

Galatians ch 5 vs 16

Paul has been (through the letter to the Galatians) calling those believers in Galatia and in essence though he couldn't have known it at the time, but in reality all the believers from this period in which he wrote this epistle clear up until the present day and so long as the Lord may tarry to repentance. As they had fallen (and we can so easily) fall out of a love relationship with our Lord into a legal relationship with Him.

So far, (among many other things) but as it relates to our most recent studies he's been showing the balance between love, and legalism, liberty and license (and we'll develop that particular aspect a little more as the text unfolds next week) seeing that liberty does not mean license. But Paul has sought to show us how we can start off so right on and then through some certain chain of events we are subjected to some outside influence to which we submit ourselves and through that influence we begin to become estranged from Christ, trusting now in our efforts and our own performance before God to gain us acceptance and righteousness in His sight rather than simply trusting in and abiding in the sufficiency of Christ.

It doesn't have to be some heinously offensive act or some radically mind altering type of influence that we succumb to, but rather it can be just some minor seemingly (for the most part) insignificant idea or concept that we allow to overcome us and before we know it we're enslaved. We've been subjected to legal bondage, and it all happens under the guise of "spiritual maturity", instead of just reading our bibles and doing what it says, we listen to some other mans ideas or read someone else's books and through that we can so easily find ourselves entangled again with a yoke of bondage. The apostle Peter would say, "*For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage.*" 2 Peter 2:18-19

When you subject yourself to the word and influence of man, you become a slave, and it doesn't take much, as Paul would put it, it only takes "*a little leaven to leaven the whole lump.*" But when you subject yourself to the word of God and godly principles you are liberated from bondage and set free by the grace of God.

Now last week we (having run out of time, which I seem to have gotten myself in the habit of doing) just kind of glazed over a couple of vs that I just wanted to touch on slightly before we move on this morning. Because as I said Paul is calling them back to repentance, back to their 1st love relationship w. Jesus Christ Trusting in the sufficiency that He provides and allowing Him to use their lives to stir up good works in their lives that are inspired not by rigid legalism, but rather by the overflow of their love for God and their love for others that God has put in their lives. So that when people see their good works their Father in heaven is glorified rather than their flesh.

Because we don't need any set of rules and regulations if we truly abide in Christ, because God by the power of Holy Spirit has written His law on our hearts, and the whole of the law is summed up and placed with in our hearts in even 1 word, love. Notice, vs 14 of ch 5, (read) if you would love your neighbor as you love yourself that would solve every problem of human relations. and I want you to take note of the fact that he didn't say learn to love yourself 1st and then treat everyone else the same. You don't have to learn to love yourself, that's not the problem; the problem is that we're too self-centered and this vs is seeking to remedy that.

This vs isn't meant to place the focus on you or me, it's meant to take the focus off of us and place it on others. It simply issues the standard by which we're to love others, and what is that standard, just love them like you love yourself and everything will work out just fine. It sometimes kind of humors me to hear people talk about how bad they hate themselves.

Not that I desire to belittle someone's pain, but because no one hates themselves. The bible says, "*No one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it.*" if they did they'd be glad when they got the raw end of the stick. Or when they were 350 pounds over weight and had the worlds worst case of acne and were bald by the age of 14, but no one is too excited when those things transpire in their lives, why because they love themselves. Now they may say "I'm too fat or I'm ugly" and then round it all off with an I hate myself, but the very fact that they are so upset about it only testifies just the opposite of that. Because if someone truly hated themselves they'd be all, I'm stoked that I everything I touch turns to mud because I hate myself.

You remember what it was like in the world and you actually had people you didn't like, (I use the world as an example because I know that we all have the deepest of affections for everyone we know now, right?). But when some misfortune befell them, many times it brought some sort of sick and twisted pleasure to you, when the town bully crashed his bike and ran home crying to mom, a part of you went, yes.

Why, because you hated that guy, but when that same thing happened to you, you weren't quite as excited about it, as a matter of fact you got pretty upset, didn't think that it was fair that everyone else could ramp better than you. Why because you love that guy and wanted the best for him, well that's what's being said here, love others the way you love yourself, do for others what you'd want done for you or what you'd do for yourself and the whole of the law will be satisfied. Why, because you'll be doing the loving thing by people, turn with me to Romans ch 13 vs 8-10.

