



SERIES: GALATIANS

## **GALATIANS 5:16-26**

February 1, 2010

In this section of Galatians, Christians are given great instruction in how to overcome sin. This key passage helps us to understand the deeper reasons why we sin and how to "uproot" that sin and live a life pleasing to God.

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

The term "flesh" here refers not to one's physical body (ie. bones and tissue), but rather to the carnal or sinful nature that exists in every human being. The sin that resides in us all has "desires" that we satisfy through disobeying God. The way to overcome such a life is to "walk by the Spirit".

*17 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.*

Even after one becomes a Christian and the Holy Spirit takes up residence within them, that person's sin nature still exists. Thus, within every believer is an internal struggle between doing good and evil. One significant phrase here is "want to do". This indicates that the *deepest* desire for a Christian is to do good (even though they still have sinful desires). However, we are kept from doing the good that we want to do because we are held back by our sin nature. This will only be fully solved when we are in heaven with Jesus.

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

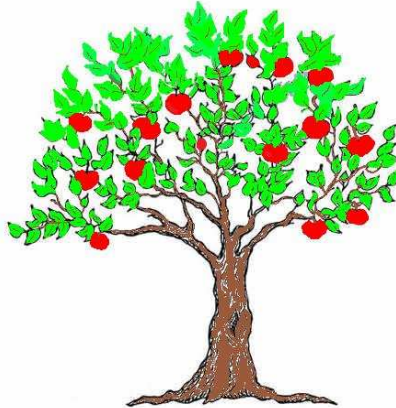
The Old Testament law was a list of rules to be obeyed. Christians have been freed from this—however, they are to be "led by the Spirit" and not submit to their sinful desires. This means that though Christians do not have the law to obey, they will still obey God because they will be following the leading of his Spirit within them.

*19 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, 21 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.*

Paul lists some of the evidences that a person is living out of their flesh and not by the Spirit. The last phrase "those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God" does not mean that if a Christian sins he ceases to be a Christian; rather, it means that people who display a lifestyle of repetitious sin do not belong to Jesus and are not saved.

*22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.*

The Holy Spirit produces good fruit in believers. This metaphor of "fruit" means that Christians should be identifiable by the "fruit" in their life. Just as one can look at apples hanging on a tree and know it is an apple tree, so should others look at the life of a Christian and be able to identify them as followers of Christ.



The "fruit" in a person's life, whether good or bad, reveals to us what kind of "tree" they are. It shows us their identity: Christian or non-Christian.

As a result, Christians should realize that the sin that shows up in their life is something that needs to be dug out by the root. Essentially, this means that sin can only truly be removed through the power of the Spirit and not a person's self-will.

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

To overcome sin, one must BELONG to Jesus. The goal of believers is not only to be like Jesus but to belong to him. Belonging to Jesus means that we are spending time with him and allowing him to change us from the inside out. The Christian who is sinning must not try harder to avoid sin; rather, they should spend time with Christ and as a result will be more like Jesus and thus conquer their sin.

*25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.*

At the moment of salvation, the Holy Spirit enters the believer's life and regenerates their heart so that they may have spiritual life. Since the Holy Spirit is the One who starts us in the right direction, we ought to *continue* to allow him to guide us in the right direction.

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### REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What desires of the flesh do I struggle with in my life?
2. What fruit of the Spirit are absent in my life?
3. In the past, how has spending time with the Lord helped me to overcome sin?
4. What changes should I be making so that I may spend time with God?