

Title: Paul's Application of Justification in the life of the believer:
The Key to Grace Living

Text: Galatians 5:16-26

Theme: The key to grace living is understanding the Holy Spirit's ministry in you and through you to those around you.

Introduction: 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)? The key to loving your neighbor (vv13-15) is understanding the Holy Spirit's ministry in you and through you to those around you (vv.16-26).

There is a need for us to pause for just a moment and define certain terms. Salvation as we know it and all of its various phases are inseparable. There are four phases or stages. They are distinct and not synonyms, but they are incapable of being separated without "killing" the whole. Here they are.

1. **Preparatory sanctification** is pre-salvation whereby the Holy Spirit is working in the life of the sinner (2 Thess. 2:13). Terms such as conviction, conversion and regeneration fall into this category.
2. **Positional sanctification** accents my standing before the Father in His Son. Such words as justification, reconciliation, propitiation, fellowship, and redemption come into play.
3. **Progressive or practical sanctification** is the outworking of my position in and through this jar of clay for the visible manifestation of Christ to those around me.
4. **Perfect sanctification** is the culmination of God's work whereby I lose forever my "old nature." This will happen either at my death or the 2nd coming of Christ.

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)." (Gromacki, *Galatians*, 160).

The believing legalist has lost sight of positional truth in their understanding of progressive sanctification. 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 heartbreaking error.

The love of verses 13 and 14 is possible as we walk, be led by, bear the fruit of, and live in the Holy Spirit. 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.

THE BIG PICTURE:

In considering the book of Galatians we can note a three-fold division.

- Chapters 1-2 = Personal/Biographical/ Authorization/Vindication
- Chapters 3-4 = Doctrinal/Biblical/Presentation/Exposition
- Chapters 5-6 = Practical/Behavioral/ Application

Its Eternal Value:

This passage removes the burden of having to perform and causes us to follow Christ and in so doing live in the Spirit.

The Problem:

Our problem is in making “walking, led, fruit, and living” conditional ideas and not seeing them as descriptive of those who are in Christ. The problem of distorting the Gospel led to spiritual cannibalism (v. 13) and sinful license (vv. 19-21). Paul’s warnings against both are strong. The church of Christ in Galatia was threatened by the false brethren and their impact on the fellowship was formidable and noticeable.

The Storyline:

From the very beginning of time, this is what the work of God accomplished. This is our present salvation. This is the new Exodus and we are now living in the new Promised Land. This is the fullness that so many of us fail to enjoy and appropriate. Oh may God enable us to see past our flesh and into the power of His Spirit.

Questions:

1. What two ideas are set in opposition to each other in verse 16?
2. If verse 16 is an expansion to verses 13-15, what would the flesh look like and what would walking in the Spirit look like?
3. Are the flesh and the Spirit compatible?
4. Are the things that please me in verse 17 the things of the flesh or of the Spirit?
5. According to Paul’s argument up to this point, is the believer under the Law?
6. If the believer is not under the Law then what is true according to verse 18?
7. Is walking by the Spirit in verse 16 different than being led by the Spirit in verse 18?
8. Is being led by the Spirit conditional or unconditional? If it is conditional, what is the one condition as noted in verse 18?
9. Is the flesh in our current paragraph different than the flesh noted in verse 13?
10. What do the works of the flesh look like from verses 19-21?

11. Could verse 15 be a simple summary of these various deeds? If so, what is the flesh when reduced to its “bottom line?”
12. Could “under the Law” and “deeds of the flesh” be synonymous in this paragraph?
13. What is the outcome of being “under the Law” and “practicing the flesh” according to verse 21?
14. What is the opposite of the “deeds of the flesh” in verse 22?
15. Is “walking,” “led,” and “fruit” synonymous in our paragraph or are they distinct ideas? Are these things conditional or unconditional?
16. What or who does this fruit describe?
17. Remember what Galatians 3:29 says? If 3:29 is true, then what is also true according to verse 24? Notice the language of 2:20. Why has my flesh been crucified?
18. Is “walking,” “led,” “fruit,” and “living” synonymous in our paragraph or are they distinct ideas? Are these ideas different than following Jesus Christ? Are these things conditional or unconditional?
19. Notice the wording of verse 25. If living is causal, then what is walking?
20. How do I “walk by the Spirit?”
21. If everything is true concerning my position in Christ, then the prohibitions in verses 13, 15 and 26 are equally true.
22. What is verse 26 describing? Note verse 19 and verse 13.
23. From this paragraph, is it possible for the believer to be walking in the Spirit and working the deeds of the flesh at the same time?
24. Is the paragraph showing us the contrast between the believer and the unbeliever or between the obedient believer and the disobedient believer? If the contrast is between the obedient believer and the disobedient believer, then what is the outcome for the disobedient believer in verse 21?
25. What preconceived ideas does this paragraph challenge?
26. What does this passage mean to you?

The Holy Spirit is calling to us from this passage to consider three ideas.

To Know: The Holy Spirit desires for us to know the power of the person and work of Jesus Christ in behalf of His people.

To Choose: The Holy Spirit desires for us to choose to rest in His finished work and stop trying to do what has already been done.

To Feel: The Holy Spirit desires for us to feel the joy of resting in His finished work.

Outline:

- I. Understanding the Conflict (vv.16-18)
 - A. The principle of resting in the person and work of Jesus Christ (v.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: “Walk in the Spirit (v. 16),” “Led by the Spirit (v. 18),” “Fruit of the Spirit (v. 22),” and “Walk in the Spirit (v. 25).”