You see if you love someone (just as a response or out of the overflow of your love for God) and you're doing for them as you'd desire to do for yourself, then you're not going to steal from someone, you're not going to murder anyone, you're not going to lie about them or envy them or seek to in some way hurt them. So in the new covenant that we have through Jesus Christ the entire Law of God has been capsulized and placed in our hearts in even one word, Love, the all giving unconditional love of God. But if you choose not to do that, but rather reject the work of the Holy Spirit in your life, the end result is just the opposite, (vs 15 of ch 5), it's back biting, gossiping, seeking to hurt people, be it verbally or otherwise, living self assertively, consuming one another, and we talked a little bit about that last week.

Love is the highest law, not the love of man, but the love of God, one day a lawyer approached Jesus and he said, "*Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?*" Jesus said to him, "*You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'* On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

Love is the fulfilling of the law, if you don't walk in Love, then you walk in the flesh, if you're not walking in the Spirit, then you're not walking in Love, because the bible says that God is love. and So if you don't know the Lord, you don't know true love, not the type of love that God intended, all you know is a self centered love. So the bible calls us to abide in Christ, to walk in love, to walk in the Spirit, if you're a party to back biting, or speaking ill of other people, then you're not walking in the Spirit, you're in the flesh and in rebellion to the desire of God for your life that's why Paul gives the exhortation in vs 16.

Vs16

Walking in the Spirit of God is an enormously important biblical theme. and Having warned the Galatians of the danger of abusing their liberty and not living in love, now Paul hands them the key concerning how they are to overcome the lusts or the desires of the flesh. What's the secret? Walking in the Spirit, the Spirit of God. The key isn't found in doing your utmost to suppress the flesh in and through your own efforts and will power, but rather the key is found in surrender to the Spirit. You see the legalist will try to deal with the flesh through the flesh, which is kind of a contradiction in terms. But they'll try to suppress the flesh through rituals, penance, pain and things just short of self inflicted torture.

Paul is saying here hey the solution is found not in suppressing the flesh through the flesh, but rather in surrendering to the Spirit. Walking in the Spirit, and the word walk indicating a forward, progressive movement, and when I consider walking I realize that it may not be anything radical or spectacular, but it's certainly effective and it make progress evident. When you stand on one side of this room and walk to the other, it's obvious that you've moved from one place to the other, you're no longer where you once were.

This walk that we have in Christ is to be done in the Spirit, or by the Spirit, in close personal connection with the Holy Spirit, this speaks of an intimacy, because you see how can 2 walk together unless they're close, and heading the same direction, the bible says can 2 walk together lest they be agreed? The question is rhetorical the answer is no, therefore to walk in the Spirit you have to be agreed with or in harmony with the Spirit. In short we need to approach every issue, every circumstance, every care, concern or worry, each and every detail of each and every aspect of our lives, in humble dependence upon the presence and work of the Holy Spirit in and out though our lives.

What's the consequence of that? To the degree that we do these things, and to the extent that we understand this and desire to walk in it, the result is that you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. Why, because it's in the realm of the spirit meet up with God, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, the triune God, 1 God represented in 3 persons, God being represented in a superior trinity, man being represented in an inferior trinity. The superior trinity being Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the inferior trinity being the spirit, soul, and body of man. and It's in the realm of the spirit where man meets God, that's where I get in touch with God, that's where God touches me, in my spirit, in the realm of the spirit.

Paul tells us in Rom 8:16 that *“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.”* Jesus said that God is a Spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and truth. Now, when Adam ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil his spirit died, even as God told him it would, Gen 2:17 *“but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”* I think you guys talked something along these lines Wednesday, and so the moment Adam partook of that fruit death was born in a 2-fold manner. The process of physical death began in him, and his spiritual death was instant. In eating of that fruit he committed spiritual suicide, *“the day you eat of it you shall surely die.”* They saw that the fruit was *good for food*, that it was pleasant to the *eyes*, and that it was desirable to make one wise. They succumbed to all that was in the world, 1 John 2:16 *“For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life”* and they ate.

