

Galatians 5 (Part 4): 17-26 • The Contrast Between Spirit and Flesh

Teacher: Pastor Paul LeBoutillier
Life Bible Ministry

We're in Galatians, chapter 5. We're continuing our study through the New Testament here on Sunday morning. We're in the fifth chapter of Galatians for I think what is our fourth installment in this chapter. We've been going relatively slowly here though this chapter. But it's because there's so much to really lay hold of, and I want to be careful not to move so quickly, that we miss out.

We're picking it up in verse 17. If you're there, Galatians 5, follow along as I read through the rest of the chapter. It says, *“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.”*¹⁸ *But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.*

¹⁹ *Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality,* ²⁰ *idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions,* ²¹ *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.*

²² *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,* ²³ *gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.* ²⁴ *And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*

²⁵ *If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.* ²⁶ *Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.”* (ESV)

Stop there, please. Let's pray.

Holy Spirit, we come before You humbly today. We ask You to speak to our hearts and move upon our hearts in such a way that You bring clarity, and insight, and understanding to this Word.

Father, this is the scripture that You have given, it's living, it's active. And we ask God that You would activate it in our hearts anew and afresh and allow us

not only to understand but to know how to put these things into practice, for therein lies wisdom. Be with us, we pray, Father, in Jesus precious name, we pray, amen. Amen.

Last week we ended our study here in chapter 5 with verse 16 and we focused on that verse because it's a pivotal verse that answers the question, how then are we to live? Because we've spent all the chapters up through this point basically saying Christians don't live according to the law. And Paul said that repeatedly. We don't live according to the law. We don't live according to the law. We don't live according to the law in all that he was saying. Meaning essentially that we don't live by rules and regulations that are external, and speaking of the Mosaic Law and all the rules and things that go along with that. Man, there is so much confusion.

I actually posted another article on my Facebook page just yesterday that goes again and talks about the dangers of a movement that's gaining a lot of strength right now in the body of Christ. Maybe you're familiar with it. It's called, The Hebrew Roots Movement, and it has actually made its way to this area as well, here in the Treasure Valley, and it is very dangerous.

But at its outset, it seems very innocuous and even innocent and enlightening because it's basically looking at the scriptures with an emphasis of the roots of the people to whom those scriptures originally came. And that's why the name was given, The Hebrew Roots Movement. It's basically going back to the biblical Hebrew roots to gain an understanding. And as far as that goes, I have no problem with it, understanding.

And that's what we try to do as we're going through even the Old Testament on Wednesday night here at Calvary Chapel. We try to understand better, what motivated the writer to write what he did, what was going on historically, what was going on culturally. And we try to bring that into our study so that we can lay hold of a better understanding of those scripture passages.

The Hebrew Roots Movement though takes it several steps farther and it goes into actually speaking of and exalting the elements of the Mosaic Law to the point where the requirements are foisted upon Christians to keep food laws, to keep the Sabbath, to keep other various aspects of the Mosaic Law. And it essentially ignores the fact that the law was a covenant agreement between God and Israel.

The problem is, is that there have been a lot of teaching over the years that blurs the lines of who is the body of Christ. You see, many people have been taught

that the church took over where Israel left off and that the church really is the Israel of God.

And every passage related to Israel, every promise given to Israel, and yes, every law that was also placed upon Israel is now part and parcel of what we have as the church, and that is just fundamentally untrue. The body of Christ is not Israel.

Israel still has a functional and prophetic purpose in God's redemptive program and the church did not take over for Israel. The church is very clearly given to us in the Word of God as Jew and Gentile made into one new man. There is no Jew or Gentile in Christ, Paul tells us. (Galatians 3:28)

We are who we are in Jesus. We are the body of Christ. We are the bride of Christ. Right? And it is made up of Jews and Gentiles, but we don't take over for Israel. We have a completely different covenant.

The Jews had a physical covenant with God. All the promises that God gave to Israel were related to the land. He says, I give you this nation, I give you this area, and I will bless you in the land if you keep my covenant. Ours is not a physical covenant. God never gave us the United States of America or any other square foot of property on this earth.

The Bible makes it clear that as Christians, our citizenship is in heaven. And the promises that are ours in Jesus are spiritual, not physical. If you go through Ephesians chapter 1, and I would encourage you to do that. Just read through Ephesians chapter 1. Paul begins by praising God who has blessed us with all the spiritual blessings that we have in Christ. They are not physical blessings. That is not to say that God doesn't care about your physical realities, or doesn't answer your prayers related to physical issues.

But, we do not have a physical covenant with God. Israel did. We don't. There are many differences between the covenant that you and I received through Jesus Christ and the covenant Israel received through the Mosaic Law.

And please don't allow those who take liberties with the Word of God to amalgamate or try to merge those covenants in your heart. Because, and frankly, that's what was going on in the churches of Galatia. That's why Paul wrote this letter because people had infiltrated the Galatian church and churches rather. And they were saying, yeah, go ahead, believe in Jesus all you want, knock yourself out. But you must also, you must be circumcised. You must keep the food laws. You must keep the Sabbath. You must keep the Mosaic Law.

That's why Paul wrote this letter to address those issues. And we've been going through these for weeks now. And the Lord has been very clear in this letter to say to you and I, we are not under the law.

Now last week we asked the question, does that mean therefore that Christians are lawless? And we answered the question when we came to verse 16. It was the last verse we looked at last week. Look at it again in your Bible.

Verse 16 says, *“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.”* This is Paul's answer to how we are to live. We talked about this last week.

If we're not to live according to the written law, if we're not to live by ceremonial observances and obedience to this and that and the other thing, how then are we to live? Paul says it right here, we're to live by the Spirit. We're to walk according to the Spirit, and then we will not gratify the desires or the lusts of the sinful nature.

From that single verse we derive a whole sense of understanding of what it means to be a Christian, to not be under the law, but to still have a moral compass. And that moral compass for you and I is the Holy Spirit, who always speaks in conjunction with the Word of God, confirming and so forth what is in the Word. But that is how we know right from wrong, good from bad, wise from foolish, so on and so on.

How many laws are there in the Old Testament? Somebody once counted, I think there's 600 some, I guess. I've never counted them, but even if there were 6,000, 60,000, there still wouldn't be enough laws in the Old Testament to cover every possible situation that you could encounter in life. Every possible question that you could have as an individual. There's still not enough laws, to say thou shalt, marry this individual, or thou shalt not go take a job in that city or whatever the case might be.

We still need to be led by the Holy Spirit and that's what makes the leading of the Spirit so dynamic, you see. We have received not just a written external law, but we've received an internal dynamic living law giver who has now come to live within us.

He is the Holy Spirit of God. He indwells us, and He illuminates, and He speaks. And so Paul says, so be led by Him. Be led by the Spirit. And He can answer any question. He can lead you in any circumstance. He can direct you

related to any issue that you have. Because He's not limited, and He has all wisdom, and all power.

He is God the Holy Spirit, who now lives inside of you. And Paul says that you and I are to walk according to His leading in our lives. It's a living law, a dynamic law. Some people though have some objections to this idea of being led by the Holy Spirit. And I'll bring up just a couple of them. I'm sure there's more. People have objections to everything. But there's a couple of objections that people do have and I'll put these on the screen for you so you can see them.

Spirit-led Christianity seems no different than being led by our conscience.

The first one is, **Spirit-led Christianity** really **seems** to be **no different than just being led by our conscience**. I mean, right and wrong, stuff like that. What's the difference? What's the difference between my conscience directing me and the Holy Spirit directing me? Well, I think it's a good question and while I can understand it, I have to say that the difference is are very profound.

For starters, a conscience is something that everybody has and you're born with it. But the indwelling presence of God's Holy Spirit only comes to those who are born again. Okay? What are the differences?

Well, your conscience is something that can be pricked and which means you might feel guilt, or even anguish, at something you said, or something you did, or something that somebody else said, or did, or whatever. And it basically it's that understanding, it's that moral awareness. And by the way, did you know that's actually what the word, conscience means in the Greek?

The Old Testament doesn't speak much of conscience, but the New Testament talks a lot of it and we are to keep a clear conscience we're told. But essentially the word, conscience means, moral awareness. And when that moral awareness is violated, there's a sense of it that and you feel like that's wrong. But make no mistake about it, your conscience can be influenced. It can be influenced by prejudice. It can be influenced by superstition. It can be influenced by just flat out bad teaching.

And the apostle Paul told us in 1 Corinthians that people can actually have a weak conscience, you remember that? He wrote and he said, some people whose conscience is weak keeps them from being able to share in the liberties or freedoms that we have in Jesus Christ. He talked about it related to eating meat that had been sacrificed to an idol.

