

TAKE A HIKE

GALATIANS 5:16-25

16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 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. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. 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. 22 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. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. (ESV)

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Introduction

In last week's sermon, "Life in the Spirit", I introduced this passage as Paul's example of living in the flesh or living in the Spirit. While it may seem like I am doubling up on this message, I want to focus on the message of the 16th and 25th verses; "*walk by the Spirit*" and "*keep in step with the Spirit.*" The opening of this passage and the closing of this chapter focus on the believer "taking a hike with the Spirit."

"Walking in the Spirit" is a common theme in the Old Testament and for the Apostle Paul:

Isaiah 42:5 Thus saith God the LORD, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein:

Ezekiel 36:27 And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Romans 8:4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Illustration

My father was severely handicapped. The results of tuberculosis had ravaged his body and just breathing was a chore for him. But when I got to the age to become

a Boy Scout, he became an assistant Scoutmaster. I always loved it when the troop was going on a camp-out. We would pack our belongings, our food and survival gear and head into the Rocky Mountains around Denver. My dad would spend the day with us, then drive back home as he could not sleep on the ground. Then, early in the morning, he would get up and drive back to the camp just so he could spend time with my brother and me. Walking and sleeping in the wild was a problem for him, but his desire was to do as much as he could with the body he had.

One of my favorite times was on Saturday when the troop would “take a hike.” The scoutmaster would say, get your gear, make sure you take your canteen as we are going all the way to the top of that mountain peak. Along the way we were instructed on what to watch out for on our journey as we would walk through the forest. I can still hear our leader’s voices teaching us; “That is poison ivy, stay away from that.” “Those mushrooms will be good for our dinner tonight, but stay away from these as they are poison.” “That is a beaver dam and you can see the beavers have been working in this area. You can see the teeth marks on the tree stumps where they chopped down the sapling to use in the dam or on their den.” All along the way they encouraged us to keep walking, eventually we will achieve our goal of reaching that peak.

As a city boy, I would get caught-up in the experience and exhilaration of the journey, learning all I could about my surroundings. At times the scoutmaster would say to me “Bob, you need to keep up with the rest of us. You need to “keep in step”.

Consider yourself on a “hike” today; the hike of your life. Sometimes the trail is well marked and the way is easy and other times the way is difficult and you have to “hack out” a trail in order to get to your destination. We began this journey the day we were saved by the work of Jesus Christ and our acceptance of Him as our Savior. This hike will take up the rest of our earthly lives as our final destination is heaven. Instead of a scoutmaster teaching and encouraging you along the way, for the Christian that is the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit

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

There were many distractions on my journey through the mountains. Beautiful vistas, wildlife, flora and the other scouts I hung around with. While each of these could be beautiful and satisfying, there were also unseen dangers that could lead me off the path and into danger. Loose rocks, exposed tree roots could easily cause you to stumble and fall. The wildlife is beautiful to look at, but they were not tame and could inflict injuries. And I found out, some of the other scouts were not always the best examples for me to follow either.

As long as I walked close by the scoutmaster, I would be safe and I would be in “ear shot” to learn so much more than wandering off by myself.

Paul is encouraging the believers in Galatia not to wander through their life journey, but to stay close and “walk by the Spirit.” Keeping close to the Spirit, would help avoid the pitfalls and dangers lurking around every corner of the journey through this life.

There is a battle going On

17 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.

The facts of the Christian life are simple. Just because you have a relationship with Jesus, does not mean that your life will be stress-free, and without troubles. The Christian will not find Utopia on planet earth, and the sooner we come to that realization, the easier it is to adjust to all that life can throw at you.

However, Paul places the blame of a failed Christian life directly on the shoulders of the believer. When the believer follows the wrong trail and looks to satisfy the desires of their own flesh, failure is imminent. Following the desires of our own flesh is at war with the leading of the Holy Spirit.

18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Let me be clear here, the believer does not need to be in a hopeless tug-of-war between the flesh and the Spirit. When the believer yields their heart to the Spirit and the Spirit has an active role in the believer’s life, then turning away from the fleshly desires is easier.

