

November 12, 2017

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Sermon Series - By Grace You Have Been Saved (Week 7)

Sermon Title and Text - Sanctification: Walk By The Spirit – Galatians 5:16-24

Sermon Points:

Introduction: Freed from the Law, not Free to Sin (Galatians 5:1-6;13)

Sanctification is a work of GOD and MAN in which

1) God sets us apart as holy and

2) Helps us progress in our victory over sin.

1. Walk by the Spirit (vv.16-18)

2. Works of the Flesh vs. Fruits of the Spirit (vv.19-24)

Application: How Do We Walk By The Spirit? The Means of Grace!

Corporate Prayer:

Father, thank you for the Spirit that lives in us. Even as we rest in our justification by faith, help us to fight the desires of our flesh by the power of the Spirit. Please continue to do your work in our hearts so that as we wage war on our sin, by your grace, we might produce the fruits of the Spirit. Amen.

Welcome to Sojourners Church this morning. My name is Nick Roen, and I am the Pastor for Worship and Youth. Normally I'm leading the worship through singing over there from the keyboard, but today I get to preach. I love it when we get to switch up our normal roles here at Sojourners, because one of the things it says is that the work of the Holy Spirit in our corporate gatherings is NOT dependent on any one person. We know this in our heads, but sometimes it could be easy for us to start to think that Sunday's are powerful because of who is doing what. But what is so glorious about the gifts that God has given us in the local church is that it becomes so clear that it is God's work by his spirit that helps us. So when Jon or Val or the Shells lead worship, we WORSHIP and God moves. And when any of the elders preach, God moves through his word. The help comes through His Spirit.

And that is one of the main things we are going to see in our text today. The topic is sanctification, and what our text in Galatians 5 so beautifully shows is that our call in fighting sin is not to white-knuckle it and try harder, and not to give up and do nothing, but rather to walk by the Spirit. That's our call, and that's what we're going to look at today. So let me pray, and then we will get going.

So for the past 6 weeks, we have been in our series on the order of Salvation called "By Grace You Have Been Saved". I just want to remind us of the glorious works of God that we have seen so far. **So** before the foundations of the world, God predestined us to be his children in Christ. In love, he has chosen every single one of us who would put our faith and trust in Jesus. **And** then, through the general call of the gospel, he called us specifically and irresistibly to himself by the power of his Spirit working on our hearts. **And** because of that call, he caused us to be born again to a living hope. He made our dead hearts alive, he gave our blind eyes sight, and inclined our affections to Jesus. **And** because of that, we freely responded by repenting of our sin and placing our faith in Jesus alone. And the faith that saved us was a gift of God himself, so that no man should boast, but rather might give all glory and honor to him who is alone worthy. **And** the moment we placed our faith and trust in Christ, we were justified in Him. Indeed, not only were our sins totally and completely forgiven because of his substitutionary death on the cross, but we were also declared positively righteous because of the perfect righteousness on Christ that has been credited to our account. And therefore, because of this justification by faith alone, God views us a perfect when he looks at us because

he sees Christ. **And** not only has he justified us, but he has also adopted us as sons and daughters, not because he had to, but because he wanted to! So now we are children of the God of the universe, perfectly loved, perfectly cared for, no matter the circumstances of this life. What an amazing process we've seen so far.

So that brings us to where we are today: sanctification. And I want to start by just giving a brief definition of sanctification. What are we talking about? So here is my best shot, with the help of Wayne Grudem as a major source here. **Sanctification is a work of God and man in which God sets us apart as holy and helps us progress in victory over sin.** Let me say it again: **Sanctification is a work of God and man in which God sets us apart as holy and helps us progress in victory over sin.**

So you see in our definition there are two things happening. Most often when we talk about sanctification, we talk about what is typically known as "progressive sanctification" which is the process of continuing to fight our sin and becoming more and more like Christ by God's help and our grace-driven effort. This is why it is a work of God and man. We cooperate with God in our progress of sanctification. And this is true, and the Bible does talk like this. 2 Corinthians 3:18 says that we all are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another. So, it is progressive. And Philippians 2:12 tells us to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who is at work within us, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. So we are working in the process, and God is working by his Spirit in the process to progressively change us. So in our progressive sanctification, it is both God and man.

