**The Fruit of the Spirit**

Galatians 5:16-21

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**Jeff:** Our gracious God, we give You thanks as we bow before You this morning. We recognize that You are God and there is no other, and we are thankful for that. And we bow the knee to You, knowing that You are our only Sovereign and Lord, and so we submit all things to You—our very lives—today. And Father, as we do that we ask that You would shape our lives so that they might be conformed to Yours and pleasing to You, so that we might be instruments in Your hands and that we might do Your will in the world.

Father, as we come before You we know that You give every good and blessed gift. And we know that in the Savior we have all the spiritual blessings that are in the heavenly places in Christ. And Father, those are not abstract and distant from us, but those are brought to us by virtue of being united to Your Son, our Lord. And yet we also know that You give gifts individually to men, and we praise You for that and ask that You would help us to use those gifts that You’ve given, that we might minister to the world and especially to Your body.

And so, Lord, we think about the church and are thankful for her. We know that this is Your body in the world. And Lord, we are thankful that You’ve carved out a place, a colony, a community of people for Yourself, and that You identify with them to such an extent that on the Damascus road You asked the apostle Paul before his conversion, *“Saul, why do you persecute Me?”* And so, Lord, we praise You that we belong to that body, and that we are yours by virtue of Christ’s work.

And Lord, we also know that we have the weapon of prayer—the beautiful weapon—that we might wield before the evil one, and also that we might lift to Your our praises and thanksgivings. And Lord, we also lift up to you our concerns. We think about Sig this very morning, and ask that Your hand would be upon him, and that You would bless him with successful surgery, that you would be with the doctors as they—

**Don Maurer:** Bruce.

**Jeff:** I thought Sig had to get the surgery.

**Don:** No, Bruce Bickel.

**Jeff:** Oh, Bruce! Lord, we pray for Bruce and ask that You would bless him with that successful surgery. And we pray, Lord, that You would do this for Your glory. Father, we pray and commit all these things to You in Christ’s precious name. Amen.

**Brave Men:** Amen.

**Jeff:** So Sig doesn’t have melanoma; Bruce does.

**Ted Wood:** You might have had a word of knowledge. *(Laughter)*

**Jeff:** I might have. Let’s hope I didn’t. *(Laughter)*

**Ted:** We’re just waiting for Jeff to become a charismatic. *(Laughter)*

**Jeff:** Yeah. And this was the start of it right here, this very moment. *(Laughter)*

**Don:** Oh by the way, Jeff, Bruce gives us a thumbs up and a big hello.

**Jeff:** Okay; tell him I said hi. All right. So today we’re going to continue on with our study. And we’re gonna pick up in Galatians chapter 5, and we’re gonna look at verses 16-21. So why don’t we do that? Don, I see the smile on your face even as you open that fat volume in front of you.

**Don:** Yes, in that inferior translation.

**Jeff:** That inferior translation. Do you want to read?

**Don:** Yes.

**Jeff:** All right. I wonder: Did they take the these and thous out of the Braille? That’s a joke. *(Laughter)*

**Don:** This is the New King James.

**Jeff:** Okay.

**Don:** Chapter 5 beginning at which verse?

**Jeff:** Chapter 5, beginning at verse 16 and reading through 21.

**Don:** Okay. *“I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. And these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.*

*“Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murder, drunkenness, revelries, and the like, of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in times past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”*

**Transcriber’s Note:** NKJV.

**Don:** This is the word of the Lord.

**Brave Men:** Thanks be to God.

***Jeff:*** *Okay. So today I want to think about just a very b*rief outline. I want us to think about just a brief introduction, and then I want to address a few things that I think are really important for us as we think about this whole idea of freedom in Christ and the fruit of the Spirit, and the lusts of the flesh that oftentimes wear us down. I want us to think about the present reality of the believer. What is the present reality?—not what our conceived reality is, not the position we think ourselves in or the position we wish we were in,--but what is the present reality of the believer when it comes to freedom? And then I want us to think about the present help that we have. Those two things are going to occupy most of our time today. And so I want us to think about those, so let’s get started with an introduction.

All right. I’m going to put somebody up on the screen that we all know and love, or maybe who most of us know and love, or maybe who one of two of us know and love: Johnny Cash. And for some reason I thought to myself that I would be able to play the song that I want you to hear this morning. But I don’t have any Internet access.

