

Subject: *The Christian Walk*
Scripture: *Galatians 5:16-26*

The Christian faith involves two main things: what we believe and how we live (our beliefs and our behavior). Everything in the Bible fits in one of these two categories. The easier of the two things is what we believe. The harder of the two things is how we live. It is one thing to talk the talk and it's another thing to walk the walk. In many passages Paul writes about what we believe, but here he is writing about how we live.

1. THE COMMAND (vs. 16)

The word “walk” is in the imperative mood which means it is a command. It is not an option or a suggestion. God expects His people to walk in the Spirit. It is also present tense which means it is a continuous regular action. The word walk means to live this way or conduct yourself in this way. It refers to the way we live our life. The word “walk” also implies progress, going from where you are to where you ought to be.

The word “walk” is used often in the New Testament to refer to a way of life. Unbelievers are those who walk in darkness, walk after the flesh, and walk according to the course of this world. But believers are to walk in the light, in the truth, in Christ, in the Spirit, in love, as children of light, as Christ walked, according to his commandments, by faith, in good works, worthy of God's calling, in wisdom, and walking to please God.

Here the command is to walk in (by) the Spirit. The Spirit moves the believer step by step and day by day in the direction God wants him to go. The Holy Spirit not only goes with us, He guides us. **Romans 8:14** *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.*

The Holy Spirit enables our walk and enlightens it. **Philippians 2:12-13** ¹² *Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.* ¹³ *For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*
Psalms 119:105 *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.*

While the Holy Spirit is the one who enables us to walk in the Spirit and enlightens that walk, it is no excuse for us to be passive and think He will do it without our obedience. This teaching that we should “let go and let God” sounds good, but it's not biblical. We are responsible and accountable to obey God's command to walk in the Spirit.

There is also a promise given to those who obey this command: “and you shall not fulfill the lusts (desires) of the flesh.” These two ways of living are mutually exclusive, so that at all times we are either walking by the Spirit or fulfilling the desires of the flesh, but never both at the same time.

It is like what Paul wrote in **Romans 13:14** *Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof.*

It is like what Paul wrote in **Ephesians 5:17-18** ¹⁷ *Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.* ¹⁸ *And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.*

2. THE CONFLICT (vs. 17)

To walk in the Spirit is command we must obey, but it won't be easy. There is a constant conflict, a battle between the Spirit and the flesh. The flesh is a term Paul often uses to describe the unredeemed or fallen human nature that remains in a believer after he is saved. This unredeemed nature remains in the believer until he is fully redeemed (glorified) in heaven. In other words this is a lifelong battle for a believer.

It's helpful to read verse 17 from the NASB translation, "For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please." So Paul acknowledges that the Christian life is a struggle between the flesh and the Spirit. He writes about this:

Romans 7:18-19 ¹⁸ *For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.* ¹⁹ *For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do.*

Romans 7:21-23 ²¹ *I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.* ²² *For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:* ²³ *But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.*

Only a true believer can say what Paul said in Romans 7:22, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man." That's the nature of a born again man, one who has a new heart. The flesh is that part of a believer that functions apart from and against the Spirit. It struggles against the work of the Spirit in the believer's new heart. The unsaved person doesn't have that conflict in him. The unbeliever's only conflict is between the flesh and his conscience, but the Holy Spirit does not live in him. So this conflict between the Spirit and the flesh is unique to believers.

We understand what Paul is talking about, don't we? Believers don't always do what they ought to do, and they sometimes do what they ought not to do. There are those times when the desire to do God's will is present, but the doing is not. Sometimes the Spirit restrains what the flesh desires, and other times the flesh overrides what the Spirit desires. So we are frustrated and identify with Paul's frustration in **Romans 7:24** *O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*

Does that mean we just give up and say it's too hard to walk in the Spirit and struggle against the flesh? No. That's not what it means. It's hard, but it's not impossible. Here are some ways to apply the passage ("uses"):

- 1) Actively obey God's command (walk in the Spirit).
- 2) Avoid situations where the flesh will be tempted.
- 3) Seek activities where the Spirit will control (worship, Scripture, prayer).
- 4) Focus on direction and look forward to perfection.

Colossians 2:6-7 ⁶ *As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:* ⁷ *Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.*