He said there are some people whose conscience is weak. They can't do it. They just can't not bring themselves to eat that meat. But there are others whose conscience is strong, they have a greater faith and, they can do it. Well, you see the difference there?

The Holy Spirit who lives within us is never going to be weak. He's never going to be influenced. Paul even talks about your consciences being seared as with a hot iron. And he talks there about a conscience becoming ineffective because it becomes hard, and it's no longer responsive like it should be.

Listen, that's never going to happen to the Holy Spirit. He's never going to become hardened. In fact, he's never going to change at all. He's going to keep speaking to you. He's going to keep warning you. Doesn't mean that you're always going to listen, but He's not going to change. That a change can't happen as it relates to the leading of the Holy Spirit because He is so much more than a moral awareness.

The Spirit is a living person dwelling within you and I, talking to us, guiding us. He can do so much more than the conscience. He can remind us of things that we used to know and maybe forgot. He can remind us of Scripture. He can comfort us in times of difficulty. Your conscience can't comfort you.

And the Holy Spirit can counsel you with wisdom and insight for your walk in this life, your conscience does not counsel you. It simply lets you know when something's not quite right. The work of the Holy Spirit is so much superior to the conscience. Again, the conscience is something everyone is born with. If you were born and obviously you were as you're here, you have a conscience.

But the only way you have the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is if you've been born a second time and that comes when you put your faith in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins, and trust what He did on the cross. The Bible says at that point you receive the indwelling Holy Spirit, and again, it is so much superior.

The second objection that people have related to being led by the Holy Spirit is,

<p>It gives people an open door to follow their own hearts and call it “the leading of the Holy Spirit.”</p>

It gives, seems to **give people an open door**, which translated, a good word for that is, an excuse **to follow their own hearts and just call it “the leading of the Holy Spirit.”**

Have you ever seen that happen? I have, many times. In fact, I was introduced to this early on when I was a youth pastor about 150 years ago up in Montana. I had a gal come in and sit, and I didn't know very much, or probably more correctly, I wasn't aware of how much I didn't know back then. I'm simply now older and more aware of what I don't know.

But this woman came in and sat down in my office and she proceeded to tell me that the Holy Spirit was leading her to divorce her husband. And as we talked, there were no biblical grounds for divorce or anything like that. And but she was just solid, this is, God told me to do this, I'm being led by the Holy Spirit.

I suppose this is a legitimate objection that some people may have related to, the possibility that we could use this as an excuse to say I want to do this and I'm going to trump you by simply saying God told me to do it. See, now you can't argue with me because God's bigger than you are and you can't argue with God, right?

You ever had a little child say something like that? I think God wants you to give me some candy or something like that. I know some kids who were raised in a Christian home that pulled the God wants you to do it thing with their parents sort of a thing. And it's like my mom and dad really respect God so I'm going to throw that out there. God wants you to give me a new bike or something like.

That is the reason why Paul goes on in this chapter to begin to outline, what does it look like when the Holy Spirit leads us and what does it look like when the flesh is leading us? And that's what he talks about in these verses.

And if you'll look with me beginning in verse 17, he begins to speak of the desires of the flesh. And he says, I want you to notice this. *“For the desires of the flesh (he says) are against (and that means, contrary) the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against (again meaning contrary to) the flesh, (put more simply, he goes on to say) ...these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.”* Alright?

What is Paul beginning to say here at the outset? He's saying that you and I have 2 natures. We have 2 natures inside of us. I was born with one of them, and I received the second one when I was born again. I was born with a sin nature. And that is that gravitational pull to live after the flesh.

But I was also born again, and I received God's divine nature, His Holy Spirit living within me. Really, truly the very nature of God. And now that nature

tends toward righteousness, it gravitates toward the will of God and the purposes of God.

And they're both going on inside of us, and that's why we feel a bit schizophrenic at times, right? Because we've got these things that are opposed to one another, that are pulling on us, and drawing us to go a different direction. The question is, which direction are we going to yield to? Are we going to yield to the flesh? Or am I going to yield to the Spirit? Right?

Everybody in this room knows that as a Christian, you still can yield to the flesh. You've probably seen it happen when somebody got in your face or cut you off in traffic. Or did something that really hurt you, and you wanted very much to hurt them back, or at least to communicate your displeasure through whatever words you might have chosen.

