

Matt Kruse - NBC
2/26/17 AM Service

Led by the Spirit – Part 1
Galatians 5:16-24
Series: No Other Gospel - #21

Congregational Prayer:

Introduction: Take your Bibles and join me in Galatians 5, Galatians chapter 5.

The story is told of a missionary in Africa who got lost one day in the jungle. There was nothing around him but bush and a few cleared places here and there. He finally found a native's hut and asked if the man could get him out of the jungle. The native said he could and the missionary excitedly said – Great, show me the way! The native simply said – Walk – and so they walked and hacked their way through unmarked jungle for more than an hour. The further they went with no sign of anything but more jungle the missionary became concerned that the native didn't really know where they were heading. And so he said – “Are you sure this is the way? Where is the path?” The native calmly responded – “Bwana, in this place there is no path. I am the path.”

As we come back to Galatians 5 this morning, we can kind of feel like this missionary – lost in the jungle – following a native, and unsure if he really knows the way. Paul has told us to stand firm in our liberty in Christ. Do not submit to the calls of man-made religion which beckon you to the deceitful system of earning a right standing before God. You don't need to shore up what Jesus has fully taken care of. If you are in Christ by grace through faith – then stand firm in that liberty by resisting the legalistic tendencies of your heart and the legalistic teachings of so many in the professed church. And then Paul warned us about the dangers of our liberty in Christ, in that our resident old-man nature – our flesh – is looking for every way possible to use our freedom in Christ as an opportunity to lead us into more sin. This antinomianism – or anti-law – position slyly tells us that since you're free from the Law in Christ and your forgiven of sin in Christ, then by all means don't worry about sinning all the more. If Law has no more say in your life and if in Christ you are forgiven of all your sin – then just let go and live it up.

We've spent the last few weeks debunking these ideas as we have considered the truths of Galatians 5. But, we could easily feel as though we are not sure now what to do in order to live out this freedom we have in Christ. We are to serve one another through love and so fulfill the whole law, but the Law is not to be over us as a taskmaster telling us what to do. We also are not to use our freedom in Christ as an opportunity for the flesh to continue in sin – so how in the world are we supposed to find our way out of this jungle? How do we live out our freedom in Christ as we lovingly serve one another? What hope do we have to do that? How do we know the way? Well, the answer from verse 16 is – God the Holy Spirit is the way. We can live out our freedom in Christ through the empowering work of the Spirit of God. And we can know what each step looks like because He is the path. He will lead us and He will empower us as He

resides within us so that we walk rightly in our freedom in Christ. He is the power and He is the path. He enables us and He guides us. Let's read Galatians 5:16-24.

You will notice that there is only one command in that whole section of Scripture, but then this one command is followed by a whole bunch of explanation of the facts. So, the command is that we must walk by the Spirit. And then there are 8 verses following which explain the why's and the how's of walking by the Spirit of God. This command in verse 16 also rests upon the foundation of what has preceded it in chapter 5. So, we are free in Christ – free from the law, and free from fleshly indulgence. We must then – in light of and because of that freedom – walk by the Spirit of God.

This command is also in direct contrast to the biting and devouring and consuming that was happening in the Galatian churches. There has been theological controversy and false teaching, and this false teaching has not produced peace, but discord – which it always does by the way. But it doesn't have to be that way in the Church. We truly can love one another and serve one another – and we can do this by walking by the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God is the third member of the Triune Godhead. God eternally exists as one God in three persons. The Spirit of God was promised by Jesus, the Son, when he was about to ascend and leave his disciples. He said that in his absence the Comforter would come. And we find out from Romans 8 that He comes and indwells us at the moment of our conversion from being lost in sin to being found and alive in Christ by His grace through faith in His finished work. The Spirit never leaves the child of God and He is in us for the purpose of empowering and guiding us in the process of sanctification. Jesus Christ is the answer to our need for justification, and the Spirit of God is the answer to our need for sanctification. He teaches and instructs us the words and ways of Jesus and He leads us along in killing sin and putting on the virtues of Christ. And so, if you are a child of God – born again to a new and living hope – then you have the Spirit of God within you, and Paul calls you to flesh out your freedom in Christ by walking according to the Spirit. The text before us directly answers the question of why. So, we are called to walk by the Spirit of God, and the next 8 verses tell us why we should do this. That is the question we are going to answer this morning. Why should we walk by the Spirit? But the text also indirectly answers the question of how. How are we to walk by the Spirit? That is the question we will seek to answer next week.

