

How To Fight Sin In Your Life – Gal 5:16-21

Gal 5:16-21; Before we get there, I want to call your attention to several things, starting with the **Short Term Missions envelope** you received when you walked in Per the pre-service video announcements, we are sending teams this year to the Twin Cities, Guatemala, Turkey, and locally to some neighborhoods here in the QC's And this envelope is your opportunity to participate and support them, if you haven't already received a *letter* from one of them Just drop it in the offering; This week or any week

➤ Also, I want to give you an update on mine and Becky's trip to **Romania** last week We were there for 6 days (**photo**), and not only shared all we could about ministry, but our very lives; Experiencing what Paul said in 1 Thess 2:8 *We were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God, but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.*

➤ And then, last weekend, at the *end* of our time there, we drove 6 hours to Harvest Targu Mures (**Photo**); It's a vibrant church about 15 months old . . . With very good worship, and very sweet people; Frankly, it reminded me a lot of you And made preaching there a privilege

So thank you for your prayers; We feel blessed to have gone, and you played a very important part in sending us (**Blank**)

➤ And then last, as always, I'm so thankful for the guys who preached in my absence – Doug Rowland here at the Main Campus, and Garth Glenn at the West The word of truth is preached and preached well in my absence, and I trust the Lord used it in your life

➤ That said, let's get to the Word (**Title Slide**); Gal 5:16-21; You follow along [16] *But I say* [instead of what *they* were saying as they devoured one another], *walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.* [17] *For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do* [right or wrong]. [18] *But if you are led by the Spirit* [as opposed to being led by the flesh], *you are not under the law* [you're free, and have the power to win]. [19] *Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, [20] idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, [21] envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

With all of Paul's talk in the previous chapters, you might think that the Christian life is one of bliss; Ease Our sins have been forgiven; Jesus lives within us We're sons of Abraham with the blessing of righteousness We're sons of God with the Holy Spirit We're children of promise, and free from the Law Sounds like a cake walk

And yet, we fail to experience those blessings over and over and over again, due to our ongoing struggle with sin; Know what I'm talking about?

I sure do; From fightings within to fears without, I *struggle* to do what's right; And avoid what's wrong; I do; Constantly And if *you're* walking with the Lord, you do too; We all do

➤ And this passage implies that it's normal; That we are in the midst of an *all-out war*; A fight Sometimes in our family when somebody gets a little teste, a little passionate about something, somebody else will break the tension by saying . . . "Wanna fight? Wanna fight; Come on; Come on"

But when it comes to a life in Christ, you don't *have* to be prodded; Tongue in cheek or not, it's on; The fight is on; And if you're going to win it, you have to . . .

Expect it (v17)

That's the *first* key to fighting sin in your life; Just like *any* battle – military or otherwise; You have to expect it Otherwise you'll be caught off guard; Maybe even doubting your salvation I used to ask God to remove my struggles; Now, I ask him to strengthen me; B/c they're not going away; Not this side of heaven Look at v17 again – *The desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.*

The *flesh*, our sin nature, is *opposed* to the Spirit; The Holy Spirit; Who dwells within us So that there's a battle royale going on, every single minute, of every single day, in every single believer It doesn't even matter if you moved to Montana, or lived like a monk; The battle would *still* rage; Why? B/c it's *in*-ternal The primary battle ground over sin, is here (heart), not here (outside)

Martin Luther experienced it and struggled; The Apostle Paul experienced it and struggled (Rom 7:15-19); King David experienced it and struggled (Ps 38:3-4) And we experience it and struggle; Every single one of us Affirming that our struggle is real, and unavoidable And if we're going to win, we have to *expect* it

2nd, we have to . . .

Walk by the Spirit (v16-18)

That's what Paul says in v16 *Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.* IOW you'll win; If you *walk by the Spirit*, you'll win the fight; It's that simple But it requires an *understanding* of this phrase

Walk by the Spirit is a metaphor that Paul uses, to say conduct your *life* according to him Or live according to his guidance and power It would be like saying to a mountaineer, "Here's your map; Now walk by the compass;" As in pay attention to it, and go where it leads Here's your map (Bible); Now walk by the compass (Spirit within)

➤ But *that* begs the question, "How?"

