Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Essential Ministry of the Holy Spirit, Part 3
Scripture: Galatians 5:16-25
Code: 90-332

We have been doing a little bit of a series on the essential ministry of the Holy Spirit in our ongoing discussions of Bible doctrine and not trying to nuance some technicality in this process, but rather to get back in touch with the basic substantial elements of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. And I have a great concern about this because I think it desperately needs attention in the church today. In fact, I'm concerned that the doctrine of sanctification, as it is called theologically, is almost a missing element in ministry these days. We find ourselves in a situation not unlike the Galatians. Turn in your Bible to Galatians chapter 3 and we'll refresh our minds about the situation they were in. And then I want to read a section of Galatians chapter 5 to which we will direct our attention. Galatians chapter 3 and verse 1.

"You foolish Galatians..." Strong language—"you are fools." "Who has bewitched you before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? This is the only thing I want to find out from you." Paul reduces his desires to one. "Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by the hearing with faith? Are you so foolish having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?"

They had begun by the power of the Spirit. It is the work of the Spirit that initiates salvation. We have looked at that. We have reviewed how spiritual life begins with the ministry of the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who convicts us of sin and righteousness and judgment. It is the Holy Spirit who produces in us repentance. It is the Holy Spirit who regenerates us, gives us new life. We are born of the Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who produces in us faith and submission to Christ. It is the Spirit then who gives us life eternal. We are then indwelt by the Spirit, baptized by means of the Spirit into the body of Christ, gifted by the Spirit to have spiritual gifts that are used to minister for the edification of the body. We are secured unto eternal life by the Spirit. We are separated from sin by the Spirit. All of that occurs at the time of our salvation. And we worked our way through that a few weeks ago.

And the question that the Apostle Paul is asking is, since all of that is true and the beginning was in the Spirit, do you now assume that you can be perfected by the flesh? Now that you are saved, is it time to set the Holy Spirit aside and launch out on your own wisdom, on your own strength, on your own ability to achieve perfection? It's as if he is saying you confess and you admit that any understanding of the cross, any understanding of Christ crucified, anything related to your justification is the work of the Spirit. But now you have abandoned the work of the Spirit insofar as your sanctification is concerned. I think this is a huge problem in contemporary Christianity. There is very

little discussion, very little talk, very little dialogue, very little emphasis these days on the ministry of the Holy Spirit in sanctification. And as we pointed out some weeks ago, many in evangelical Christianity, many who are hard core biblically oriented in their theology run from the ministry of the Holy Spirit, lest they be associated with those who have basically kidnaped the Holy Spirit and pulled Him off into charismania, making the very identification with the Holy Spirit something that some think they need to avoid lest they be tainted by the abuses in His name. But we must return to a true and biblical understanding of and ministry of the Holy Spirit.

The ministry of the Holy Spirit has been threatened a lot of ways, not only by charismania but also by the invasion of the psychological approaches to sanctification that have found their way into the church where we use personal personality manipulation to try to change people and alter people. Psychological sanctification, in effect, eliminates the Holy Spirit. Any humanistic ideas, any therapeutic ideas, any pragmatic ideas that attempt to change people's behavior by any kind of external pressure really collide with what God wants to do. And it is another of the same kind of issues that face the Galatian church, people who began in the Spirit and not think they can be perfected by some human wisdom.

We live in a very similar time to that. We've got the Doctrine of Justification pretty well sorted out, even people who in the past years paid little or no attention to things like the Doctrine of Justification are now jumping on the justification bandwagon. There's actually a bandwagon about substitutionary atonement. And people are jumping on the bandwagon because it's the popular thing to do and they want to make sure that they capture the crowd that are interested in that. But there certainly isn't any sanctification bandwagon. We have left the Holy Spirit, as it were, in the dust. It's time for us to get to the Holy Spirit. I think it's part of what happens in the history of the church that we fight on certain fronts and for a while the battle rages so hot on one front that we leave others exposed..and this is one of those.

The only way to be perfected in the Christian life is by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. It is not something you can engineer on your own. We went through a list of things that define what the Spirit does. The Spirit brings us into intimacy with God. The Spirit illuminates the Scripture. The Spirit glorifies Christ in us and to us. The Spirit personally guides us into God's will. The Spirit ministers to us through other believers and through us to other believers. The Spirit strengthens us. The Spirit intercedes with us constantly and incessantly before God, always in the perfect will of God. And those ministries are all ours by the Spirit as long as we don't quench the Spirit, as indicated in 1 Thessalonians 5:19, or grieve the Spirit as indicated in Ephesians 4 and verse 30. We quench the Spirit by turning away from His ministries to other things. We grieve the Spirit by the same action.

