

#127 “Walk by the Spirit”

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Paul says in Galatians 5:16, “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.” We can go two ways when it comes to any decision we daily face. We can obey the Lord, thereby walking by the Spirit, or we can disobey the Lord, thereby walking in a fleshly manner. So when the battle for righteousness rages, how can we choose rightly and walk after the Spirit?

We must understand that we all still have flesh even though we are born again in Christ. The Spirit indwells us and makes it possible for us to please God, but we still have human fallibility, imperfection, and things that need to be conformed to Christ (Romans 12:1-2). We are not finished works just yet, and we all battle temptation daily because Satan knows we are vulnerable to it. It is true that we are no longer “according to the flesh” or “in the flesh” as Romans 8:5, 8 indicates, for if we were, we would have no chance at pleasing God (v. 8). We are now children of God, born of His Spirit, and able by His Spirit to please God and obey. Yet even though we now have the capacity to please God, we still have the fallibility to sin as well because an element of the flesh clings on in our earthly bodies (Romans 8:11).

In order to win this regular battle against our flesh and humanity, we must understand the nature of the fight. There is a sense in which the flesh has been conquered in that those who are in Christ have by faith “crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (Galatians 5:24). This means that just as we have been set free from sin, death, and eternal condemnation in hell, we, too, have the ability and authority in and through Christ to be set free from any bondage to the flesh. We are no longer slaves to sin (Romans 6:6), and therefore it is possible to reckon the flesh as dead since it has been crucified with Christ. It is not that we no longer have flesh or are not vulnerable to even the worst of sins, but it is that we are able to choose by faith to live as if the flesh will have no control or influence over our behavior and decisions (Romans 8:12). *Therefore, believing that we can resist sin and the lusts of the flesh is a major step in living in obedience.* This is why Paul continues in Galatians 5:25 by saying, “If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.” The Spirit has given us new life in Christ where there is freedom (2 Corinthians 3:17). It is in this freedom that we are to walk by the enabling of the Spirit as we reckon the flesh to be powerless over us. If we think we are helpless victims to the forces and pulls of our flesh, we will be prone to living defeated, helpless, and hopeless lives.

So as we go throughout our day to day lives, let us take Paul’s advice in Romans 13:14 so that we can regularly win this battle for obedience: “But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.” We would do well to keep from compromising situations, from letting our minds wander, and from rationalizing sin. The flesh can consume us if we aren’t careful, but if we let Christ dictate our thoughts, feelings, and affections, then we can resist the pull of the flesh and walk by the Spirit. It is easier said than done, but the point that we must anchor our faith upon is that it can be

done. Our God is faithful, and He provides the way of escape from temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13). When we are not able, He is able. When we lack faith, He is faithful. When we are weak, He is strong. May God give us grace to trust in Him, that His ways are the best ways for us and that He will be there by His Spirit to enable us to follow His lead.