Spiritual mountaineering doesn't come naturally
So how do you *know* where he's leading? How do you *apply* his power? How do you *draw* on his insight?

I just finished a book about the Vietnam War, and one of the issues was how to apply our influence and power as a world power
And then later in the war, was how to pass on the insight of those who were already there; How to draw on their experience
And how to know exactly what the generals wanted, on the ground

The point being: successful battles require know-how; And walking by the Spirit in our fight against sin, is no different; Requiring 4 how-to's; Starting with this . . .

- **Know his desires**

If you're going to *walk by the Spirit*, if you're going to conduct your *life* according to him, you have to know what he wants; You have to know his *desires* for your life
And that comes, from reading his Word; The very book he inspired
This is God's word, inspired by God's Spirit, with God's desires, for your life

- **Listen to his thoughts**

That still, small voice in the midst of the fray; That inaudible sense while listening in prayer; You have to "hear" it; You have to lean in

- **Respond to his prompts**

A sure-fire way to grieve and quench the Spirit, so that he no longer speaks, guides, or empowers, is to ignore his promptings; His nudges
The opportunities he puts in your path
If you're going to walk by the Spirit, you have to put one foot in front of the other, and respond to his prompts
Which happens most and best when you're in close fellowship with others who are doing the same; Like those in Discipleship Groups

And then last, in order to walk by the Spirit, you have to . . .

- **Ask for his help**

Which for some of you, is like a man asking for directions on a road trip
He knows best, and we don't; So ask
It's yet another aspect of God's grace, that our women focused on this weekend, in their retreat; The Spirit is there to help; Just ask (**Summary**)

4 how-to's, to walk by the Spirit, and win the fight against the desires of your flesh

3rd . . .

Call it what it is (v19-21a)

I think that's why Paul lists all these sins in v19-21; Saying that they're *works of the flesh* and *evident*; IOW it's not like we don't know about our sin, it's that we don't admit it
We don't call a spade a spade; We don't call our sin, sin, and affix the label for all time
We call it an issue; A condition; A syndrome; Or nothing at all

So Paul does it for us; Look at v19

[19] *Now the works of the flesh* [the actions *arising* from our sinful nature] *are evident*

[obvious]: *sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, [20] idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, [21] envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these.*

15 different sins, and a great big catch all to include the rest – things *like* these
And while most of them are self-explanatory, the first 5 are worth noting

➤ Starting with *sexual immorality*; The Greek word is "porneia," and denotes any sexual intercourse outside of marriage – the holy union of 1 man and 1 woman
Any sex outside of that, is sin; Including sex between 2 people who love each other – boyfriends, girlfriends, engaged couples, whatever; It's sin
And if you're going win the battle to avoid it, you need to call it what it is

2nd here, is *impurity*; Which is *any* kind of moral uncleanness, sexual or otherwise;
Including what you think; If it's wrong to do, it's wrong to dwell on

3rd is *sensuality* – engaging in sexual stimulation; Whether by immodest dress – things that are too high, too low, too tight, or too revealing . . .
Or suggestive movements – think dirty dancing; Or inappropriate touching – heavy petting; It's sensual, and therefore sinful
And we need to call it what it is, in order to win the fight against it

And then there's *idolatry*; Where you focus your attention on some-*one* or some-*thing*, to the exclusion of *God*

➤ And last, is *sorcery* – practices that appeal to the powers of darkness, whether knowingly or unknowingly; Knowingly, like black magic and Satanism . . .
And unknowingly, like drug dealers, abortionists, and those who administer euthanasia – "mercy killings" of the old and terminal by doctors
Those kind of practices fall under the umbrella of *sorcery*; True
B/c *sorcery* translates the Greek word "pharmakeia," which was used in Paul's day to refer to the practice of witchdoctors . . .
Who prepared and administered poisons for the purpose of abortions; Even then

So whether it's life-*ending* drugs, in the womb or hospital; Or life-*altering* drugs on the street; They're associated with the powers of darkness
And if we're going to win the fight, whether in our *own* lives or in our culture, we have to call it what it is

And the same is true of every other work of the flesh; Every *other* manifestation of our sin nature; From dissensions and divisions, to strife and envy
Or maybe for you it's gossip and greed; Whatever the case, there can be no rationalizing; Not if we're going to win more than we lose

