

# The Epistle to the Galatians<sup>1</sup>

## Walk By the Spirit Not By the Flesh (Gal.5:16-23)

### I Walking By the Spirit

- A. After alerting the Galatians about the leaven of the Judaizers' teaching and warning them not to use their freedom in Christ for an opportunity for the flesh, Paul tells the Galatians that they should walk by the Spirit. **(Gal.5:16a)**
- B. To walk by the Spirit is to move, act and have our being in the Spirit, in everything we do and say. Paul actually says, "walk by Spirit," not by the Holy Spirit nor by the Spirit-just simply by Spirit. This Spirit is the one, mingled spirit. His Spirit and our spirit are blended as one. **(1Cor.6:17)** All saved people have received, have begun and are supplied with this Spirit. **(Gal.3:2-3, 5)**. Sadly, these same saved ones can be distracted from that mingled Spirit, i.e., they can be tempted to go back to the principle of being perfected by their own flesh.

### II The War Between the Flesh and the Spirit

- A. The flesh wages war with the Spirit and the Spirit with the flesh. There is no in-between-there is no neutrality. **(Gal.5:17)** The choice is clear-we either walk by the Spirit or walk by the flesh. To walk by the Spirit actually means to walk by the ultimate realization of the processed Triune God, while walking by the flesh is to walk by the uttermost expression of the fallen tripartite man.
- B. We must realize that the flesh is active not only when we do evil, but just as much as when we try to fulfill the law. That religious, law-keeping flesh is also at war with the Spirit. Therefore, we should take care not to go back to the keeping of the law for it is the natural breeding ground for our (good, religious) flesh. We might begin in our good religious flesh, but eventually we will end up in our evil, worldly, rebellious, unrighteous and unholy flesh. **(Gal.5:19-21)**
- C. So, what should we do? We should watch and pray. Watch, lest we drift away from our spirit, and pray, to get back into the spirit. **(Mtt.26:41)** Paul tells the Colossians to persevere in prayer, watching in it with thanksgiving. **(Col.4:2)**. He tells the Ephesians to pray at every time in spirit. **(Eph.6:18)**
- D. Paul is confident that if we do this simple thing, we will not fulfill the lust of the flesh. **(Gal.5:16b)** The way to be holy, to overcome sin, to be spiritual and to have a life of prayer is simply to walk by the Spirit. Our only sure and safe alternative is to walk by Spirit, not by the Law. We also don't walk by doctrines or methods-the only truth we care for is Christ and the only method we have is "to be in our mingled spirit." Learn to live here. Practice to have your

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<sup>1</sup> Outline and materials based on the *Life-Study of Galatians* by Witness Lee, *Living Stream Ministry, Anaheim, California, May, 1984*. Any inaccuracies or errors, in the outline above, are the sole responsibility of the adopter of these materials. - D.M.

daily walk here. Also, we should not do the opposite, i.e., we should not live in “lawless freedom.”

### III Led by the Spirit. (Gal.5:18)

When we walk by the Spirit, we will be led by the Spirit. **(Gal.5:18)**. Whenever we walk by the Spirit, we have the Lord’s leading, even in such ordinary matters as the way we converse with others. When we walk by the Spirit, we won’t fulfill the lusts of the flesh and when we are led by the Spirit, we are not under the Law. There is no need to walk by the Law, because we have the Spirit.

### IV The Works of the Flesh (Gal.5:19-21)

- A. Paul speaks of the “works” of the flesh that disqualify us from the inheritance of the kingdom of God, i.e., from the enjoyment of the coming kingdom **(Gal.5:21)**. These works are related to the fallen tripartite man, i.e., to the lust of the corrupted body (fornication, uncleanness, sensuality, drunkenness, carousings); to the fallen soul (enmities, strife, jealousy, angers, factions, divisions, parties and envyings); and to the deadened spirit (idolatry and sorcery)
- B. These works are arranged in different groups, according to evil passions, demonic worship, evil moods, sectarianism and dissipation (indulgence, debauchery)

### V The Fruit of the Spirit (Gal.5:22-23)

- A. Unlike flesh that involves work and effort, the Spirit is full of life and brings forth fruit that flows out, just as grapes from a vine. **(Gal.5:22)**
  - 1. The word “fruit” is singular, but this list in **vv.22-23**, has nine example of this fruit-it is one fruit, but it meets so many different needs: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and self-control.
  - 2. Paul speaks about “such things” which means there are many more aspects than these nine. This is a short list. Many other places in the N.T. list the fruit of the Spirit, such as lowliness **(Eph.4:2)**, Compassion **(Phil.2:1)**, godliness **(2Pet.1:6)**, righteousness **(Rom.14:17)**, holiness **(Eph.4:24)**, and purity **(Mtt.5:8)**.
- B. What is this fruit? This is the realization of all that Christ can be in us.
  - 1. While it is true that we all have some of these virtues in our own human make-up, in God’s eyes they are “Christ-less” virtues; they do not contain the divine attributes of God’s life and nature. To have virtues infused and saturated with the Spirit, we must be in our mingled spirit. We must not settle for less than the virtues of Christ lived out by Christ through us.
  - 2. This also implies that this is not a list of items that we should aspire to develop in ourselves with our self-effort. That would be “law-keeping.” We should not depend on the virtues that we already have nor on those that we might cultivate through human effort.