

Lesson 22 – Galatians 5:16-25

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Review

The main point of Galatians is that salvation is NOT by good works, moral living, religious ritual or observance, heredity, or organizational membership, but by **grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone!!!** Salvation results in freedom; freedom from sin and freedom to live in a way that glorifies God.

Paul is writing to the Galatian churches who are in danger of abandoning justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. He is correcting the heresy of the Judaizers who are disturbing the Galatians with a different, distorted gospel or Christ plus legalism, which is really not another gospel since there is only one gospel of Christ.

In chapters 1 and 2, Paul defended the true gospel by showing that he had received the gospel (God) through revelation and demonstrated that the true gospel has the power to change lives (persecutor/murderer to preacher; slave of sin to slave of Christ). That same authentication is true for the follower of Christ today.

In chapters 3 and 4, Paul defended justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. He showed the things that the Law cannot do compared to justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

Now in Chapters 5 and 6, having nailed down his argument for freedom in Christ through justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, Paul looks to the practical application of that freedom.

Today we will look at how it is possible to consistently walk in a way that glorifies God – walking in the Spirit.

Practical Application of Justification – Walking in the Spirit (5:16-26)

1. The remedy for sin (5:16-18)

¹⁶But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. ¹⁷For 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. ¹⁸But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. (NASB95)

¹⁶But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

¹⁸But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. (ESV)

Last week we saw that serving one another through love is the constraint on Christian freedom – an unconditional, sacrificial commitment to the total service of another as a lifestyle. How could we possibly do that in our own strength? Obviously, we cannot.

That kind of love goes against our natural inclinations. In order to act in love, we need to live in the power of the Spirit enabling God glorifying attitudes, decisions, and actions. Paul makes it clear that 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. Therefore, we must walk by the Spirit, and not carry out the desire of the flesh. We need the filling of the Spirit to enable that walk.

Living a consistently God glorifying life is only possible through Spirit-filling. The Christian life is not lived in one's own strength. It is a life lived filled by the Spirit as the life of Christ flows through you (Gal 2:20).

God has described Spirit-filling in the Scriptures in several ways to allow us to understand the deep truths of Spirit-filling. Spirit-filling is described as “abiding in Christ” (John 15:1-11); “setting apart Christ as Lord in your heart” (1 Pet 3:15); “living by faith in the Son of God” (Gal 2:20); and “presenting your bodies a living and holy sacrifice” (Rom 12:1-2).

Yet the classic passage is found in Ephesians 5:18+.

¹⁸And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but **be filled with the Spirit**,
¹⁹speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; ²⁰always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father; ²¹and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ... (²²Wives..., ²⁵Husbands..., ^{6:1}Children..., ⁴Fathers..., ⁵Slaves..., ⁹Masters...)
(Ephesians 5:18-6:9)

“Be filled” has the sense of being totally dominated and controlled. The contrast is clear; someone who is drunk is under the influence of alcohol – they have surrendered control to alcohol. Believers should only be controlled by the Spirit. The Greek for “filled” is a passive, present tense imperative (something that you are commanded to continually let happen to you). It is literally “let yourselves be kept being filled with the Spirit”. You are commanded to allow the Spirit to fill you.

The implication is that the usual, expected position of the believer is to be filled with the Spirit. The believer in a right relationship with God will be filled with the Spirit. Being filled with the Spirit is the surrendering of every area of your life to God so that the Holy Spirit is controlling you.

❖ What is your usual condition?

Being filled with the Spirit is equivalent to letting the word of Christ richly dwell within you.

¹⁶**Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you**, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷Whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father. (¹⁸Wives..., ¹⁹Husbands..., ²⁰Children..., ²¹Fathers..., ²²Slaves..., ^{4:1}Masters...) (Col 3:16-4:1)

“Letting the word of Christ richly dwell within you” produces the same result as “be filled with the Spirit”: Christ-like words, worship, reactions, and relationships.

We are commanded to be filled. We are commanded to let the word of Christ to richly dwell within you. But how specifically do we walk in the Spirit?

The filling of the Spirit is not some magical, super-spiritual experience. It occurs when you, in response to God and what He has done for you in Christ, bring your entire life under submission to Him as He has revealed to do in His word. The fruit of this filling is a tangible manifestation of strength, character, and your connection to God through Christ. The filling of the Spirit is brought about by:

1. Repenting of any known sin – An attitude of the heart that is willing to always come under the Holy Spirit’s conviction of sin and genuinely repent.

²⁹Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. ³⁰**Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God**, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³²Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. (Ephesians 4:29-32)

❖ **Does your heart quickly come under the Holy Spirit’s conviction and repent?**

2. Yielding to God in every area of life – An attitude of the heart that yields to God’s Word.

¹⁶Rejoice always; ¹⁷pray without ceasing; ¹⁸in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. ¹⁹**Do not quench the Spirit**; ²⁰**do not despise prophetic utterances**. ²¹But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; ²²abstain from every form of evil. (1 Thessalonians 5:16-21)

❖ **Does your heart yield to God’s word continually?**

3. Immersion in the Word – Comparing Eph 5:18-21 with Col 3:16-4:1 – The Spirit of God uses the Word of God to produce the will of God in a believer’s life.

