**Galatians 5:16-26**

**Week 1**

Introduction

I. The Spirit plays the key role in our sanctification

 Sanctification = the process of becoming more and more like Jesus

 = Growing in holiness

= Growing in the fruit of the Spirit

The Passage

I. Sanctification is an essential part of the Christian life (v. 21)

A. v. 21 is referring to people who habitually practice unrighteousness will not enter the kingdom

 1. Ephesians 5:3-7:

a. “let there not be even a hint of immorality”

b. “let no one deceive you with empty words”

 2. We live in a Christian culture that does not stress holiness very much

a. The message is often as long as you pray a prayer and go to church, you’ll go to heaven. Holiness in this life is optional

b. When people start calling us to holiness, it’s easy to get defensive

 1) pull the grace card

 2) pull the legalism card

B. Paul believed in grace and strongly encourages us away from legalism, but at the same time he unapologetically calls us to holiness/sanctification

1. Jesus in Mt 7:21: “not everyone who says to me “Lord, Lord” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”

2. It’s not that pursuing holiness saves us, it’s just that pursuing holiness is the unavoidable result/fruit of having been called by God and filled with his Spirit

(We are not saved BY good works, but saved FOR good works)

II. We are no longer under the law (v. 18)

A. Under the law = being in a situation where we’re constantly looking at God’s laws as a set of external rules that we’re supposed to follow while being left on our own to figure out how to follow them in own strength, constantly falling short, constantly experiencing God’s disapproval

B. The limitation of the law

1. The law tells us what to do but gives us no help in actually doing it. The law does nothing to solve the problem of our sinful nature

a. Example: telling someone “stop worrying” doesn’t actually help them stop worrying

2. The law can actually provoke our sinful nature and make matters worse (Ro 7:7-8)

a. Example: telling your kids, “don’t look under the bed” will actually provoke them to look under the bed

3. The main problem is the law is external to us and doesn’t fix our hearts

 C. God’s salvation from under the law

1. God sends his Son to do FOR us what we can’t do for ourselves (free us from the penalty of the law)

2. God sends his Spirit to do IN us what we can’t do in ourselves

D. The Spirit enters our lives and deals with the issue of the sinful nature0

1. Jeremiah 31:31-34: God writes his law on our hearts

2. Ezekiel 36: 24-28: God gives us a new heart and puts His Spirit in us and moves us to follow his laws

3. 2 Corinthians 3:3:written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts

4. So, we’re no longer under this oppressive situation where these external laws are telling us what to do but giving us absolutely no help to do them. Now the Spirit is changing us from the inside out, empowering to do what the law was always telling us to do.

5. Once we have the Spirit, technically we no longer need the external rules

 v. 23: against such things there is no law

Example: Disneyland’s Autopia: We no longer need the guide rails of the law because we have the Spirit guiding us

III. Sanctification is first/foremost about God producing in us what we can’t produce ourselves

A. The “fruit” of the Spirit (v. 22)

1. We don’t produce the fruit, the Spirit does

2. John 15: “apart from me you can do nothing”

 B. Sanctification is God’s work just as justification is God’s work

1. We all recognize that our salvation was God’s work, but sometimes we think that growing as Christians is up to us, so we often go back to living under the law and trying to be good Christians on our own effort (see Gal 3:3)

 2. But sanctification, like justification, is ultimately God’s work in us

C. This truth encourages us towards to basic postures

1. Our first job in growing as Christians is to realize we can’t grow as Christians

a. This is what faith is all about: I can’t do this, I have to trust God to do in me what I can’t do

b. So we have a righteousness that is “by faith from first to last” (Ro 1:17)

c. Dallas Willard: “the Christian life is what you do when you finally realize you can do nothing”

2. Our second job is to ask: how can I cooperate with what the Spirit is doing in my life?

a. Paul gives different metaphors to get at this: walking with Spirit (v. 16), being led by the Spirit (v. 18), living by Spirit (v. 25), keeping in step with the Spirit (v. 25)

b. All those metaphors have to do with cooperating with the Spirits’ work in our lives

 c. Growth/sanctification is a relational journey with God

We need to change our knee-jerk reactions to things

Ex: rather than saying, “I need to become more patient, loving, etc,” we are to invite God into the process, “God what do you want to say to me in this? What are wanting to do in my heart?”

**Discussion Questions**

1. What struck you most about Sunday’s sermon? What idea has stayed with you this week?

2. Explain in your own words how to reconcile the idea that we are saved by grace with Paul’s words in Galatians 5:21 and Jesus’ words in Matthew 7:21: “Not everyone who says to me ‘Lord, Lord’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”

3. How would you respond to a person if he/she said to you: “I think I’m a Christian, but I don’t see the fruit of the Spirit being produced in my life in increasing and deepening ways”?

4. In Galatians 3:1-5, Paul accused the Galatians of slipping back into life under the law. In what ways (if any) do you find yourself slipping back into living life under the law?

5. As you consider the idea of “cooperating with the Spirit’s work in your life,” what might be a practical action step for you at this time? That is, where is God working in your life that you need to pay attention to or take steps towards?