

# How We Live by the Gospel of Grace

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[ 0 : 00 ] Earlier this week, I decided I was going to do a little bit of surveying, a little bit of asking questions.

And I thought, you know, this is a good way for me not only to gather material for my sermon, but to sort of open up lines of conversation with people I know who don't believe in Jesus Christ.

And so what I did is I just went up to them and I told a couple of acquaintances. One at a coffee shop I worked at, one of them was the barber who cut my hair.

And I just told them, you know, they knew that I was a pastor here at the church. And I said, I'm preparing my sermon for this Sunday. And so I'm just wanting to, you know, gather a little of information, get a little bit of data to help me put my sermon together.

So I asked them this, have you ever tried to end an old habit or have you ever tried to start a new habit? But then you found that you did not have the willpower to make it happen.

[ 0 : 59 ] Have you ever tried to start to end an old habit or start a new habit? And you found that you didn't have the willpower to make it happen. You can maybe you could get started on it, you'd make progress for a week or two, and then it would just kind of fall away.

So the first person I asked, she said that she's tried for years. She tried for many years to change her eating habits to healthier foods, but her traveling lifestyle as well as her family's traditional food choices made that very difficult, more difficult than her willpower could overcome.

And it wasn't until moving here to town recently that those barriers to a new, to new habits of eating got dropped to the point where she could start building that habit.

A second, the second person I talked to, he said that he wants to work out regularly. But because of his work schedule, because of the long hours, that exhaustion, that tiredness that comes with that, once again, the barriers too high as willpower is not strong enough for him to follow through with his good intentions.

His willpower can't compensate for that exhaustion. Now, diet and exercise, those are pretty much the biggest New Year's resolutions, aren't they? Those are very common things, right? I'd be willing to bet.

[ 2 : 13 ] You know, what we just talked about, diet and exercise is a common experience for many of us here. I don't know if I've really worked a lot on the diet part, but the exercise part, I know exactly what he's talking about, right?

Trying to develop those new habits, get them in place, but you don't have the willpower to follow through. Now, that's bad enough with habits that are sort of a regular nuisance, habits that are maybe unhealthy for your body, new habits you're trying to develop that are healthy for your body, just general maintenance and taking care of the body that God has given you.

What about habits, bad habits in your life that are absolutely draining the life out of you, draining the life out of your relationships, or good habits that aren't bringing life to you or to your relationships because you don't have the willpower to do what you know is right.

You don't have the willpower to follow through with what you know is right. You don't have the willpower to love God. You don't have the willpower to consistently love your husband or your wife the way you know you should.

You don't have the willpower to consistently love your parents or love your children the way that you know you should. You don't have the willpower to love God the way you should.

[ 3 : 33 ] You know the things that you're supposed to do and you just can't keep it up consistently. Maybe you're cultivating a habit that you know is sinful.

You keep it secret. You keep it hidden from other people. You know it's rebellion against God. You're deeply ashamed of it. You find it too hard to overcome.

Maybe you've even gone to other people and you've tried to work on it and just you can't beat it. Maybe you're neglecting a habit you know would please God and you're feeling this continual low-level guilt that's sort of this backdrop of your life that I know I should be doing this but I haven't been doing this.

And I know I'm supposed to but I don't do it. We'll talk in a little bit about maybe some specific examples about that. But about 2,000 years ago the Apostle Paul wrote some things that can help us with this.

He was writing to several small churches in crisis and these small churches were wrestling with this question. How do we have a relationship with God and develop habits and patterns of life that please him?

[ 4 : 42 ] How do we have a relationship with God in the first place? What is the basis for that relationship? And second of all what does that relationship look like? How do we develop the habits and patterns that please God that serve him? Now there were several individuals in these churches.

Individuals we've been calling Judaizers. And these individuals, these false teachers in these churches in the region of Galatia. These individuals said that the answer was this. In order to have a relationship with God you need to become a Jew.

You need to follow all the rules and regulations of the law of Moses that was given to the Jewish people. Your obedience to this law of Moses as given in the Old Testament was the basis for your relationship with God.

And your obedience, you know, working to work and work and work to obey the law was how you pleased God. Was how you developed a lifestyle that pleased God.

Now over the last few months we've been reading a letter that Paul wrote to the Galatian churches. And in this letter Paul is responding to that teaching, that false teaching and responding to that mindset.

[ 5 : 48 ] What he's doing is he's reminding these early Christians that their relationship with God, first of all the basis for it, is what Jesus Christ has done. Not what you have done.

Jesus was a Jew who perfectly obeyed the law of Moses. He did exactly what these false teachers are trying to get the people of Israel to do. He obeyed the law of Moses. He loved God.

