

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

Walking by the Spirit

Scripture: Galatians 5:16-25

Code: 90-34

The Sufficiency of the Spirit, Part 5

Let me encourage you now, if you will, to take your Bible and open it to Galatians chapter 3 and look again at the text that we have been using to begin to initiate our thoughts along the lines of the sufficiency of the Holy Spirit. Let me just read you Galatians 3:3, we have read it each of these Sundays past and want to read it again as the setting for our teaching this morning. In Galatians 3:3 Paul writes: "Are you so foolish, having begun by the Spirit are you now being perfected by the flesh?"

We have endeavored in this series to remind the church of Jesus Christ, including ourselves, that because our salvation was a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in its initiation, so our spiritual living must be a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. We cannot fall to the level of the Galatians. We cannot begin in the Spirit and be perfected in the flesh. We must live on the spiritual level. We must live in the power of the Holy Spirit.

I have been pointing out to you over the last few weeks that one of the most serious threats against the church today, one of the most serious threats against Christians is this new kind of sanctification effort without the Holy Spirit. The church has bought into human pragmatism, ideas, techniques. The church has bought into psychology. These things are offering false and weak and worthless solutions to the troubles and burdens of believers. We have become the victim of humanistic ideas, therapies, human efforts, all kinds of human principles, human devices to try to accomplish spiritual goals. That is not unlike the Galatians who had begun in the power of the Spirit and were trying to perfect themselves by their own effort.

Now just to remind you of what we have already covered, we noted that we did all begin in the Spirit. All of us came into spiritual life through the agency of the Holy Spirit. We were convicted of sin by the Holy Spirit. We were brought to repentance by the Holy Spirit. Faith was energized in us by the Holy Spirit so that we would respond to the preaching of the gospel. We were then brought to the place where we would submit to the lordship of Christ by the Holy Spirit. And then we were regenerated by the Holy Spirit, that is we were recreated into new life.

At the time in which the Spirit of God regenerated us, He came to indwell us by His agency, we were baptized into the body of Christ, He gave us spiritual gifts, He then sealed us for eternal life and then

separated us from sin. All of that is the work of the Spirit, a monumental work that lifted us out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son, a monumental work that took us out of the mundane and earthly and set our feet in the eternal the heavenlies. So we live a spiritual life. We are not of this world though we are in this world. Our citizenship is in heaven. And as a result of this heavenly life and this spiritual kind of existence, we cannot begin in the Spirit and be perfected by the flesh. And so we've been saying all these weeks that it is essential for us to live in the Spirit, therein lies the solution to everything.

Now remember what we said that the Spirit offers us all of the perfecting resources that we need. We said, for example, the Spirit brings us into intimacy with God where is all the resource found. The Spirit illuminates the Scripture so we know exactly what the Word of God calls us to do. The Spirit then strengthens us in the inner man to do that. The Spirit glorifies Christ to us, both as our authority and our example so we know how to live and whom to be like. The Spirit then personally guides us as He moves within us through our conscience to do God's will. The Spirit then ministers to us through other Christians as He comes to us through them to touch our lives and bring us strength. And then finally we said the Spirit intercedes for us so that all things work together for good in our lives.

Now those are the ministries that the Spirit of God offers the believer by which we are perfected in the Spirit. How ridiculous, how foolish and how bewitched we would have to be like the Galatians to stoop to a lower level and having begun in the Spirit then try to live in the flesh. It is a foolish thing. The folly of this is not new. In the Old Testament let me remind you of Jeremiah chapter 2. You don't need to turn to it, just jot these verses down, verses 11 through 13. When God is indicting Israel for defecting from Him, He does it in a very vivid way. He says in Jeremiah 2:11, "Has a nation changed gods when they were not God's." He's talking about their idolatry, they had abandoned Me and followed false gods. "But My people have changed their glory." Now who is the glory of Israel? God. They've exchanged their God for that which does not profit. They've exchanged the true God for a no God, for a non-entity, for a non-existing false god. And so in verse 12 God says, "Be appalled, O heavens, at this and shudder, be very desolate, declares the Lord."

