

Text: Gal 5.23-24

We completed our look at the fruit of the Spirit last week. So, let's look again at Constable's outline and especially note the section we are currently studying.

- I. Introduction 1:1–10
- II. Personal defense of Paul's gospel 1:11–2:21
- III. Theological affirmation of salvation by faith 3:1–4:31
 - A. Vindication of the doctrine ch. 3
 - B. Clarification of the doctrine ch. 4
- IV. Practical application to Christian living 5:1–6:10
 - A. Balance in the Christian life ch. 5
 - 1. Living without the Law 5:1–12
 - 2. Living without license 5: 13-15
 - 3. Living by the Holy Spirit 5:16–26¹

Our section has the label, "Living by the Holy Spirit."

Tonight, I want to wrap up the passage so you can see how the whole thing works. Next week we will finish the passage, but vv. 25-26 form a sort of "second conclusion" to the passage. Verse 24 brings us almost full circle with where we started, so it is a very good place to wrap things up.

Let's read Gal 5.16-24, and start to put it together:

I called v. 16 "the proposition" — **walk by the Spirit, you will not follow the flesh.**

Verses 17-18 reinforce the proposition by expanding on it.

Flesh and spirit are in opposition to each other (17)

Being led by the Spirit and being under the Law are also not compatible (18)

The deeds of the flesh (emphasizing anger) are incompatible with the Kingdom (19-21)

The fruit of the Spirit (in contrast) are unopposed by Law (22-23)

Those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh (24)

¹ Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Galatians, Introduction, Outline.

I. How the thoughts in the passage connect

A. Start with the “outer markers”

Gal 5.16 ¶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

Gal 5.24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

I will talk about these two verses more in a few minutes, but here I just want to connect some dots.

1. You will not carry out the desire of the flesh (16)
2. You have crucified the flesh (24)

B. One step in

Gal 5.17-18 For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.

Gal 5.23 ... against such things there is no law.

1. A qualifier: some call v. 23 “an understatement”

- a. Goodness of the fruit of the Spirit universally recognized
- b. Not only is there no law against it, no one would dream of imposing a law against the fruit of the Spirit

That is one way to take it (and it is true).

2. But notice the legal connection

- a. There is an internal battle between the flesh and Spirit
- b. Those led by the Spirit are not under law (they don't depend on law to defeat the flesh)
- c. The fruit of the Spirit has no connection to law
 - 1) Law can't produce it
 - 2) Law can't oppose it
 - 3) Law isn't interested in it

C. The heart of the passage: contrasting lists, deeds and fruit

Gal 5.19-21 Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality,²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions,²¹ envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Gal 5.22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

1. The deeds (actions) are all bad: the answer is law — those who do don't (they don't inherit the kingdom)
2. The fruit (product) of the Spirit is all good: the Law does not apply

The big contrasts: flesh and Spirit, Law/deeds vs. walk/fruit

II. Two powerful declarations (16, 24)

A. The emphatic statement about the process of Christian living (16)

Gal 5.16 ¶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

1. Recall the emphatic double negative: “not not”
2. The one walking by the Spirit (a process) will absolutely not fulfill the flesh (bring to maturity, completion, finish)

B. The emphatic statement about our starting place

Gal 5.24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

1. A similar statement Gal 2.20

Gal 2.20 “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

- a. This is perfect passive tense
 - b. Something happened in the past to me
 - c. I am not active, God did this, and now Christ lives in me
2. But in our passage, a different tense (Aorist), different voice (Active)
- a. Who is acting here? Those who belong to Christ
 - b. The action isn't performed on them, they are acting
 - c. Note: not Present tense (continuous action) but Aorist tense (action as a whole)
 - 1) Some want to equate this phrase with the continuous life of walking by the Spirit (16)
 - 2) The difference is, this doesn't see a continuous process, but a complete action (tends to be past tense)
 - d. The phrase pictures the effect of faith on the flesh
 - 1) When we are born again, we conquer the flesh
 - 2) Our body of flesh is done away (Rm 6.6)

Rm 6.5-7 ¶ For if we have become united with *Him* in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be *in the likeness* of His resurrection,⁶ knowing this, that our old self was crucified with *Him*, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin;⁷ for he who has died is freed from sin.

- 3) The Law makes demands of the flesh (hems it in)
- 4) The Law cannot make alive
- 5) When we put to death the flesh, we are made alive in the Spirit, and so can walk by the Spirit

We must depend on the Spirit every day, but our passage says the hard part is over. We are in the Spirit, we crucified the flesh.

Rm 7.5-6 For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were *aroused* by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death. ⁶ But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.

III. One path forward

A. What are we to do then? Walk by the Spirit

Rm 8.4 so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Rm 13.14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to *its* lusts.

Col 3.5 ¶ Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.

1 Pt 4.1 ¶ Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,

B. More than “mental jujitsu”

1. Some mischaracterize this talk of victory as sort of “psyching out” the flesh
2. What we are talking about is developing a deep personal relationship with God

The more you walk with God, the more you will abhor sin and cling to Christ.

Conclusion:

“Living by the Holy Spirit”

That’s what this section advocates. We don’t live the Christian life by the Law, we live it in Christ.

The way someone's life is changed by marriage is a very inadequate picture of this.

Before the couple meets, they are individuals with their own lives, their own directions, but then they meet and fall in love.

Everything changes.

They marry, and it keeps on changing (or it should). They grow closer together (because of the flesh this takes effort). They become more like each other.

The same happens in our developing relationship with God. Of course, God doesn't change, but we will, if we walk with him.