

GALATIANS 5:16-25  
CITY LIFE CHURCH

**I. Two Desires**

- A. Desires of flesh and Spirit
- B. Under the Law vs Led (Leadership of) by the Spirit

**II. Two Characters**

- A. Works of the Flesh
- B. Fruit of the Spirit

**III. Two People**

- A. What's Dead: have crucified
- B. What's Alive: living in the Spirit

Good morning church, my name is Austin Davidson and I am the director of worship and liturgy here at City Life. I am so grateful to be preaching and worshipping with you all this morning. Let's pray...

Last week we spent some time looking at our liberation through Christ to serve one another. This morning . Paul is going to show us *how* to do that, how to live a life filled with love, joy, peace, patience...all great things right? The problem is—it's *hard*. There's opposition to living this way. We face competing desires, which produce different outcomes, based on the people we choose to be.

More specifically in this text, I'd like for us to consider Two Desires, Two Characters, and Two People. Let's Dive in...

## TWO DESIRES

Paul begins the section of his letter addressing a massive tension that I know we all feel. The tension between desires of flesh and the desires of the Spirit. Let's look at the text.

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 (Ga 5:16–17).

This past week, I was preparing this sermon, and to be honest this sermon has given me a run for my money. One morning I woke up real early and wen to the office to keep working, then I had a few meetings, and went back to writing. All in all, it was one of those days that you look up and it's 5pm, and you realize you haven't eaten one thing and you haven't taken a break. SO, I was real excited to head home maybe get a workout in, cook, relax whatever before I head to our City Group. I'm walking up the steps and go to open the door- locked.

Side note: I don't have a house key at this moment, my wife usually leaves before me and so I just leave our house unlocked- now everyone can break in.

So I walk up BOOM door is locked. In that moment I could feel irritability begin to tug and pull at my heart. Anger began to boil over: "Shannon KNOWS I don't have a house key, she KNEW that I'd come back, did she even let the dog out?!". I wanted convenience and I wanted it now!

But at the same time, I felt a gentle call- "Walk by my Spirit"- after all this time my sermon was coming back around to hit me in the face. I felt the tension. I HEARD the tension. You know what I'm talking about, that TENSION between what you desire to do and what you actually do, between the flesh and Spirit. BOTH call out to us.

## **CALL ONE: THE SPIRIT**

Paul gives us the first call... “walk by the Spirit”

This is a strong command that Paul is giving us here. “Walk” by the Spirit. What does this mean to walk? Walking is something we *choose* to do. This is an active determination. Paul calls us to actively center our entire lives around God himself. His command speaks of a way of living in which all aspects of life are directed and transformed by the Spirit. He is calling us to *walk by the Spirit*. This desire is for us to “walk” with him.

Consider the word walk. To walk you have to have an active determination. Your body is functioning from its somatic nervous system. You are choosing to take those steps. Similar this is an active determination. This word walk also implies a general conduct of life. So we actively choose to walk in this general conduct of life. Walking with who? The Spirit. A God-centered walking.

The call of the Spirit is to walk with him. The call of the flesh... is opposite.

## **CALL TWO: THE FLESH**

**The second call...the desire of the flesh.**

The desires of the flesh. Paul describes a rival kingdom fighting for our desire. When you get cut off on S. Lamar and every ounce of you is ready to jump out of the car and throw hands with someone. That is the kingdom of the flesh calling for your service.

Paul makes it very clear these are against one another, fighting for you. But what they want from you and how they call is where a large difference lies...

## **HOW ARE THEY DIFFERENT**

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. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law (Ga 5:17–18).

Okay these two are against each other. Got it. Clear. Great. But how?

Paul gives us a promise that if we walk by the Spirit. If we orient ourselves under the leadership of the Spirit actively and daily. We will not “gratify” the desires of the flesh.

This statement gives a strong insight to how these two desires are different. This “gratify” language is carry out a demand of some sort, to accomplish and perform.

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

The language here is even evidence of the difference. “Walk by the Spirit” and the opposite is to “Gratify the desires of the flesh”.

Look back to the moment I realize I was locked out of my house for the next three hours. In that moment the call was for me to “walk” by the Spirit. Not “gratify the desires of the flesh”. In that moment one desire was clawing for me to be my own savior, to be angry that those around me didn’t do as I planned. The other was simply saying “walk by me”. We are not being called by a demanding task master when the Spirit says, “walk with me” like the flesh. Instead we are INVITED to dynamically cheerfully enjoy the Spirit by walking in his ways. In what way though? How does this work? Well..

