

Dear Heavenly Father,

### **Praise**

Paul told the Galatians that before their conversion, they were “enslaved to those that by nature are not gods.” But now, through Jesus Christ, they had “come to know God, or rather to be known by God” (Gal 4:8–9). I praise you today as the God who desires to be in a loving relationship with your creation! How wonderful to be set free from the weak and worthless principles of the world and be known by you! Praise the Lord!

### **Today in Your Word**

Today you shared with me the rest of Paul’s letter to the Galatian churches which were established on his first missionary journey. Having argued from the Scriptures that salvation is by grace through faith in Christ alone (Gal 3–4), Paul now wanted to ensure *that the Galatians’ liberty did not become a license for their flesh* (Gal 5). He wanted them to understand that freedom from the law was not the freedom to do whatever they wanted; rather, it was the freedom to serve one another “through love” (Gal 5:13b). The law was given to show them how to love you and each other. If the Galatians loved their neighbor as themselves (Lev 19:18b), they would fulfill what the law required (Gal 5:14). If they did not, they would end up being “consumed by one another.” Paul then explained how the Galatians could live a life of love for one another: “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh” (Gal 5:16). The law could not empower them to love each other, but the Holy Spirit could. Indeed, if they obeyed the guidance of the Spirit and yielded to His desires, they would never fulfill the desires of the flesh. Why? Because the Spirit and the flesh oppose each other and work against each other. For that reason, even though the Galatians were not obligated to keep the law, they were not free to do whatever they wanted (Gal 5:17). They had only two choices: yield to the desires of the flesh or the leadership of the Spirit. Paul then added, “But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law” (Gal 5:18). Following the leadership of the Spirit eliminates any need to be “under the law.” What the law cannot do, the Spirit can, and where the law is limited, the Spirit is not. The Galatians were “law-less” but not “lawless,” for as they followed the Spirit’s leading, He would empower them to love each other and fulfill the law’s requirements (cf. Matt 22:35–40; James 2:8). Paul continued by urging the Galatians to obey the Holy Spirit, for He would enable them to bear spiritual fruit. The word “fruit” stands in contrast with the word “works,” for the latter emphasizes human endeavor, while the former emphasizes divine empowerment. This teaches me that walking in the Spirit is not a passive activity. I should not ‘coast along’ waiting for the Spirit to produce love and joy in my life. Rather, I should live a Spirit-directed, Spirit-empowered, and Spirit-pleasing life. As I do, the Spirit will enable me to be kind, good, faithful, gentle, and self-controlled (Gal 5:22–23). Paul concluded by encouraging the Galatians *to persevere in the faith* (Gal 6). He did this by giving them practical examples of how to edify the body and reminding them of the reward that comes from enduring to the end. Paul’s letter to the Galatians confirmed and defended the “truth of the gospel”—that both Jews and Gentiles alike are justified by grace through faith in Christ alone. I have been crucified with Christ, and I am dead to the law and the flesh. The life I now live in the Spirit is one of great freedom, but it is not the freedom to do whatever I want. Instead, it is the freedom to serve others through love and so fulfill the law of Christ.

### **Reflection**

Paul said, “Let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up” (Gal 6:9). Reaping often comes a long time after sowing, and so I find this verse comforting. Yet it also reminds me that I can’t sin and get by—if I sow to the flesh, I will reap a harvest of corruption.

### **Request**

Father, I ask today that you would help me live a Spirit-directed life. Help me to say ‘Yes’ to the Holy Spirit and ‘No’ to the desires of the flesh. I want more than anything to “keep in step with the Spirit” (Gal 5:25).

### **Thanksgiving**

Thank you for the truth of the gospel! It’s simple and beautiful message of salvation by faith in Christ alone is the foundation of my life. All glory and praise to the Son!

In Jesus’ name, Amen.

*Suggested Hymn: “Holy Spirit, Truth Divine” – Samuel Longfellow.*

*Meditation Verse: Galatians 5:16.*