He loved other people perfectly. He never sinned even once. And yet he was condemned to death.

He was crucified on a Roman cross. He was buried.

And all this took place because of his claim to be the Son of God. And then God raised him to life again. And he has gone to heaven to be with God, the Father.

And everyone who has faith in Jesus Christ, everyone who has been united to Jesus because they believe he is the Son of God, because they believe that he died and he rose again from the dead on their behalf.

[ 6 : 49 ] Because they believe their relationship with God is based on what Jesus has done for them. Every one of those people has been united to Jesus by that faith.

So that his goodness, his righteousness are now counted towards people of faith, people like you and me. And our sins, our rebellion against God, they were counted towards Jesus.

So that he took the punishment on our behalf. And so by faith, we are saved. By faith, we are saved from God's right anger toward us for our sinful acts, for our sinful disposition against God.

That is wonderful news. That is a message of the gospel of grace. But now that leaves us with the question, what now?

How are we going to live? Now these individuals, these false teachers in the Galatian churches, they're saying, you know, that's great. You know, Jesus did all this stuff. That's good.

[ 7 : 57 ] Now what you have to do is you have to follow the law of Moses because faith alone isn't good enough. Christ died for you, but his death is not the only basis for your relationship with God.

You need to obey the law of Moses to the letter. That is also part of the basis of your relationship with God. And if you fail to obey it, then in any respect, you're falling short.

You're not really one of God's people. What Paul has been warning these churches is that this is not how we live by the gospel of grace.

God's grace to you and me, God's favor towards you and me, it wasn't something that we earned by our obedience. It was a gift. And this ongoing gift, this new life that he has offered on the basis of what Christ has done, this ongoing gift is how we live by the gospel of grace.

It's how we learn to live like citizens of God's kingdom. It's how we learn to live like members of his family, dearly loved by him. So what is this gift?

[ 9 : 05 ] What is this ongoing gift? Well, Paul answers this question in Galatians chapter 5, verses 16 through 26. If you take a look in your Bibles, I didn't get the page number if you have one of our Bibles that we supply.

But Galatians is near the end, near the end of the New Testament of the Bible. It's a small book. Look for the big number 5 within the book of Galatians. That's chapter 5. Look for the small number 16.

That's verse 16 within chapter 5. Now the answer to the question of what is this gift is this. The Holy Spirit is God's ongoing gift to us.

The Holy Spirit is God's ongoing gift to us. The Holy Spirit, first of all, we have to know who he is.

The Holy Spirit, along with the Father, along with the Son, he is fully God.

There is only one God. But even though there is only one God, God the Holy Spirit is a person who is distinct from God the Father and distinct from God the Son.

[ 10 : 10 ] God in three persons. If that doesn't make a lot of sense to you, join the club of theologians for the last 2,000 years. You know, God, this is the Trinity is a very difficult concept to understand.

But it's a beautiful concept because it means from eternity past that God existed in a relationship of love with himself. And that means that God is fundamentally a God who loves and desires relationship.

That is something that is so distinct about Christianity. And that means that God wants to extend that love out to people like you and me.

And to bring us into his family. And the Father and the Son, as a result, they have sent the Holy Spirit as a gift. As a gift to you and me.

The Holy Spirit is God's ongoing gift to us. The Holy Spirit is how we live by the gospel of grace. Now here's how Paul puts it beginning in Galatians 5, verse 16.

[ 11 : 10 ] But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 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. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Now the works of the flesh are evident. Sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, 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. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

[ 12 : 25 ] If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. This is God's word to us.

If you are paying close attention, you might find some of this terminology to be a little bit confusing. Because Paul is talking about the Spirit. That is God, the Holy Spirit.

And you are like, okay, we have sort of talked about who the Holy Spirit is. So we know what that means. But now Paul is also talking about this opponent of the Spirit.

This opponent of the Spirit who is fighting against the Holy Spirit's agenda in your life. And the Holy Spirit's actions in your life. And this opponent is what Paul calls the flesh.

The flesh. Sounds kind of creepy. And it kind of is. Now maybe you are using a translation of the Bible which translates this as the sinful nature.

[ 13 : 24 ] I think that is a valuable thing to keep in mind. Because if you were just to read the flesh and you didn't examine Paul's writings super carefully.

You just kind of read it and just sort of moved on without really thinking about it too much. You might think that Paul is, what he is doing is he is saying, okay, there is the Spirit and there is the flesh. So the Spirit is the non-physical, the immaterial souls.

The flesh is your physical, material body. And our souls are good, our bodies are bad. And that is the way a lot of Greek philosophers of the time talked. That is what they thought.

