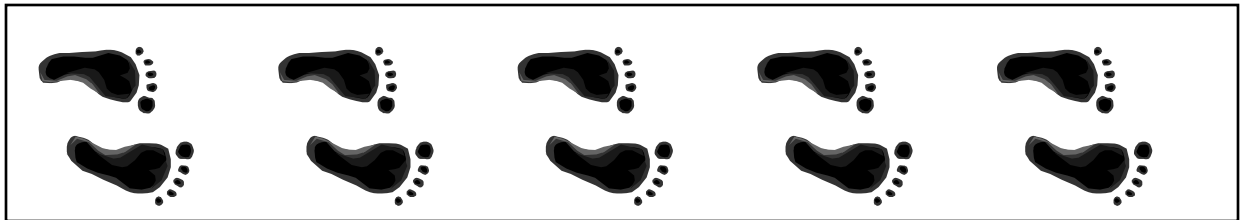


Chapter 9

Reigning Grace and the Holy Spirit

“For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God” (Rom. 8:14).



OVERVIEW

Living in *Story* forms the bulk of our immediate existence. Progressive sanctification is the Christian life. Walking in the Spirit defines the Christian life. Believers are led by the Holy Spirit, but sometimes we live our lives as if we have no sense of direction or guidance. We have been taught the condition to being led by the Holy Spirit is Spirit-filling and the condition to Spirit-filling is Spirit-baptism.

Reigning Grace and the Holy Spirit

I believe regular Christian teaching on this subject has made the Spirit's leading more mysterious than it actually is. Does He lead and do we "feel" His direction? Is it argued yes, and it is in and through His Word. What does His leading look like in and through His people? It is the intent of this study to consider the answer to this question.



POSITIONAL TRUTH OVERVIEW

- The Rule of God over and in all things renders certain the outworking of His will (Dan. 4:35; Ps. 135:5).
- He shall complete that which He alone began (Phil. 1:6; 1 Thess. 5:24).
- Image-bearers have the ability to choose between multiple options (Josh. 24:15). Such options, however, are not infinite.
- Their choices are the outworking of His rule (Phil. 2:12, 13). A believer's life is the outworking of God's rule through his choices.
- A believer's life is marked by obedience, fruit-bearing, keeping, and working because the purpose of God in and through His people will not fail (1 John 5:1-4).
- Disobedience is a temporal part of the process with a specific purpose. Though normal, it is neither obligatory nor acceptable (1 John 3:4-10).

In light of progressive sanctification (i.e. the Christian life) and the New Testament commands, we have another area that is spoken of but without real clarity. The primary idea places itself inside the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

The following comments are reflective of many within evangelical Christianity:

The Book of Galatians teaches that our options are to walk after the flesh or in the Spirit, and there is no staircase. **At any given moment** one is either in the flesh or in the Spirit, tapped into eternal defeat or eternal victory.¹

The two behaviors are mutually exclusive, **so that at all times in our Christian lives we are either walking** by the Spirit or are functioning in fleshly desire, but never both at the same time.²

The Spirit- filled life of walking by the Spirit is the equivalent to living a Christlike life. Walking by the Spirit involves saturating my life with the person of Christ. He should dominate my thought patterns as I live in the consciousness of His presence. Since the Spirit's work is to point to Christ, walking by the Spirit means that my life is patterned after the Lord Jesus Christ. An apparent contradiction of Christian living is that while my life is not mine but Christ's, at the same time I am living it (Gal. 2:20). Then who lives your Christian life: you or the Holy Spirit? It is all the Spirit's power, but it demands **all our yieldedness and commitment**. I am responsible to put to death my fleshly desires. I don't know how the combination works, but I do know that when I sin, I never blame the Holy Spirit.³

MacArthur's observation reflects the struggle of trying to reconcile ideas that are in conflict.

