

“The Fight for Control”

Galatians 5:16-18

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July 24, 2022

Have ever seen a fight or watched a wrestling match?

The biggest fighter doesn't always win, sometimes it is the guy who wants it more, who has more heart.

“It is not the size of the dog in the fight...
...but the size of the fight in the dog.”

One of our CIF wrestlers talked about just executing the plan

**My boss years ago who had been a fighter pilot would say
“if you are in a fair fight, that's your fault.”**

...You should always maintain the upper hand.

*****This morning we are going to talk about the inner fight between our new spiritual life and our old sinful nature.**

And our message title is “The Fight for Control”

There are a few things to know about this fight...

- It is constant and ongoing
- There is only one winner, no ties.
- There are countless re-matches.

3 Tips on how to win the fight for control:

- Really want to win (a clear decision must be made)
- Execute a plan (don't just show up, be ready to get hit)
- Keep the upper hand

Last week we saw that we are free **from** bondage to the Law...
... but we are also free **for** loving service.

Paul said not to “use our liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another”.

**This is the essence of this inner fight: use my freedom...
... for me or use my freedom for Christ and others**

You must decide to really want it...but I am going to share with you ideas for a plan and how to keep the upper hand.

5:16 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.

What does it mean to “walk in the Spirit”?

Your “walk” is your life.

...So your Christian life is your Christian walk.

Noah and Enoch were said to walk with God.

There are many references in Scripture where God talks about walking before Him or with Him.

1. Walking in the Spirit means to be in step with God.

The bible asks, “how can two walk together unless they agree.”

If you have ever tried to walk somewhere with someone else...

...you know you have to agree on a few things...

...**how, where, and why.**

How fast, how slow, what course to take...

Where are you going, what is the destination.

Why are going there, what is the purpose of the journey.

To walk in the Spirit means...

...God personally directs the how, where, and why.

In conversation you feel prompted to share a Scripture or...

...you feel directed to go to a certain place.

...or you feel the need to leave a situation.

I don't have to pray about every little choice...

... I just walk through the day open and yielded...

... and He leads you.

You don't need to overthink it, you just live your walk...

...and the longer you walk together, the better you get at it....

...Like Deborah and I.

Bonus tip:

When the choices are more significant it is beneficial to make sure of the direction...

...we do make mistakes but mistakes are part of the learning.

If the Spirit seems to be directing you somewhere in a conversation, you may throw up a silent prayer and just speak it.

If the Spirit seems to be directing you to move or start a particular ministry, you may need to spend some more time with that one.

But...this is an important distinction...

2. Personal direction will not contradict Biblical revelation.

If you think the Spirit is prompting you to steal from CVS or lie to your spouse or sleep with your girlfriend or get drunk with your buddies...you're wrong.

Your life is like a house being built by the Spirit for God to live in.
It will be different than other people's houses...
But it will have the same foundation.

You don't build a good house without a strong foundation.

The foundation for our house, the real and right relationship with God is the Scripture.

—Now...

The next part of that verse is...

...“and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

“The lust of the flesh”- is contrasted with walking in the Spirit.

The lust of the flesh is not just a sexual thing...It is a desire thing.

The flesh is the part of my life where the desires are not submitted to God or God's kingdom.

NLT **16** So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves.

3. Fleshly desires are outside of God's will and God's way.

But that doesn't mean they are all bad things...

Some desires are good things but they are out of order or they are good things that become god things.

Greek is “epithumia”...

...one person defined it as an “over desire” or inordinate desire

The desire I have grows over and above...

...God's good intention.

Like a plant that overgrows the garden...

I can take enjoying a slice of cheesecake which is a good thing.
...And I can allow my fleshly desire to get control...
...and have three pieces of cheesecake and now I am a glutton.

You can take a desire for sex which is a good thing...
... and allow the fleshly desire to get out of control...
...and have an affair with a coworker not your spouse.

You can take a desire to be productive and have purpose...
... and allow your fleshly nature to get control and you become a workaholic or make an idol out of your job.

All of these are desires out of line with God's plan and purpose.

**But let's go even a little deeper to look at motives...
...What is the motive for the spirit and the flesh?**

4. The Spirit glorifies Jesus as Lord and Savior, the flesh glorifies itself as lord and savior.

So the motive for walking in the Spirit by the Spirit is that people would become more like Jesus and come to see Jesus in us.

God directs me so that others see Christ.
The Spirit moves me so that I glorify Jesus.

It is not bad to enjoy life and what God has provided...
Enjoy Abundantly is our E in the LIFE acronym.
...But the flesh makes it an over or inordinate desire.

And ultimately I try to be my own savior and lord.

The motive of our sinful nature is to be savior & lord.

Our flesh desires to save us from loneliness.
Our flesh wants to save us from harm.
Our flesh wants to direct our life decisions.

**My disobedience is really a lack of trust in God.
His grace or goodness or protection and demonstrates my desire to do it myself...**

I indulge in pleasure cuz my heart is empty or I feel sad or guilty
...And instead of seeking the Lord or serving someone...

...I indulge myself in pleasure to numb the pain myself.

It is a spiritual maturity to be able to endure pain without needing to numb it with inordinate pleasures.

It is a spiritual strength to stick to the plan and submit to the Spirit even when I don't feel like it.

So the question is...

...do we do the things we do to glorify and serve Jesus...

... or glorify and serve ourselves?

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.

5. Believers have two natures that oppose each other.

Even before Christ, we dealt with our conscience.

We struggled with our inner voice and the integrity in our lives.

But when we are saved, we get a new nature and new desires

We **want to be good** so that God is glorified,
we **want to do what is right** because God is right and good,
we **want to serve others** because God loves and serves thru us.

But then I have my old nature still living in there...

I have the power to live by the Spirit, but I struggle at times with my will to carry it out.

The flesh and the Spirit have different motives and different actions and different results.

The Spirit and the flesh...

... have different how, where, and why's...

...so they can't walk together.

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

6. Walking in the Spirit is another way we live by faith.

If we live by faith, we are not "under" the law.

...We can be informed by the law.

...We can be directed by the law.

But we are not saved by the law

we are not approved by the law and
we are not “under” the authority of the Law.

We are now under the authority of a loving relationship with God and we fulfill the law with His love.

I can't keep the law, but I can fulfill it with love.

I am not perfect but I am forgiven and...
... by His Spirit I can love and fulfill the Law with His love.

So...Why does this all matter?

7. Choosing the flesh or the Spirit will bring different results.

Simply put...
Living out the desires of the flesh brings confusion, sin and death
Walking in the Spirit leads to connection with God and life.

(We will look more in depth at these results in the coming weeks.)

8. Walking in the Spirit takes practical spiritual steps.

If walking in the Spirit is part of my new nature...
...I need to practice and strengthen walking in my new nature.
...If my new nature is spiritual then...
... I should use spiritual practices

Remember:

You have to desire to win this fight...
... not just give up and let your flesh rule you.
With what you know, you can have the upper hand

And here are some practical things that will help you form a plan to execute.

1. Immerse in spiritually healthy content
Scripture, preaching, teaching, media, music and conversation
2. Engage in spiritually directed thoughts
Affirming promises, praying God's word, meditation on truth, and taking thoughts captive
3. Continue in spiritually directed life choices
Fellowship, worship, confession, listening for the Spirit's direction, and taking steps of faith