

Series: Galatians
Title: Walk in the Spirit
Text: Gal 5: 16-26
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Galatians 5: 16 *This* I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

Let's go back to chapter three to see how Paul began.

Galatians 3: 1: O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, [rebellion is as witchcraft] that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?

They began by the preaching of the gospel of Christ. The Spirit gave them faith to behold Christ. The gospel was made so clear through faith that it was like the Lord was crucified there in Galatia before their eyes.

Galatians 3: 2: This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

The Spirit of God was given you, Paul says. It was not by hearing of the works of the law. Nor was it by their works. It was through hearing the gospel of the faith of Christ and him crucified that the Spirit was given them.

Galatians 3: Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

Paul says you began in the Spirit. The Spirit of God created a new man in you. The Spirit of God gave you faith and repentance. Ye live in the Spirit and are led of the Spirit so you began walking in the Spirit. But after that you have been called into liberty are you now made perfect—grown up into Christ, your sin-nature mortified, fruit produced—by your flesh?

Galatians 3: 4: Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if *it be* yet in vain. 5: He therefore [Christ Jesus] that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, [Christ ministered the Spirit to you and worketh these miracles:

Christ called them into liberty from the bondage of the law. He gave the Spirit who regenerated them giving them liberty from the dominion of their sin-nature. It was Christ through the Spirit who produced the fruit of the Spirit in them. Paul asks, “*doeth he it* by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?” Christ ministered the Spirit and worked these miracles through the hearing of the gospel of Christ person and work.

Now we go to chapter 5.

Galatians 5: 7: Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? 8: This persuasion *cometh* not of [Christ] that calleth you. 9: A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. 10: I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded:

They ran well looking to Christ under the preaching of the gospel Christ's glorious person and his finished work. Christ did not turn them back and hinder them. The leaven of the Pharisee's turned them from Christ to their works. They had begun minding the things of the flesh rather than minding the things of the Spirit. Paul's confidence was that Christ, through the Spirit, would make them mind the things of the Spirit.

The carnal man—the sin-nature that is still in believers—minds the things of the flesh. But Paul believed Christ and his confidence was that Christ would minister the Spirit and cause them to mind the things of the Spirit. It was Paul's hope that through the Lord their inner man—the new man—would be set on Christ. Then the Spirit would make them mind the things freely given us of God. Paul's word to the Colossians in Colossians 3 was set your affection on Christ above. The Spirit sets our new man on Christ our Righteousness, our Sanctification, in whom we are complete. It is the gospel that is the power of God. The Spirit through the gospel strengthens our inner man so that through the Spirit we mortify the flesh.

Drop to verse 13.

Galatians 5: 13: For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only *use* not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

The context and subject have not changed. He says you have been called unto liberty by hearing of the gospel of Christ. Christ ministered to you the Spirit. The Spirit gave you life and faith and the fruit of the Spirit.

Only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh. Of course we are not to use liberty as a license to sin. But now that they had liberty they were being told that now they would be made perfect and mature by minding the things of the flesh, living under the law, keeping their focus on how they lived. That is giving an occasion to the flesh, too. The Spirit makes the child of God strive against sin and live honorably to the Lord. But the flesh lusts after that work being put in our hands. It is satisfying to the sin-nature.

Colossians 2: 23: Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour...[it is] satisfying of the flesh.

Paul says if any are truly concerned about the law then *by love serve one another*.

Galatians 5: 14: For all the law is fulfilled in one word, *even* in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Faith which worketh by love is the rule of the Spirit.

Galatians 5: 15: But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.

This is what resulted in them giving occasion to the flesh. Not only did they begin to mind their own law-keeping but they began minding and criticizing one another. The result was biting and devouring one another. There is a fleshly way of using the letter of the word—new or old—to constrain another by the strength of the flesh rather than using spiritual discernment to walk in newness of spirit.

This was a result of the leaven of the Pharisee's. It always is. They turned these believers from the gospel of Christ and his mighty works to the hearing of their own works. They were

turned from the Spirit to their flesh. From having their hearts set on Christ above and walking after him to minding the things of the flesh such as touch not, taste not, handle not.

The paradox to the carnal mind is that while he thinks he is mortifying his sin-nature and doing good works by being turned from Christ and the Spirit he is feeding the flesh. It puffs up in pride. The next thing it results in is examining others and trying to mortify their flesh. The outcome is biting and devouring one another. Each exalting themselves over the other.