To walk in the Spirit . . . means we must **be constantly desiring** that God's kingdom be established rather than our own. Jesus is made Lord of every area of our lives. It means being sensitive to God: Lord, what are you saying? How can I please you? How can I share your burdens? How can I fit in to your goal for the Church? How can I draw on your love more and more? How can I have your viewpoint? How can I continually draw on your character, your power and your authority? God created us to have fellowship with us. He longs to answer these questions from our hearts. As we ask them and He answers, we will find we are truly walking in the Spirit. ⁴

Yet is this what the New Testament teaches? The key to living in grace is found in Galatians 5:16-26. All of us love keys. We love the bottom line. In our passage before us, Paul gives us the key to grace living. He is about to unlock the door to this whole mystery of how to make the transfer from law to grace, from bondage to that of delicious liberty. How do we love everyone (vv. 13, 14)? How do we keep from biting and devouring one another (v.15)? What the Holy Spirit is for us is the result of the cross-work. This idea cannot be separated from what Christ did and is doing. All of this is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

Just as justification is not possible through the efforts of self, so sanctification cannot be achieved through one's own energy either.

Both come from the provision and power of God. Paul wanted the Galatians to realize that obedience to the law was not necessary for progressive sanctification. The sinner is not only justified by faith, but he is also sanctified by faith (Rom. 1:17).⁵

Many believers have lost sight of positional truth (i.e. the cross) in their understanding of progressive sanctification (i.e. the Christian life). **They have tragically made progressive sanctification a decidedly performance based means of being approved and thus accepted before the Father. Their emphasis on external conformity for religious spirituality is emphatically non-grace.** Paul's epistle to the Galatians is a correction of this bondage.

Without an understanding of what forces are at work within you, it is impossible to rest in the victory that is yours in Christ. Paul, very appropriately, describes the conflict and the two opposing sides.

I. Understanding the Conflict (Gal. 5:16-18)

A. The principle of grace living (Gal. 5:16)

Notice what Paul states. These two elements are so diametrically opposed to each other that to be in the one automatically excludes the other.

He begins with an imperative, “Walk in the Spirit.” Paul is speaking of a continuous habitual action. Why is Paul telling us to walk in the Spirit? We are to “walk in the Spirit” because we are “in the Spirit.” Before we go any further, I would like us to attempt to understand the idea of “walking in the Spirit.”

First, notice the following statements within the paragraph: “Walk⁶ in the Spirit (v.16),” “Led by the Spirit (v.18),” “Fruit of the Spirit (v.22),” “Live in the Spirit (v. 25),” and “Walk in the Spirit (v.25).”

I believe “walk” (v.16), “led” (v.18), “fruit” (v.22), and “live” (v.25), are synonyms in this paragraph. Based on the context in which we find ourselves, I would argue that the previous four phrases are in parallel and thus synonymous. To walk, be led, bear fruit, live, and walk are all saying the same thing. They are not different aspects or degrees of the same thing, they are the same thing.

Surely, it [walking in the Spirit] is no different from being ‘filled with the Spirit’ (Eph. 5:18), a phrase referring to the controlling power exerted by the Spirit on **willing Christian**.⁷

As with most of these commentators, I believe they see various parts in isolation and do not see their inter-connectedness. Because of this, I can cite them as supporting an idea in one part, but in opposition to them at another part simply because they do not see the pieces as inter-locking.

By his statement, MacArthur is making the controlling power conditional when he says, “willing Christian.” I will disagree with this shortly.

There is, I believe, misunderstanding as it relates to the Holy Spirit and His working in and through His people. As noted initially, I do not believe there is a sharp distinction between the various ideas concerning the Holy Spirit and the various activities that are assigned to Him. For example,

- Walk by the Spirit (Gal. 5:16, 25).
- Led by the Spirit (Gal. 5:18).
- Fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22).
- Live by the Spirit (Gal. 5:25).

Could we as easily place Spirit-filling in this listing of the Spirit’s activity? What difference would walking in the Spirit and living in the Spirit suggest? What difference would be led by and living in the Spirit imply? What is the fruit of the Spirit if not walking in and living in the Spirit? So, I do not believe they are saying things that are significantly different. For the most part they are saying the same thing. What then are we to make of all this?

