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Breathing the Fresh Air of Liberty in Jesus Christ

Galatians 5:1 For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

*“Some More Tips About Walking
in the Spirit”*

March 30, 2014

Sermon Text: Galatians 5:16-26

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 4

Introduction-

“If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.” Gal 5:25

What does it mean to “walk by the Spirit”? Clearly this is at the very heart of the Christian’s life in Christ. It is THE means by which we conquer sin,

overcoming (“mortify”) the remaining corruption of sinful flesh in ourselves, and live thereby in obedience to Christ. We live by the Spirit. He has regenerated our hearts, joined us to Christ, and made us alive. He is in us, leading us – so we must walk in Him. Live in a manner that is consistent with His desires as He makes them our desires.

Remember the warning John Owen gives to us from Romans 8:13-

Romans 8:13 For 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.**

His warning (and encouragement) is that it is only by the Spirit that we put to death the deeds of the flesh. Any other so-called means of doing this will only become the ground of all false religion, and it will fail.

Temptation

Every Christian is tempted. **The world** tempts us with its lying philosophies

and its offer of fame and fortune. **The flesh** tempts us with its desires/lusts. And **the devil** tempts us with his lies as well. How do we face temptation? *Walk by the Spirit.* The Spirit leads us in truth to recognize and stand against the deceptions of the lying serpent. The Spirit rises up to oppose the desires of our flesh AND expresses His desires within us that we might embrace them. It is the Spirit who leads us away from a love for this world, reminding us that it is perishing. Only by the Spirit can we overcome these enemies. And Christian, the Holy Spirit IS in you. He IS leading you.

Here are just a very, very few of the Scriptures that describe the temptations that come to us:

1 Thessalonians 3:5 For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labor would be in vain.

James 1:13-15 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God," for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. (14) But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. (15) Then desire when it has conceived

gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.

1 Corinthians 7:5 Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

Hebrews 3:13 But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Ephesians 4:14 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

1 Timothy 4:1 Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons,

2 Corinthians 11:3-4 But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. (4) For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the

one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or if you accept a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it readily enough.

Notice the repeated emphasis upon Satan's *deceptions*. We should not be surprised at this – after all, it was Satan who tempted Christ in the wilderness, and deception and lies were his currency just as in his temptation of the first Adam in Eden. Deception. Lies. What is the Holy Spirit in YOU going to do then, Christian, when these deceptions come your way? Well—

John 16:13 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.

1 John 4:1-6 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. (2) By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, (3) and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was

coming and now is in the world already. (4) Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. (5) They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. (6) We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

Christian, the more Scripture you read and digest, the better the Spirit will be able to lead you into truth. How many times is the Christian faced with the enemy's lies and a Scripture leaps into his mind? But that is not going to happen in a vacuum. We dare not neglect serious study and reading of God's Word.

Remember now, our purpose here this morning is to learn how the Spirit of God works in us so that we might put to death the deeds of the flesh and walk by the Spirit rather than gratifying that flesh. And let me recommend to you that both the devil and the world (of which he is the "god", 2 Cor 4:3-4) are going to come at us in their temptations by appealing to the flesh. Understand? It is our remaining corruption (the flesh) to which both the world and the devil are

going to appeal. You can see this in the listing Paul gives us here in Galatians 5. Yes, when we think of the sinful flesh we think of deeds such as:

- Sexual immorality
- Impurity
- Sensuality

But notice, very interestingly, the nature of the next two:

- Idolatry
- Sorcery

And then last time we spent some time considering this ugly, perhaps most foundational work of the flesh: *pride*. We saw it down in verse 26-

Galatians 5:26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

And this warning comes right after the mention (vs 24) of the passions and desires of the flesh. Pride seems to be the root sin of Satan's kingdom, *the world*-

1 John 2:15-16 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. (16) For all that is in the world--the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions--is

not from the Father but is from the world.

So I say again, that the devil and the world, as well as our flesh, are going to come at us through this remaining, corrupt thing in us which Paul calls *the flesh*. When that temptation comes, be it –

- An appeal to pride in some form of love for the world,
- An appeal to some lust
- An appeal to embrace some lie, some “other gospel,”

...we must understand that the Holy Spirit in us will rise up immediately and oppose it. That opposing desire in us is what we must yield to, and when we do we will put the deed of the flesh to death.

Let me give you an example of this very thing which we have been researching this past week. In this case, it is a temptation of *deception* by a person and system that claims to be of Christ. Listen to this man, David G. Benner, who claims to be a Christian and who, as you will see, has been for some time and continues to have a widespread influence in many so-called conservative Christian seminaries. Here he is, working to entice you through your sinful flesh away from the truth of Christ. Apparently he has been quite

successful in this demonic endeavor now for sometime:

Dr. David G. Benner is an internationally known depth psychologist, author, and lecturer whose life's work has been directed toward helping people walk the human path in a deeply spiritual way and the spiritual path in a deeply human way. The underlying passion of his life has been the understanding and pursuit of transformation – not merely healing or even growth, but the unfolding of the self associated with a journey of awakening. David has authored or edited more than 30 books which have been translated into 18 foreign languages. His books reflect both his Christian faith and the fact that he holds his beliefs with humility as he journeys with those of any faith or none. David is a faculty member of [The Rohr Institute's Living School for Action and Contemplation](#) where he serves as a Master Teacher.

