

# WALK IN THE SPIRIT

Galatians 5:13-26

Key Truth

If we walk in the Spirit, He will fill our church with His fruit.

Willie is my sister's dog. He's a great dog; we all love him. But he's a dog and he does dog things - like bark. If you come to our door he goes beserk. When cars drive on the road he gets on the back of the couch and gives them the what for. When UPS delivers he goes apoplectic. He even barks when I come in the door in the evening.

We really don't like Willie's barking. We try all kinds of ways to control it. We yell at him to stop, but that doesn't work. We put him in his room which kinda works. We put him in the garage which kinda works. The other day Willie went off when Cathy was sleeping in; bad move. Now, he gets the bark collar. He hates the bark collar. He's so afraid of that thing he won't move after we put it on. The other day he sat in the same position for 30 minutes without a peep.

It would be so much better for him and for us if Willie could control his barking from within. There's a tug-a-war in his little dog soul. But he always chooses dog. So we have to control him from the outside with the bark collar.

We have a tug-a-war in our souls. It's between living for ourselves and living for God. In this passage it's described as a tug-a-war between our fleshly desires and the desires of the Holy Spirit Who lives in us. When we live for our fleshly desires, we do all kinds of bad things. The Judaizers (legalists) would say the only way to control our flesh is to live under the Law of Moses. In their minds, if we're freed from the law the flesh will take over. There will be nothing to keep our flesh under control.

But there is another way to gain victory over the flesh.

Through the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is so much better than the law because the Holy Spirit doesn't control our flesh, He transforms it.

Galatians 5:13-26 is a familiar passage to many of us. But we tend to read it individualistic. As we read it this morning, I want you to notice it addresses the church family. The point of this passage is that **if the members of our church family walk in the Spirit, the Spirit will fill our church with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.**

The opposite is true as well. If members of our church family walk in the flesh, our church will be filled with strife, rivalries, fits of anger, jealousy, dissensions and things like these. Verses 5:13-21 warn of this.

## IF WE WALK IN THE FLESH OUR CHURCH FAMILY WILL BE FULL OF STRIFE (5:13-21)

Galatians 5:13-21 (ESV)

<sup>13</sup> For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. <sup>14</sup> For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

<sup>15</sup> But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another.

<sup>16</sup> But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

<sup>17</sup> For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

<sup>18</sup> But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

<sup>19</sup> Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, <sup>20</sup> idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, <sup>21</sup> envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

The orientation of this passage is the church family. Because we are raised in an individualistic culture it makes it harder for us to fully grasp. The people of Iconium, Lystra and Derbe, the first century recipients of Paul's letter were, like Paul, raised in a *collectivist culture*. *Collectivistic cultures* emphasize the needs and goals of the group as a whole over the needs and wishes of each individual. In such cultures, relationships with other members of the group and the interconnectedness between people play a central role in each person's identity.

The idea that I have a personal relationship with God; it's *just* God and me, would be inconceivable in their culture. Walking in the flesh or walking in the Spirit, though a personal issue, would never be understood apart from the church family. The Scriptures affirm this perspective.

We are not meant to live the Christian life alone. We are saved into a family. Jesus calls us brothers and sisters. It is in the family that we learn to love, to care, to forgive, to persevere, to be patient, to be kind etc. In the family we care for each other. We visit when we're sick. We take care of each other's children. We pray for each other. We use our spiritual gifts to bless one another. We learn to forgive, to resolve conflicts with each other, to extend grace and receive it. We disciple one another to be genuine followers of Jesus. We warmly welcome people into the family.

But if we walk in the flesh, (which is simply another way of referring to self-centeredness), it leads to strife of all kinds in the church family. A church wherein the majority of the people are walking in the flesh will not experience the present blessings of God's Kingdom. This is Paul's warning in verse 21 that "...those who do such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God." We are in the Kingdom of God now as it exists in its spiritual form. We are under God the Father's authority and the authority of Jesus as Head of the Church. As sons and daughters, we have already inherited the indwelling Holy Spirit. But there are more blessings to inherit now in the Kingdom if we walk in the Spirit and not the flesh. But if we do not yield to the Spirit, we will not inherit these additional blessings. What are these blessings? Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. These are our inheritance as sons and daughters and as the family of Christ.

At stake in the tug-a-war between our flesh and the indwelling Spirit is family conflict and loss of inheritance.

We all have this tug-a-war inside us. We know exactly what Paul means that "...the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do."

To prevent strife from occurring, some churches resort to legalism in the form of having a policy for everything. Because a group once left the kitchen dirty, now you need to do a pre-event inventory and a post-event cleanup with photo verification before you can get your deposit back. That type of legalism might keep the kitchen clean, but it won't produce a loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful and self-controlled church family.

More often than not, what do many of us do when there is strife in a church family? We leave. In our self-centeredness we don't want the hassle; we already have enough problems in our private lives. By leaving we forfeit potential for spiritual growth. Learning to forgive. Learning faithfulness to our Christian brothers and sisters. Learning to love with the love of Christ. Leaving might relieve us, but it will not lead us to become more loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle and self-controlled.

Neither leaving nor legalism is the solution to our self-centeredness.

The indwelling Holy Spirit is the solution.

The solution to our self-centeredness and its affect on our church family is to yield to the Holy Spirit and follow His guidance.

He is the power to transform our self-centeredness to Christ-centeredness.

If more and more of us yield to the Holy Spirit, He will fill our church family with His fruit.

**IF WE WALK IN THE SPIRIT OUR CHURCH FAMILY WILL BE FULL OF LOVE, JOY, PEACE (5:22-26)**

Galatians 5:22-26 (ESV)

<sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. <sup>24</sup> And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

<sup>25</sup> If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

<sup>26</sup> Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

In our next study we will think about how practically we walk in the Spirit. I encourage you this week to note the ways the Holy Spirit interacts with you perhaps convicting of sin or prompting to act or to refrain or giving clearer understanding of the Scriptures. Whatever the case, if you're a Christian, the Spirit is living and working in you to become more like Jesus.

Another issue this passage raises is our perspective on the church.

If someone were to ask you, "What is the church?", what would your answer be?

What has shaped your present view of the church?

What beliefs or experiences cause you not to want to get involved or to reject the idea that the church is a family?

In what ways might our spiritual transformation be incomplete if we do not engage with others in the church family?

In what ways in our spiritual transformation carried forward by our involvement with our church family?