

Walking by the Spirit
Galatians 5:16-6:10
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SOWING & REAPING

God has established certain laws and principles which govern the universe. These principles and laws are like a program by which the world functions. These laws govern and affect the earth, either being beneficial or harmful (i.e. *laws and cycles of nature, principles of farming, work ethic and reward*). There are also principles which govern human relationships, principles which are consistent for all men whether they acknowledge God or not (i.e. *close friendships, marriage and family, diligent business practices*). The laws of nature and life are principles that anyone at anytime can experience and understand.

Living in an urban environment, we often feel removed from an agrarian culture. But these God-established principles are best seen from an agricultural viewpoint. My grandfather grew up on a farm in Tupelo, MS. At seventeen he joined the Army to fight in WWII, but afterward he settled in southern California where he planted a small garden in his backyard. As a kid I remember watching and learning how he prepared the soil, planted the seeds, cared for the crops and finally getting to taste the produce. It was something my grandfather loved doing and enjoyed sharing with his grandkids.

FIELDS OF LIFE

The apostle Paul illustrates the principle of *Sowing and Reaping* through the analogy of agriculture. To an agrarian society, the spiritual meaning of this practical principle formed immediate application.

^{ESV} **Galatians 6:7** *Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. ⁸ For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.*

This spiritual principle is a summarized application of how you do battle with the flesh and walk by the Spirit. It serves as both a principle and a warning from God that you are not to take your freedom in Christ as an opportunity to choose to sin when you want, and then choose God when you want. As we mentioned previously, freedom does not mean you can have the best of both the physical world and the spiritual world. It is deceptive thinking to believe you do not have to give up all your selfish, sinful desires because you can “make-up” for you sins by doing good things or simply asking forgiveness.

Paul clearly states you are not to “*be deceived, God is not mocked.*” He knows your heart and motive; He knows if you are walking by the Spirit or pretending. If you are a believer, you no longer are a slave to choosing only sin. Christ has freed you from sin’s bondage and the Holy Spirit empowers you not to give into the flesh. Even though there is a struggle, the flesh is not more powerful.

I. **CALL TO FREEDOM**
Galatians 5:1, 13-15

LAW / LEGALISM

LEGALISM is essentially the belief that on the basis of my performance, I can gain more with God.

LICENSE

“Christian freedom is freedom from sin, not freedom to sin. It is an unrestricted liberty of approach to God as His children, not an unrestricted liberty to wallow in our own selfishness.”¹

LOVE

Three direct commands to fight against your flesh: *Be Serving* (vs.13), *Be Watching* (vs.15), *Be Walking* (vs.16)

II. **COMMAND TO WALK**
Galatians 5:16, 18

“BE WALKING”

BEING LED

Is the Holy Spirit is the CONTROLLING INFLUENCE of your life?

III. **CONFLICT WITHIN**

Galatians 5:17, 19-21 *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...¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality,²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions,²¹ 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.*

FLESH vs. THE SPIRIT

Formidable foe

Think of two people tied together at the waist but pulling in opposite directions. This is like the struggle within the believer. The flesh is personified as a formidable foe. In your sinful flesh, Paul says, nothing good dwells. Your flesh is formidable because it's POWERFUL, ALWAYS PRESENT and EASILY ACTIVATED. For every true believer, there is a very real, internal conflict of your remaining sinful nature waging war against your new spiritual nature.

Romans 7:14 *For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin.¹⁵ For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.¹⁶ Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good.¹⁷ So now it is no*

¹ John Stott, *The Message of Galatians*, p.141

*longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.*¹⁸ *For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.*¹⁹ *For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.*²⁰ *Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.*²¹ *So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand.*²² *For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being,*²³ *but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.*²⁴ *Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*²⁵ *Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.*

In the book *The Enemy Within*, Kris Lundgaard quotes apologist G.K. Chesterton, “*If a rhinoceros were to enter this [room] now, there is no denying he would have great power here. But I should be the first to rise and assure him that he had not authority whatever’... The only moral, authoritative rule over believers is the kingdom and reign of God. Indwelling sin is a usurper to the throne.*”² Don’t underestimate the powerful influence of the sinful flesh, and don’t mistake power for authority. The fact that the indwelling sin has influencing power does not mean it has the right to rule authoritatively in your life.

Relentless foe

The flesh is relentless leading to a struggle for power and controlling influence over your life. The tension is often who will “win out” in the battle for your desires. That is why you might feel like a PING PONG BALL BATTED BACK AND FORTH between your desire to live spiritually, only to be battered by the flesh to give into its indulgences (Rom.7:20-21).

This tension isn’t felt by an unbeliever because they are still slaves to one nature. There is no other option for them because it is the result of being born a slave to sin. Since they only sow to their flesh, their actions are never pleasing to God (Rom 3:10-12). They might struggle in their conscience but it is only a fight within their own flesh. But for you, this is where the battleground for your heart is fought.

Captivating foe

The goal of the flesh is ENTRAPMENT. It wants to lead you back into slavery, back into guilt, shame and fallen away from grace. Since it hates God, it resists anything that has to do with God.

It deceives and disguises itself to allure you with its painful hook. “*He is subtle, alluring, patient when he needs to be, pushy when he has to be, and he knows our weaknesses. He has one goal in mind and is unscrupulous in his pursuit of it.*”³

FLESHLY PRODUCE

² Kris Lundgaard, *The Enemy Within*, p.29

³ Lundgaard, p.57

Paul likes to point out the obvious and he does so by listing the “works of the flesh.” The list here is not exhaustive, but merely representative of the particular sins plaguing the Galatian churches. They simply identify the outward manifestations of the sinful heart.