Then verse 13, "For My people have committed two evils." Here they are. Number one, "They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters." The first foolish thing that Israel did was to forsake the fountain of living waters, that is the true God who was the source of everything. That is not unlike what the church has done today. You remember in John 7 Jesus said, "Whoever receives Me, drinks of Me, out of his belly will flow rivers of living water." And in saying that He was referring to the ministry of the Holy Spirit who would be the divine resource to provide all the water that a thirsty soul could need. So just as Israel of old had forsaken John, the fountain of living waters, I suggest to you the church today has forsaken God again, God the Holy Spirit, who is still the river of living waters, the provision of all that we need.

Then the second thing for which He indicts them, the second evil. "Not only have they forsaken Me, but they have hewn for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water." On the one hand they turn from God, on the other hand they turned to someone who could not help, to something that could not help. From the fountain of living waters to a broken cistern that could hold no water, that promised everything and provided nothing. And so I see the same thing today in the bewitching of the church. The church has entered into the folly of turning from the Holy Spirit who is the stream of living water and has looked in the empty buckets of psychology, pragmatism, humanism in order to discover the things that it thinks will be able to meet its own spiritual needs...how absolutely foolish.

The conclusion of all of this is that we must live on the spiritual level. We must live in the power of the God. We must cease to do what we are warned not to do in Scripture. First Thessalonians 5:19 says "Quench not the Holy Spirit." We must cease to do that. We are quenching the Spirit. Literally that means we are putting out His fire. We are pushing Him aside. We are treating Him with indifference. Secondly, we must not grieve the Spirit, Ephesians 4:30. The church today, I believe, is both quenching the Holy Spirit by refusing to respond to His leading and grieving the Holy Spirit by sin and disobedience. We must cease to quench and cease to grieve and begin to move in the power of the Spirit or the church will get worse and worse as it struggles to offer human solutions to spiritual problems.

But I told you last week that the remaining question in our study is: how do we do this? How do we live on the spiritual level? How do we get to that point where we're not looking anymore at human solutions but we're looking at spiritual solutions, supernatural answers?

Well to answer that, let's look over to chapter 5 of Galatians because the Apostle Paul had to give a solution to the Galatians...after all, the problem was theirs. And he gives them the same solution that we need because we have essentially the same problem. Now anyone who knows anything about Christian living biblically must acknowledge that the key to Christian living is the Holy Spirit, that it is a Spirit-controlled life that is a victorious triumphant life. Only the Holy Spirit can harness the fallen flesh. Only the Holy Spirit can harness the fallen flesh. Now let me say something to you you must understand. All our difficulties, I'll say it again, all our difficulties are related to the flesh. Every wrong action, every wrong word, every wrong idea, every wrong reaction, every wrong emotion, every wrong attitude is from the flesh. Every difficulty in life is a result of our humanness. The Bible says that we've already been changed on the inner man by salvation. Some day we'll be changed in the outer man and will be perfect forever and never have a problem.

And what's going to cause that? The redemption of the body. When we have the elimination of the flesh, the flesh is our problem. The reason we have anxiety, the flesh. The reason we have fear, the flesh. The reason we have terrible relationships, the flesh. The reason we have difficulty in marriage, the flesh. The reason we have difficulty in the family, the flesh. The reason we have difficulty

cooperating with other people, the flesh. The reason we have pride, the flesh. All sin of every form, all wrong emotions, all wrong attitudes, all wrong actions, all wrong reactions, all wrong thoughts, all wrong words, and all wrong deeds all come out of the flesh.

Now, if that is the case...and it is, that's very clear in Scripture...then we must find some means to subdue the flesh. And that brings us to Galatians chapter 5 and verse 16. We'll call this "the command." We'll call this "the command." "But I say, walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh." There it is. That is the base line truth for all Christian living. Walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. What a statement...what a statement. Since all of our problems and all of our anxieties and everything in life that isn't right and for which we seek a solution in the world so very often is all caused by the flesh, then whatever means by which we can overcome the lust of the flesh becomes the solution to everything. This is no over-simplification, dear friends, this is the Word of God, this is the mind of God. The flesh must be subdued. It is the flesh that fouls up everything that is fouled up in life.

