

“Live By The Spirit” Pt 2

Christian Liberty

Galatians 5:16-26

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Bruce: Good morning, men.

Men: Good morning!

Bruce: Always good to be with you. Let's stand up and go greet somebody you haven't seen in a while. Just give them the right hand of fellowship. *(Music)* Gracious heavenly Father, we come unto this time of thanksgiving. Every day is a day of thanksgiving for Your grace. We thank You that what the Father has ordained the Son has accomplished and the Holy Spirit applies.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: Father, we just pray that You would open our eyes once again, that we might behold You for Jesus' sake. And all the Brave Men said,

Men: Amen.

Bruce: The passage we'll be examining today is found in Galatians chapter five beginning at verse 16 and down through verse 26, to the end of the chapter. Once again I'll be reading from the English Standard Version. Galatians 5:16-26.

“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 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. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

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

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.” This is the word of the Lord.

Men: Thanks be to God.

Bruce: Amen and Amen. This is the primary passage in Scripture dealing with the concept of walking in the Spirit or being led by the Spirit. The general tenor of all of this passage is basically that walking with the Spirit means that you're in touch with, you're controlled by and you're led by the Holy Spirit. It really deals on a practical basis with the practical business of everyday life.

One of the best descriptions of the words *walking by the Spirit* would be the synonym *self lifestyle*, your self life style. This is the lifestyle that I have for myself, and it is common to all believers.

Now the concept of walking by the Spirit, or a lifestyle based upon practical activities of daily life, is a theme that runs all through Scripture. And I'd like to take just a few minutes to give you the concept of this idea of what it means to have the Christian life

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described in the terms of walking—in other words, in the terms of walking by the Spirit, being led by the Spirit in the everyday practicalities of life. Just let me quickly give you a big overview of this, basically from the Scriptures.

First of all, we would say that we need to have a life of *humility*. One of the practical activities of our daily lives is being humble. Our lifestyle is to be characterized by humility.

I call your attention to Ephesians chapter 4, verses 2 and 3. *“With all humility and gentleness with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”* There’s only one thing that produces unity of the Spirit and that is love. And love is the result of humility.

Humility is basically seeing that which is perfect and realizing that I cannot achieve it. Now that which is perfect is the Person and work of Christ. I view Christ, seeing Him in His sinless perfection and His perfect obedience, and I realize that I cannot achieve that in my own strength. I do not have the resources. I don’t have all the things that I need to do to achieve that. I can’t earn that. I can’t merit that. I can’t achieve it. It’s something I receive when I get credit through justification by faith alone.

But humility is the basis of our loving one another in unity. Unity is the result of love. And love is the consequence of humility. Again, humility is seeing that which is perfect—the Person and work of Christ—and realizing that in my own strength and my own resources I cannot achieve that. That has got to be one of the expressions of our practical daily living. Part of our lifestyle is humility.

Next for your consideration I would offer that *purity* is another expression of our practical lifestyle. We’re exhorted to have a pure lifestyle.

I take you to Romans chapter 13 verse 13. *“Let us walk properly, as in the daytime—not in orgies or drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy.”* You see, one of the characteristics of the Christian life is not only that it’s to be a humble life in practicality. It’s also to be a pure life. We do not set our minds on those things that stimulate us to impurity. And the result of our purity is that we manifest that in daily life. Purity is one of the functions of the daily life characteristics of a true follower of Christ.

So I would offer another one for your consideration: *contentment*. I think that contentment is part of our daily living. It’s part of our daily activity and our practical life experience. It is freedom from dependency on other people or things.

I would take you to 1 Timothy chapter 6, verses 6-8. *“But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.”*

Now men, here is the definition of contentment—food and clothing. What about all the other stuff that we have that we think is going to make us content? *(Laughter)* What are those things? If food and clothing are the things that bring contentment, which define contentment, what about a car? What about a home? What about a marriage? What about a relationship? What are those things?

Participant: Gifts.

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Bruce: They're gifts! Do you realize that? Everything that we have apart from our food and our clothing is a gift! And we need to be responsible for how we treat those gifts. We need to be thankful.