The verb “led” indicates voluntary submission; the believer decides by whom he will be led—either by his flesh or by the Spirit. The Spirit-led person is **not under the law**. The Christian does not need the restraints of the law because his moral life is governed by the Spirit.¹

We can draw the conclusion that it is impossible to be led by the Holy Spirit of God and try to observe the Law. There must have been Judaizers in their midst and Paul is helping the believers understand that with the death and resurrection of Jesus, that the Law and Prophets have been fulfilled. Paul is referring back to his statement in Galatians 5:14;

¹⁴For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.²

¹ *King James Version study Bible* . (1997). (electronic ed., Ga 5:18). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² *The Holy Bible: King James Version*. (2009). (Electronic Edition of the 1900 Authorized Version., Ga 5:14). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

Living a life led by the Spirit finds no law to condemn those works. The law therefore will not be broken and no charge would be laid at the believers feet.

What Does Our Sinful Nature Desire?

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.

Paul's listing of the works or deeds of the flesh encompass three main areas:

Sexual - sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality

Religious - idolatry, sorcery –

Relationship with man - enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, 21 envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these.

As we discussed last week, Paul lists the works of the flesh and may I say that they are not very flattering as a description of anyone, much less a born-again believer. Some of the King's English is difficult to understand as most of us do not speak it. I will reread this passage using the Common English Bible.

19The actions that are produced by selfish motives are obvious, since they include sexual immorality, moral corruption, doing whatever feels good, 20idolatry, drug use and casting spells, hate, fighting, obsession, losing your temper, competitive opposition, conflict, selfishness, group rivalry, 21jealousy, drunkenness, partying, and other things like that. I warn you as I have already warned you, that those who do these kinds of things won't inherit God's kingdom.

I don't think we need to go through each of these. I sure wouldn't want to be labeled as falling into this selfishness.

What Does The Holy Spirit Desire?

22 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.

These are the actions I want to be associated with. No need to look at another translation here to understand what Paul is trying to say...it is pretty easy.

A Spirit filled life is a life in which "there is no law."

To The Victor

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. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

...*those who belong to Christ Jesus* - The believer is a servant to Christ Jesus and therefore belongs to Christ Jesus.”

1 Corinthians 6:19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

...*have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires* – the example that Paul provokes in this passage is outstanding. To get the idea across to the reader, Paul compares by vivid imagery, the death by crucifixion and compares it to the end of the fleshly “*passions and desires*” within the believer. They are dead in the sense that they no longer reign over the believer. The Holy Spirit is there to help us not become in bondage to the works of the flesh.

If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit – We now come back to the original argument in verse 16; “*But I say, walk by the Spirit.*”

Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another –

Sin is a reality in every Christian’s life. “If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us,” John warns believers. In fact, he goes on to say, “If we say that we have not sinned, we make [God] a liar, and His word is not in us” (1 John 1:8, 10). “We all stumble in many ways” (James 3:2).

If Christians were not subject to sin they would not need “the full armor of God” in order to “stand firm against the schemes of the devil” and “to resist in the evil day” (Eph. 6:11, 13). Nor would they need to heed James’s warning about being tempted and carried away by their own lusts or his admonition to put “aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness” (James 1:14, 21).³

Conclusion

For many Christians today, walking in the Spirit is a difficult task even on the best days. But, “He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.”

When I was in Boy Scouts, I learned quickly that in order to reach the end of our hike, I was safer and better informed when I was in the presence of the Scoutmaster.

I have also learned that in order for me to reach the end of this journey of life that I am safer and better informed when I am in the presence of the Holy Spirit.

³ MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1983). *Galatians* (pp. 173–174). Chicago: Moody Press.

On a side note. I learned from my dad that even when the world and your own body tell you that you cannot continue to serve the LORD, take every opportunity to show the world just how wrong it is.

The world will fight against you living a Spirit filled life, but just remember, “greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.