

Intro:

This afternoon I want to wrap up our mini-series in Galatians. At least, I think we are wrapping up. It is always possible that I'll think of more that should be said and we may come back to these matters again.

We began by talking about being *Violent Christians* and the crucifixion of the flesh. (Gal 5.24) We saw last week how that kind of vigorous repentance and self-denial is the human side of walking with God that the Spirit of God uses to produce the fruit of the Spirit.

- You must repent of self to have joy.
- You must repent of self to have love.
- You must repent of self to have peace.
- You must repent of self to have self-control.

And on and on through the whole list...

In summing up our series, I am going to be covering a large portion of Scripture – Gal 5.25-6.16 (fasten your seat belts!)

I want to answer the question “what does walking by the Spirit look like?”

I have entitled this message:

Walking by This Rule

Paul has been dealing with an issue in the Galatian churches where false teachers known as Judaizers were attempting to pervert the new Christian faith of these saints in order to convince them that in order to be saved they must also obey certain aspects of the Jewish law, especially circumcision and the feast days. In doing this, they also attacked the credibility and authority of the apostle.

In dealing with this, Paul first defends his apostleship, and then he establishes the doctrine of justification by faith alone. The consequence of this doctrine is a new liberty the Christian has, to live and walk by the Spirit of God.

This new walk precludes the works of the flesh and flowers in the fruit of the Spirit – it is **produced not by compulsion** and **duty but by submission** to God, repentance from sin, and devotion to the ways of the Spirit.

Read Gal 5.25-6.16

Proposition: The joyful Christian life is secured by a submission to the rule of the Spirit, not the rule of the flesh.

I. The proposition of Paul's conclusion (5.25-26)

A. Proposition expressed positively (25)

1. First class conditional statement: If (and we are assuming it is true) we live in the Spirit
 - a. The statement does not say, this is true of you
 - b. The statement assumes it to be true
2. The assumption has a logical conclusion: if we live in the Spirit, then...
 - a. Literally, it is 'live by' the Spirit: marks line or direction
 - b. The logical conclusion is that we (who live by the Spirit) ought to walk in the Spirit

“The Christian life is not a human project of self-improvement. The life of Christ or some fruitful saint is *the authentic product of supernatural power.*”¹

In other words, the power of the Living Spirit of God should be evident in the life of the true believer.

3. Notice that this is a thread picked up throughout the passage
 - a. “Ye which are spiritual” (6.1)
 - b. “one sows to the flesh” “one sows to the Spirit” (6.8)
 - c. “those who walk by this rule” (6.16)

B. Proposition expressed negatively (26)

1. The first part of the condition is assumed: ‘If we live by the Spirit, then...’
2. Then there are three negative consequences to avoid (seems to be a progression)
 - a. Let us not become boastful
 - b. Let us not be challenging one another
 - c. Let us not be envying one another

There is a focus here on the evident problems that are the result of the Judaizing false teachers who wished to put people under bondage to the law; to get them to produce spiritual fruit by fleshly means.

¹ Rosscup, *BibSac*, V125, #497, p. 62

“From this it is plain that the filling or fullness of the Spirit is not, at least primarily, a matter of unusual or enrapturing experiences, but is the reality of the Spirit’s working in the basic relationships and responsibilities of everyday living. Being filled with the Spirit means marriages that really work and are not poisoned by suspicion and bitterness, homes where parents, children, brothers and sisters actually enjoy being with each other, free from jealousy, resentment and constant tension, and job situations that are not oppressive and depersonalizing, but meaningful and truly rewarding. The Spirit is the power of a new creation, reclaiming and transforming nothing less than the whole of our creaturely life. By the same token, the mark of a genuinely Spirit-filled Christian is that that Christian is not preoccupied with some past experience, no matter how memorable, but with what the Spirit is presently doing in his or her life and with what even greater filling the future may bring.”²

II. The examples of Paul’s conclusion (6.1-10)

A. The example of heart-felt care for other believers (1-5)

1. The exhortation is one to service, not to ‘over-lord-ship’
2. The problem is someone caught in a grievous sin – public, shameful, discrediting the testimony (1a)
 - a. You who are spiritual – the subject of the exhortation
 - b. Restore such an one – the object of the exhortation

Here is someone who has blown up in anger in the midst of the congregation, perhaps. (Or any grievous public sin.)

- You who are spiritual = those walking in the Spirit

3. Those walking in the Spirit are warned (1b)
 - a. There is a possibility of temptation

² Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., “The Holy Spirit,” *Westminster Theological Journal*, (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Theological Seminary, V43 #1, Fall 1980, p. 76

- 1) Varied temptations depending on the situation
 - 2) The 'walk of the Spirit' is a constant exercise that can be hindered by the flesh
- b. There is a need to fulfill the Law of Christ (2)
- 1) Not that Christ is a new Law-giver
 - 2) But that Christ was the Law-keeper

So the walk of the Spirit looks to the example of the Law-keeper and orders his life accordingly.

