

EXPERIENCING GOD'S GRACE

PART 9: LEARNING TO WALK

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Paul now switches from the problem of legalism in the Galatian churches to the inner struggle that all believers experience...the struggle between the flesh and the Spirit. He explains how believers can learn to “walk in the Spirit” and gain greater victory in the struggle against the flesh.

I. GALATIANS 5:16-26 (NIV)

“So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. ¹⁹ The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other."

II. COMMENTS

S. Michael Houdmann writes, "the Christian life is a battle of the sinful flesh against the new nature given by Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). As fallen human beings, we are still trapped in a body that desires sinful things (Romans 7:14-25). As Christians, we have the Holy Spirit producing His fruit in us and we have the Holy Spirit's power available to conquer the acts of the sinful nature (2 Corinthians 5:17; Philippians 4:13).

A Christian will never be completely victorious in always demonstrating the fruits of the Holy Spirit. It is one of the main purposes of the Christian life, though, to progressively allow the Holy Spirit to produce more and more of His fruit in our lives—and to allow the Holy Spirit to conquer the opposing sinful desires. The fruit of the Spirit is what God desires our lives to exhibit and, with the Holy Spirit's help, it is possible!"¹

| FRUIT | DESCRIPTION ² |
|--------------|---|
| Love | Affection for others |
| Joy | An exuberance about life |
| Peace | The cessation of inner turmoil, serenity |
| Patience | Slow to anger; a willingness to stick with things |
| Kindness | A sense of compassion in the heart |
| Goodness | To be generous |
| Faithfulness | Involved in loyal commitments |
| Gentleness | Not needing to force our way in life |
| Self-control | Able to marshal and direct our energies wisely |

¹ (Houdmann, S. Michael) GotQuestions.Org.

² Eugene H. Peterson, *The Message*, Navpress, Colorado Springs, CO. 1994. P. 472.

III. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Describe the two forces in these passages that are in conflict with each other.
2. (5:16) When Paul uses the word "flesh" is he simply talking about the physical body? If not, what did he mean by this word?
3. How does Paul describe his personal inner struggle in Romans 7:15-25?
4. In what ways does an understanding of our sinful nature help us?
5. (5:16, 25) What do you think Paul meant by the phrases "walk by the Spirit" and "keep in step with the Spirit"?
6. (5:22-23) Paul lists the fruit of the Spirit in these verses. Why do you suppose Paul used the word "fruit" in this context instead of words like "human characteristics," or "human traits" of a person?
7. (5:22) Why does it say "fruit" instead of "fruits"?

8. Can the work of the Holy Spirit be resisted by believers? (See 1 Cor. 6:19; Eph. 4:30; 1 Thess. 5:19). Explain why or why not.

9. How does the fruit of the Holy Spirit relate to "walking in the Spirit"?

10. Leader's questions (optional).

IV. APPLICATION

R_____ that apart from the Holy Spirit you are powerless in this struggle.

R_____: To live in the Spirit is to develop a moment-by-moment dependency on the Holy Spirit and to become increasingly sensitive to His promptings.

R_____ in knowing that in Christ you already have the victory in this struggle