

Walking in the Spirit (1): What is it to walk in the Spirit? Victory, I will glory/Turn your eyes, 421

Having finished our consideration of Romans 13:14, I thought we would spend just a few weeks in Galatians 5:16, before returning to the book of Job. I trust it's rather obvious that these two texts are rather similar.

Though there are at least two differences: first, Romans 13:14 spoke of Christ, whereas Galatians 5:16 speaks of the Spirit. Now as we shall see, these two go together, as the Spirit is the Spirit of Christ, and Christ, indwells us by His Spirit.

Second, Romans 13:14 exhorted us not to make provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts, whereas Galatians 5:16 promises us, if we walk by the Spirit, we will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. The first is an exhortation, the second a promise.

Nevertheless, while these texts may look rather different on the surface, as we look a little deeper, they are basically saying the same thing (though with some important differences). I want to consider this text with the help of three questions (each question will be answered in a sermon). They are in overview: What is it to walk in the Spirit? How are we to walk in the Spirit? Why are we to walk in the Spirit?

I. What is it to walk in the Spirit?

1. Before I attempt an answer to this question, I need to begin with a few brief clarifications about the Spirit.
2. (a) He is THE Spirit—when Paul tells us to "walk in the Spirit" he's referring to the third person of the Trinity.
3. While God is Spirit, with regards to His nature or essence, the third person is uniquely called the Spirit.
4. This has to do with the eternal and internal relations of the three persons—the Father is the Father because He begets the Son; the Son is the Son because He is begotten of the Father; the Spirit is the Spirit (breathes) because He proceeds from the Father and Son.
5. As a result, while the Father, Son, and Spirit are all Spirit, neither the Father or the Son are THE Spirit.
6. (b) He is the HOLY Spirit—the Spirit is often called Holy not because He's more holy than the Father or Son.
7. But He's called the Holy Spirit because it's His direct task to create holiness within the hearts of God's people.
8. Thus, while every work of God is a joint-work of the Trinity, there are specific works attributed to each person.
9. And it's the work of sanctification that is uniquely attributed to the second person of the Trinity—the Holy Spirit.
10. (c) He is the Spirit OF CHRIST—He's called the Spirit of Christ because He points us to Christ as revealed in Scripture.
11. Jn.16:14—"He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare *it* to you"—He will reveal Christ in and through the Spirit.
12. Thus, with these thoughts in mind, I want to briefly point out by "walk" is meant "live"—live your entire life in the Spirit.
13. Everything you do—every area of your life—every moment of your life—you are to walk in the Spirit.
14. Our lives are often described as a walk, as we are on a journey, through this world, to the promise land.

15. We are to walk with God, carefully, obediently, joyfully, and humbly, as we walk in or after the Spirit.
 16. Now, if you have an outline you will notice I provide a fivefold answer to the question: What is it to walk in the Spirit?
 17. But you will also notice these five things are closely related (and together comprise what walking in the Spirit entails).
 18. In fact, they are really the same thing viewed from a slightly different perspective (a different viewpoint).
 19. And so, there will be obvious overlap between these five points, as they together comprise what walking in the Spirit includes.
- A. It is to walk dependent upon the Spirit
1. I trust this is rather obvious—to walk in the Spirit is to walk dependent upon the Spirit and not ourselves.
 2. Those who walk in the Spirit realize two things: first, they are weak in themselves; second, they live in enemy territory.
 3. Prov.3:5—"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."
 4. A proud and self-sufficient person is a fleshly person, and knows nothing of walking in (by) the Spirit.
 5. Thus, to walk in the Spirit means, we live every second of our lives, in dependance upon His assistance.
 6. We were reminded in the previous hour, that Christians are dependent upon "an actual influence of the Spirit, to work in them to will and to do of His good pleasure."
 7. Just as to walk in the flesh is to walk in self-dependance, to walk in the Spirit is to walk in Spirit-dependance.
- B. It is to walk empowered by the Spirit
1. That is, to walk in the Spirit is to receive from supplies of strength and vigor through the ministry of the Spirit.
 2. Gal.5:25—"If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit"—to live in the Spirit means we live because of the Spirit.
 3. We live by the Spirit—He raised our dead souls from a spiritual grave—He breathed spiritual life into us.
 4. Put another way—the Holy Spirit is the cause of our new birth or our spiritual life—we live by the Spirit.
 5. And so, because we live by (because) of the Spirit we are to walk in (by) the Spirit—the same Spirit that gave us spiritual life to begin with, is the same Spirit that gives us life continually.
 6. Jn.6:63—"It is the Spirit who gives life"—the Spirit gives life initially, and the Spirit gives life ongoingly.
 7. Thus, to walk in the Spirit is to look to the Spirit for grace and strength to resist the lusts of the flesh.
 8. Rom.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."
 9. But the question might here be asked—How does the Spirit gives us live—both initially and continually?
 10. Well, He does this as He unites us to Christ—spiritual life is only found in Christ—yes, it's given by the Spirit, but He gives it by uniting us to Christ.