You see, we take advantage of the benefits that we have in life. We think that we need this or we need that. We have to have this job or that job to be content. But the Scripture is saying that *“godliness with contentment is great gain.”* And contentment is just food and clothing. Everything else is a gift. That's why we have a practical expression of being thankful persons in our life in Christ. Yes, Don?

Don: Bruce, last week you were saying that when you wanted to be a father like your dad was,--

Bruce: Yes.

Don: That it was an idol in your life.

Bruce: Correct.

Don: Where do you draw the line between wanting something which is legitimate, like being a father, and having it cross over into idolatry? I guess that's different for every person.

Bruce: I think that it really is. I can't give a black and white answer for all that. But let me give it a try, Don. That's a good question.

My definition of *idolatry* is trusting someone or something to give what only God can give you. Now contentment is only something God can give. What makes something an idol is when I focus on that and I saturate my mind with this particular thing or this particular person and begin to think that that is going to be the person or the thing that's going to give me the contentment that only God can give. That's when it becomes an idol. You cross over when you begin to feed your mind that way. And you begin to trust something or someone to give you contentment or to give only what God can give you.

How about our marriages? How often have we saddled our wives into failure because we expect them to bring all the joy to us? We make an idol out of the relationship with our wives. It's a wonderful thing to be married, no question about that. But it can become an idol. When I'm trusting her to give me the things that only God can give me, I've made her an idol. And I can make a relationship an idol, just as I did with my father.

So I think, Don, that the real issue is when you feed your mind to the point of beginning to trust this thing or person to give you what only God can give you. That's when it becomes an idol. And you begin to worship that. Yes, Ted?

Ted: I'm just thinking freedom from dependency on others. But I depend on the body of Christ.

Bruce: Well we're going to come to that in a moment.

Ted: To me there's a subtle difference there. But that's—

Ted: Here again, the definition of contentment is freedom from trusting others and trusting other things. Other people will give us things that we need in Christ. But what I'm saying, Ted, is that when you go beyond that you begin to make it an idol. It's very easy to start with wanting contentment, and then you make it an idol. It's when you take contentment and make it an idol that we run into danger. Certainly we do trust the body

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of Christ, but that’s a different thing. We’ll get to that in a moment. That’s also one of our expressions.

One of the evidences of our true saving faith is *a life of faith*. We are not to evaluate things based on what we see, but from a heavenly perspective. That’s a life of faith, seeing things from a heavenly perspective.

How about 2 Corinthians 5:7? *“For we walk by faith, not by sight.”* That’s a daily expression of our activity in Christ. We do not walk by sight; we walk by faith. And I see God’s hand behind those issues.

Look at Hebrews chapter 1 verse 1. Do you really have faith when there’s no evidence? What about those times when there’s no reason to believe; at least you don’t see any evidence? Do you still have faith? Somebody read Hebrews chapter 1 verse 1.

Participant: *“In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways. But in these present days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things and through Whom He made the universe.”*

Participant: Do you mean 11:1?

Bruce: 11:1. That was a good intro there, Sig. *(Laughter)*

Sig: *“Now faith is being sure of things hoped for and certain of things not seen.”*

Bruce: There you go. That’s it—11:1. How is your faith when you don’t see any evidence?

Participant: Hope.

Bruce: That’s the highest level. That’s when you have hope. So one of the practical expressions of our daily Christian life is going to be a life of faith. We see beyond those things we cannot see and still believe because we know that God has ordained these things in our lives. The Father has ordained it, the Son has accomplished it and the Holy Spirit applies it. We believe that, even though there is no evidence. That’s the highest level of faith. That’s one of the practical expressions of our Christian life.

How about *good works* giving evidence of our saving faith? Colossians 1:10: *“so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.”* So as to walk in a manner worthy of Him. That’s part of our practical daily experience. Walking is a lifestyle.

How about Ephesians 2:10. *“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”* Again, walking in them means a lifestyle. You and I have a lifestyle of good works. It’s one of the evidences of our true saving faith. We do good works.

Sometimes you may not understand what a good work is until it’s over. You may not know it’s a good work until it’s over. Remember, *“we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared beforehand.”*

Sometimes you might say, “Oh, that was one of those good works,” because who is the only person who could have done that good work at that particular time in the history of the world?