Now let's look at the command for a moment. The word "walk" is a progressive present tense command with continuity that could be translated "keep on continually walking...keep on continually walking." The idea here is that the life of a Christian unfolds one day at a time. It unfolds one step at a time. Walking then is a very picturesque metaphor...one step at a time under the control of the Holy Spirit...that's how we are to live. It is a habitual thing. It is a constant pattern. It is a routine for us. We already have the indwelling Spirit, according to Romans 8:9, 1 Corinthians 6:19 our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. And the Spirit is in us and the Spirit is moving and leading and we are simply to respond moment by moment, step by step, day by day walking by means of the power and direction of the Spirit. That's it, just walk by the Spirit in an attitude of submission to the Holy Spirit.

Now what does that involve? Now pragmatically it involves two things really, it involves studying the Word of God so that you know the mind of the Spirit and the will of the Spirit. Ephesians 5 says, "Be being kept filled with the Spirit." And a parallel passage, Colossians 3:16, says, "Let the Word of Christ dwell in your richly." Being filled with the Spirit is the same as letting the Word dwell in your richly because as the Word dominates your thinking, it dominates your action. As the Word moves through your heart and mind, it is that by which the Spirit of God directs your life. So as you spend time in the Word and as you spend time in prayer, communing with the living God and building an intimate relationship with the Spirit of God, as you feed on the Word and as you commune with God, you are in the position where the Spirit of God can move you down the path walking as He wants you to walk.

Now the concept of walking really does mean daily conduct. There's never a time in your life when you just arrive and from then on you're permanently spiritual. I do not believe the Bible teaches some eradication of the sin nature in this life or some second work of grace or some perfectionism, when you have reached that you never sin again. Not at all. It is a daily moment-by-moment walk and it

comes and goes, depending upon our submissiveness. By the way, if anyone of us says that we have no sin we make God a liar. We never overcome sin totally but we can overcome it as a pattern of life by walking by the Spirit. That's a basic daily practical life pattern. And I say it again, the only way you can do it, the only way you can walk routinely in the Spirit of God is to have spiritual thoughts. And the only way you can have spiritual thoughts is to be communing with the living God in an intense and continual prayer attitude and being fed continually on the Word so that your thoughts are God's thoughts.

You see, it's just a daily thing. We never arrive at some moment. I know people say, "Well I re-dedicated my life." You know how good that's...how long that's good for? Just the time you did it. And the next time you take a step you either walk by the Spirit or you walk by the flesh. That's why Paul said I die daily. Every day I have to kill myself and walk in the Spirit.

We have a walking life. That's what the Christian life is. It's a daily step-by-step moment-by-moment yielding to the Spirit of God. Walk is the general term by which our Christian life is defined. For example, in Ephesians 4:2 and 3 the Bible says, "Walk in humility." In Romans 13:13 it says, "Walk in purity." In 1 Corinthians 7:17 it says, "Walk in contentment." In 2 Corinthians 5:7 it says, "Walk in faith." In Ephesians 2:10 it says, "Walk in good works." In Ephesians 4:17 it says, "Walk differently than the world." In 2 Thessalonians 3:6 it says, "Walk separated from sin." In Ephesians 5:2 and 3 it says, "Walk in love." In Ephesians 5:8 and 9 it says, "Walk in light." In Ephesians 5:15 and 16 it says, "Walk in wisdom." And in 3 John 3 and 4 it says, "Walk in truth." So this day-by-day-by-day walk is to be walked in humility, purity, contentment, faith, good works, differently, separated from sin. It's to be a walk in love, light, wisdom and truth.

Now how you going to do that? There's only one way. You must walk by the Spirit, for it is the Spirit who produces humility. It is the Spirit who produces purity. It is the Spirit who produces contentment and faith and good works and who makes you different from the world and separates you from sin. It is the Spirit who produces love and enlightenment and wisdom and makes the truth known to you. So the sum of it all is walk in the Spirit.

That little sixteenth verse is monumental. You can take all of Christian living and reduce it to this. You can take all the commands of the New Testament and reduce them to this. If you will just walk by the Spirit you will not carry out the lusts or desires of the flesh. That's it. That's victory. The flesh wants to control you. It wants to have you think bad. It wants to have you feel bad. It wants to create anger, hostility, bitterness, jealousy, envy, strife. It wants to make you sure that you have reason to fear. It wants to make you doubt God. It wants to take love out of your heart and replace it with hatred. It wants to make you do wrong things and fill your life with guilt. It wants to destroy your marriage. It wants to destroy your home. It wants to destroy your relationships. It wants to make you useless to God. The flesh lusts all the time desiring what is wrong, what is destructive. And the only hope of overcoming it is to walk in the Spirit. You see, you cannot offer a human solution for a

spiritual problem.