### **Moving on as Paul says to be LED by the Spirit. Where is the Spirit leading us to?**

This being led is similar ideas here on walking but this gives a more directional meaning. The previous walk by the Spirit means more of a conduct/way of life. This gives more direction- to be guided by. Going back to the dang door being locked. There was an option for me in that moment to choose which desire I would follow the lead, I would answer to so to speak. The Spirit was asking me to follow into peace, thankfulness, while the flesh was calling me to walk into anger. We follow the leading of the Spirit through life. We follow the lead in those moments of tension amidst two desires. What do we get when we are Led by the Spirit?

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

What does this mean here? Not under the law?

Does he mean that we do not follow the law? No, absolutely not.

It means that, we are led...hitched to the pilot, or rather locomotive of the Spirit. As he plows through the massive snow drifts in victory, we have a choice to simply yield to him, as we cruise in the back joyfully obeying his commands. In the tension when the flesh calls and demands for us to bow down to it, we are invited to follow the freeing lead of the Spirit.

We aren't left to traverse the treacherous route alone, we are not oppressed, crushed, and left with the demands of the law hanging over our heads. The flesh clearly demands its leadership over us, clawing back time and time again. Whereas the leadership and life in the Spirit says, I want you to walk by me, to be led by me.

**Both entities (flesh and Spirit) are calling to us. One is demanding to gratify its desires and one is inviting us to be led by Him in, to, and through cheerful obedience.**

**Being led by the Spirit allows us to obey from a place of not trying to prove our worth to Christ, but actually enjoying Christ.**

**When we walk by the flesh we place ourselves and others in a world of performing. That people should carry their house keys and if not they deserve to be left outside. Or people who forget about others deserve to be held in contempt. It's a cycle of performance that claws relentlessly.**

**As we walk in one or the other of these leads, up out of us comes two characters...**

## TWO CHARACTERS

### CHARACTERS OF THE FLESH AND SPIRIT

Paul Continues on...

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. (Ga 5:19–21).

On the other side we have a second list...

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 (Ga 5:22–23)

We can look at these two lists as vices, and virtues. Examining the works of the flesh this list can be broken down into four categories.

- (1) illicit sex- this includes all sorts of immoral sexuality, or perversions of sex.  
Pornography, conceding to lust, affairs,**
- (2) religious heresy,- worshipping other gods, idols, false religions, perversion of scripture**
- (3) social conflict- rage, anger, envy, jealousy, selfishness**
- (4) drunkenness**

On the other hand we have..  
Love, joy, peace, patience...so on.

It's pretty clear here what is going on. As you look at this list of vices, first of... they're vices. Secondly, you can see apparently that this whole list is just full of destruction. Destructive nature emotionally, sexually, relationally, and even physically...

Then we have joy, peace, patience and more flowing from the other list. I think we see which list is better. It's not destructive; it's live giving and sustaining.

But we don't always believe that right?

In the moment when our body is craving to escape the anxieties of life- drunkenness looks MUCH better than faithfulness, or peace. The desires of the flesh DEMANDS we fling ourselves into alcohol, porn, our savings account, pride. In the moments of life where we feel inadequate- lying about tiny things or resorting to jealousy seems much greater than joy and thankfulness.

Historically, some of these destructive items run rampant in my family. I've watched drunkenness, drug usage, and sexual promiscuity cut bonds between fathers and sons. I've watched cousins have to see their fathers arrested and sent to prison.

I've had to sit back and watch younger family members follow the vices of their parents in drunkenness and rage cutting life short for themselves. Paul is showing us that this is not what the Spirit of God wants for us...

The desires of the flesh becomes demands, which ultimate become disappointing lifeless idols of destruction.

Paul gives us the warning. Those who do these things will not inherit the Kingdom of God. Now, does that mean if you've done a thing on this list you're out of the kingdom? No, the word "do" means to practice, to do habitually. But don't let that muffle the warning. This threat is real for each one of us...don't make peace with your flesh; WALK by the Spirit.

Paul is warning us, heed the warning.

But he doesn't just leave us at the warning. The grace of God is too good to do that. He points us to a greater option of the two...

[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. \(Ga 5:22–23\)](#)

This is what is so fascinating and encouraging about this second list. That this isn't a list of works of the flesh, and works of the "better self". It's works of the flesh vs. the fruit of the Spirit.