See Gal 5.14

- c. There is a need for persistent self-examination (3-5)
- 1) Examine yourself by comparison with Christ – then you will not think of yourself as something when you are nothing
 - 2) Then your boasting has reference to yourself, not reference to someone else

“To use the faults of others as a norm is to make it too easy for oneself!”³

- 3) Each man is accountable directly to God (although he has a burden – obligation – to help others with their burdens) (5)

The walk of the flesh most likely characterized the false teachers – there are two ways this can be:

1. By insisting that my externals (circumcision, etc.) are sufficient for acceptance without regard to the way I live
2. By insisting that the externals can provide victory for those overtaken in faults

The Spirit walk denies self and exalts Christ – willing to minister grace to others.

B. The example of sincere support of faithful teachers (6-10)

1. The setting of the paragraph: ‘communication with teachers’ (6)

³ Ridderbos, *Galatians*, 214.

- a. The force of this seems to focus on material support of the preacher
- b. The verse has confused many, seemingly out of place in the argument
- c. What do we know of the minister's (teachers) in Galatia? (Acts 14.21-23)
 - 1) They were taught first of all by Paul and Barnabas
 - 2) They were then appointed elders by Paul and Barnabas

Let's hold these thoughts to the end of the paragraph.

2. The principle of sowing and reaping (7-9)

- a. The danger of self-deception concerning the fruits of their labours (7)
 - 1) It is possible to assume that you can reap spiritual benefits even though you have fleshly activities
 - 2) God is not mocked – there is a correlation between the way you live and the fruit you bear
- b. The products of alternate lifestyles expanded (8)
 - 1) Sow to flesh = reap corruption
 - 2) Sow to Spirit = eternal life

I don't think the warning is so much focused on the final judgement as the present reality of the walk.

- It is possible for believers to be flesh-oriented and to reap only misery and corruption in this life.
- It is possible for believers to be Spirit-oriented and to reap the joys of eternal life in this life.

But let's also not kid ourselves: there are many flesh-oriented people who think they are Christians and are not ... they will only reap corruption in the end.

- c. The viewpoint of the believer is to walk in the Spirit with the harvest in view [by faith] (9)
 - 1) There is a harvest coming

- 2) This life may seem not to produce the harvest we expect, when we expect it
- 3) But the harvest is coming
3. The conclusion of the matter: do good to all, especially those of the household of faith (10)
 - a. Do good to all: Walk in the Spirit
 - b. Especially to those of the household of faith: Walk in the Spirit

No boasting, no challenging one another, no envying (5.26)

The way of the Judaizers!

- c. Tie in 6.6: if we are to walk in the Spirit, especially towards the household of faith, what should we be doing towards those who teach the faith?
 - 1) Remember that Paul is being challenged by these false teachers
 - 2) Remember that it is his gospel that is threatened, his preaching, his teaching
 - 3) Is Paul so much concerned with material support?
 - a) Note: the principle applies to material support
 - b) But: the point of the epistle is to esteem the teacher's of truth, not error
 - c) You are called to walk in the Spirit with respect to those who teach the faith
 - i) Obeying the injunctions given from the Word
 - ii) Walking in the Spirit as called from the Word
 - iii) Crucifying the flesh as instructed by the Word

What better support has a minister of the gospel than this?

^{NAU} **3 John 1:4** I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.

The walk of the Spirit means hearing and heeding the Word as taught.

III. The final exhortation of Paul's conclusion (6.11-16)

A. Paul makes an emphatic conclusion (11)

1. Paul takes up the pen himself, writing in his own hand (not an amanuensis)
2. Probably it also means that he wrote with larger than normal letters here for emphasis

B. Paul exposes the motivation of the false teachers – they wish to escape persecution for the sake of the cross (12-13)

1. They believe that compelling circumcision will reduce the risk of persecution
2. They refuse to trust the sufficiency of Christ and his cross to provide all they need
3. They are inconsistent in keeping the Law themselves, seeking only to impose it on others for their own safety

The consequence of their work is to boast in “circumcisions” – “Look how many we have brought into the covenant!”

C. Paul contrasts his motivation: boasting in the cross (14-15)

1. Only one grounds of boasting: the cross (14)
 - a. In the cross (*i.e.*, in the death of Christ to which he has been joined by faith) the world has been crucified to him
 - b. Everything the world values is put to death
 - 1) Human achievement
 - 2) Wealth
 - 3) Security
 - 4) “Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness”

Consider Leonard Dober, willing to be sold into slavery to evangelize the slaves in St. Thomas.

- 5) Fame
- c. And I to the world: I have put to death those values by valuing the way of the Spirit and the obedience to the cross

2. The only thing that matters is the new creation (15)
 - a. Circumcision or not doesn't matter
 - b. Keeping Jewish feast days don't matter

Baptism as a ritual doesn't matter (as an obedient step of faith following true conversion it does matter)

The call of the apostle is to the walk of the Spirit – that's where you should be pointed. Pleasing God, living for him, and nothing else.

D. Paul's conclusion: walk by this rule, receive peace (16)

1. This rule = everything Paul has argued for in the epistle.
2. The effect = the overflowing fruit of the Spirit on those who walk this way and on all the true people of God

Conclusion:

Well, I have gone on very long – probably attempted to say too much!

I hope that you get this.

There is a walk in the Spirit that turns away from the world, not by means of Law-works but by means of a faith-life.