “No,” to it.

At the moment of salvation, you have turned from your sin, nailed it to the Cross, and said, “Christ will take care of my sin. My old life is gone, and I have a new life in Jesus.” *[pause]*

So Paul’s point is that as people who crucified their flesh by faith in Christ’s crucifixion, so now act like it.

Remember this truth, and live according to it! *[pauseeee]*

Since the flesh is crucified, then leave it there!

Remember that your flesh is a defeated enemy, it no longer rules over you!

You nailed it to the Cross in faith, so leave behind that life, turn away from it. *[pause]*

As Paul says elsewhere, “put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires.”³ *[pauseeee]*

Think of it this way...

Christ has won the victory on the Cross, he has broken the power of sin in our lives, so now we can say, “No,” to sin.

You don’t have to listen to your flesh anymore, it doesn’t control you! *[pause]*

Don’t listen to it, don’t go back that way, that’s your old life, you are freed from its control.

You aren’t fighting a doomed battle, you are fighting a battle that has been decisively won by Jesus.

He broke the stronghold of the flesh. *[pauseeee]*

Now the flesh isn’t completely eradicated from our lives (this side of Heaven), but it has been judged and it’s dominion is gone.

This is why there’s a battle raging in us between the Spirit and the flesh.

But the key to victory is to remember that your flesh was nailed to the Cross, you are forgiven, your old life is gone, the curse has been removed, sin’s hold has been broken, and you are free.

This is reality. This is truth, and so we bring our thinking in line with it and live according to it. *[pause]*

Paul says in Romans 6, “You also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.”⁴ *[pauseeee]*

Here’s the issue, we act like slaves, when in reality, we are *freed* slaves.

Imagine a freed slave continually acting like he’s still a slave of his master.

How would we help him to overcome this issue?

³ Ephesians 4:22.

⁴ Romans 6:11-12.

We would keep saying, “Remember that you are no longer a slave, you are free! You don’t have to act that way anymore!”

That’s what Paul is doing for us here!

He’s saying, “Remember your identity! You are no longer a slave to the flesh, you are free! So act like it!” *[pauseeee]*

That old way of life likes to cling to us and we feel the flesh’s desires inside of us.

So the key is to keep thinking, “My flesh has been crucified, so I’m going to keep it there. I’m not going to try to pull out the nails. I’m not going to try to revive it.”

And with a merciless and decisive mentality, we say to the flesh, “You have no power over me! You have lost! I have crucified you by turning in faith to Jesus, who died in my place.” *[pause]*

Christian, remember that your old sinful way of life was crucified with Jesus - leave it there, where it belongs! *[pause]*

Practically, this means that when you feel those sinful desires rise up to lust after someone, you think, “No, I will not. I don’t need to obey this sinful desire.”

When those sinful desires rise up to say something mean to someone, you think, “No, the flesh doesn’t reign over me. I don’t need to follow this, but Christ has given me victory.” *[pause]*

Don’t treat the flesh with any friendliness whatsoever, but regard it as a crucified enemy who has lost. *[pause]*

You don’t need to obey your sinful passions and desires, you belong to Christ.

You are a new creation, so the flesh doesn’t have the right or power to dictate what you do if you don’t let it, you are free from its dominion.

Those sinful desires may rise up, they may be irritating, but you can resist them in the power of the Spirit. *[pause]*

What wonderful news!

All you have to do is to think of if the opposite situation were true.

Let’s say victory hadn’t been won, then you would just be at the flesh’s control and unable to truly change or say, “No.”

You would still be a slave to sin, obeying its passions and desires.

“But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”⁵

⁵ 1 Corinthians 15:57.

Now we can resist sin, now we can live for Him, and we live for Him by the Spirit, which leads me to what Paul says in verse 25...

II. You live by the Spirit, so walk in step with Him. (25)

Paul uses an “if-then” statement.

‘If’ this is true, ‘then’ act this way. [pause]

The “if” part could be really translated as, “since,” because if you are a Christian then you do live by the Spirit.

That is, we have the Spirit within and we have life because of Him.

This is actually the only way that we have eternal life, it’s because the Spirit is in us giving us life. *[pause]*

That’s our identity in Christ, we are new and have new life!

We have been born again by the Spirit.

Our old life has been crucified, and now we have new life through the Spirit. [pause]

So Paul’s point is that if we live by the Spirit and his power, so now walk in step with the Spirit.

His power gives you life, so now rely upon His power to live a godly life. [pause]

Let me put it this way...

The very power that gives you life is the same power to help you live a godly life! So don’t neglect the Spirit! [pause]

Isn’t that crazy to think about?

A true believer in Jesus Christ actually has the Spirit of God living in them.

This is not something that we should take for granted, but we utilize his direction and power by walking in step with him.

For when we walk in step with the Spirit, that’s when we bear more and more fruit of the Spirit. [pause]

So Paul tells us, “walk in step with the Spirit,” but what does that mean?

Well the verb for ‘walk in step’ is a military term referring to walking in rank.

