

REVIEW

Paul wrote to the Galatians about the new life in the Spirit as opposed to a life of trying to find acceptance through keeping rules no one can keep. He affirmed the power of Jesus in His life.

For through the Law I died to the Law, so that I might live to God. 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. I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.” Galatians 2:19-21

Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? Does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? Galatians 3:1-5

The new life is a life of faith in God to do in us what we cannot possibly do. In the last part of his letter, Paul described what a life directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit looks like. We just began to paint that portrait last week.

I. Life in the Spirit

A. It is a life of true freedom.

It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. Gal 5:1

Freedom is not the liberty to do whatever I want and desire. Freedom is the ability to do what I ought. True freedom is the freedom to live according to the new longings to live holy and please God implanted at conversion.

B. It is a life of competing passions. Spirit vs. Flesh

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. 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. Galatians 5:16-17

We identified the two sides in this war last week. This war is up close and personal. It rages inside us. It is a war between “the flesh” and the Holy Spirit indwelling our spirit. At conversion, God brought to life a new capacity. The Bible actually indicates that the person we were before Christ died with Christ. We were raised with a new identity. God implanted a new core in an old container. The old vehicle consisting of a brain, emotions, capacity came under new management. From this new core we participate with God in the renewal of the old vehicle. New patterns of thinking and feeling need to be established. We cultivate new passions and reactions. The Bible identifies these as our “members”. Basically, our members are neutral. They are capacities to function in material and immaterial world. Our members were programed by the “old man” according to the evil one.

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly lived according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Ephesians 2:1-2

Now that the old man is dead, our members need to be reprogramed according to the Spirit of life.

There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. Romans 8:1-4

If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. 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. Romans 8:10-11

The fleshly or godless passions the bible calls “the flesh.” It is a war over who will dictate how our members are used.

We have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. Romans 6:4

Consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. Romans 6:11-13

We not only inherited these selfish passions but we catered to them and cultivated them throughout our life before conversion. These old patterns became embedded in our members. We inherited both material and immaterial aspects. Generally I have come to believe that any craving or desire outside of God’s will fits the “flesh” category. Any time I feel driven to do something I really don’t want to do is a battle with the flesh sometimes intensified by spiritual forces. Paul listed some of those things.

Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these... Galatians 5:19-21

The whole world system appeals to the selfish passions of the flesh.

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. 1 John 2:16

The Bible identifies two types of people. There are those who are IN the Flesh. There are those who are IN the Spirit.

Those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. Romans 8:5-8

Paul reminded the Romans that they were no longer IN the flesh.

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 (and is still in the flesh). Romans 8:9

The expectation was that because they were made new, they should be acting differently. There is no such expectation to those still in the flesh and unable please God. We all still fight the old patterns imbedded in our mortal bodies but that is not who we are. With a new core comes a set of new desires and longings. Even though we continue to struggle with the left over programming, our heart longs for God. Paul testified as to this battle in Romans 7. This important point in this is to notice how he affirms his true longing.

I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. Romans 7:15-23

Life in the Spirit is a life of true freedom to live according to God’s ways.

Life in the spirit is a life of conflict between the Spirit and the Flesh.

Life in the spirit is a life of godly fruit or behavior.

C. It is a life of godly behavior.

Just as we are able to discern when the flesh is in control by our behavior, we can discern when we are living by the direction and enabling of the Spirit by our behavior.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Galatians 5:22-23

It is important to notice that Paul uses a singular noun. In English “fruit” can be singular or plural. Paul did not identify these characteristics as the fruits of the Spirit. When we live by the direction and empowering of the Holy Spirit, all of these characteristics are in play. They are basically all attributes of the Holy Spirit and it is logical that they would be present whenever He is in charge. This passage teaches that if we live by the Spirit, we will NOT fulfill the desires of the flesh. It also indicates that if we live by the Spirit we WILL fulfill the desires of the Spirit.

These qualities are not really all that complicated. If all these things were operating in our life, we would be living a well-balanced life that would certainly catch the attention of those around us. These characteristics flow out of the regenerated core of our being. They should be evident even to those closest to us. There is some similarity to Peter’s list of characteristics we should be continually developing.

Some divide these characteristics into three categories.