**Don (*Singing):* I fell into a burnin’ ring of fire!**

J**eff:** No Don, that’ not it. *(Laughter)* But I did put the lyrics up. And so I want you to think about these lyrics. This is the song “I Walk the Line.” I want you to read the lyrics, and I’m going to ask you a few questions. Can everybody see them from back there?

*“I keep a close watch on this heart of mine.*

*I keep my eyes wide open all the time.*

*I keep the ends out for the tie that binds.*

*Because you’re mine, I walk the line.*

*As sure as night is dark and day is light,*

*I keep you on my mind both day and night.*

*And happiness that I’ve known proves that it’s right.*

*Because you’re mine, I walk the line.*

*You’ve got a way to keep me on your side.*

*You give me cause for love that I can’t hide.*

*For you I know I’d even try to turn the tide.*

*Because you’re mine, I walk the line.”*

**Jeff:** When Don goes to prison and sings, *(Laughter),* I mean when Johnny Cash would go to prison and sing, he would ask the prisoners, “What do you want to hear?” And he said that they would always say, “I Walk the Line.”

Now here’s the question I have for you. The question I have for you is: What was that song about? What was keeping Johnny on the line?

**Brave Man:** His wife. It was his wife, wasn’t it?

**Jeff:** It was a woman, right?

**Ted:** June Carter.

**Jeff:** So we’ve got Johnny up here saying that it’s a woman that keeps him walking the line, right? And think about it: You have a bunch of prisoners in prison who love the song “I Walk the Line.” And what’s the point? Not one of them had a good woman to keep them in line. Why is this song such a draw even to persons in prison like that? I’ve got my own thoughts about it, but you talk to me about it for a few minutes. Does this strike you as odd?

**Brave Man:** No; they’re remorseful.

**Jeff:** Remorseful. Okay, what else?

**Ted:** I can remember that in my early courting days that I would do anything for that woman.

**Jeff:** Yeah.

**Ted:** I mean, that desire was there; I was driven by that desire.

**Jeff:** Yeah. You were driven by the desire to do anything for that woman. What else?

**Gary Dunbar:** Wishful thinking.

**Jeff:** Wishful thinking? Why?

**Gary:** Because she was unavailable to him.

**Jeff:** She was unavailable to him. What’s he really singing about?

**Gary:** The prisoners?

**Jeff:** Well, what are the lyrics really longing for?

**Don:** Maybe he wishes that there were no restraints and that he wasn’t tied down.

**Jeff:** Well you know, I sometimes wonder about songs like this. I sometimes wonder if songs about a perfect, ideal love that comes to settle on a woman—or a man, depending on who the singer is,--are really not about a woman or a man, but the ideal that is embodied in the woman or the man. That is, it’s only going to be the love of God that’s going to keep somebody walking the line. And the person that they typically sing about is the perfect, ideal love that would reform our lives, who would change us, who would give us everything that satisfies, right? And it’s typically embodied in another person. And so I have a tendency to think that when these people sing, what they’re really reaching for when they sing about the ideal love that will help them to walk the line is a divine love that they would reject and want if it were in another person. But they would eventually reject that person, right? That’s the sense I get when I hear songs like this.

And yet what we’re going to see today in the Scriptures is not a woman that keeps us walking the line, but we’re going to see something else that God gives to us that enables us to walk the line. That’s what I want you to see today.

But in order to see that we need first of all to see the present reality of the believer. There are three points here. I want you to see verse 17 for a minute, because verse 17 talks to us about the present reality. It says this: *“For the desires of the flesh.”*

**Transcriber’s Note:** ESV.

**Jeff:** Now I want to read you the rest of it. But I want to stop right there for just a couple of minutes, because it’s that statement that locates for us the present reality of the believer.

*“For the desires of the flesh.”* Now the question that I have is: What is the flesh? That word in Greek is *sarx,* and it could be translated as anything from flesh—that is, human flesh; the skin that covers—to something spiritual. And so the question becomes: What is Paul talking about here when he talks about the flesh?

