

Dead Man Walking Part 2

Turn with me once again to the New Testament book of Galatians. We've been focusing the last two Sundays on standing in the freedom Christ secured for us through his atoning death and resurrection. Paul declared, **"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."** Galatians 5:1

We talked about the fact we have been set free in Christ through his death and resurrection. Last Sunday we emphasized that we have been buried with Christ in baptism and resurrected to walk in a new life. The old sinful nature is dead and buried and we have been given a redeemed nature, liberated from sin and the control of Satan, made new in Christ. We have been born again. We have a new life, new attitude, new heart, new desires, new direction. We are under new management. This is what salvation looks like. A new life in Christ. The Holy Spirit takes up residence in your heart and life and gives you power to live an overcoming life in Jesus. We've been set free and Paul says "stand firm and stay free." Live in and walk in that freedom. Don't allow yourself to slip back into bondage or slavery to sin or anything else. You are free. Stay free!

Last Sunday we talked about how we were going to stand in that freedom. We quoted from Galatians 5. **"Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit."** Galatians 5:24-25 We talked about dead men walking. Crucified with Christ, yet living and walking by the Spirit. Crucifying the flesh and walking by the Spirit.

Those who belong to Jesus will live every day as though the passions and desires of the sinful nature have been crucified, put to death. It is not just a once and for all event that occurs when we repent of our sins and ask Jesus to be our Savior, but it's an everyday event as we crucify the flesh. Daily we take up our cross and follow Jesus. We refuse to let sin gain a base of operations from which to operate in our lives. We won't allow anything or anyone to pull us back into a life of sin. Instead, as Paul wrote in Romans 6, **"In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness."** Romans 6:11-13

We consider ourselves dead to sin. We won't allow sin to reign in our mortal bodies. What does that mean? We won't allow sin to take charge of the decisions we make, the actions we take, the thoughts we dwell on. We won't make ourselves available to sin or Satan, we won't cooperate with sin or wickedness, instead we offer ourselves, body, mind and spirit to the Lord since he has bought us with his blood and we belong to him!

We won't give in to the unspiritual life. Instead, crucifying the flesh, dead to sin and alive in Christ, we choose to live a life "in the Spirit" and "by the Spirit." This is the other piece to how we stand firm in that freedom Christ secured for us. Living, walking by the Spirit. Paul writes, **"So I say, live by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature."** **Galatians 5:16** Paul uses this term "live by the Spirit" as well as "led by the Spirit" and "keep in step with the Spirit." Other translations read, "walk in the Spirit."

Life in the Spirit is a life completely surrendered to Christ. Led by His Spirit, living by his Spirit, walking in step with His Spirit. When we repent of our sins and place our faith in Christ as Savior and Lord, the Holy Spirit takes up residence in our life. He does that work of regeneration, making us new creations in Christ. He begins making us conformable to the image of Christ. He comes to give us a new nature, a new way of living and thinking and acting. He comes to develop the character of Christ in our life, what we call the fruit of the Spirit. In the place of the old way of living, the old characteristics of immorality and selfishness and anger and envy and jealousy and hatred and so on, the Holy Spirit produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. In Christ we are living a Spirit filled, Spirit led life, if we will live by the Spirit and keep in step with the Spirit.

Paul gives us a picture of a shepherd leading his sheep. The Holy Spirit takes the initiative. He is leading us in ways that are pleasing to Christ. He is leading us in ways that are consistent with God's word and God's will, but notice His ways will be in conflict with the old ways of the flesh. Here it is again, **"For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want."** **Galatians 5:17**

Choosing to live by the Spirit puts us at odds with our flesh, with that old sinful nature. We are choosing to follow the Holy Spirit rather than give in to sin. Notice that last verse, "so that you do not do what you want." The Holy Spirit is at work in us, changing our wants, our desires. He wants us to live by the Spirit and walk by the Spirit so that I don't do what I want, I

do what Jesus wants. I do what the Holy Spirit wants me to do. I learn to live in obedience and walk in obedience to the Lord.

Live by the Spirit. Be led by the Spirit. Think about that for a minute. If you are living by the Spirit, that means he is constantly revealing the things of God to you. The Holy Spirit is testifying of Jesus and pointing to him. If you live by the Spirit he is convicting you of sin, warning you of paths you shouldn't take. He is at work in you, enabling you to live a godly life, empowering you to choose what is right and pleasing to God. As you choose God's way, as you choose to walk by the Spirit, that sinful nature is uncomfortable. The sinful nature resists and whines and pulls and pleads with you to give in to the flesh, to sin. But you are choosing to obey God. You are choosing to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit who is at work in you, giving you life! As you follow the Spirit He is forming new desires in your life, desires that are in keeping with the new nature and the new birth we have received through Jesus.