Believers, because of their position in Christ, walk, are led by, bear the fruit of, and live by the Holy Spirit. As a consequence of their position in Christ they manifest in and through their earthen vessels the work of the Holy Spirit.

Second, we are invited to “walk by the Spirit” because we are “in the Spirit.”

I do not think he is asking us to do something that is not already true. He is inviting us to do what we already are. This same idea is found in 1 Corinthians 5:7, Colossians 3:1-4, and 1 Thessalonians 4:1. The appeal to “act” is based on what is already true positionally.

The admonition of Paul in Galatians 5:25 is to live your position. He could just have easily said, “If you are justified, live sanctified.” Or “Let the redeemed live like the redeemed.”

I would equally argue that filling and indwelling are similar actions. Those who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit are filled with the Holy Spirit. This appears to be what is seen in Romans 8:9 and 11. It is also noted in 1 Corinthians 3:16 and 2 Timothy 1:14.

⁹ However, **you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit**, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. . . ¹¹ But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you” (Rom. 8:9, 11).

This is what we enjoy because of the cross. Each and every one of His people is filled with the Spirit. This is a result of Spirit baptism.

“Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that **the Spirit of God dwells in you?**” (1 Cor. 3:16).

“Guard, through **the Holy Spirit who dwells in us**, the treasure which has been entrusted to you” (2 Tim. 1:14).

I do believe during this period of time, however, that being led by the Holy Spirit is a consequence of His filling and the filling is a result of having been baptized by the Holy Spirit. So, in this much, there is a progression of activity.

I do not believe they are in anyway subsets of distinct kinds of Christians. Every believer who lives in the Spirit is led by the Spirit and walking in the Spirit and bearing the fruit of the Spirit. The question is, “Is this true of every believer?” If not, then what condition must be met to have all the above? If it is, then why the imperative?

Ryrie notes the problem of making the filling conditional when he says,

Though specific conditions are not mentioned in these contexts, the normal requirements for Christian growth would be implied conditions for attaining this kind of [Spirit filled] character. ⁸

By making the filling conditional an impossibility is created because the conditions, being unidentified, become subjective and tentative.

Ryrie notes how. . .

No example of praying for the filling of the Spirit exists in the post-Pentecostal material of the New Testament. So praying, however earnest, is apparently not the way to be filled. ⁹

Ryrie concludes by saying it is by yielding to Him that produces filling. Personally, I do believing yielding as noted in Romans 6:13 and 12:1, 2 are important, but I do not see it as a condition to Spirit filling. The presenting noted in Romans 6 and 12 is a consequence of the presenting taking place at the inception of coming to faith in Christ.

Perhaps the most familiar text as it relates to the filling of the Holy Spirit is found in Ephesians 5:18, "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit." This is the only time Paul wrote of filling.¹⁰ Having only one verse to build a doctrine on should cause us to be cautious. One verse is enough, but the superstructure we build on it should be carefully constructed.

When we make filling conditioned on human activity, we enter into a pattern of living that can become harmful. Many would agree the

filling is not between full or empty but rather degree or levels of filling. You are filled with the Spirit. The issue is to what degree are you recognizing that filling? Are you aware of the fact that you are filled? I agree more with this idea as to awareness rather than a contrast between filled or emptied. However, how does this differ with the idea of living in the *Story*? Living in *Story* simply means one is aware of how everything is from God, sustained by God and for God. Whether one affirms such a truth or not cannot remove them from God's *Story*. **Most of us are not even aware of His filling. We simply live our lives in ignorance of it. But if you are a believer, you are filled. Your awareness of it is the fulfillment of Ephesians 5:18.**

This filling is not in opposition to indwelling or His permanent residence in His people, but rather an invitation to be sensitive to His working in and through His people. The filling of the Spirit produces the fruit of the Spirit.