Base core characteristics – love, joy, peace

Relational characteristics – Longsuffering, kindness, goodness

Stress of life characteristics – Faithfulness, gentleness, self-control

1. **Love vs. indifference**
2. **Joy vs. gloom**
3. **Peace vs. anxiety**
4. **Long-suffering vs. impatience or a short fuse**
5. **Kindness vs. apathy**
6. **Goodness vs. selfishness**
7. **Faithfulness vs. fickleness**
8. **Gentleness vs. harshness**
9. **Self-control vs. indulgence**

II. Living Life in the Spirit

How do we not just battle the old impulses but genuinely manifest the character of Christ?

A. Live by submitting to the direction and enabling of the Holy Spirit.

Our passage here tells us to live by the Spirit.

But I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. Galatians 5:16

The key to victory has to do with our relationship to the Holy Spirit. The Bible employs several different terms to communicate the same concept. The concept has to do with a humble submission to the work of the Holy Spirit in our life. Are we in vital relationship with Him? If not, we will carry out the desire of the flesh. If so, we will bear the fruit of a life directed and empowered by Holy Spirit. It boils down to a moment by moment decision to listen to the flesh or the Spirit. If old fleshly patterns manifest, it simply means somewhere along the line we refused the direction of the Holy Spirit.

Be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And stop getting drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but continually be filled (directed and empowered) with the Spirit, Ephesians 5:15-18

But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, "GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE." Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you. James 4:6-10

Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. 1 Peter 5:6-7

Stop presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. Romans 6:13

I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present (surrender, offer) your bodies (members) a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. Romans 12:1

Abide in Me (keep connected), and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. John 15:4-5

You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. John 15:16

If we live by the Spirit, let us also be in line with (live by) the Spirit. Galatians 5:25

If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. Galatians 5:18

But I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. Galatians 5:16

Report for duty every morning. Acknowledge your weakness. Ask for His direction and empowering to face the day. The way you live clearly indicates who is in charge – the flesh or the Spirit.

B. Deny the flesh.

Take a stand against the fleshly desires imbedded in your members. Declare and affirm your allegiance to God and your true desire to please Him. When the flesh demands' fulfilment, deny the request. This passage does not say we will not feel the desires of the flesh, only that we will not fulfill the desire of the flesh when we live by the Spirit.

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, so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries. 1 Peter 4:1-3

It may feel contrary to your true desires only because the enemy tries to keep us ignorant of our true nature. We need to remember whose team we play for.

Stop letting sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and stop presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; Romans 6:12-13

Just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification. Romans 6:19

So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. Romans 8:12-13

We still bear responsibility to make wise choices. We still exercise free will. We still decide to live by the Spirit and deny the fleshly passions. The more we deny the flesh the less influence it has on our choices.

It is similar to denying your craving for certain foods; eventually you lose your craving.

Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Galatians 5:24

Consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amount to idolatry. Colossians 3:5

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, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be rendered powerless, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin. Romans 6:5-7

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, Titus 2:11-12

Stand up to those impulses. Take charge. Deny any association with those passions and cultivate your new passions by the Holy Spirit.

C. Renew our thinking

This battle takes a renewal of our thinking. Much of our behavior is based on a way of thinking. Behavior begins with thinking, then feeling, the choosing. If you don't figure out why you do what you do it will be impossible to change your doing.

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. Romans 12:1-2

For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. Colossians 1:9-12

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

And I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure you will be able to call these things to mind. 2 Peter 1:15

Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. Colossians 3:1-4

Be renewed in the spirit of your mind... Ephesians 4:23

D. Focus on Jesus.

It is the object of our faith that brings results. We become like who we hang out with or observe.

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit. 2 Corinthians 3:17-18

Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. 2 Peter 1:2-3

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. Hebrews 12:1-3

*Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God. If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!" (Which all refer to things destined to perish with use)—in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of **NO VALUE** against fleshly indulgence. Col 2:18-23*

Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts. Romans 13:13-14

E. Make no provision for the flesh (don't feed the flesh)

Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts. Romans 13:13-14

How often do we try to eliminate a craving but fail to avoid it? If you want to win over your craving for sugar or chocolate, don't keep it in the house. If you struggle with alcohol, don't frequent bars.