

## Walking in the Holy Spirit Galatians 5.16,25

Mike Elliott • Dominion Covenant Church • July 26, 2009

### Introduction

[Scripture Reading:] **Galatians 5.16** I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. **25** If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. [Prayer for God's Blessing]

One of the most amusing things I find in our church is all the boys playing with their light sabers. I was 7 years old or so when the original Star Wars movie was released but I don't remember the cool retractable light sabers with the lights and sounds and all.

Whenever I see that type of play I am reminded of what the Star Wars movies teach about "The Force". In the movies The Force is very mystical and spiritual, seeming to reveal the Producer's leanings toward eastern religion built upon a Christian background. It mixes together Buddhist ideas of oneness with Christian ideas of the Holy Spirit. In the movies, The Force is even responsible for a virgin birth and god-like qualities of telepathy and precognition.

Today I have no intention of giving a point-by-point rebuttal of Star Wars theology and world view, and it is ok for kids to play with light sabers!; I mention this because it is very easy for the world's spiritual concepts to encroach upon the true biblical concepts and this is especially true when it comes to the theology of the Holy Spirit.

The presence and ministry of the Holy Spirit is a wonderful treasure that we, and every Christian, are blessed to partake of. May he not be neglected or abused, but instead fully valued and experienced.

In the first two sections I want to briefly outline the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, and in the final section discuss how this relates to us, as individuals, walking in the Spirit by persevering in good works. So we'll start off with who the Holy Spirit is, and finish with what it means to walk with him.

Turning to our text for today...

## **I. The Holy Spirit is a person—he walks with us.**

First, we see that the Holy Spirit—as a person—walks with us. It is repeated in both the verses I read, which bracket this whole section that speaks of living in tune with the Holy Spirit.

To have a correct concept of the Holy Spirit we must put aside any notion that the Holy Spirit is an impersonal force, an *it that has a mystical presence*; no, the Holy Spirit is a he, a *person that acts*. This is seen in the testimony of Scripture through the personal pronouns that are used of him and the personal activities that are ascribed to him.

### ***A. Personal pronouns are used of him.***

If the Holy Spirit was an impersonal force, we would not see him spoken of with “I” and “he” and “me”. For example:

1. Acts 10.19-20: “the Spirit said, ‘I have sent them’”
2. Acts 13.2: “set apart for me Barnabas and Saul”

Just as I speak of my wife as a she, and my dad as a he, and they are clearly distinct individuals, so too do these personal pronouns indicate that the Holy Spirit is a person.

### ***B. Personal activities are ascribed to him.***

The person of the Holy Spirit acts. It is true that a force ‘does things’, in a manner of speaking. The force of gravity pulls you down, for example. But the actions that are ascribed to the Holy Spirit go far beyond that type of action and are instead related to a thinking, living, personal being.

1. Hebrews 3.7: “the Holy Spirit says...”
2. John 16.13: “he [the Holy Spirit] will guide you...”
3. also: teaches, comforts, encourages, warns, appoints, etc.

And many other examples where he teaches, encourages, warns, appoints, and on and on.

Thus, through the language used in relation to him and the types of things he does, we see that the Holy Spirit is a personal acting agent not a nebulous impersonal force.

## **II. The Holy Spirit is divine—he is holy.**

Thankfully for us, the Holy Spirit is a personal acting agent and much, much more. He is a divine personal acting agent! Not only is he holy, being good by way of copying or imitating God, he is God himself and possesses this holiness as an intrinsic element of his being. It is his nature, his substance, to be divine.

### ***A. He is identified as God.***

One very simple and straightforward key to this fact is an instance where the Holy Spirit is co-identified with God. Recall the situation of Ananias and Saphira. They are caught lying to the Holy Spirit, then a few moments later they are condemned for lying to God. Lying to the Holy Spirit was lying to God.

1. Acts 5.3-4: the action of lying to God was lying to the Holy Spirit.

### ***B. He is identified as Yahweh of the Old Testament.***

In numerous other places the Holy Spirit is co-identified with the covenant name of God, YHWH.

1. Acts 28.25-27 with Isaiah 6.9-10: Isaiah reports Yahweh saying it, Paul gives credit to the Spirit.

For example, in Acts 28 Paul credits words to the Spirit which Isaiah reports coming from the mouth of YHWH.