It’s sort of like the Spirit is the commanding officer and we are to walk in step with wherever he goes. *[pause]*

Have you ever seen groups of military marching somewhere?

Every step and move of the arm is synchronized, so that they look like one unit moving in harmony.

That's the idea here.

We follow the Spirit, we live in careful observance of what the Spirit wants, we conform to His standard. *[pause]*

Basically, we live our lives in harmony with the Spirit.

He goes left, we go left - he stops, we stop - he goes faster, we go faster.

Where he leads, we go. *[pause]*

So let's say he's convicting you of sin, then acknowledge that sin and turn from it.

Let's say that you can feel him leading you to encourage someone, you walk in step with Him by doing that.

Let's say that he brings a Bible verse to your mind, don't just brush it off, but dwell on it and how it applies to your life. *[pause]*

A great way of being able to walk in step with the Spirit better is by reading and knowing His Word, for the Spirit works in tandem with the Word.

It also takes being in prayer often, for prayer is seeking God's direction and help in a posture of dependence.

So it's this mindset where moment-by-moment you realize and look to God for help and direction. *[pause]*

Like the song called, "Lord, I Need You" says...⁶

"Without You I fall apart - You're the One that guides my heart.

Lord, I need You, oh, I need You - Every hour I need You...

So teach my song to rise to You - When temptation comes my way - When I cannot stand I'll fall on You - Jesus, You're my hope and stay." *[pause]*

That's walking in step with the Spirit.

It's simply living a life that realizes, "I need God for every single thing."

⁶ Lyrics from "Lord, I Need You" by Matt Maher. Found at: <https://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/mattmaher/lordineedyou.html>.

“I need his direction, power, and help for I can’t do it on my own.” *[pause]*

So often we look to God when things get really bad, and when things aren’t too bad, we trust ourselves, our wisdom, our power, and our direction.

But walking in step with the Spirit is not *just* looking to God in hardship, but looking to him with every moment along the way. *[pause]*

So as you go through each day this week, give each moment to the Lord.

Say, “Lord, I need your guidance in how to interact with my boss today.”

“God, I need you to lead me to see how I can help or encourage someone this morning.”

“Lord, I need your help to respond rightly with my spouse. Help me. Give me the words to speak.”

That’s how you can walk in step with the Spirit, for you are recognizing that He’s the leader, and you want to do whatever he wants.

You don’t try to walk your own way, but you try to sync your steps with the Spirit’s. *[pauseeee]*

You see, the Christian life isn’t merely passive, but we must actually walk in step with the Spirit.

We must follow His direction, guidance, and conviction.

But isn’t it great that we aren’t the leader, but He is?

We may not be passive, but we are led and dependent - that’s the thing. *[pauseeee]*

Our new life is empowered by the Spirit through and through.

As Paul said earlier to the Galatians, “Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?”⁷

It doesn’t make sense to have eternal life by the Spirit, and yet not live according to His guidance and power.

So live according to this truth, for you have the Spirit within you, if you have trusted in Christ to save you. *[pause]*

Do you remember this?

Do you remember to walk in step with the Spirit, realizing that he is there to guide, direct, empower, lead, and help you? *[pauseeee]*

⁷ Galatians 3:3.

I think the main problem for many of us is that we take it for granted that we have the Spirit dwelling in us.

We fail to appreciate or take notice of the work that He does, and often this leads us to depending on ourselves for our day-to-day lives.

Like the Galatians, we get saved by the Spirit's work in our heart, yet then we try to live in the power of our flesh.

But we must remember that we are saved by the Spirit's power, and we are sanctified by the Spirit's power.

He shouldn't be neglected and pushed to the side, but he should be followed.

So will you walk in step with the Spirit?

Don't grieve him by not listening to his convicting work in your life.

Don't try to walk your own path, but walk in harmony with his steps. *[pauseeee]*

Moving on, as Paul concludes his exhortation on walking by the Spirit, he gives a practical application of how they can apply this truth in their own lives, and it's this...

III. You should not be conceited: a practical application. (26)

As we saw last week, the works of the flesh are self-seeking characteristics, but the fruit of the Spirit are others-focused characteristics.

So the flesh produces conceit, the Spirit produces humility.

That's why Paul can command the Galatians to not be conceited, for this is one area where the Spirit can help them to not be prideful. *[pauseeeee]*

Now since this is an application for them to apply walking by the Spirit, then this application is helpful for our own lives, too.

Why? Because conceit is a universal, timeless sin that is a temptation for all.

While some people may not battle conceit as much as others, it's a battle for everyone. *[pause]*

Paul says, "Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another."

To be 'conceited' is to have a false, high opinion of oneself.

It's to have excessive or unwarranted pride in one's abilities or qualities.

It's that person who is a boaster, who thinks, "I'm so great, aren't I?"

And many of us may not say that out loud, but we certainly think it of ourselves. *[pause]*

The truth is, we can all be conceited to some degree.

We think we are better than others and that we deserve more than others. *[pauseeee]*

Now the reason that Paul brings this sin to the forefront is unclear.

The Galatians may have been having this issue, but even if it wasn't evidently rampant, it's a very common sin problem nonetheless.

