



Lesson 8

RG and the HOLY SPIRIT

KEY PASSAGE(S)

¹⁴ “For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God” (Rom. 8:14).

THE BIG PICTURE – THE Story

Living in *Story* forms the bulk of our immediate existence. Sanctification is the Christian life (Cf. Lesson 5). Walking in the Spirit defines the Christian life. Believers are led by the Holy Spirit, but sometimes we live our lives as if we have no sense of direction or guidance. Many have been taught the condition to being led by the Holy Spirit is Spirit-filling and the condition to Spirit-filling is Spirit-baptism. This again is unfortunate. **The Spirit filled and driven life is a fruit of the gospel.** It is nothing we can work for, but from. Our wondering whether or not we are Spirit filled should give way to wonderment at being Spirit filled. This is what the gospel produces in and through His people. Remember, always go back to the gospel.

We believe regular Christian teaching on this subject has made the Spirit’s leading more mysterious than it actually is. Does He lead and do we “feel” His direction? This study contends, yes, and it is in and through His Word. What does His leading look like in and through His people? It is the intent of this study to consider the answer to these questions.

Q1 - Is Spirit filling conditional?

INITIAL TRUTHS TO REMEMBER

- The Rule of God over and in all things renders certain the outworking of His will (Dan. 4:35; Ps. 135:5).
- He shall complete that which He alone began (Phil. 1:6; 1 Thess. 5:24).

BASIC IDEAS:

1. The Holy Spirit does for His people what they could never do for themselves.
2. He is working in them and through them the righteousness given to them.
3. Believers are to realize and enjoy all that is already true and believe He will complete what He began.

- Image-bearers have the ability to choose between multiple options (Josh. 24:15). Such options, however, are finite and governed by their nature.
- Their choices are the outworking of His rule (Phil. 2:12, 13). **A believer's life is the outworking of God's rule through his choices.**
- **Obedience, fruit bearing, keeping, working are biblical synonyms and mark a believer's life** because the purpose of God in and through His people will not fail (1 John 5:1-4). However, none of this is humanly possible, nor is **human effort the center/emphasis of the activity.**
- Disobedience is a temporal part of the process with a specific purpose. Though normal, it is neither obligatory nor acceptable (1 John 3:4-10).

OVERVIEW OF THE LESSON

In light of sanctification (i.e. the Christian life [Cf. Lesson 5]) and the New Testament commands (Cf. Lesson 7), the ministry of the Holy Spirit is spoken of but without real clarity.

The key to living in grace is found in Galatians 5:16-26. All of us love keys. We love the bottom line. In our passage before us, Paul gives us the key to grace living. He is about to unlock the door to this whole mystery of how to make the transfer from law to grace, from bondage to that of delicious liberty. How do we love everyone (vv. 13, 14)? How do we keep from biting and devouring one another (v.15)? What the Holy Spirit is for us is the result of the Jesus' work on the cross. This idea cannot be separated from what Christ did and is doing. All of this is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

Many believers have lost sight of positional truth (i.e. the cross [Cf. Lesson 4]) in their understanding of progressive sanctification (i.e. the Christian life [Cf. Lesson 5]). **They have tragically made progressive sanctification a decidedly performance-based means of approval and thus acceptance before the Father. Their emphasis on external conformity for religious spirituality is emphatically non-grace.** Paul's epistle to the Galatians is a correction of this bondage.

Without an understanding of what forces are at work within you, it is impossible to rest in the victory that is yours in Christ. Paul, very appropriately, describes the conflict and the two opposing sides. The intent of this lesson is to unpack Galatians 5:16-26.

Q2 - Is the Holy Spirit working in the life of His people?

Q3 - Is His working inevitable?

TODAY'S LESSON

I. The Principle of Grace Living (Gal. 5:16)

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

Notice what Paul states. These two elements are so diametrically opposed to each other that to be in the one automatically excludes the other.

He begins with an imperative, "Walk in the Spirit." Paul is speaking of a continuous habitual action. Why is Paul telling us to walk in the Spirit? We are to "walk in the Spirit" because we are "in the Spirit." Before we go any further, **I would like us to attempt to understand the idea of "walking in the Spirit."**

First, notice the following statements within the paragraph: "Walk in the Spirit (v.16)," "Led by the Spirit (v.18)," "Fruit of the Spirit (v.22)," "Live in the Spirit (v. 25)," and "Walk in the Spirit (v.25)."

I believe "walk" (v.16), "led" (v.18), "fruit" (v.22), and "live" (v.25), are synonyms in this paragraph. Based on the context in which we find ourselves, I would argue that the previous four phrases are in parallel and thus synonymous. To walk, be led, bear fruit, live, and walk are all saying the same thing. They are not different aspects or degrees of the same thing. They are the same thing. If they are distinct, then the passage does not make sense.