11. Eph.3:16—"For this reason I pray that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man."
12. This is a beautiful Trinitarian prayer—he prayed that the Father would give them grace, from Christ, through the Spirit.
13. This is what it means to walk in the Spirit—it's to be strengthened with grace from Christ, by the Spirit.
14. Thus, to walk in the Spirit is to walk by the power of the Spirit, which is derived from Christ by faith.
15. If the Spirit gave you spiritual life to begin with, then only the Spirit can give you spiritual life continually.
16. Notice how Paul puts it—"I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh."
17. While we have to walk in the Spirit, we nevertheless have to walk—we walk (or live) by the Holy Spirit.
18. Gal.2:20—"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."
19. The old me is dead and a new man has been raised in his place—Christ lives in this new man by His Spirit, enabling me to live or walk by faith.

C. It is to walk submissive to the Spirit

1. The flesh and Spirit are opposing and competing principles or powers within the heart of every Christian.
2. Gal.5:17—"For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another."
3. Thus, the flesh makes evil suggestions to us and the Spirit makes holy suggestions—each presents desires.
4. These desires are contrary to one another, and Christians have to resist the one and comply with the other.
5. Rom.8:1—"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit."
6. To walk according to the flesh or according to the Spirit, means to after the flesh or Spirit—to follow the flesh or Spirit.
7. Those who are not Christian follow the desires of the flesh, and those who are Christian follow the desires of the Spirit.
8. This of course must be understood to be generally true, as no Christian perfectly walks after the Spirit.
9. But generally speaking, Christians follow the desires and suggestions of the Spirit as a pattern of life.
10. Now, the older writers refer to the desires and nudgings of the Spirit as His motions or at times suggestions.
11. By this they meant—the inward impressions of the Spirit to move us to reject sin and comply with righteousness.
12. They got the term motions from such text as Judges 13:25—"And the Spirit of the LORD began to move Samson at times."
13. The Spirit moved within him, moving and nudging him to reject the lusts of the flesh and walk in the ways of truth.

14. Now, here we have to be careful, as we are dealing with things that are subjective and easily distorted.
15. We've all heard Christians say—I believe God is telling me to do something based upon inward feelings.
16. And oftentimes, what the Spirit is supposedly telling them to do, runs contrary to the holy Word of God.
17. And that's why it's always necessary to tie the motions and nudgings of the Spirit to the holy word of God.
18. The Spirit nudges us to reject the lusts of the flesh, and He moves us to obey His motions to obey God.
19. This is in contrast to those in the flesh, who always comply with the flesh and always resist the Spirit.
20. Acts 7:51—"You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers *did*, so *do* you."
21. These are the words of Stephen to the Jews—they always resisted the holy motions of the Holy Spirit.
22. Now, brethren, I'm well aware there is a work of the Spirit that cannot be resisted (we call it irresistible grace).
23. But this was never intended to deny, that natural man always resists the common motions of the Spirit.
24. Furthermore, this doesn't deny that Christians themselves, oftentimes, resist the motions of the Spirit.
25. This is the reason behind the warnings not to quench or grieve the Holy Spirit—this happens when we resist Him.
26. Thus, the question becomes—how are we to discern the holy motions, nudgings, or suggestions of the Holy Spirit?
27. (1) The Spirit works upon our spirit—that is, the Holy Spirit always works within us as rational creatures.
28. The Holy Spirit no longer speaks to us with an audible voice, but works in and through our own minds.
29. The Spirit works in us both to will and to do according to His good pleasure—His desires become our desires.
30. For example, having you ever been praying for someone, when you become burdened for someone else.
31. Personally, I typically have times in my own prayers, when I don't say anything but merely wait on God.
32. And as I do, I become burdened for specific things and specific people—these are the nudgings of the Spirit.
33. Perhaps it's a specific area in my life that needs addressing, or else some sin I committed the previous day needs repenting of.
34. (2) The Spirit works through the word—that is, the Spirit works in connection to the word read or heard.
35. We have to remember brethren, although the Spirit no longer gives additional revelation, He still speaks today through His word.
36. It's for this reason, our Savior ended each letter to the 7 churches with the phrase—"he who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

