

21.

GALATIANS 5:16-26

II. DO NOT USE FREEDOM AS A LAUNCHING PAD FOR THE BODY

B. Instead Walk in the Spirit and You Definitely Will Not Satisfy the Lusts of the Body

Introduction

The second principle Paul recommended to the Galatians that would protect them from believing salvation by grace would release them to live any way they chose was that grace leads believers to walk in the Spirit. God's Holy Spirit is opposed to the lusts of the body and will not lead believers to practice them. Instead, He will lead them to practice deeds that are holy and righteous, because He is holy and righteous. When Paul spoke of "the lusts of the body," he meant the desires of the body that have been corrupted by humanity's fall into sin. Believers' bodily desires remain unchanged after they are saved. Those bodily desires continue bent out of shape and distorted from the way God created them. They continue to pull believers toward immorality, idolatry, violence, intoxication, and other similar evils. The Spirit pulls them in the opposite direction toward deeds that are loving, joyous, peaceable, consistent, kind, good, faithful, gentle, and self-disciplined. When believers walk under the guidance of the Spirit, He will lead them into those good deeds and they will not come close to the evil deeds that would destroy them. Walking in the Spirit, not fighting with their corrupt desires, is the way for believers to avoid using freedom as a base of operations for the lusts of the body.

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Comments

Verses 16-18. **16a. And I say, walk in the Spirit and you definitely will not satisfy the lust of the body,**

The second principle Paul commended that will prevent believers from indulging the body's corrupt desires is walking in the Spirit. Believers are saved by the work of the Holy Spirit, and they should walk through each day guided by that same Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will lead them to want the desires of their own renewed spirits to triumph over the evil desires that remain in their bodies. With the Holy Spirit's help they will follow the new desires of their spirits, without needing to be restrained by fear of the penalties of a law.

Paul said the person who walks in the Spirit definitely will not satisfy the evil desires of the body. The Holy Spirit abhors the evil desires of the body that have been corrupted by sin. He is more powerful than the evil desires of the body. He will work diligently to enable believers to overcome them. He will root them out and eliminate them from the lives of those who walk with Him. Gaining mastery over the lusts of the body is not just a possibility for the one who walks in the Spirit. It is a given that definitely will take place and that will grow stronger and stronger the longer he walks in the Spirit.

17. For the body lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the body, and these are opposed to one another, so that [it will] not [be that] whatever you might choose, these you would do.

18. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under [subjected to] the law.

Paul said that the Spirit and the body are opposed to each other. The reason they oppose each other is not that God created human bodies with a bent toward sin, but because people have chosen to surrender to the enticements of sin and have been corrupted by them. The Holy Spirit and people became opponents when people first fell into sin and humanity was damaged by that fall. When people first sinned, both the spirits and the bodies of humans began to be selfish and to desire to know about and to experience dangerous and evil deeds. The fall corrupted what people were, and that

corruption has been passed on to each new generation. The tendency to sin has grown and become more powerful as the years have passed by. The sad story of mankind is that not one has conquered the temptation to sin. All have sinned, and all come short of the glory God created them to be (Rom. 3:23).

The good news of the Gospel is that when a person trusts Jesus for salvation, the damage done by the fall begins to be reversed. The first thing that happens is that the person's spirit is changed and cleansed of its sinful desires. In his spirit, soul, and heart, he begins to want to be clean and righteous. However, his body is not changed at that time. It still looks the same, knows the same information, is influenced by the same background and experiences it had before; and has the same habits it had before. Especially, the same corrupt desires that entered the human race when people first sinned remain in his body. Believers have to struggle with those evil bodily desires as long as they live on the earth.

Because the bodies of believers remain unchanged as long as they live, their bodies must experience the result that always comes from sin, which is death. It is because believers continue to live in a corrupt, unchanged body that believers must expect to experience physical death. When believers die, their bodies begin to decay and to return to the dirt from which they were made. (Rom. 8:10-13; 1 Cor. 15:35-44), while their spirits are taken to be with God. They continue in that condition until Resurrection Day. When Jesus returns, believers' bodies will be raised from the dead and changed to be like Jesus' resurrected body. Their spirits and their cleansed bodies will be rejoined and then we joyously spend the rest of eternity with God (Rom. 6:5; 1 Cor. 15:35-57).

