**LIVE BY THE SPIRIT**

Galatians 5:13-26

Key Verse 16

So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

**Introduction**



Thanks to Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross we are now free. But now the question is how we use our God-given freedom? We should use our freedom to serve God and others. We should not use it to indulge in our sinful nature. Paul elaborates that if we follow our sinful nature, we will live a terrible lives. So he urges us to live by the Holy Spirit. Then we will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. This is an important direction for our personal life of faith and for our fellowship. Let us humble ourselves to hear the word of God!

1. Read verses 13-15. How were the Galatians to use their freedom in Christ? (13) How would this actually fulfill the entire law? (14) Why should we not bite and devour each other? (15)

1-1, Read verses 13-15.

You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. **14** For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” **15** If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

1-2, How were the Galatians to use their freedom in Christ? (13)

***You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.***

* Paul reminds us again that we have been set free. We have freedom in Christ.
* Unfortunately some people misunderstand the meaning of this freedom. Many people in our society think that being free is doing whatever they feel like doing.
* Some even think that to be free means to gratify their physical desires. They want a license to indulge their sinful nature.
* Before Jesus saved us, we were not free. We were slaves to our sin and to death. We did things that we did not want to do. We were slaves to Satan.
* But Jesus set us free by dying on the cross. At the moment he died, the curtain in the temple was torn into two from top to bottom.
* Now we can approach the Holy God freely to worship him. The Holy Spirit helps us to call him affectionately, “Abba, Father.” We can love him and serve him freely.
* Again, we should remember that freedom to sin is no freedom at all. Our freedom was given so that we might serve God and serve others.
* Legalism also causes us to compare ourselves with others. Then we become proud when we seem to be doing better than others and despair when we feel we are doing worse than others.

1-3, How would this actually fulfill the entire law? (14)

***For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”***

* Paul says that the entire law is summed up in a single command: “Love your neighbor as yourself”.
* This is an excellent way for us to ensure that our valuable freedom does not get squandered on living for the flesh. By positively serving one another in love, we can overcome and conquer the desires of the flesh.
* This is the pattern set by Jesus. He had more liberty than anyone who ever walked this earth. Yet He used His liberty and freedom to serve others in love.
* In the original Greek, Paul is even more specific. He says, through love, serve one another. What kind of love is the Bible describing here? Specifically, it is the love shown through Jesus Christ.
* If we were to use a mathematical equation to capture the essence of Paul’s teaching, it might look something like the following: Freedom + love = service to God and others.
* The other equation is: freedom – love = a license to indulge the sinful nature. We have freedom in Christ. But love is an important factor that affects our life of faith.
* When we love God, obeying his commands is no problem. If we love each other by remembering how God loves us, we will not hurt each other, or envy others.

***For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command***

* Paul addresses the legalists again, and says: "You want to keep the law? Here it is! Love your neighbor as yourself and you have fulfilled the law in one word.

***“Love your neighbor as yourself.”***

* What does it mean to love your neighbor as yourself? As we naturally take care of ourselves, we should also take care of others.
* If you want to know how you ought to love your neighbor, ask yourself how much you love yourself. If you were to get into trouble or danger, you naturally would want someone to love you and help you.
* We don’t need a book of instructions to teach us how to love our neighbor. All we have to do is to look into our own hearts, and it will tell us how we ought to love our neighbor as ourself.
* We may want to focus on how much we pray, how much of the Bible we know, or how many things we do as a measure of our spiritual maturity. But this is not what counts before God’s eyes.
* A wonderful test of our spiritual condition is simply how we treat other people. No matter what position we may have, God deeply cares about how we treat others.

1-4, Why should we not bite and devour each other? (15)

***If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.***

* Paul warns us that if our fellowship is full of arguments and rivalry, jealous competition and talking behind each other’s back, we will only destroy one another.
* The words, “bite and devour one another” sounds like Paul is describing a pack of wild animals! This is to illustrate how even members of the church can act when they use their "liberty" for their selfish means and end.