And you knew at that time, because you were convicted by the Holy Spirit, that wasn't His Spirit moving, that was your flesh that was very much in control at that moment because you allowed it to be. You chose that direction. And we all know what that's like. And we even have a word for it today. We say, ahh, I fleshed out. And as a Christian, that's a reality in our lives.

That's why Paul tells us not to give freedom, not to use the members of our body as instruments of sin. That means, he's basically saying, don't flesh out. Don't give in to your flesh to express itself, because my flesh wants to express itself.

Again, if somebody gets in my way, or they disappoint me, or make me angry, or whatever, my flesh wants to rise up and respond. But the Spirit in me is doing a different work.

Again, we come back to that question, which nature are we going to yield to? That's why Paul says, keep in step with the Spirit. All right.

But he goes on here in verse 18, you look with me in your Bible to say, *“but if you are led by the Spirit, you're not under the law.”* And he's basically saying that, if you're living in step with the Spirit, if you're being led by the Spirit, you're not living under the rules of law, because now you're being directed by the law giver Himself. You're being moved by Him. It's a personal thing.

Now Paul goes on and he begins to contrast these things for you and I. Somebody walks up to you and they say something like, you get into a conversation and they say, well, I just really feel like the Holy Spirit is leading

me to da, da, da. And inside your heart, there's just like red alerts going off. And you're thinking, I don't know, that just, that sounds a little hokey to me. Well, how do you know? How do you know?

Well, Paul's going to give us some help here as he goes on and talks about these sorts of things. He says in verse 19, “*Now the works of the flesh are evident: ...*”

The works of the... Did you notice that, guys? The works of the flesh are what? Evident. They're evident. If you're thinking through the thing, you can see the works of the flesh and you can go, that's the work of the flesh, and there's no confusing it. That's the work of the flesh.

What are some of those works? Things like, he lists them here, “*sexual immorality*.” In the Greek, the word is, *pornea*. It's where we get our word pornography. And it basically is a catch all Greek word to describe pretty much any kind of sexual indulgence that is outside of God's will, right? Pretty much any kind of sexual depravity, sexual perversion, or sexual activity that is outside of the Lord's purpose or creative order, okay?

Next he goes on and talks about, “*impurity*.” And it's a word that just means, again, it's a broad word that refers to, moral filthiness, okay? We see a lot of that in our culture today, moral filthiness.

Then he talks about, “*sensuality*.” If you have an NIV, your Bible says, “*debauchery*” which I always, I think is a funny word. And I've never, ever heard anyone use the word, debauchery in regular conversation. But it basically, sensuality refers to just living life to please the senses. In other words, it's talking about living a fleshly life. It's being totally focused on my body. See, my body has these senses. What I can see, what I can hear, what I can taste, what I can smell, right? What I can feel.

These senses are God given, but what happens when my life is taken up with these things to the point where, to the exclusion of all else. Well, that's called biblically, debauchery. Okay. I am literally living for physical sensation. I'm living for what I can put in my mouth, what I can see with my eyes, what I can feel with my hands, what I can hear with my ears. Whatever, tantalizes and titillates the senses, I want it. And it can even be someone who is, we talk about people today who are thrill seekers and stuff. It's just, I want to feel, it's just... But it's a completely fleshly existence, right? Because it ignores the spiritual, okay?

He goes on, he talks in verse 20 about, “*idolatry*.” We learn a lot about this in our study of the Old Testament. We know that idolatry is essentially the making of idols, but don't think about it as making little figurines that you put in the corner of your living room, or something like that. Because we have our idols today, which are very different from the idols that people worshipped back in the time of Moses or whatever.

Our idols are money, power, pleasure, goes on and on. Anything that we're focused on, anything that we're fixated on, anything that we're running after becomes an idol in our lives. But it's all about the flesh.

He goes on in verse 20 to mention, “*sorcery*.” Your Bible may use the word, witchcraft. And what's interesting about this word is it actually has a reference to drugs because back in that day drugs were actually used to heighten one's apparent spiritual perception.

And the word sorcery came to refer to the connecting with demonic spirits and using magic spells and incantations and stuff like that. And it may seem all very spiritual, but Paul says it's all very fleshly.

