

Galatians 5: 25 and 26; “Walking in the Spirit”, Message # 52 in the series – “Christ has Set us Free”, a Bible Study conducted on April 13th, 2016, by Pastor Paul Rendall at his home.

What does it mean to walk in the Spirit? That is what we want to think about this evening. Verse 25 is saying that if we truly have life, the life of God in our soul which is the Spirit of God, then then we ought to be walking in the Spirit. That is, we ought to be doing those things which are pleasing to God. So this evening we want to look, 1st of all, at the fact that all true Christians have been given the life of Christ in their spirit. And 2nd – We want to understand that if we have received the Spirit, we ought to walk in the Spirit. And 3rd – We want to think about an injunction which flows from this truth; not to be conceited. First the doctrinal and then the practical; that is the good order for learning the ways of the Lord.

1st – Let’s look at the fact that all true Christians have received the Spirit of God.

“If we live in the Spirit”.... We should understand from this phrase that the Apostle Paul is not speaking about this in a doubtful way, but rather he is stating a fact. He could have just as easily have stated it – “Since we live in the Spirit”. But since the word of God is infallible, we should consider what it is that the Spirit is saying to us here, through the apostle Paul’s words. Paul says: “If we live in the Spirit”; which implies, that there are some, indeed we can say that there are many, who do not “live in the Spirit”. Sometimes, as a person examines themselves, there might be reason to question whether they have truly been saved; especially if there has never really been a change in their thinking and behavior since they professed to be a Christian. Some people mistakenly think that they can live the Christian life on their own without the Lord coming into their heart and setting up His residence there, through the Person of the Holy Spirit. They need life to be given to them in Jesus’ name, but they do not understand that. They need to be saved from their sins by faith in Jesus Christ, but they do not want to believe this.

Let’s look at a verse which will show us the truth about this matter. Turn with me over to Romans chapter 8, verses 5-11. “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, the things of the Spirit.” “For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.” “So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.” But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. “ “Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.” I have explained to you in past messages that those who live according to the flesh are those who do not know the Lord. The flesh is that selfish and sinful principle which all unbelieving people have within themselves, due to Adam’s sin in the beginning. When Adam sinned, sin entered his nature. And therefore, because Adam was the representative, or federal head of our whole race, he has passed down that sinful nature to every descendant of his. The sinful nature is something that everyone born into the world has, with the exception of our Lord Jesus Christ. He was born into the world sinless as a Man because His was a virgin birth.

To be carnally minded is to be concerned only with the things of this world; to only pursue earthly things based upon the desires of your sinful fleshly mindset, popularity, riches, and earthly pleasures of all sorts, without considering what God has said about these things. There is not a desire in many an unbelieving person to consider what God says is right and wrong, good or evil, and this is what it means to “set your mind on the things of the flesh”. Your mindset is hostile to God, because you will not accept what His word has to say about how you should live your life. You are living according to your own thoughts and analysis of what you think you should do with your life. You have not the Holy Spirit, but an unholy spirit. And so, if you continue to live this way, without the Holy Spirit, you are at enmity with God. You are hostile to

Christians telling you that you are wrong in your thinking and in your analysis of life. Yours is a selfish mindset. It is saying: I want God and other people to accept me as I am, with all of my sinful thoughts, words, and deeds. I do not care what they think; I do not care what God has said in His word the Bible. I am not intending to change and turn away from my sins. I will not repent of them. I believe that I am fine like I am. So do not tell me that I need to change or that I need something that I do not presently have. This is the carnal mindset.

Now, even though an unbeliever may think that they are happy in this mindset, there is no life or real peace which comes from God. Instead there is deception. The person is saying: I am pleasing to God the way that I am; nothing needs to change. But these verses are saying that if you are a true Christian you are not in the flesh (verse 9), you are in the Spirit, “if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you”. That is the same phraseology used by Paul in Galatians 5:25. “If we live by the Spirit...” Here it says: “Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.” In other words, if you do not have Christ’s spiritual life in your heart and life, you are not a true Christian. The next question should be – How do I know if I have this spiritual life in my life, the life of the Holy Spirit in my life? Verse 7 of Romans 8 gives us the answer to that question. “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.” If the carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither can it be, and that is a description of an unbeliever, then the spiritually minded man, the person who has the Holy Spirit is subject to the law of God, and can be, because the person who is believing in Jesus now has the resurrection power of Christ working in their heart and mind to be able to say: I want to be subject to the law of God. I will receive the law of God; the Bible and all the moral commandments contained therein. And I will go about to do them and to keep them; not in my own strength, but according to the grace of Christ working within me by the power of the Holy Spirit. If you have believed in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, you do receive the Spirit, and the way that you know that you have received the Spirit is if you are now willing to repent of all of your sins and to do and keep all of God’s righteous commandments.

Now 2nd – We want to understand that if we have received the Spirit, we ought to walk in the Spirit.

