
**“The Holy Spirit's Role in Holiness”
(Galatians 5:16-26)
Pastor Peter Yi
March 7th, 2010**

(Gal 5:16-26 NIV)

¹⁶ So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

¹⁷ 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.

¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under **law**.

¹⁹ The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery;

²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions

²¹ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no **law**.

²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.

²⁵ Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.

Introduction:

Review.

Well, after a great month of focusing on missions, we are back to the subject of holiness. How's holiness going for you? Have you been sustaining an effort to be more holy? Have you changed the way you've been approaching holiness? Is it less self-centered and more God-centered? Have you been memorizing scripture? Please take the effort to do this basic exercise. Please don't deceive yourself into thinking you will be holy apart from a heavy dosage of the Word of God.

Let's go over a quick review of what we went over in January.

We began with the definition of holiness as “who among the god's is like you, O Lord?” Holiness is the utter uniqueness and otherness of God, that there is only one God and there is no one like him. And at the same time, holiness is the utter moral perfection of God. He is pure and righteous and just. God's holiness undergirds all that he is, it undergirds all of his other attributes.

We then moved onto the reasons why you and I should be holy. Why should we be holy? The answer is scriptural. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written, “Be holy because I am holy. 1 Peter 1:15-16.

You and I must remind ourselves over and over of this truth. Every time we face temptation and sin, we must have a vision of the holiness of God. We must break free from our self-centeredness. We have to stop thinking firstly of what sin does to us, and how sin makes us feel rotten and dirty. We must re-capture a vision of the holiness of God. We must cry out like Joseph did,

“How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?”

We must cry out like David did after his sin with Bathsheba,

4 Against you, you only, have I sinned

and done what is evil in your sight, (Psalm 51)

Has that been your cry? Are you more broken over your sin than ever before, because you realize more than ever, what a great offense your sin is before a holy and loving God?

After that we learned that the saints of the bible, as well as you and I must have deep personal encounters with the holiness of God. We must be spellbound by the sheer beauty and wonderful terror of His holiness. We must have Moses at the burning bush moments, Isaiah in the temple moments and Peter on the fishing boat moments. We must seek out this God who is holy. Folks, the book of Hebrews says that we can approach God with confidence because of Jesus. How then can it be that we don't desire to draw near to Him, when the way to Him has now been made possible? It shouldn't be. You and I must slow down the pace of our lives to draw near to God.

And finally we learned about the role of Jesus in our holiness. He's the one that has made holiness possible by dying for our sins. He's the one that aids us in our holiness by washing his church with the word of God, and he's the one that becomes for us the model, the example of a holy life. That was, in a nutshell, the month of January.

Today, we come to the subject of the Holy Spirit and his role in our holiness. The Holy Spirit unfortunately, is often the neglected and most misunderstood of the three members of the Trinity. He is a person. By person I don't mean human, but that he has personhood, he has personality, individuality. In other words the Holy Spirit is a 'him', not an 'it'. He is distinct in that He is not the Father and He is not the Son. He is fully God, just as God the Father and God the Son.

¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. (2Co 3:17 NIV)

As Jesus was sent into the world by God the Father, so the Holy Spirit was sent into the world by Jesus. Here's what Jesus says in John 16.

7But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. **8**When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: **9**in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; **10**in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; **11**and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity enters the believer at the moment of salvation. Galatians 3:2 reads like this.

2 I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard?

The Holy Spirit guides and empowers the church to live out her mission in this world. Reference, the whole book of Acts. For example, it's the Holy Spirit that imparts spiritual gifts to the members of the church. It's the Holy Spirit that leads the church into specific directions to accomplish the work of the gospel. He strengthens. He encourages. He warns. He is the one that gives us freedom. He aids us in prayer. He resides in us as we are called temples of the Holy Spirit.

In addition, the Holy Spirit can be lied to, he can be resisted, he can be denied, he can be grieved, he can be displeased. All of these things would be sins against God, against the Holy Spirit.

And finally, He is the agent in our justification, salvation and sanctification. Listen to this great Trinitarian passage.