2. Hebrews 3.7-9 with Psalm 95.7-11: Psalmist records words of Yahweh which Hebrews puts in the mouth of the Spirit.

And in Hebrews 3 we read the author giving credit to the Spirit for what in Psalm 95 is ascribed to YHWH.

The easiest and clearest conclusion to draw is that the Holy Spirit *is* YHWH, just as much as the Father and the Son *are* YHWH. Thus he, the Holy Spirit is equal with the Father and the Son but yet distinct from them.

### ***C. He is equal with (yet distinct from) the Father and the Son.***

This is exactly what we see in another set of Scriptures that group them together but identify them separately/distinctly.

1. Matthew 28.19: “the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”

Matthew 28.19 contains the baptism formula: we baptize people in the Name (that is one name, singular), of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

2. 1Peter 1.2: “...the Father...the Spirit...Jesus Christ”

In Peter’s first epistle he greets his audience by identifying the three members of the Godhead: the Father, the Spirit, and Jesus Christ.

3. also: 1Cor 12.4-6, 2Cor 13.14, Eph 4.4-6.

There are numerous other examples, but these suffice to show that the Holy Spirit is a co-equal person along with the Father and the Son.

#### ***D. He possesses divine attributes.***

If that wasn’t enough, we also see that he possesses divine attributes. Man is made in God’s image so we reflect aspects of his attributes but they are diminished copies. The Holy Spirit, being divine, has the real thing.

1. Heb 9.14: “eternal Spirit”

In times past men lived a long time, hundreds of years, but Hebrews 9 says that the Holy Spirit is *eternal*.

2. Psalm 139.7-10: “where can I flee from your presence?”

Men may have technology to keep tabs on multiple locations at once but God, the Holy Spirit is *omnipresent*; as Psalm 139 says, there is no where for us to go to be out of his sight.

3. Isaiah 40.13-14: “who has taught him knowledge?”

And men may learn and grow and gain wisdom, but the Holy Spirit does not need to be taught; he already knows everything because he is *omniscient*.

These three attributes of eternality, omnipresence, and omniscience are divine attributes. Thus, the Holy Spirit is divine.

#### ***E. He does divine works.***

From his divine attributes comes his ability to do divine works.

1. Job 33.4: “the Spirit of God has made me”

Along with the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit is *responsible for creation*. Job 33: Elihu declares the Spirit of God made him.

2. Ezekiel 37.1-14: “I will put my Spirit in you and you shall live”

On top of original creation, the Holy Spirit has a special role in re-creation, that is, *regeneration of the soul in salvation*. In Ezekiel 37 it is promised that the Spirit will be put inside men and give life.

There are many other divine works that the Holy Spirit accomplishes:

3. also: empowering Christ, glorifying Christ, resurrection, inspiring the Scriptures, convicting the world of sin, building the church, indwelling believers, sealing their inheritance, producing faith, yielding works of righteousness, etc.

To recap, we have thus far summarized the doctrine of the Holy Spirit: we see that the Holy Spirit is a person, a divine person, a divine person that does great works in the world and in the child of God. Those works start with creation and the re-creation of regeneration and faith but they don't end there—they continue throughout the life of the believer

It is this last area that I want to especially focus on and apply to our lives. We don't want to be like the church at Ephesus to which John addressed his letter in Revelation 2; they had left their first love; we want to return to our first works, works which God prepared beforehand for us and which the Spirit yields through us.

Lets now be reminded of these and stirred to action.

### **III. The Spirit works in us—he produces good fruit.**

#### ***A. Permanently; a “seal” / “down payment” (Eph 1.13-14).***

First, let me stress that the Holy Spirit's presence in us is not a fleeting thing, as if he came upon us when we were saved and then flew away to go touch someone else. No, Scripture speaks of him as the one who permanently seals us and issues a down payment or guarantee of our inheritance.

Unfortunately modern language and practice obscure the permanency of the biblical language. Imagine sealing an envelope: you lick it and press it shut and then, doh!, you realized you forgot to sign the letter, or you misspelled the name. Once you have sealed it it's hard to open and in doing so you may rip the paper some. But even that difficulty is an inaccurate

representation of the degree to which the Holy Spirit is permanently fixed upon the true believer. Modern seals are semi-permanent, but the Holy Spirit's seal is permanent.