The word “Walk” in verse 16 is **peripatew**. It means, “Way or pattern of life.” Whereas in verse 25 the word “Walk” is **stoukw**. The idea is more of a military march or line-up. The distinction cannot be too sharply drawn. The Holy Spirit is the means whereby we walk according to our position.

Second, 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 and walk are all saying the same thing. They are not different aspects or degrees of the same thing, they are the same thing.

Ryrie notes how, “One is spiritual when Christ is seen in the life, for the fruit of the Spirit is a portraiture of our Lord (Gal. 5:22-23).” If Ryrie is right from Galatians 5:22-23, then what about those who are not spiritual (v. 21)? (Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *The Grace of God* [Chicago: Moody Press, 1963], 83).

Third, 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.” (Wallace, *Grammar*, 663).

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

The commands in our passage are descriptive and thus to be lived and enjoyed. If the descriptive statements of walking, led, fruit, and live are not characteristic of or present in the believer, then such an individual will not inherit the kingdom of God.

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

There are several salient features in the statement. **First**, 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.” (Wallace, *Grammar*, 468).

Second, 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? “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.” 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** 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** righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; 8 the one who **practices** 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** sin, because His seed abides in him; and he **cannot** 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** righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.

Friend, what is the big idea? It is found in the word “Practice.” Remember, in Galatians the issue is one of identity. Are you identified by the flesh or by the Spirit? Is your natural heritage and Law your identity or is it Christ and the Spirit?

Third, perhaps right now you are in a mental dilemma. You are thinking to yourself. (1) If I were walking in the Spirit and abiding in Him, then I would never sin. And you are also saying (2) 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, (3) “How do I walk in the

Spirit, How do I abide in Him?” My answer to that question is perhaps too simple for many of us to appreciate today, but here it is, “If you are saved, YOU ALREADY ARE WALKING IN THE SPIRIT AND ABIDING IN HIM.” **Listen, you do not do it, to get it. You got it, so do it. And the doing believes that you already got it.** The “doing” believes He does it. It is not something I do, it’s 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 resting in the person and work of Jesus Christ (v. 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.” “They are not opposites that as such live far apart, each following what it craves; they live face to face, in constant clashing.” (Lenski, *Galatians*, 282).

“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.” (Gromacki, *Galatians*, 164). I have within me a sin nature that is always hating God and is always standing in opposition to Him. This sin nature is non-redeemable and will be lost forever at death or the 2nd coming of Christ. My new nature is given to me by God and is as righteous and perfect as Christ Himself. The “I” of self is a compilation of all this and more. As a believer the “I” of self has been judicially crucified with Christ. The “I” of self has moved from the reign of sin and death to that of grace and life. 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 here, 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.

Illustration: It is like stepping outside in the rain with an umbrella. If you open the umbrella you will stay drier than if you keep it closed. Your opening and closing of the umbrella does not stop or start the rain.

The hatred that each has for the other is so great that reconciliation is impossible. Without His enablement we would never “do the things that we would.” There is no

“I” in my obedience. It is all about Him. Is this not the point in Galatians 2:20? 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 resting in the person and work of Jesus Christ (v. 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.” (Daniel B. Wallace, *Grammar*, 158).

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, because you are being led by the Holy Spirit.

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

Paul now describes those two elements that are antithetical to each other. Paul categorizes the works into three distinct areas.

A. 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.

B. Sins of Idolatry

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

C. 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. **First**, the listing is by no means exhaustive. It says “and things like these.” **Second**, 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. **Third**, the focus is on a pattern of life not a point in time. **Fourth**, those whose lives are patterned by such actions shall not go to heaven. “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.” (Wiersbe, *Galatians*, 132). 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.

Who are these people? They are people who are fulfilling the lusts of their flesh. They are people who are under the law and they are people whose pattern in life is “of the flesh.”

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

A. The contrast between the flesh and the Spirit (v. 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 ever aspect will be present in the believer yet not every aspect will be manifested.

Before noting the fruit, we should ask and answer the question, “What produces this fruit in the believer?” What is the cause? Is there a condition to the cause that is greater than what is stated in 2:20 and 3:27, 29? Now let us note the “fruit of the Spirit.”

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, and 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 the person and work of Jesus Christ (vv. 23b-26)
1. The person and work of Jesus Christ 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. The person and work of Jesus Christ 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. “It was Paul’s belief and experience that the Christian died with Christ and rose again to a life, new and clean, in which the evil things of the old self were gone and the lovely things of the Spirit had come to fruition.” (William Barclay, *Galatians and Ephesians*, 52).

My old nature, the flesh, has been crucified with Christ. Although this is true, I still have “flesh” and thus I am capable of committing all of its deeds. This “thing,” the flesh, however, is no longer my identity. It is not who I am. I am in Christ and thus live in the Spirit and He produces in me and through me His fruit.

3. The Christ-life is Spirit living (v.25).

The Christ-life exhibits the fruit of the Spirit.

4. The Christ-life is selfless living (v.26).

Law living exhibits the works of the flesh.

“Its main point is still to persuade them to return to the full, complete gospel he had given them, instead of embracing the false message of the ‘agitators.’” (Tom Wright, *Paul for Everyone*, 74).

Shepherding the Sheep: (What’s the NEXT STEP?)

1. Do you want to dance in the “rain” of grace?
2. Do you want to feel the warmth of God’s “Sun?”
3. Then give up trying and start resting in the hammock of His finished work.
4. Many of you have closed the umbrella of your legalism and are now enjoying

the “reign” of grace in your life. Some of you still have your umbrellas up and are resisting the cool, cleansing “rain” of grace.

5. May it please God to break you so that nothing else matters but Him.
6. May you triumphantly proclaim with the redeemed of God, “HE is enough in this life and in the life that is to come.”