

First Sunday after Easter

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning, everyone. So I'll just tell you a little bit about our church, because maybe you don't know. We're a very young church plant. We did start in January. It's an English church in Gatineau. There aren't really many or any English churches in Gatineau, but there's a growing English population over there. So if you know, if you have a friend who lives in Aylmer or Buckingham, tell them to come join us. We meet in the afternoons, which has its perks. Like, I get to come be here with you in the morning, and then I get to go preach at church this afternoon.

But we're a mix of English and French. So we just read the Nicene Creed. We do that in English some weeks. We do that in French other weeks. We're mostly English, but we've got a large percentage of our church that is francophone. It's very much an immigrant church as well, so it's about as diverse as you can get, which comes with tons of challenges. We struggle with the language thing, but it's also part of our, you know, DNA of what we want. We want to see the Lord Jesus reconcile all things in the universe. And so we're really putting all our chips in that Jesus basket, and we're going for it. But we're a very young, small church. We appreciate your prayers. So remember us, please, pray for us. But I came here to tell you some really good news, some really wonderful news from Galatians chapter 5 that we just read. So I've spent some time studying today's text, and man, I really believe that this can be a life-changing passage of Scripture for you.

And I'm serious when I say that. And hang with me, and I think you'll see why. The passage today sets before us two ways to live, either dependent on God or dependent on ourselves. And I say two ways to live, not two ways to think. You can have all your theological ducks in a row, but you can still just be in bondage to the law. If you go and read the entirety of the letter to the Galatians, you're going to learn a lot about the nuances between circumcision, uncircumcision, between the child of the slave woman, child of the free woman, between law and faith. But ever present in the background of this letter by Paul, like the sustained note of a bagpipe's drone is the gospel.

Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law by paying the penalty of our sins on the cross so that we could be free. That's grace. Maybe you love grace. Maybe you're all about grace.

I do. But be honest. What occurred in your heart a moment ago when Daniel read that passage from Galatians aloud? When you heard that list of vices and virtues? Some of you are like, oh no, I wasn't really paying attention. Well, you can look right now. Look at verse 19 and onward.

[3 : 0 3] Did you not check yourself to see how you did? Like, what's your score? Okay, I'm doing reasonably well with sorcery, but eek, I think I'm a little too angry. Or I've been messing up on the sexuality stuff, but I'm not divisive in the church, so where does that leave me? Y'all, we can tell ourselves that we aren't legalists all day long, but you put a list like Galatians 5 in front of us, and we will go through every line of it checking ourselves. See, how well did we do? See, we often think of legalists as the snobby legalists who have their lives all nice and tidy, everything's put together.

But it is just as legalistic to beat yourself up all the time. Shame is not a virtue. Okay, now some of you might be feeling ashamed. Let's deal with that. Let's get into this. This passage can change your life. Paul shows us the amazing, unstoppable work of the Spirit of God in those who have faith in Christ. Now, some of you may not have faith yet. It is great that you're here today. I ask you just for a little while, just try faith on. Think with it. Track with me as much as you can, and I think you'll see why so many people are obsessed with Jesus. Everything depends on Him. So in this text, we don't see Jesus' name per se. Whom do we see? We see the Spirit.

It's the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ. It's all the same God at work. And just to note, Paul mentions the Spirit in this text like seven times. That's about half the total usages of the word Spirit in Galatians. This passage is a hotbed of spiritual activity in the letter.

So where am I going with this? The main takeaway, the big idea here is that we must depend on the Spirit. Stop depending on ourselves. We must depend on the Spirit and stop depending on ourselves.

Only He can pull us out from under the law, the law that's crushing us. Now, we're going to study these verses under three headings. First, the war inside.

[5 : 20] Second, from death to life. And third, get up, soldier. The war inside, from death to life, get up, soldier. Okay? So part one, the war inside. This is verses 16 and 17. Christians talk a lot about having peace, but it's not like having like peace with the universe or being stoic and just kind of cool with everything. It's actually peace accomplished through warfare. Paul describes the Christian life as one of war, internal war. There is a war going on inside every believer.

There's good news, though. You're not fighting alone. God's Spirit is with you. Paul starts, look at the first verse there. He starts by telling the Galatians to walk by the Spirit.

He's going to start the other section similarly. Look at verse 18, being led by the Spirit. Or verse 25, keep in step, walk with the Spirit. They must remember that they're not alone. God Himself, the Holy Spirit, is with them every step of the way. And because they're walking with the Spirit, they don't have to fear the war. They don't have to fear whatever comes their way.

