

Intro – Please open your Bibles to Gal. 5:16-26.

Christmas Season... Will your experience of Christmas be cheap, or will it be rich? Why Christ came.... Marked by the Spirit... Just as the Father sent the Son, now the Father and Son have sent the Spirit to accomplish their will in the world.

In the first part of chapter 5, Paul encouraged us to run in our lane, neither giving into legalism, which says, "I must perform to earn God's forgiveness and grace," nor swerving off into licentiousness, which says, "Because I have received forgiveness and grace, I can do whatever I want." The way of the gospel is the way of love, and in our passage today Paul is going to reveal the secret of how it is possible to live a life of love and truly honor God through a life of worship to him. And it has everything to do with the way we walk. The first phrase sums it up. "But I say,

"Walk by the Spirit" Galatians 5:16-26

When you boil everything down, people will live their life through self-effort and self-reliance, or they will live their life by the Spirit of God. I hope you will see that. . .

The Point: The only way to live for God is by his Spirit working in you!

Look at v.16 of Gal. 5: (Read 16-26)

I. Walk by the Spirit and You Will Not Gratify the Desires of the Flesh (16-21)

- We see in verse 16 that we have a Command and a Promise: "Walk by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh."
- The apostle Paul, the great missionary who started churches in Galatia, uses the word "Walk" to describe the Christian life. He uses it to address one's everyday manner of life, how they roll, how they get down and do what they do on a daily basis. And he says, "Walk..."
- "By the Spirit." The Greek word translated "by the Spirit" is actually fronted in the original text. The emphasis is on how we walk, so the literal translation is: "By the Spirit walk."
- Seven times! in eleven verses Paul refers to the Spirit in this passage. 16 (1x), 17 (2x), 18 (1x), 22 (1x), 25 (2x).
- We often downplay or unintentionally minimize the role of the Spirit in our lives. In our folly, the Spirit is often the forgotten member of the Trinity. Consequently, we regularly miss out on the Spirit's work.
- Through the Spirit of God, we have divine power that enables us to become more like Jesus and live for God's glory.
- Four major phrases describe how the Spirit works in the believer's life. **Life in the Spirit**
 - Verse 16 says, "**Walk by the Spirit**" – Pres. Act. Imp "keep on walking" Y. K. Fung says, "To 'walk by the Spirit' means to be under the constant, moment by moment direction, control, and guidance of the Spirit."

- Verse 18 talks about being **“led by the Spirit”** Here the tense is a passive which emphasizes that it is the Spirit who the primary mover here. He leads us not like children playing follow the leader in a single file line going to recess but like a locomotive on a train. He is the source and sustaining force in our lives.
- Verse 25 tells us to **“live by the Spirit”** - He gives life. No one will enter the kingdom of God unless they are born by the Spirit. Rebirth is a requirement.
- Then in that same verse, it says, “If we live by the Spirit, let us [once again] **walk by the Spirit**” or as the NIV translates: **“keep in step with the Spirit,”** a military term is employed, meaning “to fall in line with.”
 - *Pic:* I realize that we have not had much snow yet, but we are smart enough to know it’s coming! To the chagrin of some and the joy of others. When I was a kid, and we had a snow day, that meant I got to go to basketball practice with my dad. . . .
- Paul’s, in every way possible, exhorts the Galatians to “walk by the Spirit.” And what is the big deal about that? If you do that there is a glorious promise attached, “you will not gratify (fulfill, carry out, complete) the works of the flesh.”
- He moves on in *verse 17* to explain: “For the desires of the flesh are against...”
- There is a complete, diametric opposition between the flesh and Spirit. The flesh refers to sinful desires that once ruled us before we became a Christian, and still remain in us after God saves us. The Bible sometimes calls it the old man. Theologians call it indwelling sin.
- There is no rivalry, no hostility or war between nations that compares to the enmity and opposition between the flesh and the Spirit.
- The flesh hates the desires of the Spirit and the Spirit hates the desires of the flesh. There is no hope for reconciliation and this battle is going on within us!
- The Christian life is not a game; it’s a war. The Bible has no category for casual Christianity.
- **1 Peter 2.11 “Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from the passions of your flesh which wage war against your soul.”**
- Whether you realize it or not there are bullets flying, grenades being launched, and this battle that never ends, BUT praise God for the battle! It provides evidence you in Christ.
- These verses are so critical because they teach us God is not simply concerned with our lives at a behavioral level. He looks through the behavior to the motivational level. Sin and righteousness start at the level of desire.
- Verse 17 should drive us to the cross. We carry desires contrary to God’s desire, the Spirit’s desires in us, and it should drive us crazy! What are we to do? This is what every believer wants to know. How can I deal with this wicked heart that still remains in me, that by the grace of God is not what it used to be?
- Answer: Walk by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.
- **“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.” (Romans 8:13)**
- **John Owen, “Be killing sin or sin will be killing you.”**
- The moment you cease depending on the Spirit’s leadership and power will be the moment you step into sin.

So what are the works of the flesh?

