

Galatians 5:16-18 – Living by the Spirit

- 1) The question we want to explore today is this: What does the Bible mean in Galatians 5:16 when it says “Walk by the spirit”?
- 2) In 2 Corinthians 5:17, Paul states that faith in Christ results in an inner change (“the old is gone – all things are new”) and this is meant to be reflected in how we live
 - a) This change in us was promised by the Law (“keep the Law and you will be acceptable”) but we were not able to accomplish it
 - b) This is the empty promise of religion – requiring outward practices such as fasting, participating in rituals and regimens based on “special days and seasons”, which, being external, only make us “look” different but do not bring about true inner change
 - c) The entire letter to the Galatians is a warning not to see faith in Christ as simply another religion (see 4:8-12)
- 3) Paul is reminding us that, although we must wait for our bodies to be renewed at the Resurrection, we have already been given a new spirit (see Galatians 2:20) and that it is the presence of this new spirit in us that enables us to overcome sin in our lives (see also 1 John 4:4 and 5:4)
 - a) He warns us that this new spirit is in conflict with the old nature that, though dead, still influences our thoughts and actions (see Romans 7:13-25)
 - b) We must consciously choose purity over sin, that the influence of the new spirit in us might grow more powerful in us and we might mature in our faith and not either “remain children” (1 Corinthians 14:20) or worse, continue in the old nature’s way of thinking and living
- 4) The new way of life, ruled by the new spirit God has given us, is meant to lead us into a better, more satisfying way of living because it leads to life, while the old ways of sin lead to death even as we live in this world
 - a) This new spirit, empowered by the Holy Spirit, offers us the relationship God had with Adam and Eve if we allow it to guide our lives
 - b) But if we are not careful, this new spirit can be polluted the same as the flesh is (2 Corinthians 7:1)
- 5) The process by which this happens is laid out in Ephesians 4:17-24, in this order:
 - a) Recognize patterns, thoughts, and urgings that arise from the sin nature we were born with and lived by naturally before we came to faith
 - b) Consciously reject this “old” way of being
 - c) “Be renewed in the spirit of our minds” (see #6)
 - d) “Put on” (that is, “walk according to” the new creation God gave us, “which **has been** created in His image”
- 6) God does not expect us to live the holy life He has called us to live by our own strength; we work with the Holy Spirit by asking Him to examine us and know us and reveal to us our inner thoughts and lead us in a better way (Psalm 139:23-24, Psalm 19:12-13) – the process Paul describes as “being renewed in the spirit of our minds”
- 7) Then, as the influence of the Holy Spirit becomes more powerful in us, we become more inclined to ‘walk’ (live) under His influence and not the urgings of our old nature
- 8) Galatians 5:18-21 describes walking by ‘the flesh’
- 9) Galatians 5:22-24 describes walking by ‘the spirit’
- 10) Galatians 5:25: If it is the spirit that gives life (John 6:63) then we must “walking in the spirit means ‘keeping in step’ with Him, allowing Him to set the pace and direction in the moments of our lives
- 11) This “spirit” is “not a spirit of slavery” either to sin or to religious requirements, but rather “a spirit of adoption” whereby our whole identity is found in our restored relationship with our Heavenly Father (Romans 8:15)
- 12) It is not that the body is evil and the soul or spirit good – rather, the spirit has been renewed by faith in Jesus while the body is renewed at the Resurrection (Titus 2:11-15)