The following is from his blog:

All in the Family

by DGB on MARCH 22, 2014

For many people, religious tolerance sounds an oxymoron. It is quite easy to understand why. God knows there have been more than enough examples of religionists who have spent their lives preaching hatred for those outside their own tradition.

But, enjoying some holidays with my wife's family at the moment, it is clear to me that what those who live and preach a religion of hatred need is to spend some time here in Trinidad and Tobago. What I have in mind isn't Carnival (as outrageously fascinating as it is), or the incredible beaches and food (as awesome as both of these are), but exposure to the way the social fabric of this country so tightly weaves together the major religious groups of the two islands.

My wife's family is quite typical of Trinidadian culture in terms of religious tolerance and interfaith composition. Good Christians regularly marry good Hindus and good Muslims and show not just tolerance but deep respect for each other's traditions. Children are raised to remember the common roots they share as Trinidadians – roots that go much deeper into the soil of humanity than the shallower roots associated with their particular religious tradition. My

Presbyterian in-laws happily go to Muslim or Hindu prayers with their husbands and wives and send their children to religious education in both traditions as a way of deepening their spiritual formation. Add in boyfriends, girlfriends, and other relations and the result is family dinners or days at the beach that are extraordinarily rich ecumenical and interfaith encounters.

I recognize that this sort of inter-religious openness is deeply threatening to many Christians. I know the tired old Scripture verses people trot out to support the sort of exclusivism they live and which they feel honours God. But rather than attempt to justify religious tolerance on the basis of Scriptures, let me say something about it as a psychologist.

The psychology of exclusion always reflects fear and breeds hostility. It arises from the binary nature of the egoic mind that attempts to simplify the world by means of comparison and categorization. But once things are categorized, it is almost impossible not to judge them good or bad. We then identify the good with "me" and "us" (those I count as my tribe) and the bad we project out onto "them" (everyone else). This is the

way the egoic mind defends itself from perceived threat. Those outside our clan and comfort zone represent a potential challenge to our way of being in the world. But engaging them with respect and openness offers incredible opportunities for expanding the self and its horizons.

Religious tolerance does not mean abandoning your beliefs. It simply means holding them with humility. The only thing it requires is openness to the possibility that you and your tribe do not have exclusive ownership of truth. Decades of dialogue with those of any faith or none with this modest degree of openness have made me more, not less, deeply Christian. But they constantly serve as a reminder that even more fundamental than being Christian is being human. And we all belong to that family!

Dare to step beyond the exclusivism of the egoic mind. I guarantee it will enrich your life. And if you happen to be a Christian, it will also make you a better witness to the Truth and Love you claim to be at the core of your life.

Now, you say, how obviously unbiblical and un-Christian is all of

that nonsense! And I am glad that you can say that. The Holy Spirit in you will be rising up against these lies immediately, and you must understand that it is indeed the Spirit of Christ in you doing this, *no matter how many other people who claim to be Christians go along with it.*

What do the following facts tell you? –

David G. Benner's books are, right now and for a number of years, being used as textbooks and/or being sold in the bookstores of/or in the libraries of: [Bolded actively use Benner as textbooks]

- **Dallas Theological Seminary**
- Westminster Seminary, CA.
- The Master's Seminary
- Dort College
- Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Pittsburg, PA.
- Denver Seminary
- **Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis, MO. (PCA)**
- Wheaton College
- Covenant College, Lookout Mountain, GA.
- Concordia Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne, IN.
- Western Theological Seminary, Holland, MI.

- Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, GA.
- **Fuller Theological Seminary**
- Phoenix Seminary
- Calvin College, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Bethel University, St. Paul, MN.

In addition, many of Benner's books are published by supposedly Christian publishers, InterVarsity Press being a main one. This is from the IVP web page:

David G. Benner (Ph.D., York University) is Emeritus Distinguished Professor of Psychology and Spirituality at Richmond Graduate University in Atlanta, Georgia. Previously he was an associate fellow at the Centre for Studies in Religion and Society at University of Victoria in British Columbia, Canada. A depth psychologist, spiritual director and retreat leader, Benner has written and edited many books, including the Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology and Counseling and Care of Souls. He is the founding executive editor of the journal Conversations.

The titles of his books published by IVP include:

- Desiring God’s Will
- The Gift of Being Yourself
- Sacred Companions: The Gift of Spiritual Friendship & Direction
- Spiritual Direction and the Care of Souls
- Surrender to Love

I am aghast at this. How is it that such a man, obviously one who “wants to distort the gospel of Christ” (Gal 17) and is pronounced anathema by the Apostle Paul, has been embraced so widely and enthusiastically by the “great halls of Christian academia”? Let me suggest the obvious answer:

“This is the result of Satan’s deceiving tactics employed against people who either are not Christians at all, or who are very careless Christians who have yielded to the idolatry and sorcery of the flesh in the face of these tempting deceptions.”