The reality for the believer who has been born of the Spirit is that they now have the tremendous opportunity to walk by the Spirit. This idea of walking by the Spirit is something we will tease out of the text a bit more next week as we deal with the how's of walking by the Spirit – but for our purposes this morning – walking by the Spirit means that we have a lifestyle which is characterized by following the Spirit and allowing Him to do His work in us. It has the idea of empowerment and of direction. Walking by the Spirit is a life lived in the power provided by the Spirit, and it is also a life lived following the direction of the Spirit as He leads us along. So, the question for this morning is – why should you care to make this your practice? The text lays out 4 reasons why we should walk by the Spirit of God.

I. Because He Protects Us – vs. 16b-17

- a. The first is found immediately after the command in verse 16. We should walk by the Spirit because He protects us. What he protects us from is the fulfillment of the desires of the flesh. Walking by the Spirit will put you instantly at odds with the flesh and will guarantee that you do not fulfill its desires. The flesh wars against the Spirit inside the believer and the Spirit wars against the flesh. To be clear when we talk about the flesh – we are not simply talking about your physical body and all the natural urges and desires that come from being human. That is sometimes how the word is used in the Scripture, but we can clearly see from our own context that this flesh is something more. So the works of the flesh are described in verses 19-21 and they are much worse than the fleshly desires for physical things. The flesh in this text is obviously speaking about the natural man – the sinful old self which is identified with Adam. It is what is described in Ephesians 2:1-3 – flip there and see how the old man is described. *Read Eph. 2:1-3*
- b. That is our word in our text – the passions or desires of the flesh. These are the anti-God desires which are rooted down deep in our original rebellion against Him. Having rejected Him as Creator God we as sinful mankind have gone our own way and become our own gods and worshiped and served the creation in the place of the Creator. When that happens – all kinds of sinful, godless lusts and passions flow out of the heart bent on rebellion and rejection of God.
- c. When God brings the new birth to your soul through the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, you are born again to a new and a living hope. This same Holy Spirit gives you new life by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, and you are liberated in Christ from the penalty of sin and from the power of sin, but not from the presence of sin. So, you face each day with the reality of being in Christ Jesus, but still having the old man – the flesh – to deal with. This is why your liberty in Christ can be dangerous. Without the empowering and sanctifying and protecting work of the Spirit of God you will slip into license because your flesh is always lurking, looking for an opportunity to beckon you to follow its desires.
- d. Notice how verse 17 explains this tension so well. The desires of the flesh are against the Spirit and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh. This is actually a verbal phrase here – so the technical translation would say that the flesh desires against the Spirit and the Spirit desires against the flesh. There is no common ground here. There is not a set of 30 desires which is somewhere in no man's land that both the Spirit and the flesh use to direct you in life. No, your flesh desires the exact opposite of the Spirit of God 100% of the time. If you follow the lead of your flesh you will go against the desires of the Spirit of God for you. If you follow the lead of the Spirit of God you will go against the desires of the flesh. In fact, the end of verse 16 literally says that you will not bring its desires to completion. You will not bring them to their end – they will not find their satisfaction or their gratification in your behavior.
- e. This is how the Spirit of God protects you. As you walk in Him and by Him and according to Him you will find that the desires of the flesh no longer are fulfilled in you. Notice the mystery of the human will interacting with the work of the Spirit of God here. The believer must make the choice to walk in accordance with

the Spirit for the Spirit to keep them from the desires of the flesh. The Spirit of God is not going to zap you with a robot like response which becomes separated from your own will. However, as we saw last week – the Spirit of God has so changed you and transformed you from the inside by causing you to be born again, that your desires now are changed if you are in Christ. So, in this moment, if you are a child of God – there is something resonating deep inside of you with this text. You read these words and you long to walk by the Spirit so that you can stop gratifying the lusts of the flesh. You know the struggle between flesh and Spirit. You know the pain of this spiritual tug of war, and these words are like balm to your soul and like fuel to your spiritual fire. Your will has been reshaped and is being reshaped by the Spirit's work. You must choose to walk by the Spirit of God, but if you are in Christ you will now want to choose to walk by the Spirit of God. So, instead of walking in the flesh and fulfilling its desires and instead of letting your liberty in Christ feed a spirit of license which only advances the works of the flesh in you – these verses call you to walk in the Spirit because He protects you from the flesh and empowers you to walk in Christ.

