

Galatians 5:24 - 6:2

Galatians 5:22-26—“24Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. 25Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. 26Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other. 6: 1Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. 2Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”

25Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. 26Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.”

. What does it mean to “keep in step with the Spirit?”

o According to John 3:5–8 the human nature, with which all of us are born, will not enter into the kingdom of God unless it is changed.

. This change is called being born again. And what this means is that the Spirit of God creates something new; he takes out of us the heart of stone that rebels against God, and he puts into us a new heart which trusts God and follows his ways.

. A new principle of life is placed within us.

. In other words, that which is begotten by the Spirit has the nature of the Spirit, is permeated by the character of the Spirit, is animated by the Spirit. This change is owing wholly to the Spirit's work of free grace, prior to any saving faith on our part.

. To “keep in step with the Spirit” means do what you do each day by the Spirit. But what does that mean, practically speaking?

. The phrase “walk by the Spirit” occurs not only in verse 25 but also in verse 16, “But I say, walk by the Spirit and do not gratify the desires of the flesh.”

. The opposite of walking by the Spirit is giving in to the desires of the flesh.

. Walking by the Spirit is what we do when the desires produced by the Spirit are stronger than the desires produced by the flesh.

. Ultimately, all the good inclinations or preferences or desires that we have are given by the Holy Spirit. Apart from the Spirit we are mere flesh. And Paul said in

o Romans 7:18, “I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing.”

Apart from the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit, none of our inclinations or desires is holy or good,

o Romans 8: 7 “...for the mind of the flesh is hostile to God's law and does not submit to it because it cannot.”

. The new birth is the coming into our life of the Holy Spirit to create a whole new array of desires and loves and yearnings and longings. And when these desires are stronger than the opposing desires of the flesh, then we are “walking by the Spirit.” For we always act according to our strongest desires.¹

¹ For the extremely significant work on this subject see Jonathan Edwards, *The Freedom of the Will in The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 2 volumes (Carlisle: Banner of Truth Trust, 1990). Some of the information in this section was taken

from John Piper, "Let Us Walk by the Spirit," March 1981, http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Sermons/ByScripture/7/286_Let_Us_Walk_by_the_Spirit/.

. This is why it is so important to see regeneration as more than just a decision you make. It is an entirely new disposition toward all of life that is given.

. This is what God said he would do in Ezekiel 36:26, 27, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you... And I will put my Spirit in you and cause you to walk in my statutes."

. The Holy Spirit produces in us desires for God's way that are stronger than our fleshly desires, and thus he causes us to walk in God's statutes.

1. Acknowledge: First, we must acknowledge from our hearts that we are helpless to do good apart from the enablement of the Holy Spirit.

o Romans 7:18, "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing."

Similarly,

o John 15:5, "Without me you can do nothing."

o Of course we can do something without Jesus: we can sin! But that's it.

o So, the first step of walking by the Spirit is: admit this fact and let it have its devastating effect on our pride. We cannot do anything pleasing to God without the constant enablement of the Spirit.

2. Pray: Second, since it is promised in Ezekiel 36:27 that God will put his Spirit within us and cause us to walk in his statutes, pray that he do it to you by his almighty power.

o Many of you know the glorious, liberating experience of having an irresistible desire for sin overcome by a new and stronger desire for God and his way.

When you look back, to whom do you attribute that new desire? Where did it come from? It came from the merciful Holy Spirit.

o Therefore, let us pray like Paul did in

o 1 Thessalonians 3:12: "May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you."

o And let's pray like the writer of Hebrews 13:21, "And now may the God of peace work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

3. Trust: The third step in walking by the Spirit is faith. We must believe that since we have come under the gracious sway of God's Spirit, "sin will no longer have dominion over us" (Romans 6:14). We must count on it that the Spirit who made us alive when we were dead in sin wills our holiness and has the power to achieve what he wills.

o Romans 8:14, where Paul says you can't even be a child of God unless you are led by the Spirit. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God."

o If you are a child of God, you have a solid and unshakable promise that God will give you victory over those powerful desires of the flesh.

o One word of caution: do not prejudge the timing of the Holy Spirit's work. Why he liberates one person overnight but brings another to freedom through months of struggle is a mystery concealed for now from our eyes.