The answer to overcoming the lust of the flesh is not pragmatics, it's not methodology, it's certainly not psychology. It's not some human effort. It's not somebody's good idea. It's not somebody's clever plan. It's not somebody's system. The way you overcome the driving compelling compulsions of the lust of the flesh is simply walking by the Spirit.

You say, "Well that sounds easy enough." Well it does sound easy enough and it's very simple. But let me take you to a second point. We saw the command in verse 16, let me be honest enough to say what Paul said and tell you there's a conflict, that's the second point. We move from command to conflict. It's easy to articulate the principle, it's very difficult to live it. Have you noticed that? Very difficult. So we come to the conflict in verse 17.

The conflict is assumed in verse 16. Obviously the indication here is that the desire of the flesh is messing us up and the only way to overcome it is to walk by the Spirit. But he gets specific in verse 17 and he tells us about the conflict. "For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit," that's a capital "S", we're talking here about the Holy Spirit. The flesh sets its desire against the Spirit. That's why there's conflict in the life of a Christian. By the way, that's a conflict that doesn't exist in the life of a non-Christian. Why? Because he doesn't possess...what?...the Spirit.

I talked to a friend of mine, a professional athlete. I asked him, "Since you've become a Christian how has your life changed in terms of what you do?" He said, "Oh, my former life before I was a Christian was the worse. It was the scum." He said, "I was a sinner of the worst order, into every sin imaginable."

I said, "Let me ask you a question." We were just chatting casually, I said, "Did it bother you to live like that?"

He said, "Bother me? No. I enjoyed it." He said, "I loved it." He said, "Man, I was really into that."

I said, "Did you feel guilt?"

He said, "No."

"Did you feel at all restrained when you would start to engage in that?"

He said, "No."

You see, there was no battle because he didn't have the Holy Spirit. So it was the flesh and the flesh and the flesh and the flesh, there's no conflict. I said, "What happened when you became a Christian?"

He said, "All those things began to be the things I hated and a conflict was engaged."

And that's exactly right. Now when we became a Christian we became a new creation. Old things passed away, new things come, says in 2 Corinthians. Galatians says, "I am crucified with Christ, the old I died nevertheless I live," a new I lives, we are a new creation, a new I, a new ego, a new person, a new creation. You say, "Well, if I'm a new creation in Christ created unto good works which God has before ordained, if I have been created in the righteousness of Christ, then why is there sin?" Because you have a new creation incarcerated in unredeemed flesh. And until you get that unredeemed flesh out of the way, when you're glorified you're always going to have a battle...always.

You say, "Well what is the flesh?" Well let me define it for you simply. The word sarx in the Greek, it's a very important term in New Testament teaching, sometimes the word sarx or flesh can refer to just the physical body. For example, in Luke 24:39 Jesus said, "A spirit has not flesh and bones as you see Me have," and He was just talking about tissue. The flesh can be used in the Bible to refer to the body. It is so used in Romans 6:19 where it talks about the weakness of our flesh. It simply means that in our bodies we're weak. It also can mean not just the physical body but human effort. And that's how it was used in Galatians 3:3, our text, which says "Having begun in the Spirit are you now made perfect by the flesh," and there the flesh is viewed not so much as the physical body but as human effort, the effort of a human being on his own in the natural to accomplish the supernatural. It is thus used in Romans 7:5 when it says, "Before we were saved we were in the flesh." In other words, we were in these bodies trying to work out our own way.

So, it can refer to the physical body and it can refer to human effort or human works. But its primary significance and certainly for us it that it refers to our unredeemed nature, our fallenness, our unredeemed humanity, that part of us that hasn't yet been redeemed. And that's the flesh where sin exists. It's not just your body, it's your mind, too. It's not a philosophical dualism that says Spirit is good and flesh is...or material things are bad, it's not just your material body, it's your feelings and your thoughts, your mind, all of that is tainted by the flesh. The flesh is your unredeemed humanness that waits the glorification of the body when you get a new body and thus a new kind of humanity which knows no sin. Paul talks about it in Romans 7. He says, "The things I want to do I don't do, the things I don't want to do I do." Why, Paul? "It is sin that is in me." Where is it, Paul? "That is in my flesh," he says, Romans 7:14 and following. It's in my flesh. My spirit has been changed and I have a new man in me but it has to be living in this old house. And that's what debilitates. So over in 17 it says, "The flesh now is no longer in harmony with the spirit in a person because you now have salvation, you have a new nature, the Holy Spirit is there and the Holy Spirit then is fighting against the flesh." And in fact verse 17 says these are in opposition to one another to the degree that you may not do the things you please.

