

Well, if you would turn with me in your copy of the Word of God, I do apologize. I mentioned last week that we didn't finish your introduction, but I forgot to mention that to my trustee admin, and so we have next week's sermon text in our bulletin, so I apologize. We're still in Galatians 5 this afternoon, so if you could listen or turn there maybe on your phone, Dr. Reader always said, reading the Bible through a phone is like kissing your wife through a screen door. But it's better than nothing. So let's read together the word of God in Galatians 5. Before we do, let's pray. Father, we pray this morning, this afternoon, that you would send your Holy Spirit to work in all of our hearts, creating faith where there is none, strengthening faith where it is present, and growing us, O Lord, in every fruit of the Spirit, especially love and faith and hope that we might grow in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. We offer these prayers in Christ's name. Amen. But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you'll 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's 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 keep in step with the Spirit. So we said last week, if you remember, in our introduction, that the fruit of the Spirit is not a spiritual to-do list. It's more of a template. It's more of an architectural rendering of what the Father has planned for you as a Christian, what the Son has won for you through his work on the cross, and what the Spirit is doing in you now and will keep doing until you stand complete at the last day, full of all these virtues in a manner that is true to your own individual, unique personality, Thank you. But you'll each of you be full of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, and self-control, but in such a way that it'll still be you. It'll be the particularity of the individuality that God has created in you, refined and redeemed and transformed into the image of God. And you will express that image in a way that nobody else will express it in heaven. It'll be like the different facets of a diamond. You will shine with a glory that is full of Christ, but it'll also be full of the uniqueness of you in that individual soul that God created and fashioned and loved before the foundation of the world. As we said last week, we're entering into the midst of a conversation. So you remember Paul is rebuking the Galatian churches. because they've departed from the gospel, they've added something to the gospel. It's a very important thing to remember. If you add anything to the gospel or take anything from the gospel, you don't weaken the gospel, you obliterate it entirely. It's an all or nothing thing. That we are saved by Christ alone, through faith alone, and because of grace alone. And we bring nothing to the table, no works of ours. God does not save us because of anything done in us or by us or to us, but simply because of what Christ has done for us. And you remember there was a Pharisee, kind of an ex-Pharisee party in Jerusalem who were very concerned that Paul's free grace gospel could sever the church from its Old Testament roots. And though it could also produce a cheap grace, kind of the idea, well God has saved me, all of my sins have been forgiven,

and therefore I can kick back on the spiritual lazy boy and live as I please. And so what they said is, you've got to be, believe in Jesus, but you've also got to be circumcised. And that addition of Jesus plus something makes nothing, Paul says. Jesus plus nothing is everything when it comes to getting to heaven. And so, Paul, you can summarize the whole book of Galatians simply by saying, Paul says, for the habits of a healthy soul, that's going on well with the Lord. Such a soul has two habits. They keep in step with the gospel, and they keep in step with the spirit. And the one leads to the other. They go together like water and wet. We keep in step with the gospel. We receive the gospel, Paul says, by the hearing of faith. And he's contrasting that with the doing of the law. One couldn't be more active doing the law and one couldn't be more passive hearing by faith. That as soon as the gospel word touches the ear and we hear it by faith, even before we apply it to our hearts, our emotions, and our consciences and live it out in our lives, the hearing of faith is enough to bring a soul safely home to God. And the moment we hear the gospel by faith, our sins are forgiven, we become sons and daughters of Abraham, and more than that, we become sons of God. And that's a wonderful truth, that you are now, if you're a Christian believing in Jesus, you are a child of God. And just like our children, I don't love my children because they love me. I don't love my children because they obey me. I love my children because they're mine. And I'll never stop loving them. No matter, you know, in the good days, the bad days, some of you have children who are estranged from you, I know, and you still love them because they're yours. And God's love for us doesn't rise and fall on the tides of our love for him. Our love is like a morning cloud, Hosea says. It quickly evaporates. But God's love is ever true and ever constant and ever the same. And the moment we receive the gospel by faith, not only do we receive Christ and come in as the Father's sons, but we become fully participants of the Holy Spirit. We receive the Spirit by the hearing of faith, not by the works of the law. And the Spirit brings all of the power of Christ and all of the love of the Father into our hearts, and progressively, slowly but surely, he overwhelms our sin nature, and produces in us the fruit of the Holy Spirit. So the first habit of the healthy soul was last week, if you weren't here, you can listen to that sermon, keep in step with the gospel. But there's a second habit, and that is keeping in step with the Spirit. And I want to look at that with you this afternoon. It's important, let me give you a quick technical word here. When you're growing in grace, there's a word theologians use, it's called synergism. It's two words from the Greek, syn, S-Y-N, which means with, and ergo, which means work. When you grow in grace, we work with the spirit. Paul makes that point in Philippians 2. Work out your salvation with fear and trembling. Why? Because God is at work in you. I can't say that without thinking of one of the great old Scottish preachers, Eric Alexander. We work out what he works in. And one of his great sermons. We work with God in our sanctification. That contrasts the other word theologians use, monergo, right? There's a website, Monergism, which is a good website that kind of has all things reformed in it. And monergism is mono-ergo, one worker, right? Regeneration, for example, is the monergistic work of God. We don't do anything. You're walking along the beach on a wet, cold winter's day and you have a heart attack and you fall dead on the beach. You're helpless. But there's a doctor there, out walking his dog, a cardiologist, he sees you, he runs across and does CPR, and he doesn't do CPR, you aren't calling him, you aren't saying, help, I've died, help, you aren't doing that, you are dead on the beach, and you're entirely dependent on his monergistic skill to come alongside and do CPR, and that's, When we are born again

of the Spirit, we make no contribution but our deadness and God comes by himself and brings life to our souls. Monergism, regeneration. The same is true also of justification. We don't bring any work to the table. God brings Christ. The only thing we bring is our sin. And even faith, faith isn't so much something you give to God, then God examines, is there enough faith here? We'll see. And if it's good enough faith, then God will save you. No, properly speaking, faith is the empty, dirty hand. It doesn't give anything to God. It receives everything from Christ. and a weak faith, faith as strong or as weak as a spider's thread, if it's in Christ, it brings all of Christ down to the soul. It's not the strength of our faith that saves us, but the object of our faith, which is the Lord Jesus Christ. So synergism, monergism. When it comes to working out our salvation, just like at the gym, we're involved, and so is the spirit. The spirit leads us, but we must follow him when he does, and Paul commands us to do that. And so I want to work through this passage with you this morning in the next 15, 20 minutes. If you need to nip out to get to work, I understand, that's totally fine, but we'll try and be as quick as possible. This work of keeping in step with the spirit is a relational work. It's always interesting to me that Paul doesn't say obey the spirit. He could have done, but he doesn't. He says walk by the spirit. Walk by the spirit. It's a picture of two friends walking side by side. Providentially last night in family worship, I was thinking with the children about Enoch. If you read Genesis 5, you'll see everyone's dying. And there's a depressing repetition of the language. So-and-so lives, he had children. After he had children, he lived so many years, then he died. He died, he died, they all died. But there's one man who doesn't die, Enoch. Enoch walked with God, and he was not because God took him. And it's a sign to us in Genesis 5 that as we see the carnage and wreckage of Adam's choice bringing death into this world, there is a way back to life and that way back involves walking with God. And I said to the children, like walking is, you do it with your friend. I was saying to Eliza, Kate, my daughter, And her good friend, Eliza Ann Wingate, I said, if you wanted to walk with Eliza Ann, what would you have to do? And I said, there's two things. You have to know where Eliza Ann is. You just can't walk out to the end of the driveway and expect to meet her. And you can't go out there and imagine. I'm gonna imagine Eliza Ann's here. We're gonna walk together. People try that with God. They think, well, I'm imagining I'm walking with God. But imagination doesn't cut it. If you're gonna walk with God, you have to know where to find God. If you're gonna walk with the Spirit, you have to know where to find the Spirit. And we find the Spirit, of course, at the foot of the cross. We trust in Jesus. We receive the Holy Spirit. as a gift. So you've got to know where to find him. And you've also got to walk in the same direction. Right? You've got to walk in the same direction. Like I said, if you met Eliza Ann at the end of the driveway, but you walked left and she walked right, the walk's not going to last very long. You gotta walk in the same direction and at the same speed if you're gonna walk with someone. It's a relationship, which is why you can't walk with the Spirit if you're walking in sin. You can't walk in the light if you're walking in the darkness, right? So it's a relational work. Sometimes you'll hear people say, Christianity's relationship is not rules. That's not true. Rules matter. But it's the relationship that drives the rules. It's a bit like sex, right? Occasionally, somebody will come into my office, though today they tend to go to Josh, he's much better at counseling than I am. But in previous marriage, people would come to me and maybe there's a sexual difficulty in the marriage and one of the two will say, well, just give me how many times a week and how long

