

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. Galatians 5:16

The story is told of an airline captain whose voice came over the PA system of his plane: "There's no cause for alarm but we felt you passengers should know that for the last three hours we've been flying without the benefit of radio, compass, radar, or navigational system -- due to the breakdown of a number of our technical components. This means that we are, in the broad sense of the word, lost and are not sure of the direction we are heading. But you'll be glad to know, however, on the brighter side -- in a narrow sense -- we are making excellent time." This, brothers and sisters, is a reflection of how most people are living their lives today. In a narrow sense, while it might seem that we are making pretty good time wading through the hectic busyness of our overcrowded, overscheduled lives -- in the broader sense we pretty much have lost our direction when it comes to finding our way to God.

This morning we continue in our Seeking Him series, which is focused on how we can know a deeper intimacy in our relationship with God - and today we will be looking at another means in God's Word by which we can seek God and grow in our walk with God. In the past weeks we've already seen the need, and have taken the steps of humility, honesty, repentance, grace, holiness, obedience, a clear conscience, forgiveness and sexual purity - and today we are looking at both the need and the means by which we can seek God through a *Spirit-filled life*. Remember that over the past three months we have also learned that God created us for relationships, first with Himself and then with each other; and that there is an *intimate* connectedness between ourselves and God and each other that cannot be denied; and that there can never be intimacy between one human being and another unless there is real intimacy with God first. And last week we learned that God has called us to holiness in our intimacy with Him and with each other - which will result in spiritual maturity in God, sexual purity in marriage, and relational purity with one another, through the *empowerment of a Spirit-filled life*.

Now our text for today is a familiar text for us and we spent three months last fall going through the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5:16-25. And so we won't spend a lot of time here, except to look at the context of our text as a foundation, an entry way to the bigger picture of how God's Word speaks to us about what it means to live a Spirit-filled life. "*But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh*" (Galatians 5:16). The apostle Paul here was writing to the church in Galatia regarding their struggles and confusion in how they were living their lives for God. There were some in the church who were seeking to turn their faith in Christ into an impersonal religious fulfillment of rules, rituals, expectations rather than a joyful, sacrificial, intimate, Spirit-filled walk with God. Paul wrote to correct this error. In Galatians 5:1-12 he explains what religious rules, rituals and expectations those of us in Christ are now *freed* from, and in the remainder of the chapter he explains what that Spirit-filled freedom we have been given in Christ looks like in everyday life. And once again, as we have seen time and time again in the past, God's Word not only speaks of what that looks like -- but also about what it should not look like, in the context of our relationships with one another.

"For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another" (Galatians 5:13-15). Apparently there was some contention and division within the church, and Paul was letting those in the church know that the freedom which they received through Jesus Christ was not a freedom to do as they wished, nor the freedom to expect others to live up to or fulfill their own personal expectations - but rather a freedom in Christ "*through love to serve one another.*" This is the same issue we struggle with in churches today as we all breathe the same air of rights and entitlement, which in reality is the religion of self-righteous expectation. Oh, may God free us from that burden!

"But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh." Paul declares these words after just calling the church to embrace the reality of the freedom from sin we have in Jesus *because* he is well aware that we all continue to sin even after we come to faith in Christ. Even with followers of Jesus there is a strong battle going on within our hearts between the powerful forces of our sinful nature and the Spirit of God. The verse after today's text says: *"For 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"* (Galatians 5:17). Looking down a little further in Galatians 5:19-21 we see what *"the desires of the flesh"* look like within the context of the body of Christ when we do not *"walk by the Spirit"* that lives within us: *"Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, 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."* Now a few of these things most of us can steer clear of - yet there is something here for each one of us. But there are a few here that are aimed specifically at the context of our text which speaks of the fleshly nature of the relational struggles between those who were in the church: *"enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, and envy."*

"But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh." We read through this list and most likely see ourselves as passive victims of the battle between the flesh and the Spirit within us. But we need to remember that all of our relational struggles in life are simply a reflection of a spiritual struggle with God in our own hearts. The phrase *"But I say, walk by the Spirit"* is an imperative, which is a command. We are not given an option here. God commands that we *"walk by the Spirit"* so that we *"will not gratify the desires of the flesh."* Jesus died on a cross and rose from the dead *not only to deliver us* from the penalty of sin *but also to empower us* beyond the sin of our daily lives. He saved us so that we might live holy lives for him. Paul spoke of this in Titus 2:11-14: *"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works."*

What this tells us is that God has not only given us the *power* of the Holy Spirit to *save us* from our sin and its consequences in eternal death, He has *also* given us the *presence* of the Holy Spirit within us so that we might have *power* to live for Him while we are here on earth, until life as we know it ultimately becomes eternally glorious beyond this earth. Before his death and crucifixion Jesus promised that he would send the *power* of His *presence* to live within us after he was gone: *"If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you"* (John 14:15-17). Following these verses Jesus continued to tell his disciples of the work of the Holy Spirit within their lives.

