

A Crucified Life

Galatians 5:24-26

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TRANSCRIPT:

We're looking together at Galatians chapter number 5. I would like to read verse 16-26 and our focus will be on verse 24-26. this morning. Galatians chapter number 5, verse number 16: "I say then, walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. 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. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law."

Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 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.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

Let us pray. Oh God in heaven, we ask now that You would send the Holy Spirit to open the eyes of our understanding, to teach us from Your Word, to convict, to exhort, to rebuke, to sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Help us to know that the Word of God is what we need in this hour to be more like our Lord Jesus Christ and to live in a way that is fruitful and pleasing in Your sight. Give us strength, we ask, in grace, in Jesus' name, amen.

Well, this chapter comes to a close, Lord willing, this morning, where we have considered what true gospel freedom looks like, and the works of the flesh in verse 19-21, and contrasted that with the fruit of the Spirit, which is found in verse 22-23. And now Paul, in verse number 25, concludes with

a similar exhortation that he gave in verse number 16. In verse number 16, he says, "walk in the Spirit." In verse number 25, he says, "let us also keep in step with the Spirit," or "let us also walk in the Spirit."

But before he closes out this section, which has been all about the Spirit and sanctification in the life of a believer, he wishes to establish his hearers upon the most important ground of assurance in their sanctification. What is that? Well, that is their union with Christ. And so, as he develops this last exhortation to holiness, to walk in the Spirit, to obey the leading of the Spirit with regards to living a life of holiness and purity, he says in verse number 24 these words:

He begins by saying, "And those who are Christ's," those who belong to Christ, those that have been described in the last chapter and in chapter number 5, and the first part of that, as the free, those that are described in verse number 18 as led by the Spirit, those that are described as producing the fruit of the Spirit and not practicing the works of the flesh. And all these effects—these things being free, being led by the Spirit, producing the fruit of the Spirit, and being kept from the practice of the works of the flesh—these are all effects of something more fundamental. These all point to a deeper reality of which these then flow out from, namely belonging to Christ.

The ones of Christ is what he literally is referring to here, pointing them back to their union with Christ as he does in Galatians 3:26-29. In Galatians 3:26-29, he says, "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And listen to these words: 'And if you are Christ's, so if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.'"

This is a common method of the Apostle Paul, not unique to the book of Galatians, where he points people back to their union and uses that blessed doctrine to help them go on in sanctification. If you read Romans 6 and 7, you'll see that very thing: "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?" Paul talks about our union with Jesus Christ and then talks about living a holy life and talks about the believer as not being under the law but under grace, and how that results in a fruitful Christian life. And he does that here.

Paul argues basically from the cross of Jesus back to the cross of Jesus, from the cross of Jesus that we have been united to Christ at the cross, and therefore we are to live like this, like this, like this—holy unto God, walking in the spirit. And then he goes back and tells them, and all this way

you should live is because you've been crucified with Christ. So that from beginning to end, we derive our power and our assurance and our hope for holiness due to our union with Christ, His death, and His resurrection.

He doesn't point us to the arm of our flesh and a new law; he keeps pointing us back to the power of Christ that we have by the Holy Spirit because of our union with Him. And so, it is no surprise that in this passage of scripture, after he goes through the fruit of the spirit and the works of the flesh and encourages and exhorts to walk in the spirit, and before he does that just again in verse number 25, he reminds and says, "And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."

He points them to a fact; he points them not to a command here in this passage but to a description of who they now are. "Whoever belongs to Christ has crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." He wants them to comprehend something: that those that are living—meaning those that are alive in the spirit—these are those that have once died, so that the living have died, so that life in the spirit is for those that have been crucified with Christ, for those that have been united to Him, so that death precedes life in fruitfulness and effectiveness in sanctification.

When did the believers at Galatia crucify the flesh with its passions and desires? Well, it was at their first believing in the gospel. It was then that by the power of the Holy Spirit and the preaching of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, that they saw that Christ is their only savior for sin, the one who can rescue them from the penalty of sin, the one who could save them from the power of sin, and the Spirit of God worked in their heart so as to produce repentance and faith, a renunciation of self, a renunciation of sin and of Satan, and there the sinner, as they did at Galatia, as we do when we come to faith in Jesus Christ, there they identified with the crucified one.

