

LOSING MY RELIGION

"ROOTED AND FRUITED" GALATIANS 5:16-26

This Week's Core Competency

Trinity – I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God-Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

2 Corinthians 13:14, *May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.*

Salvation includes justification and sanctification. We are justified or *declared* righteous *positionally* by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, and we are sanctified or *made* righteous *practically* by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. God the Father is the architect of salvation; justification is the work of the Son; sanctification is the work of the Spirit.

In Galatians 5:16 Paul writes regarding sanctification: "So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature." The ESV offers a more literal translation of the Greek text: "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh." Based on the more literal translation, J. I. Packer has written a helpful book on sanctification entitled *Keep in Step with the Spirit*.

In it he refers to the Holy Spirit as "the agent of holiness" (90), and then goes on to explain his work in those who believe. He writes:

"By the Spirit's enabling, Christians resolve to do particular things that are right, and actually do

*Every virtue we possess,
And every victory won,
And every thought of holiness,
Are his alone.*

— Harriet Auber

them, and thus form habits of doing right things, and out of these habits comes a character that is right. 'Sow an action, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character,' says the proverb, and as this is true in natural life, so it is in the life of grace. Paul describes the process of character formation by this means as one of being changed into Christ's likeness from one degree of glory to another (2 Cor. 3:18) and calls the character itself the fruit of the Spirit—which on inspection proves to be neither more nor less than the profile of Jesus Christ himself in his disciples, as was said before (Gal. 5:22-24).

"We need to remember two things here, both of which sometimes get forgotten. This first is that the Spirit works through *means*—through the objective means of grace, namely, biblical truth, prayer, fellowship, worship, and the Lord's Supper, and with them through the subjective means of grace whereby we open ourselves to change, namely, thinking, listening, questioning oneself, examining oneself, admonishing oneself, sharing what is in one's heart with others, and weighing any response they make. The Spirit shows his power in us, not by constantly interrupting our use of these means with visions, impressions or prophecies, which serve up to us ready-made insights on a plate, so to speak (such communications come only rarely, and to some believers not all), but rather by making these regular means effective to change us for the better and for the wiser as we go along. Holiness teaching that skips over disciplined persistence in the well-doing that forms holy habits in us is weak; habit forming is the Spirit's ordinary way of leading us on in holiness. The fruit of the Spirit itself is, from one standpoint, a series of habits of action and

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and reaction: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control are all of them habitual dispositions, that is, accustomed ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving. Habits are all-important in holy life, particularly those biblically prescribed habits that we find it difficult and even painful to form.

"The second thing to remember balances the first and is just as important. It is that holy habits, though formed in the natural manner I have described, by self-discipline and effort, are not natural products. The discipline and effort must be blessed by the Holy Spirit, or they would achieve nothing. So all our attempts to get our lives in shape need to be soaked in constant prayer that acknowledges our inability to change ourselves and in thanksgiving recognizes that as Harriet Auber put it: 'Every virtue we possess, And every victory won, And every thought of holiness, Are his [the Spirit's] alone.' Holiness by habit forming is not self-sanctification by self-effort, but is simply a matter of understanding the Spirit's method and then keeping in step with him" (90-91).

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Galatians 5:16-26

16 So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. 17 For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.

19 The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. 25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

Cf., another translation

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, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. 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. 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 keep in step with the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. (ESV)

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Circle "live" in v. 16.
- * Bracket "by the spirit" in vv. 16, 18, 25.
- * Circle "the sinful nature" in vv. 16, 17 (2x), 19, 24.
- * Box "so that" indicating *result* in v. 17.

- * Box "but" indicating *contrast* in vv. 18, 22.
- * Circle "led" in v. 18.
- * Underline v. 23b.
- * Circle "crucified" in v. 24.
- * Highlight v. 25.

