

The Holy Spirit: THE Key to Living a Faithful Christian Life (Part 2)

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[0 : 00] Good job. Thank you very much. I really do enjoy this service, the recognition of graduates every year. I think it's important that we as your church family celebrate this with you, honor you in this way.

One of my goals for this service every year is to preach a message that has some type of special application to graduates. Well, this year, this message, it's going to accomplish that goal because it speaks to every Christian.

If you are a Christian, then what I'm going to be talking about today, what we're going to be looking at in Galatians 5, it applies to every single one of us equally.

It's talking about something, if you are a Christian, you're very familiar with, an internal battle, an internal struggle between a force that entices us to sin and between the Spirit of God that so works in us, calling us to live a life that pleases God.

Galatians 5, beginning in verse 16, Paul is contrasting two types of what we could call character qualities or even lifestyles.

[1 : 28] One will describe what we could call character qualities or actions. One will describe what's going on. One or the other will describe what's going on in our lives right now in terms of our attitudes or actions, at least to some degree.

Now, when you see which list best describes how you are living, you will discover that at this moment, what the most powerful influence in your life is.

What we're going to see this morning, some of the characteristics of people who live according to the desires of their sinful nature, some of the outworkings of the Spirit of God in a person's life.

If we look at these two ways of thinking and living, whichever list most identifies you, that's going to show you what is actually the most powerful influence in your life right now, right this minute.

Let's read Galatians chapter 5, beginning in verse 16, but our focus this morning will be verses 19 through 25. Let's read it.

[2 : 47] Paul is writing to churches in a region called Galatia. He says, But I say, Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of your sinful nature. 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 thing you want to do. But if you're led by the Spirit, you're 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, orgy, 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, the opposite way to live.

- [4 : 11] 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 keep in step with the Spirit.
- We're in a series from Galatians chapter 5, verses 16 through chapter 6, about verse 5, maybe through verse 10. We'll see how it works out next week.
- The series is entitled, The Holy Spirit. Notice that, all capitals, T-H-E, underlined. The Holy Spirit The Key to living a faithful Christian life.
- Last week, we looked at verses 16 through 18 and saw how we must depend on the Holy Spirit's power. Well, today, we're looking at verses 19 through 25, and we're going to see how we must make the Holy Spirit the dominant influence in our lives.
- [5 : 30] There is a dominant influence over your life right now. It's either your old sinful nature or it's the Spirit of God if you're a Christian. Let's begin by, with a question.
- What is the dominant influence in your life right now? What is the strongest, most powerful influence, force, power in your life right now?
- If you're a Christian, it's either your sinful nature, what Paul calls the flesh, or the Spirit of God. As we go through these verses, we're going to look at both, both.
- I want you to be honest about what is influencing you the most right now. Let's look at number one. If our sinful nature is the most powerful influence in our life, then some of the things found in verses 19 through 21 will be present in us.
- Now, we're going to look at some things that are outrageous sins, some of them. What I want you to do is think, this list, you may not be doing this publicly, but you could be doing it privately.
- [6 : 43] You may not be doing some of these things, actually acting on them, but you're thinking it. The thought is there, the desire is there, maybe just the opportunity just hasn't arisen yet.
- So don't just think, this doesn't describe what I'm doing. Does this describe what you want to do? Does this describe some of your desires?
- Let's look. First, I'm going to categorize these. A lot of commentators, they put these under some, I like four headings, and I think that helps us to look at it better.
- So let's do that. Look at the first one, sexual sins. Verse 19. Look at those words there.
- Sexual immorality, impurity. Sensuality. You know, sex is one of God's good gifts, and I want to say at the outset, Paul is not talking about sex in any kind of negative way.
- [7 : 51] God made us to be sexual beings with sexual needs, and he designed that those needs be met in a pure and honorable and good way in marriage, in the institution of marriage.
- But we all know the good gift of sex is often abused, and that's what Paul's talking about here.
- Sexual immorality is a broad term covering all kinds of sexual sins. He's referring to things like premarital sex, adultery, homosexuality.
- He's referring to you being involved in pornography. One of the great under the radar, what we think, hidden sins of today.
- But I want you to think, sexual immorality is not limited to just physical acts. Jesus talks about how lusting for someone is the same as committing adultery with them in your heart.
- [9 : 04] So sexual immorality can just take place in your mind, just your thought life, your desires. It can take place both in our public world and our private world.

Here's something we all need to remember. When it comes to God, there is no private world. I've got a private world from you and you've got a private world from me. But nobody, no one, has a private world where God is not there.