I would argue that what is stated is descriptive of every believer. Any choice he makes does not alter what is already true. The choice is the means God uses to do what He wants in and through the individual. The choice (or will) of man is God's means of working out His purpose. **The choice of man is pivotal, but not cornerstone.**

As Jerry Bridges said,

The Holy Spirit can and does work within us apart from any conscious response on our part.¹¹

Warren Wiersbe makes this observation,

Note that the Christian cannot simply *will* to overcome the flesh. He is simply pointing out that we cannot win this victory in our own strength and by our own will.¹²

This is not saying He **always works apart from** any conscious response on our part. A means God uses in displaying His portrait on the canvass of our lives is through our will and thus choices. **It is because of this that we should always be seeking to conform our volition to that of the New Testament description of who Christ is, what He has done, and who we are in Him.**

Third, I believe Romans 6, 8, and Galatians 5 are parallel in thought.

Romans 6 tells me that as a believer united with Christ

- I am not to continue in sin (6:1)
- I am not to live in it (6:2). This is the same idea found in Galatians 5:21 and 1 John 3:4 and following.
- I am no longer a slave to sin (6:6, 17, 20)
- I am freed from sin (6:18)
- I am dead to sin (6:11)

Because this is true,

- I am not to let sin reign in my mortal body (6:12)
- If I choose to sin, I reap the consequence of its inherent demerit (6:16, 23).

Romans 8 teaches me that I am not in the flesh, but in the Spirit (vv. 8, 9). I believe Galatians 5 is running in parallel to all of the above.

Galatians immediately follows Paul's first missionary journey (about 46 AD). Romans was during his third missionary journey around 55 AD. Galatians and Romans are consistent. Romans is a fuller explanation of what he began to write in Galatians.

If walking according to the flesh is death and is hostile toward God and not able to obey and cannot please God, then those who walk according to the Spirit is life and friendly toward God and able to obey and is pleasing God.

The question is, "Does the Spirit of God dwell within you?" If yes, then what follows is true. If no, then you are an enemy of God and you are not pleasing to Him. There does not appear to be any condition between the two stated.

If you are living according to the flesh, you must die (the second death is certain for all who are unbelieving). However, if because

you are saved you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live (you will escape the second death because you believe).

The passage is not suggesting disconnect between life according to the Spirit and putting to death the deeds of the body. If you are living according to the Spirit, you are putting to death the deeds of the body. This same idea is present in Colossians 3:1-4 and then verse 5.

Notice the language: Those led by the Spirit are the Sons of God. You do not become a Son by being led; you are led because you are a Son. You cannot have one without the other.

Am I to make a distinction between walking, minding, in the Spirit, and led or should I simply see them as describing the same thing? If the Spirit of Christ dwells in me and if I am a son of God, then I am walking, minding, in, and led by the Spirit. Because of Him being in me, I am putting to death the deeds of the body. Instead of making such fruit conditions, why not see them as consequences of being a child of God.

Does Romans 8:17 make the suffering a condition? What if I do not suffer? Are the previous statements not true? Verses 18-25 provide a working definition of what it means, "To suffer."

To live in this body of flesh that is warring against my soul is to suffer. Truly, “we ourselves groan within ourselves as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.”

Listen to the following statement written in 529AD. It is dealing with our justification, but what prohibits us from considering the idea as it relates to our sanctification?

If anyone makes the assistance of grace depend on the humility or obedience of man and does not agree that **it is a gift of grace itself that we are obedient and humble**, he contradicts the Apostle who says, "What have you that you did not receive?" (1 Cor. 4:7), and, "But by the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Cor. 15:10). If anyone affirms that we can form any right opinion or make any right choice which relates to the salvation of eternal life, or that we can be saved by assent to the preaching of the gospel through our natural powers without the effectual work of the Holy Spirit, who makes all whom He calls gladly and willingly assent to and believe in the truth, he is led astray from the plain teaching of Scripture by exalting the natural ability of man, and does not understand the voice of God who says in the Gospel, "For apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5), and the word of the Apostle, "Not that we are competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our competence is from God" (2 Cor. 3:5).¹³

Notice with me six initial observations:

1. Only the saved can walk in the Spirit.
2. It is the opposite of walking in the flesh.

3. What it looks like is synonymous with the fruit of the Spirit.
4. We are walking from who we are in Christ. Any attempt on our part to gain what is already ours is inappropriate.
5. Everyday God is working in my will enabling me to choose what is right. This choice on my part is the outworking of His will and an expression of the Spirit's fruit. Thus, I can freely choose and rest knowing He is working out that which pleases Him (Phil. 2:13).
6. My active obedience is as real as God's active working. The two, however, are not equal. The one is an outworking of the other.