There is only one who can mortify our sin-nature. It is the same one by whom we began. It is Christ Jesus who is the Head of the church. The church, each member in particular, is his body. He ministers to his child by the Holy Spirit through the hearing of the gospel which gives Christ all the glory. So Paul says

Galatians 5: 16: *This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.*

He reminded them they began by hearing how Christ fulfilled all righteousness for his people and ascended to his throne as Head of his church. They began by Christ sending the Spirit and giving them liberty from the lust of their flesh so they could believe on Christ. By the Spirit they began with their inward affection in the inward man set on Christ by which Christ subdued their sin-nature. So Paul is beseeching them to continue minding the things of the Spirit that are freely given to you of God in Christ.

How is it we shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh if we walk in the Spirit. We experienced this the first hour the Lord made us hear the gospel in spirit and in truth. Through the gospel the Spirit circumcised our heart, purging our conscious. For the first time, he made us worship Christ in the Spirit. For the first he the Spirit made us rejoice in Christ Jesus. Doing so the Spirit made us have no confidence in our flesh. With our affection set on Christ by the Spirit, with all our rejoicing in Christ, we could not fulfill the lust of our flesh to put any confidence in our flesh. Paul said, "Ye did run well obeying the truth." I have confidence through the Lord he will make you mind the same things. "*This I say then, Walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh*" Paul is beseeching them to continue under the gospel of Christ with Christ as their sole focus rather than turning back to their flesh and the law with this vain notion that they will go on to perfection thereby.

Next he declares it is the Spirit of God that gets the glory for mortifying our flesh, not us, not the law, not our works. Notice in our text he speaks not of the old man and the new man but of the sin-nature and the Holy Spirit of God. There is a reason for this.

Galatians 5 :17: *For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.*

Before we get to the point Paul is making let's understand these terms. The "flesh" is the sin-nature. It is true that the Holy Spirit of God creates a new holy nature in us in regeneration. It is true our sin-nature and our new man lust—intensely war against one another. Those born of God have two natures that are contrary the one to the other. In our new man we desire holiness and hate sin—In our sin-nature we desire sin and want nothing to do with holiness. Two opposing armies are in us. This civil war will continue until the day we die.

"*So that ye cannot do the things ye would.*" In the new man we cannot do what we would and in our sin-nature we cannot do what we would. Paul wrote in Romans 7: 21...*when I would*

do good evil is present with me. 22: For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: 23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. He was speaking of the two natures—there is the “I” that is my sinful flesh and the “I” that is the new man in which I delight in the law of God.

But in our text, Paul speaks of the flesh (the sin-nature) and the Holy Spirit. He is declaring what he declared at the end of *Romans 7: 24 O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? 25: I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Paul speaks of the God the Holy Spirit warring against our sin-nature because the point of the whole epistle is that it is God who gets the glory for producing fruit in our new man and preventing us from fulfilling the lust of the flesh. Christ gave us liberty in the beginning freeing us from the condemnation of the law, freeing us from the dominion of our sin-nature by ministering to us the Spirit of God. Through the hearing of Christ and him crucified in the word fruit is of Christ produced in us through the Spirit of God.

Through the gospel of Christ, he continues this work in his redeemed. *“This I say then Walk ye in the Spirit and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.”* Christ will even mortify lust of biting and devouring one another. Paul is beseeching the Galatians to continue under the hearing of the faith of Christ’s works by whom we walk in the Spirit and by the Spirit are strengthened in the new man to mortify the flesh. Paul is saying continue walking in the Spirit rather than this leaven of the Pharisee which only fulfills the lust of the flesh.

God gets all the glory for making us to differ. It by the Spirit of God that our sin-nature cannot do the sinful things it would. Through the gospel, the Spirit leads us to Christ above. He sets our affection on things above where Christ sits (Col 3: 1-3). He renews our inward man to remember we are complete in Christ. Our life is in Christ at God’s right hand.

Thus the Spirit strengthens our inward man so we mortify the deeds of the flesh. He does not give us the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit even helps our infirmities to pray. It is by the Spirit setting our affection on Christ, bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God and joint heirs with Christ. This is the strength of our new man to strive against sin. The hearing of works only feeds the lusts of the flesh because our sin-nature lusts to use the word to bite and devour one another, especially when we behold sin in another.

Galatians 5:18: But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

He keeps repeating this because this the problem he is addressing. If ye be led of the Spirit then ye are under grace, not law. There is no condemnation because you are in Christ. Being born of the Spirit we are led of the Spirit therefore we walk after the Spirit, not after the flesh. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ has made us free from the law of sin and death through Christ’s blood.

Next he will show the works of the flesh that come from our lusts and then fruit produced of the Spirit from Christ through the gospel. This is the lusts in every believer’s sin-nature. This is the sin we are in our sin-nature. These are the works the sin-nature produces. These are in thought and some in deed. It is the Spirit of God applying the blood of Christ in our inward man that makes a believer repent from these sins and live unto Christ.