Participant: Jesus.

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Bruce: You. He prepared it for you. You may be the only person who could have done that. You might then say, “Oh, that was one of those good works that the Lord prepared for me.” You may not know or see it in advance.

That’s what walking in the Spirit means. You’re trusting the Holy spirit. You’re being guided by the Spirit. And you do a good work and you might say, “Oh! That was one of those, because I’m the only one who was on the spot at that moment and could have done that.” That’s something that God has prepared beforehand. That’s part of the practical experience of our Christian faith. We live a life of good works, walking in a manner worthy of the Lord and walking in good works—evidence of our true saving faith and regeneration.

How about another practical expression of our daily Christian faith? It would be the word *transformation*. We are not to love like those in the world do. We do not love like the world does. Our transformation should be different.

Everybody says, “Let’s just have love, peace and charity.” Yes we need to love. But our love should be different from the world’s love.

Ephesians 4:17: “*Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do,*”—referencing the nonbelievers—“*in the futility of their minds.*” You see, our love should be a Christ-centered love. It’s a Christ-centered walk. It’s a sacrificial love. So yes, we do love. But our love should not be like the world’s love. Our love is different because we’ve had a transformation, and we have a Christ-centered love as opposed to a love that is “*in the futility of their own minds.*”

That leads us to the next expression I would suggest for our consideration. It would be the word *love*. We’re to express the kind of love that sacrifices itself for the sake of others. Our love is different because we express the love that sacrifices ourselves for the sake of other people, the body of Christ specifically.

Ephesians 5:2: “*And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, a fragrant offering and a sacrifice to God.*”

Notice this. “*And walk in love.*” We are not to love like the world does. But we are to love as Christ loved us. How do you know how Christ loved us? You have to go back to the cross.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: And friends, you know, if you have a tough time loving somebody—I’ve got to be careful what I say here!—*(laughter)*—you don’t need to go to counseling. You may need to go to counseling. But you don’t need to answer that question. Just go to the cross.

Participant: Amen.

Bruce: Go to the cross. And realize just how much God has loved me, because that’s the way I am to love. Our love is not like the world’s love. It’s a love that is based upon sacrifice and the well-being of other people, and the model is Christ Himself. Go to the cross and see how much God has loved us. Yes, Matt?

Matt: Bruce, I’ve had people say to me, “I love you, Matt, but.” And then they walk away. *(Laughter)* But if we do love, we’re going to walk through that together, right?

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Bruce: And you won't have the word *but*. Or if you do, ... “If you, I will. I love you, but.” That's the way the world loves. That's not the way that we love, because Christ is our model. Go to the cross, men. Just go to the cross and see how much God loves you.

Matt: It's easy to love each other when everything's good. (*Unclear*)

Bruce: We still love because we're sacrificing for the benefit of somebody else. We're sacrificing ourselves for the benefit of somebody else.

Participant: And that's how the world will know that we're Christians.

Bruce: Exactly. John 13:34-35.

Participant: Yeah.

Bruce: “A new commandment I give you.” If you love one another as Christ has loved you, then the whole world will know that you're a follower of Christ. That's our mark. Our mark is love. But it's not love as the world loves. It's a love that sets ourselves aside for the benefit of other people.

How about *light*? It's another expression of our daily activity as believers. We see God at work in and through the circumstances of life.

Ephesians 5:8: “*For at one time you were darkness. But now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.*” In other words, have the daily practical activities of your life, your lifestyle, be not in darkness but in light. Light is purity. Light is holiness. Light is vision. It helps us understand that we're not floundering around. We know what the direction of our life is because we're walking in light. We've been set free from the darkness of this world. And so part of the practical experience of our daily life is walking in light.

How about *wisdom*? There is another expression of our practical life experience. We are to apply what we have learned. That's why I always ask you the question. What are you going to do about what you've just learned?

There are two kinds of education in the history of the world. There's the Greek system, and then there's the Middle Eastern Hebrew system.

The Greek system is this. Wisdom is the accumulation of knowledge. The more you accumulate, the wiser you are.

The Biblical version is that wisdom is the application of knowledge. It's not so much what you know. It's how much you show. One of the characteristics of the practical daily expression of walking in Christ by the Holy spirit is going to be walking in wisdom. We apply what we learn. And therefore we become wise.