How foolish was it for the Galatians. How foolish is it for anybody to abandon the only hope of spiritual growth and development and sanctification and that is the ministry of the Spirit and substitute anything else.

Turn to Jeremiah chapter 2 for just a moment. There are a couple of sections of Jeremiah that are important for us to remember in regard to the ministry of the Holy Spirit. When the Spirit of God is indicting the children of Israel for their sin through the prophet Jeremiah chapter 2 and verse 11, here is the Word of the Lord. Jeremiah 2:11, "Has a nation changed gods when they were not gods? You started out worshiping the true and living God. Have you now abandoned that and turned to others that are not Gods. But My people have changed their glory, being God, for that which does not profit they have moved away from the God who gave them life to other things. Be appalled, O heavens, at this and shudder. Be very desolate, says the Lord." We're talking about something that is of great severity in the mind of God, to turn away from Him. And it is described in verse 13 with this unforgettable language. "For My people have committed two evils. They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters," that's the first evil, the source of life. The second evil, "They have hewn for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water."

Graphic language. They had in God an endless, full, flourishing fountain of spiritual life and power. They turned from Him to a cistern which is not at all a spring, which is not at all a source of anything but only a container, and in fact the containers were broken. Here is a description of life lived without God. They had begun with God and they had turned from Him.

If you look at the thirty-first chapter of Jeremiah and the wonderful prophecy of the New Covenant, Jeremiah 31:31 which is the covenant God made with Israel, indicating one day He would bring to them salvation, but it is a covenant which we all as well receive the benefit from for we are all New Covenant believers. But you notice the nature of this covenant, verse 31, "Days are coming, declares the Lord, where I will make a New Covenant with the house of Israel, the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt." That's the Mosaic Covenant, the Sinaitic Covenant, the Covenant of Law. "My Covenant which they broke though I was a husband to them, declares the Lord. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord. I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it and I will be their God and they shall be My people." It is the nature and the character of the New Covenant that God writes His law on the heart, that the Law of God rather than being an external pressure to which man conforms, becomes an internal motivation.

To look a little more deeply into that same New Covenant, turn to Ezekiel chapter 36. Again these are New Covenant passages. Ezekiel 36 and verse 26 tells us more about this New Covenant, verses 26 and 27. "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new Spirit within you. I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh...verse 27...and I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes and You will be careful to observe My ordinances." That's what happens when the Spirit takes up residence in the life of a believer. It is the power of the Spirit that energizes obedience. It causes you to walk in My statutes and observe My ordinances. Over in

chapter 37 He says the same thing in verse 14, "I will put My Spirit within you and you will come to life and you will know that I the Lord have spoken and done it."

New Covenant life then is life in the Spirit. The Spirit becomes for us that living fountain of divine waters ever gushing up endlessly, providing all the spiritual resources we could ever need and far, far more. How foolish is it then in living out our Christian lives to turn from this fountain of living waters, the indwelling Holy Spirit, to empty, broken cisterns? If you want to live on the spiritual level, if you want to live in the power of God, you must then live in the Spirit.

Now with that in mind, let's go back to Galatians. Only this time, let's go to chapter 5, Galatians chapter 5. And here is the text to which I want to draw your attention to tonight as we consider what is a very practical portion of Scripture. Galatians chapter 5 and verse 16, very straightforward words. "But I say, walk by the Spirit...walk by the Spirit." That is by the power and direction and leading and guidance of the Spirit. "And you will not carry out the desire of the flesh." It's that simple. Walk in the Spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. Walk is a present tense command and it implies just in the word a constant step-by-step pace, progress. Keep on walking, it could be translated. As your life as a Christian unfolds one moment at a time, one day at a time, each step is taken in the power and under the control of the Spirit. This is a command to let your life be ruled by and governed by the Holy Spirit.

Now we all possess the Holy Spirit. "If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he's none of His." Romans 8:9. "Every Christian has the Spirit," we don't need like so many people who go around and pray as if they don't have the Holy Spirit to receive the Holy Spirit, we all have the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who gave us life. It is the Holy Spirit who dwelling in us sustains that life. We are the temple of the Spirit of God, 1 Corinthians 6:19 and 20. That is so basic. But possessing the Holy Spirit and being the temple of the Holy Spirit is not necessarily the same as walking in the Spirit. Walking simply means you take every step consistently in line with the will and the direction provided by the Holy Spirit.

