**WALK BY THE SPIRIT**

**Galatians 5:13–26, 6:8
Key Verse: 5:16**

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

Today's passage is the sixth lesson in our summer study of the Holy Spirit that Pastor Mark put together. I pray that we all can continue to learn who the Holy Spirit is through these summer lessons. I pray that we can continually be encouraged by the Holy Spirit, who gives us a new birth, satisfies our souls and guides us in truth.

Questions for everyone to consider: First, do we love only the lovable? Second, how do we walk by the Spirit? Third, how hard do we try to fight the desires of sexual immorality, impurity, idolatry, hatred, being argumentative, jealousy, rage, selfish ambition, envy, drunkenness, and the like? And fourth, how do we produce the fruit of the Spirit of love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control?

**Part I. Christian freedom is to humbly love others as ourselves.**

Let's read verse 13 and 14 together. "You, brothers and sisters were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Paul starts off this passage by saying that we are called to be free. The word freedom has a broad meaning. In the context of this passage, freedom that Paul is referring to is the freedom from the law. This law is the 613 commandments from the first five books of the bible, or more commonly known as the Law of Moses that the New Testament refers to often. In the gospels, the Pharisees tried to use the law against Jesus legalistically, such as the time when Jesus healed on the Sabbath. The Pharisees said he was working when he wasn't supposed to. But Paul said we are called to be free. So, we don't have to be legalistic in trying to follow God and in trying to have the right relationship with God. We don't have to abstain from eating pork. We don't have to perform ritualistic washing. Men don't have to be circumcised. Paul says that we are free from such legalistic rituals to have a deep personal relationship with God.

But then, he warns the Galatians not to abuse this freedom to indulge in the flesh. Just because we don't need to be legalistic, doesn't mean that we should do whatever we want to please ourselves. It doesn't mean that we should go steal or murder. The literal Greek translation of the phrase "indulge in the flesh" is actually "opportunity for the flesh." But I think there was a good reason why it was translated with the word "indulge." It was interesting to see the definition of indulge. I like to look up definitions. Indulge means to " Allow oneself to enjoy the pleasure of, such as indulging in sundaes. OR become involved in, such as an activity, typically one that is undesirable or disapproved of. We indulge in a guilty pleasure of eating super fatty, unhealthy super triple chocolate fudge sundae with caramel, cookie dough, and whipped cream on it. There is nothing wrong with that, but it can get out of control and we may do something wrong. So, Paul says, do not use your freedom to indulge in the flesh.

Look at verse 13b and 14. "Rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the *entire* lawis fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Christian freedom is to love others as yourself. {Repeat} Christian freedom is to love others as yourself. When we do so, it fulfills **all** the 613 commandments that's impossible to follow. Paul said this because Jesus said so and we must do so **humbly**. Jesus said to his disciples right before he was crucified, “A new command I give you: Love one another. **As I have loved you**, **so you must love one another**. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." And Paul said in Galatians 5:6, "For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love." When we believe in Jesus, we can truly love others as ourselves. There is no other way for us to truly love others because we're all naturally selfish, and we love ourselves and want to be loved only. This is so hard because people have hurt us so deeply or annoy us so much because some people are just mean and cruel, or rude and immature.

Before I became a Christian, in my early twenties, a friend once said, Joe is always angry. And it was true. I was angry all the time. Even when I wasn't angry, I would be mean to people. Even when I was trying to be funny and make jokes, I was mean even with my jokes. And I know a lot of people like that. I'm sure many of you do too. So why was I so angry? I was angry because I was **so** bitter, had a severe victim's mentality, thinking that the world was against me. I was so bitter towards God and hated Him, for the suffering of my family, in many different ways. Though I have met Jesus personally since then, I still struggle so much with trying to change the bad habit of my anger talk and mean, crass jokes.

So, I've struggling to allow Jesus to be the center of my life. We have to allow Jesus to be the center of our lives. Jesus needs to be the focus, and we must think about him, and remember what he has done for us by sacrificing his own life to give us a new life Galatians 2:20 says, " I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me". This is how we can get motivated to love others, serve others, to go out and witness to our friends, witness to strangers, and share the good news of great joy of knowing Jesus Christ!

**Part II. Walking by the Spirit means that we need to believe that He is already in our lives.**

BUT. I'm sorry, but I have another but. Paul likes to tell us say such beautiful and encouraging words, but he always has a warning because he knows our sinful hearts very well. Look at verse 15. "If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other." Not much explanation seems to be needed from the kind of words Paul uses here: bite, devour, and destroy. I think they just speak for themselves. If we don't use our freedom in Christ to love others as ourselves, we will hurt each other so deeply and so severely that eventually, relationships will be permanently destroyed. Hearts will be damaged to a point where it cannot be repaired. Over the years, I've known many friends in different churches. Every friend I knew, their church was split due to the fighting of members. Or a pastor was forced out, with the members tearing each other apart because of egos or gossips. It's very sad.