Sometimes it’s translated differently depending on the Bible you have. For instance, the NIV back in 1984 that I used then, when I encountered the word *sarx* it might translate it not as the flesh” but “the sinful nature.” And so what you begin to realize is that most translators think that when you encounter the word *sarx* or “flesh,” it basically has to be a case-by-case basis. But when Paul is dealing with the flesh theologically, he’s using it as a synonym for sin or the sinful nature. And so flesh becomes a synonym for sin.

Now in some ways I think that ought to cause us to pause and ponder, and we’re going to do that. But I want to throw the verse back up on the board for a minute. And I want to put some explanatory parentheses there.

So for the flesh—the human nature debilitated by sin—that is, for the flesh, the sin that we describe as belonging to the flesh, *“for the flesh,”*—the human nature debilitated by sin,--*“sets its desire against the Spirit.”* I see that as not the human spirit, but the Holy Spirit. So it’s the flesh or sin against the Holy Spirit within us. *“And the Spirit against the flesh. For these are in opposition one to another, so that you may not do the things that you please.”*

Now I want you to think about that for just a minute. When you think about flesh in this context, I want you to think of it this way: I want you to think of it as sin, the sinful nature. When you think about the Spirit I want you to think about the Holy Spirit. And these two are at war with one another in our persons.

Now verse 17 is a picture of an internal battle. Take a look at verse 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.”*

So we have what the Westminster Confession calls *“an irreconcilable war”* going on within us. And that war is against the flesh and the Holy Spirit.

Now I think that raises an interesting question. And that interesting question is about the flesh itself, because we are told—or at least it’s communicated to us; it’s not so subtle but it feels subtle;--it feels almost as if we are third parties watching a battle, doesn’t it? It almost feels like the battle is trans-personal. The flesh is just bad; it’s the sinful nature. And this Holy Spirit is warring against the flesh. And we’re kind of standing apart from the battle watching it carry out before us. And that’s the impression that you get when you look at these kinds of texts.

Now I want you to take a look with me at Romans 7, because it gives us this same kind of impression. It gives this impression that what’s going on in front of me is not part of me. Romans chapter 7 verse 17: *“So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.”*

Now having read verse 17, let me start back a little bit and then read, because it’s a very striking thing. *“Did that which is good then bring me to death?”* He’s talking about the law which is holy, righteous and good. Did the law bring me to death, or bring death to me?

And he says: *“By no means! It was sin producing death in me through what is good,”—*that is, the law,--*“ in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure. For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin.*

*“For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want to, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law that it is good.”*

Then verse 17: *“So now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.”* Now think about that. The way he describes the situation seems to be trans-personal. I don’t want to do the very thing that it seems I’m almost being held hostage to. I don’t want to do it. If you would ask me, “Did you want to do that?”, I would say no.

But I did it. And why did I do it? I did it because of the flesh. And he talks as if the flesh was not him.

And so this flesh is warring against the Holy Spirit. I want the Spirit, and I want everything of the Spirit. I want the law of the Spirit, I want the fruit of the Spirit. But the flesh has me held hostage.

And the question that you have to ask yourself is this: Why does Paul do this? Why does Paul talk about this battle as trans-personal like this? You say, if the body is the instrument through which sin exercises its reign, then how can Paul articulate the position of a believer, which is that the reign of sin has been broken? That’s the question, right? That’s what he’s dealing with. So if that’s the situation, how is he going to articulate that in any other way? And he’s going to do it by making sin and the body seem distant from the believer who is under Christ’s dominion.

That’s why he’s doing that. He’s not saying that I’m not responsible because it’s the flesh that has me hostage. No, what he’s trying to help us to understand is that the body is an instrument through which sin in us manifests itself. And yet its power over us—not its presence in us!—its power over us has been removed. And having been removed, we now can offer our bodies—our flesh,--as instruments of righteousness. But because of the presence of sin that’s still in us we may still offer them as instruments of wickedness or sin. And sometimes we do. And when we do, if the Spirit resides in us, we know better.

We shouldn’t have done it. We are repentant; we are sorrowful that we did do it, and we repent of it. Let me just stop and ask you: Does that make sense? Because you need to understand that kind of sort of spiritual geography before we go further. That’s the reality of where we are as believers.

**Ted:** I don’t think our sin and the flesh are the same thing. I think sin is a result that comes out of the flesh.

**Jeff:** So let me probe this out there and see if we can work with that, okay? You prompted me to remember something that I wanted to say.