Now the Christian life is described as a walk many, many times, because it is a day-by-day, step-by-step experience. I'll give you a little walking theology here, for just a moment. Ephesians 4:2 and 3 says, "Walk in humility." Romans 13:13 says, "Walk in purity." First Corinthians 7:17 says, "Walk in contentment." Second Corinthians 5:7 says, "Walk in faith, or trust." Ephesians 2:10 says, "Walk in good works." Ephesians 4:17, "Walk differently than the unconverted." Second Thessalonians 3:6, "Walk separated." Ephesians 5:2 and 3, "Walk in love." Ephesians 5:8 and 9, "Walk in light." Ephesians 5:15 and 16, "Walk in wisdom." Third John 3 and 4, "Walk in truth." And the key to all of that is to walk in the Spirit. It is He that produces humility, purity, contentment, faith, good works, separation, love, light, wisdom and truth.

Summing it all up then in this sixteenth verse you have here what is really a bottom-line definition of how to live the Christian life. "Walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh." That's triumph, that's victory, that's conquering remaining sin, the flesh that is in us. And it comes only by walking in the Spirit. And again I say, this is not what you hear today. We are told about psychological gimmicks, we are talked about practical steps to this and practical steps to that and how to change the way we behave by positive confession and positive words and name it and claim it as if we had some power in ourselves to alter reality. Simply stated, we are to walk in the Spirit or we will not conquer the ever-present desires of the flesh.

Now this is a battle and Paul goes from the command in verse 16, which is clear, to the conflict in verses 17 and 18. Let's look at it. This is one of those very definitive basic texts that all Christians need to really understand. We live in a battle. We live in a war going on inside of us. Though we are new creations, we are totally new, Galatians 2:20, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, Christ lives in me." We are a new I. But sin is still present, it is still there. And that is certainly indicated in verse 16, "Only when we walk by the Spirit will we not carry out the desires of the flesh," meaning the desires of the flesh are still there even though we are in Christ and have been justified. They're still there and they will conquer us if we don't walk by the Spirit.

It's really a sad reality to look out over the landscape of quote/unquote evangelical Christianity today and see how dominated it is by the desires of the flesh. Even at the highest level of pastoral or supposed pastoral ministry, Christian leadership, you have people who seem to have absolutely no control over their fleshly desires. Pastors falling into horrific immorality and sin, and that's the part we know, God knows the part that is publicly as yet unknown. Some men's sins follow after them...some are known in time. And descends from leadership all the way through the ranks who claim to be Christians to the degree that there's almost an indifferent attitude toward the flesh. And then you have the church busily trying to adapt to the culture so that it could somehow win the culture by affirming the culture. So you have preachers who want to be savvy on R-rated movies, and savvy on vile music, and well versed in the immoralities of our society so they can somehow identify with the people to whom they minister and they have overexposed themselves in a toxic fashion to the intrusion of these worldly vices. This is not how you overcome the flesh. But there doesn't seem to be a lot of interest in overcoming the desires of the flesh. And where there is some interest in that, it seems to descend to some level of manipulation, some levels of cleverness or some level of learning a skill, or creating a world of your own in which you can in your own power overcome the flesh. It can only be done by the power of the Spirit. First of all, we have to care that it be done, and secondly, then we have to walk by the Spirit.

Now what just are we talking about when we talk about the flesh? In verse 17 he says the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh. That's what's going on in everybody's life. It seems to me that in this particular climate in the church, more people are losing this battle than ever I've seen in my life and it's getting worse all the time. What are we talking about when we talk about

the flesh? *Sarx*is the Greek word, what is it? Very, very important term in Scripture. It is used of the physical body. Luke 24:39, "A spirit has not flesh and bones," that's simply a way to refer to physicality. So the word can mean just the physical body. It can also mean human fallenness as it does in Romans 7 where Paul says the evil that is in me, the bad longings are in my flesh, and by flesh there he means not just his physical body but his fallenness. It also can refer to self-effort as it did in Galatians 3:3, "Are you perfected by the flesh?" And there it means your own self-effort. It can mean your physicality, your physical body, it can mean your fallenness and it can also mean your own efforts. It can as well mean your weakness, or your helplessness, as in Romans 6:19, "The affirmity of our flesh," it just means there is an innate weakness in us to achieve the things that honor God. It also can refer to our entire condition before conversion, as it does in Romans 7:5, "We were in the flesh."