Now had Adam died physically that moment; I am of the persuasion that he would've entered into eternal separation from God. Why, because there had been no sacrifice given for his sin, because the remission of sin is found in the shedding of blood. Lev 17:11 *“For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.”* You see it's life for life, innocent blood making the covering for the guilty, the just for the unjust,

In Genesis ch 3 you find that the moment they ate of that tree there was a separation that was made between them and God. God cried out Adam where are you? There was a separation, now they had made coverings for themselves out of fig leaves but God never acknowledged that, why, because it's impossible for man to cover his own sin, but out of God's love for man you find there in Genesis ch 3 where God provided a covering for them of animal skins and how does that come? Through the shedding of blood, even way back in the beginning God giving a hint, a foreshadowing of what was to be found in the person of Jesus Christ Because in that day Adam became a carnal man, dominated by his flesh, instead of being dominated by the Spirit, the mind working to fulfill the desires of the spirit and the flesh lying dormant, now his flesh was what dominated, his mind working to fulfill the desires of the flesh and his spirit lied dormant.

But God never intended for man to live that way because the life of the flesh alienates us from God, because God is a spirit. and So God instituted the sacrificial system so that man could maintain some form of relationship with Him, being able to make a temporary covering for their sins through the shedding of the blood of bulls and goats and things of that nature. But the bible tells us that *“it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.”* They only made a temporary covering, reminding the people of their sins and their need for a savior, one who could not make a covering for their sins, but literally remove their sins all together.

So in the fullness of time God out of His love for us sent His own Son, to die for mans sins, Rom 5:6 *“For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.”* Rom 5:8 *“God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”* Why, so that we might be born again of the Spirit, that we might walk in the Spirit, being restored back into a right relationship with God. The flesh no longer dominating while the spirit lies dormant, but now though you were dead in trespasses you’re made alive in Christ, the Spirit now dominating your life, the mind seeking again how to fulfill the desires of the Spirit while the flesh lies dormant, you no longer fulfilling it’s lusts.

You’ve become a Spirit, a Holy Spirit dominated person, you’re once again a spiritual being, not a fleshly being. and When I say fleshly being I’m in reference to this skin and bone per say but rather those sinful desires and appetites that separate us from our God. and So when Nicodemus came to Jesus (and I know I mentioned this to you a few weeks ago) but Jesus confronted Nicodemus immediately with this issue, He said you’ve got to be born again. Nicodemus was like what do you mean, I’m an old man, I can’t crawl back up in my mothers womb and be born again. and Jesus kind of chided Nicodemus a little bit and said are you a teacher of Israel and you don’t know these things, I’m not talking about that, that which is born of the flesh is flesh, but that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Don’t marvel when I say that you have to be born again.

Jesus spoke to Nicodemus there of the spiritual rebirth that takes place when a person receives Christ as their savior and there is a work of the Spirit that takes place with in his heart and he is born again of the Spirit, and now has again a spirit that is alive and conscious of God. and God’s desires for his life, and the desires that are not God’s for his life, which are the lusts of the flesh, and you’re able to discern these things because God has made you alive in Christ Jesus.

Now that you’re spirit is alive you can experience fellowship with God, the joy, the blessing, and the fulfillment of walking with God. Before you’re spirit was alive and you didn’t know Jesus, you were empty, something was missing in your life, you agreed with Mick Jagger, no matter what you did, you just couldn’t get no satisfaction. Everything was a temporary fix to a permanent problem, and the more you stuffed in that void that was with in your heart, the more aimless, and hopeless, and desperate it all seemed because nothing truly satisfied.

But now having been made alive, being as it were resurrected from the dead even yourself, you know true satisfaction and fulfillment, because that void in the heart of man is a God shaped vacuum that only Jesus Christ can fill. and God placed that within the heart of man as sort of a honing device, so that you might seek Him out and when you find Him, the void is filled. That's one indicator that you've met Jesus Christ you're no longer searching, you've found what you're looking for, your heart is no longer empty but now it overflows with torrents of living water. Meeting Jesus Christ is like a cold drink of water to your dry and dusty heart.