Because the Spirit of Christ is the Spirit of truth and He will always rise up and identify the spirit of error when it comes against us. Christian, YOU must learn to listen to the Spirit in you! How many Christians yield to error and temptation and deception simply because they listened to the wave of opinion around them rather than to the Spirit in them? Listen, listen again to God’s inerrant, infallible Word:

Galatians 5:16-26 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 walk by the Spirit.** (26) Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

Preparing for the Attack

It is never a good idea to put off preparing for an enemy attack. We

must train for the battle *now*. I want to spend the rest of our time together today directing you to this preparation. It is a given – the temptation of the world and the devil directed against our sinful flesh, is going to come. How do we prepare? Well, I suggest that we:

1. Do Not Grieve the Spirit – Change Your Clothes!

Indulging the flesh strengthens it. As you listen to the following Scripture, notice that the instruction “do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God” appears right in the center of instruction about putting off the old clothes of the flesh and putting on your new wardrobe – the new self who you now are in Christ. This is an amazing passage. You find the renewing of the mind here and the instruction of not giving the devil an opportunity. This section really is still another on walking by the Spirit and thereby putting to death the deeds of the flesh. It opens with a reminder that every Christian has been taught by Jesus’ truth, which I think is still another reference to the Holy Spirit:

Ephesians 4:19-32 They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

(20) **But that is not the way you learned Christ!-- (21) assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus,** (22) to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, (23) **and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds,** (24) and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

(25) Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. (26) Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, (27) **and give no opportunity to the devil.** (28) Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. (29) Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.

(30) And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

(31) Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander

be put away from you, along with all malice. (32) Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit. That is what happens when we yield to temptation and the desires of our flesh.

2. Immerse Yourself in the Word With Prayer

If the Spirit is the Spirit of Truth, then surely the more we study His truth, the easier it will be for Him to lead us in that truth.

Psalms 119:9-11 How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. (10) With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments! (11) I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.

Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

Jeremiah 15:16-17 Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and

the delight of my heart, for I am called by your name, O LORD, God of hosts. (17) I did not sit in the company of revelers, nor did I rejoice; I sat alone, because your hand was upon me, for you had filled me with indignation.

Psalms 1:1-2 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; (2) but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night.

This point is vital. If we do not apply ourselves to the reading and study of Scripture, praying and asking the Lord to teach us, then we are hindering the Spirit's ability to lead us. I have no doubt that this is a chief reason, if not *the* chief reason for the sad condition of the church today.

Here is John Owen on this:

A man finds any lust to bring him into the condition formerly described; it is powerful, strong, tumultuating, leads captive, vexes, disquiets, takes away peace; he is not able to bear it; wherefore he sets himself against it, prays against it, groans under it, sighs to be delivered: but in the meantime, perhaps, in other duties, -- in

constant communion with God, -- in reading, prayer, and meditation, --in other ways that are not of the same kind with the lust wherewith he is troubled, -- he is loose and negligent. Let not that man think that ever he shall arrive to the mortification of the lust he is perplexed withal.

Owen, John (2010-03-23). Of the Mortification of Sin in Believers (p. 52). . Kindle Edition.

3. Separate from the Wicked & Keep Company With the Godly

While the Holy Spirit will lead us to love others, He will particularly draw us into fellowship with other believers. That means, conversely, that He will lead us away from fellowship with the wicked, and this is a vital point for us to note.

The world pressures us to be “tolerant” of everyone and everything. That is one of the great evils of this Benner teaching – a denial of evil. A denial of real truth. If you separate from the wicked, you will be branded as judgmental and cruel.

But the Holy Spirit does this very thing. He exposes evil and He leads us to reject it and separate from it and instead join ourselves to the Godly:

2 Corinthians 6:14-18 Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? (15) What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? (16) What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. (17) Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, (18) and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty."

Psalms 1:1 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers;

This is vital for us to understand, and it is widely denied today even among Christians due to a prevalence of false teaching. The Holy Spirit leads us away from the wicked. Here is further proof:

John 10:14-16 I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, (15) just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. (16) And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.

That voice is of course His Word in connection with the leading of the Spirit in us. The wicked cannot hear it.

1 John 4:4-7 Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. (5) They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. (6) We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error. (7) Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.

Conclusion

Let's close now with two important truths, one for the Christian and one for the unsaved:

Christian, did you notice that wonderful fact we just read? *He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.* Christ, by His Spirit, has given us a mighty, unstoppable Champion who cannot be overcome by the world, the flesh, or the devil. Walk in Him and you will conquer.

And finally for anyone here today who is not in Christ –

The chief work for the unsaved person is to seek Christ. While it is a good thing to turn away from sin, you must not make moralism your primary objective. Because if you are not in Christ, you will never truly put to death the deeds of the flesh. You will never have real life. Therefore you must not allow yourself to be diverted into the pursuit of some “good” thing. You must be born again. Apart from knowing and being made new by Christ, all else is lost.