



Monday, May 13, 2024 - Battle Walk

Galatians 5:16-17

16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 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.

Do you realize that you are in a battle everyday? The battle you are engaged in is one that is happening all around us, but we are rarely aware of it. This battle is one that rages in the life of every believer. Simply put, there is a battle that exists between what our flesh wants to do and what the Spirit wants us to do. There are days where we surrender to the Spirit and enjoy great victory. However, there are other days when we succumb to the flesh and feel defeated. This week we are going to explore the final verses of Galatians 5 together, not only to become aware of the battle we are engaged in, but how we can ensure victory each and every day.

Each day we are faced with a choice - walk in the ways of the Spirit or walk according to the flesh. As followers of Jesus, we are called to walk in the Spirit. Paul exhorts the Galatians, and us, by reminding us of the results of walking in the Spirit. This serves almost like a litmus test of how we are doing spiritually. He says that we are to walk by the Spirit. By doing so, we will not gratify (or give in to) the flesh or its desires. Paul gives the reasoning in verse 17 as to why we have power over the flesh and its desires. Simply put, the desires of the flesh and the desires of the Spirit are opposed to one another. You cannot serve them both and live a spiritually fulfilled life. As Joshua declares - choose this day whom you will serve. The desires of the flesh or the desires of the Spirit. These verses help us to see clearly the battle that we are in. The flesh desires to prevent you from doing the things of the Spirit, the things you, as a believer, want to do. To that end, persevere in the Spirit. Hold fast in faith. Call upon the Lord and He will give you strength.

Take some time today to consider the battle that exists in your heart and mind. Are you more prone to give in to the desires of the flesh or the Spirit? Why do you think that is? If you find yourself prone to the desires of the flesh, do not fret. Confess your sin to the Lord and repent. Replace unhealthy and fleshly practices with those which draw you closer to the Lord.

Tuesday, May 14, 2024 - Flesh Works

Galatians 5:18-21

18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions,

divisions, 21 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.

There are some things that we do that defy explanation. The struggle that Paul had in his flesh (see Romans 7:15-25) is the same struggle we face. We do the things we don't want to do. And the things we don't want to do, we end up doing. One of the things that is critical for us to win the battle between flesh and Spirit is to understand what the difference is between the works of the flesh versus the works of the Spirit. Over the next two days we are going to be studying these. You will quickly see just how opposed they are to one another and why the works of the Spirit are superior.

Paul encourages the Galatians to be led by the Spirit, through whom there is freedom in the law. In other words, as we walk in the Spirit, we do so in freedom from the penalty of the law of sin and death. He then wants to clearly communicate the things that result from indulging the fleshly desires. Notice what Paul says - the works of the flesh are evident. In other words, they are not hidden. Rather, they are well known and fully known. Paul then lists off 15 works of the flesh that, as he says, are very evident. As you read through this list our minds make a checklist of ones we may have committed, but more often the ones that others we know have committed. I would dare say that there is not a single person reading this today who can escape this list without at least one ding (myself included). This just goes to show the depth of our sinfulness and the greater depth of God's love, grace, and forgiveness. Paul makes a definitive statement at the end of verse 21 - those who do these things will not inherit the kingdom of God. The idea Paul conveys here is not only have these things been done but they are being done continually. To continue in the works of the flesh gives evidence of an unrepentant heart and an unrenewed life.

Take some time today and examine the frequency of any works of the flesh in your life. Where you find something in your life that is more than should be there, pause, and ask the Lord for forgiveness, cleansing, and deliverance. If there is a particular area of struggle, consider enlisting a trusted brother (for men) or sister (for women) to share your struggle with and to help encourage you and hold you accountable.

Wednesday, May 15, 2024 - Spirit Works

Galatians 5:22-23

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

I love fruit. Fruit is delicious. In fact, there are very few fruits that I don't enjoy. Apples may be among my favorite. I like oranges, grapes, and bananas too. Fruit is like God's version of candy - sweet and tasty. In the same way, as followers of Jesus we are to be fruit bearers as well (who knew we were supposed to be fruity). All joking aside, the fruit that is born from our lives is to be of a spiritual nature. The fruit of your life is revealed by the actions of your life. The actions of your life reveal the desires that you are fulfilling - those of the flesh or the Spirit.