**Ted:** Yeah.

**Jeff:** So what is sin? Adam sins, but what is the sin that gets passed from Adam to his posterity? For instance, is it the case that they have found the sin gene in us? And if they would just remove the sin gene we’d all be good; we wouldn’t need Christ. Or is it something else? Is it the pronouncement of guilt upon Adam which leads to a progressive pollution in Adam, then manifests itself from generation to generation? Because not only does Adam possess the judgment against him, but so too does his posterity.

Let me give you a for instance, okay; let me try to do that. How long does Adam live after he sins? He still lives quite a long time; almost a thousand years, right? Now what begins to happen? What begins to happen is that Adam doesn’t experience the fullness of the curse. In other words he’s judged now. Sin is imputed to him; the judgment of guilt is imputed to him and all of his posterity, and pollution comes.

But the pollution comes in a slow way; it creeps into the human race. The ages of men go down, right? Now God does shorten the days after the Flood. The point is that what you see is that men begin to die. But then they begin to die earlier, right? And that is evidence of the pollution that creeps into the human race.

And so, for instance, is Adam and his posterity as bad as they could possibly be? Or with each generation does the corruption get worse? For3 instance an individual can be terribly sinful. But over the generations the corruption creeps in and gets worse and worse and worse.

The analogy would be that Adam doesn’t die immediately. But the death age descends ever so slowly.

**Ted: But Adam is dead when he sins against God.**

Jeff: **Yes.**

Ted: **He is dead to God.**

Jeff: **Yes, that’s right.**

Ted: **Outside of God’s mercy he is dead to God.**

Jeff: **Yes.**

**Ted:** He’s dead to God. So the actual and chronological age seems like a long time. But put up against the age of the earth, or the age of creation, it’s like that. I mean, what’s the difference—

**Don Maurer:** I don’t know about that.

**Ted:** The difference between dying at 70 and dying at 970 is as nothing if you were to stand before God.

**Jeff:** You’re getting in the way.

**Ted:** You’re getting in the way; we’re fooling ourselves. Oh, if the Lord would just give me five more years! Well okay; there you go. That’s all.

**Jeff:** So the manifestation of God’s judgment in Adam is immediate, and he’s done. But the manifestation of that in the flesh is a creeping corruption.

**Ted:** I don’t think it could get worse. I don’t think we are more evil. They didn’t grow in evilness.

**Jeff:** They find new ways to sin.

**Ted:** Oh, absolutely.

**Jeff:** It’s like technology, right? So basically with technology all you have to do is think of the ways with which now we can kill the unborn, right? Technology has increased our wickedness in that regard. But that was always there’ our desire to kill was in us from the very beginning with Cain.

**Ted:** And given enough, we’d kill more.

**Jeff:** That’s right. So does that make sense, reading that kind of reality? Why does Paul make this trans-personal kind of argument? It’s because he needs to show that we are under Christ’s dominion even while the presence of sin remains in our lives. And yet we’re not under sin’s dominion anymore. But because of sin’s presence we can still offer our bodies as instruments of righteousness. But we’re never under sin’s dominion. We know better and should have acted better.

Let me give you one more text in Romans chapter 6. In verse 12 he says: *“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.”* Why does he say that? Because you’re no longer under sin’s dominion; you are now under the dominion of Christ. *“Do not then present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness. But present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments of righteousness.”*

Now listen to this. *“For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.”* In other words, Christ came under the law and its curse for you to bring you out from under that curse. Now the law is holy, righteous and good. It’s your friend, it’s your guide. But every once in a while it points out where you’ve failed, doesn’t it? And that’s because the presence of sin remains in you, not because you’re under its dominion.

Let me give you a practical example of this. One time I was counseling a guy who was looking often at pornography. And he would break away from it for three or four days, and then he would go back to it. And finally I said to him, “Why are you going back? Why do you break free from it and then go back to it?”

And this is what he said, and I’ll never forget it. He said, “I feel like I owe it.” In other words, I feel obligated to it.

I said to him, “Stop yourself! Do you hear what you are saying? What you’re saying is that this is my master; I owe this behavior to that. And as soon as you start to think like that, brother, listen to me. You’d better ask yourself a hard question. Is that a slip, or do you really believe that you are under sin’s dominion again? Because if you believe that you are under sin’s dominion, you’re not under Christ’s dominion. And if that was a slip, then you’d better start thinking in a different way, and so acting in a different way.”