Have you noticed that? Have you noticed that you don't do what you ought to do and you do what you ought not to do? Sure, that's the battle of a Christian. That's Romans chapter 7. That's not an unbeliever's battle, that's a Christian's battle. That's the flesh and the Holy Spirit at war.

Now listen, folks. If that is true, and it is, then the idea that you could come up with some human solution to your problem is ludicrous because it's just more of the flesh. The flesh is not only our unredeemed humanness but the flesh is all of our human effort. Psychology is just a human answer. All the pragmatic solutions that people come up with for spiritual problems are nothing more than the flesh. And the flesh is not going to control the desires of the flesh. Flesh then refers to natural effort, independent of God that is weak, helpless and sinful. So if I have a problem and I turn to anything on the human level, I am pouring gasoline on the fire. And the flesh, it says, would you notice in verse 17, sets its desire against the Spirit. That's a very good way to translate that. The flesh sets its desire against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh. And by the way, that word "desire," epithumia, means strong desire, evil yearning, compulsion. What lust wants to do is conceive and bring forth sin. And what the Holy Spirit wants to do is prevent that from happening.

So the war is on. Evil desire moves in the flesh. It is the beachhead where temptation lands and lusts move the flesh in a battle against the Holy Spirit to dominate the Christian's life. And the power of the flesh is great. But the power of the Spirit is greater, right?...is greater. So all we have to do is walk in the Spirit and we will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. We will not carry out its desires if we walk in the Spirit. If we offer fleshly solutions to the flesh, we pour gas on the fire. That's the conflict. Whatever the Holy Spirit endeavors to do, the flesh endeavors to stop. So we must walk in the Spirit. We must be filled with the Spirit.

Look at verse 18. This is very important. "If you are led by the Spirit you are not under the law." Now stop at this point, this is so very important. Why does he say this? It's the same as verse 16. He equates here the flesh with the law. In verse 16 he said walk by the Spirit and you'll not carry out the desire of the flesh. Verse 18 he says, "If you are walking by the leading of the Spirit, you're not under the law." And he equates the desire of the flesh with the law. What does he mean? The law are rules given to man by which he in keeping can control himself, right? If you could keep the law you'd be a perfect man, right? If you could keep the law, you'd completely control the flesh. But you can't.

The law here then in this particular section refers to human effort...to human effort. So he says if you're led by the Spirit and you're walking by the Spirit then you're not going to be under the law, you're not going to be under human effort. The point is this, the human effort is one thing, it's connected with the flesh; spiritual effort is another, it's connected with the Spirit. To be operating under the law means to be operating by works...to be operating by human effort. That's absolutely useless. Any human solution, any human agenda, any human wisdom, any human approach, methodology, means only feeds the flesh. So verse 16 says if you're walking by the Spirit you'll

overcome the desires of the flesh. And if you're led by the Spirit, verse 18 says, also implying that you're walking and following the leading of the Spirit, then you're not going to be trapped in a system where by human effort you're trying to attain spiritual means.

I can't...I can't say this as importantly, I don't think, as I want you to understand it. But he is simply saying here any human effort is pointless when it attempts to deal with the spiritual dimension...whether it is law even the law that is good cannot control the flesh. So even if the good law of God can't control the flesh, how can some human design, human methodology. That's what's so ridiculous about human psychology. What's it going to do to control the flesh when it's the invention of man? Pour gas on the fire.

Pilgrim's Progress, the Interpreter's house, you remember the section on Interpreter's house? The parlor in Interpreter's house was full of dust, thick dust everywhere. And someone came in and started to sweep this dust and it just billowed and billowed and choked and gagged everybody and fell right back down where it started. And Interpreter says, "This parlor is the heart of a man that was never sanctified. The dust is his original sin and inward corruptions that have defiled the whole man and he that began to sweep is the law." All the law does is stir up all the dirt and choke and gag everybody, it doesn't clean anything. And if that's true of the law of God, then how can some human devised system ever overcome the flesh? You see, the battle in every person's life, every believer's life is the flesh and the Holy Spirit at war. If you walk in the Spirit, victory, triumphant and you overcome the flesh. But you certainly can't overcome the flesh with human effort, human means.