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Identify the *command* in verse 16.
2. Describe the *relationship* between "the sinful nature" and "the Holy Spirit."
3. Put the result of the conflict between *the Spirit* and *the sinful nature* (v. 17) in your own words.
4. *Illustrate* verse 17 by giving a concrete example.
5. In verse 18 Paul says, "But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law." How so?
6. The punctuation in the NIV indicates that there are four divisions in Paul's list of vices (v. 19-21a). The first division contains three sins, the second two, the third eight, and the fourth two. Label each of these four divisions.
7. If Paul's readers were not in jeopardy of losing their salvation—and they were not—why do you think he issued the warning found in verse 21?
8. What is the *relationship* of the Holy Spirit to the virtues listed in verses 22-23?
9. Verse 24 says, "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires," and yet verse 17 says that the sinful nature (lit., "the flesh") and the Spirit are in conflict with one another. If believers still have its passions and desires, in what sense have they crucified the sinful nature?
10. **Discussion:** Talk about the image formed in your mind by the exhortation "let us keep in step with the Spirit."

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

If sons of God are neither slaves to the law nor slaves to religion does that mean that we are free to do as we please? Paul answers that question in 5:13 by saying, "You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love."

Galatians 5:16-26 contrasts two ways of life. One way of life indulges the "sinful nature." The other defers to the Holy Spirit. We can either live by the Spirit or live by the "sinful nature." The term translated "sinful nature" in the NIV is the Greek word generally used to refer to the human body. However, it must mean something a bit different here because there is nothing inherently sinful about our physical bodies.

We human beings have material and immaterial parts. Our material part is our physical body; our immaterial part is our soul or spirit. The "sinful nature" or "old nature" (lit., "flesh") is not a third part wholly distinct from the other two. In fact, it isn't a part at all. It is rather our capacity and propensity to do evil—"a bent, a tendency, a bias toward sin and away from doing God's will" (Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, vol. 2:599). Therefore, living by the sinful nature simply means doing what comes naturally for sinful human beings. Notice how Galatians 5:13 is translated in *The Message*, "It is absolutely clear that God has called you to a free life. Just make sure that you don't use this freedom as an excuse to do whatever you want to do and destroy your freedom."

On the closely related topic of *sanctification* Erickson writes:

"The Holy Spirit also works sanctification in the life of the believer. By sanctification is meant the continued transformation of moral and spiritual character so that the life of the believer actually comes to mirror the standing which he or she already has in God's sight. While justification is an instantaneous act giving the individual a righteous standing before God, sanctification is a process making the person holy or good. In the earlier part of Romans 8, Paul dwells on this work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit has liberated us from the law (v. 2). Henceforth believers do not walk and live according to the flesh, their old nature, but according to the Spirit (v. 4), having their minds set on the Spirit (v.

5). Christians are in the Spirit (v. 9), and the Spirit dwells in them, a thought that is repeated three times (vv. 9, 11 twice). As the Spirit indwells believers, he guides and leads them, and the deeds of the flesh are, accordingly, put to death (v. 13). All those who are thus "led by the Spirit are sons of God" (v. 14). The Spirit is now at work giving them life, witnessing that they are sons rather than slaves, and thus supplying indisputable evidence that they are truly in Christ (vv. 15-17).

"This life in the Spirit is what God intends for the Christian. Paul in Galatians 5 contrasts life in the Spirit with life in the flesh. He instructs his readers to walk by the Spirit instead of gratifying the desires of the flesh (v. 16). If they heed this instruction, the Spirit will produce in them a set of qualities which are collectively referred to as the "fruit of the Spirit" (v. 22). Paul lists nine of these qualities: "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law" (vv. 22-23). These qualities cannot in their entirety be produced in human lives by unaided self-effort. They are a supernatural work. They are opposed to the works of the flesh—a list of sins in verses 19-21—just as the Spirit himself is in opposition to the flesh. The work of the Holy Spirit in sanctification, then, is not merely the negative work of mortification of the flesh (Rom. 8:13), but also the production of a positive likeness to Christ" (3:875).