**Psalm 55.22: God will never let the righteous fall;**

**Philippians 1.6: he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion.**

Speaking of down payments: these days when you are buying a house you put down some earnest money, which is to say that you are earnest/serious about buying the house. However, today you can get out of the arrangement by paying a fee. That is *not* how it used to be and *not* how it works with the Holy Spirit—he is the irrevocable down payment that will stand sure until we fully receive the inheritance.

So there may be times when it feels like the Holy Spirit is waning inside you, you may feel your love of the Lord and your love of your brothers and sisters growing luke warm, but be assured that for him who is truly saved, the Holy Spirit is the ever-present comforter.

***B. Love for one another (1Jn 4.7).***

His continual presence in our lives can, should, and will produce love for one another. The Holy Spirit gives us new birth, and he who is born of God loves his brethren. This love is practiced despite their blemishes, their personality quirks, or the inconvenience that is inherent to stepping outside of our daily routine to show love.

It is inconvenient to love your brother by taking the time to do some volunteer work for them. It is difficult to love your neighbor by going out on a limb and sharing the gospel with him. It is uncomfortable to love your brother by gently admonishing him to abstain from a sinful behavior you have noticed and attempt to rescue him from trouble.

Love manifests itself in a multitude of ways, so I exhort you to be creative and be abundant, let your love shine brightly, daily, joyfully.

***C. Righteousness (1Jn 2.29).***

This next point turns the focus back on ourselves. God is righteous and those who are his children must also be righteous. The time to pull the rug over your own failings is passed. We must remove the log from our own eye and then help others get the specs out of theirs.

It is very tempting to blame our own sin on the failings of others. “I wouldn’t be so angry if everyone else wasn’t such a loser!” “I wouldn’t be so impatient if everyone would just get with the program!” “I wouldn’t crave the attention of others so much if my family would pay me more compliments!”

Again, child of God, God is righteous and you as his child must be righteous too. Here in Galatians 5 we have a lengthy list of things to put off and things to put on, things to block out of your mind and things to meditate on.

Don’t be unrighteously contentious, be righteously peaceful; don’t be unrighteously selfish, be righteously kind; don’t be unrighteously jealous, be righteously joyful.

**Psalm 15.2,5b: He who walks uprightly and works righteousness... shall never be moved.**

***D. Power and self-discipline (2Tim 1.7).***

In light of all these challenges, with our own sin and the sin of others, we may well feel weak. Ah, but alas God has given us power to be strong and the self-discipline to pursue a steady course.

**2Timothy 1.7: God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.**

Do you feel weak? great, you are ready to partake of God’s strength which far surpasses your own. Do you feel overloaded and confused? God is renewing your mind so that you can discern and pursue his will (Rom 12.2).

Let me offer a little personal example. When my wife and I bought our house it needed a lot of work. Over the next few months of remodeling many of the projects were new to me. I remember being in the middle of laying tile and I hit a tricky spot; I had no idea how to do it “right”. The mortar was getting hard, my knees were getting sore and my back was getting tired. What I really wanted to do was give up but there was no one I could pass the buck to and it would have been too expensive to hire a professional. So rather than crying in self-pity I cried out to God in prayer, “Please, God, help me! Give me insight into the proper way to do this so that I don’t waste my time and money and end up with something ugly.” He was faithful and the tile turned out pretty well.

The point is, the Holy Spirit gives us strength to persevere through the difficult times of life that are fraught with attacks and challenges, and he gives us a clear, level-headed mind so we can navigate our way through those challenges. If you feel like tossing in the towel or you are losing your mind, you are not walking in the Spirit.

**E. Good fruit (Gal 5.22).** Finally, and this is kinda obvious, the Holy Spirit's work in us will ultimately bear *good* fruit. There is a lot of bad to get rid of and in Galatians 5 Paul lists it, the works of the flesh, which are:

**adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like;**

All of these are examples of not walking in the Spirit.

In contrast to this the fruit of the Spirit is:

**love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.**

## Conclusion

I conclude with a promise and its fulfillment. The promise comes from Ezekiel 36.27:

[Yahweh says,] **I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do *them*.**

The fulfillment comes from Galatians 5.25:

**If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.**

Brothers and sisters in the Lord, you *are* Christ's and are alive in the Spirit and have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Let us be ever mindful of the life we have in the Holy Spirit and continue to walk in the him; being confident in the down payment we have received, loving one another through service, admonition, evangelism, etc., pursuing righteousness in our own lives, and doing good through God-given power and discipline in order to bear truly good fruit—a harvest that grows more and more abundant as the years advance. Amen.

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