**Ted:** Where did he end up?

**Jeff:** In a better spot.

**Ted:** Great! How did he end up responding?

**Jeff:** I think with a lot of accountability and changing his thinking. I think that sometimes that’s really what it takes for a lot of guys; it’s to be surrounded by guys who are—I mean, think about it, right? Think about the narrow path. When you look at *Pilgrim’s Progress* and the valley of the shadow of death, the narrow path has the quagmire on one side and the ditch on the other side. And David fell into the quagmire, remember? And that was Bathsheba. And that is a narrow path.

And how do you keep yourself from falling in one side or the other? You keep yourself from falling in one side or the other when you get a couple of brothers on either side of you who can hold you on the path; that’s it. And there are times when you won’t need that. But there may be times where you need that. You need to be surrounded by guys who will hold you on the path.

And you need to realize that some guys will look at that and say, “I just don’t think I’m saved; I need guys to help me on the straight and narrow.” No, no. It’s not that you’re not saved; it’s that you need help with your sanctification at this point. It’s a little bit bumpy and you need some help. But you’ll get through it because there’s power in the gospel.

And that’s the point of this. The point of saying this is that you are not under sin’s dominion’s you’re under Christ’s dominion. And because you’re under His dominion then God is working in you what is pleasing in His sight. And that is that He’s bringing you into conformity with that law that is holy, righteous and good which is embodied ibn Christ Himself, so you’re looking more like Christ day by day. Okay, is that good? I don’t want to move on if that’s not good. Yes?

**Brave Man:** I was just curious about the conscience. How does that work?

**Jeff:** Yeah. I think the conscience is basically defined as “con”—with—and *Scientia*—knowledge; with knowledge. Then basically what we’re doing is, we’re operating with a certain level of knowledge. What knowledge are we operating with? We’re operating with the knowledge of the Scriptures.

Let me just pause for a minute. What about the person in the Scriptures who ate food sacrificed to idols and thought he had sinned by doing so? Paul said that his conscience was not informed by the Word to give them freedom to eat meat, knowing that idols are nothing. They believed idols were something, and their consciences weren’t informed by Scriptures. Idols are nothing, and so they felt as if they had sinned.

Okay. So conscience is operating with knowledge about certain actions, events, and so on. So how does this work with conscience? When our conscience is informed, that is the law which is holy, righteous and good that informs us that a certain behavior is sinful. And knowing it’s sinful, what happens is that our consciences get inflamed and says, “That’s wrong.”

Take Paul’s example in Romans 7. Paul says, “You know what? I didn’t have a problem with covetousness until the law said, *‘You shall not covet.’* And then sin came alive in me and I died.” And so that’s a case of conscience. Sin coming alive in him was his conscience being informed by the Word, and he died. Does that help?

**Brave Man:** Yes.

**Jeff:** Okay. Anything else? All right. So now secondly, here’s the thing that we need to remember; it kind of falls out of what we just said. The battle is not between equals. The flesh is not equal to the Spirit.

Listen brothers: I want to say this to you with all that is in me. Let’s just put it on the table, okay, because this is important. We talk today as if the struggle with sex in our culture is bigger than gospel grace. We do! We talk about it as if it’s the besetting sin that’s bigger than any grace that can be offered to us in the gospel.

I mean, I had a guy tell me one time that there is no man today who is not living in the chains of pornography. Now I want to tell you something. If you believe that then you have a defeatist view of the gospel, because what you’re saying is that the gospel is not powerful enough to save any man from lust.

And the bottom line is that if that’s the way you think, you need to change your thinking, because it’s not true. That’s a lie from the pit. The devil wants you to believe that. He wants you to believe that you are obligated to any particular sin that you happen to be struggling with. And you’re not obligated to it; it doesn’t have dominion over you. And that’s the point of this. So that’s second.

I want you to remember *Pilgrim’s Progress* again. That was the only *Pilgrim’s Progress* illustration I was going to mention. The first one was free, so I’m not going to charge you for that. *(Laughter)* But this is the one where Christian comes out of the armor. And remember, he comes out of the armor and he forgets his scroll. And his scroll is his assurance, and he sees the lions and he says, “Oh, I can’t do this!” And he turns around and he goes back and looks for his assurance and he grabs the scroll, and then he goes.