BUT, the Bible also speaks of the reality that we are already sanctified, already made holy right now. This is speaking to the reality that we have been set apart as holy by God in Christ. And so Paul tells the Corinthian church, messed up and sinful as they were, that they have been washed, sanctified, and justified in Christ (1 Corinthians 6:11). And in Acts 20:32, Paul talks about believers as "those who are sanctified." In that passage in Acts that word for sanctified is a perfect passive participle, which means it is a completed past activity (we've been sanctified) which has ongoing results (we are being sanctified).

So both realities are true, and both realities are in the Bible. And this is exactly what Hebrews 10:14 teaches, which says "By a single sacrifice he (God) has made perfect all those who are being sanctified." We are perfect, and we are being made perfect. It's finished, and it continues until we die. Like so many things in the Christian life, it is "already" and "not yet". And so one way to think about our sanctification is that in this life it is a process of us becoming what we actually are. We are sanctified already, set apart by God. And we are becoming sanctified, but slowly, by grace-driven effort and the power of the Spirit, becoming more and more sanctified until we see Jesus face to face. We are becoming what we actually are.

So with those two aspects of sanctification in mind, what our passage in Galatians 5 gives tremendous insight into is the progressive process of our sanctification. What does that look like, and how it is accomplished? How are we slowly changed? And if there is a way in which we cooperate with God in our progress toward perfection, what are we supposed to do?

So let's look at Galatians 5, and I want to start by looking at the context that leads up to our section of verses 16-26. And what we are going to see is two things that Paul wants the Galatians to be aware of, and I want you to remember both of them throughout the sermon because he will unpack them both in verses 16-26. So let's start by looking briefly up at the beginning of chapter 5. Verses 1-6:

[1] For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery. [2] Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. [3] I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law. [4] You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace. [5] For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. [6] For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love."

So the main reason that Paul is writing to the Galatian church is because there are some there who are seeking to add the necessity of circumcision to justification. They are trusting in the law for their righteousness before God, instead of grace alone through faith alone, by requiring that Gentile converts submit to the yoke of circumcision. And Paul has just spent the first 4 chapters making a robust defense of justification by grace alone through faith. So we get here to chapter 5, and he says, "For freedom you have been set free. Don't submit again to a yoke of slavery." This is the first thing to remember about the context of our passage. Keep this in mind: You are free from justification by works of the law. You don't need circumcision. You are free from the requirements of the law for justification, so quite adding to the gospel. Because if you add any requirement of the law, then verse 3 says that you are then required to keep the entire law perfectly, and therefore you have fallen from grace. It is Christ alone by grace alone through faith alone, or nothing.

But, Paul is not without a word of caution. And here is the second thing to remember about the context. Look down to verse 13: "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." So Paul is recognizing two ditches here. On the one hand, you can trust in works of the law for justification. And he is forceful, DO NOT DO THAT! You are free from that! But, also do not use your freedom from the law as an opportunity to live in your fleshly desires. In other words, your conduct still matters. Yes, you are justified by grace through faith, but sin is still serious, and if your faith is true, justifying faith, then it will produce the fruit of sanctification. Or, as John Piper so memorably puts it, "The faith that justifies ALWAYS sanctifies." There is no justification without the necessary fruit of putting to death the desires of the flesh. So, going forward here, remember these two things: you can get in trouble by (1) requiring works of the law as grounds for justification, OR (2) you can get in trouble by claiming our freedom from works as freedom to sin. And neither is correct. So what is correct? What is the middle way?

And Paul gives us the middle way. **So here's the first point: Walk by the Spirit.** Freedom from the law looks like walking by the Spirit. And if we walk by the Spirit, we will not gratify the desires of the flesh. So let's now look at verses 16-18: "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."

