

The Bible teaches that within every Christian are two opposite and opposing natures. These two natures constantly contend for the believer's will.

A Christian... is not a person... who no longer experiences evil desires... and thoughts within. ... A Christian is a person who **is at war** with those thoughts and desires... by the power of the Spirit. ... Conflict in your soul is not **all** bad... Of course... we long for the day when our sinful nature will no longer wage this war in our souls... when only pure and loving desires... will fill our hearts. But let me tell you something... there is something **worse** than the battles that rage within you... between flesh and Spirit — and that would be - **no** war at all! ... Praise God for the war within! ... The Holy Spirit has landed in your heart to do battle with the flesh. ... So be encouraged if your soul feels like a battlefield at times. ... And be concerned... if it doesn't! ... You see... the sign of whether you are indwelt by the Spirit... is **not** the absence of a struggle with evil desires and bad thoughts... but that you are *at war* with them!

When we habitually yield our will to the Spirit... the Holy Spirit produces fruit in us... that others can see. But when we yield our will to the flesh... there are also outward manifestations that can be seen by others. ... This is what our passage in Galatians is dealing with this morning. ... It is about yielding ourselves to the right influence.

The Galatian churches had been attempting to satisfy God... by works of the flesh. This only resulted in complete disunity among them. ... Allowing so much of the flesh to influence their will... had caused them to turn on one another. ... It was a church-wide problem... as we will see in the final

verses of our passage. Too many people in the church were not being controlled by the Holy Spirit... and ministry had turned to chaos. ... How sad... when a church devolves to that. ... You know... and I know... that this happens FAR MORE frequently than it should.

I got a visual image of this while driving the roads of Cartagena Colombia... with Mike... a few short weeks ago. Sitting in a Cartagena traffic jam with Mike... I thought about the verse we concluded with... last week. ... The verse our passage this morning carries forth as the solution.

Galatians 5:15

I think that I was provided with an representation of this... down in Colombia... in the midst of everyone tooting their horn... squeezing by... cutting in front... and trying to get out ahead of everyone else... I thought this is a great example of the flesh driven life. ... And it deeply saddens me to acknowledge that churches are sometimes like that. Unity is sacrificed... disruption occurs... and nothing good comes from it.

Amidst the confusion of the masses... and thinking about that verse... I asked God to spare our church from ever becoming like that... because we so easily CAN. It happens when believers walk in the flesh and not by the Spirit... when believers make it all about their own desires and preferences... when believers take matters into their own hands... thinking they have to... by their own effort... make something (they just know is important) to happen... when believers complain to others and don't go to the person they have the problem with... or if they do go... they don't go in a spirit of humility.

One reason I am so concerned... and believe that we are on the verge of becoming like this... teetering on the ledge... ready to fall into the chaos of being a flesh-driven church... is because I know my own heart... It is so very prone to yield itself to my flesh. ... I have a battle that rages within me... and every believer here this morning has one too.

Before we delve into this morning's passage... let me back up and get a running start. We've already looked at the verse we finished with last week... but let's take one more step... and read all three verses we covered last week.

Galatians 5:13-15

Love is not optional. ... It is commanded. ...And notice just how very radical the love we are commanded to exhibit is: "*You shall love your neighbor as...*" ...What? ... "*yourself.*" ... In other words... we are called in our freedom to desire and seek the happiness of others... with the **same** zeal... the same fervor... that we seek our own.

NOTHING could seem more contrary ... to our natural inclinations... which are fully in tune with our flesh... our ego-driven attempts ... to fill an emptiness inside of us. ... Our flesh says... "*No way... Others need to seek MY happiness...*"

So even as a believer... we read passages like last week's... and it seems utterly impossible. That I should get up in the morning and feel as much concern for your needs... as for my own... seems utterly beyond my power. If you did not read those verses and feel some sort of "*Uh Oh... this just is not at all possible for me to do... caring for others as I care for myself...*" If

these verses do not elicit some sense of hopeless ability... in your own strength and ability... than something is wrong. ... It is supposed to. I believe that we are supposed to feel discouraged by this impossible command... because it leads perfectly into the verses of our study today.

Paul's answer to this discouragement is found in Galatians 5:16–26... Where Paul gives us the secret. ... The only way we can obey the command to love like this... is in learning to "walk by the Spirit." Paul makes clear that believers are given a power from within... a power that comes from the Holy Spirit of God.

