

Sermon Title: "Who's in Charge? Walking in the Spirit"
Series: "Holy Spirit: The Forgotten Member of the Trinity"

Dave Sattler July 31, 2016 Text: Galatians 5:16-25

Sources: NIV Life App Bible; Commentaries: Cole, Fung, & McKnight; Books: Jim Cymbala's Spirit Rising, John Stott's Baptism & Fullness; Pokemon GO; Sermon: Graham Cooke.

<Slide> Introduction:

- Good morning, I'm Dave Sattler, one of the pastors here, today continuing our series on the "Holy Spirit: The Forgotten Member of the Trinity."
- ILL - Recently during one of my teaching times, someone asked the question:
 - Q: 'How come we've been having so many messages about the Holy Spirit lately? I've been going to church for 10 years, why have I never heard this stuff before?'
 - My answer, Q: 'The enemy loves to keep the reality of the Holy Spirit hidden. Or, occupy us with other things in an effort to make us forget. For a Christian who cultivates an ongoing relationship with the Spirit is a danger to the devil.'
 - Truth is: the Holy Spirit is the ultimate resource we have. Therefore, it's vital to learn Who He is, what the Spirit does, and how we can experience Him.
 - We cannot grow without the Spirit. As Jesus says in cf. John 15:5: Q: "Apart from Me [apart from My Spirit Whom I'm about to leave with you] you can do nothing."
- In the fall of 1988, I was starting my 2nd year of Bible College and ...
 - We decided it would be a good idea to sneak out of our rooms one night after curfew.
 - We had a spotlight. We parked a truck with a sound system on the lawn to introduce ourselves to the girl's dormitory. I was emcee!
 - Music cranked, I went through the lineup of 20 or so men announcing them one by one: names, hometowns, something funny about each of them.
 - Girls hung out their windows hollering approval.
 - When I finally came to the end, the spotlight shone on a stranger, dressed in pyjamas and slippers. To my horror, it was the School's Vice President!
 - A few of my dorm mates noticed he was there, cut the music, and bolted.
 - **<Slide>** Then, Dr Rose, calmly and firmly asked, Q: 'Who's in charge here?'
 - Those who had the guts to remain pointed their fingers squarely at me.
- A funny story, but it drives at a key point of the Christian life, "Who's really in charge?"
- This is the question with which all Christ-followers must wrestle. And, it is an intense battle.
- **<Slide>** Please turn to Galatians 5 on your electronic device or p946 in the blue Bibles.
- Galatia was a region in modern-day Central Turkey around Ankara, Turkey's capital.
- Cities familiar to you from the book of Acts or from your own travels: Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, & Antioch. Evidently, there were some interpersonal conflicts in these churches Paul had planted. This internal "biting and devouring" mentioned in 5:15 — sounds like a pack of wild animals — was "destroying" the church. And disarming their witness.
- Paul declares: the tension is not between people but between their sinful nature and the Holy Spirit. Who's in charge? Us, and our fleshly passions played out [which only 'blows up' relationships], or the Holy Spirit and His desire to transform us into the image of Christ.
- <READ Galatians 5:16-25> Pray: "God, control me by Your Spirit. Move me out' the way."

Passage Outline:

<Slide> 1. Our Sinful Nature (5:16-17a).

- V17: "For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit ..."
- Paul hits on one of the tenets of the Christian Story. The greek word translated "flesh" is used throughout the NT to describe the human race in its fallen state — or our sinful nature.
- We all have a sin nature. And, without the Spirit breathing new life into us, we are dead.