should it last for? And I'm thinking, if you approach sex that way, you're coming at it through rules. It's completely the wrong direction. It's the relationship that drives it, right? Not kind of rules that you might make up or some kind of sexual tick box. And that's the same with the spirit. We walk with him. It's a relationship with God. through Christ by the Spirit. Do you have such a relationship? It's important to ask yourself that question. That's the first thing then. It's a relational work. The second thing is it's a personal work. You must do it. He leads, but you must choose to follow. You must follow him persistently. The verb walk by the spirit is a present active command. It's a command for you to obey. It's a present command, which means it's something you must do continually. It's not something you do once and then forget about it. You've got to be doing it all day, every day, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. It's a persistent work, a purposeful work. When the Holy Spirit leads you away from sin, you must choose to follow. When the Holy Spirit encourages you to draw near to God in prayer, you must choose to pray. Lloyd-Jones said, one of the secrets of developing a prayer life is every time the Holy Spirit prompts your soul to pray, follow Him. Even if it's only an arrow prayer to God, never resist the Spirit's call to pray. When He leads you to God through Scripture, we must open our Bibles and read. There's a famous poem, there lies before a man a ways and a way and a way. The high soul takes the high road, the highway. The low soul takes the low and in between on the misty flats the rest drift to and fro. Now I hope there's no one here this morning taking the low road away from God. But I imagine more than a few of us at times find ourselves, maybe today, drifting on the misty flats. And Paul is calling you personally and persistently to follow the Holy Spirit. A persistent and a purposeful personal walk. It's also, so it's a relational work, it's a personal work, it's also an adversarial work. You've got to understand there's a conflict within your soul. If you're born again, there's the spirit, but there's also the flesh. And they're pulling you in different directions, Paul says that. If you walk by the Spirit, you'll 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. And so for the Christian, when you follow the Spirit, you will always face the flesh's resistance. And when you choose to follow the flesh, you'll always face the spirit's resistance. You'll be pulled. It's what Paul says in Romans 7, the good that I want to do, I don't do. The evil that I hate, that I find, I practice. Oh, wretched man that I am. We're constantly pulled in two difficult, different, sorry, directions. Now the flesh, is Paul's term for the Adamic nature turned in upon itself. That's hostile to God and to anyone who stands in its way. And the flesh really is one priority. It wants to feel good. that it wants to fight with anyone who steps on its toesy-woesies as it tries to feel good. And if you look at Paul as he describes the flesh here, he describes the flesh in terms of feeling good and fighting. Those are two buckets you could put all of these words in. Just listen to as he describes the flesh. The works of the flesh are evident, sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, pleasing the body is the idea, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. Even idolatry and sorcery The flesh can sometimes be very religious, but it's always on my terms. We'll design the religion. We'll serve our God, our way, at our time, and for our pleasure, and for our benefits. So the flesh, even when the flesh goes to church, it never goes there for the right reasons. And it's important to realize that, because you can meet