So when you come across the word "flesh" you better be careful how you interpret it because it can mean physical body, human fallenness, our own efforts, our own weakness or helplessness and it can refer to our former condition. But it also can refer to the principle of fallenness that is fully operative in our present condition, and that is precisely how Paul uses it in Romans 7. Look at Romans 7 for a moment because this is an important portion of Scripture to get this right. Paul says in Romans 7:14, "I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin." And there he defines what he means by flesh. He means I have this slavery to sin, I have this hold on me that is exercised by sin. It is not what I want, though verse 15 he says, "What I'm doing I don't understand, I'm not practicing what I'd like to do but I'm doing the very thing I hate. If I do the very thing I don't wish to do, I agree with the Law confessing that it's good, so now no longer am I the one doing it but sin which indwells me." So there is this principle of sin, remaining sin still in every believer residing that drives us in the area of the desires of the flesh to do what our redeemed nature doesn't want to do and not to do what our redeemed nature does want to do. There's a principle then, according to verse 21, that evil is present in me though I am the one who wishes to do good. I joyfully concur with the Law of God in the inner man, I love the Law of God. And we all live in this, we understand that. "But I see a different law, a different power in the members of my body waging war against the law of my mind, making me a prisoner, the law of sin which is in my members, wretched man that I am." It's as if I'm attached to a dead body.

So what we learn from that is that the flesh is still there. Yes, we're still physical, but that's not what he's talking about. He's talking about our fallenness, the sinful propensities that are in our human nature that are going to be there until we are glorified. More than just our weakness as indicated by the infirmity of the flesh, more than just our own self-efforts, this is an innate presence of sin. Paul says then...go back to our Galatians text...the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit. The Christian life is a battle. It is a war going on in us. Desire lusts means strong desire, yearnings that are very, very powerful. They produce sin. James chapter 1 lays it out, "Let no man say when he is tempted, 'I'm being tempted by God.' For God cannot be tempted by evil. He Himself does not tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when He is carried away and enticed by his own lust." It's not the devil. It's not

God. It's in us. Each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. When lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin. When sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. And then he goes on to say, "Only good things come from God. Evil things come from within us." Lust conceives brings forth sin.

So in us the flesh exists our fallenness, setting its desires against the Holy Spirit who is in us. The war is on. Our fallen lust moving us in a battle against the Holy Spirit to see who is going to dominate. You say, "Well isn't the Spirit more powerful than the flesh?" Yes, and the Spirit has subdued our flesh savingly. The Spirit has subdued our flesh to a great degree, a transforming degree in terms of salvation and regeneration, but there is still the presence of that flesh. Though greatly subdued, there is still part of it which is not yet subdued waging war against the work of the Spirit. If we want to win that battle, we have to ally ourselves with the Holy Spirit and not with the flesh.

In Romans chapter 6 and verse 12, Paul lays that out for us in some simple directives that you'll remember. Romans 6:12, "Do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts." Do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness. Don't keep doing that. All of these are commands which assume our responsibility. "Present yourself to God as though alive from the dead and your members as instruments of righteousness to God." What he's saying is, side with the Spirit not with the flesh. This is not passive. This is an active kind of siding. Again Paul in Romans deals with this in the eighth chapter, I think it's verse 13, "If you are living according to the flesh, you die. But if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live." It is an active, aggressive killing of lusts and desires. This is what it means that you have put on the new man and you now no longer live according to the way you used to live. But it is an active kind of obedience. Christian life is a race to be run, according to Hebrews chapter 12. It is a fight to be fought according to 1 Corinthians chapter 9, beating your body to bring it into submission. The devil is an enemy that assaults the flesh through the system of the world and he is an enemy to be resisted. And in order for us to effectively resist, Titus 3:8 says, "We must apply ourselves to good deeds." Paul calls this kind of aggressive approach "Pressing toward the mark of Christ's likeness which is the prize of our high calling," Philippians 3. And in Philippians 2 he calls it, "Working out your salvation which God has wrought on thee inside."

In other words, we have to line up with the Holy Spirit and not with the flesh. We have to walk by the Spirit and not by the flesh. We have to respond to the directives and commands of the Spirit and not the desires of the flesh. In Ephesians 5:18 this same principle is stated in another way. It says, "Be filled with the Spirit...be...literally being kept filled with the Spirit." In other words, let the Spirit dominate you. And in Colossians 3:16, the parallel passage, by the way, to Ephesians 5:18, the exact parallel passage, all the surrounding passages are exactly the same, the parallel says this, "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly." Being filled by the Spirit, being controlled by the Spirit, dominated by the Spirit is the same as letting the Word of Christ dominate you. The Word and the Spirit being the same. The Word reflects the will of the Spirit. If you want to walk by the Spirit, then you walk

according to Scripture, according to what the Word of God teaches. You ask yourself why there's so little interest in sanctification today? It's directly parallel to little interest in the Scripture. Why there are so many people who fall in ugly and gross sin at all levels of the life of the church, it is because they do not know what they need to know to follow the mind of the Holy Spirit. They're untaught. It is no favor done to people to preach nothing but simplistic evangelistic sermons culturally based to try to attract non-believers week after week, year after year, and leave everybody sitting in there whose come to Christ starving for spiritual truth and not knowing enough to win the battle that's going on inside.