- So, what about the common notion that I'm a 'good' person? Q: 'And, if I'm a 'good' person, which I obviously am, then my passions & desires must all be good too. Right?!'
- ILL - Well, let's examine my relationship with ice cream.
 - If I crave it, it must be good.
 - This is the trap: my passion gets the best of me and I throw away reality in favour of the feeling, Q: 'Ice cream may not be good for me, but it sure is good.'
 - 'That creamy texture, that sweet blast of vanilla on my tongue, that cool refreshing sensation it delivers. Tastes so good, it must be good for me.'
- The doctrine of Original Sin, that all of us are born with a sinful nature, is fading into oblivion in today's culture. Perhaps because of abuse, Q; 'Sinners!'; it's been used as a 'stick' to club people into submission. Or, maybe because of all the amazing human inventions & accomplishments the past 50 years; narcissistic, people just don't believe it anymore.
- Yet the Bible teaches something very different.
- Consider cf. James 1:14-15: "... but each person is tempted when they are dragged away **by their own evil desire** and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death."
- The Bible soberly describes our sinful nature not to 'crush' or further enslave us, but instead to show us our need for a Saviour - Jesus. And, to open us up to the many exciting and even authentically 'good' possibilities that come with a life devoted to walking in the Spirit.

<Slide> 2. In Conflict with the Spirit (5:17b-23)

- Your sinful nature and the Holy Spirit are, as Paul says in the end of v17, "in conflict with each other," so that you "do not do what you want" (old NIV).
- We're in a battle, but do we even realize it?
- V19-21 give a heavy list of subtle and not-so-subtle sins, more than half of which have to do with getting along with others. If we allow these things to control us, we are in big trouble.
- ILL - This tactic of presenting moral lists is not unique to Paul.
 - In the ancient world, it was a common feature in the teachings of rabbis & philosophers.
 - With one major difference: most believed these vices were contrary to human nature, and somehow existed outside the human soul.
 - They were things people did, but were not connected to who they were.
 - But, Paul's conviction? Q: 'Without the Spirit, that's who you are!'
- Then we see in v22-23 — a sweet list of virtues.
- At conversion, all believers received the Holy Spirit.
- We were regenerated, "born again" (cf. John 3:3); and we were **also already given**, to keep the agriculture theme going, the "soil" — out of which the fruit is able to grow.
- Growing in the fruit of the Spirit is a 'feature' of the salvation 'deal' we all have in Christ.
- But, are you accessing that feature? Do you even know about it?
- ILL - Like when you finally hit Level 5 in Pokemon ...
 - And went to your first gym and chose a team (Valor, Mystic, Instinct) & met your leader.
 - I've heard Nintendo will soon be adding a new feature.
 - For TEAM VALOR, your "queen" Candela be able to offer tactical advice — a new feature to access for Pokemoners around the globe.
- God by His Spirit longs for us to access His "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, & self-control."
- This is a beautiful feature of walking in the Spirit.
- With God's help, are we growing in these areas?
- We must tap in to the Spirit.

- Great 20th Century theologian John Stott says,
 - Q: "The mere recital of these ... should be enough to make the mouth water and the heart beat faster. For this is the portrait of Jesus Christ." - Baptism & Fullness, p76
- As part of God's sanctifying work, these qualities of Jesus are possible in our lives!

<Slide> 3. Crucified Passions & Desires (5:24)

- V24: "Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions & desires."
- Dealing with sin calls for decisive action; sin can never be dealt with apart from Christ.
- We can't simply adopt a new strategy, find a new counsellor, read a new book, try a new drug to fix our problem. No medication, support group, not even 'white-knuckling it' or gritting our teeth and trying our absolute hardest is going to fix us.
- ILL - A friend of mine who'd gotten saved a few years earlier,
 - Once said to me about his pre-Christian life, Q: 'I'm not that guy anymore!'
 - Yes, he'd confessed his sin, asked Jesus to be his Saviour, invited Jesus into his life.
 - But, he also desired a whole new way of living.
 - He'd needed to "die to his old life", to be "made new again," and to live in that newness.
- APP: And this is an important step many Christ-followers miss — or skip all together.
 - In reality, there are actually 2 crosses in the Christian Story.
 - Foremost is the cross Jesus died on, the turning point in history, where, by the Lord's sacrifice, it was made possible for our sins to be forgiven and relationship restored with our Creator.
 - But, in the life of a Christian, there is another cross, one on which we must choose to die: die to self, crucify our flesh, surrender our will, offer up control of our lives to Jesus.

