

Galatians 5:16-26

Verse 16:

--Paul is continuing to exhort these Galatians believers that they are free from the law but freedom from the law does not mean they are free to put the desires of their flesh first.

--The question becomes: *How do we stay on the right path if we are free from the law but still able to use our freedom as a base of operations for the flesh?*

--Paul's answer is clear: ***Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.***

--How do we walk in the Spirit? By living each day surrendered to His desires and not the desires of the flesh!

--This was not a command for "Special" or "Holy" believers such as missionaries or pastors! Paul takes it for granted that they know the Holy Spirit in their own personal experience. *If not, they are not saved!*

--Also, to ***walk in the Spirit*** is not a mystical experience that only happens at a crisis event. Sometimes radical testimonies give us this false impression. Once we receive the Spirit of God in new birth we all face a life of daily submission to the God who knows us.

--This is a declaration of truth that is meant to exhort all true believers. Unfortunately, there is way too much emaciated Christianity that doesn't declare anything like this! We often talk as if it is a foregone conclusion that the vast majority of Christians are going to live mostly-defeated lives characterized more by flesh than Holy Spirit: never maturing, carrying the same character flaws year after year, their salt and light conspicuous by absence than taste or sight, striving only against sins that would harm their reputation, selfish, lustful, and petty, etc.

--Paul declares that God has set us free to walk in His Spirit and not be dominated by our flesh.

Verse 17:

--Does that mean Paul doesn't understand our struggle? Of course not!

--Paul knows that as the law and works are contrary to faith and grace, so the desires of the flesh are contrary to those of the Spirit. He understands conflict rages in each of us.

--He does not say: ***so that you do not do the things that you wish*** because we are always defeated in this battle. In context, Paul is still making the point that freedom from the law does not look like freedom to live for yourself. Life in God isn't a Disney movie—you cannot just follow your heart!

--We all should also know something of the battle between the Spirit and the flesh (Two natures). The Spirit will always desire what is good and the flesh will always desire what is sinful. *Christ-life Vs. Self-life*

--The conflicting desires of the Spirit and the flesh become the defining marker whether a person loves and serves themselves or loves and serves God and others.

--God knows that we cannot help that our flesh desires things—on various levels. Yet God sees the desires of the flesh in us as weakness or a disease to be cleansed and different from the willingness of the Spirit. What does this mean? It means that resistance to the flesh does not invalidate submission to the Spirit. If anything, it confirms it!

--If I don't feel like going to church (my flesh lusting comfort) but I do not obey, I am walking in the Spirit. The resistance in me manifests the reality of the contrary principle. *So I must just live miserable? No, you must live like a Christian walking in the Spirit and rejecting their flesh!*

--Even if we have the Holy Spirit we can still resist, grieve, and quench His work or influence. Still He never leaves us! *Think of it as having a godly friend with you that speaks up.*

Verse 18:

--Paul brings the law back into focus. He knows that the Spirit of God leads us on a path between the sinful desires of the flesh (**16**) and the yoke of bondage in the law (**18**). The commands to obedience in the law are not God's means of obedience through the Spirit. The emergence of fleshly desires cannot entice us to go back to the slavery of the law as the answer.

--What is the answer? Being ***led by the Spirit!*** This means being under His leadership. Think of the disciples following Jesus—they weren't always happy or agreed on what they were doing!

Verses 19-21:

--In case anyone was still confused and wondering what the flesh looks like, Paul here describes it. These are the ***works of the flesh***:

-***Adultery***: We know. *Sleep where you belong*

-***Fornication***: Greek is *porneia* which was basically all unlawful sex as known in **Leviticus 18**.

-***Uncleanness***: All impure thoughts, words, and actions.

-***Lewdness***: Shameless desire gone beyond the bounds of public decency.

-***Idolatry***: Worshiping another god or worshiping the true God as something He is not.

-***Sorcery***: Greek is *pharmakeia* and relates to magic, occult power, altered states, spirits, etc.

-***Hatred***: Animosity or enmity.

-***Contentions***: Strife and discord.

-***Jealousies***: Desiring what others possesses or enjoy.

-***Outbursts of wrath***: Flaring tempers.

-***Selfish ambitions***: Rivalry or someone who is obviously doing their own thing.

-***Dissensions***: Has the idea of *standing apart*.

-***Heresies***: Has the idea of *choosing or sectioning*.

-***Envy***: Cannot stand the prosperity or blessing of others.

-***Murders***: Violence and degradation of human life.

-***Drunkennes***: Plague in our society and the world over.

-***Revelries***: Are orgies or wild parties.

--Paul makes it clear that one cannot **practice such things** and inherit the kingdom of God. These are what we have been saved *from* not *to*. These works are the very opposite of the Holy Spirit and clear works of the flesh. This is what the flesh desires. Always has. Always will.

Verses 22-23:

--So too, Paul describes what the fruit of the Spirit looks like. Notice that Paul contrasts the actions of the flesh as **works** and that the actions of the Spirit as **fruit**. One is done and the other is grown. Each has a different source of origin and life-energy.

--Fruit is therefore the outcome of the life of God. Works are the things that we can accomplish in our own strength without the life of God.

--Fruit only grows by abiding or being rooted in the True Vine. God will never own anything as spiritual fruit that is not grown and nourished with His own life. Also, it will contain seeds to reproduce after the same kind!

--The Greek for **fruit** is a collective singular (as we would say there is *fruit* in a bowl, not *fruits*) and there are a lot of guesses as to why. I think, in context, the fruit comes from the Holy Spirit as the singular source—singularly connected to Him—as one cluster of virtues/grapes.