And so, in chapter 5 we are commanded to walk by the Spirit if we have any hope of conquering our flesh with its lusts. The flesh sets its desire against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh, for these are in opposition to one another, listen to this, so that you may not do the things that you please. That's right back to Romans 7 again. You may not do the things that you please. That's exactly where we live. We hate sin in ourselves and the more sanctified you are and the more you engage yourself in this battle, the more you will hate the sin that is in you.

And then I want you to notice verse 18. "If you are led by the Spirit," which is the same as walking by the Spirit, the same as being filled with the Spirit, "you are not under the Law." This is a marvelous, marvelous statement. Verse 16 says, "Walk in the Spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh." So what will you carry out? You'll carry out the will of the Spirit. Now follow this. You will carry out the will of the Spirit, not the desire of the flesh if you walk by the Spirit. Walking by the Spirit means being filled, being richly dominated by the Word of God which is the mind of the Spirit.

If you walk in that way, filled and dominated by Scripture, you will not carry out the desire of the flesh, that's verse 16. Verse 18, "You are not under the Law." Now it would seem to say...Wait a minute, wouldn't it be better to say if you are led by the Spirit you are under the Law? That is to say you are submitting to the Law, you are obeying the Law, you are in compliance with the Law. Why does he say you're not under the Law? Why? What does that mean? Simply this, no longer are you in a situation where you're trying to be controlled externally. The transformation and the work of the Spirit on the inside is controlling you from inside. And that is the essence of what I showed you in Jeremiah and in Ezekiel with regard to the New Covenant. And that's what it means to receive the Holy Spirit, to be the temple of the Spirit, a place where the Spirit is taken up residence. We are no longer under the external constraint of the Law. We are now under the internal compulsion of the Holy Spirit. You can take two people, take them...well let's use Paul as an example, the Apostle Paul before he was a Christian was under the Law, was he not? By his own confession he was under the Law? And he endeavored to live according to the Law. The Law was an outside stimulus. He had a fallen heart. He had an evil unredeemed heart. He had nothing of God within him. The Spirit did not live within him. And yet he said that as far as the law goes, I am blameless. There are many moral people who function under law. They subscribe their lives to some level of the law outwardly. And they try to live their lives according to the Law. They're operating by works. They're operating by human effort. And

they can keep it up for a while. They can...they can do it successfully for a time. And they can hide the things they need to hide and reveal only the things they need to reveal. But sin is still dominant on the inside. But when you receive the Spirit in your regeneration, and when the Spirit takes up residence and you walk in the Spirit, or are led by the Spirit, you are no longer under an external constraint, you're under an internal divine motivation.

This is what the psalmist meant when he said, "O how I love Your law." This is what Paul means in Romans 7 when he says, "I love the Law of God, it is holy, just and good." My inner person wants to obey and wants to keep the Law. This is the difference. There are people in the world today who are very moral people. Some of them are more externally moral than professing Christians. But it's all external pressure for whatever reason to conform to an external law as far as anybody can see. But when you walk in the Spirit, the external law goes away and the Spirit of God does His work on the inside. And that's exactly what the prophet Ezekiel and Jeremiah both had in mind when they recorded the Word of the Lord, "I will write My law on your heart." I don't need a sign in my house that tells me to love God. I don't need a sign in my house that tells me to honor Christ. I don't need a sign. I don't have to put something in front of me that tells me to do what is right, to honor God, to worship God, to walk according to the Word of God. I don't need that. I don't need anything external to motivate me because there's a motivation on the inside wrought in me by the Holy Spirit to which I long with all my heart and all my passion to respond fully and consistently.

And so, just go back to verse 18, "If you are led by the Spirit," there's the cure right there, "follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, walk in the way in which the Holy Spirit directs you." How do you know in what way the Spirit's directing you? Because it is revealed in the Word of God. This is how believers are supposed to live. Romans 8:14, "All who are being led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God." If you're the son of God, you're being led by the Spirit of God. So if you are led by the Spirit of God, follow. It's all wonderful and it's right and it's noble and I can tell you this, if you're a Christian, this resonates and this is what you want. This is what you hunger for. This is what you desire. If you don't like what I'm saying, don't kid yourself that you're a believer. If you're a true believer, you want to walk in the Spirit. You are being led by the Spirit and you desire to follow. But you understand that the flesh resists and fights to hinder that. And to begin with, you can't for a moment even entertain the idea that you can somehow accomplish a sanctified life if you abandon the only way in which one can be lived, and that is by the power of the Holy Spirit. The battle is too fierce. The flesh is too strong. We are in our own strength too weak. We cannot be perfected by our human strength. We can't let happen to us that happened to the Galatians. They started well, in the power of the Spirit, then in came self-effort, the Holy Spirit was ignored, and they would fall into sin. Follow the Spirit, follow the Spirit by following the mind of the Spirit. Follow the mind of the Spirit by following the revelation of Scripture.