And we need to always keep that in mind. The word impurity literally means uncleanness. It's describing either some kind of perverse behavior or it could be describing how sexual impurity defiles and corrupts a person which separates us from God.

Sensuality, the next one, this is sexual sin without limits or restraint. William Barclay describes it like this. A love of sin so reckless and so audacious that a man has ceased to care what God or man thinks of his actions.

I want us to understand something. Sometimes we can all say, I don't care what other people think. And sometimes we say that in a way that's okay, that's positive.

[10 : 26] You know, we're not going to go with the flow. We don't care if somebody criticizes us. We're going to do what we think is the right thing. So in that way, we don't care what people think. But we need to all be careful that we never develop the attitude, I don't give a rip what anybody thinks, including God.

That's a dangerous place to be. It's a place of doing things that deep down, if we'll admit it, we are ashamed and we don't want to be held accountable for.

What we're going to do this morning is not do an in-depth study of these sins of the sinful nature. We're looking at sort of the whole thing in a nutshell this morning and going to compare it with the fruit of the Spirit.

So let's move on in this. The next group is religious sins, verse 20. Everyone worships something. God made us that way. God made us in such a way that we would want to worship Him.

That was the original design. But when sin entered the world, everything got messed up. Everything is flawed, including what we worship sometimes.

[11 : 41] Idolatry can be defined as worship of the creature rather than the creator. Idolatry is when we worship maybe even a good gift of God in place of God, the giver.

Anything that takes God's place in our life can be an idol. If you are worshipping a person, if you're worshipping money, if you're worshipping power, if you're worshipping education, you're an idolater according to Scripture.

Anything that takes God's place in our life has become an idol, which makes us guilty of idolatry. Sorcery. That's sort of strange turning up in this passage, but it refers to any kind of involvement with the powers of evil, and it's used in the New Testament sometimes to refer to someone's involvement with the occult.

Now, the word actually comes from a Greek word, pharmakon, which literally means drugs, where our word pharmacy comes from. And in New Testament times, this word was sometimes used to describe drugs that induced abortion.

Sometimes it's a part of an occult practice. So that's what he's talking about there. Various kinds of unacceptable worship. The third category is social sins.

[13 : 10] Verses 20 and 21. The things on this list revealed our flawed personal character and our failure in relationships. I want you to look at that.

Verses 20 and first part of verse 21. These words don't need a whole lot of explanation. He's talking about how our sinful nature so works in us that we're prideful, we are divisive, we don't get along with people.

Just look at this list. Enmity, that means hatred, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries.

Some translations say selfish ambition, dissensions, divisions, envy. You see what he's talking about? Paul is talking about how our sinful nature so works in us to tempt us to be sexually impure in some way.

Sometimes. Not all time, but sometimes. And some people more than others. Our sinful nature provokes us to place too much emphasis on another person or a thing in place of God.

[14 : 30] Our sinful, selfish attitudes, desires, sometimes tempt us just to not be, not try to get along with someone.

Just be content, or just be obsessed with our way and get angry and lash out at people when we don't get our way. The fourth category is alcohol-related sins.

Drunkenness, you know what that is. But the word that's next, orgies. You think, where in the world does that come from in this list? It can be translated carousing.

It can just be referring to something like what you would call wild parties. This word is used three times in the New Testament, and each time it's linked to the sin of drunkenness. That's why it's here.

It's not really out of place. He's talking about not just somebody who gets drunk, but somebody who just goes wild in their drinking and drunkenness.

[15 : 31] You know, our nation's number one drug problem today is alcohol abuse. it's the most problem drug among all ages, but it's certainly the most problem drug among young people, and you know, you got, you know friends in high school and college who've already got a problem with alcohol.

They've abused it to the point that they're drunk more times than not on a weekend. Problem that I want to sort of focus on for a moment here is it's the number one drug problem alcohol abuse is in our country, yet it is glorified by the entertainment and advertising industries as if it is the key to having a good time.

You see it in, you know, commercials, advertisements, you see it in all kinds of TV shows and movies, that if you really want to have a good time, you got to drink. And a lot of times, the more you drink, the better your time is, the more relaxed you are, the more loose you are, the more open and free you are.

I want to be clear. I have never seen anyone where alcohol made them a better person.

Now, if you have, I want you to tell me. I want to know that. I have never in my life seen anyone who really liked to drink, who made it a priority in their life and it made them a better husband or father or mother or daughter or anything.

[17 : 12] But I have seen how alcohol has ruined people's lives. I mean, I've seen it close, very much in my face, in my family, among people that I know and love where alcohol has ruined their life, destroyed their life, their home, their family, lost their career.

And I want us to be aware of that. I want you to be aware of that today as a young person at any age. Let it sink in.