“If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.” In other words: If we have this life from Christ, the Holy Spirit dwelling within us, we need to walk, we need to live our Christian life, taking deliberate steps to obey Christ’s word, by and in the strength and wisdom which the Holy Spirit will supply to us. This is what I believe that this verse is saying. This verse is simply an extension of verse 18 of chapter 5, here in Galatians: “But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.” Being led by the Spirit means that the Spirit will guide you, the believer, into the truth of Christ’s word. He will be working providentially to bring you into various situations where you will have every opportunity to put God’s commandments into practice. The Christian is not under God’s law; that is, they are not under its curse and they are not under it as a covenant of works; His commandments having to be kept perfectly in order to have eternal life and know God’s rich blessings. Rather, the Christian life is a life of being free to keep God’s commandments realizing that there will be no condemnation for those who in Christ Jesus. And in fact, since the love of God is poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, it becomes our delight to walk with, and in, the Spirit attempting to do and keep God’s commandments and by faith making progress in righteousness, holiness, and truth.

Turn with me over to Ephesians chapter 4. We will look at verses 17-24. “This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.” “But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been

taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.” Here you can see what it means to walk in the Spirit. It is that you do not walk, you do not live your life as the rest of the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds; thinking that it is just fine to be unfeeling, even past feeling, and sexually immoral, and greedy. But people like this are, it says here, “alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them.” You, if you know the Lord, you have not learned Christ in this way. Instead you put off the old man who is growing corrupt according to deceitful lusts. And you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. Each of us needs to ask whether this is what we are doing day by day? For the Christian life is not simply knowing doctrinal truth. It is living out the truth by means of sharing the truth and doing good deeds; cultivating a life of righteousness and holiness. This is walking in the Spirit.

3rd – We want to think about an injunction which flows from this truth; which is, not to be conceited.

Verse 26 – “Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.” The New American Standard Translation says: “Let us not become boastful, challenging one another envying one another.” We have seen what a glorious thing it is to walk in the Spirit. But Paul and the Holy Spirit also thought we should be warned against becoming conceited and boastful, lest we find ourselves walking in the flesh and not in the Spirit. Pride in the thoughts of a Christian can do a great deal of damage to the forward progress of Christ’s kingdom; in their own life, and in the life of their church, and even to the Association of Churches to which they belong. Usually in a Christian it is pride of knowledge that does this great damage. Certainly it is right to accumulate knowledge, the knowledge of Christ and the Scriptures, but it is not this that the apostle is warning us against. Certainly it is right to state our convictions concerning the dangers of false doctrine; doctrines which lead men to their destruction if they are believed. Certainly it is essential for every Christian to hold fast the doctrine of justification by faith continually. We can also say that it is always good to contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. (Jude 3) It is always good to hold fast and to hold forth sound doctrine of the Bible and our Confession, and shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. (Philippians 2: 14) But this is not what Paul is warning us against. What Paul is warning us against, I believe, is thinking that we have the right to challenge other orthodox Christians in our own church or Association of churches, with the more extensive knowledge of doctrinal truth that we believe that we have; challenging them with their supposed unorthodoxy. That is the sinful problem that he is warning us against. Let true Christians not become conceited. It could be that one person believes that a true Biblical knowledge of a particular important doctrine has been attained. But when they have attained it, sometimes they may not have the wisdom, or exercise the discretion with that knowledge, to think of how they should hold that knowledge, or how they should communicate that knowledge to win others to it.

Turn with me over to James chapter 3, verses 13-18. “Who is wise and understanding among you?” “Let him show by good conduct that this works are done in the meekness of wisdom.” “But you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth.” “This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic.” “For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.” “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without hypocrisy.” “Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” I think that we should apply this truth in this way: I may believe that all Christians must come to see the truth of a particular doctrine in just the way that I see it in order to be orthodox. And so, when I find that others in my own church or in my Association of churches, do not hold that particular

doctrine in exactly the way that I do, I may find myself wanting to challenge them and provoke them with their supposed unorthodoxy. We believe in the same Confession, and yet we do not agree on all aspects of a particular doctrine.

This is what has happened in our own Association of Reformed Baptist Churches in relation to the doctrine of Divine Impassibility. The words “God is without passions” have been disagreed upon. Godly men who all hold to the Confession disagree about what the word “passions” means. But brethren, what I think this verse which we are studying is saying, is that it should be possible to disagree upon this one word’s meaning without having a division take place between brethren and churches! I personally believe that it is not right, in the name of Full Subscription to the 1689 Confession, to require other pastors to uniformly conform to the same definition of the word “passions”, when there are real reasons why the disagreement should exist. Should we therefore take sides against our own brethren when the meaning of a particular word is disagreed upon? I think not! I believe that the apostle Paul is saying that it is possible to be fully orthodox and yet disagree over something like this, and a statement made by the Association to the effect that it is not agreed by godly men what this word “passions” means.

But, at all costs, we should strive not be conceited or boastful, provoking or challenging our brethren by being conceited and thinking that we know everything about whether God has feelings, even though He does not have sinful passions. This is why all Reformed Baptists need to think about these verses. Without having the wisdom which comes from above, which is pure, peaceable, and gentle, even the most knowledgeable of Christians will not know how to apply the knowledge that they have, lovingly, so that the truth of the Scriptures will be acknowledged and others helped on to maturity in their walk with Christ. May each of us be kept from envy and pride and a boastful spirit concerning the things that we know. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies. Let us see what makes for true unity and love of the brethren.