

“Every Christian’s Battle”

1/26/20

Gal. 5:16 “But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.”

On the day you and I accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, God gave us the wonderful gift of His Holy Spirit.

He came to dwell within us that we might have the power to live victoriously over the Christian’s 3 great enemies—the world, the flesh, and the devil!

Now, according to our text, every Christian experiences a conflict they never had before their salvation—the battle between the flesh and the Spirit.

So...What is “the flesh”?

The flesh is our fallen nature that pulls us away from God and always rebels against His will.

The flesh is always the culprit in a fall into sin.

The Apostle James wrote, “When you are being tempted, do not say, “God is tempting me.” God is never tempted to do wrong,

and he never tempts anyone else. 14 Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away.”—James 1:13-14 NLT

Someone described the flesh this way: “The flesh provides the tinder on which the devil's temptations can kindle.”

Another person wrote, “The Spirit-led life is a life of conflict, because it is in constant combat with the old ways of the flesh that continue to tempt and seduce the believer.”

Paul explains the cause of this inner conflict:

Gal. 5: 17 NASB “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.”

The only hope for escape from the flesh is its total execution, which happened on the Cross of Christ.

Hence, Paul declared: “I am crucified with Christ...”

But the way this becomes a daily reality for the believer is by walking in the Spirit—“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.”

So then, if that's the route to victory, how DO we walk in the Spirit?

Paul tells us in six simple words—Be filled with the Holy Spirit!

Eph. 5:18 NLT "Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit,"

Now, notice how Paul compares two things—drunkenness and being filled with the Spirit.

We say that someone who is drunk is "under the influence"—they are totally under the power and control of alcohol.

And in contrast, a person who is filled with the Spirit is under the influence, power, and control of the Holy Spirit."

But the comparison ends there.

Being filled with the Spirit doesn't cause a kind of spiritual drunkenness where we lose control of ourselves, as with alcohol.

The fact is, when the Spirit of God controls us, we are *the most self-controlled* we could possibly be.

Paul told young Timothy, “For God did not give us a spirit of timidity *or* cowardice *or* fear, but [He has given us a spirit] of power and of love....and self-control]”—2 Tim. 1:7 Amp

And alcohol weakens us—it numbs the parts of the brain that give a person self-control, wisdom, understanding, discrimination, judgment, and discernment.

People who are under the influence of alcohol lose their God-given inhibitions and make decisions they would never make normally.

In short—a person who is drunk loses control to alcohol, and with it often their honor.

But being filled with the Spirit does the exact opposite.

Being filled with the Spirit is not a depressant, it’s a stimulant.

When the Spirit controls a person, it stimulates them to become their best and reach their highest.

They become all that God meant them to be.

Christians under the influence of the Holy Spirit have accomplished some of the greatest and best intellectual discoveries and achievements in history!

So the key issue with being filled with the Holy Spirit is not, “How much of the Holy Spirit do I have?”, but “How much does the Holy Spirit have of me?”

It all comes down to what is controlling you—the flesh or the Holy Spirit!

So the bottom line is—If you are filled by the Holy Spirit, you are simply being controlled by the Spirit.

So, how can I assure that each and every day, I am being controlled by the Holy Spirit?

Let me give you two simple ways:

First,

I. Obey Him

The Bible says, "For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God" (Ro. 8:14 NIV).

"...be being filled with the [Holy] Spirit *and* constantly guided by Him" (Eph 5:18 Amp).

The Spirit of God prompts and nudges the true child of God on a regular, daily basis.

Jesus said, "But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come" (John 16:13 NIV).

So according to Jesus, we can expect the Holy Spirit to speak to our hearts, and to guide us in life.

The Apostle John also adds that He will teach us:

"As for you, the anointing (the Holy Spirit) you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But...his anointing teaches you about all things..." (1 John 2:27 NIV).

So according to the Bible, the Holy Spirit will guide, speak, and teach the believer in Jesus Christ.

And when the Holy Spirit speaks, guides, and teaches us, we're to OBEY His direction.

When we do this, we are walking in the Holy Spirit!

A second way you can be assured you're filled with and controlled by the Holy Spirit is to:

II. Set your thoughts on the things of the Spirit

Rom 8:5 NKJV "For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those *who live* according to the Spirit, (set their minds on) the things of the Spirit."

Here's an undeniable law of life:

—Your day will go the direction of your thoughts.

This is why we must, first thing every day, get into God's Word and prayer.

When you do this FIRST, you are setting the direction of your thoughts for that day on the things of God.

“...but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit.”—Ro. 8:5

ILLUS: GPS—I set my GPS *first* before going somewhere, and it sets my direction for the rest of the journey.

Likewise when I “set my thoughts” FIRST THING on the things of God, it sets the direction for that day!

Those who live according to the flesh are always thinking about and feeding on things that are prompted by their flesh.

But those who walk in the Spirit set their thoughts on what pleases the Spirit—the Word of God, the Lord Jesus, doing good deeds, and so on.

This is why Paul wrote, “Finally, believers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable *and* worthy of respect, whatever is right *and* confirmed by God’s word, whatever is pure *and* wholesome, whatever is lovely *and* brings peace, whatever is admirable *and* of good repute; if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think continually on these things [center your mind on them, and implant them in your heart]”—Phil 4:8 Amp

It comes down to this—you will be controlled by whatever you feed on the most, the things of the Spirit or the things of the flesh!

One new convert described it this way, “It’s like there is a big dogfight going on in my head. My old, bad dog that wants me to go back to the bars, is fighting with this new good dog that wants me to go to church, love my wife, and tell others about Christ.”

He was asked, “Which one is winning.” He replied, “I guess the one I feed the most!”

There is a battle going on every day between the flesh (the bad dog) and the spirit (the good dog).

To be victorious in the daily battle we must starve the bad dog, and feed the good dog.

Being filled with the Spirit is to be controlled by the Spirit.

And two ways we can be sure we’re controlled by the Spirit is to obey the Spirit’s guidance and promptings, and to first thing each day set the direction of our thoughts on what pleases the Spirit!