Alcohol is the number one abused drug in this country. Alcohol will not help you to be better in any way. but it can, it very well could hurt you and the people in your life that you don't want to hurt if you're not very, very careful.

Now, look at verse 21. This list of acts of the sinful nature ends with a very strong, serious warning. Look at it. I warn you.

As I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. People whose lives are characterized by sexual immorality, by just, they're just angry, mean-spirited, cause trouble people, selfish and self-centered, they worship things instead of God, they worship people instead of God.

[19 : 00] Paul is saying very clearly here that a person who lives this way, we're talking about somebody, this is their way of life. This is what they know. This is how they are. This is how they're known. They're not going to heaven when they die.

Now, let's be clear. The most faithful Christian struggles with some of these on a regular basis.

All of us in this room, the most respected, the most godly individual in this room, you are tempted.

Maybe with something related to sexual immorality. Maybe with alcohol. Maybe you've got put too much value on some things or people, and God's not first in your life truly on a regular basis.

Maybe you're just a selfish person. You're very arrogant. You're jealous of everything that someone has to have something more than you or better than you.

[20 : 08] You're tempted this way. Sometimes you give in to this. Sometimes you give in to it more at home around your family and close friends than you do out in public. Maybe nobody at church has ever seen you, but your family certainly has seen you.

Show your rear end because you're giving in to the desires of your sinful nature about getting your way, about making sure you get your way and you force it on everybody else in your life.

You say, we're going to be real this morning. We're not going to look at this passage and talk about all those evil people. We're talking about how we as Christians have a sinful nature and we are tempted.

We have desires and feelings. There's things, emotions that come out sometimes. If that's our normal way of living and we would say, I just can't help but be this way, that means the Spirit of God does not live in you and that means you're not a Christian.

You may be a church member, you may be a baptized church member, but you cannot be a child of God. You are not going to heaven, the Word of God says, if this is you on a regular basis, the way you think, the way you speak, the way you act, let's hold that thought down.

[21 : 31] Let's go on. Let's look at the other source of influence in this passage, the Holy Spirit. If the Spirit of God is the most powerful influence in our lives, we will to some degree be developing character qualities described here as the fruit of the Spirit.

Look at them. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Now, I want you to notice a difference in the way Paul describes these works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit.

Verse 19, the works of the flesh. He's talking about attitudes and actions that arise and come from us. just a part of who we are as fallen, sinful people.

But verse 22, he describes the fruit of the Spirit. These are attitudes and actions that the Spirit of God produces in and through us. We're going to be doing a study on Wednesday nights on each of these qualities in this list called the fruit of the Spirit.

Wednesday night, 6.30, over in the fellowship hall. This coming Wednesday night, we're going to start looking at the first one individually, love. Now, I want to encourage you to come and be a part of this study of how the Holy Spirit will work in us to enable us to experience and demonstrate love and joy and peace in the midst of difficulty.

[23 : 04] When life is hard and things of that nature. But right now, look at the works of the sinful nature that we've looked at, this list, 19 and 21, through 21, and the fruit of the Spirit.

Which list describes the consistent desire of your heart and which is the consistent pattern of your life? Think about it.

all Christians, all of us struggle with sinful desires that come from our sinful nature. It's an internal war. It's a battle that's going on within us.

Paul talked about it in verse 17 that we looked at last week. Sometimes we give in to those desires. Sometimes, the most godly in this room, give in to those temptations, those desires, and you say or do a sinful thing that people see and hear.

It's obvious. Sometimes we do that more than we want to admit. But a true Christian will not let that be their normal way of life. That will not be their lifestyle, giving in to the desires of our sinful nature.

[24 : 24] Because Paul said, if we do, we will not inherit the kingdom of God. So it means a Christian won't do that. True children of God are not at the mercy of our sinful nature. If you're a child of God, the Spirit of God lives within you and you do not have to give in to the temptations.

You do not have to act on those desires and thoughts and feelings that you have that come from within you that you know are wrong. You do not have to live a life that is defined by sin.

If you're living, if you're a Christian and dwell by the Spirit of God, you want to obey Him. You want to do what's right, not what's wrong. You want to please God, not displease Him.

That's your desire that comes from the indwelling Holy Spirit. Let's look now at how we can successfully follow the leadership of the Holy Spirit and live that kind of way.

Number two, how can the Holy Spirit become the dominant influence in your life every day? Well, that's what verses 24 and 25 tells us. It's a two-step process. Number one, we must say no to the desires of our sinful nature.

[25 : 32] Look at what he says in verse 24. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Paul uses the imagery of crucifixion for an obvious reason.