I do believe I can choose to yield the members of my body as an instrument of sin (Rom. 6:13), but I do not believe I can practice sin without violating the truth of Galatians 5:21 and 1 John 3:4ff. Nothing I do can undo what He has done.

I recognize that someone might say, "Well he's a believer and look at his moral failure." Yet, I keep coming back to this idea: Can his actions/experience undo what God has declared to be true? Sure, he is acting carnally, sure he is failing to appropriate the victory of Christ, and sure, he is potentially suggesting that he was never truly saved, but can the believer ever undo what God has done?

This is not to dismiss his moral failure or the appeal to choose correctly, but it is to rest in the absolute sufficiency of Jesus Christ and His extending of grace to me.

If someone is walking in the Spirit, they are led and are in turn bearing His fruit and following the Spirit's promptings. You do not have one without the other three. In your choice you might choose not to enjoy what is already true. Nevertheless, **your unbelief cannot make false what is true.**

I continue to wrestle through this mental dilemma. The Bible says that if you practice sin you are not going to heaven. Do you as a believer practice sin? I would argue that regardless as to what you are doing, it is not the practicing of sin. I argue the same for walking in the Spirit. Romans 8 assure me that I am walking in the Spirit. Galatians 5 tells me that if I am not walking in the Spirit, I am fulfilling the lust of the flesh. Verses 16 and 21 are in parallel. I believe I can legitimately conclude that I am walking in the Spirit regardless as to what might appear to be otherwise. Part of our problem is that we are trying to figure out what this looks like and my response is that walking in the Spirit is as diversified as personalities and cultures and as limitless as our infinite God.

Paul's appeal is for us to practice our position. Verses 18 and 25 make this clear. Both verses use what is called a first class condition. In this structure. . .

The speaker assumes that the condition stated in the 'if' clause is true for the sake of argument, and thus the content of the 'then' clause follows, naturally and logically. [There is a qualifier to all of

this]. Frequently the “if” clause is in fact *not* true, but is still presented by the speaker as true for the sake of argument.¹⁴

This does not mean we can translate it with “since,” but it does mean we should assume it true.

The whole argument of Paul is that we are not under the law as such but led by the Spirit (v.18). Is living *by* the Spirit and living *in* the Spirit two different ideas? I personally do not believe so.

Paul’s assumption is the saved are walking, being led, and bearing fruit because they are living in the Spirit. Those who are not living in the Spirit are not saved and thus still under the Law and manifesting the works of the flesh.

After the introduction of the commands he then uses the double negative. He says, “Those who are walking in the Spirit are **no never** fulfilling the lusts of the flesh.”

He uses the double negative.

This is an emphatic negation. It is the strongest way to negate something in Greek. **Ou ma** rules out even the idea as being a possibility: **Ou ma** is the most decisive way of negating something in the future.¹⁵

Fourth, by walking in the Spirit the lusts of the flesh shall never be fulfilled. You will not be characterized by sin. **If you are walking in the Spirit, the pattern of your life will be Son marked and not sin marked.**

Can you not hear James 1:14 and 15 echoing in the background?

¹⁴ “But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. ¹⁵ Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death” (James 1:14, 15).

By walking in the Spirit this pattern of death will no longer be fulfilled in your life. This is the same truth John brings out in 1 John 3:4-10.

⁴“Everyone who **practices** (present active participle) sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. ⁵ You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. ⁶ No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. ⁷ Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who **practices** (present active participle) righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; ⁸ the one who **practices** (present active participle) sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. ⁹ No one who is born of God **practices** (present active indicative) sin, because His seed abides in him; and he **cannot (ou dunatai)** sin, because he is born of God. ¹⁰ By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not **practice** (present active participle) righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother” (1 John 3:4-10).