But here’s the beautiful thing. It’s not as if Christian goes, “I don’t have my scroll! I’m gonna face the lions!” You know, that sort of thing. He gets to the lions and he’s still afraid.

And the pastor at the Gate Beautiful says to him, “Are you afraid? They’re chained! Just walk on the path; you’ll be okay!”

And the point is that what the porter is saying is that those lions don’t have dominion over you; they’re chained. Christ has dominion over you; stay on the path and you’ll be safe. And that’s the imagery, right? And so there’s a lot there, but that’s the point; the lions are chained. Yes, Don?

**Don:** Yes. And whether you’re talking about sexual sin or whatever, I think that even the church has bought into this idea.

**Jeff:** Oh, sure!

**Don:** Once an alcoholic, always an alcoholic.

**Jeff:** Oh, sure.

**Don:** That kind of mentality.

**Jeff:** Sure, sure. And you can do that with a lot of sins, right?

**Don:** Sure. It’s my German temper, or whatever.

**Jeff:** Yeah, yeah; this is the way I am. I have a bad temper; that’s the way I am, that’s the way I’ll always be. No! You’re lying to yourself, right?

**Don:** Paul says, *“Such were some of you.”*

**Jeff:** Yeah, that’s right. You know, Don is exactly right. I’ll never forget this. I struggled with a temper for a long time. I’ll never, ever forget that I was working at a factory at the time. I was going in for a 4:00-12:00 shift, and I was replacing the fork truck driver at this glass plant. And all I said was, “Hey, how is your day?”

And he unleashed a tirade on me. Now back in those days my natural instinct and response would have been very aggressive in return. I’ll never forget the day that I was entirely calm in the face of that. I felt like the Lord conquered that in me.

And you know, here’s the thing about it, brothers; listen to me. I want you to know something. Oftentimes we feel like we’ve got to do this. And there’s a sense in which yes, you’ve got to do this.

But there have been a number of times; I can think of two in my life where I went to the Lord and I said, “Look. I know I’m supposed to conquer this; I can’t do it. I need You to show up in a big way in my life, and that’s all there is to it.”

And the Lord shows up. And here’s the thing about it: The thing about it is that He shows up. But what we have a tendency to do is this. What we have a tendency to do is to say, “Ah, free from this!” You know, the big hole that is wrecking your life? We have a tendency to walk over the hole and kick stones down and play around it; do you know what I mean? And guess who falls in again when you do that? Instead of saying, “I’ve been delivered from that hole. And guess what? I’m laying a plank over it and I’m never gonna go near it again.”

Now sometimes it comes near to us in ways that we can’t help. And I’ll tell you what: The fact of the matter is, I remember when my brother was killed; you guys know about that. It was in 2012. I was working on my Ph.D. at the time and trying to finish it up. The DA called me and said, “Hey, we have the last appeal in that this guy can appeal; we need to deal with that.”

I’ll tell you what. I went through that process for about six or seven years, just watching the ineptitude of our judicial system and all that kind of thing, and listening to junk happening. I mean, I want to tell you something: I struggled with anger in ways where I was surprised. And I thought to myself: I have it; there’s still a little root in there that I need to be vigilant against.

And so I went to one of my owners and I told him. I said, “Look, here’s where I am. So I need help; I need me to keep me accountable to you because this is where I’m struggling.”

And so we just need to recognize where we are. And even with a sin that maybe we haven’t struggled with in years, we need to be careful to grab ourselves by the scruff of the neck and take ourselves to the throne of grace. And if we need a brother to come with us, we need to bring him; it’s that simple.

All right. So #3 is that we need to remember that we’re on the winning side. We are not in the flesh, but in Christ. That’s huge. We are in union with Jesus Christ, not in union with the flesh. And I think that’s why Paul is trying to help us to see this trans-personal aspect of the battle, because he understands that we live in the flesh, move in the flesh, have our being in the flesh in one sense. If I get away from my flesh you know what that means: it means I’m dead. It means I’m not showing up here next Friday. *(Laughter)*

But the point is that if we’re talking about who our King is, it’s not the flesh; it’s Christ. I’m united to Christ, and all of the benefits that I have flow from Him into my flesh. And therefore my flesh can be brought into subjection to my King. Okay, that’s the point there.