some unbelievers who are remarkably decent people, but it's the empty, painted virtue of a dead soul. So you might find an unbeliever who loves his wife, but he loves his wife because she makes him feel good. He enjoys the benefits he has from the relationship and he scratches her back in the hope that she will scratch his. And it's very difficult to escape the pull of the self, the old adage that women often use sex to get love and men use love to get sex. is an interesting dynamic that always stands on the wings even of the best marriage, but it tends to be the predominant thing that stands in a flesh-based marriage. We're a good father. You see some good fathers, but he loves his children because there's a natural love we have for our children. We want them to do well, but we also find within us that when they do well, it reflects upon us, which is why we get so angry with them when they sin publicly. They can disrespect you at home. But if they disrespect you on the way to church, beside me or Ken Wingate or one of the elders, you'll be much more angry because they've made you look bad. Well, you might find a fleshly man overcoming alcoholism. But his reasons for overcoming alcoholism, well, he sees how alcohol is destroying his life, his family, his career, his reputation. And so, He battles against it and might win, but he's doing it for the wrong reasons. We might find a fleshly man pretend to be humble, but he becomes very, very proud of how humble he pretends to be. Right? And so I'm not saying a person who's ruled by the flesh, because if you aren't a Christian here this morning, this afternoon, then the flesh is the ruling principle of your life. That doesn't mean that you don't realize, and maybe even, realize that it's not good, it bothers your conscience, and you try to keep it in check, but it is the ruling principle of your life. If you were to become a Christian this morning, this afternoon, the Holy Spirit would enter your heart and dethrone the flesh, but it would still be a remaining influence in your heart, fighting against the Holy Spirit who's pulling you to heaven. And sometimes it can be very difficult to tell, is the principle of the flesh the ruling influence of my life or the remaining influence of my life? And as a Christian, we go to the cross, we confess our sins, and we fill ourselves with the Holy Spirit, and we walk by the Spirit. It's an adversarial life. The old Indian proverb, you know, in your heart there are two wolves fighting, a black wolf and a white wolf. The black wolf is malice, envy, hatred, bitterness, idolatry, sexual immorality, sensuality, list goes on. And the white wolf is love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, and so forth. And which wolf wins? And the Indian father says, the one you feed, the chef is telling us here in the corner, the one you feed. And you've got to battle against the flesh, you've got to kill it, put it to death, not feed it, and you've got to engage with the Holy Spirit. And the thing is, it's a package deal. You can't feed any of your flesh without feeding all of your flesh. Later in Galatians, Paul says, do not be deceived. Whatsoever a man sows, that he will reap. If you sow to the flesh, you will from the flesh reap corruption and death. But if you sow to the spirit, you'll reap everlasting life. And it doesn't matter if you sow envy or jealousy or pornography, whatever you sow, you just don't feed that one part. It's like when you fertilize a plant, you fertilize all of the branches in the plant. If you fertilize any of the flesh, you're fertilizing all of the flesh, which is why Paul says, put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh. Where are you this morning, this afternoon? Where are you this afternoon making provision for the flesh in your life? And Paul says, by the Holy Spirit. You can't white knuckle your way. Holy Spirit, by the Holy Spirit. Stop that. The last major point this morning is not only is it a relational work and a personal work and an adversarial work that

involves conflict, it's a crucial work. You must know what's at stake. Paul says, after he outlines the list of the flesh sins, I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. That if you feed the flesh and you grow the flesh, you'll become the flesh. And you'll show, it's not a case, one of the first times I met Dr. Thomas, I was very concerned about losing my salvation. And Dr. Thomas, I said, can you be, I think I've just become a Calvinist, but there are all these texts in the Bible that seem to speak about losing your salvation, and you could maybe even read this verse as that. They will not inherit the kingdom of God. And Dr. Thomas was a master theologian. He said there's a theological answer to that question. There's also a personal answer. Theologically, once you're saved, you'll always be saved. Now, you can think you're saved, believe you are saved, and not be saved. But once you are saved, you are locked in forever. And our calling as Christians is to make our calling and election sure. It's not in doubt in heaven. God knows those he's chosen. But to a greater or lesser extent, as we live our lives, our sense of assurance, that we're sure we know Christ, can rise or fall. And it rises or falls as you walk by the Spirit. But when you walk away from the Spirit, and you walk in the flesh, you're taking an ax to the tree of your assurance. Because if it walks like a duck, and it quacks like a duck, and it flies like a duck, it might well get shot like a duck during hunting season and eaten like a duck maybe by an immigrant, but we'll not go there this afternoon. Right, and so if you live according to the flesh, you're living like an unconverted pagan, right? If you live like an unconverted pagan, sooner or later, people have got to ask the question, are you an unconverted pagan? It's not a case of losing your salvation, it's a question of have you ever been saved? Right? Have you ever been saved? It's a crucial work. Now let me quickly give you three take home points. To walk