❖ **Are you placing a priority on immersing yourself in God’s word?**

Walking in the Spirit is a moment-by-moment decision to recognize, repent, and confess sin; yield your will to God’s moral will as set forth in His word; and allow the word to richly dwell within you.

The remedy for walking in the flesh (i.e., sinning) is not self-effort. It is Spirit-filling. It is walking in the Spirit. The Spirit enables a life that is in accord with God’s word. The Spirit is powerful. God’s word is powerful. Therefore, the believer in the most dire, seemingly hopeless circumstances can be encouraged, comforted, and changed as the Spirit applies the Word to our heart.

This is something that only comes about by the Spirit which is given at salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Not by the law.

❖ **Is your life characterized by the flesh or the Spirit?**

2. The description of walking in the flesh (5:19-21)

¹⁹Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, ²¹envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (NASB95)

¹⁹Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (ESV)

So that we can discern if we are walking in the flesh or walking in the Spirit, Paul lists some results of each (the things that are “evident”).

“Evident” means made visible as an external manifestation to the senses. The Greek reads “evident now are the deeds of the flesh...” emphasizing the visibility of these deeds. A rebellious heart is demonstrated in external, rebellious actions. These deeds of the flesh are patterns of sin that profane the name of God among the world.

⁴⁵The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil *man* out of the evil *treasure* brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart. (Luke 6:45)

²⁰And He was saying, “That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. ²¹For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, ²²deeds of coveting *and* wickedness, *as well as* deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride *and* foolishness. ²³All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man.” (Mark 7:20-23)

Don’t just think of these sins as their most heinous manifestation, but their most subtle or least. Think also of the heart that comes behind them.

There seems to be groupings of the deeds of the flesh. The first is sexual or sensual sins.

- Immorality – This is “porneia” and it is associated with sexual excess and indulgence, of every kind of extramarital or unnatural sexual intercourse. It describes any sexual activity outside of marriage including adultery, fornication, homosexuality, etc.
- Impurity – A broad term describing a state of moral uncleanness in thought, word, and deed, especially sexual sin.
- Sensuality – Referred to any excess or lack of restraint but came to convey the idea of shameless excess and the absence of restraint, especially with sexual excess and lewd sexual immorality, of uninhibited and unabashed carnality.

❖ Are you walking in physical/mental purity?

The next grouping is religious sins of worship of the wrong God or to seek spiritual experience apart from Christ.

- Idolatry – Extreme admiration or reverence for something other than God, but specifically the worship of something created rather than the Creator (Rom 1:22-25).
- Sorcery – This is “pharmakeia” and referred to drug use for religious experiences and was associated with the occult.

❖ **Are you walking in worship purity?**

The next group of sins is relationship or people sins connected to how we treat one another.

- Enmities – Describes an extreme negative attitude that is the opposite of love and friendship; antagonism; deep-rooted hatred or irreconcilable hostility.
- Strife – Describes contention, wrangling, quarrels and refers to engagement in competition and rivalry, especially with reference to positions taken in a matter.
- Jealousy – Comes from “zelos” and describes an intense interest in something and in the negative, someone else’s possessions, achievements, or advantages.
- Outbursts of anger – Speaks of an agitated or heated anger that rushes along; a sudden, explosive rage. Elsewhere, it is translated as “wrath” (Eph 4:31; Col 3:8) or “angry tempers” (2 Cor 12:20).
- Disputes – Describes self-seeking, strife, contentiousness, extreme selfishness, rivalry and those who seek only their own, desiring to be number one no matter the cost.
- Dissensions – Describes discord, disunity, contention, division into opposing groups; disagreement which leads to discord.
- Factions – Describes divisively expressing one’s opinions, wrongful dividing over opinions.
- Envy – Describes pain felt and resentment at another’s excellence or happiness; not just wanting what another person has, but also resenting that person for having it.

❖ **Are you walking in relationship purity?**

The last group of sins can be called social-interaction sins.

- Drunkenness – Describes intentional intoxication.
- Carousing – Describes unrestrained partying where enjoyment has degenerated into out-of-control license.

❖ **Are you walking in self-control?**

Paul gives a final catch all, “and things like these”. The list is not complete and total depravity means the list is long.

The Holy Spirit never led anyone into sexual sin, idolatry, relationship strife, or intoxicated license. If you are involved in sexual immorality (heart or deed), exalt anything above God, have heart or actual broken relationships, or lose control of yourself, then you are not filled with the Spirit. You are not walking in the Spirit. You are walking in the flesh.

Paul makes it clear that those whose lifestyle is described by these things or things like these as a pattern are lying to themselves and others, they are not saved, they have not been regenerated.

❖ **What characterizes your life?**

3. The description for walking in the Spirit (5:22-23)

²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. (NASB95)

²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,
²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. (ESV)

There seems to be two kinds of “fruit” given in Scripture. Both types of fruit flow from walking in the Spirit. Spiritual action fruit is good works (Col 1:10; Eph 2:10, Titus 2:14), worship (Rom 12:1), giving (2 Cor 8:1-5), praise (Heb 13:15), making disciples (Matt 20:19-20), serving the body (1 Pet 4:10-11), etc. Spiritual attitude fruit is described here.

