

The Christian Walk: “Walking by the Spirit”

(Galatians 5:16-18)

Introduction

- This year’s Summer Sermon Series is titled, “The Christian Walk.” In this series, we are studying various verses in Scripture that describe specific aspects of the Christian’s walk. That is, how Christians are to live the Christian life. Today, we are going to look at what it means to “*walk by the Spirit*” (Gal.5:16).
- As always, it is important to know the context of a passage of Scripture. The divinely inspired book of Galatians was written by the apostle Paul in the midst of the first century. He wrote this letter “*to the churches of Galatia*” (1:2), to exhort them to remain faithful to the true Gospel – salvation by God’s grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. False teachers had deceived them into thinking that they could be saved by good/religious works (or needed good works in order to obtain/maintain their salvation). Specifically, these false teachers (known as Judaizers), were teaching that a person must adhere to Jewish customs and laws – especially the act of circumcision – in order to truly be saved.

Paul’s letter to these Galatian Christians, is lovingly tough and affectionately candid. He sharply rebuked them for their deserting of God (1:6), and for turning to the false gospel of legalism and self-righteousness (which is no gospel at all; Gal.1:7; 2:16; 3:7, 9, 11, 14):

Gal 1:6-7 ~ “I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel – ⁷not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ.”

Gal 1:8-9 ~ “But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. ⁹As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed.”

Gal 2:16 ~ “yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.” (Eph.2:5, 9; Tit.3:3)

Gal 5:2-6 ~ “Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. ³I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law. ⁴You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace. ⁵For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. ⁶For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.”

Gal 3:10 ~ “For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.’”

James 2:10 ~ “For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it.”

Gal 6:15 ~ “For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.”

1 Cor 7:19 ~ “For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but keeping the commandments of God.”

- This brings us to the passage of Scripture we are looking at this morning. In Galatians 5:16-18, Paul’s teaching is still Gospel-centered. He is teaching that the Christian life cannot be lived in the flesh alone. The Christian life is not about religious rituals and rules, nor is it about living according to fleshly and sinful (worldly/ungodly) desires.

The Christian life is characterized as “walking by the Spirit.” This is not some charismatic “hyper-spiritual” experience. It is living in harmony with the Holy Spirit of God – not grieving (Eph.4:30) or quenching (1Thess.5:19) the Spirit by disobedience –according to God’s will and for His glory.

Gal 5:16-18 ~ “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷For 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. ¹⁸But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.”

- As Christians, the biggest battle we fight is the spiritual battle. Make no mistake, the Christian life is great life, a joy-filled life, and a blessed life – but it is also an embattled life. We are at war. The spiritual battle is all around us, and also within us (see 2Cor.10:3-4; 1Pet.5:8). As the description indicates, the spiritual battle is not physical or material. Before listing off the various parts of the “Armor of God”, the apostle Paul wrote:

Eph 6:10-13 ~ “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹²For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.” (see Rom.13:12-14; 1Cor.10:13; 2Cor.10:3-4; Jms.4:7)

- The Christian cannot live the Christian life apart from the indwelling power and presence of God’s Holy Spirit. Thankfully, God gives His Spirit to everyone He saves – the fulness of His Spirit at the first moment of genuine conversion (Rom.8:7-9; 1Cor.12:13; Eph.1:13-14).

“The Holy Spirit glorifies Jesus Christ and implements Christ’s work of redemption and baptism. He regenerates, baptizes, seals, gifts, and indwells all believers at conversion, progressively sanctifying, and securing them in Christ forever. The Spirit fills, leads, comforts, and intercedes for believers, empowering them for godly living and service. His presence is evident by the fruit of the Spirit and the building up of believers into the body of Christ, the Church” (SBC Doctrinal Statement).

- Contrary to what many believe and teach today, living by the Spirit of God is not some mystical or irrational life. And it is certainly not living a worldly or sinful life (Rom.6:1-2; Jn.14:15; 17:17; 1Jn.2:15-17). Simply put, living by the Spirit is walking in obedience to God. It is living according to God’s Word and His will. Only those who are truly saved possess the indwelling presence and power of God’s Holy Spirit (see Acts 2:38; Rom.8:9-11). In addition to being the deposit which guarantees our salvation (2Cor.1:22; 5:5; Eph.1:14), the indwelling Spirit enables/empowers believers to walk in obedience to God by empowering them to “*put off*” (Eph.4:22-24; Col.3:9), to “*put to death*” (Rom.6:6; 8:13; Col.3:5), to “*renounce*” (Tit.2:12) their sinful and worldly desires.