How about Ephesians chapter 5, verses 15 and 16? “*Walk carefully, then, how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.*”

Now notice. There's a description. There are many ways that the Scripture divides a true believer from a false believer. Saved versus unsaved, regenerated versus unregenerate. One of the other ways is wise versus unwise.

You see, we are to walk with wisdom because we're applying the biblical knowledge that the Holy Spirit gives us. One of the differences between the description of a wise person and an unwise person is that they don't know how to manage their time. We exercise the use of our time management because we understand this. The days are evil.

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And therefore we don't waste our time. And one of the descriptions of a true believer is that he knows how to be a good time manager. He manages his time well, because we understand that the days are evil. That's what it means to have a daily walk with Christ. Wisdom; we apply what we've learned because the days are evil. We walk in wisdom.

And lastly I would suggest *truth*. If we don't practice the principle, we don't receive the promise—truth.

Look at 3 John verses 3 and 4. *“For I rejoiced greatly when the brothers came and testified to the truth, as indeed you are walking in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.”*

Now one of the greatest joys any preacher or teacher has is to see that the persons to whom they are speaking or teaching are walking in truth. The truth sets us free. Christ sets us free. One of the characteristics and practical activities of our daily time management is that we're walking in truth. We've been set free. We have to know the truth, and the truth is found in the Person and work of Christ.

So I would just suggest that one of the pictures that you can derive from the Christian life and the walk described, using the word *walk*, would be a life of humility, a life of purity, a life of contentment, a life of faith, a life of good works, a life of transformation, a life of love, a life of light, a life of wisdom, and a life of truth. Those are all helping us understand the concept of what it means to have the practical daily experiences of a lifestyle. Those descriptions describe our lifestyle as followers of Christ.

And that's what Paul is really emphasizing here with the Galatian believers, because the command, as you see in verse sixteen, is to walk in the Spirit.

Now the Galatians were ceasing to look at the Spirit. And they were beginning to look at the threats of the law and to use their own strength and their own resources to achieve the fulfillment of the law. They began to quit looking at the Spirit because of the influence of the Judaizers. And they began to look at themselves for the resources to maintain God's law.

And so to Paul's message of Christian liberty, they would begin to say, “With all the liberty that Paul is talking about, what is the restraint going to be?” There's no restraint. If you're that free in Christ, there's going to be no restraint.

But Paul reminds them and he reminds us that the restraint is now internal. It now has become internal. The Holy Spirit has now become our conscience and gives us the will to be willing. He becomes our restraint.

The meaning of walking in the Spirit, then, is to walk in connection with the Holy Spirit, to live a life directed and energized by the Holy Spirit, to be connected with the Spirit, to be directed by the Spirit and also energized by the Spirit. I use the word *energized* because He gives us the will to be willing. Sometimes in my own humanness I just don't have the will to want to do that. The Holy Spirit is the restraining element who combats the flesh of our fallen human nature and gives us the will to be willing to do something as part of our restraint.

It implies daily progress. Walking in the Spirit, men, implies daily progress. It also implies effort on our part, as well as power and direction on God's part. Effort on our part; power and direction on God's part.

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It's a progressive activity. It's not something that happens once and for all. It's a daily activity. It's part of our practical living.

How about Ephesians 5:18? *“Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery. But be filled with the Spirit.”*

Now the Greek text of those words *“be filled with the Spirit”* really implies continual exercise. You're continually exercising being filled with the Spirit. Literally we could translate that *“be being kept filled.”* In other words, being filled with the Spirit is a continual daily practical activity of our lifestyle. It's not a one-time event. We're always in the activity of being filled all the time. Be being kept filled. The filling of the Spirit is the same as walking by the Spirit.

Now the command that Paul gives us in Galatians five is to be filled. That conveys the idea of the wind filling a sail and moving a ship along its course. You can erect your sail and the wind comes along and takes it on course.