We are not called to summon up the strength within us to emit this new life. No, this is supernatural stemming from the powerful work of the Holy Spirit. We see this previously in Galatians 3:3-5

[3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? 4 Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? 5 Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith—\(Ga 3:3–5\).](#)

I encourage you to take some time and consider this list. Where do you see; love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control? Be encouraged, that is the Spirit clearly working in your life. Fight to walk by the Spirit more, trust in his leading.

When we are lead by him bear the fruit of the Spirit.

You ever come across a person that just emits so much of these characters? You can almost smell the joy on them.

I think of one of my really great friends and the amount of peace and joy they have. Often times I find us at a restaurant sitting down and I'll offer up a complaint for us to discuss. "This weather is the worst...wow I hate this design" to which they replies. Isn't it such a joy that we get to just be here together hanging out right now? What an awful dinner or even to sit through if we were to just complain, feast on anger, thank God for friends who point us to more hopeful option of bearing the fruit of love, joy, peace, etc.

Paul walks through all of this to come to a final point. That's what it looks like to bear the fruit of the Spirit. To uphold these things amidst fleshly works and desires. To cling to them.

Now...

Paul walks through all of this to come to a final point. There are two people...

## **THE DEAD AND ALIVE**

### *WHAT'S DEAD?*

Paul concludes this section with a statement of life and death.

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. (Ga 5:24–25)

This is a simple yet profound statement- for those of us in Christ- children of God have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

This is pointing back to Galatians 2:20

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Ga 2:20)

When Paul says those belong to Christ have crucified the flesh...it is used to indicate that believers have chose to be aligned with Christ in conversion.

They have renounced the slavery of the flesh, and proclaimed death of the old man. In Christ. That man, that flesh, those desires have no power over us in Christ.

The past event of conversion effects our current and future. How? New life. Past event with present implications.

## WHAT'S ALIVE?

From the death of the old self is the new creation we have in the Spirit!  
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 (Ga 5:24–25).

Conclusively, this is exactly what Paul is getting to in this entire passage. A push for us to walk in the new creation we were called to be. **His command for us to do something, is to do it in someone else power.** Galatians 3:3

Not only are we called to this but this was promise thousands of years before. We see the promise in Ezekiel...

And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup> And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. <sup>28</sup> (Eze 36:26–28).

We are Spirit people! A people who walk by the Spirit's commands, rest within the lead of the Spirit, put to death the flesh and continue on in stride with the commands of the Spirit. This is all in his power.

This what we get in Christ! Christian brothers and sisters. He has given us a new heart, Not because of anything we have done or will do but because he is gracious and kind. He has removed our heart of stone, and planted a new heart in us, namely he has brought us back to life! He has put his Spirit in us, to enable us to walk in his statutes, He has put his Spirit in us so that we can walk in his statutes freely and joyfully.

Paul admonishes us to continue in this reality.

Recently told me a story in which he was down by the river walk in San Antonio. He said a group of guys were down there having a good time, hooping and hollering when one of the guys fell in.

The guy makes a huge splash and begins to flail all over the place, screaming and shouting for help.

A restaurant manager steps out and begins to yell, "HEY! HEY! LOOK AT ME!". After multiple times of trying to get the attention of the young man he eventually looked up and made eye contact. The manager responded. "STAND UP". He stands up and the water is merely knee deep.

This is almost exactly how I picture myself flailing around in life sometimes. As soon as I feel the demanding flesh pull me beneath its waters I begin to pull and grab for comfort in finances, lying, maybe an extra drink maybe an extra look maybe more me time..

We find myself panicking for power in this KNEE DEEP WATER that is powerless to the lead of the Spirit that is calling out to us.

Maybe you flail and begin to lie in order to gain approval from people, maybe you run to indulgence of food, or decide to get drunk to try to keep you afloat. All the while the Spirit is saying, "Stop, look at me, stand up. Rest in my led, I will hold you and keep you perfectly." We see this promise oh John from Jesus.

"These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. 26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. 27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you  
(Jn 14:25–27)

Have you floundered around in sin habitually? I want to invite you to orient your life around The Spirit of God, walk by him.

Maybe you have been under the waters of self-righteous works. I encourage and invite you to come back and rest in the leading of the Spirit.

Finally, Christian brother or sister. If you live by the Spirit, and you are actively choosing to walk by the Spirit. Continue. Don't stop. He who has promised us, is faithful to do these things. Walk in the glorious new creation that the Spirit so gently calling us to.