4. Act: The fourth step in walking by the Spirit is to act the way you know is right.

o Notice: this is not step number one. If this were step number one, all our actions would be works of the flesh, not fruit of the Spirit. Only after we have appealed for the Spirit's enablement and thrown ourselves confidently on his promise and power to work in us, do we now work with all our might. Only when we act with that spiritual preparation, will we be able to say with Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:10, "By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God which is with me."

o A person who has acknowledged his helplessness, prayed for God's enablement to do right, and yielded himself confidently to the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit has this astonishing incentive to do righteousness, namely, the confidence that, whatever righteous act he does, it is God almighty who is at work in him giving him the will and the power to do it.

5. Thank: The final step in walking by the Spirit is to thank God for any virtue attained or any good deed performed.

o We must not only ask his enablement for it but also thank him whenever we do it. Just one example from 2 Corinthians 8:16. Paul says, "Thanks be to God who puts the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus."

o Titus loved the Corinthians.

o Where did that come from?

o God put it in his heart. It was a fruit of the Spirit.

o So what does Paul do? He thanks God. And Titus should, too.

26 Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

. Self-conceit (AV Vainglory.). This is a very instructive verse because it shows that our conduct to others is determined by our opinion of ourselves.

o When we have „self-conceit. we provoke and envy other people.

o This word (the Greek adjective kenodoxos) denotes somebody who has an opinion of himself which is empty...false.

a. When we are conceited, our relationships with other people will invariably be poisoned.

. When we are conceited, we tend to do one of two things;

1. We either „provoke. one another or
2. We „envy. one another.
 - a. First, we provoke one another. This Greek verb (prokaleo) is unique in the New Testament. It means to „challenge. somebody to a contest. It implies that we are so sure of our superiority that we want to demonstrate it.
 - b. If, on the other hand, we regard them as superior to us, we envy them.

In both cases our attitude is due to „vainglory. or „conceit., to our having such a fantasy opinion of ourselves that we cannot bear rivals.

- . Very different is that love which is the fruit of the Spirit.
- . People with such love regard others as „more important. and seek every opportunity to serve them.
- . Philippians 2:3: “Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves.”
 - o This cannot be a command to regard everybody, including the worst offenders, as morally „better. (since humility is neither blind nor perverse),
 - o Rather it is to regard them as „more important. & therefore worthy to be served.

1Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. 2Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”

- . Notice the assumption which lies behind this command, namely that we all have burdens and that God does not mean us to carry them alone.
- . Some people think it a sign of fortitude not to bother other people with their burdens.
 - o Such fortitude may appear brave, but it is more stoical than Christian. Others remind us Psalm 5:22 to „cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you..
 - o They therefore argue that we have a divine burden-bearer who is quite adequate, and that it is a sign of weakness to require any human help. This too is a grievous mistake.
 - o True, Jesus Christ alone can bear the burden of our sin and guilt; He bore it in His own body when He died on the cross. But this is not so with our other burdens —our worries, temptations, doubts and sorrows. ... We can cast all our care on Him, since He cares for us (1 Pet. 5:7, AV).
 - o But remember that one of the ways in which He bears these burdens of ours is through human friendship. Paul at one stage in his life he was terribly burdened. His mind could not rest, so great was his suspense. 2 Cor. 7:5,6 “But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus.”
 - o God.s comfort was not given to Paul through his private prayer, but through the companionship of a friend.

. John Stott: “God.s comfort was not given to Paul through his private prayer and waiting upon the Lord, but through the companionship of a friend and through the good news which he brought. Human friendship, in which we bear one another.s

burdens, is part of the purpose of God for his people. So we should not keep our burdens to ourselves, but rather seek a Christian friend who will help to bear them with us.”

. Human friendship, in which we bear one another.s burdens, is part of the purpose of

God for His people.

- o So we should not keep our burdens to ourselves, but rather seek a Christian friend who will help to bear them with us.
- o By such burden-bearing we “will fulfill the law of Christ.”

. The „law of Christ’ which Paul mentions is the command to love one another as He loves us; that was the new commandment which He gave (Jn. 13:34; 15:12).

. It is very significant that to „love our neighbor., „bear one another’s burdens. and „fulfill the law. are three equivalent expressions.

o It shows that to love one another as Christ loved us may lead us not to some heroic, spectacular deed of self-sacrifice, but to the much more mundane and unspectacular ministry of burden-bearing.

. The reverse danger is that the burdened person will not share his/her burden. Pride becomes a fiendish enemy.

. “Burden-bearing” is a natural consequence of walking by the Spirit. Luther: “Therefore, Christians must have strong shoulders and mighty bones”—sturdy enough, that is, to carry heavy burdens.²

2 Martin Luther, Luther.s Works

Application:

How can you “bear one another.s burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ”?