What is the big idea? It is found in the word “practice.” Throughout the passage, there is the constant emphasis of a pattern, habit, and life-style. **There is a big difference between a point in time and a pattern of life.** Because of our old nature the believer still sins, but because he is born of God, he is not characterized as a sinner.

Right now you may be in a mental dilemma. You might be thinking to yourself, “If I were walking in the Spirit and abiding in Him, then I would never sin.” Moreover, you may also be saying that “since I am sinning I must not be walking in the Spirit or abiding in Him.” So the question you are now asking yourself is this, “How do I walk in the Spirit; How do I abide in Him?” My answer to that question is simple, but here it is, “If you are saved, YOU ALREADY ARE WALKING IN THE SPIRIT AND ABIDING IN HIM.”

Some Christians believe you abide in Him by reading your Bible, confessing your sin, faithfully attending church, giving to your local assembly, and witnessing to the unsaved and/or being totally yielded. Maybe you have been taught a different list, but it is something like the above.

Steve McVey says,

As a result, the criterion for our lives returns to God’s original design: living in total dependence on Him at every moment. The New

Reigning Grace and the Holy Spirit

Testament calls it *abiding* in Christ.¹⁶ I believe he is elaborating on this idea with; “We are absorbed into a continuous awareness of our oneness with Christ”¹⁷ and “When we live in total dependence upon Him”.¹⁸ It is the idea of being “**totally yielded to God**”¹⁹ or “**totally abandon ourselves to God**”.²⁰

I do believe yielding as noted in Romans 6:13 and 12:1, 2 are important, but I do not see it as a condition to Spirit filling.

Another reputable source argues that. . .

When a believer is separated from known personal sin and is **totally yielded** to the indwelling Spirit, he will be filled with the Spirit.²¹

They conclude with,

Dependence, cleanliness, and yieldedness are necessary to achieve the Spirit-filled life. Such conditions must be met daily. They may be realized for the first time in a post-conversion act of total commitment to the will of God, but they must be reaffirmed daily.²²

If this is true, then “it is possible to be filled with the Spirit on Sunday and not be filled on Monday. Each Christian must ask himself or herself, ‘Am I at this moment spiritually clean and submissive to the leadership of the Spirit?’”²³

Really? When is enough, enough? How do we determine when we have confessed enough sin or have entered into the zone of totally

yielding? Most Christians are oblivious to the ministry of the Holy Spirit. If such is the case, then should we conclude that most Christians are not filled, walking, led, or living in the Spirit? If such actions are conditional, then what “ritual” are we to go through daily in order to insure that we are filled, walking, led, and living in the Spirit?

All of this is built around Ephesians 5:18. But I do not see where such thinking comes from in the New Testament. And I find such thinking unfortunate.

A.B. Simpson comes pretty close to identifying the concept of abiding. It is not something I do, it is something I am. I abide by my position, not my performance.

To abide in Christ is to recognize that Christ is in everything that comes in life; and that everything that occurs in the course of Providence is in some sense connected with the will of God.²⁴

I believe his thought is to believe what God has done is true and enough. There is nothing more for me to do. Yet his choice of language still causes the believer to wonder if he has ever “done” enough? And that is what each of the above cited resources suggest.

I believe there is nothing you have to do to get it. You got it, so do it. Moreover, the doing believes that you already got it.

The “doing” believes He does it. It is not something I do, it has been done. It is not something I can merit or maintain by works. It is all of grace.

As a Christian, I am walking, being led, and bearing fruit, because I am living in the Spirit. I am abiding in Him, thus I am not practicing sin. **Sin happens in the life of His people, but that is not going to be my focus. I have better things to think on than yesterday’s sin.**

B. The pressure against grace living (Gal. 5:17)

The flesh is such a powerful adversary that without the Spirit’s intervention and empowerment we are helpless against its forces. Make no mistake, “The flesh is completely opposed to the Holy Spirit.” Yet what we once were in Adam, we no longer are, although we still have.