They even had this clever saying in Greek, soma seima. Which means the body is a tomb. Your inner soul, your spirit is what is good.

And thank God when you die. Because now you get to get rid of that ridiculous, awful body.

Obviously, this is not quite as popular a view in our culture.

[ 14 : 21 ] But we need to let Scripture interpret Scripture. In particular, we need, if we are going to take Paul seriously, if we are going to show him respect, if we are going to show the Holy Spirit respect as he speaks through the Apostle Paul, what we need to do is we need to let Paul define his own terms.

We need to let him supply his own definition for his own words. That's, you know, if I am talking with you and I am trying to understand what you mean, then what I am trying to do is think, what does Colin mean by that word he just said?

I don't just assign whatever meaning I want to it. I try to put some thought into it. What did he mean by that? And the same thing with reading Paul. Now, this isn't the first time in this letter to the Galatians that Paul has used these terms.

He has set these terms spirit and flesh against each other already a couple of times. If you go back to chapter 3, verse 3, Paul is reminding the Galatians they have been saved by faith in Jesus Christ.

They are by faith depending on Jesus Christ. They depended on him. They were empowered by his spirit. So it makes no sense for them now to all of a sudden switch tactics, to all of a sudden switch to human efforts such as circumcision, such as keeping all of these various laws that were prescribed.

[ 15 : 46 ] It makes no sense to switch to all those things as the basis for their relationship with God, as though those things are going to be life-giving to them. Paul challenges the Galatians in chapter 3, verse 3.

Are you so foolish? Having begun by the spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? In other words, you got this far by putting gas in your tank, and now you're going to pour water in it in hope that that is going to get you farther.

Why would you change? A couple weeks ago, we encountered these two terms, spirit and flesh, once again in Galatians chapter 4, verse 29.

And there, Paul contrasts Abraham's son Ishmael, Abraham being the father of the Jewish nation, and he has two sons, one son Ishmael, the other son Isaac. Paul contrasts the two. And he writes, Just at that time, he who was born according to the flesh, that's Ishmael, persecuted him who was born according to the spirit.

That's Isaac. So also it is now. Now why was Ishmael born according to the flesh while Isaac was born according to the spirit? Well, you have to go back to the book of Genesis to study it, and as you read the story in Genesis, you realize something.

[ 17 : 01 ] The contrast between the two is this. Ishmael was born by human scheming and planning. And purely by human scheming and planning. Abraham's wife Sarah was infertile, so what Sarah did is she decided to use her female slave Hagar as a surrogate mother.

It wasn't a really great idea. But Isaac, he was born according to God's promise. He was born according to the power of God's spirit at work.

Abraham and Sarah, they played their part in that, sure. But it was the Holy Spirit who supplied the power, the Holy Spirit who supplied the promise. The words flesh and spirit are often used in other ways in the Bible, and in other contexts they might have other meanings.

But when Paul uses them, and when Paul pairs them together as contrasting each other, that's what the contrast is. What is the flesh? The flesh is human beings, people like you and like me. Human beings trying to live independently from God. They're relying entirely on their own self-confidence, their own strategizing, their own planning, their own scheming, their own competence, their own ability, their own willpower.

[ 18 : 20 ] Human beings like you and me, we can get a lot of stuff done that way, in the short term anyway. I mean, so much of our whole culture is built on that.

Political planning, corporate marketing, so much of what we do is according to the flesh, the works of the flesh, things we accomplish in the flesh.

They look really impressive and really powerful for now. For now, in the long term, well, we all know what happens to you and to me.

You and to me, we know we're not going to be around a couple hundred years from now, and we can be pretty confident that all of the structures that our culture has built are probably not going to be around a thousand years from now.

The works of the flesh look really impressive in the short term, but they crumble and they fade away in the long term. It's a very popular way to live, but it is not how we live by the gospel of grace. It is not eternal.

[ 19 : 21 ] The contrast is with the Spirit. The Spirit is God's Holy Spirit. The Spirit equips and empowers human beings who know that they are powerless, who know that they are weak, who know that their strategies and plans and schemes can easily be ruined and will eventually be unraveled, who know that their own competence, their own ability, their own willpower are finite, are limited.

Human beings like you and me, you know, in general, we often try to avoid that mindset. We try to dodge it. We try to distract ourselves from that. But somebody who is living according to the Spirit doesn't try to avoid that, but embraces it.

They embrace their own frailty. It's an unpopular way to live, but it is exactly how we live by the gospel of grace. Paul reminds us in verses 16 and 17 that the Holy Spirit is God's ongoing gift to us. He is how we live by the gospel of grace. Verses 16 and 17, he writes this, So Paul says that this is how we live by the gospel of grace.