2. Read verses 16-18. What happens when we walk by the Spirit? (16) What conflict

do we experience within us? (17) What does it mean to be led by the Spirit? (18a)

What is the outcome if we are led by the Spirit? (18b)

2-1, Read verses 16-18.

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.

2-2, What happens when we walk by the Spirit? (16)

***So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.***

* Paul says here, if we walk in the Spirit, we will not fulfill the desires of the flesh.
* The idea of the legalist is that by promoting walking in the Spirit, people will think they have a license to sin. They hold to the idea that only legalism can keep us holy. But it is wrong!
* Our natural tendency is to gratify the desires of the sinful nature. This is the fallen nature we inherited from Adam.
* So we need God’s help to fight the good fight. We need the help of the Holy Spirit.
* What does it mean to walk in the Spirit? First, we are to be sensitive to His residence and His influence. Second, it means to pattern our life after the influence of the Holy Spirit.
* Then how does the Holy Spirit influence our life? He reveals His will to us through the message(words) of the Bible. He also influences us through others who walk in the Spirit.
* How can you tell if someone walks in the Spirit? When someone walks in the Spirit, they listen to what the Holy Spirit says as He guides us in Jesus.

John 16:13 reads,

But when he, the Spirit of truth,comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.

* And you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh: There is no way anyone can fulfill the lust of the flesh as they walk in the Spirit. The two simply don't go together.
* The Holy Spirit doesn't move in us to gratify our fallen desires. Rather, the Holy Spirit dwells in us to teach us about Jesus, and to guide us in the path of Jesus.
* This is the key to righteous living - walking in the Spirit, not living under the domination of the law.

2-3, What conflict do we experience within us? (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.***

* There is a constant war going on in our hearts. There are two forces in us that are in conflict with each other.
* One is our desire to follow the sinful nature. The other is our desire to follow the Holy Spirit.
* We have been justified by the blood of Jesus, but this does not mean we suddenly become a holy man or woman over night.
* We are now in the process of **sanctification.** We still wear the sinful body. Our body has not been transformed into a heavenly one.
* This won’t happen until Jesus comes again. Only then we will be changed into spiritual beings like angels.
* In the meantime, we struggle between these two conflicting forces. The flesh desires that we please ourselves.
* The Spirit desires to please the Lord. The flesh desires instant gratification. The Spirit desires eternal joy. There is a fierce battle.
* How do we fight against the flesh? We have to be able to say "No" to the flesh and its sinful desires. We have to strengthen ourselves in the Spirit of God.
* If you set the Word out of sight, you are helpless against the flesh. This is a fact.
* May God help our JBF and HBF children win their spiritual battles throughout this Summer, by relying on the Words of God. Through God’s Word, may they grow as God’s servants.

2-4, What does it mean to be led by the Spirit? (18a)

2-5, What is the outcome if we are led by the Spirit? (18b)

***But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.***

* Before Jesus came, we were under the law. We were condemned because we could not keep all the laws.
* We fell short of the glory of God. But by his grace, God set us free from sin and death through the blood of Jesus.
* There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ. Now we live by the Spirit.
* The antidote to the flesh is not found in the law, but in the Spirit. If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. We are now free from outer influence or regulation of the law of God.
* The word “led” indicates that there is the fluence of the Holy Spirit within our hearts.

Jeremiah 31:33 reads,

I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

3. Read verses 19-25. What are the obvious acts of the flesh? (19-21a) What are the

consequences of the acts of the flesh? (21b) What are the fruits of the Spirit?

(22-23a) How does this fruit surpass the law? (23b) What shoud we do to live by the

Spirit? (24, 25) How should we live in a Christian community? (26)

3-1, Read verses 19-25.

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.