by the spirit, you must win the battle of the mind. It's your mindset. People in the flesh, people in the spirit meet the same temptations in life. But I've told you before, if you want to live a way you've never lived before, you must think a way you've never thought before. You've got to take every thought captive. You've got to be renewed in the spirit of your mind. And so when the flesh comes knocking on your door, and he makes the darkness look bright, you've got to be able to say, I see through your dark lie, and it's wrong, and it leads me to hell. I'm not going to go that way. And that needs to happen at the moment of temptation. Now, maybe you're sitting in this room, and maybe you're struggling with drinking too much alcohol in the evenings. And you're thinking, never again, never again. And then you go back home tonight and the Jack Daniels bottle begins to speak to you. That's the time you've got to say, you lie. This is not the pathway to life, it's the pathway to death. And that is a battle you win in the battle of your mind. You've got to also win the battle of the moment. Because it's those moments that come, put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh. In that moment when you're reaching for the bottle or the computer or mouse to go somewhere you shouldn't go, in that moment you've got to say, what doest thou hear, Elijah? You've got to steel yourself in your mind and in the moment. And then you gotta win the battle for the means. How do you feed the flesh? The word of God, the sacraments of God, and praying to God. Word, sacrament, and prayer, the means of grace. That's where you go to get grace. You've got to be in scripture. You've got to be in prayer. My son, he always calls me when I'm preaching, it's amazing, it's really amazing. You gotta win the battle of the word, you gotta be in prayer, and the sacraments are wonderful because they show you that God means business. Every month we come to the Lord's table, and God the

Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit says to you, I mean business. How serious am I, but you get into heaven. Look at the table, the broken body. the shed blood of my own son. I tore him apart that I might spare you. He was not spared so that you might be. I love you. The gospel is not God loves you, has a wonderful plan for your life. The gospel is God loves you at the cost of his son. And as you look at the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, also baptism, but the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, we look at it and it reminds us of the Father's love for us. How can you eat the banquet of hell? When I stand ready to feed you with the body and blood of my son, and Jesus stands ready to feed you with the body and blood of his own flesh that he laid down on the altar to redeem you. The battle of the mind, the battle of the moment, and the battle of the means. You've got to be feeding the spirit. Otherwise, Your effort to resist sin will be no more noble than the unconverted alcoholic trying to resist the siren call of alcoholism for the wrong reasons, in the wrong way, and for the wrong end. Sanctification is not doing a plank. My brother-in-law can do a plank for 34 minutes, which is unbelievable to me. And he does it by the grit of his own will. He holds on. That's not, it's like holding your breath. How long can you hold it for? And you hold it five seconds more today than yesterday and you get better and better and better and better and better. But it's your own, I'm gonna hold on. That's the lesser part of sanctification. The greater part, you can't white knuckle your way to holiness. The greater part is reaching up and laying hold of the lightning rod of God. Christ's grace upon the cross, and filling your soul with the Holy Spirit by faith, by the word, in prayer, through the sacraments, and feeling the resurrection energy of Jesus Christ. What that looks like in the moment of temptation is you're saying to yourself in your mind, I am reckoning myself dead to sin. Satan says, you must obey. You've always obeyed. Every time I tell you, go here, do this, you go. And you say, maybe, but not today. I am dead to that sin because Christ died for it, Christ died to it, and I died with Christ. And as you believe yourself into Christ, you'll find the power of the Holy Spirit enabling you to put it to death and to say no to it. And that's how you walk by the Spirit. And praise God, though there's this awful battle within the flesh and the spirit, the flesh is finite and frail. The spirit is the almighty spirit of God. It's not, your work is not in vain. You will win the day as you walk by the spirit. You will put to death the deeds of the flesh until there's no more flesh left to kill beyond the river in the presence of the almighty Father who loves us at such a great cost to himself. Let's pray together. Father, help us all, oh God. We all face the flesh in a myriad of different ways. I face it, everyone here faces it. Oh God, give us grace to resolve to give the flesh new quarter, to feed the flesh in new area, to make new provision for it. Help us to put it to death and to put on the Lord Jesus Christ. For your glory we pray, the growth of your kingdom in us and through us, and the good of all around us. For Jesus' sake, amen.