

Intro:

Our subject lately has been Christian liberty. This all started from some thoughts I had concerning cultivating the fruit of the Spirit.

- In one sense, there isn't much we can do to cultivate the fruit of the Spirit – fruit producing is the Spirit's work, not ours.
- But in another sense we can cultivate the fruit of the Spirit – we do it by 'weeding the garden', *i.e.*, by crucifying the flesh.

Some react to my second point because they are convinced that any kind of 'imperative talk' – authoritative commands – equals legalism.

So we have been trying to clarify Christian liberty and legalism.

Christian liberty can be compared to Greek ideas:

- It is the freedom to be a responsible citizen of the Christian *polis*, the Kingdom of God.
- It is the freedom that comes from mastery of the internal passions, the work of the flesh.

Christian liberty also has the notion of freedom from religious laws in order to obtain eternal salvation – freedom from law-works.

There are two threats to Christian liberty:

1. The notion that I must perform some religious work in order to be saved.
2. The notion that I can live without rules except those *specifically* given by God in the Bible. (For example, those who hold this view would agree that adultery is wrong for a Christian because the Bible says so.)

All of this brings us to today's passage: Gal 5.16-18

I have entitled this message:

Walking in the Spirit

In this message I want to talk about the ways men walk and contrast that with the walk of the Spirit.

I. Walking away from God

A. The walk (and work) of the flesh

1. The notion of contrasting walks is not explicit in our passage, but is implicit

2. The walk of the flesh involves domination by fleshly passions (an opposite of liberty) (16)
 - a. This walk is work – it isn't easy to live this way (5.19 'the works' [deeds])
 - b. This walk is destructive (5.19-21)
 - 1) Socially – who wants to be around people characterized by the things in this list?
 - 2) Physically – lives given over to these lifestyles break down physically
 - a) Compare pictures of young girls before and after lives of prostitution
 - b) Compare pictures of people before and after lives of alcoholism
 - c) Consider the hardened voice of a 40 year old who lived his life for the bottle and cigarettes, etc.
 - 3) Spiritually – 'shall not inherit the kingdom'
 3. The walk, work, and way of the flesh is antagonistic to the walk of the Spirit (17)
 - a. The walk of the flesh is antagonistic to the walk of the Spirit
 - b. The two ways are directly incompatible: they are going in opposite directions
- B. The walk under the Law (18)
1. Again, this is not explicitly called a walk
 - a. Note that Paul moved from talking about the diametrically opposed walks of flesh and Spirit in v. 18
 - b. Instead, he substitutes being 'under the law' for the walk and work of the flesh
 2. The universal inconsistency of most people who do not walk in the Spirit
 - a. The walk of the flesh is so negative and destructive that few people actually live it completely.
 - b. Many people will adopt some kind of law as a safeguard against the destructiveness of the walk of the flesh

This includes 'religious' people and 'secular' people.

3. The law of the secular person
 - a. Varies between individuals
 - b. But is a restraint on the flesh motivated by several factors
 - 1) Fear of total self-destruction (pursue the flesh completely and consistently and you will destroy yourself)
 - 2) Fear of public disapproval (pursuit of the flesh is essentially selfish, but will tread on the rights of others)

This is behind the moralism of the moral man in Rm 2.

4. The law of the religious person
 - a. Uses religious ritual as the framework of the 'law-walk'
 - 1) Something of a restraint on the flesh
 - 2) Something of an escape from the destructiveness of the flesh (fire insurance)
 - b. May still be self-indulgent in many ways, but congratulates the self in its victories over the flesh by means of Law

The walk under the Law is opposed to liberty also, because the individual is acting like a slave and not a free citizen of the kingdom.

II. Walking in the Spirit

- A. The implications from Galatians 5
 1. The walk in the spirit is not fully defined in our passage, just implied
 2. It is defined negatively by its opposition to the walk of the flesh (16, 24-25)
 3. It's consequences are seen in the fruit of the Spirit (22-23)
 4. Positive clues from earlier in the passage:
 - a. Through love serve one another (13)

b. The Law fulfilled in love (14)

“No external force or sanction can compel the loving of a neighbour as oneself; such love must be generated within — by the Spirit.”¹

B. An illustration from Paul and Titus (2 Cor 12.18)

1. Paul and Titus are said to have lived and acted in the same ‘spirit’
2. Paul and Titus conducted themselves in the same way as each other

The Spirit walk must be to conform our walk to the way the Spirit functions – this requires discernment, discipleship, and devotion. [Bible reading and prayer!!]

C. The direction of the new walk (Eph 2.1-10)

1. The old walk was in trespasses and sins according to the course of this world (1-3)
2. The old walk was interrupted by the gift of salvation (4-9)
3. The new life is intended to produce new works – good works (10)

The new works are a new walk = the walk in the Spirit

D. The exposition of the Spirit walk (Rm 8.1-17)

1. Salvation in Christ has set you free (1-3)
 - a. Free from condemnation (1)
 - b. Free from the law of sin and death [walk in the flesh] (2)
 - c. Free from the demands of the Law [walk under the law] (3)
2. Salvation is intended to set you free for the walk of the Spirit which truly fulfils the ultimate point of the law [love your neighbour] (4)
3. The walk of the flesh and the walk of the Spirit contrasted (5-11)
 - a. Flesh: focuses on fleshly things [see Gal 5]; Spirit focuses on spiritual things (5)
 - b. Mind set on flesh is death; mind set on Spirit is life (6)
 - c. Mind set on the flesh is hostile to God and cannot please God (7-8)

¹ Bruce, p. 243

- d. Mind set on Spirit [which you believers are] is alive and the Spirit will grant life [enabling power] to your weak body (9-11)
- 4. The way of the Spirit is the way of life (12-17)
 - a. Led by the Spirit (12-14)
 - b. Adopted as sons [citizens] (15)
 - c. Inner witness (16)
 - d. Ready to suffer with Him (17)

Do you see how Paul expands on the language of Gal 5 here?

We have rushed through this passage, but do you begin to see?

The walk in the Spirit is one that pursues the things God approves, not as a matter of law, not to gain salvation, but to please the God that saved you and that you love.

Conclusion:

Do you love the ways of God?

Or do you love the ways of the world? Do you love the ways of the flesh?

If yes to the last two, then you also love the ways of the devil.

Do you have the spirit of adoption in your heart?

It can be seen by the walk you love.