They are not opposites that as such live far apart, each following what it craves; they live face to face, in constant clashing.²⁵

The new divine nature was not implanted to improve or to displace the old sin nature, and neither can the sin nature pollute the holy divine nature. They are two separate entities.²⁶

I have within me a sin nature that hates God and is always standing in opposition to Him. This sin nature is non-redeemable and will be lost forever at death or the second coming of Christ. My new nature is given to me by God and is as righteous and perfect as Christ Himself. Grace is now reigning over “me.” As a believer, I am to know, reckon, and yield/submit myself to this reign. This is the Romans 6 truth. It is as “I” yield to this reign that I begin to enjoy it. Make no mistake; grace is reigning right now in your life as a believer. Your “know, reckon, and yield,” is simply acknowledging what is already true. **Your non-yielding is not stopping the reign of grace and your yielding is not starting the reign of grace. It is already here. Whether or not you enjoy it lies in resting in His work.**

The word “contrary” is translated with “oppose” and “adversary” in other passages. The flesh is the adversary of the Spirit. The tense usage suggests continual opposition.

It is because of this truth that we say our flesh is non-redeemable and our new man is non-corruptible.

C. The promise for grace living (Gal. 5:18)

The Holy Spirit is the inherent and efficacious power-enabling grace living.

The force of the immediate context and the whole of Galatians is against [making the Holy Spirit the new rule or standard]: it is not the *standard* of the Spirit that enables one to resist the flesh, but the *empowering* of the Spirit. Paul is clear that the law, any law, cannot do anything to counter the fleshly forces within.²⁷

What has been Paul's point in this short epistle? As a believer, you are no longer under the Law. Why does he make such a claim? It is because you are being led by the Holy Spirit.

II. Understanding the Flesh (Gal. 5:19-21)

Paul now describes those two elements that are antithetical to each other. Paul categorizes the works of the flesh into three distinct areas. The areas or categories are not absolute. They are just suggestions.

- Sins of Immorality

Three sins are listed: immorality, impurity, sensuality. All three relate to sexual sins. Sensuality has a tendency to be "soft." The King James translates the word "lasciviousness or wantonness." It speaks of unbridled lust.

- Sins of Idolatry

The second set addresses idolatry and witchcraft or sorcery. Idolatry is putting anything ahead of Jesus Christ.

- Sins of Animosity

The third set deals with issues of the heart. Please note the list: enmities, strife, and jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, and carousing.

There are four truths we wish to note.

1. The listing is by no means exhaustive. It says “and things like these.”
2. We have a tendency to categorize sin, yet sin is sin. The sin of immorality is coupled with idolatry and with jealousy and envy. We are so prone to judge the sins of the hand and overlook the sins of the heart. Grace-living forbids us to live hypocritical lives.
3. The focus is on a pattern of life not a point in time.
4. Those whose lives are patterned by such actions shall not go to heaven (Gal. 5:21, see also Eph. 5:5).

The person who practices these sins shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Paul is not talking about an act of sin, but a habit of sin. ²⁸

Remember 3:29 tells us that we are heirs of the promise. Is it possible to be the heir of the promise and not inherit the kingdom of God? No, it is impossible. So what is this telling us? True believers will not be characterized by the flesh.

Reigning Grace and the Holy Spirit

III. Understanding the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22-26)

A. The contrast between the flesh and the Spirit (Gal. 5:22)

Paul continues with his thought that the flesh and the Spirit are antithetical to each other. Both are mutually exclusive (vv. 16-18).

B. The classification of spiritual fruit or expressions of grace living.

There are nine aspects of this one fruit. There appears to be three groupings of three each. I personally see the fruit as being singular, which suggests that every aspect will be present in the believer, yet not every aspect will be manifested. The areas or categories are not absolute. They are just suggestions.

1. Inward Fruit

The first set of three is love, joy, peace. All three of these speak of one's inner character.

2. Outward Fruit

The second set is made up of patience, kindness, goodness. These three speak of our relationship with others.

3. Upward Fruit

The last set is made up of faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

C. The consequences of spiritual fruit or grace living (Gal. 5:23b-26)

1. Grace living frees me from the weight of the law (v.23b).

The expression of fruit in the life of the believer is as diversified as individual personalities and cultures and as limitless as our infinite God. Thus, we should stop trying to put people into our little boxes and conform them to our man-centered image.