Now when we backslide we can often sense a separation taking place, that's an indicator that you're not walking in the spirit, but rather somewhere along the line you began to entertain the lusts of the flesh. and You need to repent, you need to confess your sin to God from a truly repentant heart that desires to be right with Him and He is faithful and just to forgive you your sin and to cleanse you of all unrighteousness. But the remedy, the key concerning how to avoid that predicament is to walk in the Spirit, that is, walk in fellowship with God, walk on the spiritual side of your nature. and If you do that you will not be fulfilling the lusts of the flesh, the fleshly desires will not be dominating your life, the appetites of the flesh will not rule over you, but rather your life will be dominated by the Spirit, therefore it will be dominated by God.

Now I want to take just a minute to speak about the lusts of the flesh because when we hear that word "lust" in our culture, it almost automatically makes us think of lust in the physical sense of the word of one person lusting carnally after another. and No doubt this covers that aspect but isn't limited to that in and of itself. Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, says that this "refers to those evil desires which are ready to express themselves in bodily activity." It's "a phrase which describes the emotions of the soul, the natural tendency towards things evil. Such "lusts" are not necessarily base and immoral, they may be refined in character, but are evil if inconsistent with the will of God."

In other words it's the ungodly or the uncontrolled cravings of natural humanity. and I make that distinction because not all natural cravings of man are innately evil, for example we all have a desire to eat, (whether you're saved or not) there's nothing evil or sinful about that, but if it's unbridled and out of control, it becomes the lust of the flesh, being dominated by the flesh.

All of mankind has a desire to some greater or lesser degree of intimacy, that's a natural craving in the heart of man, but the flesh has twisted that craving in such a way that the way it desires to fulfill it is too many times unacceptable to God, i.e. sexual intimacy prior to marriage. Or after you are married looking for any real form of intimacy from anyone other than the one whom God has joined you to by flirting around or even total infidelity. You see the desire for intimacy that's unbridled becomes the lust of the flesh. So the lust of the flesh is those ungodly tendencies or even those natural cravings that are out of control and dominated by the flesh.

Again the remedy for the believer as it pertains to not fulfilling the lusts of the flesh is to walk in the Spirit. Abide in Christ, abide in His word, abide in prayer, because you see it's in the realm of the spirit that His Spirit touches my spirit and causes me to become willing to do these things, but the consistent struggle is the weakness of my flesh. and Jesus knows that, that's why he said in Matt 26:41 *"Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."*

So what do we do in regards to the weakness of our flesh, Jesus just told us, watch and pray, pay attention to what's going on around you, the thoughts that you allow yourself to entertain, and make God your stronghold, cry out to Him, pray with out ceasing. Bring every thought (the bible says) into captivity to the obedience of Christ (2nd Cor 10:5) you give that thought that you're entertaining into the captivity of Christ and I guarantee He'll take care of it, the problem comes in when we don't give it to Him. and We meditate on it and the whole time you can sense Him asking for it, but we're all just a minute, just a minute, let me feed on it for just a second longer and then you can have it. We're not to do that; you're to give it over to Him. These are practical ways by which we walk in the Spirit, not fulfilling the lusts of the flesh, the appetites of the flesh. We overcome the flesh, through surrender to the Spirit

We see an illustration of this principal recorded twice for us in the scriptures in the life of Moses. Twice, while in the presence of God on Mt Sinai, we're told that Moses didn't eat or drink anything for 40 days and 40 nights, the "appetites of his flesh" were totally dormant. Why, was he trying to impress God, or suppress his flesh, no, he was just so totally consumed by the presence of God, the Spirit of God, he was so entranced and enthralled, that he didn't even think of or have time for the things of the flesh. Those things were just irrelevant because he was so enraptured (literally) by the presence of God.

So how are we as the children of God to overcome the lust of the flesh, the simplest and most effective way is to walk in the Spirit, spend time with Jesus, become so enraptured, so consumed, so engulfed, with His goodness, His love, His grace and His mercy, spending time in His word, talking to Him like that friend that's closer than a brother, because that's who He is, and you'll find the things of this world losing more and more of their flavor and you won't fulfill the lusts of the flesh. As the old Hymn put it, "Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face, and the things of this world will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace."