

“Galatians 5:16-18”

“Walk In The Spirit”

Christian liberty has no *grounds* in the arena of *license*, but it *abounds* in the arena of *love*. Freedom in Christ isn't a freedom to *sin* but rather a freedom to *serve*. Sin centers in self, service centers in others. The flesh wants to gratify self; God's love wants to give to others. So Paul says in Vs 13 of Ch 5 of the book of Galatians (read)...

We're not to use God's grace, & the freedom that He's given us as a smokescreen to fulfill whatever whims & selfish desires we may have. The bible is clear that when we received J.C. that's the day we died to sin. Paul told the Romans, *“...knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.”*¹ So then as he asked earlier in the chapter, *“How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?”*² So the liberty we've been given isn't in relationship to sin or any license therein, but rather it's related to *love*; & love looks beyond self to serve & meet the needs of others.

We have to remember that the Galatians were up against a particular perspective that said, “Grace & liberty are a bad combination. Teach someone that & they'll be out doing any & every ungodly evil that they can conceive! We need the law to keep boundaries on these people!” & Paul is saying, “No, you don't understand. Liberty isn't exercised w/in the context of *license* & *sin*, but w/in the context of *love* & *service*. The love of God in a person's life will demonstrate itself in serving & elevating others above self.”

He says that all of the law is fulfilled even in this simple principle, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” You do that, & you'll never lie about someone, speak evil of someone, you'll never steal from anyone or do anything that will in anyway harm them, because that's the way you'd look to take care of yourself.

But (Vs 15), if you bite & devour one another, if you allow yourself to become self absorbed & only concerned w/your own little world & so you begin to nitpick one another...beware, it'll become a feeding frenzy. You'll become consumed by one another, turned inward on each other when there's a whole generation out there headed for hell who are w/out hope being w/out God in the world. We're to be a light in this dark world, seeking to get the gospel out to the lost, not focused on ourselves, but through love serving one another.

¹ The New King James Version. (1982). [Ro 6:6]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² The New King James Version. (1982). [Ro 6:2]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Ok, great. Sounds good, right? How are we to pull this off? What's the key to navigating this course of love rather than gravitating toward the flesh, focusing on myself?

Vs 16-18

In other words, legal pressure on the *outside* won't change you, but a loving Person on the *inside* will.

When it comes to our exercise of liberty in Christ, the key isn't to *suppress the flesh*, but to *surrender to the Spirit*. Legalism & asceticism are intricately woven together. "You've got to deal w/the flesh through ritual, or pain, somehow suffering to gain victory or control." But what Paul is saying is, "Hey, there's a much better solution, don't worry about the flesh, just walk in the Spirit.

So we want to take some time & develop this principle of what it means to "walk in the Spirit." I think 1st of all we need to acknowledge that the word "walk" speaks of personal involvement. If you're walking you're not spectating, you're participating. **To "walk" speaks of movement, a forward progression; we're talking about going forward, moving into maturity in our life in Christ, our relationship w/God. If you & I are going to go forward w/God, if we're to mature in sanctification, it will involve our participation.**

Sometimes we hear this phrase, "Let go & let God" & if we're not careful that can be misinterpreted... If by "let go & let God" you mean you're putting aside your own resources, you're laying aside your own will, surrendering your agenda & submitting your life to God's will, God's plan & God's purpose for your life, than you're right on the money (biblically speaking). **If however when you say, "You're letting go & letting God" what you mean is that you're just going to put things on "spiritual cruise control" & let God do His thing; when He wants & how He wants, than you're off the mark. Why? Because God's method of bringing maturity in His people has always involved them partnering w/Him in the process.** He works in & through "willing vessels", the Holy Spirit will take the initiative, He'll do the leading, but we have to do the walking. He's not going to force us to go His way... We have to yield ourselves to His direction/correction & control.

So we're to "walk in the Spirit", that is, lead our lives after the Spirit. The exhortation is really lead our lives in the fullness for which we were created. Man was created by God, to live in fellowship w/God. God is a superior trinity we're an inferior trinity. The superior Trinity being made up of the Father, the Son & the Holy Spirit, the inferior being the spirit, soul, & body of man. It's in in the realm of the spirit that we meet with & have fellowship w/God. That's where we meet together.