--God doesn't dispense these various graces to us like condiment packets that we can use or save as we see fit. The idea is, by having the Holy Spirit, I bear the fruit that He alone grows.

--Things such as:

-**Love:** Which is the chief characteristic of God, our new life, and the Spirit's fulfillment of the law. God is the One who teaches us to love.

Ephesians 5:1-2: Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

2 John 1:6: This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it.

--This Biblical love can be commanded because it is more than a feeling. It includes the mind, the will, the body, the spirit and our emotions. That is why we can be held responsible for loving or not loving. *Really we do the same with humans—think good/bad parents!*

-**Joy:** Comes from God by His Spirit. God is not shaken by circumstances and His ends are certain so we can rejoice always.

Romans 14:17: For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

-**Peace:** Is being in harmony with God and His will.

1 Corinthians 14:33: For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

-**Longsuffering:** Long term love and patience and kindness toward others who need it—those that are in process. This is how God is with us.

2 Peter 3:9: The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

-**Kindness:** Combines ideas such as gentleness and easiness of disposition and actions.

*Drummond (The Greatest Thing In The World): *"I will pass through this world but once. And good thing therefore that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any human being, let me do it now. Let me not defer it or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again."**

Ephesians 2:7: That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace and His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

-**Goodness:** Goodness has the idea of being beneficial. Since God's goodness is in Himself and uncaused by creation, it is most clearly seen and known as His desire to be beneficial toward His creation.

Psalm 119:68: You are good, and do good.

-**Faithfulness:** The word carries the idea of faith but also of loyalty toward God.

-**Gentleness:** Is mostly translated *meekness*. Which is power and authority under control. This is why it is a wonderful description of Christ. *Moses as well*

-**Self-control:** The Christian walking in the Spirit will not be out of control.

*Cumming (Through the Eternal Spirit): *"It is difficult to give an account of the order. But two things are significant: the wonderful experiences of a surrendered life come at the beginning; the mastery and subjugation of self, within and without, come last of all. Is not that the story of many a beautiful Christian life? And is there not in it a wonderful lesson for us, if we have ears to hear?"**

--Paul makes it clear that there is no law against these virtues because the law was designed for unlawful works from fleshly sin and not spiritual fruits springing up by the life of God.

Verse 24:

--We have been crucified with Christ by faith but we also crucify our own flesh in obedience to God by the power of the Holy Spirit.

--We are crucifying our flesh with its **passions and desires** (**passions** being what resides in our flesh and **desires** being their active expression). This must be chosen daily—not by a once-and-for-all miracle.

Luke 9:23: Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me."

--Our cross is the death to self we find in the path of loving obedience to God.

--And yes, the metaphor of crucifixion is used on purpose. It was meant to be shocking and ruthless. It will not always be pretty or enjoyable for us to crucify our flesh. It will hurt us and won't feel "fun" or even "spiritual" per say.

*Tozer (The Pursuit of God): *“In human experience that veil is made of living spiritual tissue; it is composed of the sentient, quivering stuff of which our whole beings consist, and to touch it is to touch us where we feel pain. To tear it away is to injure us, to hurt us and make us bleed. To say otherwise is to make the cross no cross and death no death at all. It is never fun to die. To rip through the dear and tender stuff of which life is made can never be anything but deeply painful. Yet that is what the cross did to Jesus and it is what the cross would do to every man to set him free.”**

--Yet the emphasis should never be on how hard it is for us to put our wicked flesh to death so that we can be free to walk in the Spirit and know the blessings of spiritual fruit.

--The cross was hard for Jesus! Who was already free. It was unfair to Jesus! Who didn't require: sin to be paid for, justification with God, or the hope of salvation. His cross is the emphasis. Not the cross we take up to follow Him into freedom, life, resurrection and glory.

*Fenelon (The Complete Fenelon): *“The more we are afraid to bear crosses, the more we need them. Let us not, therefore, fall into hopeless discouragement when the hand of God lays crosses heavily upon us. We should be fully aware of the magnitude of our disease by seeing the severity of the remedies that our spiritual Physician sees good to apply. Truly we must be extremely diseased, and God must be extremely merciful, since, despite our opposition, he reaches down to heal us. Surely, we should find in our very crosses a supply of love, comfort, and confidence, saying with the Apostle, “For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.” Happy are those who weep, and who, having sown in tears, will with indescribable joy reap the harvest of eternal life.*

*“I have been crucified with Christ,” says St. Paul. It is with our Savior that we are bound to the cross, and it is his grace that binds us there. It is for Jesus' sake that we would not depart from the cross, since without it we cannot have him.”**

--The cross only kills self—the outerman—and sets us free to follow Him. Even there, at the place of the cross, God does not leave us alone. Unlike Christ, we never have to be forsaken of God.

Verses 25-26:

--Paul uses a different word for **walk** here. In **16** it was the normal word for regular walking. Here the Greek word has the idea of walking *in line* or *in rank*. It is walking in proper relation to others.

--A person who walks in the Spirit will not be known by their supernatural private experience but in their evident public relationships.

--They will not:

-**Become conceited:** A conceited person has a false idea of themselves and their capabilities.

How many are greatly offended at correction or being removed from a place of service or a job!

-**Provoking one another:** Has the idea of challenging. Trying to get a rise out of people.

-**Envyng one another:** This is despising the blessing of God in another's life.

