

“Walking by the Spirit”
Galatians 5:24-26
(Preached at Trinity, July 21, 2013)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. In **Verses 19-23** Paul describes the great contrast between the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit. The works of the flesh describe those who are under the Law. They are condemned by the Law and have no way to fulfill its demands. Their life is characterized by lawlessness. Unredeemed flesh has no desire to follow the way of God.
2. But the Christian is of a different sort. Jesus Christ has set us free from the Law. We are no longer condemned by the Law. We are no longer governed by the flesh but now we walk by the Spirit. Paul described this wonderful transformation of grace in Romans 8 **Romans 8:1-8 NAU** - "Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. ³ For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. ⁵ For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, ⁷ because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able *to do so*, ⁸ and those who are in the flesh cannot please God."
3. The Christian no longer lives by the flesh but by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit who dwells in us manifests holiness in our lives. Paul calls this the fruit of the Spirit. Fruitfulness describes productivity, bounty, plenty – the Holy Spirit fills us with the richness of His Divine influence in our lives.
4. Then why do we still sin? Paul described a conflict within us. Although we have been saved and delivered from the bondage of sin our flesh has not yet been annihilated. There is a struggle within us—a struggle between our flesh and the Holy Spirit.
Galatians 5:17 NAU - "For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please."
5. How are we to manifest the wonderful fruitfulness of the Holy Spirit?
Paul puts it in simple terms:
Galatians 5:16 NAU - " But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh."
Galatians 5:25 NAU - "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit."

I. What does it mean to walk by the Spirit?

A. Why does Paul say “walk” by the Spirit and not “live” by the Spirit or “seek” the Spirit?

1. I think Paul is using the imagery of Israel’s deliverance from Egypt where they had been in slaves for over 400 years. In **Chapter 4:7** Paul wrote: "Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God."
2. This is what Paul told the Church of Corinth – Israel’s deliverance and journey through the wilderness should serve as an example for us.
1 Corinthians 10:1-6 NAU - "For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; ² and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; ³ and all ate the same spiritual food; ⁴ and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ. ⁵ Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness. ⁶ Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved."
3. In Egypt Israel had no freedom. They were under the cruel bondage of the Egyptian taskmasters who made impossible demands upon them. They had strict quotas for bricks but did not supply them what was necessary to meet the quotas. Such was our condition under the Law. The Law makes demands but provides no means for fulfilling the demands.
4. Israel was set free from their bondage in Egypt and they were placed on a journey in the wilderness of Sinai. God led them on their journey by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.
5. We were bound by the Law but we are no longer slaves; we have been delivered from our bondage.
Just as Israel traveled through the wilderness by God’s leading—we too must follow the Spirit as we progress through this life.
6. We are also on a pilgrimage, not to an earthly piece of real estate but to heavenly Zion. Our journey must be directed by the Holy Spirit. Paul describes this as “walking in the Spirit.” To walk in the Spirit is to be led by the Spirit, to discern His will and follow His guidance. It means to live in submission to Him.

B. Just like Israel sometimes followed the sinful lusts of their flesh so also we are enticed to follow the desires of the flesh

1. Sometimes we succumb to anger, or jealousy, or envy, or covetousness
2. Sometimes we are tempted to murmur and complain
3. Paul gives us a marvelous promise
Galatians 5:16 NAU - "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh."
4. Then Paul states the matter again:
Galatians 5:25 NAU - "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit."
5. Paul says that we avoid the works of the flesh by walking by the Spirit. He also says that we will manifest the fruit of holiness by walking by the Spirit. But what does it mean to walk by the Spirit?

II. Walking by the Spirit is a willingness to be led by the Spirit

A. The children of Israel often denied the leadership of God

1. They failed to trust His rich provision
2. They failed to trust His gracious protection
3. They even denied His right of undivided worship
4. We too sometimes fail to give God our undivided allegiance.
5. Walking by the Spirit is a willingness to be led by Him in everything. It is a life of absolute submission.
It isn't the Spirit that leads us to the never-ending pursuit of pleasure and material possessions.
It isn't the Spirit that draws us to selfishness without regard for others
It isn't the Spirit that leads us to anger, envy and jealousy

B. There is a higher class of objects that have captivated the thoughts of those who walk after the Spirit

1. They are referred to in Scripture as the "things of God" and the "things of the Spirit"
Romans 8:5 NAU - "For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit."
2. These things cannot be appreciated by the lost man. He has no interest in them. He is uninterested in the things of God. He is only interested in the things of the flesh.
He is uninterested in worship, preaching, the Bible, prayer, service to Christ – He cares not for the prosperity of the church, evangelism, missions.
3. It's like a beautiful piece of art. Although the uncultivated man can look upon it with his physical eye he has no perception of its aesthetic excellence. He will have no delight in it.
The lost man may have an intellectual knowledge of the "things of God" but he will not delight in them. He will be bored with them.
4. The Christian no longer lives according to this world. He now lives above this world
Matthew Henry – "Regenerating grace creates a new world in the soul; all things are new."
5. "Old things have passed away"
Our opinions have changed – they are shaped by God's Word
Our plans have changed – What are your plans? Do you seek God's will?
Our desires and affections have changed – What does your heart long for?
Our views of truth have changed – absolute, unchanging

C. Paul also describes it as being filled with the Holy Spirit

1. The NT uses the word "filled" to describe the total influence of something in our lives
Acts 13:45 NAS - "But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy, and *began* contradicting the things spoken by Paul, and were blaspheming."