Galatians 5: 19: Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*;

- **Adultery**—to look upon a woman as adultery, as well as the act; the thought has to be mortified as well as the act.
- **Fornication**—sex outside of marriage
- **Uncleanness**—any impure thoughts, gestures, words, deeds
- **Lasciviousness**—unbridled sin without shame

Then he lists religious sins which are included in biting and devouring which Paul warned about. These sins include the flesh's reaction to other's sins.

Galatians 5: 20: Idolatry—anything that comes between us and God; covetousness is idolatry

- **Witchcraft**—Paul said who hath bewitched you; rebellion is witchcraft; seeking to go beyond God into things not revealed or pertaining to us
- **Hatred**—enmity, unmerciful, hardness in thought or deed
- **Variance**—contentious thoughts, words or actions
- **Emulations**—this is that bad zeal Paul spoke of in 4th chapter—zeal against a rival such as Pharisee's against Paul or against a brother who has offended us
- **Wrath**—anger; holding on to anger, anger boiling up
- **Strife**—to put self forward like a politician running for office
- **Seditions**—creating divisions
- **Heresies**—the word means choice; strife always result in division so that choices must be made but the choices are false; believers have no choice but to continue in Christ

Galatians 5: 21: Envyings—being envious at someone else being used or blessed]

- **Murders**—by anger or act, murdering their character in speech or their body in deed
- **Drunkenness**—we have liberty in meat and drink but not drunkenness; we can also be drunk on pride, drunk on Babylon's fornication—part of which the Galatians were being bewitched into
- **Revellings**—extravagant and wild parties
- **and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.**

If a sinner is not born of the Spirit of God this is all a sinner can produce and he will not inherit the kingdom of God. If the Spirit of God is in us then we know and confess this is our sin-nature. And we are guilty of these works of the flesh in thought and some in deed.

But the Spirit of God will not allow us to do what our flesh would. He will not allow his child "fulfill" or come to the end which is death and apostacy. Believers can commit these sins. But God will chasten and cleanse us and make us repent. Sometimes the Spirit does so quickly, sometimes he lets us suffer awhile. But even if it is by fire the Lord will consume our dross so that we be not condemned with this world. This does not mean that we will ever be free from these sins in our sin-nature. But as we grow in grace and knowledge of Christ the Lord will make his child hate sin more and more and love righteousness more and more. Still, even an aged believer can commit these sins. Sadly, these sins are too prevalent among the saints.

Also, notice, the kingdom of God is an *inheritance freely given*. An unregenerate sinner may do none of these sins outwardly but he is a sinner in nature. The kingdom of God is not earned. Though a sinner may do none of these outwardly or even though a believer may do none of these outwardly, it does not earn the kingdom. The kingdom of God is an inheritance

freely given of our heavenly Father to those the Father chose, Christ redeemed and the Spirit sanctifies.

Next is the fruit of the Spirit. Notice it is fruit. It is not works which we produce. It is fruit the Spirit of God produces.

Galatians 5: 22: But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23: Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

If you are led of the Spirit you are not under the law. There is no law against the fruit of the Spirit. This began by the hearing of faith by Christ ministering the Spirit creating a new man and fruit. It continues the same way.

Galatians 5: 24: And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

On the cross we were crucified with Christ. But the word "have crucified" is a present tense word. It means by the Spirit, we continually crucify the flesh with the affections and the lusts. As Paul stated earlier this warfare will continue until the day we die. The Spirit of God keeps us minding the things of the spirit, setting our affection on Christ, thus we are enabled to crucify the affections and lusts of the flesh.

With the biting and devouring at Galatia few heard this and applied it to themselves. When they heard of those sins they were applying them to those they were biting and devouring. In that state we think ourselves spiritual. Paul says here is their chance to prove they are spiritual.

Galatians 5: 25: If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

Let us hear Christ in the gospel, look to Christ by faith, and being led of the Spirit let us continue walking in the Spirit in the fruit of the Spirit.

Galatians 5: 26: Let us not be desirous of vain glory—that is what the Pharisee's were seeking by constraining the Galatians. Paul told the Philippians let nothing be done through strife or vain glory but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

- **Let us not be...provoking one another**—stirring up the sin-nature in each other using the letter of the word in our flesh to bite, accuse and excuse]
- **Let us not be...envying one another**—that is what all their biting and devouring was, envy.

Then Paul says concerning the brethren who were offending them by their sin—instead of biting and devouring them,

Galatians 6: 1: Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. 2: Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. 3: For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself. 4: But let every man prove [examine, test and do] his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. 5 For every man shall bear his own burden.

Amen!