How about this next one? “*Strife, strife*.” You know what our word for strife is today? Drama. Right? That's what we call it. And have you noticed there are some people who gravitate toward drama? Have you noticed that? When we were raising our kids, we always told them this is a drama free zone, our home. Which wasn't always the case but it was our attempt anyway.

And there seem to be just some people who are just drawn to drama. And if there isn't any drama in the room, they'll make some. And it's like, just chill. But listen it it's strife. It's picking a fight. It's picking a bone of contention. When there's the potential that you and I could sit in the room and be very polite to one another and very..., but instead I'm not going to leave it there. I'm going to bring up something, I'm going to find something to say that is going to tick you off or get you going. And then, oh boy, then we got, this is where I want to live. Can you imagine? Paul says where that comes from, that comes from the flesh.

There's a brother who's been writing me a lot, he doesn't live in this country. But he's been emailing me a lot, and he's been telling me how he goes from church to church, and every church he goes to, he starts talking about the God of the Bible, and he keeps getting thrown out of every single church. People will just stand up and say, I'm just done talking to you, and then they'll walk out. And he's like, yeah, those... and he keeps... And I'm trying to communicate to him, dude, that's your problem. That may seem spiritual to you, to go in and declare

the truth to the point where they kick you out, but that is just flesh. That is your flesh. And some things can appear to look spiritual but it's just the flesh.

“*Jealousy*” is the next thing he mentions. That's essentially wanting what you have. I want what you have.

“*Fits of anger*,” the NIV says, “*fits of rage*.” In other words, there's that flash point of anger.

“*Rivalries, dissensions, divisions*,” they're all in the same category of things that separate people. Divisions, you guys over there, and we over here. And factions, like, well you believe, and we believe, and that sort of thing. It's fleshly. It's all fleshly.

He goes on, “*envy*,” refusal to be happy when somebody else prospers, or has something good happen to him.

“*Drunkenness*.” I don't think that needs a description.

“*Orgies*,” sexual perversity, and he says, “*...things like these*.” Just in case he might have missed something.

And then he says this, “*I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God*.” And when Paul says, “*those who do such things*,” he's talking about those who live after the flesh. Okay?

Somebody who's whole life, whole goal is to live after the flesh, to go after the flesh. He's not talking about people who stumble into the flesh occasionally, which defines you and I. We do mess up from time to time.

He's talking about people who live irrevocably in that life of the flesh. He says, I'm warning you as I did before that those who live that way will not inherit the kingdom of God. Listen, don't be deceived. Paul is not saying that somebody who has lived that way cannot be saved if they repent and turn. He's not saying that at all.

In fact, you remember what he wrote to the Corinthians? Let me put this on the screen for you from chapter 6. He says,

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 (NIV)

*Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. **And that is what some of you were.** But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*

*Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? (really what he just is saying right here in Galatians so he says,) Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. (but I want you to notice what else he goes on to say) **And that is what some of you were.** (notice past tense. *Were*. You guys, some of you lived in that lifestyle. Some of you, that was your address) *But* (what happened?) *you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.**

And so you're not living that way anymore. You came out of that lifestyle. You came out of that way of fleshly, indulgence, and you began to live instead for the Spirit and for the truth. And although you may at times stumble along the way, and there's no perfect man or woman among us. You don't live there anymore because it's not your address anymore. As I said before, you're a citizen of heaven.

I want you to notice, by the way, something else. Let me pause here for just a second. When we're looking at these works of the flesh, it's important that we understand that these are works of the flesh. Did you notice when he talks about the fruit of the Spirit, he never calls it the works of the Spirit? It's the fruit of the spirit. You know why?

Because fruit it grows naturally when you abide in the vine. It's not something you have to work for. It grows because it comes about as we yield to God's Holy Spirit within us. As we yield to what He is wanting to accomplish. As we yield to His way. These fruits, which we're going to look at, begin to grow in our lives, alright? We look at the life of the Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit, verse 22 in your Bible.

He says, “*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,*”²³ *gentleness, self-control; (he says) against such things*

there is no law.” Why? Because the law is internal now. There's no external mosaic or any other law that can govern these things because these are within.

And you can see now why when we're looking at somebody who says to us, I just really feel like I'm being led of the Spirit to do this, we can come back and we can say, you know what? That looks a whole lot more like the flesh than it does the Spirit. Because we've been given insights to understand what these things produce.