Jesus was crucified. He died for our sins. He uses this imagery of crucifixion to describe the radical break that we are supposed to make when we turn from our sin, when we are saved, when we do put our faith and trust in Jesus.

He's referring to what we did at conversion. We repented of our sin. We turned from our sin. We turned away from everything that we thought was selfish and sinful and ungodly.

Well, since that time, since whenever it was you were saved, the Lord has continued to reveal things to you that are selfish and sinful and ungodly. If you're a Christian and dwell by the Spirit of God, as you learn about those things, as you learn what does not please God, you'll do it.

You'll not give in to it. When you learn what does please God, you'll want to do what pleases God. That is the desire of everyone who's been born again by the Spirit of God. That's the way to test if you really are a Christian.

[26 : 52] Do you love sin and enjoy it and have no real serious guilt about it? The Spirit of God can't be living within you. But do you really and truly hate sin and you want to overcome it?

You want to live a life that pleases God. You want to honor Him. You want to be right with people. That's a sign that the Spirit of God is working within you. And the second part of this process is we must say yes to the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

He says, if we live by the Spirit, verse 25, let us also keep step with the Spirit. The Holy Spirit leads us by giving us the desires to live a life that will please God in mind and heart and life.

The Holy Spirit works in us to enable us to produce Christ-like character qualities. The fruit of the Spirit. You can live a faithful Christian life but you cannot do it on your own.

You need that supernatural help that the Holy Spirit of God will give you. Chuck Swindoll gives us some good advice on how we can do this way, live this way.

[28 : 05] Listen to what he says. Look at what he says. He says, resolve each morning to walk in the Spirit. First thing every morning before you get up, commit yourself to His control.

Swindoll is saying, if you're really serious about living a faithful Christian life, when you wake up in the morning, when the clock goes off, think to yourself, I really am a child of God. The Spirit of God lives within me. Pray and just ask God, Lord, help me to be sensitive to your Spirit's presence.

Help me to be obedient to His power. Help me to watch what I say. Not just say everything I think. Help me to watch what I do. Help me to watch what my mind dwells on.

And then number two, strive to maintain your walk throughout each day. Don't turn away from the Spirit's leading so you can flirt with the desires of the sinful nature. The Spirit will guide, protect, and empower you.

All you must do is follow Him by faith. Begin in the mornings, committing your life and you in the fresh to be sensitive to the Spirit of God and obedient to His leadership.

[29 : 13] And throughout the day, think about that. Recognize when your sinful nature is tempting you and leading, trying to lead you in the wrong way. Learn to say no.

Learn not to say it. Learn not to do it. Learn not to look at it. Learn to do instead what the Spirit of God is leading you to do.

That which will please God. That which will make a positive difference in other people's lives. That which will ultimately please you. God's Word is clear.

We can live a faithful, obedient, victorious Christian life if we will say no to our sinful nature and yes to the leading of the Holy Spirit every day.

All day. The question is do you want to do that? Will you do that? Let's pray together.

[30 : 14] Dear God, help us right now to know exactly how you see us, how we really are.

Father, show us if we really are Christians but we're not being faithful to say no to the desires of our sinful nature. We're not choosing on a daily basis to be obedient to your Spirit's leading.

We're not choosing to please you. We're instead pleasing ourselves more times than we like to admit. If that's the case, Father, help that person to admit it to you, to confess their sin, to truly repent, to seek your forgiveness and a fresh start today to walk in the Spirit, to keep in step with the Spirit.

Father, if there are people in this room who would say while they know they feel the battle every day, they are making progress and following the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

Dear God, affirm them, encourage them to keep on, not let up, but to keep on relying upon the power that you provide through your indwelling Spirit.

[31 : 41] But dear God, if there are people in this room who are not indwelt by the Spirit, they don't have this struggle. They just live any way they want to live with relatively no guilt.

Help them to see, dear God, that if they continue that way, they will not inherit your kingdom. They'll not go to heaven when they die. They're not your children. But God, we pray right now that you will create within them a desire to turn from this way of life.

a desire to truly trust Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Father, help them right now to call upon Jesus to save them. I want everybody to continue in an attitude of prayer.

You listen to the Lord and you obey Him. Do what He's calling you to do in these next few minutes. I'd be happy to pray with you during this time if that's what you'd like.

You'd like that kind of help. If you want to talk about these things, I'd be happy to do that now. I'd be happy to do it anytime, anywhere. But let's make sure as we leave here today we are living under the power of the Spirit of God who indwells us as a Christian.

[33 : 01] thank you. I'm sending you to God's Murray through the power of the Holy Spirit of God