In Galatians 5:16-18 Paul makes it clear that the alternative to *legalism* is not *license* as the Judaizers say. There is a third, higher way. About it one commentator writes: "Clearly, therefore, life by the Spirit constitutes for the apostle a third way of life distinct both on the one hand from legalism and on the other from that which is characterized by a yielding to the impulses of the flesh. It is by no means a middle course between them, but a highway above them both, a life of freedom from statues, of faith and love" (Ernest DeWitt Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*, ICC, 302). So according to Paul, the impulses of the sinful nature are addressed not by obeying the law but by following the Spirit.

In verses 19-21 and verses 22-24 Paul gives two catalogue lists: first a list of vices and then a list of

virtues. He gives these contrasting lists to illustrate the conflict between the sinful nature and the Spirit mentioned in the previous verses. With regard to their contrast, one commentator observes: "The common feature in this catalogue of vices seems to reside in the self centeredness or egocentricity that underlies all of them" while the common feature in the catalogue of virtues resides "with the underlying orientation of selfless and outgoing concern for others" (Richard N. Longenecker, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 41, *Galatians*, 296, 97).

Against such things as listed among the virtues, the apostle says, "there is no law." His words suggest, somewhat ironically, that believers will obey the law not by being under the law but by being led by the Spirit. What's more, since they belong to Christ, they "have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires" (v. 24) and are no longer its slaves. They are free to "keep in step with the Spirit."

The Message of the Passage

Rather than indulging the sinful nature, keep in step with the Spirit who will produce his fruit in you.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James suggests in James 1:22. Try some of the challenges below to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your answers to the following *living* questions:**

–How is God making himself known to you?

–How does God want to change you?

–How is God calling you to change your world?

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 16 **live** Lit., "walk" (ESV). "'Walking' is a common Hebraism for 'conducting one's life' and thus is synonymous with 'living'" (Ronald Y. K. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, NICNT, 248). "'Walk by the Spirit' means 'let your conduct be directed by the Spirit'" (F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, NIGNT, 243).

v. 16 **by the Spirit** "To 'walk by the Spirit' means to be under the constant, moment-by-moment direction, control, and guidance of the Spirit. By living this way believers can be sure that they will not 'carry out' (NASB) the desires of their sinful nature" (249).

v. 16 **the sinful nature** Lit., "the flesh" (ESV). "In the earliest days of the Greek language *sarx* [flesh] meant mostly the soft, fleshy parts of the body, like its Hebrew equivalent *basar*. But *sarx* soon came to denote the body as a whole (that is, the material part of a person) and after that, by extension, the whole man as conditioned by a bodily existence and by natural desires. In this sense, it is not bad. But when the word was taken over into the Christian vocabulary, as it was to a large degree by Paul, it came to mean man as a fallen being whose desires even at best originate from sin and are stained by it. Thus, *sarx* came to mean all the evil that man is and is capable of apart from the intervention of God's grace in his life. In this respect *sarx* is synonymous with 'the natural man' or 'the old nature.'" (James Montgomery Boice, "Galatians," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 10:494). "The old [i.e., sinful] and new natures, as presented in the Scriptures, are *dispositions*, not total combinations of a human being's attributes . . . When an unregenerate man receives the new nature through regeneration, he continues to possess human nature in the broad sense. Reception of the new nature produces a radical spiritual change in him, but it does not change his inherent kind of being. He is called a 'new man' (Colossians 3:10), but he is still man. Reception of the new nature does not produce a metaphysical change in a person. This fact forces the conclusion that the new nature is a *disposition* rather than a combination of attributes which determines kind" (Renald E. Showers, *The New Nature*, 18, 19, italics added).

v. 17 **so that** "The last clause of v. 17 [a *result* clause] may mean one of three things: (1) the sinful nature keeps you from doing the good you desire, (2) the Spirit keeps you from doing the evil you desire, or (3) each nature hinders the desires of the other (so Burton). In view of the parallel statements in Romans 7:15, 16, probably the first should be preferred, especially since the next verse goes on to speak of the victory that can be attained by the Spirit's power" (Boice, 494-95).