Are you seeing patience? Are you seeing gentleness? Are you seeing kindness? Are you seeing love? Are you seeing forbearance? Are you seeing these kinds of things in this person's life? Then yeah, they're probably being led by the Spirit.

But if you're seeing the opposite of those things, if you're seeing anger, and impatience, and hatred and division, and yet they're saying, I just feel led of the Holy Spirit to do this, then you've got a fleshly move on your hands. Right? And I'm not giving you these things so that you and I can just judge each other. Right? That's not why we're saying these things.

Paul is helping us to understand that there are regular sort of things that issue forth naturally from these different natures that you and I have. The fleshly nature naturally issues forth in the list of the works of the flesh He gave.

But the fruit of the Spirit naturally issues forth from the life of the Spirit as we yield to Him and what He's doing in our lives, these things come about.

What Paul is basically saying or reminding us of, is that the Holy Spirit is never an excuse to do what I want to do. Okay? The Holy Spirit is never an excuse to just do what my flesh wants to do.

And when I am led by the Holy Spirit, that leading will be consistent with those fruits. But when I am led by my flesh, that leading will be consistent with the things that Paul also mentioned there.

But Paul also wants to give us another very important reason why being led by the Spirit is never going to resemble the work of the flesh. Look what he says in verse 24. This is very important. *“And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”*

See that's the reason you guys, why being led by the Spirit is not going to look like the life of the flesh. The life of the flesh has been crucified. And by the

way, the verb tense that is used in that verse is past tense. And it actually speaks of something that has happened decisively in the past.

You have been crucified with Christ and your flesh entered into His death on the cross, so that it no longer need control you. In other words, the tyranny of the flesh has been broken.

Before I knew Jesus, I didn't have a choice in the matter. I was governed by my flesh. There was no spiritual dynamic in my life from the Holy Spirit. That wasn't until I was born again. You see, I was under the dominion of the flesh and so were you before Christ. But, now, through Jesus, when we come to Him, we, and don't ask me to explain this. But we somehow enter into His death, the dying process, the death He died to sin, we die unto the sinful nature.

In other words, the power of the sinful nature is broken over our lives and we don't have to obey it. We don't have to obey the flesh's desires anymore. Will we stumble from time to time and obey the desires of the flesh? Yes. But the blood of Jesus Christ keeps on cleansing us from sin.

We know that we do make mistakes. We confess those. We come to God. We say, Lord, strengthen me that I might not fall in this area again. Because here's the deal. We don't go and sin because we have to anymore. We sin because we choose to.

Before I knew Jesus, I had no choice in the matter. Now I have a choice in the matter because I'm free. I've been set free from the dominion and the tyranny of my flesh, my sinful nature. And I don't have to follow its desires and its impulses. I don't have to and neither do you. Why? Because it's been crucified. Paul writes about this in Romans, chapter 6. He says,

Romans 6:1-4 (ESV)

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? (no!) By no means! (he says) How can we who died to sin still live in it? (and then he asks the question, he says,) Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried

therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

That's what we're doing when we water baptize somebody. We're telling that story. We're telling the story. Jesus died, I entered into His death. Jesus was raised to life, I have entered into His resurrection. What died? The old me, the old sin nature. It hasn't been eliminated yet, but it has lost its power to dominate and tyrannize.

What are we supposed to do? I have to hurry up here. Romans 6:11. I like it in the New King James (NKJV). That's the one I'm going to give to you.

Romans 6:11 (NKJV)

...you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

...you also, (Paul says) reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

What is he saying here? I like the word, reckon. Ah, reckon, that's a good word, don't you? But the word, reckon means, believe. Believe. What's Paul saying here? Believe that you're dead to sin.

You know what the point is? The point is, it is faith that activates the reality of the death that we have experienced in Christ to the old sinful nature. If you believe that your sinful nature is in control of your life, if you believe there's nothing you can do about your sin, then you're going to continue to be a slave to your sin, even though you've been set free. Right?

But, if you exercise faith and believe that what happened to you when you came to Christ, the sinful nature was broken in its ability to dominate your life. If you reckon yourself dead to that sin nature, but alive in Christ Jesus, you will begin to see an exponential growth of victory in your life over sin.

I don't have to fall to that sin. I am dead to that sin. We have to begin to believe it. Listen, obedience, victory, comes by faith. Same way you get saved.

You're saved by grace through faith. You have victory over sin by faith. Believing that what happened really took place.

We're going to have to stop there.