II. Because He Frees Us – vs. 18

- a. We also must walk by the Spirit because He frees us. Verse 18 says – But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. This is the second of 4 synonyms used in this text to talk about our relationship with the Spirit of God. So in verse 16 we are called to walk by the Spirit or according to the Spirit. Here we are called to be led by the Spirit. In verse 25 we are said to live by the Spirit and then we are exhorted to keep in step with the Spirit. All of them have their own nuances, but they are pieces of a mosaic that when put together give us the striking picture. We walk by Him, we are led by Him, we live by Him, and we are to keep in step with Him. In other words, our relationship with the Spirit of God is the key to a sanctified and holy life.
- b. Verse 18 in particular explains to us the consequence of being led by the Spirit. If we follow the Spirit's way and go the direction He calls us to then we will not be under the law. This further defines our relationship with the Spirit of God who dwells within us. We are not walking next to Him as though He is a peer, nor are we walking in front of Him as though we are showing Him the way, but He is leading us. He is out in front. To use the words of the African Native, He is saying to us – out here there are no paths, I am the path. In other words, there is no law to follow to guarantee that you are going to produce holiness and live in a way that is pleasing to God. You do not need a list of 12 things to do every day to make yourself holy. What you need is the Spirit of God at work in you to lead you more deeply into sanctification in Christ.
- c. This is huge for these Galatian believers because they were being called by these false teachers to follow the Law. They wanted to put the Law in front of them and tell them that if they followed the lead of the Law – if the Law led them – then they would bolster their justification before God and they would advance in their sanctification before God. But this is legalism which ends up condemning you before God because you are unable to keep the whole law because you are

weak in your sinful flesh to do so. This again, is why Christ came. He came to do in the flesh what we were too weak to do, so that he could then die to sin in the flesh and bear the penalty our sin had earned.

- d. You do not then need to be led by the Law. You have been freed from the external demands of the Law by and in Christ. That is what Romans 7:4 makes known to us when it says, “you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God.” Having been identified with Christ through faith, we no longer belong to the Law and its external demands of righteousness. We now belong to Christ so that we may bear fruit for God. When we walk by the Spirit we are reckoning this to be true and we are living in light of it. When we do, we are freed from the Law.
- e. The insinuation of verse 18 is that if you are walking in the flesh, then you are under the law. I am saying that because if you are led by the Spirit then you are not under the law, so the opposite is also true – if you are walking or living consistently according to your flesh then you are under the law. This might look like religious legalism which attempts to earn God’s favor through law keeping. Or this might look like flesh-driven license which tries to get rid of law keeping, but only ends up living in the unending appetites of sinful flesh. Both legalism and license are expressions of living according to the flesh and they both end up in the same place. They both place us under the Law. In legalism we are under the Law in the sense that it condemns us for not keeping it in every way. In license we are under the Law in that it condemns us by leading us to all kinds of wicked expressions of our flesh which are in turn condemned by God’s right and righteous Law. So neither legalism nor license are the answer to getting out from under the condemning authority of the law of God. Only the Spirit enables us through Christ to escape this condemnation of the Law. Only the Spirit can lead us out of this slavery and into the joyous freedom which is ours in Christ Jesus. If we are led by the Spirit, we will not be under the condemning judgment of the Law. This is indeed a compelling reason calling us to walk by the Spirit and not by the flesh.

III. Because He Produces Fruit in Us – vs. 19-23

- a. This reason is bolstered by the truth found in verses 19-23. We must also walk by the Spirit because he produces fruit in us. This fruit of the Spirit’s work in us is contrasted with the works of the flesh in verses 19-21. And the overwhelming point of this vice and virtue list is to paint a realistic picture of the great difference between walking by the flesh and walking by the Spirit. The believer in Christ has the opportunity to do both, and this list paints the ugly reality of the works of the flesh. This is contrasted with the fruit of the Spirit to show you the better way. There is an infinitely greater way to live in this life and only the Spirit can produce this in you as the fruit of his labor as he tends to your spiritual garden.
- b. This idea, by the way, is in direct contrast to the overwhelming belief held by most people in the world about the inherent goodness of mankind. The