D. It is to walk directed by the Spirit

1. Notice, what Paul calls "walking in the Spirit" (v16) he describes as being "led by the Spirit" (v18)—"But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law."
2. An evidence of not being under the law, is being Spirit led—by nature we are under the law and by grace we are under grace.
3. I mentioned this last Wednesday, Christians are no longer under the law as a broken covenant of works.
4. It no longer condemns them as Christ bore its curse, and it no longer commands them without giving grace.
5. But the Spirit is given to us in order to led and direct us in the paths of righteousness as found in God's law.
6. Ezek.36:27—"I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them."
7. The Holy Spirit always leads us in and through the holy Scriptures—He enables us to walk in the word.
8. Thus, to walk in the Spirit and to walk in the word are one and the same things—"Blessed *are* the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD" (Ps.119:1)!
9. Ps.119:35—"Make me walk in the path of Your commandments, for I delight in it"—that is, by Your Spirit.
10. Micah 4:2—"Many nations shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.' For out of Zion the law shall go forth, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem."
11. Thomas Jacomb—"The Spirit guides, but it is by and in the word, and the guidance of the word is the guidance of the Spirit. He that squares his life by the counsels, commands, prohibitions of the word, he truly walks after the Spirit."
12. Many commentators see within Galatians 5, a reference to the OT, and the Spirit leading Israel through the wilderness (Isa.63:11-13; Neh.9:19-20).
13. They were first liberated from Egypt and then led through the wilderness, and so too, Paul describes the Galatians as liberated (v1), and then led by the Spirit (v19).
14. In fact, the similarities go beyond these, for just as the OC people of God were tempted to return to Egypt, so the Galatians were being tempted to return to the Mosaic Law.
15. Now, the leading of the nation in the OT was unique, in that it concerned a nation that was largely unsaved (it was illustrated in the pillar of fire by night and pillar of cloud by day).
16. This of course is very different from the Spirit's leading of the church, that is a saved and sanctified nation.
17. Thus, we learn that God doesn't liberate us from spiritual Egypt merely to leave us to wonder in the wilderness.
18. (1) The difficulty of the journey—the wilderness (this evil world) is a dangerous place, filled with powerful enemies.
19. (2) The distance of the journey—the distance between Egypt and our Promised Land (the new heavens and earth) is very great.

E. It is to walk mindful of the Spirit

1. This fifth point is really a summary of the other four—that is, to walk mindful of the Spirit is to walk dependent upon Him, empowered by Him, obedient to Him, and directed by Him.
2. Perhaps I can best summarize what I mean under this fifth point by changing the preposition "in" to "with."
3. To walk in the Spirit is to walk with the Spirit—it is to walk within the realm and delight of the Spirit.

4. Those who walk in the flesh, love and delight in the flesh, likewise, those who walk in the Spirit, love and delight in the Spirit.
5. James Buchanan—"Walking in the Spirit consists in maintaining a spiritual frame of mind, by having our thoughts much engaged with spiritual truth, and our affections set on spiritual objects, and all our faculties employed in spiritual services."
6. Rom.8:5—"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, the things of the Spirit."
7. Those who live after the flesh have a fleshly mind—it thinks about and delights in fleshly (carnal) things.
8. In contrast to this, those who live after the Spirit, set their minds on the things of the Spirit (spiritual things).
9. Thus, by "the things of the Spirit" is meant God, the person and work of Christ, and heaven, all that's revealed by the Spirit through Scripture.
10. Those who live after the flesh don't mind these things—they might think of them but they don't relish in them.
11. Thus, those who walk in the Spirit walk dependent upon the Spirit, are empowered by the Spirit, are obedient to the Spirit, are directed by the Spirit, and are mindful of the Spirit.
12. Again, I don't mean to suggest there's a great difference between each of these, but taken together, they comprise what walking in the Spirit entails.
13. Warning 1—Beware of neglecting the ministry of the Spirit—this is especially a temptation for Reformed Christians (who rightly stress the Holy Scriptures).
14. Let me simply say in passing, the accusation that Reformed Christians neglect the Spirit simply isn't true.
15. John Calvin, called the Theologian of the Spirit by B.B. Warfield, gave over 1/2 of his Institutes to the application of salvation by the Spirit.
16. And the Puritans wrote dozens of volumes on the person and ministry of the Spirit (Owen volumes 3-4).
17. But nevertheless, it's possible for us to neglect these things for fear of falling prey to contemporary perversions.
18. We must never give credence to the general false accusation, that Reformed Christians are afraid of the Spirit.
19. Now, we need the Holy Spirit every day, hour, minute, and second, to empower and direct us through this world.
20. Warning 2—Beware of divorcing the Spirit from the word—while the Spirit Himself ministers within us, He never acts contrary to His word, and He ordinarily works in connection with His word.
21. The Spirit speaks to us, strengthens and directs us, in and through the word—thus we need the Spirit and the word.
22. Brethren, to put it rather plainly—every person who walks in the Spirit, walks within the word of God.
23. Warning 3—Beware of divorcing the Spirit from Christ—remember, the Spirit is the Spirit of Christ.
24. It's His task to lead us to Christ in whom we find grace and strength—it's His task to make Christ known.
25. And thus, those who walk in the Spirit, not only walk in the word, but they walk with their beloved Savior.