So, how can we freely love one another, not bite each other and devour each other, and destroy each other?

Let's all read verse 16 together. "**So** I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh." Paul starts with "So" after verse 15. To love each other then, we must walk by the Spirit. Here the word "walk" implies a daily activity, a part of my life. When we do so every day, it is the best antidote to our nagging tendency to gratify the desires of the flesh. We will not indulge in our flesh and we will not bite, devour, and destroy each other. How do we go about this? It starts with our inner, personal battle. We must fight the battle between the flesh and the Spirit within ourselves. Look at verse 17. When you became a Christian, has your life been smooth sailing ever since? If anything, it seems like Christian life has gotten harder and the struggles against the flesh became greater. There is a conflict within us. It's because we become that much more aware of our sins, and the sinful things that we do. Our mind becomes a battlefield to prevent our flesh from evil thoughts and we have to struggle to let good thoughts come into our minds. Romans 8:5 says, "Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires." We must struggle to have our minds set on what the Spirit desires.

How do we that? Look at verse 16 again. We're going to delve into the ways we can live by the Spirit. One part is to walk and be led by the Spirit. The second part of the Spirit is to keep step with the Spirit, and the third is to sow to please the Spirit. Isn't the way Paul describes the Spirit interesting? To walk, to be led (verse 18), to keep in step (verse 25), and sow to please the Spirit (6:8). I will talk about each part.

**First**, what does it mean to "walk by the Spirit?" To walk by the Spirit means to let the Spirit guide and we follow the Spirit. This essentially means that we must let go. We must accept that we don't control our own lives and that we are not in control of our destiny. It means to let the Spirit lead and guide us. It means to not try to center our lives around ourselves and just thinking about ourselves, our situation, and our satisfaction of the flesh. We must be guided away from the flesh, and be guided to loving God and loving others.

This is very hard to do because it's not like we can see and talk to the Spirit. But just think about where you are in your life right now. Can you really say that every course of action in your life was a product of your decision? For some people, if you did not receive scholarships to Depaul, would you be at Depaul, and be then be at this church? For others, would you have been here if someone from this church did not invite you to bible study?

Susannah, one of our dear friend, who's in Africa right now, I believe was guided by the Spirit to come to our ministry. When we had our first student dinner, Caleb went out to invite students right before the dinner. He met a guy student who was willing to come. So at the same time, he invited his friend Susannah to come with him. She did not want to come (and she told me this) but did any way. Since then, she has been with us and has been such a great friend to us and a great blessing for our ministry. She even sang at my wedding. Susannah has said that she believes God guided her to our church in her freshman year.

Here is another example. When my wife Rebecca was around 3 years old and she was in Spain, her family with her older sister, mother, and father, got in a serious car accident. While her father, M.Paul was driving up a mountain, the car got veered off the road because an oncoming truck distracted him. While flying off the mountain in the air, he screamed, "God, save my family!". The car tumbled and rolled many times down the side of the mountain and finally landed on the bottom. Miraculously, her whole family survived. M.Paul and his wife just had scratches and bruises. Rebecca and her sister? They were securely lodged under the dashboard of the passenger side. Afterwards, believing that God had saved his family, M.Paul tried to read the bible on his own, but could not understand it. Then he heard that there was a colleague at his job, who was a Christian and was teaching the bible. M. Paul sought him out, started studying the bible, and became an ambassador for Christ in many Latin American countries. I **sincerely** believe that the Holy Spirit saved M.Paul and his family, and then guided him to a proper bible teacher.

**Second**, since we live by the Spirit, **keeping in** **step** with the Spirit is like dancing with the Spirit. I just love the choice of words Paul uses for all his explanations. If you've ever watched Dancing with the Stars, or America's Best Dance Crew, you know that it takes tremendous coordination and practice. To be in sync with your partner or team, it takes hours of practice working together. It requires focus, self-discipline, and obedience to your instructor or to your team members. In the same way, we need to work hard every day and be aware of what the Spirit is doing in our lives. This is not easy because we're so busy being busy, so focused with school or work and enjoying our lives. We tend to forget about our daily spiritual lives, and so it is hard to keep in step with the Spirit. So we must decide to follow the Spirit's guidance and do our best to keep in step with Him everyday.

