

Galatians 5:16-26

Walk by the Spirit

Good morning church. So good to be with you in January 2022. Hope all of you had a great Christmas and New Year season. I always fight each year through January to write the proper year on things (checks, correspondence, etc). Anyone else struggle with that? I was doing pretty well until Friday, and I wrote the wrong year in the cover of a Bible. Oh well.

We are in the HOME stretch of the book of Galatians. We have today where we will finish chapter 5, then 2 weeks in chapter 6 and we will have covered this power-packed letter to these 4 churches.

Then, to let you know where we are going from there, on January 30th my good friend and pastor, Mark Gibbens, many of you know Mark, but he's been a good friend for almost 20 years – Mark's going to preach for us on January 30. Then, on February 6 we will start a series called BLESS. 6-week series, using BLESS as an acronym, with 1 week overview at the front. You won't want to miss this series.

But for today, Today we are in Galatians 5:16-26 in a message that I've titled "Walk by the Spirit." As I was typing this week, I had running through my head that 1963 Frankie Valli and the 4 Seasons song "Walk Like A Man" – until this week I never knew the lyrics other than the chorus. But it's this song I think a father telling his son after a break up – telling him to walk like a man. ***Sing a line or two.***

Well, what does this have to do with Galatians? We're in a section of this letter where Paul is in essence screaming to these churches – WALK BY THE SPIRIT! Forget about the flesh. I don't think Paul was singing in falsetto, but he's pleading with them powerfully through his pen to Walk by the Spirit. Remember the Holy Ghost inside of you. Trust Him. Look to Him. Choose each day to Walk by HIS POWER!

If you have a Bible with you, go ahead and turn to Galatians 5:16-26
READ Galatians 5:16-26

¹⁶ I say, then, walk by the Spirit and you will certainly not carry out the desire of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh desires what is against the Spirit, and the Spirit desires what is against the flesh; these are opposed to each other, so that you don't do what you want. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are obvious:^[e] sexual immorality, moral impurity, promiscuity, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambitions, dissensions, factions, ²¹ envy,^[f] drunkenness, carousing, and anything similar. I am warning you about these things—as I warned you before—that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control. The law is not against such things. [E] ²⁴ Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

PRAY.

Last week the text that Matt shared from – pointed us to the freedom we have in Christ. That we are free to obey – and free to serve one another through love – “what matters is faith working through love”.

And building on this, today’s text Paul has lays out for these churches, and for us by extension, what it looks like to follow Jesus. That our lives can either be ruled and dominated by “the flesh” or the Spirit – but not both because they’re opposed to each other! And notice here, he’s not talking to pastors, elders, missionaries, or music leaders. He’s talking to all who claim the name of Jesus. To all who by grace alone through faith alone have turned from their sin and are following Jesus.

I. Call to Battle

And this call, is a call to battle – we can either choose to live our lives based on whatever we want whenever we want it – forgetting about what may or may not be good and Godly. OR we can submit ourselves to the rule and reign of Jesus, and walk by the Spirit.

That’s the battle Paul is pointing out to us this morning. So maybe you think I’m being overly dramatic, calling this a battle? Well, to minimize the threat, to think we’re not in a battle is to have already lost. All throughout the scripture we see wartime imagery used – and we have to be prepared for it. Perhaps most notably, in Ephesians 6 Paul talks about taking up the Armor, and he tells us that our struggle isn’t against a visible opponent, but instead against the cosmic powers of darkness and against evil. We really are in a way.

II. Two Opposing Positions

V17 – the flesh and the Spirit are opposed to each other. And every person falls into one of 2 camps here. There’s no middle ground. Those that are controlled and dominated by our own fleshly desires. And those that are led by the Spirit of God, walking by the Spirit. There’s no middle ground.

The flesh desires what is against the Spirit and the Spirit desires what is against the flesh. Like oil and water can’t mix – you can’t be controlled by both the Holy Spirit and your own sinful desires at the same time.

How do you know what’s controlling you? What are you running toward? What type of life are you living. Because the works of the flesh are obvious.