They decisively, by grace through faith, chose Christ over the world, and so Paul says, "And those that belong to Christ, they have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." That's the effects of such a conversion. When they came to faith in Jesus Christ, what Paul is helping them to comprehend and realize is that the flesh was crucified with its passions and desires when you first came to Christ.

Now, if you're an honest Christian, which all Christians should be, you should be thinking at this point, anyhow, "What on earth are you saying? The flesh was crucified when I first believed the gospel with its passions and lusts? What? Hang on a minute. Why then do I still feel my passions and lusts? Why do I still know the operations of the flesh within my life? And more than this, how is it, Paul, that you can have the audacity to say

this in verse number 24, but just in verse number 17, you said that the flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh, so that you cannot do the things that you wish, and now you're saying the flesh has been crucified with its passions and desires? Yeah, good question."

In what sense, Paul, has the flesh been crucified with its passions and desires? Because we can't come to a passage like this and do two things: We can't deny its truth. He's making an emphatic statement that is important for our sanctification, that the flesh has been crucified with its passions and lusts. So we can't dismiss it, yet at the same time, we can't misunderstand it because then we're going to get awfully discouraged, aren't we, when we find ourselves to be still wrestling and fighting against sin.

So in what sense, Paul, is this true? What Paul is trying to help the believers understand is that the believers' relationship to the flesh before their conversion is different to their relationship to the flesh after their conversion. So that the flesh has gone from the throne of their hearts to a cross. Their old self, the person that they used to be in Adam, has died, so that they can never be the same person that they used to be in Adam. They are a new creation in Christ. They now belong to Christ Jesus. They are the new man.

But more than that, their flesh, the principle of remaining sin, that which entices them to sin, went from the throne to the cross. The flesh ruled the old kingdom of our corrupted hearts. Through passions and through lusts, it dominated the unbeliever, so that they practiced what we saw in verse number 19-21, those that were part of the kingdom of darkness and not of the kingdom of life.

But when the gospel came by the power of the Spirit, what happened is that the gospel triumphed over the reign of sin within our hearts. The kingdom of God arrived, as it were, in our hearts. The light shined into the darkness, and we were set free from the power and rule and from the reign of sin in our lives. Flesh was wounded, was hung on a cross, and no longer became the dominating force of the life of those who believed in Jesus. They confessed Jesus is Lord, and indeed He ascended into the throne of their hearts and reigns as Lord.

So our new status then, as a result of this gospel that has dealt a death blow to remaining sin within our lives and has enthroned Christ as king, our new status according to the scripture, as Romans 6 puts it, is that we are dead to sin. The Bible teaches us in Romans 6:6 that we are no longer therefore slaves of sin. And in Romans 6:7, it says that he who has died is freed from sin. So that the rule and reign and power of sin has been broken in the lives of those who believed, those that have come to faith in Jesus

Christ.

The monster of sin has been wounded and given a death blow, defeated and dying, no longer dominating the lives of those who believe in Jesus. This is important because what Paul is wanting us to remember when I tell you to walk in the Spirit and have the fruit of the Spirit and to not fulfill the lust of your flesh, I want you to realize that the gospel of Jesus Christ has made that possible. He wants them to understand and to realize that it wasn't just their sin debt that was nailed to the cross, but the flesh also was nailed to the cross.

So for so many believers, we think in terms of the cross and just think of the fact that I had all this sin debt, which is very true. So much sin debt. The law was against us, and the ordinances of writings, and we were guilty as guilty could be. We were done. And we rejoice in the fact that our record has been made clear and our sin has been washed away, and that we are now righteous in Christ and no longer is regarded as sinners. But that's not all that happened on the cross. We were united with Christ in His death and raised with Him to walk in newness of life, so that sin shall no longer have dominion over you, for you are not under the law but under grace.

The cross speaks of a new power to live unto God. Paul speaks of this so powerfully in Galatians 2. He talks about the fact that we died to the law that we might live unto God. "For I have been crucified with Christ; nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." He's not just talking about a new standing before God in relationship to our position; He's also talking about a new power that results from the effects of the cross in our lives because the flesh has been crucified with its passions and desires, so that it no longer rules the life of the believer.