And Paul could have said something like this, using that imagery. He could have said, *“Erect the sail of your submission and yielding, and let the Holy Spirit fill you and move you in the direction that God wants you to go. Erect that sail and let the Holy Spirit come along and fill it, and move you in the direction of due course.”* That's the idea of *“be being kept filled.”*

It is the Spirit's ministry to bring the sinner to Christ and to make the sinner look like Christ. That's the Spirit's ministry—to bring the sinner to Christ and to make the sinner like Christ. Yes, Don?

Don: Okay. In verse 18 we're told to be filled with the Spirit. And then there seems to be, in my opinion anyway, a connection with verse 19. How do we do that, or what is the result of being filled with the Spirit? We're speaking to one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Is that a legitimate—

Bruce: Absolutely. That's my next point. Go to Ephesians 5:18 and then go to Colossians 3:16.

Let's go to Ephesians 5:18. And open your Bibles to Colossians chapter 3 verse 16 to 4:1. The passage that we want to examine is Ephesians 5:18-6:9. And compare that with Colossians chapter 3 verse 16-4:1. Let's go to Ephesians 5:18.

“Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery. But be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

Now look at the consequences of being kept filled. Now go to Colossians chapter 3 verse 16.

“Let the word of God dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with all thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”

Now men, when you compare those two passages, as Don suggested, the consequences of being kept filled by the Spirit in Ephesians 5 and letting the word of God

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dwell in you richly in Colossians 3 are the same thing. That means that whatever the definition you have of walking in the Spirit, it means that it is impacted by having the word of God dwell in you richly. How is it that you and I are being led by the Spirit? What do we do to erect the sail that the Holy Spirit will come and take us on the course and the direction that He wants us to go? It's by letting the word of God dwell in us richly. Those two consequences are the same. And read those two chapters because you get into dealing with husbands and wives, employment and leadership. They are all the same consequences. The same results are said to be the product of letting the word of God dwell in you richly. So whatever definition we use, We have to say this: that being filled with the Spirit is related to letting the word of God dwell in you richly. Yes, please?

Participant: Earlier, when you were going through the walk, you mentioned the light, and you said it was a daily activity in and through the circumstances of life. So you talked about that, seeing the Holy Spirit move. That's always the question. There are times when it's obvious and evident to me that that was the Lord moving. You know, it is subjective right now.

Bruce: It is. The more you and I are in the Scripture, the more we're going to see God involved in all the activities of our lives. And so when you and I let the word of God dwell in us richly, we're going to have a clear understanding because of wisdom. We're going to see things more clearly. We're going to see things from a heavenly perspective.

A classic example? According to Romans 13 I cannot be fired. I can be rescued, but I can't be fired. All authority comes from God. That means that person who is the authority in my life has a divine appointment over my life. I know that because the Scripture has told me that. He or she may not know that. But that's irrelevant. My response is to apply that truth in my life and act in a wise way, operating in life because I see behind what's going on in this situation with my boss. I see God's sovereign hand in that because all authority is given by God and that person has a divine appointment in my life. That determines how I respond to him or her—radically different than the world does. That's seeing things from a heavenly perspective. You see God behind the circumstances.

Now I told you about the situation that I had at PNC with a couple of different bosses. You see, there's some great freedom in understanding that. There's great freedom in walking in light. There's great freedom in applying the truth of the Scriptures because you begin to see God behind the circumstances. And that's what it means to be walking in the Spirit, because you just erect the sail of your submission, saturate yourself with the Scriptures and let the word of God dwell in you richly. And you're going to begin to see things radically differently than you did before because you're not looking at things from a human perspective, but you're seeing things from a heavenly perspective. That's what letting the word of God dwell in you richly does.

Participant: Isn't that also part of Romans eight?

Bruce: Oh, absolutely.

Participant: In the area of our sin, our failure, if we're loving God and trying to please Him, even in our messing up, in our weakness in our attempt to try to serve Him, we still fail.

Bruce: Yes.

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Participant: We can rest assured that God will work it together.

Bruce: Absolutely. In all things God works. You see, that’s freedom, men. Do you understand the freedom that is? You go to work and you have a boss that’s a jerk. That’s not the issue. You’re free to have a different response! You can be salt and light. You can walk in light. You can walk in truth. You have contentment because you don’t get contentment from your boss, because you see things from a heavenly perspective. Yes?