❖ **What fruit do you see present in your life?**

Just like we can discern if we are filled with the Spirit if we are sinning, we can discern if we are filled with the Spirit if the fruit of the Spirit is present or not.

“But” contrasts the deeds of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit. This is a completely opposite life of the evident deeds of the flesh. As opposed to the external manifestations of sin in the deeds of the flesh, the fruit of the Spirit is internal. A changed heart that is opposite of the world.

These are the “fruit” of the Spirit. “Fruit” is singular, not plural. One fruit manifested by nine characteristics. A supernatural response to the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Interestingly, all nine characteristics of the fruit of the Spirit are also commanded in the NT. In addition, each of characteristic can be seen in the fullest example in Jesus.

- Love – The unconditional, sacrificial commitment of my will to another’s needs and best interests regardless of the cost to myself. This is the love that God is (1 John 4:8), God demonstrates (Rom 5:8), God commands (John 15:12), and God provides (Rom 5:5), and God produces (Gal 5:23). Each one of the deeds of the flesh is in some way a counterfeit of love.
- Joy – The deep-down sense of well-being abiding in the heart of the one who knows all is well between himself and the Lord independent of circumstances.
- Peace – Tranquility of mind independent of circumstances dispelling anxiousness and fear.
- Patience – The long holding out of the mind before it gives room to action or passion; emotional calm or quietness in the face of provocation, misfortune, or unfavorable circumstances; the calm willingness to accept situations that are irritating or painful.
- Kindness – A tender concern for others; a genuine desire to treat others gently, as the Lord treats us.

- Goodness – A moral and spiritual excellence that is known by its sweetness and active kindness.
- Faithfulness – Loyalty and trustworthiness to the Lord and people.
- Gentleness – A humble and gentle attitude that is patiently submissive in every offense, while being free of any desire for revenge or retribution and in such a way that one is submissive to the will of God (Col 3:12), teachable (James 1:21), and considerate of others (Eph 4:2).
- Self-control – Restraining passions and appetites.

❖ **How might the absence of these qualities be used as a barometer for Spirit-filling?**

These are characteristics that the law cannot produce. No set of rules (law) is effective against the flesh. Believers should only look to the Spirit to produce godly character, not a useless system of rules.

4. Walk in your position (5:24-25)

²⁴Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. (NASB95)

²⁴And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. (ESV)

If you have been justified by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, then you have “crucified the flesh with its passions and desires”. Paul used “crucified” elsewhere.

⁵For if we have become united with *Him* in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be *in the likeness* of His resurrection, ⁶knowing this, that **our old self was crucified with Him**, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; ⁷for he who has died is freed from sin. (Romans 6:5-7)

¹⁹For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God. ²⁰**I have been crucified with Christ**; and 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 up for me. (Galatians 2:19-20)

If you belong to Christ, then you have been freed from the sin nature, the flesh with its passions and desires.

“Passions” strong inward inflamed, aroused emotions that drive an individual; intense, driving, or overmastering feelings that compel one to action; emotions which are deeply stirring and/or ungovernable (or barely controllable).

“Desires” describes strong desires or impulses, longings or passionate craving directed toward an object.

❖ **Do you experience freedom for cravings and desires?**

Belonging to Christ means we have been made new by the Spirit.

²This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? ³Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? ⁴Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? ⁵So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? (Galatians 3:2-5)

Being crucified with Christ, being made new by the Spirit means we have a choice to give in to passions and desires or not. The way we do not give in is by “walking in the Spirit”.

We need to walk with the Spirit to overcome the deeds of the flesh and glorify God. The Spirit works in us for salvation and sanctification.

❖ **What is your first thought when tempted with cravings and desires?**

❖ **How might you walk in the Spirit more consistently?**

Summary

The Galatians were in danger of abandoning justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. The only way to constrain freedom in love is to walk in the Spirit, by being filled with the Spirit. The way we know if we are walking in the Spirit is to discern the deeds of the flesh or the fruit of the Spirit in our life. Since we have been saved by the Spirit we need to be walking in the Spirit.

Additional Study

1. Read Galatians through in one sitting?
2. Read Hebrews 4:12; 2 Timothy 3:16-16; and Psalm 119:9-11 and answer the following:
 - What can God’s Word do powerfully in my heart?
 - Am I treasuring God’s Word in my heart?
 - What does/would treasuring God’s Word look like?
3. Read Psalm 119 and answer the following:
 - How is the Bible described?
 - What can I learn for how to view the Bible from this?
 - What place should the Bible have in my life?
 - How is the heart of the righteous man toward the Bible described?
4. Read Psalm 19 and answer the following:
 - What are the different names give to the Bible in Psalm 19:7-9? What can I learn for how to view the Bible from this?
 - What does the Bible do to the believer from Psalm 19:7-9? Am I experiencing this? Why or why not?
 - Does Psalm 19:14 describe my heart? If not, what needs to change so that it does?