

WALKING IN VICTORY

One of the biggest challenges we face when it comes to being a follower of Jesus is learning how to overcome the desires of our flesh. Of course when we say “flesh” what we mean is the lusts and desires of our heart for the things that appeal to our physical appetites. Just like difficulties, the flesh can really hinder the work of God in our life if we allow it.

Welcome to **Wk 3 of Spirit & Truth!** Over the last couple of weeks we have been talking about how God’s plan for taking the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world is the church. In **Week 1** we talked about how God has empowered us through the pouring out of His Holy Spirit which enables us to be used by God as witnesses calling others to trust in Jesus. But any time God is at work we can rest assured that Satan is trying to hinder whatever it is that God is doing. **Last Week** we talked about one of the ways Satan tries to hinder the mission of the church is through our difficulties. We talked about how we can overcome those difficulties if we just learn to look at our situation from God’s perspective and rather than focus on our worldly status, focus on our status as sons and daughters of the King.

This week we are going to take a look at another way Satan tries to hinder the work of the church and that is through the weakness of our flesh. So today our goal is to give you a powerful strategy for overcoming the desires of your flesh in order to experience the victory that is available to you when you choose to walk by the Spirit. So if you will turn to **Galatians 5** I am going to **PRAY** for us and then we are going to dive in.

Galatians is a letter written to the churches that the Apostle Paul helped plant in the southern region of Asia Minor (North and West of Israel if you are looking at a map). After Paul’s conversion to Christ, which is detailed for us in **Acts 9**, he became a church planter where he took the Gospel westward on 4 different missionary journeys. The Galatian churches made up of Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe were all churches he helped establish while on his first missionary journey. The people who inhabited the region were Celtic people who had migrated to the region from Gaul (modern day France). It is believed that Galatians was written from Ephesus while Paul was on his third missionary journey. The reason for the letter was to combat false teachers who were undermining the teaching of Salvation by FAITH. They did so by promoting a salvation that was to be achieved by keeping a set of legalistic Jewish rules. At the center of this tension was the struggle that all of us have faced when trying to live out our faith while still dealing with our fleshly desires. The default for us when we experience this struggle is to gravitate toward a legalistic approach to the practice of our faith where we feel like we have to keep a strict list of do’s and don’ts in order to please God. The danger of this is that if we are not careful we will soon begin to believe that our salvation is found in our ability to be able to adhere to or keep certain legalistic rules as if our salvation depended on us. And that is not what Jesus taught.

John 3:16-18 (NIV) 16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. **17** For God did not send his Son

into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. **18** Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. Our salvation according to Jesus is exclusively dependent on our willingness to trust in Him, not our ability to keep a bunch of legalistic rules. In fact, the person Jesus is talking to in **John 3** was a religious leader who was pretty good at keeping a list of religious rules. But even still, notice what Jesus said to him was necessary if he wanted salvation. vs. **16**.... whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

So in this instance Paul feels the obligation to send a letter to the Galatians reinforcing this fact by reminding them that our salvation is not based on our work but it is based upon our faith in the work that Jesus accomplished.

Galatians 2:16 (NIV) know that a person is not justified by the works of the law (justified meaning to be made right with God), but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified. The only way we can be made right with God is through our faith in Jesus and the work He did on the cross.

But what do we do about the desires of our flesh that are still lingering around once we have accepted Jesus? How do we process the weakness of our flesh and how do we overcome this aspect so that the mission God has called us to is not hindered? Well, Paul addresses this specifically in **Galatians 5** and it is here that I want us to see **FOUR MINDSETS we need to have when it comes to overcoming our fleshly desires.**

Mindset #1 - Our FREEDOM in Christ is so we can LOVE OTHERS not SERVE ourselves

GALATIANS 5:13-15 (NIV) **13** You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. **14** For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."**15** If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

In order for us to be about the mission we have been talking about the last few weeks it is important for us to be freed up so that we can minister to those around us in need of the Gospel. Paul makes it very clear that our salvation and freedom from the consequences of sin is without question not a license to freely indulge our sinful desires. In fact, the freedom we are now given is so that we can be free from the guilt and shame of sin and free from trying to earn God's favor so that we can now turn all our energy and focus toward loving and caring for others. Because we have found this freedom we should want to share that with others. The only way we can fulfill the Great Commandment of loving God and loving others is to get our mind off of ourselves and focus on and be concerned for the care of others. Why do people bite and devour each other? It is because they are only concerned with themselves. It is selfishness that keeps us from being able to keep the law in the first place and at the heart of our fleshly struggles is a

selfish focus on ourselves. **Mindset #1 - Our FREEDOM in Christ is so we can LOVE OTHERS not SERVE ourselves**

Mindset #2 - We have a HELPER that will give us VICTORY over the desires of our FLESH