And even if it is a war on the inside, the Spirit is with them. So now things, I find, start to get a little interesting. Look at verse 16. Paul says something peculiar. He says that because they're walking with the Spirit, they will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

Desires of the flesh. That may sound carnal when you first hear it, but it's all those things that were read earlier, all those things that include like rivalries and dissensions, divisions, those are all desires of the flesh. So it's all said in the passage. But let's stop here. How is it that Paul can just say this sentence so matter-of-factly? Like, walk by the Spirit and you won't chase after these sins anymore? Like, if I came to you and I said, look, I've been really struggling with sin lately. Here it is. Here it is. Here it is. I could really use some prayer. And you said, Frankie, all you got to do is just, you just got to walk by the Spirit, man, and you won't desire those things anymore. You'll be fine. If you said that to me, I would walk away so discouraged. I'd be so confused about the Christian life. Like, what does it even mean? It just sounds like one of those cliches. So what is Paul saying here? Well, verse 17 clears it up. Look at 17. The Spirit is opposed to the flesh, and the flesh is opposed to the Spirit. They are at war. And it's war that is serving a purpose in the

[8 : 13] Christian life. That last phrase in verse 17 is important. Look at 17. It's war in order that, or to keep you from doing the things that you hate to do? No. That you want to do. Yeah, you want to sin.

Yeah, I want to sin. And you know what? In war, you have bad days. You have days where you lose. But God's Spirit is at work in your heart right now, waging war on your sin. See, we go through life thinking that if we're going to get God, we have to just sort of like clean up our act first. And even if you know the gospel, you still live like that. You still live afraid of Him, afraid to run to Him after your sin.

But that's the reverse of what Christianity is. You can only clean up your act. You can only have any victory over sin if the Holy Spirit is with you, in you, at work. It is Him who is working. It is He who is making you even notice a problem with sin.

See, a believer who struggles with sin is a real believer. And a believer who doesn't struggle with sin is not a believer at all.

You hear me? A believer who doesn't struggle with sin is not a believer. There's no internal warfare going on.

[9 : 44] You must have conflict. If you don't have an internal war with sin, then whatever peace you have in your life, it's like the Pax Romana, you history buffs may know, that the Romans, they say, would make peace by going into a city and turning it into a desert, killing all life, quashing any life.

But you who struggle with sin, who may feel weighed down by it so bad, even this morning, you walk in this room feeling like a fraud because you hate what happens in the dark. You who struggle with sin are like a city in which God is throwing a spiritual coup, redeeming it, buying it back. There is a battle. It is a battle to win you.

It is a battle in your heart. Now, this is not something Paul's making up. He's getting this from the Old Testament. You go read the prophecy of Ezekiel, all these words about like flesh and spirit, waging war and fighting and interacting. That's coming from the prophet Ezekiel.

And a lot of you may, maybe your favorite passage, if you know Ezekiel, is that valley of dry bones, where it's revealed that the problem is not that Israel isn't just trying hard enough.

It's that they need new hearts. They're dead bones. They need to be brought to life. And that is an act of God. That's how they obey the law. It is through God's grace at work in their hearts.

[11 : 13] God himself must give them new spiritual life. This is where our dependence on God starts to come in. We must see him as our source of life, our source of obedience.

You know, if we don't have him at work in us, like we just continue to destroy ourself. And this is what the false teachers in Galatians didn't really understand.

You go read the book and they're all fighting about rituals and circumcision and stuff. See, they may have been paying lip service to Jesus, but by making something like the law or circumcision to be like the front door to God, it's a grievous error.

Because God doesn't wait for you to get your life in order before you come to him. It's like going to a graveyard and waiting for somebody to come out of a tomb. See, God has to be the one who comes to us.

He has to be the one who draws us closer to him. He is our only hope in our fight against sin. See, the problem the Galatians are facing, it's much deeper than religious rites.

[12 : 15] It's about the very nature of how God interacts with man. It's either by works or it's by grace. Now, some of you really need to take this to heart this morning and reevaluate the war that is going on inside of you.

You feel like an imposter. You feel increasingly annoyed with yourself, increasingly annoyed with others. You're just another hypocrite in church, waiting for what you've done in the dark to be brought to the light.

And look, generally speaking, like everybody, regardless of your religion, faces some sort of inner turmoil, some sort of self-doubt. But how you deal with that is very telling of your spiritual state.

Maybe some of you are sort of setting yourself as the standard of what a good human is, like, if somebody seems better than me, well, that makes them a good person. If somebody's, you know, worse than me, well, that makes them a bad person.

You're the standard. Or maybe some of you are just walking around feeling awful about yourself all the time. You're just never good enough. But there's something peculiar happens whenever you're a Christian.

[13 : 26] We misinterpret this turmoil in us to think that we're fake. But I want you to hear me. There is nothing that will cause you more turmoil of heart than the flag of God planted in your soul.

There's nothing that will cause you more turmoil of heart than the flag of God planted in your soul. Your anguish over sin is the spiritual coup where God himself is overthrowing the old regime.

