LSB Galatians 5:16 - 26 Part 1

16 But I say, walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. 17 For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you do not do the things that you want. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. 19 Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, 21 envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice 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 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk in step with the Spirit. 26 Let us not become those with vain glory, challenging one another, envying one another.

The christian life is a progression. If you are a christian, and I'll take a moment to define what a genuine christian is in a few moments, just so we're all on the same page, if you are a christian, the real thing, you begin at one point and you end this life here at a different point. Changed.

I encourage people to read Bunyan's allegory of the christian life, Pilgrim's Progress, because too often, I get the sense in our current era of the church, that being a christian is connected to some one time experience, some words you said, some prayer you might have prayed, something that happened one time and then you simply live out this life and heaven is your guaranteed future.

There's nothing else you do. You crossed over the line in the sand and believed and that's the end of it. Until heaven, what else is there to do? Go to church whenever it's convenient. Try to be decent to your fellow man. Get along with your neighbors. Maybe live by the ten commandments.

That's it . . . . . right?

Let me direct you to the 4rth word in verse 16. In almost every translation I checked, the word is *walk*. **Walk**. In the greek interlinear version we find out the order is backwards from our english. *I say now, by the Spirit, walk*. A few more words in english but in the greek, walk is also the fourth word.

The word is; peripateó. Used 96 times in the New Testament, and in all of it's uses, it means movement. Going somewhere. And it's used both physically, literally, and metaphorically.

The christian life is a walk. It is movement. From beginning to end, you never stop moving.

Let me sweep you ahead momentarily to verse 25. We're not going to get there today, but for the purpose of beginning, look quickly at what it says;

25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

Such depth in so few words. Dual premises and we're going to talk about both of them.

I began a few moments ago challenging your very claim to be a christian. And I said we would define what a real christian IS. Paul states the same premise. **If** we live. That's the definition of a christian. Someone who was previously dead. Spiritually dead. They had no connection with God. Sin had caused a separation from a Holy God. Living in darkness. Waiting for judgement. With no hope to rescue yourself.

But by God's grace we are quickened from the dead. Our human spirits are made alive together with God's Holy Spirit. That is the definition of a christian. We believe in the finished work of Jesus, on the cross. He died in our place. He effectually died the death that we deserved, taking our punishment in His body.

Then He arose from the dead on the third day. And He not only takes the death we deserved, He arose to give us His righteousness. The free gift of salvation for all who hear and believe. How does it happen?

He gives us His Holy Spirit to dwell inside our hearts. Our spirits are made alive with His Spirit. We in the spiritual sense, quite literally live by the Spirit. The mark of demarcation between true regenerated to life christians and all the rest who claim to be christians is the indwelling Holy Spirit. Life comes by the indwelling Christ, living in me.

Paul states it very plainly; 5 *Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize about yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test*? 2Cor 13:5

Or the verse that Christ used to quite literally quicken me from the dead. Romans 8:9 *However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit,* ***<u>if indeed</u>*** *the Spirit of God dwells in you. <u>But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him</u>*.

So Paul uses that premise to go beyond the initial beginning of spiritual life, that quickening from death to life, by the Spirit.

25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

If this is true, then this is true. It's an if-then argument. If it was by the Spirit that you began your new spiritual life, it's also by the same Spirit that you walk through this life. The life giver is also the transport through.

The same Spirit who quickened you from death to life and who dwells inside each and every christian is also the Spirit by which we walk. The christian life is a walk. Day to day, step by step, we're going somewhere. Walking. And Paul is very logical. *25* ***<u>If</u>*** *we* ***live*** *by the Spirit, let us also* ***walk*** *by the Spirit.*

This idea of walking, with Jesus, daily, walking step by step, with the Lord

Jesus in a progressive forward direction, has a name. A theological name. Are you ready for your 5 syllable word of the day? We had a 7 syllable word last week. Remember? *antinomianism*

You get off easy this week with a short little 5 syllable word that defines this day to day, week to week, year in year out forward walking with Jesus into more holiness, less sinfulness. Santification.

Sanctification is the word that describes the normative forward growth, forward progress into being more like Jesus. Don't like big theological sounding words? OK, I don't blame you. Let's just call it what Paul calls it. A walk. A journey. A journey that begins somewhere and makes progress and ends somewhere. A walk.

These folks didn't have cars. Maybe if the Bible was written today we might call it a drive, or a voyage, or a flight. Any word that describes movement from one place to a different place would work.

But the idea was best stated then as now, as a walk. I can't think of too much that's more intimate in a friendship than going walking together. It's a good word. A great word. All the other words define movement without effort. Walking describes movement through effort that we make. Step by step by step. We have engagement in the process.

So we're on a journey in this christian life and the next thing that's important to realize is that when the Spirit of God accomplishes either your salvation or your sanctification, *25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.*
the work that gets accomplished is not caused by you, by your flesh, it's accomplished by the Holy Spirit.