Galatians 5:16

The only way we can keep from doing what our sinful nature craves... is by "walking by the Spirit." ...

Paul employed the strongest expression in the Greek... the most vehement way to write... No possible way – ever! Ou mae. ... So what we have here is a powerful PROMISE that we will not in anywise gratify the desires of our sinful nature... if we walk by the Spirit. We will NEVER be free... until we get to glory... from the war within... but we have a NEVER-FAIL weapon that will win every battle... if we use it.

So it is imperative that we know #1.) What exactly it means to walk by the Spirit... and #2.) Specifically... how do we employ this sure-fire weapon. This is what we will primarily focus on... for the duration of our study of these verses. There are insights given to us in every verse... so we will acknowledge them in their setting... and then we will gather them all up at the end... and try to formulate some practical understandings for us to

immediately apply in each of our lives. ... So here are a few things to recognize from verse 16 here.

First of all... **Walk by the Spirit** implies both direction and empowerment... that is... making decisions and choices according to the Holy Spirit's guidance... and acting with the spiritual power that the Spirit supplies.

Second... To "walk" in Scripture regularly represents the pattern of conduct of **all** of one's life.

The Christian life is often spoken of as a pilgrimage as we are traveling from earth to Heaven. The word **walk** in Scripture, is many times synonymous with lifestyle. A good example is when the Pharisees questioned Jesus:

Mark 7:5 (ESV)

And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, "Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?"

Walking does not just speak of special times with God... which we call "mountain top experiences." It is all of life. ... Walking speaks of the ordinary... NOT just the spectacular.

Where our Christian character is most tested is in the ordinary round of life. Anyone can act special under special circumstances... but the real test is how you act in the ordinary walk.

Colombia Grace Foundation hosts several groups a year of people who go down to Colombia to work at the mission. The team that was there when

Steve and I were there had structured times in the morning and in the evening where they would have devotions. At other times people would go off and read and pray. Then we had structured times of witnessing... and there were unstructured times of stopping at a roadside food stand to eat... and several of the team members would pass out gospel tracks to Colombians. ... I thought this was great. But what I was part of... were special circumstances... we had all been sent down here as short-term missionaries. ... Now if we continuously did these things back home... in ordinary life... then we could say it was our “walk.”

Third... to walk by the Spirit... involves submitting ourselves to His leading. This sounds easy enough... doesn't it...? But how do we know... how can we tell... the difference between our own subjective feelings... and the Spirit's leading. ... I will have more to say about this later... because our text will give some insight. But right now... let me offer some insight from a few other passages of Scripture.

Hebrews 4:12 (ESV)

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

When I was in Colombia... I saw some men butchering a pig right outside their home on the streets of Turbana. So when I was teaching at the pastor's seminar... I thought it would be easy for the Colombian pastors to understand the analogy this verse makes to butchering with a sharp sword... or knife. No one wants to butcher an animal with a dull tool. You will never separate joint and marrow. ... The Word of God is like the sharp knife... it separates the otherwise inseparable soul and spirit inside of us. ... Our soul is our subjective feelings... our own thoughts and intentions.

Our Spirit is where God speaks into our lives. ... The Word of God distinguishes them... it shows us what are OUR OWN thoughts and intentions... And what is really God speaking to us. ... Fill your heart and mind with God's Word... and you will know what the Holy Spirit's leading is. But also... consider this...

John 14:21 (ESV)

*Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him **and manifest myself to him.***"

We must have a willingness to OBEY... and God will manifest Himself... He will reveal His leading to us...

John 7:17 (ESV)

***If anyone's will is to do God's will,** he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority.*

Verse 17... will make clear how the flesh and the Spirit are opposites. They have opposite appetites... and our will... at all times is either feeding one... or the other.

Galatians 5:17

Whichever appetites we set out to satisfy... we will hear whispers from the opposition. Our will... is never free from this conflict... even when it chooses which one it will follow. ... Whenever we set out to do what the Holy Spirit instructs... we can expect our sinful nature to flare up in opposition. ... When we decide to share the gospel... our sinful human nature will make us feel foolish. ... When we decide to commit ourselves to some service... evil desires hinder us... trying to thwart the leading of the

Spirit. ... Conversely... each time we follow our sinful human nature... we will receive (through our consciences... God's word... or even other believers)... reminders not to follow those sinful desires. ... These two forces within... are constantly fighting each other. ... Sinful desires still pop up... like guerrilla forces... ambushing us... sometimes when we least expect it.