We walk by the Spirit. We walk by the Spirit. Now it's a little strange to talk about walking by the Spirit. I mean, he's not sort of saying that in order to experience this newfound power, we have to just start, you know, I don't know, do a Forrest Gump walk across America or something like that, empowered by the Spirit.

[ 21 : 09 ] This is not a literal thing. This is a word picture. Paul often talks about our lives as a walk. Why is a walk a good picture? Because someone who is walking keeps moving and pressing forward at a steady pace, following Jesus Christ with that habitual stride in place.

Steady, persistently moving forward with a direction in mind, following our Master and our Savior, Jesus Christ, down a path. And he said this life of steady habit that characterizes God's people, this life is empowered by God's ongoing gift to us.

It is empowered by His Holy Spirit. You walk by the Spirit. That's who energizes us to keep on walking, to keep on walking.

Even when we are weary, even when we are worn out, we walk by the Spirit. And there is a funny thing that happens if you have ever been on a straight path through the woods, you are walking along the straight path.

As you are walking forward, have you ever noticed that when you are just walking forward, when your gaze is fixed forward, fixed ahead of you, when you are walking steadily like that, funny thing, have you ever noticed you don't all of a sudden veer sideways?

[ 22 : 26 ] Or like, go backwards? Just completely at random? I mean, as long as the path is pretty good. I mean, maybe I have fallen over a few times just walking in these trails, right? But in general, right, you, as you are walking along, you are facing forward, and you are putting one foot in front of the other, you tend to go forward.

You don't get pulled to the side. You don't get pulled backwards. You keep proceeding steadily forward. Paul says in verse 16, Walk by the Spirit, keep walking forward, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

You are not going to be pulled aside. You are not going to be pulled backwards into a lifestyle of license, into a lifestyle of impulsive living, into a lifestyle of bad habits, into a lifestyle of gratifying and satisfying the flesh.

Walk by the Spirit, and you won't try to live life on your own terms. You won't try to live life by your own efforts, accomplishing your own dreams and your own agendas. And your own goals, and ending up with a life that is completely unproductive when it comes to loving God and loving other people the way God has called us to do.

Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. Now, we, unfortunately, get pulled off the path quite easily.

[ 23 : 42 ] We're kind of like the dog that you go with on a walk who's just like always running off and sniffing every bush and going backwards and going all over the place, right? Paul writes in verse 17, 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. So here's the idea. The Spirit is like the master holding the leash, pulling the dog forward, empowering him forward, motivating him, giving the energy with a desire to obey God, to love him, to love one another.

The Spirit prods and pushes us and moves us forward. But within you, within you there is the Spirit working in you to move you forward, giving you the desire to move forward, to follow Jesus faithfully, to remain steady and faithful and committed and devoted to him.

But within you there is also remaining left over from your old way of life before you knew Jesus. Within you there is remaining the flesh. And the flesh opposes that forward impulse of the Spirit. It works to undermine the work of the Spirit. It aims to pull you off the path, to pull you deep into the woods. It entices you with shiny things that seem more appealing. It promises you things that you crave.

[ 25 : 02 ] The flesh promises you pleasure. It promises you gratification from sex, from alcohol, from adrenaline. It promises you money. It promises you power. It promises you control.

It promises you the ability to extract out of the other people in your life the emotional support, the respect, the appreciation, the love that you deserve. The flesh promises you the ability to shut up or to put in their place the people who put you down.

And it promises that these things are going to be easy. Or at the very least, it doesn't take a lot of effort. You can get them for yourself with a little bit of effort. Just walk a little bit off the path.

And when you get these things you will be living the good life. If only you let yourself be controlled by the flesh and its desires. The flesh promises you the license to do what you want, when you want, however you want.

And the flesh will not be satisfied with just a little bit of you. Sin cannot be caged. It cannot be tamed.

[ 26 : 14 ] It cannot be domesticated. The theologian John Owen, he once wrote this. Sin aims always at the utmost. Every rise of lust, might it have its course, would come to the height of villainy.

In other words, you let a little bit of lust in. What it wants to do is take over and control your own life. And to bring you to commit the worst possible sin. A little bit of lust wants to lead you down the path to where you are committing adultery. A little bit of anger wants to lead you down the path to where you are murdering someone.

That's what sin wants to do. That's what sin wants to do. It's like a grave that is never satisfied. It's like a grave that is never satisfied.

That's what sin wants to do. It is crouching at the door. And it is trying to lure you and take over and dominate your life. That is what the flesh is trying to do.

But thankfully, we have this gift. Because Paul does not just write that the desires of the flesh are against the spirit. He says this, the desires of the spirit are against the flesh.