overwhelming belief is that man is basically good in his heart and most people are decent people. This belief carries through to say that people do really bad things like commit major crimes and hurt others because their environments led them to those choices. If we could work together as a society to improve people's financial situation and their housing and their food and their general level of living, then we would rid ourselves of crime and violent behavior – and the works of the flesh detailed in this list. But the truth given to us in the Scriptures is that mankind does not have an environment problem but a heart problem. We are polluted at our very core, and so when we go through each day according to our sinful flesh we produce the works of the flesh, like what we read here. To do anything different, we don't simply need an environment change, but a whole heart and nature change. This is what the Spirit offers. This is the new birth in Jesus Christ. Because of this change of nature in us, He is able to completely transform us by His gracious work to say no to our sinful and fleshly lusts and to say yes to His desires to do good through love and to serve others. So, the obvious thought here is – you should walk by the Spirit because he produces the superior fruit in us.

- c. Look at the two lists for a second. Next week we will get more into the specifics of the lists, but just notice some stark differences between the lists so that you see how much superior the fruit of the Spirit is to the works of the flesh.
 - i. Different Natures
 1. They have different natures. The works of the flesh are plural – they are “works” of the flesh. But the fruit of the Spirit is singular – it is a fruit of the Spirit's work in your life to have these things come out of you. What this means is that the possibilities of the expression of our evil hearts in various attitudes, thoughts, and actions is almost limitless. So Paul uses the plural “works” and at the end of his list of 15 things he uses a catch all phrase of “and things like these.” This is not by any means an exhaustive list, but rather a beginner list. These are some of the core expressions of the work of the flesh in and through us. These are just some of the ways our sinful rebellion against God comes out of us. It helps to take in the whole list before parsing it out and looking at each word. So, just let the weight of this list set upon your spiritual chest for a minute and overwhelm your soul with the evil that is resident in your old sinful nature. These things, and a million more, are all in you in the sense that you are capable of all of them. It is a filthy list of darkness and evil. It is a list that begins with sexual deviancy, which we know from Romans 1 is one of the chief ways in which mankind expresses its rebellion against God. We throw off God's clear way for purity, we shuck His design and we invent all kinds of evil expressions. Next the list gives two of the core expressions of religious deviancy – idolatry and sorcery. We reject the one true God and we replace Him with other gods and with other ways to be led through life. Then the list rattles off 8

ways we destroy our relationships with others as we walk according to the flesh – enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy. Not only have we rejected God but now we reject others as we make ourselves the god of our own little world and we demand others to worship us like we think we deserve. And when they don't, these wicked responses flow freely from our heart. Then the list ends with 2 descriptions of mankind's behavior related to drink – drunkenness and orgies – or carousing – or partying in ways not appropriate to talk about in front of children. This is what the flesh calls you to. Your sinful nature walks in step with this drum beat calling you to march headlong into the eternal condemnation of sin.

2. But the fruit of the Spirit is different. It is a singular fruit expressed in these 9 attitudes and behaviors. This again is not an exhaustive list of the only ways that the Spirit works in you, but it is an essential list. This is the essence of His fruit in your life. As he tends to your new nature and as you walk according to His leading, these things will be the essence of what comes out of you. And all of these things will be in some way present in you. So, while the flesh has a sporadic and wild production of limitless evil, the Spirit has a focused and orderly set of fruits he is producing. It is like the difference between the weeds in a field and the carefully planted and tended crop of the farmer. The weeds will look for and find any way and any place possible to creep up and thrive. But the farmer works hard at tending the piece of ground to make sure that it can produce the fruit he desires. The Spirit is like the farmer and the flesh is like the cursed weeds. Their natures are completely different. As you look over the list of these 9 expressions of the Spirit's fruit you again should be overwhelmed by the totality before parsing out the specifics. Let these 9 things rush like a cleansing wave through your soul. Though your flesh seeks to destroy you through the various expressions of evil, the Spirit offers hope to you. There is a different and a better way. You do not have to be the person described in verses 19-21. With the Spirit of Christ resident in you, you can now produce this fruit. Who wouldn't want to be a person known for these things?
3. Notice that the header of the list is love. This is the self-sacrificing attitude and action which is always looking for any way possible to serve others. This is the chief fruit of the Spirit in you. Romans 5:5 describes God's love as being poured into our hearts by the Spirit who has been given to us. This love of God then changes us as it overwhelms our hearts and calls us to love others as we have been loved. The core virtue of the true child of God is an unending awe at the great love he or she has been shown, and the fleshing