Participant: You talk about freedom. And I think one of the greatest things about this is something that you taught us for years and years—being beers, not doers. So if we are being kept filled, we in Christ and Christ in us, then it’s not a list of dos and don’ts and rules. It’s being Christlike, being sanctified, being filled with the Holy Spirit. So we can absolutely be beings. In and through that sometimes we have to act intentionally. But it’s because of who we are, being Christlike. There is so much freedom, and that yoke is light.

Bruce: We need to spend as much time talking about being in Christ as we talk about doing things for Christ. Having your mind saturated with the things of Christ will allow your life to be borne along by the Holy Spirit. Saturate your life with the things of Christ and the Holy Spirit will just erect your sail of submission, and He will blow us in the course that He wants us to go.

The Scottish preacher Alexander McLaren said this. “He who has the Spirit in his heart and the Scripture in his hand has all he needs.”

Men: Amen.

Bruce: When you have the Holy Spirit in your heart and the Scripture in your hand, you have all that you will ever need. That’s what it means to walk by the Spirit. Let the word of God dwell in you richly. That’s His command. The command is to walk in the Spirit. This is not a suggestion. This is not a request. It’s not a preference. It’s a command. It says that you are to do this. So you do this by being in Christ, in union with Christ. Yes, sir?

Participant: I think I’d like to look at this as the Spirit in his heart and the word in his head. I think in terms of people like Don Maurer. He’s got it in his head. He works with it because he’s got the Spirit in his heart. He doesn’t always have the Word in his hand. When he brings his Testaments here in Braille, they are very huge books. But his head has lots of it, all right there.

Bruce: That’s because the Holy Spirit gives him the will to be willing to study. “Let the word of God dwell in you richly.” Don’s a good example of that.

But Paul also reminds us of this. Not only is there a command, but there’s a conflict that we have to be aware of. We have to know our enemy. The command is to walk in the Spirit. The difficulty is found in verses 17 and 18. He contrasts the different results of living by the Spirit with living by the flesh. The works of the flesh are found in verses 19-21, and the result of walking by the Spirit is found in verses 22-23. We need to understand that contrast.

Now we’re not able in ourselves, but able only by the Holy Spirit to control the flesh and to live a life that is pleasing to God. We cannot do that in our own strength. There is a constant warfare in the Christian life between the flesh and the Spirit because they often

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desire different things. But the desires of the Spirit are much stronger than the desires of the flesh in the Christian life.

When you and I are subjected to the Spirit and submit to the Spirit, we're not doing the things that we would normally want to do in our human nature. We're not willing to fulfill the desires of the flesh.

Let me give you an illustration. Go to Mark chapter seven. Look at verses 20-23.

Mark 7:20-23. *“And He said, ‘What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murders, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.’”*

Now let me ask you a question. Who is to blame, you or your environment?

Participant: Me.

Bruce: You see, the psychologists and sociologists and the educated erudite people of our universities are going to say that it's the result of your environment.

You have two choices. Either man is going to be corrupted by the dirty environment, or the environment is going to be made dirty by the evil man. Those are the two choices. Either a man is going to be corrupted by an evil environment, or the environment is going to be corrupted by a dirty man.

You see, we need to understand this. All that evil comes from within us. We are dirty in ourselves. I understand that having a greater education or technology, better housing, better food, all that stuff, may help us enjoy the benefits of life. But ultimately the environment can't affect man's heart. It cannot affect man's heart. Only Christ can do that.

So whatever the environment, mankind will mess it up, because the flesh will produce the things that will adversely affect our environment. We are the ones who have impacted our environment. We are the ones who have dirtied our environment by the things we do.

Take a look at those things. Go back to Mark seven. Take a look at those things that come from within. Now take a look at each one of those and ask yourself. How do the consequences of those choices affect our environment. You see, it makes our environment totally, absolutely dirty, because we are dirty within ourselves. And the environment is never going to change a man's heart. Only Christ can do that.

Participant: Hey, Bruce.

Bruce: Please.

Participant: That whole thing, you know, it begins obviously out of a heart that flows evil thoughts and all that kind of stuff. But as we dirty our culture, it's a vicious cycle here.

