

## THE BOOK OF GALATIANS

"Walking by the Spirit"

Galatians 5:16-18

### Introduction

1. The argument of this Book of Galatians is absolutely clear. A hell-bound sinner is justified (i.e. declared righteous before the triune holy God) by grace through faith in the absolutely perfect work of Jesus Christ alone -- plus or minus nothing!

2. The result of such a justification is freedom or liberty (5:1, 13). Now this liberty is 1) a restricted liberty (v. 13), 2) a commanded liberty (v. 13), 3) a related liberty (v. 14) and finally 4) an endangered liberty (v. 15).

3. There is recorded in Scripture, blessed be God, a glorious alternative to the works system, not only for justification, but for sanctification (i.e. a life of separation to God from the flesh). It is this kind of living unto the Lord which is now taken up by the apostle Paul under the direction of the Holy Spirit. Note the three significant areas addressed.

1. Area #1. The SOURCE of sanctification v. 16

a. By counsel "But this I say . . . ." No matter what men may say, the apostle has a word from the Lord. This is divine revelation i.e. information given by the Holy Spirit which we would not otherwise know. It is only found in the Bible. The world's libraries cannot and do not provide this for us! (cf. 4:1).

b. By conduct "Walk by the Spirit . . . ."

What a depth phrase this is! The verb is present tense, hence advances continuous action. The root significance of the verb is to "walk around." Perhaps the idea of conduct is primary, but surely is included. It is a statement about living or life. But the real issue here is the prepositional phrase used to translate the case of "Spirit." While the form for dative, instrumental, and locative cases is all the same, the most meaningful exegesis of the noun form is instrumental i.e. "by means of the Spirit." Hence, the walk of the believer is to be 1) strengthened by the Spirit, 2) regulated by the spirit, 3) restrained by the Spirit, 4) constrained by the Spirit, 5) hedged by the Spirit, 6) progressed by the Spirit. Simply: the phrase means that the child of God is to walk in full reliance upon the ability and power of the Holy Spirit Who indwells (i.e. lives in).

c. By concern "Ye shall not fulfill . . . ."

The verb here means to end something or to complete something. Both may be true here. Moreover, the form of the verb may be a strong future (assurance) or an imperative (prohibition). Either one is acceptable in form, but the double negative, "in no wise" may favor the future. The point is this: the believer who walks by total dependance upon the Holy Spirit will in no wise fulfill the lust of the flesh. What a marvelous statement that it is possible to live above the flesh! Obviously, in this case, flesh is what provokes evil desires.

Glory to God for a sanctification which is so powerful!

2. Area #2. The STRUGGLE for sanctification v. 17.

Remember: salvation is addition, not subtraction. The divine nature is received at the moment of the new birth (2 Pet. 1:4). The old fallen nature received by human procreation from Adam (#1 in Genesis) remains in the born again believer.

a. The struggle is stated. "For the flesh lusteth . . . ."

The connective "for" of this verse introduces the ground upon which the previous verse is based. The word lust (i.e. desire) is used of the Lord (Luke 22; 15), angels (1 Pet. 1:12), of good men (Heb. 6:11). Here the flesh is really antagonistic, hence the verb is used offensively.

b. The struggle is explained

The flesh and the Spirit are antithetical. There is no personal interest between the two. It is a duel. They are lined up against one another.

c. The struggle is purposed

Here the Holy Spirit lusts in the believer (i.e. strives) so that the believer will not keep on doing the things which relate to the old nature. Hence, there is victory for the believer who walks by means of the Spirit of God. Hallelujah! It is not inevitable that a believer will yield to the desires of the flesh.

3. Area #3. The STATE in sanctification v. 18.

Ah, what a word in this verse. The lordship of sin over a believer is virtually a necessity under law (i.e. works system). It demands obedience, but law cannot supply the power to perform. On the contrary, the grace--faith system accepts inherent weakness in the believer, but provides sufficient and constant power to perform (Eph. 3:16). Hence, above it is the Spirit versus the flesh (v. 17). Here it is the Spirit versus law. This double antagonism of the Spirit must be taken seriously.

### Conclusion

A believer is one who is in right relationship with Christ. A separated believer is one who is in right relationship with the Holy Spirit. Let's be serious about this whole matter. Are you in right relationship with the Holy Spirit? Are you at this moment living your life by the Holy Spirit? Oh God, help us! Amen!