The Holy Spirit is doing the leading, but we are doing the walking. Notice the Spirit is doing the leading, he is living in us, bearing fruit in us, changing our desires into what God desires for us, (which is the absolute best), but we are doing the walking. What I mean is our role is not just passive submission to the Holy Spirit's control. We are walking. We are cooperating with the Holy Spirit. We are making a choice minute by minute to walk in the right way. Purposefully. Intentionally.

Let me show you something about walking by the Spirit. Look at Galatians 5:16 and 5:25. The NIV translates both verses as "live by the Spirit". NASB use "walk by the Spirit."
V16 "But I say, walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh." V25 "If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit."

Both verses speak of walking by the Spirit, but the Greek words translated as "walk" are different. Verse 16 the word walk is the word most often used simply for walking. But the Greek word translated as walk in verse 25 is a word that is used to mean "walking in line" or "being in line with." It's used as a military term for marching in an ordered row. That's why the NIV translates verse 25 as **"Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit."** Keep in step. Line up with the Spirit.

That Greek word is used five times in the New Testament and each time there is a rule or a standard or a principle that is being followed. We are to follow in line with a standard laid out for us. In this verse the rule or line we are to follow behind or fall in line with is the Holy Spirit

Himself and His will, his rule, his standard. To walk by the Spirit is to deliberately walk along the path or according to the line which the Holy Spirit lays down.

How do we know what that path is? Is it enough to say we are going to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit? We are praying, seeking his will, asking for his daily guidance and direction. What if I can't discern what that is? Do you realize he has helped us? How? The Holy Spirit has given us the Word of God!

Peter writes, **“But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.” 2 Peter 1:20-21** The Bible, the word of God, was given to us as the Holy Spirit spoke into the hearts and minds of the writers. The Spirit of God authored this book. It is a living word to us. If we are going to be led by the Spirit, we must know what he has said and what he is saying to us. We need to read his book! This is the pattern, the rule for us to follow. Paul writes, **“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” 2 Timothy 3:16-17**

God by His Holy Spirit spoke this word and it is useful for teaching us, rebuking us when we are in error, correcting us when we are headed off the path, training us so we can stand strong in serving the Lord. This is the Holy Spirit inspired word of God. This word shows us the way we are to go, the path we are to follow as the Spirit leads. We are to line up with this word as the Holy Spirit makes it alive in our heart. If we don't know the word of God we are prone to wander from the path. The Spirit will speak to us and lead us through his word!

The Psalmist declared, **“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.” Psalm 119:105** The Holy Spirit takes the word of God and lights up our path. We keep in step with the Spirit as we walk in obedience to His Word! The Psalmist asked **“How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word.” Psalm 119:9** The Holy Spirit leads us in a path that is in line with and in keeping with the Word of God.

“Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.” Galatians 5:25 Keep in step with the Spirit. Walk in line with the Spirit and with His Word. (Someone walks one direction with the bible and one goes another direction.) If that's the Holy Spirit and that's His word headed that direction and you are wandering around over here, you aren't in step with the Spirit. You aren't walking by the Spirit. You aren't living by the Spirit. Most likely you

aren't crucifying the old nature either and you won't be standing in freedom for very long. You are headed back to slavery and bondage. Get in step with the Spirit and keep in step! Hide God's word in your heart and stay in step with the author of this book, the Holy Spirit. Don't fall behind. March in step to his drumbeat. Move when he says move and stop when he says stop. Stay as close to Jesus and his Spirit as you can. Stay in line with God's word.

So here it is. We are going to live in that freedom Christ secured for us, free from sin and from bondage to an old way of living. Every day we choose to crucify the sinful nature with its passions and desires. We live like a dead man walking because that old man has been crucified. In addition, every day we choose to live by the Spirit and keep in step with the Spirit, following as He leads us, living in obedience to His Word.

In his commentary on Galatians, John Stott wrote, **“As therefore, we ‘crucify the flesh’, repudiating what we know to be wrong, so too we must ‘walk by the Spirit’, setting ourselves to follow what we know to be right. We reject one path to follow another. We turn from what is evil in order to occupy ourselves with what is good. And if it is vital to be ruthless in turning away from the things of the flesh, it is equally vital to be disciplined in turning towards the things of the Spirit.” ...John Stott**

We reject one path to follow another. There are plenty of alternate paths. Choose the path the Spirit takes. You don't want to go back into slavery to sin. You don't want to be in bondage to an old way of thinking or living. Christ has set us free. Let's stay in that freedom.

I have a feeling there are people here who asked Jesus to save them and deliver them, but you would have to admit you aren't walking by the Spirit today. You aren't keeping in step with the Spirit. You keep doing things you know Jesus wouldn't do, saying things Jesus wouldn't say, treating people in ways you know Jesus wouldn't treat people. You say you are living for Jesus but you aren't in step with the Spirit. You aren't crucifying the flesh and keeping in step with the Spirit. You look around and wonder, “How did I get way over here?” How about getting in step with Him today? How about surrendering your whole heart and life to Jesus, getting in step with and keeping in step with the Holy Spirit? This is the way to stay free!