- SEXUAL SINS: sexual immorality (*porneia*), impurity (unclean, filthy), sensuality (debauchery, no shame)
- IDOLATROUS SINS: idolatry (worshiping anything other than the one, true God), sorcery (*pharmakeia*, hallucinations, witchcraft, magic)
- RELATIONAL SINS: enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy (degenerative progression of disunity among the Galatians)
- EXCESSIVE SINS: drunkenness, orgies (carousing, excessive partying)

Those whose habit and lifestyle is characterized by these type of sins will result in not receiving the inheritance of God’s promised kingdom. A Christian might fall from grace⁴ and back into one of these sins, but they should not remain there. Some of you have been saved from a past lifestyle of these sins. Thanks be to the grace of God you are no longer enslaved to them! But you know the very real danger of slipping back into their seductive habits. As obvious as these sins are, there are others not listed which wield their power against the desires of the Spirit (Eph.5:4).

Yet how often do you try to curb fleshly desires through legalism? Do you try to set up regulations, restraints, or devices to try and keep you from giving into temptation? Some of those restraints might work for a time, but they cannot kill the flesh. But you cannot fight the flesh by the flesh. Trying to conquer the flesh through natural resources and legalistic means will never result in ultimate freedom from these sinful products.

IV. CHARACTER PRODUCED

Galatians 5:22-25 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.²⁴ And 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.*

SPIRITUAL PRODUCE

There is no negotiating for peace with your flesh. The only course of action is to DESTROY it. *How is the powerful influence of your sinful flesh overcome? **By the more powerful work of the Holy Spirit.*** It is not anything more than walking by the Spirit, nor is it anything less. *“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”* (Rom. 8:11). Walking by the Spirit means the fruit of the Spirit is replacing the dying habits of sin with the fresh produce of the Spirit. It is this organic, spontaneous production by the Spirit to conquer fleshly desires and maturing you in

⁴ Galatians 5:4

SANCTIFICATION. There is one Spirit who produces His fruit from within, inward qualities which ripen through the process of practice, testing and time.

Paul gained this understanding from Jesus Christ Himself. Jesus said it was to our advantage that He should leave so our Helper, the Holy Spirit, could come to perform His work.⁵ In the middle of His conversation of the coming of the Holy Spirit, Jesus also uses the analogy of fruitful production.

John 15:1-5 *"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. 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."*

Walking by the Spirit is the conduit that keeps you abiding in Christ. Just as an electric transformer transfer electric energy between circuits through electromagnetic induction, so the Holy Spirit transfers God's power to activate your obedience.

So if you are struggling with anger, you have the power of the Holy Spirit to practice patience. You don't need to get patience, or *gain more of* patience, but start practicing the patience already supplied to you by the Spirit. The more you practice patience the more you will see the fuse of your anger lengthened, resulting in less outbursts of anger.

Paul qualifies that against the Spirit's work "*there is no law.*" In other words, you cannot regulate, mandate or legislate the fruit of the Spirit. If you try to do so, then you've only succeeded in enacting MORALISM. Trying to produce something spiritual through natural means will only lead to moralistic, therapeutic deism.

CRUCIFIED DESIRES

The flesh produces powerful desires. Any sin, especially deep-rooted or long habitual sins have their influential tentacles wrapped around the recesses of your heart's desires. So when you are going toe-to-toe with your flesh, remember what has already happened to sin's authority.

By receiving the gift of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, you consented to have these sins crucified to the cross on Jesus Christ. As a result, they lost their enslaving stranglehold on you. The word "*passions*" means *strong, suffering desires*, often linked with sexual sins and their stronghold on a person. No matter how strong you think the desire and passion is, the power of Jesus Christ is greater and the Spirit of God is more powerful in overcoming these desires. The war has already been won, but battles will still need to be fought.

⁵ John 14:15-14; 16:7-15

What happens when you fail or fall into sin? Get up and fall back in step with the Spirit. "Though a righteous man falls seven times, he will get up, but the wicked will stumble into ruin." (Prov.24:16)⁶

CONCLUSION

In your journey of the **Worthy Walk**, it is necessary to fall in line with the Holy Spirit. Just as your life in Christ began by the work of the Spirit, so your life in Christ can only continue by the energizing power of the Spirit. *"So to 'walk by the Spirit' is deliberately to walk along the path or according to the line which the Holy Spirit lays down. The Spirit 'leads' us; but we are to 'walk by' Him or according to His rule."*⁷

You cannot expect anything spiritual to be produced in your life if you are not walking by the Spirit in the means of His grace: **Scripture, prayerful communion and worship with your church body**. These are the consistent means by which you learn the Spirit's desires and through which He produces in you His eternal quality of life.

*"This will be seen in our whole way of life – in the leisure occupations we pursue, the books we read and the friendships we make. Above all in what older authors called 'a diligent use of the means of grace', that is, in a disciplined practice of prayer and Scripture meditation, in fellowship with believers who provoke us to love and good works, in keeping the Lord's day as the Lord's day, and in attending public worship and the Lord's Supper. In all these ways we occupy ourselves in spiritual things. It is not enough to yield passively to the Spirit's control; we must also walk actively in the Spirit's way. Only so will the fruit of the Spirit appear."*⁸

⁶ Holman Christian Standard Version

⁷ Stott, p.153

⁸ *Ibid.*, 154