**Third,** we must **sow** to please the Spirit. Let's read Galatians 6:8. "Those who sow to please their sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; those who sow to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life." This simply means to **do** something to please the Spirit. It may be small acts of faith that we do to please God. It may be putting the hymns and bibles away, cleaning the bible house for Sunday Worship service, serving lunch after Sunday service, saying a word of kindness to a friend or even a stranger, and so many more. This is sowing to please God.

I've been talking a lot about the Spirit and I gave some examples. Now then, how do we **practically** walk by the Spirit, be led by the Spirit, keep in step with the Spirit, and sow to please the Spirit? We can't rely on our abilities and have the will power to think that we can know the Holy Spirit. It is a process of training to listen to what God is saying to us and reflecting upon how God is guiding us in our lives.

A. This happens when we pray. We have to pray and ask that God may help us to overcome the desires of our flesh. We have to look to Jesus for his help. Jesus prayed to do so in the Garden of Gethsemane: Matthew 26:39-42, "Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.” 40 Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. “Couldn’t you men keep watch with me for one hour?” he asked Peter. 41 “Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” 42 He went away a second time and prayed, “My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.” Jesus struggled immeasurably to obey God and his mission to suffer and die on the cross

B. We also must mediate on Jesus' words. John 6:63 says, "The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you--they are full of the Spirit and life." As we listen to Jesus' words by reading the bible and mediate on it, it wakes us up mentally and be full of the Spirit and life.

C. We must also thank and praise God. No matter what. Sometimes when our hearts are heaviest, when our situation is the hardest, that’s the time to sing songs of praise to God. When we do, the Holy Spirit comes on us and fills our hearts. Doesn't singing sometimes just make you happy? Colossians 3:16 says, "Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts." We have a lot of musicians in our ministry, so this must ring true to many of you. Singing praises to God does not only mean singing, but thanking and praising God for his goodness, no matter what. That in all things, God works for the good of those who love him (Rom8:28). That we must be thankful always, because it is what Jesus wants us to do. (1 Th 5:18) This is how we can walk by the Spirit and experience the Spirit.

May God help us to pray with all our hearts like Jesus did, to mediate on Jesus' words honestly and deeply, and sing praises of thanks, no matter what the circumstance! When we do this, we are believing that he is with us in our hearts and guiding us in our everyday lives.

**Part III. Examples of living by the Flesh and the fruit of the Spirit**

Look at verses 19-21. Paul strongly contrasts living by the flesh and by the Spirit. The acts of the flesh are ***obvious****.* Then Paul divides the acts into 4 categories: the lust of the flesh, turning to worship something other than God, relationships with people, and hedonism. He then says in verse 21 by saying "**the like**", meaning that these are just some of the acts, and there are many more. Paul listed these specific sins because he wanted to tell us the vast examples of the sins that we commit, whether it is in our hearts, minds, or through action. And whether it is small or big, intentional or unintentional. Our sins are clearly revealed through our thoughts, speech and actions. These acts of flesh reveal that we live by the flesh, and stay ignorant of it usually. Look at 21b. Paul finishes his list of examples with a strong warning of people living in sin will not go to heaven. We must be serious about how we are living, examine our lives and behavior, and fight against it.

Let's read verses 22-24. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."

So there is hope! the fruit of the Spirit that Paul lists speaks for itself, especially listing love first. Another way to look at this is by putting a colon after love. Love being first is reiterating what Paul said in the beginning of this passage about loving others as yourself. Ultimately, these are the characteristics of Jesus. So, we must strive and struggle to imitate Jesus. As verse 24 says, we must belong to Christ Jesus, and crucify the passions and desires of our flesh. How do we that? Belonging to Christ means to clothe and remember what Jesus did for us on the cross. Romans 13:14 says, "Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh." We must remember how Jesus died on the cross for our sinful nature, so that we can die to our sinful nature. Romans 6:6 says, "For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin" This gives us the hope to get out of our sinful way of life.

Look at verse 26. Paul again gives the Galatians another warning again of what happens once we bear fruit and not keep step with the Spirit. It appears that some people become conceited and self-righteous, provoking and envying each other. It's like saying, have you struggled as much as me? You're not being faithful to bible study. We have to be careful not to abuse the fruit of the Spirit.

Today, we learned that we must love others as ourselves by walking, or being guided, by the Spirit. There is a battle in our minds and hearts. We have the desires of the flesh and the other is walking by the Spirit. We have to make a decision and fight for what is good and what is right through accepting and remembering the grace of Jesus Christ in our lives. Christ must live in our hearts through our faith, and it must be expressed through loving others as we love ourselves. When we do so, we bear good fruit and see the tangible evidence. My God help us to discern and walk by the Spirit, through prayer, meditation, singing thanks and praises to God, not matter what.