

Walk by the Spirit

Galatians 5:16-25

3/ 26/ 06

Intro

The churches in the Galatian region were troubled because there were some who were trying to convince them that the way to relate to God, the way to get God's approval is to live by rules; that the better you are at living by these rules, the more God approves of you.

The problem, Paul says, is that is completely against everything that the gospel stands for. We are approved by God because our sins are forgiven in Christ; we are approved and accepted by God because we are in Christ and have His righteousness given to us.

The idea that living by rules makes us better is easy to refute. It's a question of human character. We know how we are, we don't like to be told what to do, but rules do that, they tell us what to do. And we want to do exactly the opposite.

No, keeping rules won't make us better; the Law doesn't make us better. But the Holy Spirit does. That's where Paul takes us in these verses.

These are insights into walking by the Spirit.

I. You Have a Choice

A. Know where you're walking to

- When you walk, you're going somewhere.
- You and I have a choice as to where we will walk. The path we're on is heading somewhere.

Illus – If you wander with no direction at all, you end up downhill, but the world is sloped down.

You have to decide that you want to walk in the Spirit.

- The flesh sets its desire against the Spirit. The flesh wants to walk downhill.

Psalms 61:1-2, "Hear my cry, O God; give heed to my prayer. From the end of the earth I call to You when my heart is faint; lead me to the rock that is higher than I."

Habakkuk 3:19, "The Lord God is my strength, and He has made my feet like hinds' feet, and makes me walk on my high places."

B. Choose whom you will serve

- As was said by that great American philosopher, Bob Dylan, "You're gonna serve somebody. It may be the devil, or it may be the Lord, but you're gonna have to serve somebody."

Romans 6:12, 14, "Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts... For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? May it never be! Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?"

- One of the most direct challenges in scripture that makes it clear that we must choose is Joshua's challenge to Israel.

Joshua 24:14-15, "Now, therefore, fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

II. Consider the Fruit

A. The flesh burns you out

- Verses 19-21 – the deeds of the flesh are evident...
- These are the things that burn you out and wear you down.

Illus – If someone gives themselves over to these things, it makes him old and haggard. In other words, it brings him closer to death.

Romans 6:21, "Therefore what benefit did you gain from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death."

- Paul writes that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Illus – Practice means to perfect. "Practice makes perfect," the saying goes. Woe to those who are experts in these things the scripture says.

App – You will find that the ones who are well practiced in worldliness will try to make you feel inferior because you are inexperienced.

Illus – A conversation I had with an "expert" in worldliness, "God knows your name. God knows you're standing here right now. He loves you, but hates what you're doing. He is the hound of heaven and he's on your trail..."

B. The Spirit brings forth life

- If you walk by the Spirit, you will find life.
- The Spirit brings refreshing, He brings the life and character of God wherever He goes.

Ezekiel 47:1-10 The river of life...

Revelation 22:1-2, Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."

Illus – The Spirit brings fruit because we are "abiding" on the branches. In other words, as Jesus said, "Apart from Me you can do nothing."

- The fruit of the Spirit is a list of the qualities of God's character. (Verses 22-23)

- Changes come over us when we walk by the Spirit because the River of Life is moving through the desert within our hearts.

John 7:37-39, Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. ‘He who believes in Me,’ as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’” But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive;

III. Have Some Passion in Your Walk

A. Crucify the passions of the flesh

- Paul writes in verse 24 that we must kill the worldly passions.
- Passion is the right word because he perfectly describes the way many people go after the world.

Romans 7:5, “For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death.”

- Paul gives a great summary in Romans chapter 13, that we need to surround ourselves with the Lord.

Romans 13:14, “Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.” NIV

- Some things must die so that other things can come alive.

B. Have passion in your heart for God

- If you kill the worldly passions, but don’t ignite a fire in your heart, your heart will be empty.

Illus – A guy in our church came to Christ from a life of drugs. I loved to watch his passion for Christ and His desire for the Word of God. “I’m addicted to Christ,” he said.

Illus – When we were in Africa and gave bibles to those who were coming to Christ, the crowd became too much and we had to leave, but one man chased the jeep until he got his treasure and then lifted his hands to God.

- You can’t move from passion to boredom and expect it to work, God knows better than that.

Matthew 12:43-44, Now when the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and does not find it. Then it says, “I will return to my house from which I came”; and when it comes, it finds it unoccupied, swept, and put in order.

- The purpose of removing the demon was so that the man could be filled by the Spirit of God.

Illus – What we need is to have passion for Christ. Let Him be the fire in your heart.

Conclusion

God is changing us by changing our passions. To extinguish the fires of the world, we need to have fire for Christ.