The old nature is very strong... and often you and I have tried to curb and tame it... but it will not be subdued... and we sometimes find ourselves... although wanting to be better... if anything... growing worse than before. The heart is so hard... the will is so obstinate... the passions are so furious... the thoughts are so volatile... the imagination is so ungovernable... the desires are so wild... that it can feel as though we have a den of wild beasts inside of us... which would rather eat us up... than be ruled by us. ... You and I might as well hope to hold the north wind in the palm of our hand... than expect to control by our own strength... those unruly powers... which dwell within our fallen nature.

The old nature was not altered or changed at salvation... neither can it be reformed. ... The presence of these two opposing natures creates within the Christian a great conflict. ... Thankfully Verse 18 provides us with more insight to having the Spirit win the battles over our old nature.

Galatians 5:18

A godly life is not lived under ANY set of rules... Not even the Law set forth by Moses on Mt. Sinai... ! Godly living is not imposed by a churches code

of conduct... either written or implemented by traditions. Instead... It is a life that is simply led by the Spirit.

Now this phrase "led by the Spirit" is very purposeful. There is much for us to see in the way Paul has worded this.

If Paul had said, "If you *follow* the Spirit you are not under law," it would have been true. But please notice that this is not what Paul wrote. Instead... Paul used the passive voice ("If you are led".) This emphasizes the Spirit's work... not ours. If Paul wrote "if you follow the Spirit" ... the emphasis would be OUR ACTION... what WE DO. But he did not write that.

Here is what I am saying. ... The Spirit is not a leader like the pace car in the "Daytona 500." ... He is much more of a leader like a locomotive on a train. ... The caboose does not follow in its own strength... And we do not follow in our strength. ... We are led by his power. ... So "walk by the Spirit" means stay hooked up to the divine source of power and go wherever He leads. ... Fill your heart and mind with His Word... so you can know what His leading is... and yield yourself to Him... allowing Him to take over and control you. ... Jesus gave us the Holy Spirit to empower us to obey Christ's otherwise impossible commands.

Verse 19 starts a very ugly list of results... of our failure to walk by the Spirit. Paul writes of them... that they are evident. This means that this is not a list of questionable evils... these are obvious. To question them whether or not they really are evil... is to ignore common sense. But... as we take a look at them... I think you will agree that so much of our current

society is far... far... out of touch with common sense. They are white-washed... in order to justify doing them.

Galatians 5:19

“Sexual immorality” is the Greek word... “porneia”... and it refers to any... and all... forms of sexual activity that is done outside of the bounds of marriage. ... Right out of the gate with this list... we get one that is accepted by our society as “normal”... There is only something wrong if a person does NOT commit adultery and fornication.

“Impurity” is the Greek word... “a-kath-ar-sia” which was a medical term that referred to an infected and oozing sore. It is used here to describe a dirty mind... filled with many sexual images... that seeks to ooze out... expressing itself... in improper sexual behavior.

I don't think that there is any need for me to stop and comment about any of these other items in the list... except for this last one in verse 19... and then I will let the others speak for themselves.

I can't help but say something about this word, “sensuality”... because it totally describes 21st Century America. This word speaks of a wanton appetite that knows no shame. It speaks of living without restraint... a boastful readiness to commit lewd and vile sexual acts that include homosexuality.

The list of undeniably evil acts continues...

Galatians 5:20-21

The person who **practices** (Greek word – “prass-ontaes” – which means... does them as a pattern of life)... shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Paul is not talking about an **act** of sin, but a **habit** of sin.

This does not say that a Christian loses his salvation if he lapses into one of these sins of the flesh... but that a person who lives continually on such a level of moral corruption... gives evidence of not being a child of God.

So this gives fair warning... that not being under the Law... but being under grace... is no excuse to go on sinning. ... If anything, it is an encouragement to live in obedience to the Lord.

Galatians 5:22 – “*But the fruit of the Spirit...*” ... I don’t think that there can be much doubt that Paul got this image of fruit from Jesus. ... Some of Jesus’ final instruction to His disciples went like this...

John 15:4-5 (ESV)

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.

The very concept that Paul used of fruit... shows us a little more of how we “walk in the Spirit.” Fruit is a by-product; it takes time to grow and requires care and cultivation. The Spirit produces the fruit; our job is to get in tune with the Spirit. Believers exhibit the fruit of the Spirit, not because they work at it, but simply because the Holy Spirit controls their lives.