3-2, What are the obvious acts of the flesh? (19-21a)

***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.***

* Paul had just mentioned the inner battle between the flesh and the Spirit. Though this battle is fought internally, the results are outwardly evident.
* Paul says that these acts of the sinful nature are obvious. They are obvious to us because we have personally committed many of these acts.
* We are forgiven sinners. We all are human. These acts of the sinful nature can affect not only our personal lives but also our social lives.
* These acts can be classified into three categories:

(1) sins of physical body affecting our personal and moral lives (sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery, drunkenness and orgies)

(2) sins of the soul that affect our relationship with God that is our spiritual lives (idolatry and witchcraft)

(3) sins that we commit against other people which affect our social lives (hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy).

* But this list is not exhaustive. Paul ends the listing with the words, “and the like.” Greed, pride, ingratitude, slander, lies, laziness, and so on.
* Notice that the first thing Paul mentions in the list is sexual immorality. This sin leads to many other sins.
* Sexual immorality damages not only one’s personal life but also the family. It also ruins a community and an entire society.
* Those who serve the work of God must especially watch out for this sin. There must be not even a hint of sexual immorality so as to protect God’s flock.
* Some people say that the acts of the sinful nature are not serious when they do not hurt others, like a victimless crime.
* In their minds, adultery or fornication is no big deal if the sex is consensual. But there is no such thing as a victimless sin.
* The person who commits the sin of sexual immorality is a victim. What we do and what we say also affect others, even if we do it in secret.
* Our sinful acts affect the entire Christian community. We are not an island. Most of all, God is watching us.

3-3, What are the consequences of the acts of the flesh? (21b)

***I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.***

* Paul warns those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. What could be more serious than this? Our life in eternity depends on it.
* “Those who live like this” indicates that without repentance they continued to live by the acts of flesh.
* King David committed terrible sins. But he repented of his sins sincerely, turned from his sins, and lived for God.
* Nothing is worse than to continue in sin. If one doesn’t repent, but continues to fulfill the desires of the flesh, they are not able to inherit the kingdom of God, for their lives are not compatible with God’s kingdom.

Romans 8:5-8 reads,

Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. **6** The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. **7** The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. **8** Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.

3-4, What are the fruits of the Spirit? (22-23a)

***22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control.***

* It’s interesting to note that Paul uses the term, “the fruit” of the Spirit, as opposed to “the acts” of the sinful nature.
* Fruit is singular while acts(of the flesh) is plural, for all 9 are manifested in each person if he or she lives by the Spirit.
* Our sins are the result of our acting out the evil that is in our hearts. On the other hand, the fruit of the Holy Spirit is what the Spirit helps us to bear when we walk in step with what the Spirit desires.
* This fruit cannot be manufactured or produced by our hard work. It grows out of a life that follows the Holy Spirit.
* There are three kinds of fruit of the Holy Spirit:

(1) the fruit that is produced in us when we remain in God (love, joy, peace)

(2) the fruit we have in relation to others 4 (patience or forbearance, kindness and goodness)

(3) the fruit in our personal life (faithfulness, gentleness and self-control).

* Among these, Paul mentions the fruit of love first because love affects all other aspects of our life.
* Paul said earlier that we should not abuse our freedom in Christ by indulging the sinful nature, but serve each other in love.
* We can show that we are Jesus’ disciples by loving one another. Love builds up others; it does not tear down or divide. Legalism tends to tear down and divide.
* The legalist is happy to find someone’s wrongdoing. He cannot wait to criticize the person and talk about his fault, because it makes him feel better. This is not love. Love builds up others in Christ.
* The joy and peace which the Spirit gives are different from the pleasure of sin and worldly peace.
* Joy as the fruit of the Spirit comes from knowing God and his grace upon us. God also gives us his joy when we serve him and his people with love (JOY = Jesus first, others next, and then yourself).
* This is not a temporary temporary emotion but joy which we experience deep in our heart and it lasts. The peace that God gives us is not conditional. No one can take it away from us.
* We can have the Spirit’s peace in the midst of the storms of life. This peace is like the undercurrent in a deep ocean.