So back to verse 18. "But if you are led by the Spirit," there's the cure. "You follow the Holy Spirit's leading." His part is to lead, our part is to walk. But the flesh resists, the flesh fights, the flesh wants to hinder and we must walk by the Spirit to overcome the flesh. We certainly can't let happen to us, I hope, what happened to the Galatians. They started so well, they started in the power of the Holy Spirit. And then self-effort entered in and the Holy Spirit was ignored and they devised schemes and methods by which they themselves would subdue their own flesh. And it was a joke, it was foolish and they failed.

You see, I mean, it would be literally ridiculous to assume you could do that when you stop and realize that God has an impossible standard to start with. Secondly, Satan is a very strong foe and thirdly, the flesh is very very powerful. You're never going to be able to keep the divine standard, overcome Satan and dominate the flesh by some human means.

Now let me put this thing together. I told you, every problem in life comes from what? The flesh. Therefore every solution comes from whom? The Spirit. So if you have a problem where do you go for the solution? To the Holy Spirit, not to some human solution. Fabulous encouraging truth of 2 Corinthians 6:16 ought to be embedded in our minds, "For you are the temple of the living God," what a statement. God lives in you. As God has said, "I will dwell in them and walk in them." He is

walking. He is leading. He's saying walk the same path. The Spirit of almighty God is in you alive and moving and you are to follow and I am to follow. That's the only way you can conquer the flesh.

So, the command and the conflict. And if you're not motivated yet, let me take you to the third point, the contrast...the contrast. This is very powerful. Please notice verse 19. "Now the deeds of the flesh are evident which are..." now let me stop for just a moment there. He's going to give you a list of things that come from the flesh, okay? "They are these: immorality, impurity, sensuality." Those three things have to do with sex, sexual behavior. The term "immorality" is porneia, illicit sex, fornication. The term "impurity" is akatharsia which means uncleanness. It's the filth of mind. It's the pornographic mind that leads to the pornographic conduct. The third term is sensuality. We often translate that in the past lasciviousness. It's living without restraint. Living for pleasure with no restraint.

So here's the deeds of the flesh. Now follow this. Here's a person who is immoral in conduct, a fornicator, sexually involved, a person who is impure in mind who has got some kind of a pornographic addiction, who is stimulated by dirty magazines, dirty books, dirty movies. A person who is wanton or lascivious, or sensual is one who goes so far in lust that they could care less what anybody thinks. We could say this is the person with the sexual addiction, to use a contemporary term. What produces sexual addiction? Fouled up relationship with your mother? Messed up relationship with your father? Lack of self-esteem? What produces sexual addiction? The flesh...the flesh. That's what it says.

Furthermore, there's another category, that's the category of self-effort in religion, verse 20, here's some more deeds of the flesh: "Idolatry," that's as much a work of the flesh as immorality, by the way, it means worshiping anything other than the true God. Some people worship a false god, some people worship in a false religious system, some people worship themselves, some people worship their money, their career, their prestige, their house, their car, whatever it is, any kind of false god. "Sorcery," that's the word pharmakia from which we get pharmacy, it means drugs. And since drugs were used as the common medium in the practice of magic and sorcery and since regularly in occult practices people took drugs, the word came to include all kinds of sorcery and witchcraft, but its root idea is drugs.

Then you have another category, the category of human relationships. And what does the flesh produce in human relationships? The word is enmities, or hatred, it means hostile hatred. Strife--fighting, quarreling. Jealousy--that is the anger which is produced when somebody has what you want. Outbursts of anger, literally hostile outbursts, uncontrolled temper tantrums, disputes, dissensions, factions, that's chaos, conflict of different kinds.

So you have sex, religion and relationships dealt with. And finally, even drink. In verse 21 after the word "envying" which is another form of inability to get along with people is drunkenness and

carousing--that means public orgies. And then finally things like these.