➤ The Center for Disease Control in Atlanta is the worldwide watchdog for pandemics and plagues
And when they hear about an outbreak of infectious disease somewhere on the globe, they don't turn a blind eye
Or assume it will take care of itself and therefore treat it like a common cold

They look into it, they identify it, and they call it what it is

If it's H1N1, they say it; If it's Ebola, they say it; If it's Bubonic Plague, they say it
They call it what it is, in order to fight it the best they can

And we need to do the same

Instead of turning a blind *eye* to our sin, we need to name it
Instead of treating it like a cold, we need to wash it in the blood
Instead of *rationalizing* its existence, we need to call it what it is
And I'm going to give you an opportunity to do exactly that, before we're done
To get on your knees, get with the Lord, and call your sin, sin

"It's not that bad" doesn't cut it; "It could be worse" is no excuse
And such thinking will set you up for failure

Call it what it is, and last . . .

Consider the consequences (v21b)

The consequences of *failure* in the fight; *I warn you* [Paul says in v21b], *as I warned you before* [apparently he spoke to them about this when he was in Galatia] . . .

I warn you . . . that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

The *kingdom of God* referring to his future rule and reign when he returns, and our participation in it; It won't happen if we do these things

A consequence we should consider, to *fortify* our fight

Just like the consequences of speeding, help us hold the line while driving

➤ Speaking of which, we did a fair *amount* of driving in Romania; And discovered very quickly that most drivers over there have a death wish; Seriously
More times than I care to remember, somebody passed us on a curvy mountain road, barely avoiding a head-on collision; 3, 4, 5 cars at a time; They didn't care
On one occasion, we saw a guy coming at us, and in order to avoid a collision, he forced another car off the road to get back in his *lane*; Crazy
And while I'm sure it gives them a rush, just like works of the flesh, in the long run, it's fatal; Those who indulge in sin, *will not inherit the kingdom of God*

➤ Now, that's *not* to say, that if we sin as believers, we lose our salvation; We don't; Even if it's willful, rebellious sin
Rather, the verb "do" here, as in *those who do such things*, is *present* tense
Indicating an ongoing *continuation* of sin, rather than a temporary lapse in judgment
Showing that they never really received God's Spirit in the *first* place, and were never really saved; *Those* are the ones who won't *inherit the kingdom of God*

➤ But that's in no way intended to diminish the weight of Paul's words
And if they concern you, or even scare you b/c of the *sin* you've been indulging in, you're spot on; You *should* be frightened; B/c you may *not* be saved
It doesn't matter what you prayed or professed, if your faith hasn't changed you, it hasn't saved you

But even if it has, and you're just going through a time of struggle that you can't seem to shake, the solution is the same – repent

Whether you're continuing in sin as an *unbeliever*, or as a believer, the solution is to *repent* (**Slide**); To . . .

Get with the Lord; Call your sin, sin; Ask for forgiveness; And turn to the Spirit

That's repentance; And the key to winning the war

And I want to give you a chance to do that right now

To come down front, get on your knees, and find God's mercy/grace in time of need

Pray – If the Lord's been speaking to you, just slip out of your row, come down front, and get on your knees (**Keys**)

No need to worry about what people think; This is a place of grace, and this is the time to receive it

Maybe you need to repent of your sins and put a stake in the ground; As a turning point
Or maybe you just need a fresh filling of the Spirit; A fresh infusion of his power
B/c while you're walking in victory, you well know that the battle rages, and you're right on the edge

Whatever the case, you come, and let the worship team sing over you (**Song**)

Closing Prayer – As we close in prayer, if you'd like to remain up here during the offertory, please feel free

Lord, we come to you broken and ashamed; Trusting that you hear

And confess that we've been impure, immoral, angry, divisive, drunk – and it's sin;
We're calling it what it is, God; We're calling it what you call it
And we're asking that you forgive us; B/c of Jesus, will you wash us and cleanse us, white as snow?

We turn now to you Holy Spirit; To walk with you, and lean on you, and follow you
Deliver us from evil we pray

And receive our tithes and offerings now, for the work of your kingdom, our inheritance

Close – **Welcome Packet/Step 1; STM Prayer Card** – team member; *Elder prayer*