

Galatians 5:13 - 18

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

1 ¹³For you were called to freedom, brethren; only *do not turn*
2 *your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through*
3 *love serve one another.* ¹⁴For the whole Law is fulfilled in
4 one word, in the *statement*, “You shall love your neighbor as
5 yourself.” ¹⁵But if you bite and devour one another, take care
6 that you are not consumed by one another.

7 ¹⁶But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the
8 desire of the flesh. ¹⁷For the flesh sets its desire against the
9 Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in
10 opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things
11 that you please. ¹⁸But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not
12 under the Law.

Observation (What does it say?):

What do you notice in this passage?

- *Repeated words or ideas?*
- *Comparisons or contrasts?*
- *Purpose or explanation?*
- *Unusual or symbolic language?*
- *Commands or instructions?*
- *Conditional (if–then) statements?*
- *Other observations?*

Interpretation (What does it mean?):

After observing the passage:

- *What parts seem clear and straightforward?*
- *What parts seem unclear or confusing?*
- *What parts challenge your previous thinking?*
- *What questions come to mind as you read?*
- *How would you title this passage?*

Application (What does it mean for me?):

- *What parts of this passage fit your current life situation?*
- *What parts seem unrelated to your circumstances?*
- *How might this passage affect your understanding of who God is and what He is doing?*
- *What part of this passage would be the most challenging for you to apply?*
- *What would be different (attitudes, behavior) if God used this passage to change you?*

Additional questions for thought and discussion:

- What does it mean to love yourself (v. 14)? Is that the same as “a positive self-image”? What about liking yourself? Is there a difference? How does that distinction affect your understanding of “love your neighbor”? Do you ever feel like “biting and devouring” yourself? What would it mean to love your neighbor even if you don’t like your neighbor? Is that possible?
- If we have freedom (v. 13, cf. v. 1) why should we be kept from doing what we please (v. 17b)? When Paul mentions “the things you please” does he mean things of the flesh or things of the Spirit? Is he saying the flesh keeps us from following the Spirit, or that the Spirit keeps us from following the flesh? How does this affect your understanding of the passage?
- Is there a difference between “walking” (v. 16) and “being led” (v. 18) by the Spirit?
- Most of this letter has been contrasting law and grace (1:6), or law and faith (2:16, 20), or law and promise (3:16-22). Why does Paul move to contrasting flesh and Spirit? What hints has he mentioned earlier about the Spirit (e.g. 3:2-4, 14; 4:6; 5:5)?

Inductive Bible Study

(A few general ideas)

Observation
(What does it say?)*What facts do you **observe** about the passage that help bring out the writer’s thought process?*

- Who are the people involved?
- What action takes place?
- What type of literature is it (poetry, history, didactic, etc.)?
- What details are included or left out?
- Are any unusual words used?
- Is there symbolic language?
- What is the grammar of the passage (pronouns, prepositions, verb tenses)?
- Are words or ideas repeated?
- Any comparisons or contrasts?
- Any cause and effect?
- Are there indications of purpose (“in order that...”)?
- Are there conclusions (“Therefore...”)?
- Are there explanations?
- Does the passage logically break into sections?
- How would you summarize the passage?
- What would be a good “headline” for the passage?

Interpretation
(What does it mean?)*What questions come to mind about the facts that would help you **interpret** the meaning?*

- How would the original readers have understood the passage?
- What is the main emphasis?
- Why does the writer use repetition, or contrast, or unusual words?
- What does the grammar or structure of the passage reveal about the writer’s thought pattern?
- Is there a logical sequence in the passage?
- How are different ideas in the passage connected?
- Are there any new ideas or concepts presented?
- Are there difficulties in the passage?

Application
(What does it mean for me?)*What is the impact on your life? What **application** does the Holy Spirit want to show you?*

- Is there a command to obey?
- Is there a promise to be thankful for?
- Is there an attribute of God to worship?
- Is there an example to follow?

Read nothing into the Scriptures, but draw everything from them, and suffer nothing to remain hidden that is really in them.
J.A. Bengel (1687-1752)