Now listen to what I say because this is going to tie it all up. We have a lot of people in this world with problems, right? He says here is what the flesh produces. And I'll tell you right now, you'll find everybody's problem here. People say, "Oh, I have a problem with compulsive sexual behavior." Oh, that's right here, immorality, impurity, sensuality. "Oh I have a problem focusing on objects, you know, I've got all kinds of idols and I'm distracted." That's here, idolatry. "I have a drug problem." That's here, too, pharmakia, you've got a drug problem, that's here. You have bitterness, hate, you have conflict in your home, conflict in your marriage, you don't get along with your mother, you don't get along with your father, you don't think people love you, you have all kinds of problems like that, you feel jealous toward other people, you feel unfulfilled, you have a temper, you burst out, you have a drinking problem, you drink too much, you envy other people, you're discontent, unhappy, you look at other people's physical body and you don't like the way your's looks so your anorexia, or you're anorectic or bulimic or what? You can put it all in here, folks. It's all the flesh one way or another. And this isn't an exhaustive list, that's why at the end he says, "Things like these."

Now listen carefully. If this is what the flesh produces, then how do we overcome it? By human effort? By psychology? By therapy? By what? By walking...what?...in the Spirit. You do not solve human problems on a human plain. In fact, he says just to put this category totally together, verse 21, "I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you before...implied...that those who practice such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God." Those who continually keep on doing these things...in other words, these are patterns of an unregenerate person. And if they are the unbroken patterns of your life, then you're not a Christian.

I told you about the young man in the hospital that came to Christ a few days before he died of AIDS. He said to me when he was eight years old he made a profession of faith in Jesus. He...he supposedly asked Jesus into his heart and people assured him all his life he was a Christian but he said, "I've lived 23 years in uninterrupted homosexuality, I'm dying of AIDS. I know my life has never been transformed and I know I'm going to hell and I'm not prepared to meet God." And he knew. A person who continues to practice that kind of thing will not inherit the Kingdom of God. That's characteristic of unredeemed flesh. Paul says there's only one way to dominate the flesh...go to verse 22, this is the contrast, that's through the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control and against such things there is no law. Law doesn't deal with those things. Those things are beyond law because those...law relates to human effort, these things relate to the power of the Spirit.

People say, "Oh, my problem is...there's not enough love in my life." Oh, that's easy, good, I'm glad you said that, the fruit of the Spirit is love. You say, "Well, I'm always sad, I'm always depressed, I'm in despair, I'm so depressed." Well that's good, I'm glad you said that, the fruit of the Spirit is joy. "Well I just can't seem to resolve anything, I'm in conflict, I have all these fears." Good, the fruit of the

Spirit is peace. "Oh, I'm so impatient, I'm so distracted, I'm so afraid." Oh good, the Spirit will give you patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness. You say, "I'm just out of control, I can't get my life together." Oh good, the fruit of the Spirit is self-control.

Now you see how simple this is? How did we ever get so messed up trying to solve all these problems through I don't know what that can only be solved on a spiritual plain? That's why I told you a number of weeks ago, for somebody to say I have a sexual addiction and I've got all these problems, as he said to the Christian counselor on the radio, and have the guy say to her, "You need a few years of therapy" is a denial, flat denial of the power of the Holy Spirit.

You see, if all the problems in our life are produced by the flesh and the only one who can overcome the flesh is the Spirit, then it sure makes sense to walk by the Spirit. But we are so clever, aren't we, that we have bewitched ourselves and we have a sick church and a church trying to cure itself with more human effort and it's pouring gasoline on its fire.

Everything that's wrong in our life is produced by the flesh. Everything that's right is the fruit of the Spirit. So that takes us to the final point, the conquest. Verse 24, "Those that belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires," that's past tense, we've done that. Now the flesh has been put to death. But some of us are foolish enough to carry the dead corpse around, aren't we? And let its rotting decay effect our lives more than it needs to. So he says, from a positional standpoint, from a factual standpoint, before God the flesh is dead. Its passions and desires, the power of them is broken. So verse 25 says, "If we live by the Spirit...and we do...we don't live by the flesh anymore, let us also...what?...walk by the Spirit." You see that?

