

Galatians 5:16-26

Introduction

I. Surrender to grace

The Biggest Loser: a story of people who can't fix themselves and surrender to a trainer who can do for them what they can't do for themselves

II. The context: Freedom (Galatians 4-5)

A. We are freed FROM the law

B. But what are we freed FOR?

1. Love is the principle (5:1-15)

2. The Holy Spirit is the presence and power (5:16-26)

Theme: Do the hard work of surrendering to the Spirit

The Passage

I. The Conflict between the flesh and the Spirit (5:16-18)

A. Who are the adversaries in this conflict?

1. Flesh = the self-centered part of us that wants to live on our own strength and for our own glory and that does not want to submit to God's laws or his mercy.

a. It seeks independence from God by breaking all His rules

b. Or it seeks independence by trying to keep all his rules in its own strength for its own glory

2. Spirit = the Holy Spirit; God's own personal presence and power dwelling inside of us that desires to do things in God's power for God's glory

B. What's the nature of this conflict?

1. We should avoid two extremes

a. Extreme #1: The Christian life is totally victorious and sin has been removed

b. Extreme #2: The Christian life is one where we are constantly defeated by sin

2. Paul's emphasis here is on the strong possibility of victory

v. 16: Assumes victory

v. 24: The "flesh" has been dealt a fatal blow. It still rears its ugly head, but it is a defeated foe, and so we can have victory through the Spirit (even though we don't always achieve that)

II. The works of the Flesh (5:19-21)

A. General comments

1. This is not a complete list; just representative

2. There are physical, spiritual, and relational sins mentioned

3. Some of these are good desires perverted when God is not at the center

4. This is what happens when the flesh (self-centered life) is allowed to run amok

B. Paul's strong warning (v. 21)

If this is the consistent pattern of our lives, we have to wonder whether we are actually saved (see Galatians 6:7-8)

III. The fruit of the Spirit fruit (5:22-26)

A. General comments

1. This is not complete list; just representative
2. This is the character of Jesus

B. Notice Paul's word choice: "fruit" (v. 22)

1. Fruit is singular
 - a. These qualities are all different aspects of one and the same fruit
 - b. When the Spirit is at work, we should expect to see all of these qualities growing together (not in isolation)
 - c. That's how we can tell the difference between Spirit inspired fruit and a person's natural personality/temperament
2. Paul says "fruit" not "acts"
 - a. "Acts" of flesh are something we produce on our own efforts
 - b. "Fruit" is something the Holy Spirit produces in us
 - .1 Our job is not to produce love, joy, peace, etc. Our job is to walk in the Spirit and He will produce the fruit (see John 15)
 - .2 The Christian life isn't something we can do. It's something God does in us from start to finish (See Philippians 1:6)

IV. What does it mean to walk in the Spirit?

A. It means doing the hard work of surrender. It means doing the hard work of opening ourselves to another Person to let Him do in us what we can't do in ourselves

B. Example of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (See Matthew 26:36-46)

1. He invites God into the honest truth of where he is
"Father if it be possible, please take this cup from me"
2. He actively surrenders his will to Father
"Yet not as I will, but as you will."
3. He acts in line with God's will
"Rise, let's go! Here comes my betrayer"

C. We should follow his example

1. Invite God into the truth of who we are and what we are thinking/feeling
2. Actively surrender our will to his
3. Act in line with God's will in whatever ways we can

D. When we surrender ourselves to God, we actually find our truest selves

Conclusion

What one thing do you need to take from this passage today?

1. Do you need to stop settling for rampant sin and get into the fight
2. Where do you need to invite God into something in your life?
3. What do you need to surrender to Him?
4. How can you practically act in line with his will?

Discussion Questions

1. Opening questions: What struck you most about the sermon/the passage? What surprised you? What confused you? What did you disagree with?
2. How was the “flesh” defined on Sunday? How did that definition compare with your prior understanding of “flesh”?
3. In talking about the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit, it was suggested on Sunday that we should avoid the extremes of thinking about the Christian life in terms of constant victory or constant defeat. Do you agree with that suggestion? How much victory over sin should we expect in this life, and how can you defend that answer Biblically?
4. How should we understand Paul’s strong warning in v. 21? How would you respond to a person who believes he/she is a Christian and says he/she constantly falls into some of the sins listed in v. 19-21?
5. Using the analogy of The Biggest Loser contestants who surrender their lives to a trainer, it was argued that a key part of “walking in the Spirit” is doing the “hard work of surrender.” How did you resonate with that? What do you think “walking in the Spirit” actually looks like on a practical basis?
6. Based on Jesus’ experience in the Garden of Gethsemane, three basic “steps” were mentioned in doing the hard work of surrender: 1) inviting God in to the honest truth of where we are 2) actively surrendering our wills to His and 3) acting in ways we can that line up with God’s will. Which of those is generally the hardest for you?