- What actions and attitudes do sinful desires produce out of us? Paul provides 15 terms to describe it. Sadly, this is not an exhaustive list and we cannot take the time to work through them one by one, but I'm going to read them slowly and I want to challenge you to examine your own holiness in each of these areas.
- They divide into four major categories:
 - *Sexuality*: sexual immorality (pornography, modesty), impurity (what do you allow in to your life on a daily basis; My wife likes a clean house. God likes a clean heart.) sensuality,
 - *False Religion*: (setting up false ways of relating to God, or god substitutes). "idolatry, sorcery",
 - *Interpersonal relationships*: "enmity, strife . . ."
 - *Wild Living*: "drunkenness and orgies" refer to drinking orgies. Paul already covered sexual sin in the first three terms. As we seek temporal pleasure in created things, our wrongly ordered desires can lead to addiction.
- And then Paul uses a final qualifier: "and things like these." Pride, Laziness, Ingratitude
- At the end of verse 21 Paul gives a significant Warning!! (and these warnings are good for believers and unbelievers to hear. "I warn...")
- If you are currently struggling in any of these ways, then I want to plead with you to turn to God. Some of you may need to turn to God for the first time. He's never been a real part of your life. You don't have his Spirit in you to conquer your destructive patterns.
- Others would say, "But what about me? There are times in my life when I really give in to my flesh and I deal with jealousy and envy and impurity and anger. Does that mean I'm not a Christian?" If you have come to the place where you have trusted in Christ, I think I John 3:7-9 is instructive... "Whoever makes a practice of sinning" is not of God.

Trans: So Paul has given us a command and a glorious promise in verses 16-21 that we should Walk by the Spirit and We Will Not Gratify our Flesh, then in verses 22-24 he tells us...

II. Walk by the Spirit and Bear Fruit for God (22-24)

- ▲ Paul establishes a contrast with the works of the flesh in verse 22: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control; against such things there is no law."
- ▲ Many Christians are satisfied with trying to abstain from the works of the flesh and they never focus on the divine life that should be flowing out of their lives on a daily basis.
- ▲ Think about it like this: we had a great time last night at our Christmas Party. The place was packed, conversation extended throughout the room. Some of our people even humbled themselves by becoming human Christmas trees. And then there was the magnificent spread on the dessert tables. Now can you imagine if our wonderful chefs and bakers of these desserts, threw all their ingredients in a bowl, stirred it up, and then brought it to the party to serve it up? Not a great idea. There is something altogether incomplete with that picture...

- ▲ You see: we can't truly put off pride unless we put on the fruit of humility. As we kill impurity and sexual immorality, we must wear the fruit of self-control.
- ▲ Notice two things about this fruit: #1) Paul calls this the "fruit" of the Spirit, not fruits. It's singular. Why is this important because it gives us the idea that all of these Christ-like characteristics should be pouring forth from our lives, which leads us to the second truth about this fruit. #2) It all emanates from the same source. It's not my fruit, Mark's fruit, Summer's fruit. It's the Spirit's fruit! He is the source. That's the only way it's happening, and that's really good, because He gets the glory!
- ▲ At the end of verse 23 it says, "against such things there is no law" There is no restriction against these Christ-like attitudes and actions. We should be incredibly liberal in our love for one another. God puts no limit on the amount of joy and goodness that should be displayed in the life of the believer.
- ▲ And don't miss the phrase in v. 23, "against such things." So is wisdom a fruit of the Spirit? Does the fruit of the Spirit include gratitude, faith, boldness, and truthful speech?
- ▲ For far too long it's as if I took a big bold bracket and insert before the word love and another one and inserted after self-control. That's ridiculous! Every good in the Christian's life comes because the Spirit of Christ lives within us.
- ▲ Paul goes on in v 24: "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified..." We belong to Christ. What the Spirit produces in us reflects Christ in us. And this is not surprising because the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ.
- ▲ During this Christmas season, as we reflect on the coming of Christ for us. God with us. Recognize that it is his Spirit now producing everything he came to bring. We know love because he first loved us. We have peace because the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6) reigns in us. We can have this joy because we delight in him as our greatest treasure. We can be kind and generous and sacrificial because Jesus exemplified all of these things and now works them in us.

Trans: The last exhortation I want to share with you tonight is found in verses 25 and 26. (Read) we've seen that if we Walk by the Spirit, we will not gratify the desires of the flesh. We've seen that we should Walk by the Spirit and Bear Fruit for God, but finally, we see must..

III. Walk By the Spirit and Live Out the Gospel (25-26).

- ▲ I want to challenge you right now to memorize verse 25. I believe one can make a case that this is the heart of Paul's message to the Galatians and I believe that one can readily build a theology of the Christian life out of this one verse. What does it say? "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit." Can you say that with me? "If.." Again.
- ▲ Do you see Paul's logic here? If the Spirit has given us life, we must continue to walk in the Spirit. The same way we came to Christ (by grace, through faith) is the same way we continue to live the Christian life. (by his grace, through faith in him).
- ▲ Becoming more like Christ through God's grace will keep us from much weariness, frustration and disappointment, because God did not design us to run on the fuel of our own strength.
- ▲ All of the Christian life is all of grace, and this truth is all over the Bible!

- **“I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5)**
- **Romans 11:36 “For from him and through Him and to Him are all things.” From him – He is the source, through him – He is the Means, To Him – He is the end, it all goes back to God in praise.**

▲ The gospel is not the ABC's; it is the A to Z.

In reflecting on verses 16-26 the million dollar question is: How do we walk by the Spirit on a daily basis? In our text Paul does not give us a specific formula, but I believe we can apply three Scriptural principles to help us walk by the Spirit:

1) Pray for the Spirit to do his work in your life daily.

- **“If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” (Luke 11:13)**

2) Fill your mind with God's Spirit inspired Word.

- **“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)**
- [Fire – Logs of Truth...]

3) Consistently evaluate whether you are displaying the Spirit's fruit.

- **Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. (2 Corinthians 13:5)**
- Live in community. Open yourself up to accountability. Look in the mirror of your life on a regular basis and measure it against Jesus. He will graciously change you into his image.

Here's what we're going to do. Micah and the team is going to come up. I'm going to pray for us, and then we're going to sing a song that is really a prayer to God. It is a prayer confessing our need for God. Let's make it the cry of our heart today.

Pray!!