The old guard, your sin, tries to fight to keep you thinking you're enslaved. But God's flag is not going anywhere. God looked at you at your worst, your weakest, your worst day.

And he said, this is my city now. She's mine. He's mine. The war you feel on the inside is God's war to win you.

And his spirit always wins. Don't you fear? He's broken your chains. Get up. Walk with him. So part one, the war inside. Part two, from death to life.

[14 : 41] Here we're going to be studying the bulk of the passage from verses 18 to 24. We're going to take a little bit more time here than in the third part. So look at 18. But if you're led by the spirit, you're not under the law.

Being led by the spirit. We're going to come back to this verse, verse 18, by the way, so memorize it now. If you're led by the spirit, you're not under the law. This has a Psalm 23 sort of undertone.

The Lord is our shepherd who is leading us through the valley of the shadow of the penalty of the law and into the bright fields of the kingdom of God.

His spirit leads us. Hold on to that. Paul then describes what he calls the works of the flesh. It's a list of sins that lead to death in our lives.

These are the things that those who are under the law will be judged by. Look at verse 21. Those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. So what things are so bad that if somebody does them, it results in them being barred from the kingdom of God, really being sent to hell?

[15 : 51] Well, it's pretty much everything bad. Paul lists three sins of a sexual nature. Look at 19. Sexual immorality and purity, sensuality.

Then verse 20. Two sins of a religious nature. Idolatry. Sorcery. Then, get this, get this. Eight sins of how we treat one another in the community.

Eight. Enmity. Strife. Jealousy. Fits of anger. Rivalries. Dissensions. Divisions. Verse 21. Envy. Then there's two sins of debauchery, drunkenness and orgies.

And that last one is probably less how it's translated here and more like a crazy frat party vibe where the sexuality is included, but it's not the main deal. So, look, whenever we look at a list of this, we may want to just focus on the things that we don't do, like we try to keep ourselves away from the sins that would sort of scare us to think we're going to hell or something.

But, okay. Say you're not a wild partier. How's your anger? Eight of those sins, the majority of those sins, were relational things.

[17 : 03] Maybe you don't drink, even. But how much rivalry is churning under the surface of that grudge you're holding against somebody in the room?

Most of the sins here are relational. And frankly, none of us are making it through this list alive. But what did verse 18 say?

Have you forgotten it? If you're led by the Spirit, you're not under the law. Are you under the law? No. If you're led by the Spirit, you're not under the law.

See, it's not that sin is excusable. It's so bad it spoils everything. It destroys everything. It kills us. But the King of the Kingdom has grabbed a hold of you with his unbreakable chains of grace, and he is pulling you out of the muck of sin into the bright fields of the Kingdom of God.

Out from under the law. If you depend on him, he's paid the law's penalty for you by dying for you on the cross.

[18 : 13] It's done. It's he who does it. It's his work. It's not your work. I mean, what are the works of the flesh? Paul calls sin here works of the flesh.

But God's work here is something completely different. This rescuing work. And then what it does in our lives is it brings us from death into life. It grows fruit in our lives.

See, Paul doesn't even call the good things here works. We're used to calling good things works, bad things sin. He flips. He's like, your works are sin, but here's the good thing. Here's the life. Here's the fruit. See that in verse 22.

It's fruit. What is this fruit? Some of you have it memorized. Maybe some of you kids have a little song. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Fruit. This is such a rich biblical imagery. This is what humanity was made for. Think of the Garden of Eden. What was the goal? Spread the life. Spread the fruit over the earth.

[19 : 14] You get to the temple of God, his holy place. How is it described? It's like pomegranates on the wall and stuff. Fruit. Fruit. Life-giving sustenance. And look, you don't need to be a Christian to look at the list of vices and virtues here and say, yeah, vices are like death and virtues are sort of like life.

But it's just like in Deuteronomy. After Moses gives the law to the people of God with all of its judgments, he tells them two words. Choose life.

I want life. I'm tired of death. I'm tired of the death in my life. I'm tired of what sin is doing to me and to everything I touch.

But God wants life for us more than we do. It's why I became a man. It's why he gave his life so that we could be brought from death to life.

I want you to consider the fruit. Love. For God so loved the world that he gave his only son to save it, to save you.

[20 : 21] Joy. It was for the joy set before Christ that he endured the cross. That joy was you. Peace.

Only a man of the deepest eternal peace would have put himself in such a miserable place of torment to rescue those of us who are trying to mess up his life.

He loves us with such peace. Patience. Now, some of you this morning feel very impatient. You're impatient with yourself or your kids.

We can hardly stand ourselves sometimes. But he is so patient with us. So patient. He's not in a rush with you.

Like, you're in such a rush to get your life cleaned up and everything. He's not in a rush. He's patient. He knows he's going to win. Kindness. God doesn't shame us into acting better.