Jesus said, *"God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."*³ Paul said, *"The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,"*⁴

However on the day Adam sinned his spirit died just as God said it would. Now the fellowship was broken, there was a separation through sin & God wouldn't fellowship w/man dominated by His flesh. (Which is exactly what the sin led to [fleshly domination]). Eve saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. (The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye & the pride of life, they gave themselves over to their fleshly appetites). So now (their spirit having died) their minds no longer sought to fulfill the desire of the Spirit, but were absorbed w/the body appetites & the lusts (or passions) of the flesh... God never intended for man to live that way, because God is Spirit & we meet w/God in the Spirit however now there was alienation, there was separation (Adam, where are you?) there was a breach in the relationship.

But God so loved the world that in the fullness of time He sent forth His Son. To die for man's sin, so that He might bring restoration/reconciliation where previously there was separation. So that when you (when I) receive J.C. as my Savior, there is a work of God that takes place in my heart, a spiritual rebirth & am now "born again" as by the Spirit of God. That's what Jesus was talking about when He told Nicodemus (Jn 3) that unless a man is born again he will by no means enter the kingdom of God. It's the process through which we are made alive together in Christ though previously we were dead in sins & trespasses (Eph2, Col 2:13). Physically? No, spiritually.

Now... try & explain that process to an unbeliever, the things that have happened to you having given your life to Christ & you'll drive yourself crazy ☺. To them you're talking nonsense though to you it seems so plain. That's what Paul was talking about when He said, *"But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."*⁵ However for you, things that were once a mystery are so clearly evident, it's the work of the Holy Spirit in your life. (You who were once dead, He has made you alive) Now that your spirit is alive you can have fellowship w/God once again, so *walk* in the Spirit, walk in intimacy w/God.

³ The New King James Version. (1982). [Jn 4:24]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴ The New King James Version. (1982). [Ro 8:16]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁵ The New King James Version. (1982). [1 Co 2:14]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Now; in short, what does it look like to “Walk in the Spirit”? Well, we’ll see some specific fingerprints mentioned next time. However, for now suffice it to say that the one who is walking *in* the Spirit (being led *of* the Spirit) will live a life that looks a lot like Jesus. After all, didn’t Jesus tell us that the ministry of the Holy Spirit would be to promote, magnify & speak of Him? In Jn 14 Jesus told us that the Spirit would lead us in the truth, that He would teach us His word & in Jn 15 He told us that the Spirit would testify of Him. So, the one walking in the Spirit will testify to the truth, have the testimony of God’s Word & will glorify & magnify Jesus. The Spirit governs us & guides us in the path & nature of Jesus.

Let me say this as well. Don’t envision the Holy Spirit as a “Divine Influence”; He’s a divine Person, no different from the Father or the Son. One has said, “What God the Father planned for you, and God the Son purchased for you on the cross, God the Spirit personalizes for you and applies to your life as you yield to Him.”

That’s why Paul can say so categorically, “Walk in the Spirit & *you shall not* fulfill the lust (or passion) of the flesh.” Now the power of the flesh has been broken through the cross of J.C., you don’t have to obey it, but as long as we live in these bodies (#onemorereasonwecantwaitforourresurrectionbody) that old nature is constantly attempting to control you even as it did prior to you being born again (that’s Vs 17).

But before Paul presents the dilemma, he gives us the solution. Don’t suppress the flesh, surrender to the Spirit. That’s where our personal choice comes in isn’t it? Before you came to Christ you didn’t have a sin problem, you *wanted* to sin, it was no problem 😊. However now that you’ve been made alive to God in Christ, you don’t want to sin anymore. You want to lead a life pleasing to God, but your flesh still wants to be gratified. So the temptation arises; as to where before you just went ahead & entered into sin, now the Holy Spirit says, “Hey, why do this & bring a breach in your relationship w/God & other people? How about you follow *My* lead rather than do what you want?” It’s at that point we have a choice. Now, should you choose to walk in sin, than you can do that & reap the consequences accordingly. However, should you choose to surrender to the Spirit He will lead you in victory over that area of sin.

When Paul says, “you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh” he actually uses a double negative, like “you cannot not fulfill...” now as to where in English, the double negative makes a positive, in the Greek it only strengthens the negation.