2. Grace living frees me from the passions and desires of the flesh (v.24).

This crucifixion is probably referring to our initial salvation experience and Galatians 2:20 and Colossians 3:1-5.

3. Grace living is Spirit living (v.25).

Grace-living exhibits the fruit of the Spirit. Because I am living in the Spirit, I am also to be walking in the Spirit. Yet how do I “walk

in the Spirit?” What must I “do?” What condition is given? Not-a-one except, “Since you already live in Him - Walk in Him.” The “condition” is to believe what He did and said is true (Rom. 6:1, 2; 8:4-9). The only “condition” to “walking” (practicing what is already true) is that you have functional legs and you know how (and both “conditions” are already true).

In Adam we “acted” like descendants of Adam, and in Christ we “act” like descendants of Christ.

4. Grace living is selfless living (v.26).

Law-living exhibits the works of the flesh.



APPLICATION

The Spirit’s leading looks like the Spirit’s fruit. The Spirit’s leading looks like the Spirit’s gifting. When we are bearing fruit and exercising our giftedness, we are revealing His leading. The Spirit’s leading in and through His people looks like “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Gal. 5:22, 23). The Spirit’s leading in and through His people looks like “prophecy, service, teaching; exhortation; giving, leading, and mercy” (Rom. 12:6-8).

Those who are filled with the Spirit as a consequence of being baptized by the Spirit manifest the fruit of the Spirit and this is what it means to be led of the Spirit.

Let us seek things that are above. Let us walk in the Spirit even as we are in the Spirit. Let us not yield our members as instruments of unrighteousness, but rather let us present ourselves before God as the living and holy sacrifice we are.

Who I am	What I do automatically	How it's done Or accomplished
Unbeliever - in Adam	Walk	According to the Flesh
A Believer - in Christ	Walk	According to the Spirit

¹ Michael Wells, *Sidetracked In The Wilderness*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991), 136.

² MacArthur, *Galatians*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1987), 154.

³ John MacArthur, <http://www.biblebb.com/files/MAC/sg1668.htm>

⁴ John MacArthur, <http://jabi.com/church/article0005.html>

⁵ Gromacki, *Galatians*, 160. A common dilemma in reading many authors is what appears to be a consistent inconsistency between position and condition. It appears from my perspective some allow one's experience to control interpretation rather than allow the text to interpret one's experience.

⁶ The word "walk" in verse 16 is **peripateo**. It means, "Way or pattern of life." Whereas in verse 25 the word "walks" is **stoikeo**. The idea is more of a military march or line-up. A distinction between the two is necessary but not absolute. The Holy Spirit is the means whereby we walk according to our position.

⁷ MacArthur, *Galatians*, 154.

⁸ Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1987), 376.

⁹ Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 378.

¹⁰ Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 376.

¹¹ Jerry Bridges, *Transforming Grace*, (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1991), 115.

¹² Wiersbe, *Galatians*, 129, 130.

-
- ¹³ Adapted from The Counsel of Orange (529 AD)
(<http://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/articles/topic/doctrinesofgrace.html>)
- ¹⁴ Wallace, *Grammar*, 663.
- ¹⁵ Wallace, *Grammar*, 468.
- ¹⁶ Steve McVey, *Grace Rules*, (Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 1998), 71
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 122
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 125
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 131
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, 128
- ²¹ *Understanding Christian Theology*, Swindoll and Zuck, General Editors, 494.
- ²² *Understanding Christian Theology*, Swindoll and Zuck, General Editors, 504.
- ²³ *Understanding Christian Theology*, Swindoll and Zuck, General Editors, 502.
- ²⁴ A.B. Simpson, *The Christ Life*, (Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications, 1980), 54.
- ²⁵ Lenski, *Galatians*, 282.
- ²⁶ Gromacki, *Galatians*, 164.
- ²⁷ Daniel B. Wallace, *Grammar*, 158.
- ²⁸ Wiersbe, *Galatians*, 132.