The Spirit produces these character traits that are found in the nature of Christ. They are the byproducts of Christ's control—we can't obtain them by

trying to get them without His enablement. If we want the fruit of the Spirit to grow in us... we must join our life to His. I have heard J Vernon McGee... Ron Dunn... and others give great sermons about this. They have challenged us to try and find a fruit tree that pushes and struggles... with a great deal of self-effort... to produce its fruit. ... No! Fruit bearing happens naturally... it simply results from being in the right environment... being well fed on nutrients... and cultivated.

Galatians 5:22-23

Now... I could also go through each of these and comment... but I won't. I'll let each one speak for itself. ... But this list ends with the observation that... if a person has these fruits of the Spirit... he/she needs no law to govern their conduct. ... So the fruits of the Spirit have no part with the law.

We do not this bear fruit for our own consumption... we bear fruit that others might be fed and helped... and that Christ might be glorified. ... The flesh may manufacture "results" that bring praise and honor back onto ourselves... but the flesh cannot bear fruit that brings glory to God.

Galatians 5:24

This verse should put an end to a concept that I often hear. It goes like this... *“So-and-so is a Christian. I saw them walk down the isle at church...”* or *“I heard them pray a prayer...”* or *“They told me that they believe in Jesus...”* *“However... they just don't live like one...”*

Now either the people who make such statement are right... or the Bible is right... in what it declares here. A saved person... someone who belongs to Christ acts different from the world. New life in Christ brings a new power to a person... and they use that power to overcome the flesh.

They have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. This crucifixion happened at the cross of Christ... and it becomes effective when a person is truly converted. ... But just as we have already seen... this does not mean that their sin nature is now gone... or even rendered inactive... but it has been judged... and the believer has been provided with the victory... that they need to lay hold of... in times of struggle.

Galatians 2:20 (ESV)

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

I think what Paul means in verse 24... when he says the flesh has been crucified... is that the decisive battle has been fought and won by the Spirit. The Spirit has captured the capital... and broken the back of the resistance movement. ... The flesh is as good as dead. ... Its doom is sure. ... But there are outlying pockets of resistance. ... The guerrillas of the flesh will not lay down their arms... and must be fought back daily. ... The only way to do it is by the Spirit... so we MUST walk by the Spirit. When we do... He gives victory over the dwindling resistance movement of the flesh.

God is interested in every part of your life... not just the spiritual part. As we live by the Holy Spirit's power... we need to submit every aspect of our life to God... emotional... physical... social... intellectual... vocational. ... In verse 25... Paul says that because we're saved... we should live like it!

As you recall... verse 16 told us to "walk by the Spirit." The word "walk" was parapateo... but here "walk" is a different Greek word. ... It is stoichomen... which has a more basic and elemental meaning. It means "to proceed or step in order." ... In verse 16 we were given the principle of normal walking... but here in verse 25 it means... learn to walk. ... Just as we learned to walk physically by the trial and error method... so are we to begin to walk by the Spirit -- it is a learning process.

How did you learn to walk? ... Were you given a lecture on the subject? ... Did you go to a school and take a course in learning to walk?

This is the way we are to learn to walk in the Spirit -- by trial and error. I know people who have attended seminar after seminar... conference... after conference. ... And please don't misunderstand me... I think conferences are GREAT and very inspirational. ... But how sad to see people attend these spiritual life conferences... and have their notebooks filled with notes on how to live the Christian life. ... But they still are not living it. ... What is the problem?

You have to learn to walk in the Spirit... which means you are to start out. Why not start now? Say, "*I am going to walk in the Spirit. I am going to depend upon the Holy Spirit to produce the fruits in my life.*" ... Perhaps you are thinking that you might fall down. ... I have news for you -- you **are** going to fall. ... It will hurt. ... You might wonder... "*How many times will I fall?*" ... There is no way for me to know that. ... I am still falling. ... But that is the way you are going to walk in the Spirit... and that's the only way.

You and I need to step out today... and every day... and lean upon the Spirit of God. ... Cultivate a fruit bearing environment... fill you heart and mind with Scripture... and yield yourself to Him... as He reveals Himself to you.

May I suggest... that every day... before your feet hit the floor... start your day by saying, "*Lord, I can't live today in a way that pleases You... and I want You to do it through me.*"