Believers, because of their position in Christ, walk, are led by, bear the fruit of, and live by the Holy Spirit. **As a consequence of their position in Christ, they manifest the work of the Holy Spirit in and through their earthen vessels.**

Second, we are invited to "walk by the Spirit" because we are "in the Spirit."

Paul is asking us to do something that is already true. He is inviting us to be who we already are. This same idea is found in 1 Corinthians 5:7, Colossians 3:1-4, and 1 Thessalonians 4:1. The appeal to "act" is based on what is already positionally true.

The admonition of Paul in Galatians 5:25 is to live your position. He could just have easily said, "If you are justified, live sanctified," or "Let the redeemed live like the redeemed."

This filling is not in opposition to indwelling or His permanent residence in His people, but rather an invitation to be sensitive to His working in and through His people. **In many ways, the three ideas are synonymous concepts.** There might be some particular nuance between the three, but they are working synonyms. The filling of the Spirit produces the fruit of the Spirit.

Third, I believe Romans 6, 8, and Galatians 5 are parallel in thought.

Romans 6 tells me that as a believer united with Christ

- I am not to continue in sin (6:1)
- I am not to live in it (6:2). This is the same idea found in Galatians 5:21 and 1 John 3:4 and following.
- I am no longer a slave to sin (6:6, 17, 20)

- I am freed from sin (6:18)
- I am dead to sin (6:11)

Because this is true,

- I am not to let sin reign in my mortal body (6:12)
- If I choose to sin, I reap the consequence of its inherent demerit (6:16, 23).

Romans 8 teaches we are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit (vv. 8, 9). Galatians 5 is running in parallel to all of the above.

The question is, “Does the Spirit of God dwell within you?” If yes, then what follows is true (Rom. 8:9, 10). If no, then you are an enemy of God and you are not pleasing to Him. There does not appear to be any condition between the two stated.

The passage is not suggesting disconnect between life according to the Spirit and putting to death the deeds of the body. **If you are living according to the Spirit, you are putting to death the deeds of the body.** This same idea is present in Colossians 3:1-4 and then verse 5.

Notice the language: Those led by the Spirit are the Sons of God. You do not become a Son by being led; you are led because you are a Son. You cannot have one without the other.

If someone is walking in the Spirit, they are led and are in turn bearing His fruit and following the Spirit’s promptings. You do not have one without the other three. In your choice, you might choose not to enjoy what is already true. Nevertheless, **your unbelief cannot make false what is true. Paul’s appeal is for us to practice our position.** Verses 18 and 25 make this clear. Both verses use what is called a first-class condition. Paul’s assumption is the saved are walking, being led, and bearing fruit because they are living in the Spirit. **Those who are not living in the Spirit are not saved** and thus still under the Law and manifesting the works of the flesh.

After the introduction of the commands he then uses the double negative. He says, “Those who are walking in the Spirit are **no never** fulfilling the lusts of the flesh.”

Fourth, by walking in the Spirit the lusts of the flesh shall never be fulfilled [Strong double negative with aorist active subjunctive]. You will not be characterized by sin. **If you are walking in the Spirit, the pattern of your life will be Son-marked and not sin-marked.**

By walking in the Spirit this pattern of death will no longer be fulfilled in your life. This is the same truth John brings out in 1 John 3:4-10.

⁴Everyone who **practices** (present active participle) sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. ⁵You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. ⁶No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. ⁷Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who **practices** (present active participle) righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; ⁸ the one who **practices** (present active participle) sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. ⁹ No one who is born of God **practices** (present active indicative) sin, because His seed

abides in him; and he **cannot** (**ou dunatai**) sin, because he is born of God. ¹⁰ By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not **practice** (present active participle) righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother" (1 John 3:4-10).

What is the big idea? It is found in the word "practice." Throughout the passage, there is the constant emphasis of a pattern, habit, and lifestyle. **There is a big difference between a point in time and a pattern of life.** Because of our old nature the believer still sins, but because he is born of God, he is not characterized as a sinner (Cf. Lesson 9, Point II).

I believe his thought is to believe what God has done is true and enough. There is nothing more for me to do. **Yet his choice of language still causes the believer to wonder if he has ever "done" enough? And that is what each of the above cited resources suggest. We believe there is nothing we have to do to get it. We got it, so do it. Moreover, the doing believes that we already got it.**

The "doing" believes He does it. It is not something I do. It has been done. It is not something I can merit or maintain by works. It is all of grace.