[ 27 : 22 ] The flesh is trying to pull you off of the path. The flesh is trying to entice you with license. It's trying to promise you the things you crave. But the spirit is fighting back. He is making war against the flesh.

The Holy Spirit is God's ongoing gift. He restrains our license. The Holy Spirit restrains our license. And this is really, really important.

Because many of Paul's opponents, they might have argued this. You know, if you say that the law is not the basis for your relationship with God. If obedience to the law is not the basis for your relationship with God.

Then what you're doing is you're opening the door wide, wide open to license. To people just doing whatever they want. You know, once saved, always saved. I've got a relationship with God. I prayed a prayer.

Now I can just live whatever life I want. Do whatever I want. And I know I'm going to heaven in the end. But Paul says that if you and I, if we truly are God's people.

[ 28 : 24 ] Then God the Holy Spirit has been given to us as an ongoing gift. And God the Holy Spirit is working in your heart to restrain your license.

We obey God. You and I obey God. And we love our neighbor. Not out of a, just the sheer willpower. But out of the power of the Holy Spirit. Who guides us. Who compels us.

Who powers us. As we walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ our Lord. The Holy Spirit restrains our license. And now Paul.

Really goes on the offensive against these false teachers. Because not only does the Holy Spirit give you and me a newfound ability to obey God. Paul even writes in verse 18.

If you are led by the Spirit. You are not under the law. If you are led by the Spirit. You are not under the law. So instead of living under the law.

[ 29 : 21 ] Instead of trying to gut out your obedience to God. Instead of trying to force ourselves to obey. Out of our own willpower. Out of our own strength. Out of our own abilities. Paul says that you and I are now led by the Spirit.

So there is no need to put on a performance. In order to win God's approval of us. There is no more need for legalism. For law keeping.

That is focused on trying to keep the law. In order to establish a relationship with God. There is no more need for that. The Holy Spirit is God's ongoing gift to us. First he restrains our license.

And second. He replaces our legalism. The Holy Spirit replaces our legalism. In his letter to the Colossians. Paul writes about why human efforts to please God.

They simply aren't enough. Enough. And he says this. In Colossians chapter 2. If with Christ. You died. To the elemental spirits of the world.

[ 30 : 26 ] Why as if you were still alive in the world. Do you submit to regulations? Do not handle. Do not taste. Do not touch. Referring to things that all perishers.

They are used according to human precepts and teachings. These have indeed an appearance of wisdom. In promoting self-made religion. And asceticism. And severity to the body. But they are of no value.

In stopping the indulgence of the flesh. They are of no value. In stopping the indulgence of the flesh. You see that? You can try to control your behavior by learning all of God's law.

Or you could just maybe take it a step further. So you could try to control your behavior by following this one simple rule. To get rid of all your belly fat. I mean sorry. Please God. You can try to invent all these rules.

All these restrictions to guide your behavior. It won't change who you are. It won't stop the indulgence of the flesh.

[ 31 : 25 ] Think about it like this. It is like you walked into a muddy swamp. You are about knee deep in the water. And you are finding that about half of that depth is actually mud. Your left foot is stuck.

It has been sucked into the mud. So what do you do? You have a good yank. And you pull out. You manage to pull out your left foot. What happened to your right foot? It is deeper. How do you get your right foot out?

Put your left foot in. Pull out your right foot. Now your left foot. Now you are like hip deep. And you are stuck. You are stuck. With a lot of planning. With a lot of accountability.

With a lot of perseverance. And a lot of will power. Maybe you are the kind of person who can just. Who can just. You know. Do all of that stuff. You can force a change of habit in your life. You could do it.

But here is what happens. You just get sucked in somewhere else. Your flesh is. It is kind of like a game of whack-a-mole. Right? You ever played that?

[ 32 : 25 ] Where all the little moles just pop up out of the holes. And you hit them with a hammer. Why can't you just hit the mole one time. And then they all stay down. You hit it with a hammer. Another one pops up. Hit that with the hammer. Another one pops up.

Hit that with the hammer. Another one pops up. Hit that with the hammer. Another pops up. Oh, there are so many moles popping up. You can't even keep track of them all. That is what trying to fight the flesh. What the tactics of the flesh is like.

That is what it is like to try to fight off the flesh. By using merely human abilities. Human power. Human planning. Without the power of the spirit of God. Back in Galatians 5 verse 19.

Paul writes this. The works of the flesh are evident. Sexual immorality. Impurity. Sensuality. Idolatry. Sorcery. Enmity. Strife. Jealousy. Fits of anger. Rivalries. Dissensions. Divisions. Envy.