John 14:25-26: *"These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you."* John 15:26: *"When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me."* John 16:6-11: *"I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged."* John 16:12-14: *"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you."*

What is the *power* of the Holy Spirit? In Romans 8 reveals to us the power of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 8:2: *“The law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.”*

Romans 8:5: *“Those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.”*

Romans 8:6: *“To set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.”*

Romans 8:9: *The Spirit of God dwells in you.”*

Romans 8:10: *“Although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness.”*

Romans 8:11: *“If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.”*

Romans 8:13: *“By the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body.”*

Romans 8:14: *“All who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.”*

Romans 8:15: *“You have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’”*

Romans 8:16-17: *“The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.”*

Romans 8:23: *“We ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.”*

Romans 8:26: *“The Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.”*

Romans 8:27-28: *“He who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”*

These verses in Romans 8 reveal the power of the Holy Spirit is at work in just about every area of our lives. The apostle Paul, in his letter to the church of Ephesus, in the context of first proclaiming the great and glorious and deep truths about what it truly means to be *“blessed . . . in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places”* (Ephesians 1:3) - then speaks of the power of the Holy Spirit that God has graciously given to the people of God in His church:

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. Ephesians 3:14-21

Praise God for the “*power*” of His Holy Spirit in our lives! How is it then that can we know the “*power*” of being filled with the Holy Spirit? Romans 15:13 says: “*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.*” Where does the “*hope*” come from that God promises will “*fill*” us “*with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit*” we “*may abound in hope*”? Well, Romans 15:13 was written in the context of Romans 15:4, which says: “*For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.*” What we are reading here is that we will be filled with “*power of the Holy Spirit*” when we are filled with the Word of God. In other words, we will know the full assurance of our “*hope*” in Christ when we read and study and meditate and memorize and listen to the hope-giving promises “*of the Scriptures*”— which will fill us with the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit is the divine author of the Word of God.

We see how this “*hope*” that is filled “*with all joy*” is connected with the filling of the “*power of the Holy Spirit*” in Romans 5:1-5: “*Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.*” The power to “*rejoice*” in times of suffering is the power of the “*hope*” that we have in the in words of the Bible, which were written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. In other words, the way to be filled with the Spirit is to be filled with God’s Word. We receive the power of the Spirit when we believe in the promises “*of the Scriptures*” that were written by the Spirit. When God’s Word fills us with hope, that hope then fills us with joy, and then that joy empowers us to live a Spirit-filled life. “*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.*” We see how the power of God’s Word produces Spirit-filled “*joy*” and “*hope*” and “*peace*” in the hearts and lives of God’s people through the words of the prophet Isaiah.

Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near;

let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts;

let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him,

and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.

For as the heavens are higher than the earth,

so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth,

making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,

so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;

it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,

and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.

For you shall go out in joy and be led forth in peace;

the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing,

and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle;

and it shall make a name for the Lord, an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

Isaiah 55:6-13

Praise God for the “*power*” of His Holy Spirit in our lives! Praise God that we can be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit when we are filled with the Word of God! What then does the Spirit-filled life look like when we have received the “*power*” of the Spirit through the Word of God? Here is where we go back to our text for today, where our today’s text reveals to us not only that a Spirit-filled life is a life that produces the fruits of the Spirit, but also what the fruit of a Spirit-filled life looks like.

"But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh." Now we've already read what *"the desires of the flesh"* look like. But what does it look like when we *"walk by the Spirit"*? We see what that looks like in Galatians 5:22-24: *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."* In being created in the image of God we are called to be like God, Christ-like, Spirit-filled, as we walk this earth. In knowing that our text is in the context of relationships, we see what walking in the Spirit looks like for those in the church:

Love - John 15:12: *"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."*

Joy - Psalm 16:9: *"My heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure."*

Peace - Ephesians 4:3: *"Maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."*

Patience - Ephesians 4:2: *"With all humility and gentleness, with patience, bear with one another in love."*

Kindness - Ephesians 4:32: *"Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another."*

Goodness - 3 John 1:11: *"Beloved, do not imitate evil but imitate good. Whoever does good is from God."*

Faithfulness - James 2:5: *"Has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith?"*

Gentleness - Titus 3:2: *"Speak evil of no one . . . avoid quarreling . . . be gentle . . . toward all people."*

Self-control - 2 Timothy 1:7: *"God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control."*

And so this is the list of what the spiritual fruit of the Spirit is to look like in our lives – and we also know that we have been given the power of the Spirit through the Word of God to bear this fruit. And so now we are faced with the pragmatic question: *How then do we live these out in the power of the Spirit?* Or using Paul's words, how do we *"walk by the Spirit"* by the power of the Spirit? Well, we are given direction in how to do so in a text that's in the middle of our text for today, as Galatians 5:18 says: *"But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law."* Notice Paul did not say: *"If you follow the Spirit you are not under law."* What is the difference? Follow is *active*, while *"led"* is *passive*. Here Paul is emphasizing the sovereign work of God through the Holy Spirit, not our human effort. The Spirit is a leader who we follow in our salvation and our walk on earth like following a pace car on the racetrack. The Spirit is the leader in the fruits of the Spirit like a locomotive is connected to a train. We do not follow in our strength. We are led by His power. *"Walk in the Spirit"* means we can't do this on our own. *"Walk by the Spirit"* means stay connected to the Holy Spirit and go wherever He leads.