<Slide> 4. In Step With the Spirit (5:25)

- ILL - When children are learning to walk, they are incredibly dependent.
 - Whether it's a parent or an older sibling or a babysitter, they need help to ... protect them from running into furniture, crashing on the pavement, walking into danger ...
 - I remember when our kids would grab onto two of our fingers with their whole hand and walk ... step by step, trusting, with us right behind them.
- And this is the picture here: "... keep in step with the Spirit." (25)
- We'll never truly walk any other way.
- Since God, the Spirit, is the Source of life, it makes sense.
- When we insist on being in charge, we cannot move forward. But, when we allow the Spirit to direct our course, when we depend on — reach out to Him, when we walk in step with the Spirit, that's when we find true life.

Applications:

- Let's conclude with a few application points.

1. <Slide> Setting the Atmosphere.

- No mere human, not even the best farmer, can make fruit grow. We can't make ourselves grow spiritually either — God does that, but we can 'set the atmosphere.'
- Like real fruit, the fruit of the Spirit grow naturally, not by force.
- ILL - I've been thinking about the tomato plants at my house.
 - I can't make them grow by yelling at them, "Grow!!!"
 - But I can ... weed around them, water them daily; and then trust and wait ...
 - Also, I can't expect my tomato plants to grow mangoes, or avocados.
 - My tomato plants, if they grow at all, will grow tomatoes, exactly the seed we sowed.
- Paul speaks further to this point farther down in cf. Galatians 6:7, Q: "We reap what we sow."

- Cultivating a life with the Spirit where growth happens is not an entirely passive exercise.
- The Spirit demands control, yet waits patiently for us to give it to Him.
- Bearing fruit requires our surrender and cooperation.
- APP: And each of us has some control over the conditions we set for our lives.
 - The company we keep, thoughts we think, what we read, watch, or listen to, how we spend our money, our work time, our leisure time, our recreation time.
 - All this absorbs our energy and sets the atmosphere for our lives.
 - We are sowing seeds all the time.
- Growth comes when the conditions are right: when we 'weed out' other stuff, when we talk to the Spirit regularly, when we allow our lives to be **led by Him** in our battle with the flesh.
- And, as the Spirit works, fruit, Christ's character, becomes more and more visible in our lives.

2. <Slide> Remembering Our True Identity.

- It's vital for Christ-followers to remember our true identity.
- As children of God, we are in fact, actually, 'saints'.
- Sure, we sometimes sin, but, in Christ, being a 'sinner' is no longer our core identity.
- The Spirit isn't simply 'reforming' our old sinful nature, that's crucified, dead, buried — gone!
- Problem is: we too often forget that we are "dead to sin and alive to new life in Christ" (cf. Romans 6:3-4).
- This is one of the enemy's tactics: confuse, plant doubt, mess with our identity. And we find ourselves with our feet still walking in our old nature. When in reality we are new creations, we belong to Christ Jesus, we have the Spirit of God, and we have a new nature.
- <Slide> ILL - I like what UK preacher, Graham Cooke says on this topic,
 - Q: 'Your old sin nature? Why would you want to consult that old thing?! Why would you want to resurrect it and ask its opinion? The old self is dead. That's who you once were. It's not who you are now. It's not who Christ has raised you up to be. You are alive and you are free, and you have the invisible God on the inside. You have His literal life flowing through you. You have access to every spiritual blessing in Christ, and the same power that raised Him from the dead is now alive in you ...'
- <Slide> ILL - A friend shared this testimony about her struggle with identity.
 - She says, Q: 'This has been such a powerful revelation for me; for years I lived disempowered, thinking I was still a sinner even though I was redeemed. And then, when I began to hear more teaching and revelation on the reality of the new nature we have been given, and that we **really have been 'born again'**, I was so empowered and began living in a whole new way. And the Spirit's life was flowing through me to a whole new level. It made all the difference. Remembering this identity piece shifted my perspective and I began living out of alignment with that truth.'
- APP: Many of us who grew up in staunch legalism struggle with the very idea we are saints.
 - And when we sin, we feel loads and loads of guilt and shame,
 - ☒ Q: 'I'm such a worm I could never be a saint.'
 - Others have a real problem seeing ourselves as anything but 'good.'
 - We're 'amazing.' And, the idea of needing the Holy Spirit is foreign.
 - Q: 'I'm good, thanks. Good enough **on my own**.'
- ILL - Calling his congregation back to their true identity in Christ,
 - An old African American preacher loved to use these words:
 - ☒ Q: 'If you ain't who you is, you is who you ain't! Be who you is.'
- Christ-followers are no longer sinners but saints. This is us. Let us live like it. 'Be who you is.'