He's saying that it's impossible for you to gratify your flesh if you walk in the Spirit. Because the Spirit won't lead you that way, the Holy Spirit will never lead you to compromise your marriage, or to get drunk, or to lie (you get the idea). **He will lead you in the path & in the nature of Christ. He will *not* fulfill the evil impulses of the fallen nature. (Be they pride, hatred, covetousness, jealousy, envy, any # of ungodly inclinations that spring up from our fallen nature). But the struggle is real, isn't it? Look at Vs 17 (read).**

Now the word "lusts" carries a different cultural connotation to us today. This could read, "The flesh *wars* against the Spirit & the Spirit *wars* against the flesh." They stand at opposite ends of the spectrum & are both equally opposed one to the other.

Now that you've been born again there's a war going on in you & you're caught in the middle. You see this illustrated in cartoons don't you? (The little angel on one shoulder, a little devil on the other & you're being torn between the two☺). & The flesh is seeking to get you to do it's bidding nonstop. So you make the choice, you surrender to the Spirit, you have victory, but then here it comes again... & This choice to walk in, live after the Spirit has to be made daily, & even many times throughout the course of that day. Because even though you made the choice & gained the victory 10 minutes ago, doesn't mean you'll make that same choice *now*. That's why Paul says, "So that you do not do what you wish." You want to do the right thing in your heart, but you failed. Jesus said that like this, **"The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."⁶**

Let's be clear, the Holy Spirit is not some mechanical instrument in our lives that operates automatically completely unrelated to our will. But rather He's a Divine Person who waits to be depended upon, surrendered to that we might cooperate w/Him. He is always there to give us victory but we got to be willing to just "say no" to the flesh! ☺ Now before Christ, you couldn't say "no" you were a slave to sin, you've been set free in Christ.

Let me say this as well, if you have this fight happening in you... Don't let that convince you that you're not saved; it's probably a good sign that you are! If the Holy Spirit wasn't in you, urging you, you wouldn't care, but you're growing in Christ, you want to do His will & it wars w/in you. So even though the Christ life is a free life, no one ever said it was an *easy* or *effortless* life...

As a matter of fact Jesus said, **"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it."**⁷

⁶ The New King James Version, (1982). (Mk 14:38). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁷ The New King James Version, (1982). (Mt 7:13-14). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

One of the things that makes this narrow path so difficult is the battle between the flesh & the Spirit. They're going 2 different directions & pulling against one another & we can either weigh in on the flesh side, or the Spirit side. **One path leads us in righteousness, the other in sinfulness. It's like the difference between a sheep & a pig, the sheep is a clean animal, avoids garbage, the pig being unclean loves to wallow in the filth. The Spirit will lead you away from the garbage, the flesh wants you wallowing in the filth.**

Vs 18

The antidote to the flesh isn't found in law, but in the Spirit. It's not found in conforming to pressures legally, but being transformed by the Person of the Holy Spirit inwardly. You guys, this is the great work of the New Covenant. God said in Jeremiah 31, **"I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people."**⁸ **How do you suppose God does that? Through etching all 613 laws of the OT on that tablet of flesh? No way, but by the Power/Person of the Holy Spirit dwelling in you He places His law of love in you.** So that now, along w/the Psalmist you echo, **"I delight to do Your will, O my God, And Your law is within my heart."**⁹

What's more effective, a person or a precept? There you are you're driving home & the speed limit sign says 45mph. That's the precept the law, how effective is that at keeping you under the legal limit? 😊 **Some do better than others but most of us fail. However when you look in your rear view mirror & you see that car coming up behind you that has w/in it a person capable of enforcing that law; well that's much more effective at keeping you w/in the realm of compliance 😊.** That's a weak yet somewhat relatable illustration that demonstrates that a person is much more effective than a precept. & That's the difference between the law on the outside & the Person of the Holy Spirit on the inside.

As believers we long to lead lives of holiness, well pleasing to God bringing glory to His name. That's not going to happen through seeking to suppress the flesh but through surrender to the Holy Spirit. "Walk in the Spirit, & you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh."

⁸ The New King James Version. (1982). [Je 31:33]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁹ The New King James Version. (1982). [Ps 40:8]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Prayer Points:

God Thank You once again for Your Word. We receive the principles & we trust in You through Your Holy Spirit to make it personal/practical in our lives. Our spirit is willing, our flesh is weak. Teach us surrender, may we not resist Your work, Your urging & Your unction in our lives, be glorified is us.

It's in the context of the Spirit that we meet & have fellowship w/God. But if you've never surrendered your heart to Christ than though your body lives, your spirit is dead in sin. But you can find life today through faith in J.C. who has loved you & given Himself for you upon the cross. The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.