

Galatians 5:16-6:10 • Walking by the Spirit

Introduction

You cannot study the Bible for very long without encountering practical, guiding steps to attain any spiritual quality or theological concept in your everyday life. In our study of James we were presented with the definition of “faith” as being our personal, daily choices regarding our behavior. “Faith”, which seems like such a lofty, unattainable thing at times is made possible by simple choices we make in everyday conditions. In Galatians, Paul presents the steps for another seemingly hard to attain quality identifying true Christians: Walking by the Spirit.

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.

[Read 5:16-18]

Q: According to v.16, in what are our unhealthy desires rooted? What does that really mean to us?

A: They're rooted in the flesh, meaning that we are focused on satisfying ourselves and our ambitions at the expense of all others including those of God.

Q: What are some examples of v.17 in real life? Name some desires of the flesh that are incompatible with the desires of the Spirit.

A: [The group should name many but if you need to get things started....] Sex under any circumstances vs. sex only within the context of marriage. Money spent only on my cares vs. the needs of others, etc., etc.

Q: What does the end of v.17 mean when it says, “....you may not do the things that you please”?

A: Choosing to control your personal desires, denying yourself the pleasure of following your own wants and submitting to the desires of the Spirit. [Mt. 16:24-25, “Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.’”]

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.

[Read 5:19-21]

Q: Is Paul saying that we must be perfect, that we can never sin?

A: The key is the end of v.21 that states, “....those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” Paul is making a statement about life-choices, people who embrace one or more of these things as a recurring behavior, as a “normal” part of their life. They're not temporarily sinning but developing a recurring behavior.

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

[Read 5:22-23]

Q: The example of “fruit” is used often throughout the Bible. What is a plainer way of stating its meaning?

A: The **EVIDENCE** proving that one is walking by the Spirit.

Q: Why, as pointed out at the end of v.23, is there “no law” where these things are concerned?

A: If we fully exhibit each of these qualities to the point that they become visibly evident in our life, the rules and regulations of the Law would be followed and fulfilled without our ever noticing or anyone telling us the rules to begin with.

²⁴Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

[Read 5:24]

Q: What is the first practical step the Christian takes to overcome the desires of the flesh?

A: He/she recognizes that just as Christ was crucified to atone for their sin, so is their old way of life crucified – put to death – in their acceptance of Christ as Savior. He put to death our sin, and in acceptance of His salvation we put to death our former life.

²⁵If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

[Read 5:25]

Q: What is the difference between “living” by the Spirit and “walking” by the Spirit?

A: If we are made alive by accepting Christ as our Savior, and we have crucified our old life and desires, we are left with turning our life in a completely new direction, not walking according to our desire but the Spirit's.

²⁶Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.

[Read 5:26-6:5]

^{6:1}Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. ²Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ. ³For if anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. ⁴But each one must examine his own work, and then he will have reason for boasting in regard to himself alone, and not in regard to another. ⁵For each one will bear his own load.

Q: What is the first change in our behavior that indicates we've chosen to forsake the flesh for the Spirit in v.26?

A: To not negatively challenge, envy or provoke others, especially in the course of promoting ourselves over them. Whereas crucifying our old life is in line with the greatest commandment – to love God – this is an application of the second greatest commandment – to love each other.

Q: What is the contrast in attitude and action between 5:26 and 6:1?

A: Even when we find someone else in error, we still don't promote ourselves over them. Rather than directly challenging them, to walk by the Spirit requires restoration.

Q: But – according to v.1 – should we be actively looking for the fault in others, in their differences from us?

A: Focusing on ourselves is the only way to avoid temptation, which results in the best possible vantage point for us to discern the needs in others. (First take out the log and **THEN** look for the splinter....)

Q: How does Paul sum up “walking by the Spirit” in v.2? How does it fit with 5:26 to 6:1 so far?

A: By becoming a partner with others in sharing their burdens we are visibly loving our neighbor as our self.

Q: And how do we avoid the pitfalls of 5:26-6:2 according to v.3-4?

A: Our self-centered focus is replaced with concern for our neighbor when we live a life of self-examination.

Q: What is the only tangible difference between myself and others that I should focus on?

A: The burden of our load is unique for each of us. What I bear may not total the same “weight” as others. It's the application that God has entrusted to each of us a different number of talents, minas, etc. with which we're individually responsible, whether we've been given 1 or 10, or whether or neighbor's been given 1 or 10. It's what we do with what we've got, not whether the amount given by God to each of us is different.

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Point: Summarize what it means to “walk by the Spirit.”

To constantly examine my own life and behavior to determine what yet remains to be crucified – put to death – in order to produce the fruit of the Spirit.