Gal 2:20 ~ “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

Gal 5:24 ~ “... those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”

Rom 8:7-8 ~ “For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. ⁸Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”

- Galatians 5:16-18 can be outlined with three major headings.

1. The Command (vs.16)

➤ First, we need to identify the command in verse sixteen: “*But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh*” (vs.16). It is found in the imperative verb “walk” (*peripateō*). This Greek word (used almost 100 times in the New Testament, but only here in Galatians), is used literally to refer to a person “walking around” (primarily in the Gospels), or figuratively to describe the way in which a person is (or should be) living or behaving.

In this sense, walking is distinct from talking, feeling, or even thinking. As the saying goes, “Talk is cheap.” Christians are commanded to not only “talk the talk” but “walk the walk.” The true Christian does not merely adhere to Christian doctrine and values, but seeks to be obedient to Christ. A true disciple of Jesus Christ is a follower of Jesus Christ. That is, they seek to be like Christ in everything they say and do (Rom.8:29). For we are not saved *by* good works, but *unto* good works.

Eph 2:1-3, 10 ~ “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ²in which you once walked [*peripateō*], following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience – ³among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. ... ¹⁰For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk [*peripateō*] in them.”

Col 1:9-10 ~ “And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰so as to walk [*peripateō*] in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.”

1 John 2:3-6 ~ “... we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. ⁴Whoever says ‘I know him’ but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, ⁵but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: ⁶whoever says he abides in him ought to walk [*peripateō*] in the same way in which he walked [*peripateō*].”

➤ Anyone who professes to be a Christian and does not desire or strive to follow Christ is a false Christian (Matt.7:21-23; Lk.6:46-49; 1Jn.1:4-10) – he/she is the epitome of a hypocrite. To say that you are a Christian and not strive to live like Christ is the very basis and nature of hypocrisy. A hypocrite is not someone who is struggling to live according to what they believe, but someone who is faking to live according to what they believe. The Greek word translated “hypocrite” (*hypokritēs*) in the New Testament literally referred to a play-actor, a person pretending to be something/someone they are not.

➤ Jesus repeatedly condemned the Jewish leaders for their hypocrisy (in fact, our English words “hypocrisy” and “pharisee” are synonyms). As Christians, we must avoid the heresies of legalism (thinking we are saved by good works) and liberalism (thinking we are not saved unto good works).

Matt 23:1-3 ~ “Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, ²‘The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, ³so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice.’” [Jesus condemned the scribes and Pharisees “hypocrites” (*hypokritēs*) six times in Matt.23 (vs.13-29)]

1 John 1:6-7 ~ “If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk [*peripateō*] in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. ⁷But if we walk [*peripateō*] in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.”

1 John 3:7-10 ~ “Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. ⁸Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. ⁹No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. ¹⁰By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.”

➤ Christians are commanded by God to *“walk by the Spirit”* of God (vs.16). That is, to live in obedience and submission to the Holy Spirit of God. This is not an elective for Christians, or something that Christians do only when it is easy, beneficial or convenient. As Christians, we are to be living each day “in step” with the Spirit’s leading as He leads us in wisdom, godliness and righteousness. This is not theoretical, or even mystical. It is the conscious and willful decision to obey the commands of God – to *“walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him”* (Col.1:10).

Romans 6:12-13 ~ “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.

¹³Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.”

Romans 13:13-14 ~ “Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.”

➤ Notice the assurance that is given in verse sixteen: *“... walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh”* (vs.16). As we will see, the way to not *“gratify the desires of the flesh”* is not simply trying to resist or repress our fleshly (sinful) desires. The way to overcome sin is not merely trying to overcome sin, in our own strength, passion or wisdom. The way to overcome sin is to do so by walking in the Spirit. We cannot simply will ourselves to be godly, or pull up our “spiritual/religious bootstraps” and gut-out a righteous life. We are fully depended on God’s enabling and leading (Jn.15:4-5; Phil.2:13; Col.1:29).