That's why Paul can so dogmatically say, or the Holy Spirit can so clearly say, that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Because if you practice such things, it's evidence that the reign of Christ is not in you, and the Spirit of God does not rule in your life. The monster of sin has been dealt with a death blow, and therefore the most important question with regards to our sanctification, which we've been looking at over the last couple of weeks, is this: Do I belong to Christ? Have I been united to Christ?

There is no point trying to live a life that is pleasing to God and living a life that demonstrates the fruit of the Spirit if you have not the Spirit. There is no point trying to live in obedience in a consistent way with the Word of

God and with the truth of God by the Spirit of God if you do not belong to Christ. It is our union with Christ from which our holiness comes forth, and our holiness as believers, knowing that we have been united to Christ, is sustained by our recognition and our understanding and by living out by faith out of that union that we have now received.

So sanctification's most important question is: Do I belong to Christ? I pray that you can answer that in the affirmative this morning. But sanctification's most important ground is this fact, this fact: The flesh has been crucified with its passions and desires. That is the most important fact of reality that you should believe and know as those who belong to Jesus as you seek to live for Jesus.

And so now, because of that, because the flesh has been crucified with its passions and desires, and although we still feel the influences of remaining sin within our heart, we are no longer under its dominion and under its reign and rule, now we can hear and now we can obey the exhortations of Scripture. Because we've been united to Christ in His death and in His life, therefore the commands of Christ are not there to condemn you, but they are possibilities for you who press on in faith in dependence upon God.

And two of these exhortations come in here in verse number 25 and 26. "Those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." If you live in the Spirit, a better translation, as the ESV puts it at this point, is "let us also keep in step with the Spirit." So if your flesh has been crucified with its passions and desires, if you can say this morning that yes, I belong to Jesus Christ, here is an exhortation for you: March in tune with the Spirit.

That assumes that you have the Spirit, that you're living in the Spirit, that you're alive by the power of the Holy Spirit, have died with Christ, and raised with Christ. It's basically saying to us, imagine yourself as if you belong to a marching squadron of soldiers, moving together in a parade. Ever seen them do it? I've never done it before. In a parade or a drill, each soldier lined up, ordered, with their ear attentively to the voice of the commander, the squadron leader. He says, "Forward march," and they march. Left, right, left, right, left, right. "At ease," "Rest," "About face," turn around. And each soldier that is there in that squadron is keeping in step with the squadron leader, who is both marching and communicating and leading the rest of the soldiers orderly in a fashion that would fulfill their duty as soldiers.

And each soldier that is in that marching squadron must be attentive to the voice of the squadron leader. They must be responsive, immediately responsive to the squadron leader. "Forward march." "Are you sure we should

be going forward, sir?" Won't work. "Forward march" means forward march, no delay, respond to the voice of the commander. So they must be attentive, they must be responsive, but all this underlying it is that they have an unwavering trust and allegiance in the squadron leader, who has led thousands of soldiers before them into faithful marching in their life.

And what Paul wants us to understand is that you are part of a marching squadron, and the Holy Spirit is your chief commander, and the Holy Spirit is in you, and the Holy Spirit is guiding you and leading you and convicting you of sin in your life and influencing you to act in a way consistent with Christian love. And as you read your word and as you worship God, you have within your very being the person of the Holy Spirit, who is there to direct you into holiness and godliness. And what Paul is saying is, keep in step with Him. Don't worry what the guy on the right is doing. Don't worry what the person on the left is doing. You listen to the voice of the commander. If you live in the Spirit, walk in the Spirit. If you live in the Spirit, keep in step with the Spirit. Keep your ear to the voice of the Spirit.

He has led thousands and thousands and millions of Christians through temptation all the way to glory. He has been successful in leading Christ's soldiers into the kingdom of God and into their perfect rest. He has been faithful in producing the fruit of the Spirit in their lives and causing them to grow in holiness and to grow in sanctification. And He will not fail you. Trust Him. Trust Him. Keep in step with Him.

"If you live in the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit." This is the first exhortation to those that belong with Christ, to those who live in the Spirit and have crucified their flesh with their passions and desires. And then the second of that exhortation is in verse number 26. So let us walk in the Spirit, verse 25, but verse 26, "let us not become conceited." Well, that's the enemy of the Spirit, isn't it? If all the fruit of the Spirit issues forth from love, we could say all the works of the flesh issue forth from conceit, which is pride.