John 14:27 reads,

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid”

* When we live by the Spirit, God helps us to bear good fruit in our relationships with others. They are patience (or forbearance), kindness and goodness.
* If we follow our sinful nature, we cannot be patient or bear with those who are obnoxious or weak or violent in terms of words and deeds.
* We cannot be kind or good to others if we rely on our human nature. Only God can help us to bear this fruit through the Holy Spirit.
* “Forbearance=Longsuffering=Patience” is a work of the Spirit! Longsuffering is that quality which enables a person to bear adversity, injury, reproach, and makes them patient to wait for the improvement of those who have done him wrong.
* To withstand continued assaults we must be longsuffering and patiently wait for the devil to get tired of his game.
* The last three are faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. These are qualities that God enables us to have as we live by the Holy Spirit.
* Self-assertiveness is highly valued in our society. But it is much better that each of us curtails the desire to be pre-eminent and exercises gentleness.
* When we live by the Spirit, we bear the fruit that helps us to be faithful to God and kind and gentle to others.

3-5, How does this fruit surpass the law? (23b)

***Against such things there is no law.***

* Paul stressed that there is no law against love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.
* In other words, if a person has this fruit of the Spirit, they don't need the Law. They have fulfilled it already!
* The Law is not given for the righteous man. A true Christian conducts himself in such a way that he does not need any law to warn or to restrain him.

3-6, What should we do to live by the Spirit? (24, 25)

***Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.***

* Paul says that those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.
* It is something that the believer does by the help of the Spirit. We are called to choose to work with God to die to the flesh just as Jesus was crucified His flesh.

Romans 6:11-13 reads,

In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. **12** Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. **13** Do not offer any part of yourself to sin as an instrument of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer every part of yourself to him as an instrument of righteousness.

* We are a new creation in Christ. We have the image of Christ on us. Our sinful nature has been crucified with Christ.

***25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.***

* We no longer boast about our sinful past; we live by faith in the Son of God.
* Paul here is saying, "Keep in step with the Spirit." “To walk in line with or to be in line with."
* We must follow his very gentle guidance in every step of our life. It means to remain in Jesus and his words.
* It means to repent of our sins as we study the word of God. The Holy Spirit is gentle. He does not force us. He gently nudges us to follow the word of God.
* To listen to him and follow him, we have to hold God’s word in our hearts and be sensitive to his guidance.

3-7, How should we live in a Christian community? (26)

***Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.***

* Finally, a child of God is walking in the Spirit - then Satan tempts them to be conceited about it.
* Soon, they are sure they are right and everyone else is wrong. It often happens gradually, so Paul warns, "do not become conceited."
* Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other. We cannot listen to the Holy Spirit if we become conceited.
* We cannot hear him when we become busy with provoking and envying each other. Our fellowship has members with diverse backgrounds, race, and culture.
* We have large gaps in our ages and stages in our careers. We have children in different age groups. In this situation, how can we create a spiritual environment in which the Holy Spirit can work among us?
* We cannot if we spend our time and energy provoking and envying each other or if we become conceited!
* We can have harmony if each and every one of us follows the Spirit by repenting of our sins based on God’s word and praying for one another.

**Conclusion**

We often think that our problems and difficulties are all outside of ourselves. We think that we would be fine if everyone just treated us right and if circumstances just got better. But the true problems are in us, and need to be dealt with by the Spirit of God. Augustine used to often pray, "Lord, deliver me from that evil man, myself." With that kind of reality check, we can see a new world, and new life instead of trying to change the other person or the circumstance. All of us must yield to the Spirit of God, and begin to truly walk in the Spirit. There is always a conflict in our hearts—our inclination to follow the sinful nature and the desire to follow the Holy Spirit. Paul says that we will not inherit the kingdom of God if we deliberately choose to indulge the sinful nature. He urges us to live by the Spirit. When we do so through the word of God and prayer, God produces in us the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Let us humbly and sincerely make a decision to follow the Holy Spirit!

**One word: Live by the Spirit!**