Now there are a number of reasons why you have to walk in the Spirit. Let me just give you three you can think about on your own. Number one, because of God's impossible standard. Because of God's impossible standard. First Peter 1:16, "Be holy as I am holy." I might achieve, I don't know, some

level of satisfaction in the religious community if I live a certain way. I might be accepted by moral people and religious people and even Christian people if I guard my life from certain overt kinds of sins. But the standard that is laid out for us in the Scripture is, "Be holy for I am holy." That great Levitical demand of God that is repeated by Peter in 1 Peter 1:16. This impossible standard takes it way out of my power...way out of my power.

So, we need to walk in the Spirit because the standard is otherwise impossible. Secondly, our foe is formidable...our foe is formidable. And what do I mean by that? The flesh...so let's say the flesh is formidable...the flesh is formidable. There is in my flesh...says Paul...no good thing. Formidable because it's powerful. Formidable because it's ever-present. Formidable because it is easily activated. And that takes me to the third reason for walking in the Spirit. First, because of God's impossible standard, because of the formidable nature of our flesh, and thirdly, because of the relentless operation of Satan. Satan tweaks and turns the system to assault the flesh which is the beachhead on which he lands his temptations.

So we have a serious battle facing us. And if we are going to win that battle, we need to walk in the power of the Spirit. Second Corinthians 6:16, "You are the temple of the living God." As God has said, "I will dwell in them and walk in them." It's a case of God walking in us and we walking with Him. And walking always means daily, progressive conduct. The Spirit of the Almighty God of the universe lives in you. You are the temple of the Holy Spirit. He is alive in you. He is walking. He is moving forward. We are to follow and walk in the Spirit and that means we are to embrace the mind of the Spirit which is the truth of the Spirit which means we are to be saturated with the Word of God. And when we hear it, we are to embrace it. That's what Colossians 3:16 is saying, "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly." Not just hearing it and shaking it off, but letting it find a place deep and rich in your soul. There is so much superficiality, even in cases where Bible verses are used and supposed Bible teaching is going on. It lacks depth and breadth and height and length. It lacks richness. It lacks profundity. It lacks riveting compelling pulsating truth that penetrates our souls and grips us. That's why it's so important to expose yourself to that kind of understanding of the Word of God any way and every way you possibly can, relentlessly filling your soul with it so that you might ever be dominated by the mind of the Spirit. It's that truth poured in and poured in and poured in that dominates. And I know you understand that. I...I know for me, and I study constantly and read constantly, and not just by any means to preach. In fact, I never study to make a sermon, I can always think of something to say. I always study to know the truth of the Word of God. And out of that comes a message as in some sense a byproduct. But I'm not even reading all the time just in connection with the subject that I'm going to preach on. Just reading to be nourished. Just reading to understand more richly and more deeply the things of the Spirit and rushing in my own heart to apply that, to apply it so that it becomes embedded in my own understanding.

There is no other way to live the Christian life other than to walk by the Spirit. There is no other way to walk by the Spirit other than to know what the Spirit wants. There's no other way to know what the

Spirit wants unless you understand the great rich truths of Scripture. And there is, of course, today this mass of people who go to church and hear nothing that's deep at all or penetrating, or helpful. And so they're left in this horrific battle further described in verses 19 through 23. Let's look at that.

The command came first, and then the conflict. And here's the contrast between the flesh and the Spirit. Here's...here's what describes of delineates the components of these two realities. The deeds of the flesh, just in case you might forget, this would be what you don't want to dominate your life, immorality. These are typical. Paul loves these kinds of lists. That's the word *porneia*from which we get the word pornography, illicit sexual conduct. That's the first thing in the list followed by impurity, *akatharsia*. A catharsis is a cleansing, an acatharsis is something that is unclean, used by the way in ancient times of the pus that came out of an unclean wound. Thought and mind filth that leads to pornographic thoughts and conduct.

And then he talks about sensuality, *aselgeia*, basically a word which means without restraint. It is sexual abandonment that knows no restraint. The one who has gone so far in lust and desire that he could care less what anybody thinks. In fact, this is the person who parades his evil in front of everybody with seemingly no restraint. Those are elements of the flesh that show up in the category of morality.