As a Christian, we are walking, being led, and bearing fruit, because we are living in the Spirit. We are abiding in Him, thus we are not practicing sin. **Sin happens in the life of His people, but that is not going to be our focus. We have better things to think on than yesterday's sin, today's failure, or tomorrow's temptation.**

Q4 - What happens if we separate the idea of walking from filling, etc.?

Q5 - Does Galatians 5 explain the conditions to being led by or filled with the Spirit, etc.?

II. The Pressure Against Grace Living (Gal. 5:17)

- ¹⁷For 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.

The flesh is such a powerful adversary that without the Spirit's intervention and empowerment we are helpless against its forces. Make no mistake. The flesh is completely opposed to the Holy Spirit. **Yet what we once were in Adam, we no longer are, although we still have.**

We have within us a sin nature that hates God and is always standing in opposition to Him. This sin nature is non-redeemable and will be lost forever at death or the second coming of Christ. Our new nature is given to us by God and is as righteous and perfect as Christ Himself (Cf. Lesson 3). Grace is now reigning over "us." As a believer, we are to know, reckon, and yield/submit ourselves to this reign. This is the Romans 6 truth. It is as "we" yield to this reign that we begin to enjoy it. Make no mistake. Grace is reigning right now in our lives as believers. Our "know, reckon, and yield," is simply acknowledging what is already true. **Our non-yielding is not stopping the reign of grace and our yielding is not starting the reign of grace.**

It is already here. Whether or not we enjoy it lies in resting in His work.

The word “contrary” is translated with “oppose” and “adversary” in other passages. **The flesh is the adversary of the Spirit.** The tense usage suggests continual opposition. It is because of this truth that we conclude our flesh is non-redeemable and our new man is non-corruptible.

Q6 – Are the workings of the Holy Spirit and the workings of the flesh compatible?

III. The Promise for Grace Living (Gal. 5:18)

- ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

What has been Paul’s point in Galatians? As a believer, you are no longer under the Law. The Law cannot make you a member of God’s covenant community and the Law cannot keep you in the covenant community. Why does he make such a claim? It is because you are being led by the Holy Spirit.

Q7 – What is meant by not being under the Law?

IV. The Consequences of Spiritual Fruit or Grace Living (Gal. 5:23b-26)

There are four consequences from the following verses.

A. Grace living frees us from the weight of the law (v.23b).

- 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. ²³ gentleness, self-control; **against such things there is no law.**

The expression of fruit in the life of the believer is as diversified as individual personalities and cultures and as limitless as our infinite God. Thus, we should stop trying to put people into our little boxes or conform them to our man-centered image.

B. Grace living frees us from the passions and desires of the flesh (v.24).

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

This crucifixion is probably referring to our initial salvation experience. See also Galatians 2:20 and Colossians 3:1-5.

Q8 - Are believers free from the power of sin?

C. Grace living is Spirit living (v.25).

- ²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.

Grace-living exhibits the fruit of the Spirit. Because I am living in the Spirit, I am also to be walking in the Spirit. Yet how do I “walk in the Spirit?” What must I “do?” What condition is given? Not-a-one except, “Since you already live in Him - Walk in Him.” The “condition” is to believe what He did and said is true (Rom. 6:1, 2; 8:4-9). The only “condition” to “walking” (practicing what is already true) is that you have functional legs and you know how (and both “conditions” are already true).

In Adam, we “acted” like descendants of Adam, and in Christ we “act” like descendants of Christ. Both actions come from our natures.

D. Grace living is selfless living (v.26).

- ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

The causation of loving the Lord leads to the consequence of loving one another. Law-living exhibits the works of the flesh.

CONCLUSION

The Spirit’s leading looks like the Spirit’s fruit. The Spirit’s leading looks like the Spirit’s gifting. When we are bearing fruit and exercising our giftedness, we are revealing His leading. The Spirit’s leading in and through His people looks like “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Gal. 5:22, 23). The Spirit’s leading in and through His people looks like “prophecy, service, teaching; exhortation; giving, leading, and mercy” (Rom. 12:6-8). Believers are filled with the Spirit as a consequence of being baptized by the Spirit who thereby manifest the fruit of the Spirit and this is what it means to be led of the Spirit.

Who I am	What I do automatically	How it’s done Or accomplished
Unbeliever - in Adam	Walk	According to the Flesh
A Believer - in Christ	Walk	According to the Spirit

Q9 - What difference does it make as to the Spirit's filling being conditional or unconditional?

Q10 - Are you walking in the Spirit?

Q11 - What is the one condition for the Holy Spirit to be working in your life?

FOR FURTHER STUDY: Romans 6 and Romans 8.

NEXT LESSON - RG and Personal Sin