[21 : 18] Paul tells us that God's kindness is what is meant to lead us into repentance. Wow. Who's like this? You see where we're going with this? This is the life of Christ at work in his people.

Goodness. It is his goodness, the goodness of God that he gives to us sinners. So that just like in the Garden of Eden, one day we could be called very good because of him.

Faithfulness. Faithfulness. Faithfulness. All of us have been like an unfaithful bride to God. Yet he stays with us. He keeps our vows for us.

Gentleness and lowliness. Calling all of us to come and drop our burdens at his feet. To take on us the way of grace and life. Self-control.

The book of Proverbs tells us that the person who has self-control is stronger than a warrior who conquers a city. Jesus faced temptation after temptation and didn't give in an inch.

[22 : 22] He is the mightiest of most warlike of self-controlled people. And he did that because you and I are so indulgent. Our hearts are so easily entangled in sin.

But he was our champion. He defeated that for us. He has self-control. The fruit of the Spirit is the very life of Jesus that God is putting into the hearts of his people.

In order to give us life. We are passing from death to life because of him. That's how Paul can say in verse 24. Look at 24. He's like those who belong to Christ. They've crucified the flesh with his passions and desires.

They've died already. They've passed through death. They're going to life. See, we see our sins so clearly sometimes. Never, never fully.

But here's how we need to see our sins. We need to see our sins like Paul sees them in 24. They've been nailed to the cross to die. The flesh has been nailed to the cross.

[23 : 22] See, our sinful flesh, it may wail and howl. But it is crucified. It may yet breathe and torment us, whispering to us, you'll never be free of sin.

You'll never be free of me. But it's crucified. Your flesh may shame you. It may tempt you. But you have crucified it by entrusting yourself to your crucified king.

You experience now only the death throes of a dying beast. Fear not. Stop your wallowing in self-pity, self-loathing.

Don't you know that those nails will never be removed? Our sin will never come down from that cross. It is dying. And now it is his life at work in you, bringing you to life.

The spirit leads you from death to life. The war inside, from death to life. And now part three. Get up, soldier. We're going to finish our text by studying the last two verses.

[24 : 30] So Paul so far talked about walking by the spirit, being led by the spirit. And now he says, keep in step with the spirit. Or maybe in your Bible it says walk, but I think keep in step is a better translation.

See, this is the kind of walking where you're walking in ranks and files, marching. Y'all, this is military language. I find this very fascinating.

Look at the beginning of verse 25. He says, if we live by the spirit, let's keep in step with the spirit. If we live. Who is it that lives? Let your eyes go back to verse 24. It's those who have crucified the flesh and they now live by the spirit.

Those who have died now live. Now rise and rank and file, keeping in step with their king, their commander. A resurrected army, just like that valley of dry bones.

That is you, church. That is what the Lord is doing for you. You're not hopeless and dead for sins. Don't act like it anymore.

[25 : 34] You have a new heart, bursting with life. God's in it. God's saving you. God's making you his warrior, rising and rank and file. Get up, soldier. Keep in step with your shepherd king.

Now look, this is not something we do alone. Paul knows we do this in community. Look at verse 26. He goes back to those relational sins again. He says, don't become conceited. Don't provoke one another.

Don't envy. See, those ways of death are behind you. They are nailed to the cross in your flesh. You're to love one another now. You're to march together now.

The people of God are to be like that ancient Greek phalanx. Do you know the phalanx? It was a way of organizing your troops in battle where they'd all be in a block and they'd have their shields all overlapping lined up and you'd have your spears all overlapping lined up and you would march together, march onward, onward, together, rank and file together.

The phalanx only works if you stay together, if you march as one. You are one with those sitting in the room with you today.

[26 : 44] What reason do you have to look down on anybody here? What benefit is it to you if any one of you fall? What is the point of distancing yourself from any of the other people here?

None. You are one learning to keep in step with your shepherd king together, following him into eternal life.

May this church never be a place where the gospel is on your lips, but it's not okay to make mistakes. May the fruit of the spirit of God, his life, remove the shackles of the law which keep any of you in chained, inciting your sin against one another, making you feel competitive against one another.

May every one of you leave here today just a little bit lighter, a little bit freer, more of a team, happily entrusting yourself to the spirit. Get up, soldier.

The way of the law is over. Remember, the way of grace is set before you. Walk with him. Be led by him. Keep in step with him. Depend on him.

[27 : 56] Come out from under the law. Let's pray. God, we are so wearied from our sin, our flesh, that you've set before us a way out from under your law.

What a treasure. What a gracious, loving gift. Thank you. Thank you. Help us to see ourselves as you see us, as saved, as loved, as being healed, being rescued, forgiven, all through the work of the spirit of Christ.

In whose name we pray. Amen.