

Life Led by the Spirit

Galatians 5:16-26



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Paul's references to the Holy Spirit

- ***receive the Spirit*** (3:2)
- ***begun by the Spirit*** (3:3)
- ***miracles of the Spirit*** (3:5)
- ***promise of the Spirit through faith*** (3:14)
- ***the Spirit in our hearts*** (4:6)
- ***through the Spirit, by faith*** (5:5)
- While he was with them Paul must have taught them that, upon placing their faith in Christ, they had received the Spirit as their constant companion who gave them a new nature by regenerating them, and who now lives within them.

The Spirit-led lifestyle (5:16)

- "**flesh**" (*sarx*) ~ the fallen, sinful nature of human beings apart from the influence of God.
- "**will carry out**" (*teleō*) ~ the idea of finishing or bringing something to a close.
- Two important facts: ***1)*** believers have the Spirit living in them, *and* ***2)*** they are currently living in the flesh.
- Continuously "**walk by the Spirit**" (*peripateō*) ~ includes all aspects of a person's lifestyle, including thoughts, words, and deeds.
- The Christian life is a moment by moment dependence on God by faith, and by yielding to the guidance of the indwelling Spirit.

The opposition of the flesh to the Spirit (5:17)

- Two opposing forces struggle for dominance in a believer's life.
- "**sets its desire**" (*epithumeō*) ~ intense longing for something.
- "**flesh against the Spirit**" *and* "**Spirit against the flesh**" ~ constantly in opposition to one another.
- It is possible for a believer to "**not do the things that you please**."
- "**please**" (*thelō*) ~ desire, intend, will, purpose, or have in mind. "*The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak*" (Matt 26:41).
- If a believer succumbs to the desires of the flesh, God has provided the means of restoring a right relationship through confession and forgiveness (1 John 1:9).

Led by the Spirit ~ not under Law (5:18)

- "**led by the Spirit**" (*agō*) ~ constantly leading, conducting, bringing, guiding, or directing.
- The challenge of the Christian life is to exercise faith that the Spirit is active and to yield by faith to the Spirit's leading.
- The believer's responsibility is changed from getting things done by trusting the energy of the flesh to accomplishing things by relying on the power and direction of the Spirit.
- "**not under the Law**" ~ godly living is not accomplished by turning to the Law, but the Law finds nothing to condemn in the life of a person who is led by the Spirit.

The works of the flesh (5:19-20)

- "**immorality**" (*porneia*) ~ forbidden sexual activity.
- "**impurity**" (*akatharsia*) ~ physical or moral uncleanness.
- "**sensuality**" (*aselgeia*) ~ inability to control sexual urges.
- "**idolatry**" (*eidōlolatreia*) ~ devotion to non-existent gods.
- "**sorcery**" (*pharmakeia*) ~ magic or occult practices.
- "**enmities**" (*echthra*) ~ attitudes of hostility.
- "**strife**" (*eris*) ~ quarrelling and bickering.
- "**jealousy**" (*zēlos*) ~ zeal in protecting what you have.
- "**outbursts of anger**" (*thumos*) ~ heated eruptions of temper.
- "**disputes**" (*eritheia*) ~ contention that arises between factions.
- "**dissensions**" (*dichostasia*) ~ disagreements due to disunity.
- "**factions**" (*hairesis*) ~ discord between rival groups.

The works of the flesh (5:21)

- "**envying**" (*phthonos*) ~ resentment of something belonging to someone else.
- "**drunkenness**" (*methē*) ~ indulgence in drinking to the point of intoxication.
- "**carousing**" (*kōmos*) ~ feasting and partying beyond the limits of morality and decency.
- "**things like these**" (*homoios*) ~ a representative sample of the "works of the flesh."

- Paul "**forewarned**" (*proeipon*) them in the past and he was now "**forewarning**" (*prolegō*) them again.
- "**practice**" (*prassō*) ~ perform habitually and repeatedly.
- "**will not inherit the kingdom of God**" ~ persistent fleshly behavior gives evidence of not being a son and heir of God.

The fruit of the Spirit (5:22-23)

- "**love**" (*agapē*) ~ self-sacrificing action for the benefit of others.
- "**joy**" (*chara*) ~ calm delight, gladness, or rejoicing despite outward circumstances.
- "**peace**" (*eirēnē*) ~ tranquility and assurance of God's love and care.
- "**patience**" (*makrothumia*) ~ long-tempered endurance.
- "**kindness**" (*chrēstotēs*) ~ uprightness and godly virtue expressed to others.
- "**goodness**" (*agathōsunē*) ~ moral and spiritual excellence.
- "**faithfulness**" (*pistis*) ~ trustworthiness in acting according to God's will.
- "**gentleness**" (*prautēs*) ~ power under God's control.
- "**self-control**" (*enkrateia*) ~ ability to master fleshly desires through the strength of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Live and walk by the Spirit (5:24-25)

- Identification with Christ's crucifixion breaks the absolute tyranny of the flesh over life. Believers can consider themselves dead to the desires of the flesh, and they gain the Spirit's power for living.
- "**We live by the Spirit**" *therefore* "**let us also walk by the Spirit**."
- "**walk**" (*stoicheō*) ~ "to proceed in a row," includes the idea of a person's manner of life in relationship and harmony with others.
- Believers should keep in step with one another under the Spirit's guidance and power.
- Provides a transition into the discussion of relationships among believers in the body of Christ.

Identifying current fleshly behavior (5:26)

Three sins of the flesh that were becoming an issue in Galatia:

- "**boastful**" (*kenodoxos*) ~ "empty glory," fruitless or worthless pride, conceit, self-love, self-centeredness, or egotistical vanity.
- "**challenging one another**" (*prokaleomai*) ~ literally, calling each other out for a fight.
- "**envying one another**" (*phthoneō*) ~ bitterness over something another person has, or a desire to see them lose what they have.

Paul was transitioning to his discussion in the next section about the believers' responsibilities toward each other.

Summary

- Paul encouraged the Galatians to live in the freedom that Christ purchased for them, but the Judaizers told them that such freedom would lead to sin unless they put themselves under the restraining influence of the Mosaic Law.
- Paul made it clear that obedience to the Law through works of the flesh could never protect them from the sins of the flesh.
- Instead Paul commanded them to “walk in the Spirit.” Only the indwelling Holy Spirit can provide the desire and power to live a life that is pleasing to God.
- Believers must step out in faith and live that life!