✓ Illust: “It must be clear to us that mortification [i.e. the killing of sin], though it is something we do, cannot be carried out in our own strength. Well did the Puritan John Owen say, ‘Mortification from a self-strength, carried on by ways of self-invention, unto the end of a self-righteousness is the soul and substance of all false religion.’ Mortification must be done by the strength and under the direction of the Holy Spirit” (Jerry Bridges, *The Pursuit of Holiness*, ch.9).

➤ Yet, we cannot passively wait on God to make us live righteously or force us (against our wills) to live a holy life. The saying, “Let go and let God” sounds religious and pious, but is in actuality a false spirituality. Walking by the Spirit does not release us from the responsibility we have to strive for godliness. While we cannot walk by the Spirit apart from God’s enabling power, we also cannot walk by the Spirit without deliberate and conscious effort on our part. Remember, “You can drift into sin, but not into righteousness” (Leon Morris).

➤ In the same vein, Jesus used the illustration of a vine and branches:

John 15:1-5 ~ “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. ²Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

³Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”

➤ Our work in our pursuit of holiness is to abide in Christ (in the vine). We do this by *“walking by the Spirit.”* God’s part in our pursuit of holiness is to enable us, as we abide in Him, to produce the fruit of the Spirit (see Gal.5:22-23).

Gal 2:20 ~ “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

Col 1:28-29 ~ “Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. ²⁹For this I toil [*kopiaō*], struggling [*agōnizomai*] with all his energy [*energeia*] that he powerfully [*dynamis*] works [*energeō*] within me.”

Phil 2:12-13 ~ “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear [*phobos*] and trembling [*tromos*],¹³ for it is God who works [*energeō*] in you, both to will and to work [*energeō*] for his good pleasure.”

➤ The truth is, while we are saved by God’s grace alone, we are not sanctified by God’s grace alone. God commands that we participate with Him in our own personal holiness. We cannot (on the one hand) live a holy life on our own, and we cannot (on the other hand) live a holy life without conscious and sincere effort on our part. It can be helpful to think of these as two wings on an airplane.

✓ Illust: “As you look at the two wings, imagine the words *dependence* [God’s work in our sanctification] on the left wing and *discipline* [our work in our sanctification] on the right wing. This airplane illustrated one of the most important principles in the Christian life. Just as the airplane must have both wings to fly, so we must exercise both discipline and dependence in the pursuit of holiness. Just as it is impossible for an airplane to fly with only one wing, so it is impossible for us to successfully pursue holiness with only dependence or discipline. We absolutely must have both” (Jerry Bridges, *The Discipline of Grace*; p.121-122).

➤ So here is a promise given to us by God: “*But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh*” (vs.16). The natural, supernatural, result of walking by the Spirit is not gratifying the desires of our sinful flesh.

The Greek word translated “*gratify*” (*teleō*) refers to that which is accomplished, perfected or completed [note: similar to the word Jesus used when, from the cross, He said: “It is finished”; Jn.19:30]. In Galatians 5:16, Paul is using this word to describe the carrying out or fulfilling of one’s sinful desires. In other words, our sinful desires will be thwarted – our temptations will be unfulfilled, unsatisfied – as we yield to the will and work of God’s Holy Spirit.

✓ Illust: “While you can’t keep the birds [of temptation] from flying around your head, you can keep them from nesting in your hair” (Martin Luther).

James 1:14-15 ~ “But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. ¹⁵Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.”

➤ Notice the order: “*But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh*” (vs.16). When we walk by the Spirit, we will not gratify the desires of the flesh. The opposite is not true (i.e., not gratifying the desires of the flesh does not lead to walking by the Spirit). Again, it is only through walking by the Spirit that we can keep from sinning (i.e., not gratifying the desires of the flesh).

2. The Conflict (vs.17)

➤ One reason for this is that a Christian simply cannot be walking in the Spirit and in the flesh at the same time. In verse seventeen we read: “*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*” (vs.17).