And we can draw a similarity. I had no control over the initial quickening, and I have no real control over the progress that the Spirit causes. He quickens and He grows. I can't speed Him up any more than I could cause Him to make me alive. Painfully slow progress. Spiritual progress is

wrought in me by God's Holy Spirit, apart from my control.

We could press the metaphor of a growing body. I had no control over my birth, and likewise over a lifetime, I have no control over the long process of change that brings me from a baby to a child to a young adult to middle age, to the old age you see this morning. I'm responsible for very little. Although Pam reminds me that smaller portions at meals would help a bit. But we do have a part to play, and we'll talk a bit about that.

There's nothing more pitiable than the sight of a new baby that is failing to thrive. Something's wrong and the baby won't eat. No appetite. Failure to thrive is what the hospital calls that. Tragic.

Peter uses that comparison to christians. 1 Pet. 2:2 *like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation*,

Growth is another metaphor like walking. We walk with Jesus. We grow in holy stature to be more and more like Jesus. Progress. Forward progress. *grow in respect to salvation*,

And the writer of Hebrews uses this same analogy but in a negative sense. A failure to thrive kind of sense. I often think it could very well have been Peter who wrote the letter to the Hebrews. At the end of the 5th chapter, speaking of comparing Christ to Melchizedek, our author says this;

11 Concerning him we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. 12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. 13 For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an infant. 14 But solid food is for the mature, who ***because of practice*** *have their senses trained to discern both good and evil*.

These folks are not thriving. No growth. No progress in their walk, their journey. And the author equates time and progress as something reasonable to expect. They should have been spiritual teenagers by now. Always hungry. Ever watch teenage boys put away hot dogs and hamburgers. That's the kind of appetite and food these folks should have been hungry for, but they need to be nursed with milk like newborn babies.

Our passage this morning is about progress on our spiritual journey. It's about walking. Spiritual walking. Spiritual growth.

16 But I say, walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

Walk. By the power of the Holy Spirit, walk. Movement is required. Sanctification is normal. If you're a christian and you're in the same place that you were in 5 years ago, first, check your pulse, and second, walk.

I want to show you a trifecta of verses that all address this same area. Sanctification. Ordinary growth. Walking on a journey. Spiritual movement.

Put your thinking caps on now because some very important words get used interchangeably. Ready. Three verses that use different words but the goal and the outcome are interchangeable with ***walk*** *by the Spirit*.

John 17:17. The high priestly prayer. For us. Jesus asks the Father;
17 Sanctify them by the truth; Your word is truth.
There's a direct connection between sanctification, progress on the spiritual journey, and what? The Word of truth. God's word causes spiritual progress. Walking by the Spirit is caused by filling up with His Word.

Next verse that spells out the very same idea of spiritual movement and progress in your journey, your walk with Jesus; Col. 3:16

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, with all wisdom teaching and

admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with gratefulness in your hearts to God.

Pay particular attention to the cause and effect here. God's Word causes psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, teaching, admonishing . . .

Now we go to the third parallel in this trifecta. Eph. 5:18 *And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord*;

We need to stop here for a moment and consider a single word in vs. 18 of Ephesians 5 *be filled*. the greek word here translated filled is plērousthe. And if you look it up in the greek dictionary it means exactly what we would say at the gas station as topped off. Filled up to capacity. Topped off.

But there's even something more strategic than that. The verb tense of the word. Present Imperative Middle, or passive, 2nd person plural. An imperative is a command. Keep your tank topped up. And plural means it is continual. by filling and filling, and filling, and filling, continually.

If I were driving a car across the country, the command would be to keep filling that gas tank up. Keep it full. We could do an amplified interpretation and write it this way and be more correct for what the original readers understood than our current translations. Be being kept filled up. With the Spirit. It's continual.

But wait a minute. I said I don't have any more control over the Spirits filling, my walking in the Spirit than I did over the Spirit's quickening me from the dead in the first place. Right. I can't make the Spirit do anything. He makes me do stuff. The Spirit is the sovereign Lord, I'm the doulos, the slave.

Oh, but there is something I can do. Compare the effectual results of both

Ephesians 5:18,19 with Colossians 3:16

but be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; Ephesians

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with gratefulness in your hearts to God. Colossians

The effectual result is the same. I can't make the sovereign Holy Spirit do what I want, but I can in fact control the intake of God's Word. Both the filling of the Holy Spirit, and the Word of God have the identical effect. I can't boss the Spirit around, but I can pour in this book, daily, like filling the gas tank on a cross country trip.

People sing these songs that sound like the wheezing of an iron lung about wanting to have more of the Spirit, more of Christ, more, more, more . . . and their Bibles have an inch of dust on the covers. That's irrational.

If you want to experience a deeper walk with Jesus, blow the dust off of the book and start pouring it into your tank. That's not a suggestion according to Paul in Ephesians or Colossians. It's an imperative command that never goes away in this life. Keep filling that gas tank. Keep pouring in God's word. Over and over every day, every day, and look where you're at in 5 years compared to where you're at today, and it'll surprise you what Jesus has done.

