**Galatians 5:16-26**

**Week 2**

Introduction

I. Our first role in sanctification is to realize that we can’t fix ourselves: our job is to surrender to the Spirit who can change us

II. That being said, we still have a role to play: we are called to pursue holiness with the passion, discipline and intention of a soldier in battle

The Passage

I. When the Spirit enters our lives, we are thrown into a conflict (v. 16-17)

A. The two opponents in this conflict

 1. The Spirit = the Holy Spirit dwelling inside us

 2. The sinful nature/the flesh

a. = That part of us that resists God, rebels against God, selfishly lives for our own pleaser and glory

 b. We inherited this from Adam and Eve. We don’t have to be taught it.

c. “Flesh” does not just refer to physical sins but any sin (physical, internal, relational)

B. The conflict takes place within our own hearts

We experience ourselves as being conflicted (“you don’t do what you want” v. 17)

C. The Spirit has the upper hand in this conflict

 1. On the one hand, this is a conflict we will have all our lives

 2. On the other hand, we can expect to have significant victory in this battle

 -v. 16: “walk by the Spirit and you will not fulfill the desires of the flesh”

-Ro 8:9: You are not controlled by the flesh but by the Spirit

-2 Cor 3:18: As we look to the Lord Jesus we are being transformed into his likeness with ever increasing glory”

II. We need a good defense (v. 24)

A. Paul uses “crucify” to give us a certain perspective on our sin

 1. Paul wants us to realize that Christ’s crucifixion is made real in our lives

 a. When we become Christians, an old part of us dies

 1) Galatians 2:20: “I have been crucified with Christ”

2) Romans 6:6-7: For we know that our old self was crucified with Christ so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin, because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

 b. And we are to consider that part of us as being dead

1) Ro 6:11-12: count yourselves dead to sin and alive to God

2) = realize that our sin is part of an old life that is dead. There’s no future in that for us.

B. Paul uses “crucify” to encourage us to take drastic action against our sin

 1. We are to show no mercy against our sin

2. Our danger is that, rather than crucify our sin, we dabble and flirt with it

C.S. Lewis: image of sin as being this lizard on our shoulder that we treat like a pet and want to keep around

3. We need to be ruthless with sin and put it to death by the Spirit before it has a chance to grow (Ro 8:13)

Examples: flee sexual immorality right away

C. We need to take honest look at our lives

1. Where in our life are there sins that we simply aren’t ready to give that up and leave in the past?

2. Where in our life are there sins we want to give up, but aren’t ready to take drastic action to change?

III. We need a good offense (v. 25)

A. “Keep in step with the Spirit” = a military image: “march in line with the Spirit”

 Follow closely behind the Spirit and walk in his fruitful, healthy paths

B. “The best defense is a good offense”

 1. Notice that the first fruits of the Spirit are love and joy, not caution and prudence

Walking in the Spirit is not just about being moralistic, cautious people, but rather being fully human = people who proactively pursue all the good qualities that the Lord intended us to have

2. Example: Dave’s experiment with joy

Proactively pursuing joy had the added benefit of being a great antidote to anxiety, people-pleasing, and ingratitude

3. “The expulsive power of a new affection” (Thomas Chalmers)

 = the best way to get rid of a wrong desire is by replacing it with a new desire

4. Examples

a. Sexual immorality: rather than simply fleeing sexual immorality, we need to also proactively pursue love (love of spouse, love of the potential victim, etc)

b. Envy: rather than simply trying to deny our envy, we should also proactively pursue gratitude (remember things we’re thankful for)

Conclusion

C.S. Lewis: “It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the beach. We are far too easily pleased.”

**Discussion Questions**

1. As we discussed the conflict between the Spirit and the flesh, we talked about the issue of how much victory we should expect to achieve in this lifetime. How would you articulate the level and kind of victory we should expect?

2. Explain in your own words what Paul means when he says, “those who belong to Jesus have crucified the flesh with its desires.”

3. C.S. Lewis compares the sin nature to a pet lizard we carry on our shoulder that we like to feed from time to time and don’t want to get rid of. Consider the question asked on Sunday: Where in my life are there sins that I’m simply not ready to give that up? What comes up for you as you consider that?

4. Consider the idea that the best defense is a good offense. Share a time in your life where proactively pursuing a good and healthy thing was a great antidote to a bad or unhealthy desire.

5. As you consider proactively pursuing the good that God has for us, which fruit of the Spirit do you think God wants you to lean into at this time in your life?