

DISCIPLESHIP TEACHING AND TRAINING

DISCIPLES ARE CALLED TO WALK IN THE SPIRIT

Galatians 5:16-26, NKJV

16 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.

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

19 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness,

20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies,

21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

24 And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

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

Galatians is a letter written by the apostle Paul to the churches in the territory and the province of Galatia. The newly converted Christians were being challenged by false teachers who were attempting to bring the Galatian believers under the bondage of the law. Paul argues emphatically that the gospel was about grace and faith in Christ. The Galatian letter is perhaps Paul's most stern and straightforward message. Paul would give no slack to allow for a moment the false teachers any credibility. Paul argues that there is only one true gospel (Gal. 1:6-9).

When we come to the fifth chapter of this letter, we understand that Paul is addressing the disciples how they are to live as believers in the Lord. After one comes to believe in the Lord for salvation, then that believer is challenged to begin a spiritual journey of sanctification. Our lives are to follow the pattern lived by our Savior.

The Imperative is that believers are to “Walk in the Spirit” (Gal. 5:16).

5:16 “But I say,” – In the preceding passage they were urged to use their freedom aright and to exercise their love in mutual service. Still the Christian life is not merely the response to law imposed from without, however excellent that law may be, it is the result of a new spirit quickened within. Nevertheless, just as law must be obeyed, so must the spirit of the believer yield to the guidance, and receive the power, communicated to it by the Holy Spirit of God.

Walk – this is a figurative use of the word, signifying the whole round of the activities of the individual life whether of the unregenerate, or of the believer. It is applied to the observance of religious ordinances, as well as to moral conduct. The Christian is to walk in newness of life, after the Spirit, in honesty, by faith, in good works, in love, in wisdom, in truth, after the commandments of the Lord. And negatively, not after the flesh, not after the manner of men, not in craftiness, not by sight, not in vanity of the mind, not disorderly.

In the Spirit – That is through the agency of the Holy Spirit. The believer is quickened by Him, and is taught by Him to cherish this hope, and is maintained by Him to continue therein. The Holy Spirit is received by an act of faith, and by the continued exercise of this receptive faculty, faith, the blessings He brings are appropriated. Thus, the whole spiritual life of the Christian is a life of faith, life through the Holy Spirit.

And you shall not fulfill – this word may mean, a, simply to end anything, as a journey, literally, or metaphorically, or a discourse, or an experience of

trial, or a period of time. This word may also mean b, to “complete,” as an appointed work is completed.

Not – in no wise. Then sentence may be read either, a. as an assurance to the believer that if he walks by the Spirit, if he submits to the leading of the Holy Spirit of God, refusing to order his life according to the promptings of the flesh and the conventions of the age, then he shall not be overmastered by the desires of the flesh, but on the contrary shall have the victory over, and be enabled to live superior to them; or , be, as a command followed by a prohibition, the first positive, “submit to the leading of the Holy Spirit”; the second negative, “refuse to order your life according to the promptings of the flesh and the conventions of this age.”

5:17 For – introduces the ground on which the assurance (a) or prohibition (b) of v. 16 is based. The Spirit and the flesh are mutually antagonistic in nature, and where the expressed condition is fulfilled the victory of the Spirit is assured to the believer.

Lusts – this is basically a word which means “desires.” It can mean on one hand the desires of good men for good things, and of the desires of men for things without moral quality, as well as of desires evil in themselves.

Against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh – The Holy Spirit is intended, as in the preceding verse. As he had exhorted them to walk by (in) the Spirit, so he warns them to expect opposition in endeavoring so to do.

For – introducing the explanation of the opposition between the flesh and the Holy Spirit.

These are contrary the one to the other – The flesh, what man became in his nature in consequence of the Fall, with its propensity for evil, and the Holy Spirit, who is God, are, in the nature of the case, mutually antagonistic and impossible of reconciliation.

That – In the first case the thought is that the object of the striving of the Spirit in the believer is that he may be saved from yielding to the evil tendencies of his own nature; in the other case it is that the conflict in the believer which hinders his doing the things that he would, whether good or evil, is explained by the contrariety of the two forces at work within him.

You may not do the things that you would – “in order that the things you desire these you may not do,” the things toward which fallen man naturally turns, and which are enumerated in v. 19 as “the works of the flesh.” This is the characteristic of Christian liberty as an experience; since the believer is indwelt by the Holy Spirit it is no longer inevitable that he must yield to the evil motions of the flesh, he shall, if the condition of vv. 16 and 18 is fulfilled, enjoy happy liberty from all such bondage. And not only so, as he yields himself to the guidance and strengthening of the Spirit he is enabled to refuse “to do those things which are not fitting.”