out of that love to those around them. Remember how in verse 13 we were told not to use our liberty in Christ as an opportunity for fleshly indulgence, but rather through love we were to serve one another with this liberty. Well, this will only happen in you if you are walking according to the Spirit of God. Love in you will be the product of the Spirit's work in you. This will then give way to the other expressions of the Spirit's work – joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. All of those are expressions of love and they together are the fruit of the Spirit's work. All of these will be present in you if you are walking by the Spirit. Some may be seen more prominently, but they will all be there because these are what the Spirit produces in us as we walk according to His leading and empowering and sanctifying work in our lives.

ii. Different Outcomes

1. These two also have different outcomes. So, they have a different nature and a different outcome. Paul warns us in verse 21 about the works of the flesh. He has already warned them before and he warns them again. If these things are your pattern and your regular practice, you can be sure that you are not a child of God. This harkens back to Jesus' words about a bad tree producing bad fruit and a good tree producing good fruit. Your attitudes and behaviors and words that come out of your heart give evidence of the nature of your heart. So, if you are continuing in the regular practice of the works of the flesh you can be assured that you are not in Christ and therefore will face the eternal judgment which will place you outside the eternal Kingdom of God. These vices have no place in God's kingdom, and those who continue to practice them in this life so that they have not been born again by the powerful work of the Gospel of Jesus. To be clear here – when the text says, “those who do such things” – it is not talking about those who have ever done these things, or those who occasionally do these things. But rather, it is describing those who continually practice these things with no sign of the godly sorrow over sin which is described in 2 Corinthians 7. So, the true believer will still struggle with sin as it is expressed in these ways – which is why we are told to walk by the Spirit so that we can overcome and defeat these desires – but the point of the text is that the believer will struggle because the Spirit will be at war within him against the flesh. The unbeliever will feel remorse and will wish for a change, but he will not know the intense war of the Spirit of God pulling him out of the muck and mire of sinful desires to pull him onto the shore of Spirit-filled living. That is a uniquely Christian experience.

2. Notice that the outcome of the Spirit's fruit in us is completely different than the outcome of the works of the flesh. There is no law against the fruit of the Spirit. In other words, you are not breaking any laws of God or man by having this fruit in your life. If you live according to the Spirit you will not be condemned by any law!

IV. Because We Belong to Jesus Christ – vs. 24

- a. Let me point you to the last reason which should compel you to walk by the Spirit. In verse 24, true believers are described as those who belong to Jesus Christ. What this means in verse 24 is that they are those who have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. In other words, in coming to Jesus and being made one of His own, you have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.
- b. The Spirit's work in you to give you victory over the desires of the flesh and to cause His fruit to come out of you is totally dependent upon your belonging to Christ. Your flesh is placed on the execution stake because you are in Jesus Christ, and the Spirit then is able to cause you to walk in the newness of life – the new man – which is yours in Jesus Christ. The work of the Spirit is dependent upon the work of Jesus Christ. The work of Jesus Christ is furthered in you by the work of the Spirit of God. So, you should respond to this by seeking to walk by the Spirit because you belong to Jesus Christ and you have crucified your flesh with all of its passions and desires. Enabled by and in Christ, you now can be empowered by the Spirit. They go hand in hand. To be mature in Christ you must have both. So, if you know and claim the work of Christ on your behalf, and if you have taken up your cross and followed Jesus, then now walk by the Spirit because only he is able to empower and guide you in this walk of faith.

Conclusion:

Come, Holy Spirit, heav'nly Dove,
With all thy quick'ning powers;
Kindle a flame of sacred love
In these cold hearts of ours.

Look how we grovel here below,
Fond of these trifling toys;
Our souls can neither fly nor go
To reach eternal joys.

In vain we tune our formal songs,
In vain we strive to rise;
Hosannahs languish on our tongues,
And our devotion dies.

Dear Lord! and shall we ever lie
At this poor dying rate?

Our love so faint, so cold to thee,
And thine to us so great?

Come, Holy Spirit, heav'nly Dove,
With all thy quick'ning powers
Come, shed abroad a Savior's love,
And that shall kindle ours.

- Isaac Watts, Hymns, Book II, Hymn 84