Bruce: Oh, absolutely. As we dirty our culture, our culture does what? It imposes it's dirt upon us. We're essentially getting what we ask for. That's what we're doing. We're getting what we ask for.

Participant: And it brings about even worse.

Bruce: It does. It magnifies it. It works synergistically. When we dirty our environment it comes back to haunt us and it synergistically makes it worse than before.

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But you’ve got to ask yourself the question. Is it my environment or is it me? And we have to come to the conclusion, as Paul teaches, that it’s us.

That’s why he gives us the contrast and the clarity between living by the flesh and living by the Spirit. So take a look at the contrast in verses 19-23.

If we’re led by the Spirit, we are free from the control of the law. We need no law to tell us what to do, because the Holy Spirit will tell us what to do and give us the will to be willing. We don’t need a list of dos and don’ts. And we need no threats of punishment to motivate us to live a holy life. It’s the love of Christ that motivates us to live a holy life. The Holy Spirit tells us what to do and then gives us the power to do it. He gives us the will to be willing.

If the works of the flesh are habitually present in a Christian’s life, then he is walking not in the Spirit, but in the flesh. And if the fruit of the Spirit is habitually present in a believer’s life, then he is walking not in the flesh but in the Spirit.

Now we have a partial list of some of the works of the flesh that I want to go through very quickly, to help us understand the combat. Yes, please?

Participant: Let me just interject, because while we’re still in that thought as far as what comes out of this not only touches us but society. I heard (a pastor) who wrote the book *Family Shepherd* on “Family Life” this spring. He was a former military man and had his uniform on. He was addressing a thousand men. He said that we don’t train to wear the uniform. We train to charge the hill. We don’t just want to clean up and look good.

Bruce: Right.

Participant: It’s not just a mission or a commission. Why do we want to overcome that? We’re not doing this just to change ourselves, but to change society and culture.

Bruce: And we need to walk by the Spirit. That’s our goal, to walk by the Spirit and honor the Lord Jesus Christ. All things we do bring honor and glory to Him. That’s our mission. We are M-8s—mission-minded members of a movement motivated by mercy for ministry in the marketplace. Yes, Don?

Don: And I think it even goes farther than that, because, you know, we can deceive ourselves—

Bruce: Absolutely.

Don: Into thinking, “Well, if I cherish this particular sin or thought, nobody else knows about it. I’m not hurting anybody else.” But that’s not the point. We want to please God. We love Christ.

Bruce: Amen.

Don: And that should motivate us even in our thought life, or our private sins, or whatever, that the world doesn’t know about. That should motivate us. I love Him. And therefore I want to take every thought captive as well, even if the world never knows.

Bruce: Amen. Amen to that. We don’t need threats of punishment to motivate us to do the right thing. It’s the love of Christ that causes us to be motivated to do the right thing. And that’s the Holy Spirit giving us the will to be willing and the power to do that.

Let me just go through this list because we’re going to have a contrast between the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit. And we need to understand both of these so

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that we can understand and analyze ourselves and say, “Am I participating to some degree in this though nobody else knows about it? Do I need to give that up? Do I need to die to that? Is that something that’s going on in my life?” Let me go through these with you very briefly.

He gives four categories of what we would call works of the flesh to contrast the fruit of the Spirit, which we will deal with in a couple of weeks. First of all, the first group is what we would call *the sexual group*. The Scripture says, “*sexual immorality*.” That would be sexual intercourse outside of marriage, or illicit sexual intercourse by a married person—both/and. Sexual immorality.

Next is the word *impurity*. That means all sexual impurities, whatever they may be. Sexual impurities, part of the sins of the flesh.

The third one is *sensuality*. That’s the word *lasciviousness*. It means a shameless lack of sexual restraint. That would include pornography and other things of that nature.

Next is *the religion group* *Idolatry*, trusting someone or something to give you what only God can give, the worship of false idols, the worship of false things—idolatry. You see, that’s part of the flesh.

Next is *sorcery*—all operations of man performed by the power of demons, including drugs. And historically, one of the great facilitators of sorcery worship was drug activity. So what we have in our modern age today in the way of drugs is part of the activity of sorcery. It’s included in that whole definition of what sorcery is. And that is the operation of men performed by the power of demons, of which drugs would be included.