Galatians 5:22 begins: *"The fruit of the Spirit is . . ."* If our Christian walk is to be a walk of love and joy and peace and patience and kindness and goodness and faithfulness and gentleness and self-control – then *walking by the Spirit* must also mean *bearing the fruit* of the Spirit. This again is Paul's way of emphasizing that this fruit is the sovereign work of the Spirit. This is not our fruit; it is the fruit *"of the Spirit."* Jesus said this John 15:4-5: *"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."* Jesus is telling us here that when we *"walk in the Spirit"* by being *"led by the Spirit"* we will *bear the fruit of the Spirit*. But we must also take note that while being *"led by the Spirit"* is about dependence upon the Holy Spirit – our wills are still deeply involved in this. We must *want* to be connected to the locomotive. We must *want* to follow the pace car. We must *want* to abide in the vine. We must *want* to live our lives surrendered to and under the control of the Spirit of God. The apostle Paul wrote about this in Galatians 2:20 *"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."* We can only be *"led by the Spirit"* when we want to be *"led by the Spirit"* – and we will only *"want"* to be *"led by the Spirit"* when we stop following our own shadows rather the light of the glory of God. Jesus said: *"Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also"* (Matthew 6:21) - and we will we want to be *"led by the Spirit"* when we treasure Jesus more than anything or anyone else. Once we stop trying to fill the emptiness of our souls with a hundred pieces of world, our souls we will then *"walk by the Spirit."*

The word for soul in the Old Testament (*nephesh*) reflects the idea of longing, desiring, and yearning. The nature of the soul in the Old Testament speaks of craving and weakness, not strength. Our souls are created empty. The soul was made to *want*. Our spiritual neediness, our spiritual emptiness is hard-wired into our being. But this is not due to sin, but it is aggravated by sin. In being created by God our souls crave to be filled with God – but sin has infected that craving - and so the essence of sin is that we now crave to live without God and live for ourselves. Thus the term *self-centered* is the spiritual reality of how sin has infected our souls. Our original craving is now but an echo, but it is an echo which is dramatically awakened and comes alive when we come to faith in Jesus. Throughout history those who have walked by the Spirit have possessed a heart for God and sought intimacy with God. They were a people who had a solid grasp of the gospel, who hungered and thirsted for righteousness, who were consciousness of the inner conflict within their own hearts between their sinful nature and the indwelling Spirit of God. They knew that true spiritual life was humanly impossible, and they humbly surrendered to and were utterly dependent upon the Holy Spirit. Those who walked by the Spirit lived lives of love and sacrifice and service within the context of the local church, who then sent them out to spread the joy of Jesus into the broader community of the world. In knowing the depravity of their own sin and the beauty of the gospel, they lived out their lives with both urgency and anticipation, filled with the Spirit which was empowered by truth of the Word of God.

"And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit" (Galatians 5:24-25). Brothers and sisters, being a Christian is NOT a matter of simply having an experience with God. Being a Christian is living out an authentic walk with Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. And that is not a walk that occurs in a holy vacuum – outside the parameters of relationships within the lives of others in the church. It is highly significant that Paul ends this section of his letter on walking by the Holy Spirit with the following words: *"Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another"* (Galatians 5:26). The Spirit-filled life begins when there is real intimacy with God, which then leads to real intimacy with one another, as we live out authentic loving, joy-filled, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle, self-controlled relationships with one another. Jesus said: *"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him"* (John 12:24-26). The Spirit-empowered life that draws us into a deeper intimacy with God is a life that seeks the power of God through the Word of God – and humbly dies to self, in order to bear the fruit of God's Spirit.

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you. 2 Corinthians 3:17-4:12

O Holy Spirit,

As the sun is full of light, the ocean full of water, Heaven full of glory, so may my heart be full of thee. Vain are all divine purposes of love and the redemption wrought by Jesus except thou work within, regenerating by thy power, giving my eyes to see Jesus, showing me the realities of the unseen world.

Give me thyself without measure, as an unimpaired fountain, as inexhaustible riches.

I bewail my coldness, poverty, emptiness, imperfect vision, languid service, prayerless prayers, praiseless praises. Suffer me not to grieve or resist thee.

Come as power, to expel every rebel lust, to reign supreme and keep me thine;
Come as teacher, leading me into ALL truth, filling me with ALL understanding;
Come as love, that I may adore the Father, and love him as my all;
Come as joy, to dwell in me, move in me, animate me:
Come as light, illuminating the Scripture, moulding me in its laws:
Come as sanctifier, body, soul and spirit wholly thine;
Come as helper, with strength to bless and keep, directing my EVERY step;
Come as beautifier, bringing order out of confusion, loveliness out of chaos.

Magnify to me thy glory by being magnified in me, and make me redolent of thy fragrance.

“Spiritus Sanctus” from Valley of Vision: Puritan Prayers and Devotions, pp. 50-51

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