Paul dealt with the reality of a believer's condition while still living in the body. Because the bodies of believers are not yet changed, all believers must struggle with the temptation to sin. However, Paul insisted that believers do not have to yield to those temptations. They have a new power to be able to follow the desires of their new spirits and not yield to the evil desires that remain in their bodies. The reason a Christian can control and conquer the evil desires that remain in his body is

that the Holy Spirit lives in him to be his Companion, Guide, Teacher, and Strengthen. The Spirit's presence enables him to keep his body under control and to reflect the Spirit's likeness instead of likeness to the world. Paul urged the Galatians to draw on the resources provided by the Spirit and to control their corrupt bodily desires.

The believer who is led by the Spirit is not under the law in the sense of being under the law's supervision to keep him obedient to God. He has moved to a new realm, where he is supervised by the Holy Spirit. Instead of being motivated by fear of punishment from the law, he is motivated by a love for righteousness that comes from the work of the Holy Spirit in him. He not only has a new motive but also a new power, which is supplied by the Holy Spirit who lives in him. He uses that power to keep his body under control and to make it useful to God. For a Christian, living a righteous life has nothing to do with being afraid of the law. It has everything to do with being led by the Spirit of God.

Verses 19-21. **19. Now the works of the body are obvious, which are adultery, fornication, impurity, indecency,**

20. Idolatry, sorcery, hostilities, fightings, jealousies, angers, rivalries, divisions, factions,

21. Envyings, murders, drunkennesses, revelings, and [deeds] similar to these, which I declare to you, as also I told you before, that those who practice such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

Paul contrasted the works that the body desires with the fruit that the Spirit grows in believers' lives. He listed four types of bodily vices. The first was sexual sin, which includes adultery, fornication, impurity and indecency. The second was false religion, of which idolatry and sorcery are examples. The third was violence, which manifests itself as hostilities, fightings, jealousies, angers, rivalries, divisions, factions, envyings, and murders. The fourth was partying, which shows itself as drunkennesses and revelings. Paul did not intend to list all of the vices the body desires, but to give examples of them. So he then said "and [deeds] similar to these," that is, any deeds that damage and degrade.

Since the fall of humankind into sin, the body finds endless ways to be attracted into evil deeds. Sin has plagued humanity since the Garden of Eden, and it continued to bring damage and destruction to individuals and to societies all over the world today. Even more deadly is the reality that those who give in to those evil desires will not inherit the Kingdom of God. The evil desires of the body keep many people from trusting Jesus as Savior and becoming a part of the Kingdom of God. If they prefer their evil desires more than they want Jesus, they will remain in their lost condition throughout life and will be shut out of the Kingdom of God for eternity.

When a person trusts Jesus as Savior, he does not immediately know how to control those evil bodily desires. It takes time for him to learn to keep them under control and to triumph over them. He must draw on the resources God provides him to grow in his ability to walk in the Spirit and cease to practice the evil desires by the body. If he holds onto any of those evil desires too long, his spiritual growth becomes stunted. He becomes a disgrace to the name of Jesus. For that reason, Paul urged the Galatian churches to walk in the Spirit and to subdue the evil desires of their bodies through the power of the Holy Spirit.

22. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faith,

23. Gentleness, self-control. Against such as these, no law exists.

The bright side of the picture is that the Holy Spirit overcomes the lusts of believers' bodies by growing His likeness within believers as they walk with Him day by day. Paul called the Spirit's likeness in a believer "the fruit of the Spirit," because it is a new way of life that grows within a person through the presence of the Holy Spirit. When a person trusts Jesus as his Savior, the Holy Spirit comes to live in his body, and the Spirit gives him the power to control the evil desires that remain in his body. The Holy Spirit makes that change in him, not by transforming his body but by growing His own likeness within that body. Because the Spirit is present in him, the Spirit's likeness grows naturally within him just like a fruit tree naturally produces fruit of its own kind.