Acts 19:28-29 NAU - "When they heard *this* and were filled with rage, they *began* crying out, saying, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" ²⁹ The city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed with one accord into the theater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia."

Romans 1:28-29 NAU - "And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, ²⁹ being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; *they are* gossips"

2. The Christian has the duty of being filled with the Holy Spirit—to be under His absolute influence and control.
 - a. This is both a human duty and a sovereign work of God
Listen to Paul in Ephesians 5
Ephesians 5:18 NAS - "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit"
 - b. The word is a present passive imperative
It is present telling us that it is an ongoing work
It is passive telling us that it is a work taking place outside ourselves—we are being filled.
But it is also an imperative making it a command – “be filled”
3. This is a command to submit to the Holy desires of the Holy Spirit. When we submit to Him He manifests the fruit of His powerful presence upon our lives. We are filled with love, joy, peace, etc.
4. This submission to the Holy Spirit is at the heart of Romans 12
Romans 12:1 NAU - "Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship."

C. How does this work out practically?

1. Your children have tried and tested your patience to the max and you have every right to be angry, yet you respond with patience.
 - a. This is the work of the Holy Spirit in you producing the fruit of righteousness.
 - b. You deny your desire to respond in anger and instead rely on the power of the Holy Spirit in you. You deny yourself and follow Christ. You present yourself as a living sacrifice.
2. You come home tired from work and you want to just sit down and have some quiet time in front of the TV. Yet you rise up to invest yourself with your children and spend time with your wife. You deny yourself and follow Christ presenting yourself as a living sacrifice.
3. This works itself out in countless ways each day.
 - a. The conditions at your office are stressful and your co-workers are continually complaining.
 - b. You are tempted to join them, yet you respond with contentment and joy.

4. And when you fail—when you respond in anger, when you lose your patience you find the grace of the Gospel rich as God looks upon your weakness with pity. Rather than returning to the Law you look to the grace of the Gospel.
5. This is walking by the Spirit

III. The person walking by the Spirit will be dominated by a love for Christ – He will glory in the person of Christ

A. The Holy Spirit always points us to Christ.

1. Love is a fruit of the Spirit that finds its greatest manifestation in our love for Christ
2. The lost man despises Christ – His person, His rule, His kingdom, His people. He may pretend to be merely indifferent towards God, but his indifference is great wickedness and rebellion.
Romans 1:21 NAU - "For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened."
3. The lost man may become religious. He may join a church. He may advance in leadership at the church. But he will not love Christ and he will not submit to the demands of Christ.
John 14:15 - "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments."
4. The Christian sees Jesus as most excellent, the greatest of treasures.
 - a. The Holy Spirit always points us to Christ – We find His teachings excellent, we find His person excellent.
 - b. Jesus Christ has a spiritual beauty that can only be beheld by those who have been transformed. Only the redeemed truly know of His excellence.
5. He is altogether lovely. We adore Him. We savor every aspect of His perfect divine person
The man who walks after the Spirit has an appetite for Christ.
Paul wrote in **Philippians 3:8** - "Yea doubtless, and I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ,
6. Salvation is not chiefly about forgiveness or being delivered from the penalty of sin. Salvation is chiefly about being brought to fellowship with Christ
Calvin – "The whole purpose of the Gospel is that Christ be made ours, and that we be engrafted into His body."

B. Walking in the Spirit is having our minds conformed to Christ. It is having Christ as our chief desire.

1. As I've stated before, the Christian life is a conflict of desires
2. Before we are saved we have one desire – to satisfy our flesh. Sin brings the flesh pleasure and so becomes its greatest desire.
3. The Christian still battles against the flesh but by grace we have a new desire.
4. Christ has become our greatest desire. He has become most precious in our sight. He has captivated our heart.

5. The desires of the flesh are still there but our love for Christ exceeds all else. Our obedience is motivated by Christ
6. The Christian life is simply following the one we love. It is applying ourselves that we might delight more and more in Christ.

Conclusion:

1. This is what it means to walk by the Spirit. We follow the leadership of the Holy Spirit and He leads us nearer to Christ.
2. But such a life changes everything. In **Chapter 6** Paul will describe some of the ways.