GALATIANS 5:16 (NIV)16 So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

Because of the Holy Spirit we no longer have to fight the desires of the flesh on our own. THE HOLY SPIRIT will give us power to overcome if we allow Him the opportunity! It is important to know that we do not walk alone. God has not called us to a new way of living without equipping us with the tools and resources we need to accomplish it. Remember the Holy Spirit is our teacher who wants to come alongside us and to remind us of what Jesus taught. He wants to replace our desires of the flesh with desires of the Kingdom and with desires to live a life that glorifies Jesus. One of the attributes that the Holy Spirit offers us is the ability to exercise self-control. It is a fruit of the Spirit. It may seem at times that we cannot control ourselves but if we will tap into the assistance God has provided us we now have at our disposal the strength and power to resist temptations of the flesh. But we have to make the choice to walk in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is a perfect gentleman. He will not force Himself on you. You must allow Him access and you must give Him permission to lead you and guide you. But notice the promise if we do. “walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.” The idea here is that we walk in step with the Holy Spirit by applying the word of God to our life. We let Him lead and guide our life by helping us put God’s word into action in our life. If we do this it is impossible to gratify the desires of our flesh and instead we will see fruit of the Spirit produced in our life. Do your actions and motives line up with the fruit of the Spirit? (we will look at the fruit of the Spirit shortly) **Mindset #1 - Our FREEDOM in Christ is so we can LOVE OTHERS not SERVE ourselves. Mindset #2 - We have a HELPER that will give us VICTORY over the desires of our FLESH**

Mindset #3 - We must FEED the HOLY SPIRIT and STARVE the FLESH

GALATIANS 5:17-18 (NIV)17 For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. **18** But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Which one leads in your life depends on which one you FEED the most and they both are at odds with each other. In fact they “war” against one another. There will never be a truce between them. It is winner takes all and a complete victory over the other is the only way this war ends.

Romans 8:5-8 (NIV) 5 Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the

Spirit desires. **6** The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. **7** The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. **8** Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.

The biggest way we FEED the Holy Spirit and STARVE the flesh is by allowing our minds to be transformed by the WORD of God. Not just reading it but meditating on it and seeking to apply it to our lives. It is how we give the Holy Spirit the opportunity to influence and change our heart. It's not necessarily we who are empowering the Holy Spirit, but rather it is us giving Him unfettered access and letting Him loose in our life. The Holy Spirit feeds off of the Word of GOD and it is through the Word of God that the Holy Spirit keeps our flesh in check. (JESUS TEMPTATION after FASTING in the wilderness is an example of this) However, if we indulge the flesh, we quench the access of the Holy Spirit and restrict Him from moving through our life. By feeding ourselves with the word of God and not acting on the desires of our flesh, its influence over our lives begins to shrink. Jesus had control over his earthly flesh by placing it in submission to the Word of God and we have this same power through the Spirit! **Mindset #1 - Our FREEDOM in Christ is so we can LOVE OTHERS not SERVE ourselves. Mindset #2 - We have a HELPER that will give us VICTORY over the desires of our FLESH. Mindset #3 - We must FEED the HOLY SPIRIT and STARVE the FLESH**

Mindset #4 - We must be able to EXPERIENCE the DIFFERENCE between the TWO

Here is a list of the ACTS of the flesh:

GALATIANS 5:19-21 (NIV)19 The acts (the work) of the flesh are obvious: Sensual SINS sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; Religious SINS **20** idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, Social SINS jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions **21** and envy; Personal SINS drunkenness, orgies, and the like. (which means there are many others not listed) **I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.** This is activity that will not be seen in heaven. It is the result of our corrupt flesh. Each wars against the things of God. These are activities that need distinct boundaries and must cease. This is the work we naturally will engage in without God and His influence in our lives and each one has SELF to fuel its passions and desires.

Here is the FRUIT of the SPIRIT

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, 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 flesh 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. This is the fruit produced in our lives when yielded to the Holy SPIRIT! We don't produce this the SPIRIT does. That is why we must lean into and trust the Holy Spirit. These are activities that are to never be limited and should be free flowing without restriction in our lives. When we walk in the Spirit others are blessed by the fruit that emanates from our life because by nature it is OTHERS oriented.

Worship Comes Back Up

Invitation:

These 4 Mindsets are a gauge by which you can measure your life and determine where you are in your relationship with Jesus. Too much YOU results in the first list. Walking in the Holy Spirit results in the second list. **Where are you?** If you feel no tension at all between these two lists chances are you have never received Jesus as your Lord and Savior and the Holy Spirit is not present in your life. If there has never been a disruption in your life where you sense the activity in your life needs to change to that of the fruit of the Spirit then you have never accepted Jesus. If there is struggle that should encourage you because that is a sign of the Holy Spirit's presence. But the struggle doesn't need to persist; you can achieve victory over the flesh if you will choose to live a SPIRIT filled life. Your MATURITY in Christ will be determined by the duration between when God SPEAKS and you ACT.