There are also elements of the flesh that show up in the category, believe it or not, of religion. Verse 20, idolatry, as much a work of the flesh as immorality. And I don't mean by that just worshiping an idol, or an image. It is worshiping any other than the true God and the true Lord Jesus Christ, any false religion. Followed by sorcery, *pharmakeia*from which we get, obviously, pharmacy, pharmaceuticals. It always meant a drug. Drugs were used in the ancient world as a common medium in the practice of magic and sorcery. They used drugs to induce euphoric states of consciousness which they assumed elevated them into the world of the gods. They altered their thinking by the use of drugs, sorcery, any kind of altered thinking. In that case it was used in their religious worship, connected to witchcraft, magic and other forms of sorcery.

There are also sins of the flesh that operate in the area of social relationships. It's not just immorality and sexual sin, it's not just false religion, but even in our relationships with others. For example, notice again, enmities, verse 20, *echsthra,*hatred is what it means, plural here, hatreds, hostility. Then comes strife, *eris*, meaning fights, quarrels, takes the attitude of hatred and puts it into action. Then comes jealousy, *zelos*from which comes zeal, the anger produced by what somebody else has that you want. Then come outbursts of anger, kind of a progression here, *thumos*, the outburst of hostility, uncontrolled temper. That leads obviously to very serious disputes, dissensions and factions and envyings as verse 21 begins.

So you have these kinds of sins that show up in the category of our own personal lives, our religious lives, and our social lives. And then he throws in drunkenness, carousing, this would be public orgies

which were a part of ancient religion, and anything else you like...things like these of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God. He sounds like John here, doesn't he? Black and white John that he who is born of God doesn't practice sin, as John says in 1 John chapter 3. Those who practice, *prasso*, in the present tense. He means by that those who lives are characterized by things like this. It is a durative of action in the Greek language and so speaks of habitual practice of such things. And those who habitually do this kind of thing shall not inherit the Kingdom of God. These are works of the flesh which express the flesh unrestrained and unmitigated if they are constant. Now these kinds of things can show up in the life of a believer, yes a believer can be immoral, impure, sensual, idolatrous, even be involved in drugs and all the things that are listed in the social elements there, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, yes...they can envy, yes, they can be drunk, yes they can get involved in carousing, yes. But it's not for them a pattern of life, it is an aberration. But nonetheless the point he's making here is this is how the flesh functions. This is the stuff that the flesh produces. This is the nature of the flesh. And this is what is in you and in me all the time. It's there warring against the Holy Spirit.

And on the other hand, verse 22 tells us that if we look at the Spirit, this is what we find. The fruit of the Spirit, the spontaneous produce of the Spirit, if you will, to use the agrarian analogy, the spontaneous produce of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. So that's what's going on in you. There is in you a working of the Holy Spirit producing nine basic attitudes. Love, *agape*, the highest form of love. Joy, to that joy we add peace, *eirene*, tranquility of mind based upon a settled relationship with God. Patience,*makrothumeo*, which means long suffering, tolerant. Commonly used, by the way, in the Bible of the attitude of God toward sinners. Kindness, *chrestotes*...goodness, *agathosune*, spiritual, moral excellence.

And finally, the three graces...faith, or better, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, the ability to keep self in check. All of this is the work of the Spirit who produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. So that's what's going on, two extremes present in you, in your flesh all that is evil in the spirit, all that is righteous. All of these, by the way, were characteristics of Jesus Christ and if we had time we could go back through the life and ministry of Jesus and see how He demonstrated all of those nine virtues produced by the Holy Spirit, who, of course, was working through Him in His incarnate ministry.

Notice at the end of verse 23 he makes a very interesting statement. "Against such things there is no law." The law was given to restrain evil. You don't need a law to restrain these. You don't need a law even to produce these. What a contrast. The normal behavior of the natural man in the flesh is described in verses 19 to 21 and a law was needed to restrain it. But in the believer the normal behavior is described in verses 22 and 23 and no law is needed to restrain that or to produce that because it is the work of the Spirit on the inside. The Spirit-controlled life produces all of that.

The Christian life then in all its fullness is a life lived in the power of the Holy Spirit. And if we don't live it that way, we cannot possibly be victorious. And so there's a final point in verses 24 and 25, you can call it the conquest, if you want. The conflict is there. The contrast between the elements that characterize the flesh and the Spirit. And what about the conquest? Verse 24, "Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passion and desires." That's history, folks, that is past history. It refers to the moment of your salvation, when you were crucified with Christ. You have already crucified the flesh. There is already a slaying of the full power of the flesh. The old self has already been put to death. You have been crucified with Christ. And in that crucifixion, your flesh...and this is so important...with its passions and desires have been crucified. What a great statement. Those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. The lordship of passion, the lordship of evil desire over your life has been broken at your salvation. It no longer reigns. You now are dominated by the Spirit, verse 25, so that if we now live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. We now live not by the flesh any longer. We live now by the Spirit. Not dominated by the flesh, but dominated by the Spirit. Romans 8:5, "For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh. Those who are according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit." Of course, verse 9, "You are not in the flesh but in the Spirit if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. And if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the Spirit is alive because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you." What he means is spiritual life and power over the flesh. "So you are no longer under obligation...verse 12...to live according to the flesh. If you're living according to the flesh, you must die. But if you're living by the Spirit, you are putting to death the deeds of the body and you will live."