¹ Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, ² who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance. (1Pe 1:1-2 NIV)

¹³ But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. (2Th 2:13 NIV)

So let's look more closely at the Holy Spirit's role in our sanctification, in our holiness.

The letter to the Galatians is letter written by Paul to a church who has lost there way on the road of Christian living. The Galatians Christians started their Christian life really well. They were saved by grace. They were filled with the Holy Spirit, but they failed to continue living that way. So what were they doing? They began to revert back to an old way, a wrong way, a totally ineffective way of living. They went back to legalism. When Christians begin to backslide in their spiritual lives, there are only two ways to go. One is libertarianism. The root word there is liberty. What that means is that they forget about any type of rules or conduct and they begin to live a life of license. Anything goes. I'm going to be forgiven anyway, so why not live it up? I can just repent later so why not sin as much as I want. I can always come back to God later in life so while I'm in my prime I'm going to live for myself and for my pleasures. That's one way to go when we begin to back-slide.

The other way to go and this way is much more insidious, I think, because it pretends to be spiritual. At least the life of license is obvious that the person has gone off the deep end and has basically forsaken God. At least this person's sins are obvious. But the other way is much more difficult to detect from the inside as well as from the outside. But this way, is just as wrong, and just as sinful and soon begins to fester and rot and stink. This is the way of legalism. In the absence of the Holy Spirit or Spirit-filled living, we will revert to rules. And we begin to think that we are still being spiritual, that we are still being holy, and that people still think well of us. Why? Because we're following the rules. But after a while, it begins to stink. There is the absence of grace in the person's life. There is judgmentalism. There arises a critical spirit. But all the while, this person thinks they're okay because they've kept all the rules. And then they begin to make up new rules that are absent of the Spirit of God, but of course they spin it in such a way that if you don't obey that rule, you couldn't possibly be serious about your Christian life.

The Corinthian Christians were the former. They had become a church of license. The Galatian Christians however, had become the latter. They had become a church of law. Neither is right. God wants every church and every Christian to be Spiritual (with a capital S).

Here's what Paul scathingly says to this church.

***1**You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. **2**I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? **3**Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?*

So what is the better way? In fact, what is the only way? It is living life guided and led by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit's goal for our lives is that we might be holy. And so we might ask the question, "How do I do that?" or "How does the Holy Spirit do that in my life?"

This passage tells us the answer in two ways. One is prescriptive. Do this. The other is descriptive. This is the new or current reality in our lives. The bible seems to place equal emphasis on both. For many of us, we get right into, the prescriptive instead of looking also at the descriptive. We want to know the answer to the question, "What am I supposed to do?!" As important as the answer to that question is, it is only ½ of the answer. The other question we must ask is this. What is the current reality of my life as taught in the Scriptures? Or What does the bible say about who I am or who lives in me or about my nature as a Christian? The answers to these questions are equally important. This is what this passage in Galatians does. It combines the prescriptive with the descriptive. For example.

Prescriptive: Live by the Spirit. Keep in step with the Spirit.

Descriptive: nature of a life lived by the Spirit and the nature of a life lived by the sinful nature.

Descriptive: those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. (v24)

This passage describes that there are two ways to live as a Christian. And in reality, it only mentions two ways to show that in essence, there is only one way to live as a Christian. The other way is so unChristian that it isn't even a viable option.

Here are the two ways to live. We either live lives according to our sinful nature or we live a life according to the Holy Spirit.

These two ways of living are at polar opposites of each other. They are so different that to try and live out both is to live the life of a person with a dual personality.

These two ways of living are always at war with each other. V17 says that 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. Paul says almost the same thing in Romans 7.

14We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. **15**I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. **16**And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. **17**As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. **18**I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. **19**For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. **20**Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

This is every Christian's reality. It is descriptive of the spiritual battle, the struggle for holiness, all of us are in.

The Life of the sinful nature.

Here's how Paul describes it means to live a life according to the sinful nature.

¹⁹ The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery;

²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions

²¹ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

That's descriptive of the life led by the sinful nature.

1. that this is wrong, or that this is not the way is OBVIOUS!
2. It is unchristian. Look at the end of verse 21. (READ). This statement is both prescriptive telling Christians not to engage in such things. But it is also descriptive telling us that to be a Christian is not to do these things. In other words, if we are truly Christian, we do not live a life according to the sinful nature.