[ 33 : 23 ] Drunkenness. Orgies. And things like these. I love that. And things like these. Just so you know, that was only a partial list. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Maybe there are habits in your life that you can't break. Maybe. I am very confident there are people who crave sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality.

Maybe it's with another flesh and blood human being that you are around on a daily, weekly basis. Maybe it's with pornographic images and movies. This is very common. One thing that's maybe a little less common in Western culture is to crave idol worship and sorcery. I think maybe a little bit more common in this corner of BC than in other places where I've lived. But throughout most of the world, that's actually a huge temptation. To try. You know, it's so appealing to get the comfort and the control that comes from knowing that you're in touch with the spirit world.

[ 34 : 31 ] Maybe something more common is what Paul calls enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy.

You know, a whole bunch of words for a lot of the same thing, right? Are you the kind of person you find yourself just continually butting heads with your spouse or continually butting heads with other people in your life?

You just always seem to be getting into arguments and fights. You want to change that about yourself. You want to break out of that habit, those habits, but you just keep falling into them. Or maybe you're just always giving somebody the cold shoulder and you know you shouldn't but you just keep doing it. Or it's with your children or it's with your parents or it's with your coworkers or it's with somebody else here at the church.

And you could kind of look over to the left and you could see them. Do you find yourself always craving someone else's popularity? Do you find yourself craving their adventurous lifestyle, craving their family relationships, craving their social status or their job?

[ 35 : 37 ] Or maybe it's not another person you're looking at. Maybe drugs, alcohol, they help you cope with a persistent sense of despair in your life. Maybe you've broken out of one of these habits.

With a lot of hard work, with a lot of effort, you've broken out of one of those habits only to get your legs stuck in a new one. It happens. People breaking out of alcohol addiction, they fall prey to another addiction instead.

Or their flesh breaks out in some other way. All together. Maybe you've picked up, you've finally developed and picked up a good habit only to lapse back into one of these bad habits.

Like you finally, okay I'm finally, you know, treated, you know, I'm finally broken free from pornography. But now you're treating your wife and your children like garbage.

Obedying God by your own planning, obeying God by your own scheming, by your own willpower, by your own ability, it will not work.

[ 36 : 46 ] Certainly not long term. It will not work. Case study right here. It doesn't work. I've read all of the articles.

I've downloaded all of the apps. I've tried to form certain habits in my life just by my own willpower and it never works out of my own abilities. I can never make it happen just by sheer force of will. It isn't enough. I always lapse back eventually. I've sometimes heard people describe the Christian life.

When, in this talk about legalism and license, I've sometimes heard the Christian life as, people talk about it as though the Christian life is basically finding a balance between legalism on the one hand and license on the other.

They're the two ditches. You try to stay in the road between the two of them. I understand. There's some very well-meaning people, people I respect and I've loved who I've heard say that. Here's the only problem.

[ 37 : 46 ] It is a damnable lie. It is a lie because neither legalism nor license nor anything in between is how we live by the gospel of grace. Because both legalism and license, they are of the flesh.

You are trying to fight the flesh with the weapons of the flesh. It doesn't work. Both legalism and license are about living out of human ability without daily dependence on the Holy Spirit.

Trying to find a balance between legalism on the one hand and license on the other. Think about it. This is like being sick, feeling horribly nauseated. I know sickness has been going around a lot.

I've been hearing stories of nausea and vomiting. If you're like, oh man, I don't want to go back and think about that again. Too bad. We're going to think about vomiting here. You've got two options when you feel that coming.

You either try to hold it back as long as you can and fight it. That's usually what I do. Or you try to force yourself to vomit.

[ 38 : 56 ] Get it over with. Either way, either you fight it out of your own power and your own will. Or you just, you do it. Either way, you end up producing what? Vomit. It does not matter what you do.

Vomit comes out anyway. Whether legalism, trying to hold back, trying to restrain yourself by your own human abilities and efforts, trying to restrict yourself, or license.

Nah, just go for it. Nah, get it out there. Either way, you produce the vomit that Paul calls the works of the flesh. And he writes in verse 21, this very sobering, sobering thought.

Those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. It's so interesting that he says that in a book that is so much about grace, that is so much about how our relationship with God is not on the basis of what we do.

[ 40 : 04 ] And yet he says here that if you are engaging and giving into the flesh and producing these works of the flesh, you're not going to inherit the kingdom of God. Because on the one hand, we are not saved on the basis of our obedience to God.

But on the other hand, we are not saved without obedience to God either. Because if we continue to persist and wallow in this vomit, we demonstrate that the Holy Spirit is not in us.