Participant: Bruce?

Bruce: Yes, please?

Participant: There was a news report last night that said that as many people are dying in whatever state from auto accidents because of the growth of the heroin epidemic in our country.

Bruce: Yes. That’s part of this whole thing, and that’s a sin of the flesh. We have to deal with that, men. You can’t just cover it up. There’s a contrast between the fruit of the Spirit and the sins of the flesh.

The third group would be what I would call *the relationship group*. The first group would be the sexual group. Then you would have the religion group. And the third I would call the relationship group. He lists about eight of these.

Enmity. That is hatred and ill will. *Strife*. That is discord caused by ill will by how you think. Hatred is the attitude; strife is the action.

Next is *jealousy*. That is anger produced by wanting what others have. *Fits of anger*, outbursts of vitriolic or hot anger, personal wrath. *Fits of anger*, hot anger. *Rivalries* would be contests, struggles or quarrels, taking sides in anger. Rivalry is taking sides in anger.

Next would be *dissensions*. That’s promotion of open divisions, seditions. *Divisions*—heresies, strange and unorthodox opinions, false doctrine. Divisions are caused by heresies, strange or unorthodox opinions, false doctrine.

And last is *envy*—discontent in seeing others have what we want to have ourselves; discontent in seeing others have what we want. And that leads to murder. When you see

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what somebody else has and you want it, you will do whatever you need to get it, and that can lead to murder. The way to stop murdering is to stop envying.

And lastly, *the social group*. We have the sexual group, the religion group, the relationship group, and now we have the social group.

There are two of those. *Drunkenness*. That would be intoxication. And last would be *orgies*—riotous actions associated with drunkenness.

So men, we as believers may occasionally commit any one of these or all of those. But we do not continually practice them. The word is continually practice. We do not practice those. All persons who practice these things are unsaved people who will not inherit the kingdom of God. The issue here is continually practicing. The word of God bases its evaluation on a person’s character—not on one’s occasional actions but one’s habitual actions. They fully demonstrate the true character of the person.

So men, we have to take a look at these things and say, “Have I dabbled in any of these?” If I have on occasion, I need to get rid of that and ask the Holy Spirit to forgive me for that, trust the Holy Spirit to erect the sail of my life, submit to the Holy Spirit and let Him blow us in that direction. The issue here is that you may commit one of those. But you don’t practice them permanently in continual action. You’re not practicing those things. Yes, Don?

Don: Yes. I was going to bring that up. We can’t have the attitude, “Well, I can do it occasionally, as long as I don’t do it all the time.” I think our attitude should be, “Oh Lord, how could I think that? How could I do that? I love You. I don’t want to offend You. Please forgive me.” And I think we have David as an example. I think we have Peter as an example.

Bruce: Absolutely.

Don: And the comforting words of Paul in Romans seven. So that’s good.

Bruce: The difference is in continually practicing. Look at the seven tests and the seven traits of a true believer in 1 John. If you say you have no sin, there’s no truth in you and you’re a liar.

Men, the reason that I want to go through this list of these seven things is that our freedom does not give us the freedom to participate in these things, or to continue in them when we see them raise their heads. We need to deal with them the moment we see them. If I have that attitude, that’s what it means to “be being kept filled.” This is a continual action on our part, and power and distribution of God’s wealth as part of His resources. We cannot do this ourselves. Walking in the Spirit is to be connected with the Spirit, to be energized by the Spirit, and to be directed by the Spirit of God. And the way we do that, men, is by letting the word of God dwell in us richly. And the more we saturate ourselves with the things of Christ, His Person and His work, the more we will erect the sail of our submission and let the Holy Spirit blow us in the course that God would take us. And may it be so that we will continue to walk in the Spirit and deal with the sins of the flesh, for God’s sake and for His glory.

Let’s pray. Father, You’ve given us much. Help us never to violate our freedom. Our freedom is in Christ. It’s not in this world. And Father, help us to deal with the issues of covering up our own sins because nobody else might see them. Help us to deal with the

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sin of presumption. We presume too much upon Your graced, Your mercy and Your love. Father, deal with us for Christ's sake. And may it be done for His glory. And all the Brave Men said, “Amen!” (*Applause*)