That's what a life lived according to the sinful nature looks like.

There is a better way. It is the only way. It is descriptive and prescriptive for every Christian.

It is the Life Led by the Holy Spirit.

Here are the words used in this passage to describe this life.

V16 – live (walk) by the Holy Spirit – meaning, let your conduct be guided by the Holy Spirit.

Walking implies a way of life, our journey is guided by Him.

V18 – be led by the Holy Spirit. To be led by the Holy Spirit is to resist and die to the power of the Holy Spirit.

V22-23 – bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit. It is to take bear within ourselves and in our interpersonal relationships the character of Christ. It is the description of spiritual maturity. I had said in an earlier sermon that spiritual maturity is measured in degrees of holiness. The presence of these fruit are the indicators that we are in fact maturing. Take a look within your own heart. Is there a greater measure of these fruit?

V25 – live by the Holy Spirit – allow the Holy Spirit to be not only the giver of eternal life, but also the means by which we live out eternal life. How was it that we were given eternal life? It was only by the grace of God in Christ Jesus. So if that is how the Holy Spirit began our spiritual lives then it is by grace that he wants to grow us in our spiritual lives. So to live daily by the Holy Spirit is to live by grace, completely, totally, utterly dependent upon him for all we think, say and do. How do I do that? Folks, it's nothing new. You know the answer already, but it's always the basics we have to come back to. You and I, all Christians for that matter, live by grace, live by the Holy Spirit through prayer and the word. That's what it means to live

V25 – keep in step with the Holy Spirit. Again, walk by the Spirit. The first statement was descriptive in verse 16. It stated a fact of life. It tells us what to believe. The concluding statement is prescriptive. It tells us what to do. It is in the command form. This is our responsibility, to live out our lives in a way that is lived out in partnership with the Holy Spirit.

There are some standard games played at picnics. In a sense it wouldn't be a picnic if these games weren't played. The relay race. The potato sack race. And of course the most difficult of them all, the three legged race. If you are not familiar with this game, it's a game where you get a partner and stand next to your partner side-by-side. Then your inside legs are tied together. So in essence you have 3 legs. When you first try this race, intuitively both partners want to move their same legs at the same time. For example the right leg. And of course we all know what happens when we do it. We tumble and fall. And it's only after a whole lot of concentration and a bit of practice, that we begin to get the rhythm. It's no longer R, L, R, L. It's now, Outside, inside, outside, inside. And then when you get really good at it, you start walking really fast, even for a short while, run. And then our mind clicks back to R, L, R, L; and what happens? We fall.

This is the life that is lived in step with the Holy Spirit. The life of Christian holiness is not the piggy back race, where we jump on the Holy Spirit and just hang on. The life of Christian Holiness is the 3-legged race, where we get in sync with the Holy Spirit. He walks and I walk. He walks and I walk, side by side, together.

So, what is the role of the Holy Spirit in our Holiness? To help us walk in Holiness, to be led in Holiness, to bear the fruit of Holiness, to keep in step with the Holy Spirit.

All of these descriptors indicate a lifestyle of holiness. It indicates that habits need to be formed. Here's what J. I. Packer says and I'll conclude with this. Two things.

First, "Yet we need to remember two things here, both of which sometimes get forgotten. The first is that the Spirit works through means—through the objective means of grace, namely, biblical truth, prayer, fellowship, worship, and the Lord's Supper, and with them through the subjective means of grace whereby we open ourselves to change, namely, thinking, listening, questioning oneself, examining oneself, admonishing oneself, sharing what is in one's heart with others, and weighing any response they make. "Habit forming is the Spirit's ordinary way of leading us on in holiness."

Second. "It is that holy habits, though formed in the natural manner I have described, by self-discipline and effort, are not natural products. The discipline and effort must be blessed by the Holy Spirit, or they would achieve nothing. So all our attempts to get our lives in shape need to be soaked in constant prayer that acknowledges our inability to change ourselves." (109)

Friends, shall we allow full access to the Holy Spirit into our lives for our holiness? We have no other choice. There is no other way.