The “*desires of the flesh*” (vs.16, 17; cf. 1Jn.2:16) refers to any and every sinful desire (see “*works of the flesh*”, Gal.5:19-21). This includes not only the sinful desires that come from our physical appetites and bodily actions, but also sinful desires that come from our minds, our mouths, our wills, and our emotions.

➤ These “*desires of the flesh*” are “*against*” (*kata*) the desires of “*the Spirit*”, and the “*desires of the Spirit*” are “*against*” the desires of “*the flesh*” (vs.17). More literally, verse seventeen could be translated “the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh.” Paul summarized this by simply stating that “*these are opposed to each other*” (vs.17). The word translated “opposed” (*antikeimai*) describes something that is in conflict with, or even hostile (adversarial, contrary) to, something else. The believer simply cannot walk in the flesh and by the Spirit at the same time. When we are living in the flesh we are living contrary to the Spirit, and when we are living in the Spirit we are living contrary to the flesh.

- This is the battle within. As Christians, we (ultimately) want to do that which God has called us to do; we want to be obedient, godly, and pleasing in His sight. But our (sinful) flesh fights against those spiritual desires and affections.

Satan cannot make us sin; he cannot possess the life of a true believer. But Satan can influence us through temptation, deception and seduction. Satan has no power of the Spirit of God, that resides in every true Christian, so he uses our flesh as the beachhead of all his attacks.

Our battle is to resist the devil (Jms.4:7), putting on the armor of God in order to stand against the schemes of the devil (Eph.6:11), and submitting to God as we walk by the Spirit of God. This is our greatest battle. It is a daily, moment-by-moment, battle to keep in step with the Spirit of God.

- Perhaps we can all relate to Paul's personal battle with his sinful flesh:

Rom 7:15-25 ~ "For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. ¹⁶Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. ¹⁷So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. ¹⁸For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. ¹⁹For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. ²⁰Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. ²¹So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. ²²For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, ²³but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

²⁴Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? ²⁵Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! ..."

- Our only deliverance from this battle within is the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. A person simply cannot live by the Spirit apart from being saved and sanctified in the Spirit.

Romans 8:5-8 ~ "For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. ⁶For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. ⁸Those who are in the flesh cannot please God."

Romans 8:12-14 ~ "So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. ¹³For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God."

1 Cor 15:56-57 ~ "The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

- The result of this conflict is that when the believer is truly walking by the Spirit they will not gratify their sinful desires. However, when the believer is walking in the flesh they will not gratify the desires of the Spirit – i.e. the desires of the flesh *"keep you from doing the things you want to do"* (vs.17).

✓ Illust: The Protestant Reformer Martin Luther (1483-1546), whom I quoted from previously, was an ordained priest in the Roman Catholic Church until he discovered the true Gospel that a person is saved by God's grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone.

"When I was a monk I thought I was lost forever whenever I felt an evil emotion, carnal lust, wrath, hatred, or envy. I tried to quiet my conscience in many ways, but it did not work, because lust would always come back and give me no rest. I told myself: 'You have permitted this and that sin, envy, impatience, and the like. Your joining this holy order has been in vain, and all your good works are good for nothing.' If at that time I had understood this passage, *'The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh,'* I could have spared myself many a day of self-torment. I would have said to myself: 'Martin, you will never be without sin, for you have flesh. Despair not, but resist the flesh'" (Martin Luther; *Luther's Commentary on Galatians*; 5:17).

- We see the effects of this conflict in the lists of “*the works of the flesh*” (vs.19) and “*the fruit of the Spirit*” (vs.22):

Gal 5:19-24 ~ “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 [*ho homoios houtos*]. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things [*toioutos*] will not inherit the kingdom of God.

²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things [*toioutos*] there is no law. ²⁴And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”

- There are a couple of things that we must understand about these two lists. First, notice that “*works of the flesh*” (vs.19) is plural and “*fruit of the Spirit*” (vs.22) is singular. This denotes that while every sinner does not commit every sin, every Christian possess every fruit.

Second, notice that neither of these lists are exhaustive – they are examples. The Greek word (*toioutos*), translated “*such things*”, appears in both “*the works of the flesh*” (vs.21) and “*the fruit of the Spirit*” (vs.23). Throughout the New Testament, we find varying lists of the works of the flesh (see Rom.1:24-32; 13:12-14; Eph.4:20-32; Col.3:5-9; 1Thess.4:1-8; 2Pet.3:2-5; 1Jn.2:15-17), in addition to other spiritual virtues (see Eph.4:2; Phil.4:8; Col.3:12; 2Tim.3:10).