And we must beware of pride, which is the greatest enemy of the Spirit's work within our lives. "Don't become conceited," is the exhortation here. Don't become boastful. Don't become proud. Don't become one who has vain glory, boasting, glorying in themselves, having a high view of themselves, which is vain. It's really empty. Puffing themselves up, really, it's just empty. Proud and empty. So let us not become conceited.

We're going to walk in the Spirit, keep in step with the Spirit, and we're going to watch our hearts to make sure that we don't give way to pride. And this is quite interesting because Paul shows how pride affects our relationships to others. Look what he says in verse number 26: "Let us not

become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another," so that the peace of God and the churches of Galatia will be dependent on the humility of the people, and as much as they are committed to listening to the work of the Spirit, who produces Christian love and holiness in their lives.

So don't become conceited. Because our conduct toward others is determined by our opinion of ourselves. Our conduct toward others is determined by our opinion of ourselves. It is pride that infects and corrupts our dealings with others. Don't become conceited because you will be one who then provokes one another, and you will be one who envies others. All because of conceit, all because pride has a foothold in your life.

The word "provoke" means to challenge to a fight for the purpose of magnifying yourself or proving yourself to be right. The conceit that comes across in provocation, where you simply—it may appear in this kind of carnal competitiveness. Sometimes it comes in the form of a question, where your question is really to demonstrate how much you actually know. When it's not really the primary reason for asking a question, but you want to boast in what you know, so you ask the question that might belittle someone and put them to a challenge. But you know, you just want to show them who really is in charge here, who really knows what we're talking about. Provoking, living in such a way as to be argumentative and fighting with people, to display yourself as strong and them as weak, to step on their head so that you can climb, as it were, the ladder, so that you might receive the glory and the praise, and people might walk away thinking, "Wow, this person is great. There is none like that person."

And so, this is the view of superiority, right? This is the provoking; it comes from a heart of superiority, thinking highly of oneself. But then also, envy is a manifestation of conceit, but it comes across as inferiority. But at its real heart is that they think very highly of themselves too, just like the person that provokes. So the person who envies is very much the same. "I deserve better. I'm jealous of what they have, and I don't have that." And it produces the same kind of spirit of carnal competition, doesn't it? But it might come from an attitude of more inferiority than superiority, from an insecurity.

I like how John Stott puts it; I think he puts it so well. He says, "When we are conceited, our relationships with other people are bound to be poisoned. If we regard ourselves as superior to other people, we challenge them, for we want them to know and feel our superiority. If we regard them as superior to us, we envy them. In both cases, our attitude is due to having such a fantastic opinion of ourselves that we cannot bear rivals."

Very different is that love which is the fruit of the Spirit, which Christians

exhibit when they are walking by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit has opened their eyes to see both their own sin and unworthiness and also the importance and value of other people in the sight of God. The envious is not caring about the other person in the sight of God. And so also is the one that is provoking. They care about their own glory. It is the works of the flesh. It is not demonstrating Christian love, which is by the Spirit. It is not living in a way that is consistent with hearing the instruction of the Spirit. It's that carnal competitive spirit that is that manifestation of the flesh, which Paul addresses in 2 Corinthians 10. He says, "For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise."

It is those that are constantly thinking about what other people think of them and about their name and their glory that are full of conceit and pride, and that comes out in the form of defensiveness, perhaps, or it comes out in the form of platforming yourself, which is so common today, isn't it? It's like we've provided the social media platform for that just to happen. It is the expression and platform of you. Everyone needs to like me. They liked me on that photo last week but not on this photo this week. It's an amazing thing, isn't it?

It's this carnal conceit which destroys relationships because it makes us at the center, and everyone is serving to our conceit. It is the publicizing and praise of you. And what Paul is saying is all that is fodder and food for provocation and for envy. That kind of mindset and that kind of thinking that is so self-centered, all it will produce is friction in relationships, whether by envy or whether by provoking and challenging others. Because at the end of the day, it is about our glory when we behave that way, not the glory of God.