We are living, if we're Christians, by the Spirit. We are therefore experiencing the dominating power of the Spirit and we are to walk fully in the Spirit. This is foundational to Christian living. There's no way to get here, folks, other than to know the mind of the Spirit. This is not mysticism, there's no way to get here other than know the mind of the Spirit. No way to know the mind of the Spirit other than to have the Word of Christ dwell in you richly and profoundly. That's so important. Not just hearing it, not being hearers of the Word, but doers. As James put it. I worry about people who train themselves not to apply the truth. I worry about that a lot. And I know there are people in this church who have been here for years and years and years and then bolt off into some heinous and gross sin as if they heard nothing. There are people who have sat under sound teaching and trained themselves to ignore it. And the same sun that melts the wax, hardens the clay. And what is changing and transforming some people is hardening other people. It's critical for you to do a little inventory on how you respond to the truth that the Lord gives you.

So verse 25 sums it up. "If we live by the Spirit," and we do, better translated, "Since we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit." I grieve, as I said at the beginning, that the Holy Spirit is so

dishonored in this time. There is so little interest in real sanctification, holiness, godliness, separation from the world. People think it's a necessary strategy for evangelism to connect with the culture and to be under its damaging corrupting influence. People think that preaching the Word of God, preaching sound doctrine, saturating people with divine truth is somehow unacceptable, boring, uninteresting, unimportant and so people who have actually been converted are left exposed to the power of the flesh. And there is this floating sort of fantasy about the Holy Spirit that has come out of the Charismatic Movement that dominates our thinking. We need to go back to the real ministry of the Holy Spirit which is to activate His power in us through His Word so that we can truly conquer the flesh to the glory of Christ and the blessing of His church and the benefit of the lost.

Father, again tonight, these truths are brought with force to our hearts because they come out of Your authoritative, inspired, inerrant Word. This is Your Word to us. This is not my message, this is Your message. We have grieved the Holy Spirit. We have certainly quenched the Holy Spirit. We have misrepresented the Holy Spirit. We've ignored the Holy Spirit. And while there seems to be an attempt made not to dishonor the Father and even an attempt not to dishonor the Son, there seems to be little interest in not dishonoring You, O Holy Spirit. For any time we have quenched or grieved You, we ask Your forgiveness. We thank You for Your faithfulness to us, to continue to make intercession for us with groanings that cannot be...cannot be uttered and therefore because You intercede for us here and because the Son intercedes for us there in heaven, all things are worked together for good on our behalf. We thank You for Your relentless intercession for us. We thank You for Your presence in us. We thank You for Your leading and we ask, O Spirit of God, that You would put in us the longing and the desire and the compulsion to walk in the way that You are leading, to follow You and thus to give You glory and thus to enjoy Your fruit and not the product of the flesh, and thus to live lives that bring honor to You and that make the gospel believable. We thank You for the privilege that we have that is beyond comprehension to have You, O Holy Spirit, living in us, amazing...amazing. It's almost inconceivable that You, the one who moved over the face of the formless and the void at creation and caused things to come into existence, You the one who revealed the Scripture, the fullness of revelation, You the one who powered the body of Mary to give birth to the Savior, You the one who worked through the incarnate Son of God, the one who came down and formed the church, the one by whom we are placed into the body of Christ, You live in us all the time. This is a staggering reality. And may we know that wherever we go, whatever we say, whatever we do, whatever we think, we do all of that with Your full knowledge. For he that is joined to the Lord is one and we are one with You and You with us. We thank You that graciously, continually, patiently, lovingly, You continue to direct and lead us, may we follow with eager hearts, longing above all things to do what You desire us to do, exercising obedience to Your Word so that we may subdue in Your power the deeds of the flesh and enjoy the full fruit of the Spirit manifestly, to live in love and joy and peace and all those other things is the only way we want to live, and it's there for our grasp if we walk the way You lead us. Cause us to do that eagerly with the confidence that in that we will be blessed, You will be honored, others will be affected in the church and outside. For this we pray for Your glory. Amen.

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