Paul is painting a picture of the internal battle that is taking place within each believer. Verse 17 paints a picture of warring desires within each of us. Because of original sin, the sinful flesh that is within us is producing desires to sin. The flesh is a biblical term that refers to the remaining vestiges of sin in all of us. This is our remaining sinful nature as fallen humans, and it is producing desires in us. AND, if you are in Christ, you have been given the Spirit, who is living inside you. The Spirit of the living God is alive and active, and we have those desires as well. And the picture is that the flesh is desiring against the spirit, and the spirit is desiring against the flesh, and the result is that often times these competing desires keep us from doing what we want to do. This is the refrain of Romans 7, right? In Romans 7, Paul says that the very things he doesn't want to do (which are the desires of the flesh in him) he does, and the things that he wants to do (which are the desires of the Spirit in him) he doesn't do. There is this war inside, and sometimes, we don't follow the right desires. This is the reality for all believers.

For the unbeliever, one who does not have the Spirit at work within them, all they have is the desires of the flesh. Romans 3:11 says that no one seeks for God. There is no Godward desires in the unregenerate heart, only desires of the sinful nature. But for the believer, we have the Spirit at work, which is desiring against the flesh.

Now, look at what Paul says in verse 16: "Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh." So how is it that we won't gratify the desires of the flesh that are within us? How can we fight them, defeat them, wage war on them? Paul's answer is to walk by the Spirit. And what's important to notice here right away is that "walk" is a command. Paul is commanding the Galatians to do something. He's saying, "You

there, walk! Do it!” Remember in our definition of sanctification, we said that it is a work of God and man. We cooperate with God’s work by grace-driven effort. It is not legalism to say that our sanctification requires effort. In other words, we will not grow in our sanctification—indeed, we will fail to put to death the desires of the flesh— if we just sit there and do nothing and expect God to just magically make us holy. It doesn’t work that way. No, instead, we need to do something, and this passage tells us that we are to walk.

BUT! Look at how Paul tells us to walk. Walk in your own strength? Walk really really hard as fast as you naturally can? No! Instead, “walk by the Spirit.” This is why sanctification is us cooperating with the work of God in us. We need to walk, yes, but we walk by the Spirit who is alive inside! It is not only our work. Just as you won’t become sanctified by doing nothing, you will also not be sanctified in your own strength without the Spirit’s power within. It is truly God who is at work within us, by his Spirit, to will and to work in our working for his good pleasure (Phil 2:12).

Now, look at verse 18: “But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.” Remember those two things that Paul warned the Galatians at the beginning of the chapter. The first was to not trust in their works of the law for salvation for justification. Here he brings it back around and says, “If you are fighting your sin BY THE SPIRIT, then you’re not trusting in the law, because walking by the Spirit is the fruit of our justification and having the Spirit within us already.” We need to understand this. Commanding the Galatians to walk by the Spirit is not forfeiting their freedom from the law. It isn’t law to say, “Fight your sin!” Instead, walking by the Spirit means they are not under the law. Because they aren’t walking to earn justification, or walking in their own strength, but by the Spirit inside of them, which is the seal and sign that they are justified already (Eph 1:13). Walking by the Spirit is the fruit of justification, not the ground of it. So in walking by the Spirit, we avoid that first ditch.

But also, remember the second ditch that Paul warned the Galatians of. He also said don’t use your freedom from the law as freedom to sin. Why? Why is that important. And that leads us to our **second point: Works of the Flesh vs. Fruits of the Spirit**. So here, in verses 19-24, Paul gives us two pictures: what it looks like to follow the desires of the flesh, and what it looks like to follow the desires of the Spirit. And as we’ll see, the type of fruit matters. Look at 19-24 with me:

“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.”