Paul listed some of the qualities the Spirit grows in a believer's life. He named love, joy, peace, perseverance, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, and self-control. Those good qualities in the life of a Christian are not primarily the result of the believer's efforts, though he should strive to practice them as much as he can. The change comes primarily from the presence of the Holy Spirit's growing His likeness in the life of that believer. The more a believer allows the Holy Spirit to have freedom to grow in him, the more the Spirit's likeness matures in him as ripened fruit. The good qualities Paul named are not natural to fallen humanity, and they are not natural to the unchanged bodies of believers. However, they are natural to the Holy Spirit. Therefore, they just naturally grow wherever the Holy Spirit is present. No law forbids them, but only the Spirit grows them.

Like all growing things, the fruit of the Spirit begins small and weak. At first it is like a tender sprout, but it grows stronger and larger day by day as the believer continues to allow the Spirit to be free to grow His likeness in him. As he continues to allow the Spirit to live in his life, the Spirit's fruit occupies more and more of his life and overshadows the evil that still remains in his body. The fruit of the Spirit soon comes to characterize his way of life more than the weaknesses of his body.

Even when the fruit of the Spirit is young and small, it contains all the qualities that it takes to live in His likeness. The Holy Spirit has only one fruit, just as an apple tree grows only apples, and an orange tree grows only oranges. An apple, like every other fruit, is distinct and different in every aspect from every other fruit, but it has many characteristics. An apple can be identified by any one of its qualities. Its skin, flesh, juice, and seeds all are different from every other fruit, but it takes all of its distinct qualities to make an apple. When fruit first appears on an apple tree, it has all of the distinctive qualities of an apple. They are small and need to grow and enlarge to make a mature apple. As the fruit remains attached to the tree for nourishment, it enlarges and matures until it becomes the luscious fruit we love to eat. It still has

all the qualities it possessed when it first sprouted on the tree, but they have become full grown and mature.

The life the Holy Spirit grows in Christians works the same way. It is one fruit, but it has many characteristics. Each of its characteristics is unique to Christians, but it takes all of those characteristics to make one Christian character. When a person is saved, the Holy Spirit gives all of the good qualities of a changed life to the believer in one package. The new believer does not receive the characteristics of a new life one at a time and then add other good characteristics as time goes on. He receives all the characteristics together as parts of one new way of life. At first, all the characteristics are tiny, weak, and immature. As he continues to let the Holy Spirit live in him, those good qualities enlarge and grow stronger. After the Holy Spirit has lived within him for months and years, those good qualities come to maturity, and he more adequately reflects the likeness of the Holy Spirit in his daily life. All of the good characteristics grow along together until they produce a mature, well-rounded godly life. A believer's growth in godliness continues as long as he stays in communion with the Holy Spirit. They never become perfect as long as he continues to live in the body; however, when he is taken to heaven they come to full perfection in him.

None of the changes that take place in a believer's life come from fear of any law. They come from the Holy Spirit as He lives in the believer's body and as He grows His likeness within him.

24. And the ones of Christ have crucified the body with [its] passions and [its] lusts.

In addition, Christians are able to control the lusts of the body because, when they surrender to Jesus, they turned their sins and weaknesses over to Him. He takes them to the cross with Him, and they die with Him, so that they no longer have power over the believer. Though his passions are still present for him to struggle with, their power to condemn him is dead, leaving the Holy Spirit free to live in him instead and to grow His likeness in his life.

Verses 25-26. **25. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.**

26. Let us not become self-seeking, provoking one another, envying one another.

Paul closed his discussion of walking in the Spirit by challenging the Galatians to practice that

walk. The Spirit had given them life. They needed to practice by their daily actions the new life Jesus had given them. Living that new life would mean they would not exalt themselves and be jealous of others. Instead, they would put others first and be considerate of their needs, as the Spirit is considerate of them.

CONCLUSION

Paul's challenge to the Galatians is written in the Scriptures so we can apply the same challenge to our lives. Let us respond to the challenge by cultivating the presence of the Spirit in us and by setting Him free to fill every part of our lives. Let us also cooperate with Him by challenging the weaknesses that remain in our bodies without fear, knowing we now have the strength to subdue them if we will. When we do, He will grow His likeness in us, and more and more we will come to look and act like Him.