3. The Conquest (vs.18)

- The solution to our proclivity to sin is not to pit our desire to be righteous against the desires of the flesh, but to actively surrender our wills to the leading of the Holy Spirit – i.e. the presence and power of the indwelling Holy Spirit in our lives. We simply cannot win the battle against sin in our own strength or by our own wisdom. We must seek continually to be led by the Spirit of God.

This means that we faithfully avail ourselves to the resources God has given us: prayer and the Scriptures. If we are not immersed in the Word of God, and faithful in prayer, we will struggle to know the will God. The goal of the Christian life is to live like Christ. To accomplish this, we must be ever-conscious of God – His truth, His presence, His character, His power, His attributes, His will, and His glory. When we neglect the study of His word and the discipline of prayer, we are more apt to drift away from God and more susceptible to the attacks of the devil.

- We must remember, however, that our pursuit of walking by the Spirit must not be fueled by legalism or any heartless/mindless religious activity. We must be careful not to turn spiritual disciplines (i.e. prayer, Bible study, etc.) into religious routines or rituals. For, as the Pharisees put on inglorious display, a person can pray and read the Bible and not be walking in the Spirit (or even saved!). Walking by the Spirit of God is not simply being dutiful in Christian activities. It is humbly submitting to God, and consciously following His will for your life.
- The apostle Paul put it this way: “*But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law*” (vs.18). As we saw in Galatians 3:23-4:7, the (mature) Christian no longer needs the law of God to guide them because they are led by the Spirit of God. To be “*led*” (*agō*) by the Spirit is essentially the same as walking by the Spirit. However, it has the added meaning of being compelled and directed. In other words, when a Christian is truly led by the Spirit of God the law is not the main means of their sanctification; the Spirit is. The Spirit-led Christian is free from the law – not free to do whatever they want, but free to do all that God wants (Rom.6:1-2; Gal.5:13; 1Pet.2:16).

Those who are living by the guiding power of the Spirit in their lives and are fighting each day against the influence of the sinful nature do not need to be supervised and restrained by the law. They have something far greater than the external law(s) of God. They have the indwelling presence and power of God’s Holy Spirit – every moment of every day!

Romans 6:14 ~ “For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.”

Romans 8:1-4 ~ “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ²For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. ³For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”

➤ To put it another way, the Christian is not free *to* sin but freed *from* sin. That is, the Christian has been freed from not only the penalty of sin (justification) but also the very power of sin (sanctification) – and one day the very presence of sin (glorification). The Christian is no longer helplessly dead in sin, no longer powerlessly under sin’s control, no longer unable to say no to unrighteousness. At the moment of true conversion, the Christian is able to live (for the first time) a righteous, Christlike, life.

Conclusion

➤ So, what does it mean to “*walk by the Spirit*” (Gal.5:16), to be “*led by the Spirit*” (Gal.5:18), or to “*live by the Spirit*” (Gal.5:25), and to “*keep in step with the Spirit*” (Gal.5:25)? Simply put, living by the Spirit is walking in obedience to God. It is living, in the power and presence of God, according to the Word and will of God.

Gal 5:25 ~ “If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.”

A CHRISTIAN'S DAILY PRAYER

As morning dawns and day awakes, to You I bring my need
O gracious God, my source of strength, in You I live and breathe
Each hour is Yours by wisdom planned,
Each deed empowered by sovereign hands
Renew my spirit, help me stand, be glorified today

As day unfolds, I seek Your will in all of life’s demands
And though the tempter tries me still, I cling to Your commands
Let every effort of my life
Display the matchless worth of Christ
Make me a living sacrifice; be glorified today

As sun gives way to darkest night Your Spirit still is here
And though my strength fades like the light, new mercies will appear
I rest in You; abide with me
Until our trials and suffering
Give way to final victory; be glorified, today
Be glorified, I pray

Music and Words by Matt Merker, Jordan Kauflin, and Dave Fournier
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