3. <Slide> Spirit, Fill Me.

- Some BQ's have been reverberating in my head this week: Why do I have the Spirit but exhibit so little of His power & love? How is it that the possibility of being led by the Spirit is right in my grasp yet I seem so often 'out of step' with the Spirit? Answers? Because I love to be in charge. And because I love sin. It's so fun. Feels so good. At least for a little while.
- Truth is: walking in the Spirit is tough; this way of life: trusting daily, 'Spirit, fill me' is never easy. Besides, our lives are so full already it's hard to make room for the Holy Spirit to fill.
- ILL - But the Spirit is not an 'add-on' to our already busy lives.
 - Like our yoga class or lunch-time soccer group or book club.
 - Being Spirit-filled people is not an ideology or religion to follow.
 - It's core to our identity; it's who we are — an all-encompassing way of life.
 - We North Shore people give a lot of time, invest a ton of money, put much effort into bettering ourselves ... business-skill development, life coaching, fitness training.
 - I often joke, Q: 'It takes a big commitment to be a 'high-performing athlete' like me!'
- Problem is many well-meaning Christians, post-conversion, revert back to self-effort and find themselves 'spinning their wheels' and become disillusioned, frustrated, stagnant; or worse, naive, unaware, content with the status quo.
- When, with the Spirit, there's always more freedom — always more growth possible!
- APP: If your lust is out of control, self-mastery is never going to fix it.
 - When I think I'm the solution, I'm sunk. Our best defence = v16, Q: "walk by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh."
 - The "self-control" God brings is countercultural and freeing. It involves allowing one's life to be fashioned not by what we desire, but by what the Spirit desires.
 - And soon, over time — though not completely before eternity, what we naturally desire even begins to align with what the Spirit desires. And it's beautiful.
- APP: Chances are if your relationships are blowing up, or you're in conflict after conflict,
 - It's not communication skills, conflict management, not even mediation you need.
 - That's Paul's whole point: true love, the kind the Spirit longs to grow in us, actually has the ability to bridge massive chasms of relational brokenness.
- ILL - I've witnessed it firsthand several times.
 - When I've been wronged. Or been in conflict. When I've wanted to rage.
 - Instead, I have felt the Spirit fill me with "love" for people. I've literally felt His love run through my chest and down my arms as I've extended a hand or a hug.
 - This kind of Christ-like love, when I allow it to enter my heart, has the supernatural ability to melt my "hatred", "jealousy", & "envy". And tear down walls that divide us.
- Finally, if we expect to grow we need to be in regular touch with the Spirit.
- I love what John Stott says, Q: "It's been my practice ... every day to pray that God would fill me with his Spirit and cause more of the Spirit's fruit to appear in my life." - B&F, p118
- '**SPiRiT, FiLL ME!**' This is our prayer as we walk with Him. Amen.