So here we see the fruits of both types of desires. First, what does it look like if we follow the desires of the flesh? Notice, that the move is from “desires of the flesh” to “works of the flesh”. “The works of the flesh are evident.” And it says at the end of verse 21, “Those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” In other words, if we follow the desires of the flesh, if we don’t fight them by the Spirit, then the fruit is sin, which leads to death. And the point of the list is not to exhaustively list every possible work of the flesh, but to show that all sins result in death. The works of the flesh are sin, and the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). This is why it is so important that we not use our freedom from the law as freedom to sin. What we do matters! Sanctification is important! Now, again, don’t get it backwards. We DO NOT earn our justification by what we do or do not do. That is the first ditch Paul warned against, right? BUT, if we have been justified by faith, then the faith that justifies ALWAYS sanctifies. And so, if we are never sanctified, if we make no progress whatsoever in fighting sin, if we do not wage war against the desires of the flesh, and continue unrepentant, headlong in our sin, then we will not inherit the Kingdom of God. True faith is a faith that will not only justify us, but sanctify us, which is one of the reasons that James can say that faith without works is dead (James 2:17). Or, the author of Hebrews can say, “Strive for... holiness, without which no one will see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14).

Remember, in our definition of sanctification, we noted that sanctification is progressive, but there is also an aspect that is complete in Christ, and we are spending our lives progressively becoming what we actually are. SO, logically, if we are not sanctified in Christ, then we will make no progress in our progressive sanctification. But if we ARE sanctified in Christ in the “already sense” then we WILL become more and more what we already are!

So Paul’s warning is stern: Do not use your freedom from the law as freedom to sin, because if you unrepentantly follow the desires of the flesh and continue in the works of the flesh, you will show that your faith is dead. Sanctification matters.

Now, Paul contrasts the works or fruit of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit. So look again with me at verses 22-24: “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.”

So here we see a different kind of fruit. This is what it looks like if we walk by the Spirit and fight against the desires of the flesh. Instead of works that lead to death, we produce fruits of the Spirit. These are the beautiful results of the Spirit inside of us leading us against the desires of the flesh, and into the good works prepared for us beforehand in Christ (Eph 2:10). Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. If the Spirit is alive in us, these will be our desires. Yes, we will have other desires too, but these will be present and it is possible for us to walk in them if we walk by the Spirit! And Paul makes sure we know that these are good fruits, so he adds “against such things there is no law.” This is freedom from the law; not that you are free to do the things that the law condemns, but that you WON’T do the things the law condemns. Freedom in Christ isn’t that we are free to sin, but that we are free NOT TO. We aren’t captive to the works of the flesh, which the law condemns, but instead are freed to walk by the Spirit in victory over the desires of the flesh.

And this is exactly how Paul summarizes the whole flow of thought of everything he’s just said in verse 24: “And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.” We have been set free in Christ Jesus from the slavery of the flesh, and now as we walk by the Spirit we war against the desires of the flesh and produce the fruits of the Spirit inside of us. And notice that it says that those who belong to Christ Jesus “HAVE CRUCIFIED the flesh with its passions and desires.” This cannot mean that we do not have any more fleshly desires within us. We just saw Paul say that the desires of the flesh AND the Spirit are at work in believers. So what does he mean here?

The old Scottish theologian John Brown gives us a helpful picture of our crucifixion of the flesh. He says, “Crucifixion produced death not suddenly but gradually. True Christians do not succeed in completely destroying it (that is, the flesh) while here below; but they have fixed it to the cross, and they are determined to keep it there till it expire. So, Paul says, if we crucified the flesh, we must leave it there to die. We must renew every day this attitude towards sin of ruthless and uncompromising rejection.”

Yes, we have fixed our flesh to the cross, and we hold it there until it dies! We wage war against the last, violent gasps of our flesh while it struggles and fights and claws for life within us. And we do that by walking by the Spirit!