All that's in us is the flesh and the works that it's producing. The Christian life is not a balance between legalism and license. It is a third way.

It is a third way altogether. It is walking by the Spirit. It is being led by the Spirit. It's like instead of trying to handle that disease yourself, trying to control the vomiting on your own, what you do is you, instead of staying home and trying to vomit in the way that suits you best, you go to the doctor. And he gives you a daily medicine. And that medicine you take daily, day in, day out is dependence. It is dependence on the Spirit. It is faith. It is trust.

[ 41 : 15 ] It is a medicine that will kill off the disease. You'll notice that in verse 20, Paul warns against the works of the flesh. And now he's going to give us the medicine and what it produces.

When he introduces this contrasting list in verse 22, notice that he changes the way he describes it. You expect him to say, you know, I talked about the works of the flesh.

Now here are the works of the Spirit. But that's not what he says. Commentator Timothy George, he explains why Paul doesn't do this. Paul did not contrast the works of the flesh with opposing works of the Spirit.

The works of the flesh are the products of fallen human beings in their own devising, conniving, and manufacturing, in the sense of made with one's own hands, efforts at self-actualization.

From the Tower of Babel to modern totalitarianism, from Aaron's golden calf to contemporary idols of money, sex, and power, the works of the flesh have littered the human landscape with misery, violence, and death.

[ 42 : 25 ] When Paul proceeded to describe the modality of the Spirit-led life, however, he deliberately shifted from the language of technology, the language of things that humans develop, things they produce and manufacture and engineer, he shifted from the language of technology, of works, to that of nature, fruit, the fruit of the Spirit.

Those who grow apples, oranges, and peaches know that however much they may seek to protect their orchards from bad weather or deadly insects, at the end of the day, the product yielded by a fruit tree is a gift, not the result of human ingenuity or agricultural prowess.

Just so. That which the Holy Spirit affects in the lives of believers, the desirable traits of Paul's second list, is the result of his indwelling presence and the spiritual metamorphosis that dynamic reality brings about.

That lesson's a little bit complex, but here's the idea, basically this. What the Holy Spirit works in the lives of believers, all of these lists that he calls the fruit of the Spirit, that's because the Holy Spirit is in you.

His presence is in you. And he is changing you. There is a metamorphosis going on inside of you. And he is working dynamically, he is working powerfully to bring about this new life.

[ 43 : 54 ] The Holy Spirit is a gift given to us. He works in us to produce fruit by his own power, by his own ability.

Fruit that we can't take credit for. Make no mistake, this list of traits here isn't a list of, here are the things that you are supposed to do, follow these laws. You know, this is a list of things the Holy Spirit will do in you.

The fruit of the Spirit, verse 22, is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

That's what it looks like to walk by the Spirit. If you look at that list of people and you're thinking, I know people like that. The people you know like that are people who are walking by the Spirit. Because you can't consistently maintain these traits without that life of dependence, of resting in God's Spirit, of trusting Him, of working through His power.

[ 44 : 58 ] It's not a passive life, it's a life that all these things are things you do. But it's a life that is empowered by the Spirit. When you and I trust God, when we rely on Him, when we continually come for wisdom, to the scriptures that the Holy Spirit wrote, when we speak to Him honestly and regularly, by praying in the Spirit.

When we worship and serve alongside His family that has been gifted to us by the Spirit. The Holy Spirit produces this fruit in us. We listen to His Word.

This is the Word of the Holy Spirit to us. That is, this is the most reliable and sure way to hear from the Holy Spirit. Man, this is a wonderful gift. But we need it. We need it daily.

Our daily bread. Praying to the Spirit. Praying by the Spirit. Speaking to God the Father, empowered by the Spirit. Worshiping, serving alongside His family.

We've been given spiritual gifts. They've been given by the Spirit. The whole reason is because the Holy Spirit has put other people into your life as part of this church. And He's saying, I've given you those relationships so you can work together, so you can be productive together, you can be fruitful together.

[ 46 : 15 ] Please, take advantage of what I've given you. And when we do those things, when we faithfully, consistently walk by the Spirit, He produces this fruit.

And this fruit is so good. It is so wonderful, so perfect that Paul adds this in verse 23. Against such things, there is no law.

Understatement of the year. The great irony. You know, we think that to keep the law we need legalism. The great irony is that when the Holy Spirit replaces our legalism, He gives us the ability to keep the law for the very first time.

You can finally fulfill the law. Rather than tearing down God's law, rather than tearing down right and wrong, Paul is saying, I am upholding it higher than anyone has ever upheld it before, Jesus Christ.

