

Session 5

July 10, 2022

WALKING WITH THE SPIRIT

Galatians 5:16-25

There are three deadly enemies set against humanity that place us in opposition to God. Each enemy attacks us at different times and in different ways. But they all work to keep unbelievers from coming to Christ, and believers from being effective in the Kingdom. They are the *flesh*, the *world*, and the *devil*. The *flesh* consists of base, sin-nature impulses that promise to satisfy us physically. The *world* consists of the more sophisticated pursuits that promise to elevate us in fame, fortune, prominence, and position. The *devil*? Well, he's the devil! He attacks us in the spiritual realm, accusing us with his lies and ensnaring us in his schemes. In this week's lesson, the enemy is the flesh, and the remedy is the Holy Spirit.

The fight (vv. 16-18). As I mentioned above, the battle is real, and the battle is continual...even for believers. I often ask my church members, "On the day you were saved, how long did it take you to sin again?" Praise God that He gives us a new, regenerate spiritual nature when we are saved. But unfortunately, that old sinful nature is still lurking. Hence, there is a need to walk continually in the Spirit. So great is that need, that the word *walk* (v. 16) is actually a command. First, the apostle states the *reason* for walking in the Spirit: the flesh and the Spirit are diametrically opposed in their desires. The flesh seeks to fulfill selfish, physical desires, while the Spirit seeks to honor God in purity. Second, the apostle states the two-fold *results* of walking in the Spirit. First, the person walking in the Spirit will not fulfill the lust of the flesh (v. 16). Second, those walking by the Spirit are not hampered by the legalistic obstacles of the law (v. 18). For reflection: *If the law is good, and Jesus came to fulfill it (Matt. 5:17), then how could attempting to keep the law ever be wrong? Can you defend your position with Scripture?*

The flesh (vv. 19-21). When I was growing up, I associated the flesh with "sex, drugs and rock and roll." I still think of that way! The selfish, corrupt nature of our flesh is obsessed with self-gratification. Three things stand out about the fifteen characteristics listed in verses 19-21. The first is that the works of the flesh are *obvious* (v. 19). The term used here means "clearly evident" and comes from the root word for "shining." In other words, this isn't rocket science: we all recognize immediately the sins of the flesh; they are *glaring!* The second characteristic is that this list isn't exhaustive. There are plenty of others that are similar in nature (v. 21), and equally as destructive. Finally, Paul notes their common outcome. Those who continually practice these behaviors will not inherit the kingdom of God (v. 21). For reflection: *Remember...verse 21 doesn't mean you can lose your salvation by committing these sins. Rather, it means that those who continue to live a life of fleshly corruption have never been saved to begin with!*

The fruit (vv. 21-25). One hint when studying a Bible passage is to consider the author's use of any comparisons or contrasts. Here, Paul uses contrasts. Whereas the works of the flesh are listed in verses 19-21, the fruit of the Spirit are in obvious contrast to them. Since so much has been written on these nine characteristics, I won't elaborate here. But there are some interesting features of this text. First, there is the word *fruit* itself. In general, when used by both Jesus (e.g.:

John 15:5) and Paul (e.g.: Col. 1:10), fruit is seen as a natural result of the Lord's work and is a positive thing. Second, many treat the list as separate *fruits* of the Spirit; but the word itself is singular. Hence, technically, there is one "fruit of the Spirit" characterized in nine different ways. Third, "Against such things there is no law" (v. 23) means that such things are not under any condemnation from any law. Rather, they are entirely acceptable under any circumstance. Fourth, Christ-followers must necessarily condemn the lusts of the flesh to a certain death (v. 24); they are *crucified* with Christ (see Gal. 2:20). But in contrast, those who have crucified their fleshly desires have replaced them with spiritual pursuits (v. 25). For reflection: *The concept of "crucified with Christ" is a major Pauline theme. Why do you think he used that particular metaphor? What nuances of meaning can you discover?*