But as the psalmist says, "Not unto us, not unto us be glory, but unto Your name give glory, for Your truth's sake." And therefore, we have to realize that we should not live in a way that is consistent with the works of the flesh, that shows or demonstrates to others that our flesh hasn't been crucified with its passions and desires. You see, if our flesh has been crucified with its passions and desires, conceit should not be on the throne. We should war continually against it as it seeks to ascend in our hearts.

What Paul is trying to help the believers understand here is that the only fruitful Christian life is a life that is crucified. Crucified with Christ in conversion, and a life that is daily crucified in recognition of the crucifixion of Christ and their union with Christ. That they reckon themselves to be dead indeed unto sin and alive unto God. That they live in a way that demonstrates that the flesh is being pushed down and slain and killed.

That they're starving this man hanging on a cross in their lives. Yes, he's been put on the cross, but you're slaying and killing. You're not listening to his command. You're not feeding him, but rather you are suppressing him, and you are slaying him.

Listen to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ in John 12: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there will My servant be also. If anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him." You see what's happening here? Jesus is saying, even about His own self, this is also part of a prophecy concerning His own death. He is that grain of wheat that is falling to the ground in His death and dying, who is going to bring forth fruit to eternal life for all who believe on Him.

But what Jesus is saying is, just like I am as your Master, so you should also be as My servant. Die with Me, rise with Me. If you want the fruit of the Spirit to be evident in your life, not only believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved, but continue to walk the path of the crucified life. Would you crucify the flesh today?

Some of us are perhaps among those that do not belong to Christ this morning. We are those that practice the works of the flesh. The answer for your sin is found at the cross, in union with our Lord Jesus Christ. You this morning must climb the hill, that mountain, Mount Calvary. You this morning must lift up your eyes as you walk that cross, the way of the cross, and you must see Him who is crucified there for your sin. See Him wounded there, see Him bleeding there, and in humility and humbleness of heart, see Him as your only hope for salvation, for deliverance, and come to Him and bow before Him and say, "Lord, nail me to the cross. Take me up with You. My sin, myself, nail me to the cross. My passions, my lusts, my sin, my sin. Lord, I would be Yours and Yours alone. Save me. Give me life."

If you do this in sincerity of heart, as moved by the Holy Spirit, you will live as a freeborn son of God, delivered from the shackles of your sin, and be able to walk in newness of life. You might say this morning, "I've done this, Josh. I have called on the Lord. I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. I have been crucified with Christ." Well, you need to live as I do, in practice, exactly as we are in principle. We need to live, continuing to believe that sin's power has been broken and that sin is no longer my master. You need to take this fact that those that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires, and next time the passions and desires enter into your heart, you say, "I crucified that with Christ when I believed on His name. I will not yield to your rule in my life. I belong to Christ. To Him

be the glory in my life. I will not let sin reign in my mortal bodies that I will fulfill it in the lust thereof, for Christ has died in my stead, and He's enthroned in my heart, and I want Christ to reign in my life. I will let sin hang and die there, but not my Savior."

"I will starve sin's remaining cause that pleases me to come and fulfill its lusts. I will live by the Spirit because I've been made alive by the Spirit, and by the Spirit, I'll produce the fruit of the Spirit and not fulfill the lusts of my flesh. My life will be a life not filled with conceit but one that is crucified, marked by humility, marked by dependency not upon its own ability and power, but with its eyes fixed on Christ and with its ears attentive to the Spirit. I will march, and I will look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of my faith, and I will be brought into the heavenly city, and I will be set free from the power of sin forever and ever, and no longer will sin call unto me in that day because I will be there with the Lamb, and I will be changed forevermore. But I will march, and I will listen, and I will not let sin reign in my life. My allegiance is to my commander. I want to hear Him say, 'Left, right, left, right.'"

Perhaps this morning, some of you are walking in the wrong direction, not keeping in step with the Spirit. You need to hear His word this morning and make an about-turn, a 180-degree turn around, and say, "Lord, forgive me. I've rejected the voice of Your Spirit pressed upon my conscience. I know that I'm not living in a way that is pleasing to You." This commander leads us on to Christlikeness, on to eternal life. And let us go on and listen and keep in step with the Spirit of holiness, and let us fight and let us war and let us understand that the battle has been won by Christ, and the victory is secured for us in the eternal realm. Go on, Christian. Fight as a soldier of the cross. Let us pray.