

❧ Walking in God's Grace—Week Seven, Day One ❧

Read Galatians 5:7-12

⁷You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth? ⁸That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you. ⁹"A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough." ¹⁰I am confident in the Lord that you will take no other view. The one who is throwing you into confusion will pay the penalty, whoever he may be. ¹¹Brothers, if I am still preaching circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished. ¹²As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!

Paul was fond of athletic illustrations in his letters. This week's passage starts by providing a visual image of these wonderful Christians, saved by God's grace and then set on their course to do the good works God prepared in advance for them (Eph. 2:10) by his grace. I get the picture in my mind of running down a scenic tree-lined autumn road and suddenly having a group of runners come up from behind with a cloud of dust and confusion and run me right off the path.

1. What does Paul say is the spiritual result of being *cut in on*?
2. He terms it *persuasion* and says it does not come from the one who calls you. (Remember Gal. 1:15) Then who does it come from?
3. Have you ever succumbed to *persuasion* from others that caused you to begin to focus on external rules and rely more on your ability to live a good Christian life? Explain.
4. What do you think yeast symbolizes in the Bible?
5. In the context of this passage (and from what you might know about cooking) explain verse 9:

You have probably noticed in life, that we do tend to start thinking or doing like others around us. Even in normal routines like diets, school choices, hobbies, gardening, fashion, etc. A couple of friends start doing something and it can spread pretty quickly. I guess that is the *whole batch of dough* effect.

These verses are talking about being persuaded off our course of grace and freedom into self-effort or rule-keeping; but I want to end on a positive parallel. What is one thing that you want to impart to those around you to help THEM 'stay the course' of grace and run a good race in God's power?



Walking in God's Grace—Week Seven, Day Two

Read Galatians 5:13-15

13 You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. ***14*** The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." ***15*** If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

This is the second time in this chapter that Paul has referenced 'freedom'. He began in v. 1 "***It is for freedom that Christ has set us free***".

1. We are now free from what?
2. Now for an important warning—we are not to abuse that freedom! Write out the second sentence in v. 13:
3. Rather than indulging ourselves with our freedom (inward) we are instructed to focus outward and do what?
4. Let's take a minute and check out Jesus' words that match v. 14. Read Matt. 22:38-40. What does Jesus say about *love your neighbor as yourself*?
5. V. 15 shows us that rather than ***loving each other***, which would be characteristic of a church body walking by the Spirit; something else was characteristic of this church. Describe it:

The proof that our religion is very much that of the religious flesh is that the sinful flesh will be found to flourish along with it. It was thus with the Galatians. While they were making a good showing in the flesh and glorying in it, their daily life was full of bitterness, envy, hatred, and other sins. They were biting and devouring one another. Religious flesh and sinful flesh are one; no wonder that with a great deal of religion, temper and selfishness and worldliness are so often found side by side. The religion of the flesh cannot conquer sin.

Andrew Murray

...but stay tuned for the GOOD NEWS tomorrow!



Walking in God's Grace—Week Seven, Day Three

Read Galatians 5:16-18

¹⁶So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. ¹⁷For 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. ¹⁸But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.

This has got to be about the best set of verses in the whole book. After soaking in so much exhortation to not return again to the law, to the Old Covenant, to what Andrew Murray called *the religious flesh*; after being reminded that Jesus died so that we would be free from the bondage of the law, so that we would have that inner strength to obey the Lord; Paul bursts forth with this wonderful prescription for our life: “**Live by the Spirit**”. Oh, Lord, help us to do just that—help us to **Walk in Grace**!

1. Circle all the words “*contrary*” and “*conflict*” in the above passage.
2. What two things in in conflict with each other?

The word conflict reminds me of our lesson two weeks ago about Isaac and Ishmael (the son of the freewoman and the son of the slave woman). They were in conflict with each other since one son was born after the flesh and one after the spirit.

3. Interesting to note here the word “*desire*”:
 - What does the sinful nature desire?
 - What does the Spirit desire?

So, what do we do? Knowing that we have both our sinful nature AND the Spirit of Jesus? And these two have different appetites?

Let's identify two verbs that Paul uses to help us out.

- In v. 16 Paul says _____ by the Spirit Check out the NKJV: “Walk” by the Spirit
- In v. 18 Paul says _____ by the Spirit

I personally think that the verb in v. 18 helps us process this. *Living* or *walking* by the Spirit is one thing, but being **led by the Spirit** makes it much more clear to me.

“The solution is not to pit our will against the flesh, but to surrender our will to the Holy Spirit. This verse literally means, ‘But if you are willingly led by the Spirit, then you are not under the law.’ The Holy Spirit writes God’s law on our hearts.”
—Warren Wiersbe

As you finish your time in the Word today, ask the Lord to help you have a heart of surrender to His leadership, so that it is the Holy Spirit writing God’s plan and desires on your heart and giving you the power to obey. Then ask the Lord for a one-sentence prayer that sums up this request and write it here:



Walking in God's Grace—Week Seven, Day Four

Read Galatians 5:19-21

¹⁹The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹and 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.

Two days ago in v. 13 we were exhorted “*do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature*”. When we are willingly led by the Spirit and God writes HIS law upon our hearts the *acts of the sinful nature* become obvious—we call it our conscience. We know, don't we, when we are engaging in something that is initiated directly from our flesh—verses 19 and 20 and 21 list them. It is not usually a lack of information that causes us to sin—sin is *obvious*. It is a lack of relationship with the Spirit of God.

Just for the sake of really reading these and not glossing over them, list these *obvious* acts into a column below that you feel it belongs (no grades on this!) :)

Sensual Sins

Superstitious Sins

Social Sins

It is rather shocking (and humbling) to list the appetites of our old nature; and to be reminded that nature is still within each one of us, asking for its way. It is also rather sobering to read the last sentence of our lesson today. Let's see if we can discern what that means and what it doesn't mean.

1. Complete this portion of the verse: “...*those who* _____ _____ _____ *will not inherit the kingdom of God.*”
2. Doesn't that sound like a perfect contrast to yesterday's opening verse “Live by the Spirit”?

We each have a choice to let one of our natures be the boss, be in the lead: the sinful nature, or the Spirit of God. I think we all know what choice we WANT to make.

Here are some options for dealing with that sinful nature:

Reform it through religious rules (the law)
Ignore it
Feed it

Put it to death—crucify it
Invite the Spirit to be in charge of it
Starve it

Any choices from the first column will result in sinful habits that will make deep ruts in our life and produce the **fruit of the flesh** listed in today's verses.

Choices from the second column will produce **fruit of the Spirit** (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control) which is where we will pick up our lesson next week. God Bless you!