And so Paul tells them not to become conceited. *[pauseeee]*

Isn't it interesting how Paul brings out conceit here?

It's because conceit can come upon those trying to keep the Law like the Galatians, for they think, "Look at me, I'm keeping the Law more than you. I'm closer to God."

But also, conceit can come upon those who have been walking by the Spirit.

They may see their progress in their walk with the Lord, see the fruit of the Spirit more and more, and then start to become puffed up by it.

They think, "Look, I'm following the Spirit, while those people aren't. I'm so much more godly."

That's the sneakiness of conceit, it creeps its way up and shows itself amongst even the most godly endeavours. *[pauseeee]*

So Paul tells us not to be conceited, and obedience to this command is of course through walking by the Spirit.

We rely upon him to be humble and not to be conceited.

We remember who we are in Christ, and this reminds us that we don't deserve anything, but for the grace of God.

Everything and anything we have is from God, even the mark of not being conceited.

So we don't think too highly of ourselves, but we put others first, relying upon the Spirit's power to do it. *[pauseeee]*

And after the initial command, Paul gives two more verbs, expanding upon this 'being conceited'.

They are not to be conceited, provoking one another.

And they are not to be conceited, envying one another.

Both 'provoking' and 'envying' are ways in which we act when we are conceited. *[pause]*

The 'provoking' here in the original language means to challenge someone to a contest, and thereby causing a reaction out of them.

It's kind of the idea of someone walking up to someone else and saying, "Come on, fight me."
[pauseeee]

What this shows us is that some people in their conceit think so highly of themselves that they want to demonstrate their superiority for all to see.

They feel superior to others, thinking, "I am great. I challenge you to beat me so I can *prove* that I am greater."

They feel superior and they want others to feel inferior to them. [pauseeee]

Have you ever felt that way about yourself?

Do you ever feel superior to others, and look for ways to make people feel inferior?

That's being conceited, provoking others. [pause]

This could be seen in someone's desire to debate theology with someone else so that they can make themselves look extra knowledgeable, and make the other person look ill-informed compared to them.

Or it could be seen in someone talking about what they all did for Christ this week, so as to look better to others, and to make others look worse.

This is conceit and it should not be displayed in our lives. [pauseeee]

So provoking is the aggressive and strong way of showing conceit, but did you know that conceit is also seen in envy?

It's true!

Those who envy others can be just as conceited, but they show it in a non-aggressive way.
[pause]

Maybe you're thinking, "How?"

Well 'provoking' is feeling *superior* to others, thinking, "I am great. I challenge you to prove that I am greater and you are inferior."

But envy is the other side of the coin.

Envy is feeling *inferior* to others, and being resentful because you think that you actually deserve to be greater.

So it's being spiteful or resentful at the success or possessions of another person.

You want what they have.

You're not content, but you think that you deserve to be superior because in your mind *you are* superior to others! *[pause]*

This can be seen in people being jealous of the gifts of others.

They can be envious of the position or reputation of others.

Or they can envy the knowledge, godliness, or success of others. *[pause]*

Envy is conceit, that is, excessive pride, and it should not be displayed in our lives, but driven out by a desire to simply walk by the Spirit.

Driven out by a humble attitude that says, "I need God, and whatever I have is from His gracious hand." *[pause]*

In the end conceit is not content with rivals.

Those who provoke want to keep pushing those rivals down by displays of superiority.

And those who envy can't take others having more than they do, and ultimately they want to be raised up above what others have. *[pause]*

Paul says to each of us today, "Let us not become conceited."

And it's only by God's grace through His Spirit that we can obey this command. *[pauseeee]*

What this passage teaches us is that...

Victories in the battle of the Spirit and flesh come when we live according to truth!

Put another way: daily victories come because we remember and live in light of the fact that victory has been won.

That's what's important - living according to the truth. *[pause]*

So do you live your life like a freed slave who acts like they aren't?

Or do you live like a freed slave, who knows that they are freed?

Because that's what you truly are: you are freed from the bondage to sin. *[pause]*

Your old self has been crucified in Christ's crucifixion, and following your flesh is your old life that you gave up by turning in faith to Him.

So remember this truth and act like it!

Don't turn back to your old way of life.

Don't follow your flesh's desires, but say, "No," by relying on the Spirit to help you. *[pause]*

Your flesh's desires don't control you anymore, it is not your master.

You don't have to listen to those sinful urges, but Christ has freed you to live a holy life in the power of the Spirit. *[pause]*

So when the flesh's desire to be conceited rises up, put it to death by remembering who you are in Christ.

Think, "Christ has died so that I don't have to live the way I used to. I don't have to feel superior to everyone else because I am a sinner saved by grace and only Christ is supreme over all of us.

Conceit is a part of my old life, but I am a new creation in Christ, forgiven and free, by the mercy of the Lord.

And now I can only live a humble life because the Spirit is at work in me, so please help me to not be conceited today." *[pause]*

What a great thing that God has given to His children!

He has not only saved us and forgave us, but he gives us life and empowers us to live by His Spirit.

It's all of grace.