Just as the works of the flesh are evident, so are the works (fruit) of the Spirit. Paul lists off eight fruit of the Spirit. Another way to think about this fruit are the ways the Holy Spirit is manifested in and through the life of the believer. Foremost among them is love. Everything you do as a follower of Jesus is the result of love. Love for God and love for people. Love is the first domino that pushes the subsequent dominoes to fall. One leads to another. Love leads to joy, which leads to peace, which leads to patience, and so forth. When you think about a follower of Jesus, these are things that should immediately come to mind when describing them and how they live. Keep in mind, these are things that will continue to grow in you as you grow toward spiritual maturity. Paul concludes verse 23 stating that there is no law against these things. Quite the contrast to the works of the flesh, don't you think?

Take some time today to inventory the fruit of the Spirit in your life. Which of these do you seem to have in abundance? Which of these seem to be scarce? When you find a spiritual fruit lacking in your life, ask the Lord to help you grow that fruit, knowing and understanding that He will provide opportunities for you to grow in that area.

Thursday, May 16, 2024 - Life and Death

Galatians 5:24

24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

We are precariously balanced between life and death. In a moment, in a flash, we can take the step from life to death. I know, not a very encouraging thought. However, in order for us to fully grasp Paul's instruction in today's reading, we need to know and understand just how fine a line exists between life and death. If we want to truly live life as God intended, then we have to understand that it comes by way of death.

Kill the flesh! That may seem a bit extreme, but if you truly desire to live a full and fulfilling spiritual life, that is exactly what you have to do. Paul says that those who belong to Christ have already crucified the flesh along with its passions and desires. That seems pretty definitive to me. The key phrase to understand and keep in mind here is 'those who belong to Christ.' What does that mean? It means those who have professed their faith in Jesus and fully surrendered themselves to His lordship and leadership. Why is it necessary to crucify the flesh with its passions and desires? The desires of the flesh only seek to destroy you and pull you further away from a relationship with the Lord. The only way to overcome them is to crucify them. It was for this purpose that Jesus was crucified. His crucifixion is what enables you to crucify the desires of the flesh and find true freedom in Him. Taking Paul's words to heart, then, you, if you are truly a follower of Jesus, must nail the desires of your flesh to the cross and leave them there to die. In other words, don't resuscitate them. Let them die and discover the true life that comes as a result.

What is the evidence in your life that you belong to Christ? How do your thoughts, actions, and words testify to your identity in Christ? What desires, specifically, do you need to crucify? What is keeping you from doing that

today? Spend some time today in quiet reflection about your life and the changes that the Lord needs to make in you. Then ask the Lord to begin the process of renewal and restoration in your life.

Friday, May 17, 2024 - Spirit Life

Galatians 5:25-26

25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

The life you have through Jesus Christ is worth living. If we truly desire to live for God's glory, then we must make the conscious decision each day to live in a way that is worthy of our calling in Christ and that glorifies and honors God. For the true believer, this is a non-negotiable practice each day and throughout the day. Today, we will see that the life to which we have been called to live is one that is found only through fellowship with the Holy Spirit.

Paul exhorts us to live by the Spirit. How do we know if we are living by the Spirit? According to Paul it is based upon how we live. He contends that if we are living by the Spirit, then we will keep in step with the Spirit. As the Spirit is moving, we are moving with Him. Where He leads, we will go. Based on what Paul says here, the Spirit is always moving. As He moves, He moves us toward greater Christ-likeness. Keep in mind, the role of the Holy Spirit is to bring to mind the things that Jesus taught (see John 14:26). He does this because Jesus' teaching is foundational and formational to our life. It is also worthy of mention that if we are keeping step with the Spirit that we are following His leadership. Following implies humility. This idea comes into much clearer view in verse 26. Here, Paul warns against conceitedness/pride, the provocation of others and envy. When your focus is on the Lord, you cannot give your attention to who others are and what they have. We would do well to heed Paul's words.

Take some time today to reflect how well you have been walking with the Spirit over the past week, the past month, the past six months, and the past year. Hopefully you are seeing some progress. If you are not, or are not seeing the progress that you like, give some thought about what changes you need to make to ensure you are keeping in step with the Spirit.

*This week's devotions were prepared for you by Troy Allen.