

WALKING IN THE SPIRIT

INTRODUCTION: There is an internal struggle between the desires of the flesh and living by the Spirit. The evidence of which is prevailing can be seen through our very actions. We are either fulfilling the lust of the flesh, or we are producing the fruit of the Spirit. The Apostle Paul deals with these opposing factions and correlates the works of the flesh with the law, while the fruit of the Spirit is produced apart from the law.

Galatians 5:16-26

I. THE INTERNAL CONFLICT vv. 16-18

A. Believers are instructed to walk by the Spirit to avoid satisfying the desires of the flesh. v. 16

1. First of all, we are told to walk in the Spirit. *John 16:13*
2. When we walk in the Spirit, we do not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.
3. There is an ongoing conflict between the Spirit and the flesh.
Romans 7:18, Romans 8:5

B. There is an inherent opposition between the Holy Spirit and the sinful nature. v.17

1. The sinful nature is not passive as it actively craves and drives us toward desires opposed to the leading of the Spirit.
Romans 8:13, 37
2. On the other hand, the Holy Spirit, who dwells within us actively opposes fleshly impulses. *Romans 8:1*
3. This conflict brings us to the place of making the choice as to which one we follow. *1 Corinthians 10:13*

C. Those who are led by the Spirit are no longer under the condemnation of the law. *v.18*

1. The role of the Holy Spirit is to partner with us.
2. The Holy Spirit grants us amazing freedom from legalism.
Romans 6:14, 2 Corinthians 5:14-15
3. The Spirit works from the inside while the law works from the outside. *Matthew 23:27*

II. THE EVIDENCE OF THE FLESH *vv. 19-21*

A. Sins of men are usually quite obvious. *v.19*

1. These behaviors are not hidden or mysterious; they are clearly recognizable "outward" manifestations of an inward problem.
Romans 1:28-32
2. Sin is far reaching, knowing no bounds and is unredeemable apart from Christ.
3. These are labeled "works of the flesh" because they are the natural product of human effort apart from God's grace.
Romans 7:5

B. Paul breaks down 3 main areas of sinfulness. *vv.19-21*

1. There are sexual and moral sins which include adultery, fornication, uncleanness, and lewdness.
2. There are religious sins which include idolatry and sorcery.
Luke 16:13

3. Then there are the social and relational sins which includes hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, and heresies.

C. Paul warns that those who habitually practice such things will not inherit the blessings of the kingdom of God. *v.21*

1. The warning is directed at those who "practice" these sins as a lifestyle, rather than those who occasionally stumble.

2. Paul makes it clear that a life dominated by the flesh is incompatible with the character of God. *Romans 5:20, Romans 6:1-2*

3. The kingdom of God is spoken of as a present reality and not something that is in the future. *Mark 1:15*

III. THE EVIDENCE OF THE SPIRIT

A. The character of the Holy Spirit produces good fruit in our lives. *vv. 22-23*

1. The word fruit is singular and implies that all nine virtues originate from one source: the Holy Spirit.

2. The inward graces are love, joy, and peace representing the believer's internal state and relationship with God.

3. The outward expressions of longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control reflect how a believer interacts with others and governs their own impulses.

B. The blessing of the fruit of the Spirit is that it is free from the confines of the law. *vv.23-24, Jeremiah 31:33*

1. No law exists to forbid or limit these virtues because they perfectly fulfill God's will.
2. Crucifying the flesh indicates a decisive break with sinful passions and desires through union with Jesus. *v.24, Romans 6:5-6*
3. Because we belong to Christ, the power of the "flesh" is legally broken, making room for the Spirit to produce His fruit.

C. Paul is concluding this passage by encouraging those who are led by the Spirit to actually live accordingly. *vv.25-26*

1. This encourages the believers because they have a glorious path that they in fact can walk. *2 Corinthians 3:17-18*
2. Walking in the Spirit causes us to avoid "conceit," which stems from the flesh and seeks self-glory. *v.26, Philippian 2:3*
3. By following the Spirit, we cease "provoking" or "envying" one another, replacing social friction with the unity of the fruit.

CONCLUSION: Believers are encouraged to walk by the Spirit to overcome the selfish desires of the flesh. This ongoing spiritual battle is won not by legalism, but by living in step with the Spirit, producing godly fruit rather than works of the flesh.