Because now we have the Holy Spirit and He will help us keep it. He will help us love God fully and love other people in the way that we should do. And teach us how to do it with wisdom in every situation.

[ 47 : 29 ] When we walk by His power and are led by His hand, nothing we do will run contrary to God's law. But only when we fully walk by His power and are led by His hand.

All that we do will be productive, it will bear fruit. Bear these sorts of fruit by the Spirit. And it is, I'll tell you what, I talked with the youth a little bit about this a couple weeks ago.

It is so rare, it is so wonderful to be around someone who has spent decades of their life steeped in the Holy Spirit. Steeped in God's Word, steeped in prayer, steeped in the fellowship of other believers.

And they just are radiant. I challenge the youth, wouldn't you love to be like that? When you're 40, 50, 60 years old. People who aren't useless.

Wouldn't it be wonderful to be the kind of person that someone could come up to, someone could be going through a tough time, maybe going through a divorce, maybe having lost a child, and they know they can go to you.

[ 48 : 36 ] Because you're brimming over with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. You're brimming over with wisdom. If you indulge in the works of the flesh, they know they can't go to you.

But out of you will flow life-giving water. Out of you will flow fruit. If you steep yourself in the Spirit and sink your roots deep into Him.

People like that in this long-standing war with the flesh, they have gained victory over the evil habits of the flesh. They have developed new habits of patience, kindness, goodness. They bless God's people.

They bless their neighbors with these things. So let's place ourselves in a posture of dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit. This is not a passive attitude of kind of let go and let God, you know,

like we're not doing anything at all.

This is an attitude of praying, of studying, of seeking counsel, of trusting God as we make decisions and structure our lives so that we can kill off sinful habits and develop new godly habits in their place.

[ 49 : 50 ] So this is something to think about this week in your growth groups. How do I go about depending on the Spirit? And how can I encourage the others in my group to depend on the Spirit?

How can we work together at this so that we can bear fruit for God? What is that going to look like in practical terms starting this week? That's a good question to think about. Let's talk about one of those sinful habits that needs to die.

This is what Paul closes with here, this section with. Verses 24 through 26, Paul singles out a particular problem in these churches. He says in verse 24, Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. What he's saying is if you and I, if we belong to Christ Jesus, if we have been born again into the new life that Jesus offers, then we have taken our flesh, that old way of living, that independence from God, we've taken the passions and the desires, its lusts and its cravings, its dreams and ambitions.

What we've done is we have stretched it out on a wooden cross, we have driven nails through it and we have raised it up, crucified the flesh and walked away leaving it to die.

[ 51 : 13 ] And now we walk away and we live by the Spirit. Let us also, depending on your translation, you might say something like walk, keep in step I think is a really good way of bringing it out.

Let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us remember that we belong to Christ Jesus. Let us keep our eyes fixed on Christ, regularly thinking about Him, singing about Him, talking about Him, enjoying Him.

Last weekend I got to watch several high school kids attempt to walk a slack line that they had stretched between two trees. It was pretty hilarious.

Some of them had experience with it, they did a lot better. One reason that people who are experienced with a slack line do better at it is not just because of their sense of balance, but because they know a trick.

And the trick is this, or so I'm told, to stay standing on a slack line, you don't, what you do is you fix your eyes ahead, at the end of the line, the anchor that holds it in place.

[ 52 : 22 ] What you don't do is you look at your feet. You don't look at yourself when you're on the slack line. You look at the anchor at the end of the line. And then you can walk without falling.

As Christians we are meant to fix our eyes on Jesus, not on ourselves. But I feel like I have ten thoughts about myself for every one thought I have about Jesus.

Or maybe a hundred. Robert Murray Machain has been often quoted as saying, for every one thought about yourself think ten thoughts about Jesus. Man, if we could do that, that would be wonderful.

Because the Holy Spirit is God's ongoing gift to us. What he does is he eradicates our self-absorption. He eradicates our self-absorption. He eradicates our self-absorption. Paul writes, let us not become conceited.

Let's not keep our eyes riveted to ourselves, our reputations, our interests, our problems. If we do that, we will be provoking one another, we will be envying one another, as we compete with each other. I see it all the time.

[ 53 : 27 ] In marriages, in families, in communities, in the church. But when God's Spirit works within us, he fixes our eyes on where we're walking, who we're walking to, who we're following, who we belong to.

The Holy Spirit is God's ongoing gift to us. He restrains our license. He replaces our legalism. He eradicates our self-absorption. When we keep in step with him, we are finally able to choose to love as we are meant to love.

We are finally able to live out the habits of life that we are meant to live out. We are finally able to become who we are called to be. The Holy Spirit is how we live by the gospel of grace.

My God and Father, I know I am.