All right now: the present help. We have six minutes. I’m gonna speak fast; you listen fast and we’ll get done fast. *(Laughter)* So the present help for the believer.

Remember the song “I Walk the Line”:

*“You’ve got a way to keep me on your side.*

*You give me cause for love that I can’t hide.”*

The woman. You, woman! Every man needs a woman, a good woman. *(Laughter)* Okay, now listen. It’s not a woman; it’s the Spirit of God who keeps us in line. That’s what the text says: it’s the Spirit that’s over against the flesh. It’s not my woman that’s over against the flesh; it’s the Spirit that’s over against the flesh.

One of the things that you see is that you see this in Scripture. For instance in Hebrews 9:14: *“How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God!”* In other words, it’s the Spirit who brings the work of Christ to bear upon our lives! That’s a powerful verse!

It’s not a woman, as good as your woman is. And I’ll tell you: there are good women. Rare jewels, right?; that’s what Proverbs 31 says: they’re rare jewels, hard to find. But as good as they are, they’re not the Spirit of God.

Why? Take a look at 2 Corinthians 3:17. I’ll tell you why; the answer is right there in the text. It says: *“Now the Lord is the Spirit.”*

*“The Lord is the Spirit.”* Now that doesn’t mean that oh, They’re the same Person! No, that’s not what it means. That means that They have so common a purpose that you can transpose one to the other. In other words, the Spirit’s job, the Spirit’s purpose, the Spirit’s aim is to work the work of Christ into the life of Christ’s people. And so Paul can say that the Lord is the Spirit in the sense that His aim, His purpose, His goal is to work Christ into us. That’s an absolutely beautiful thing; very glorious.

Now the question is: What does the Spirit’s influence look like? Now listen to this: two seemingly contradictory statements. In verse 14 what are we told? We are told to love our neighbor and so to fulfill the law. But what are we told in verse 18? “But you are not under the law.”

What does that mean? Brothers, it means this: He is putting together two true statements there. You are not under the law as a curse. In other words, you are no longer condemned by the law because Christ has been condemned for you. So you are not under the law as a covenant of works.

But the law is now your guide to a righteous life. The law now tells you what is pleasing to God. And when you fail to do that you know that you have an Advocate. You know that you have a Redeemer who has come under its curse so you have forgiveness. And you get back up after having repented and you endeavor to new obedience; that’s what you do.

So these are not two contradictory statements. You are not under the law anymore as a curse. But you are under the law as a guide, okay?

So Galatians 3 is the schoolmaster that drives us to Christ. That’s why the law was added; it was added that the need for grace might be demonstrated. Don’t worry about these slides; I’ll simply end with this.

When you think about the three uses of the law, what do you think of? The Spirit takes the law, applies it to unconverted people, and uses it as a schoolmaster to show them their guilt and their need for grace.

The second use of the law is that the law restrains sin. That’s what the world’s governments do: they apply the law to restrain sin to unconverted and converted people. But thirdly the use of the law is that it becomes a righteous guide for Christians. So the first and the third uses of the law are what I’m talking about here in those statements.

So we’re not under the law as a curse. Christ came under the law to become a curse for us, and now the law becomes our guide.

Okay, so that’s our present help. The Spirit is bringing our lives more into conformity with the law. There’s so much more we could say here, so let me just say this. We’re justified in Christ. But the Lord and the Spirit have this common purpose. And what does the Spirit do? The Spirit takes the Lord’s work and brings justification to us, and He uses it to cleanse our consciences.

And so that’s the experiential part of that, right? And so having this cleansing of the conscience is an important dynamic in all of this. And so what begins to happen is, I realize I’m forgiven and I endeavor to new obedience. I treat the law as my guide; I don’t fear it. Now I see it as holy, righteous and good. And I want to bring my life into conformity to it, even as Christ brought His earthly life into conformity to it. So that’s the idea. If you have any questions we can talk about it next time; thanks for your patience on that.

All right, let’s pray. Gracious God in heaven, thank You for this day and for the blessing of life in Christ, and Lord, not just for the understanding of the present reality but also Your present help. Thanks for Your Spirit. We rejoice in You. We pray these things in Jesus’ name. Amen.

**Brave Men:** Amen. *(Applause)*