v. 18 **led** "Being 'led by the Spirit' is in form passive; in its actual meaning, however, it is not entirely passive. The active leading of the Holy Spirit does not signify the believer's being, so to speak, led by the nose willy-nilly; on the contrary, he must let himself be led by the Spirit—that is, actively choose to stand on the side of the Spirit over against the flesh. Like 'walking by the Spirit' (v. 16, cf. v. 26b), being led by the Spirit is a kind of 'passive-active' action—actively obeying the prior leading of the Spirit (cf. Phil 2:12f)" (Fung, 251). Put differently, being led (passive) by the Spirit entails following (active) the Spirit. Verse 18 is best taken as a summary in which Paul reminds the Galatians that although he is now talking of the need to live a godly life, he is not thereby reverting to legalism. "The antidote to license in the Christian life is not laws, as the Judaizers argued, but openness to the Spirit and being guided by the Spirit. For being 'in Christ' means neither *nomism* nor *libertinism*, but a new quality of life based in and directed by the Spirit" (Longenecker, 246).

v. 24 **crucified** "How is faith a means of sanctification? First, by faith we continue to grasp our union with Christ, which is the heart of sanctification. In regeneration, which is totally a work of God, we are made one with Christ . . . by faith we accept the fact that in Christ sin no longer has the mastery over us. Believers must not only recognize intellectually but embrace in full belief the truth that 'our old self was crucified with him [Christ] so that the body of sin might be rendered powerless, that we should no longer be slaves to sin' (Rom. 6:6) and that sin is no longer our master because we are not under law but under grace (v. 14)" (Anthony A. Hoekema, *Saved by Grace*, 196). "When a person believes in Jesus Christ, he experiences a death with Christ. He dies in the sense that he ceases to be an 'old man.' He ceases to be an unregenerate man characterized by the position of slave to his sinful disposition. Through this death the master-slave relationship which had existed between the person and his sinful disposition during the unregenerate state is terminated permanently . . . Although the sinful disposition continues with the regenerate person through the remainder of this present life, it permanently ceases to be his master" (Showers, 88).

Family Time

Parents, our summer series in *PantegoKids* is called **True or False?** Like the adults, we will be studying the book of Galatians to discover how to live out true faith.

When my kids were younger I attempted to teach them how to de-escalate an argument among themselves. I told them that some words are inflammatory. They cause a situation to be worse. Those words add conflict to the situation rather than defuse it. Many times when their arguments would begin, I would simply say "inflammatory remark" and (most of the time) they would readjust their tone and words. A few years later, my nephews, who had heard me use the phrase over and over, were visiting at our house when we had a fire in our backyard fire pit. One of my sons threw something in the fire that caused a small explosion and the flames to leap in the air. "Wow," one of my nephews said, "That was an inflammatory remark!" In our passage today, we learn that living by our sinful nature causes us to become conceited and provoke each other. Life in the Spirit, on the other hand, enables us to respond in the fruit of the Spirit. Living according to the Spirit brings glory to God and good to others. In these last days of summer, you may find yourself refereeing more conflicts among your children. Sometimes all it takes is a gentle reminder that we live and speak and love according to the Spirit at work in us. Provoking and "inflammatory remarks" cause conflict to get out of control and cause damage. Challenge each other to speak fruitful words!

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Galatians 5:16-26

1. What is contrary to the Spirit?

2. List all the fruit of the Spirit.

What Do You Think

Which is the hardest fruit for you to demonstrate in your life? Why?

What R U Going To Do

Kindness counts! Write notes to everyone in your family this week telling them something you love about them. Kind words are healing and helpful.

MEMORY TIME

Post the kid-friendly Core Competency and the Memory Verse throughout the house.

Core Comp

Memory Verse

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC ____ and Verse _____. Family completed **Say** _____ **Think** _____ **Do** _____

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn tokens by completing the Bible study portion of this page.
Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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Wendy Hollabaugh (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.



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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.