III. Some things are obvious

V19-21

Sex – Contrary to what our society, culture, etc. is screaming at us. God has a good design for human sexuality, rooted in creation order. That it is a gift, designed to be honored in the covenant of marriage between one biological man and biological woman. And anything outside of God's good design is sinful. I tell my kids – it's not just what you do, it's also what you look at online. I've counseled guys for years that – maybe you need a flipphone and to get rid of your computer because of what you're looking at. It's that serious.

And hear me – we can't compromise on God's good design for human sexuality.

But not just sex – there's a religious side of the works of the flesh. What Paul calls idolatry and sorcery.

Idolatry and Sorcery → In the 1st century context, the idolatry that Paul would have been writing against was (1) pagan/Greek culture but also (2) the idolatry of religious approval. And while maybe we don't have the same type of idolatry that Paul was dealing with → idolatry is alive and well in America and even in our churches if we're not careful.

I mean, we see this list – and like Paul says it's obvious. And a sign that you are controlled by the flesh is if this lists defines you.

Not, do we get angry, realize what we've done and confess and repent. In fact, just this week, Friday morning to be exact – I was frustrated. Had forgotten something at the house, had to head back there and was likely going to be late to an early appointment. Car cuts me off and I had an "outburst of anger" to use Paul's words. And to make matters even worse, I'm pretty sure one of our church members was just across the interchange from me and may have seen the whole thing!

See it's not that when we trust in Christ we become instantly perfect. But when we fall back into ways of the flesh we realize it and repent and confess.

IV. Those who practice...

And when we see this list – like man – every single one of us has been guilty of something or maybe a lot of the things on this list. Does it mean that we're not Christians? No way. We have to understand the word 'practice.' Because Paul writes to us, those who practice such things WILL NOT inherit the kingdom of God.

The question is one of (1) control and (2) response when we fail. Are we controlled by desires that don't honor God, and the good of God's design for us? When we fail, do we excuse ourselves, do we give in even more, or do we confess and repent and seek the power of the Holy Spirit to give us victory over the flesh.

Paul gives us this incredible contrast with the works of the flesh, when he lays out the fruit of the Spirit,

V. But the Fruit of the Spirit

Not an all encompassing list, but a pretty good one. Interestingly, cynicism isn't on the list here. Love, joy, peace → those things that a life with Jesus produces in the heart of a believer

Patience, Kindness, Goodness → how we relate to one another

Faithfulness, Gentleness, and Self-Control

These marks are **Undeniable** when they are growing in your life. Because this fruit can only grow out of relationship with Jesus. You can't discipline yourself into this type of fruit. You can't just try REALLY, REALLY, REALLY hard into this type of fruit. It only can come from a growing relationship and trust in Jesus.

And here's the thing – it doesn't happen overnight. It's a long and drawn out process, and usually painful. And it's not like, go try harder to grow this fruit in your life. We have a responsibility as a Christian, but the Holy Spirit is ultimately the One that causes the growth. If you have turned from your sin, and are trusting in Jesus alone, then allow the Spirit to grow His fruit in your life.

VI. Paul's Reminder – A crucified life

V24 – a Reminder of the Gospel – that we have died with Christ. Echoes of 2:20.

Jesus said, in the Gospels, that if we are to follow after Him, we must deny ourselves, take up our cross daily, and follow him. And there's this progression that I've seen in my own life

Deny myself → Follow Jesus → Delight in Jesus → Find greater joy in Jesus than the temporary pleasures of this world → Trust that His ways are better and for my long-term good and His glory!

CLOSING

So I guess the million dollar question is... Is your life dominated by the works of the flesh or the fruit of the Spirit? Have you seen the fruit of the Spirit growing, and how? Would the people closest to you agree? Over 3 months, 6 months, couple of years. Do you see the long, painful growth in godliness in your own life? If so, rejoice, praise God. If not, first and most importantly are you a Christian? If you aren't – trust in Jesus today. If you are, open the Word, Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you today, to lead you today in the Word of God and in the rhythms of your life.