

Walk in the Spirit (Pentecost 2018) – *Galatians 5:16-18*

Introduction – Pentecost is the Christian celebration of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the birthday of the New Creation, or when the church was “born again” into the New Covenant. This is the reversal of the tower of Babel and now all nations are brought into the New Israel, Jew and Gentile alike. In Acts 2 Luke records the bringing in of the firstfruits of Pentecost, men and women instead of wheat. But like Pentecost, there was the promise that this was only the firstfruits with a much greater harvest to come. Jesus was given the nations. The gospel by means of the Holy Spirit was going to flow out to all tribes, all tongues, and all nations. And people who are granted this new life in the Spirit find that they are transformed and able to walk according to that transformation by means of the life of the Holy Spirit in them.

Walk in the Spirit – Earlier Paul writes that we cry out “Abba, Father” by means of the Spirit (Gal 5:6-7). Life by the Spirit is the root; walking in the Spirit is the fruit, and that fruit is the practical reproduction of the character of Christ in the lives of his people. To “*walk in the Spirit*” is to let your conduct be directed by the Spirit of Christ. The illustration is one of walking – and so think of how naturally we learn to walk. We walk because we are “walkers” and when we can’t walk we know that something is unnatural; something is wrong.

“*The way of the Spirit is the way to freedom; the way of the Spirit is the way of love*” – F.F. Bruce. All the law is fulfilled with the command to love (v14) and the fruit of the Spirit is love (v22). This kind of love-command cannot be kept except by the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Battle of Flesh and Spirit – One commentator described the flesh as “*the power that opposes God and enslaves human beings*.” Another said, “*the flesh is Paul’s term for everything aside from God in which one places his final trust*.” The point is that the flesh is not simply wicked, immoral activities; those are the works of the flesh (see vv19-21). Central to the flesh is a self-centered desire to justify oneself, to declare oneself good, righteous, and approved – to be one’s own god and standard bearer. This has been crucified along with its passions and desires (v24), and yet at the same time there is an ongoing war in your soul that will rage on until the resurrection (v17). The difference for those in Christ is that before, you could not stop sinning because every work came from the flesh and the fallen, old man behind it. Now, because of the Spirit’s presence and the new heart we have been given, we can choose to be led by the Spirit in freedom from the condemnation of the law and our sin.

And so, a battle rages. There are only two ways to walk and they are mutually exclusive. The Spirit and the flesh are mortal enemies and that is why we must constantly mortify the flesh by means of the Spirit (Rom 8:13, Col 3:1, 5).

Word and Spirit – The Word directs and the Spirit empowers. The Word is objective and the Spirit fills you with that Word in ways you cannot do on your own (Col 3:16-17). The Word tells you how to work out your salvation and the Spirit works from within “*to will and to do for His good pleasure*” (Phil 2:12-13). We are to put on the “*sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*” (Eph 6:17).

A true believer cannot lose his salvation, but this is never an excuse for complacency in our ongoing sanctification. “*Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul*” (1 Pet 2:11). The sign of the Spirit’s presence is the power to abstain from fleshly lusts. These two statements are true: (1) – there is a real war being waged over your soul, and (2) – you are promised victory in the battle.

The Power of the Spirit and the Promise of Pentecost – This is true for the individual and it is true for the world as well. Jesus was promised all the nations (Psalm 2, Matt 28:18-20) and at Pentecost He was given the firstfruits. Abraham was promised to be the father of many nations and was given one son (Gen 12:1-3, 13:14-17). He was promised a land and we have now inherited the whole earth (Matt 5:5, Eph 6:1-

3). The stone that was cut out without hands broke the kingdoms of men and became a great mountain that filled the whole earth (Dan 2). The water that flowed from the New Temple went out and filled the whole earth, bringing healing to all the nations (Ezek 47). The power of the Spirit is not revealed in the small beginnings. The power is revealed in the promises received by faith.

How Does this Spirit-filled Kingdom Come? – In Luke 13:18-21 Jesus describes what His kingdom is like. He makes clear that it is God's good pleasure that the kingdom of God does not arrive like a huge military invasion. While declaring victory over the whole earth (in His ascension), His kingdom arrives like certain kinds of small, hidden things: mustard seeds and leaven. Leaven is a sign of the gospel's intensive progress in the world. It brings a dead lump-world to life. It will eventually leaven the whole lump; everything will be born-again, influenced, transformed. The kingdom is like a mustard seed, the smallest in the garden (Matt 13:32); it is hardly noticed at first. But it grows to become the largest tree in the garden. Jesus is calling here upon OT imagery, this time depicting the great empires as trees in which subject nations nest like birds finding their true home (Ezek 17, Dan 4:10-12).

Walk in the Spirit – For you “*to walk in the Spirit*” is to walk in the way this redeemed world is going. It is to cut with the grain of the kingdom of God. That is what Pentecost declares and promises. That is what came to us at Pentecost. That is Who has come to you.

Dave Hatcher – Pentecost, May 20, 2018

Notes for Little Saints

Do you remember learning how to walk?

Normally, we don't. It happened when we were very little and it came naturally, because we are by nature, “walkers.” That's what we do.

Draw a picture of a little baby learning to walk –

In the same way, if we have been born again, it is by the Holy Spirit and so we can “walk in the Spirit.”

Nevertheless, there is a battle in us because our flesh loves to lie to us and tell us that we can be our own god. The Spirit of God battles hard against that in us.

Write out Galatians 5:16