And again I say what I've said all along, the only source of spiritual transformation is the Holy Spirit. The only way that we can live our life is on the same level that we entered this life. We began in the Spirit, we must live in the Spirit. Human solutions are useless. Human systems, methods are useless. Put it to practice in a marriage, for example. You want to have a happy marriage? You say, "We've got a lot of conflict." I can resolve that, the fruit of the Spirit is love, walk in the Spirit, He'll produce love. The fruit of the Spirit is joy, walk in the Spirit, He'll produce joy. The fruit of the Spirit is peace, walk in the Spirit, He'll produce peace. If you have terrible conflict in your marriage, it isn't because you haven't had good counseling, it's because you're not walking in the Spirit.

You say, "I've got a lot of problems personally. I'm dissatisfied, unhappy, miserable." Oh I understand, that's a direct reflection not of the fact that your parents wounded you or stuffed you in a closet when you were four and left you there for two hours and you've been warped ever since, that's nothing to do with that. The reason that you're experiencing conflict may have some circumstantial things that sort of complicate your life but the reason is because you're not enjoying that which is provided for those who walk in the Spirit.

I sat down next to somebody on the plane coming home late Friday night and she said to me, "You know," she said, "a wonderful thing has happened in my life." And I said, "Really?" She said, "Yes," she said, "I've just discovered a deep-seeded problem that I never knew I had." And I said, "Well, now who told you you had it?" She said, "Well, you know, I never realized I had it until I went to this meeting and this therapy group and now I know I have it." And I said, "Does that help?" She says, "Well not really," she says, "because now I really don't know what to do about it."

What a crazy approach. So she wondered whether I could help. I had a great time giving her the gospel of Jesus Christ and she had an open heart. She had just divorced her husband and it was a sad and devastating thing, left her with a little three-year-old girl and she said, "I'm trying to find God and I want to give my life to God but I don't know how to find Him." Her father had just died of alcoholic complications, she had lost one that was very dear to her. I looked at all of the problems and she had tried all kinds of solutions. In fact, she went to places where they gave her problems just so they could collect the money for solving them. I thought and I said to her, "You know the only one who can solve all of these things in your heart is the Lord Jesus Christ with the power of His indwelling Spirit." She said, "I want to know more." So I'm going to send her a lot of tapes and I gave her a church to attend where she lives and...but that's how it is in the world, people fussing around trying to find solutions in places where they don't exist.

The flesh wars against the Spirit. Understand that. That's as a Christian what's going on. The only way to overcome is the power of the Spirit. You want to have a good marriage, walk in the Spirit. You want to have a good home life, walk in the Spirit. People say...pastors ask me all week long in these conferences, "What's the key to your home? What's the key to raising your kids to love the Lord? What's the key to having a happy home? You know, what's the key to..." My answer is always walk in the Spirit, walk in the Spirit, He'll produce His fruit.

You say, "Well I have all these fears and burdens and..." Walk in the Spirit, He'll overturn it all. You say, "But how do you walk in the Spirit again?" Through a consistent commitment to prayer and the study of the Word so you think spiritual thoughts. And day by day, day by day you yield yourself to those things. You say, "That's hard to do alone, isn't it?" Yeah, yeah, hard to do alone. Can you go to chapter 6 for a quick minute? It's hard to do alone. You know what chapter 6 says? "If a man is caught in a trespass because he didn't do it, those of you who are spiritual...that means you're doing what? You're walking by the Spirit...you come along and restore that person in a spirit of gentleness and look to yourself lest you too be tempted." You're not invulnerable to that. "And bear one another's burdens and thus fulfill the law of Christ," the law of love. It is hard to do this and you can't do it too well alone, have you noticed? We need help from each other. Isn't that why the church is the church? We're not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together but we are to stimulate one another to love and good works when we do meet.

Beloved, the answer to all life's needs for the believer is in walking by the Spirit because all the problems come from the flesh. Let's help each other do that. Let's bow together in prayer.

What a wonderful time we've had in these five weeks, Lord, as we've looked through this subject and how it's challenged our hearts. Lord, we ask that You would press upon us daily the need to walk step by step in Your Spirit, saturated with Your Word, thinking Your thoughts, communing with You in prayer, saying yes to Your leadership, submitting to You. Father, we want to do that and we know You've commanded us to do it and yet we're dependent on You giving us the power to do it, so strengthen us in the inner man by Your Spirit that we might walk in the way the Spirit is walking and not fulfill the lust of the flesh. Thank You for giving us a clear instruction and clear answer to overcoming all of life's problems. Help us to stop looking in the bewitching foolish solutions of the world for what only the Spirit can do.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2012 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright>).