

Romans

Bible Study

Walking in the Spirit

Romans 8:1—5

Romans chapter 8 begins with the word *therefore* because it is a summary for what Paul has presented in the previous chapters. Having no condemnation summarizes chapters 1—5, which explains man's hopeless condition and provides a solution through the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Those who have put their trust in Him for their salvation are declared righteous so that they are no longer condemnable. We are now completely identified with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. Sin, death and the Law have no hold upon us any more.

Having been saved, we are now responsible to learn to walk in the Spirit. This is what Romans chapters 6—8 is all about, and what Romans 8:4—8 summarizes.

Our walk

Understanding that we are dead to sin and to the Law is necessary in order for a believer to have a proper walk. Those who don't understand that they are already dead to sin will continually try to be dead to sin by living a better life. They will be fighting a battle that has already been won because we have been baptized (identified) with Jesus Christ. The same thing can be said about the Law. Those who don't know they are already dead to the Law will continually be trying to live by the Law. On one hand, the uninformed believer is trying to please God by not doing something (not sinning), and on the other hand, he is trying to please God by doing something (following the Law). Unwittingly, he is trying to accomplish this through the flesh, the old nature. Those who understand that we are already dead to sin and the Law are able to move on to spiritual maturity in their Christian walk. This is one reason the book of Romans is such a crucial book for the believer to understand. Paul calls it an establishment book, one that plants the believer firmly into the knowledge of what it means to be in Jesus Christ (Romans 1:11; 16:25). Without the book of Romans and Galatians, we would not even know that we were to walk in the Spirit. Those who throw out these books are not capable of properly maturing in their spiritual walk.

So, just what is walking in the Spirit? Before examining what it means to walk in the Spirit, it may be helpful to look at something we are familiar with, walking in the flesh.

Walking in the flesh

Walking in the flesh is walking in the power of the old nature. This is something that we need absolutely no instructions on how to accomplish since we have all been practicing doing this since birth. We grow up thinking that everything revolves around us and we get our greatest personal satisfaction when we please the flesh. A distinction must be made between the flesh as the old nature and the flesh that is our body. One is immaterial while the other is visible. The physical body is amoral, it is not good or bad. However, the physical body plays out the desires of whatever is controlling us. If the old nature is in control, then the body will exhibit characteristics in line with the old nature. When speaking of the old nature as being the flesh, we are speaking of the inner man, not the physical, visible body. The Bible refers to the physical body as the mortal flesh (2 Corinthians 4:11).

Any time we try to accomplish something in our own power we are doing so through the flesh. Self-righteous pride is the end result. We can often tell if we are walking in the flesh by what fruit is being borne.

Galatians 5:19—21 19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness (morally impure), lasciviousness (unbridled immorality), 20 idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance (contention), emulations (envious rivalry and contention), wrath, strife (causing factions), seditions (dissension and division), heresies, 21 envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings (carousing), and such like:

There are many who would say they do not have trouble in any of these areas and may think they are living a proper life. However, Colossians gives us another list with items that we have all struggled with at times.

Colossians 3:8—9 8 But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. 9 Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds;

All these things are called deceitful lusts in Ephesians 4:22 and are things we need to free ourselves from. They should not be a part of our thought life or played out in the flesh. They are called deceitful because these things can appear to be good and worthwhile instead of destructive and godless. They are the outward evidences of the “fruit” that we produce when we allow ourselves to operate in the flesh. The unbeliever lives a life pleasing the flesh because that's all they can do. They can't help but live a life reflecting who they truly are on the inside. Even their good deeds are done in the power of the old nature. The believer can choose how they are going to walk, either by the flesh or by the Spirit.

Walking in the Spirit

Walking in the Spirit is completely contrary to walking in the flesh. Instead of operating in the power of self, we need to operate in the power of the Holy Spirit. When we operate in the flesh, we cannot operate in the Spirit and visa versa (Galatians 5:16—17). The natural mind is tuned in to operate in the natural, sinful realm. This is why we need a renewed mind in order to operate under the control of the Spirit (Romans 12:1—2).

The misconception that most believers have is that walking in the Spirit entails doing something tangible for the Lord like doing missionary work, serving in a church, teaching Sunday School, reaching out to the poor, etc. They confuse outward good works with the inward change of the Spirit. The fruit produced by a believer walking in the Spirit is internal but will ultimately be manifested in good works (Galatians 5:22—23; Titus 3:8, 14). The fruit produced is the natural product of the Spirit when we are walking in the Spirit. It's living according to our renewed mind, not allowing the flesh to rule over us.

The renewed mind

According to Romans 12:2, we are not to conform to this world (live according to the flesh), but we are to be transformed into a person that is usable by the Lord. It is through transformation that we are able to live out the perfect will of God. The first step of transformation is salvation. We will never be transformed with our old sinful nature. With salvation comes the indwelling Holy Spirit and a new nature. Once saved, we now have the ability to yield to the flesh or to yield to the Holy Spirit. This is where the renewed mind comes in.

Walking in the Spirit requires a renewed mind, one that is not directing the body to follow the lusts of the flesh. A prerequisite for a renewed mind is to be a believer. Unbelievers are incapable of renewing their mind since they are only controlled by the flesh (Romans 1:28). The renewed mind is one that has been changed from following the desires of the flesh to following the desires of the Spirit. We are transformed from being fleshly minded to spiritually minded when we renew our minds (Romans 12:1—2). This is not a one time event, but something we need to do continually (2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 4:23).

The mind is renewed when we fill our mind with the things of the Lord by studying and meditating on Scripture and we allow it to richly dwell in us (Colossians 3:16). It then becomes the work of the Holy Spirit to activate what we have taken in. This is the continual renewing done by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5). With this renewing comes a proper walk and fruit bearing (Galatians 5:22—23).

As Colossians 1:9—10 states, we need to fill ourselves with the knowledge of His will. We do this by studying Scripture because this is the only place we will be able to find the will of God for a believer in this Dispensation of Grace. The wisdom and spiritual understanding is the work of the Holy Spirit as He takes Scripture and gives it life within us so that we can walk in a manner that is worthy of the Lord, and by doing so, bear fruit that is pleasing to Him. The believer who is walking in the Spirit is completely in the perfect will of God.

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