So, the question then remains: how? How do we walk by the Spirit? If we must walk, how then do we do it in a way that is not in our own strength, but in the Spirit? In our application, I want to get really practical. **How do we walk by the Spirit?**

I’ll give my answer, and then we are going to briefly go to a few different passages to show how it works. So here is the answer: *We walk by the Spirit by doing the things that God prescribed for us to do that bring us under the influence of the Spirit and not the influence of the flesh.* And these things are commonly called the means of grace. They are the things that God has told us to do because when we do them, he uses them as means to sanctify us, keep us, strengthen us, and give us his grace. So how do we walk by the Spirit? By doing

the things that the Spirit uses in our lives as means to exert his influence to defeat the desires of the flesh. That's my answer. Walking by the Spirit is not will power in the moment. It isn't white-knuckling self-induced strength. Instead, we put ourselves under the Spirit's influence by using the means of grace. So what I want to do here is look briefly at 3 different means of grace given to us to help us walk by the Spirit. There are more, but we don't have time.

Number 1, the word of God. In Ephesians 6:17, we read that the word of God is the sword of the Spirit. It is part of a bigger list of the full armor of God, in that list, the Word of God is the only one listed as an offensive weapon. Indeed, swords are meant for one thing: killing. So when we read Romans 8:13 that we are to put to death the deeds of the flesh by the Spirit, God's ordained means of that killing, that waging war on our sin nature, is the word of God. And so we wield it as the sword it is, memorizing it, hiding it in our hearts so that we always have it for the time of battle against temptation. When the pleasure of sin seems too good to resist, strike with the fatal blow of the promise of superior pleasure found in the Word: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God!" Matthew 5:8, or "The Lord is a sun and a shield, the Lord bestows favor and honor, no good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly!" Wield the promises of the word in the battle, spend time in the word, allowing God's very words to wash over you, soaking in them. We allow ourselves to become "sanctified in the truth, [for] your word is truth" (John 17:17). And when we wield the Word of God as the sword of the Spirit, we walk by the Spirit.

Number 2, prayer. God promises us to use prayer as a means of grace by his Spirit to do a multitude of work in our lives. Jude 20-21 says, "But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and *praying in the Holy Spirit*, [21] keep yourselves in the love of God." Notice that the praying in the Spirit is the means that God uses to keep us in his love. So don't think that it won't matter if we pray or not. John Piper says, "That would be like saying, Since God is the decisive giver and sustainer of life, I don't need to breathe. I can spend as much time underwater as above water and it won't make any difference. Yes it will. God's means of sustaining life is not only the gift of life, but the gift of breath to sustain it (Acts 17:25).

So don't think, Since God is the decisive keeper of my soul, I can spend as much time in prayerless sinning as in prayerful serving, and it won't make any difference. Yes it will. God's means of keeping your soul is not only the gift of life, but also the gift of prayer to sustain it. If you don't receive and use the gift of life-sustaining prayer, there is little reason to think that you receive and cherish the gift of life."

Indeed, God promises to be our very well timed help, that we might receive mercy and find grace when we draw near to the throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16). So when we pray by the Spirit, we walk by the Spirit, warring against our flesh.

Number 3, corporate worship. Ephesians 5:18-19 says, "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, [19] addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart." So how are we filled, controlled by, influenced by the Spirit? By speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Sunday morning worship matters! When we come together to sing, yes we are singing to God, but we are also speaking to one another, encouraging one another, singing the gospel to one another. And God uses that corporate worship as a means of grace to bring us under the influence of his Spirit. This is a good time to mention that in the new year, we are going to start having a monthly evening of worship and prayer. It will be a time for us to linger in song, prayer, and the word, and so create another opportunity to come under the influence of the Spirit of God. It matters! When we worship God together, we walk in the Spirit, waging war against the desires of the flesh.

So, Sojourners. Walk by the Spirit. Keep becoming who you already are in Christ; holy, set apart. Wage war against the desires of the flesh. Nail them to the cross, and hold them there! Put them to death, because the works of the flesh only produce death. Instead, walk in the fruits of the Spirit by the common means of grace that God gives us in his word. Use the means of grace. Walking in the means of grace is our work! Wield the

word, pray by the Spirit's power, come to church, not because you're supposed to but because God uses them to sanctify us. Our sanctification matters! Let's cooperate with God who is at work within us.