The christian life is a journey. If you aren't moving forward in your relationship with Jesus, that's cause for real concern. We're actually ***commanded*** to get busy, get walking, get moving. According to this book, there's no such thing as static christians. That's actually the theme of the book of Hebrews. Warning after warning of so-called christians that are static. Still need some milk after 40 years.

16 But I say, walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. Control by the Spirit as opposed to control by the flesh. Spirit . . . . Flesh.

The fact is, we are still very much a dichotomy in this life. My spirit has been quickened from death to life and is filled up with the Holy Spirit of God, transformed daily by this book.

Never the less, my flesh, my body with all of it's falleness that I inherited from my parents all the way back to Adam, it would rather shift to neutral and coast. It has all kinds of evil things it would rather be doing than pouring in more and more of Jesus.

My body and it's desires are in a war over my soul fighting it out with my quickened and joined to Jesus spirit. My old sinful self connected to this old dead and dying sinful body has a whole bunch of evil things that just come naturally to it.

So much easier to just sin than to walk in the Spirit with Jesus. OK, make a deal. Maybe not really vile sin, but maybe just shift to neutral and coast. No effort. No progress. And, no Jesus.

He doesn't continue the friendship - fellowship stuff so much when I choose to coast, or sin. He gone. Not really gone, because He promised to never leave me or forsake me. It's more like when I do something that makes my wife super mad and we avoid each other. For a while.

She'll be like, don't bother coming in here, smelling like that. I don't need your company right now. Go somewhere. Far.

Sin has a similar effect on my love relationship with Jesus. You can't have your sin . . . and Jesus. So, there's a compelling to not sin. Fellowship is sweet. Disfellowship is sad. And if you persist, He'll get out His stick. For real true christians, He ***will*** win. And it can get ugly. He knows how to cause pain. For your good. Like your mom or your grandma that knew

how to get you scooting along. Some well placed pain to motivate you.

So we are motivated to ***not*** sin. On several levels. Mostly it's the break in sweet fellowship is all I need. I love Him and I don't like to be locked in a different room away from Him. That's usually all it takes for me.

But the flesh is strong, isn't it. Really strong. So sin happens. But Paul gives us our escape route here. We do have choices. Defer to the Spirit and all the good things pour out. Defer to the flesh and all the bad things come pouring out. Verse 17;

17 For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you do not do the things that you want.

I took 5 minutes out to revisit my childhood and watch a Donald Duck cartoon from 1938 called ***Donald's Better Self***. There's the normal Donald, and then there's the angel Donald with a halo, and there's a devil Donald that's red and has horns and a pointy tail.

The sissy angel Donald is trying to get him to do good things, like get out of bed and go to school, and the Devil donald is telling him to get back in bed and sleep a while longer, go fishing instead of school, play hooky, smoke a pipe like a man, etc. etc.

Walt Disney had a lot of fun with this verse. A lot of silliness. Angels are sissy's. Demons are fun. Evil is fun. Doing what you're supposed to is no fun. It's the cartoon version of verse 17. But theology ala Disney stops right there.

Before we were born again we lived within some limits. Boundaries. We had parents to force us to get out of bed and go to school. We had incentives to obey teachers and not cause distractions and trouble with others. We obeyed the authorities in our lives. Parents. Teachers. Policemen. Curfews. And conscience.

God gives even fallen men a conscience. All of those things that helped us to live within some kind of safe boundaries are torn down now. If you take a tire iron and break out all the windows at the school a social worker from the government will get you some mental health prescription for some pills that will turn you into a turnip.

Then after a few years of pills and being a turnip, you take a gun to school instead of a tire iron. Our culture is very confused about evil. How do you control evil? They're working on AI. Artificial intelligence. Maybe we can reprogram genetics like we reprogram computers and fix the evil thing some how.

But who gets to say what is and isn't evil? We talked about this last week. The ***"who says so"*** question. We killed God, so who gets to say what is and isn't evil? We're all just accidental life forms flying through space on a rock completely at random by chance, so who says it's wrong to hose down 30 or so of your schoolmates with an oozie? Why does it matter if we're just a random accident anyways.

And if the same doped up made into a turnip by pills kid looks up how many babies died today from their mothers aborting them, how do you convince him that that's OK but the oozie thing is evil? How does that work?

How odd that an ancient book actually understands and defines evil, where it started, and how to control it. We're lightyears ahead of secularism standing around scratching their collective heads and arguing amongst themselves about what is and isn't evil, and what can be done about it if we do decide on a definition.

This book not only defines evil, it tells us of a solution. Jesus knew all about evil and He defined the source. Matt. 15. After He is accused of uncleaness by some pharisees; *10 After Jesus called the crowd to Him, He said to them, "Hear and understand. 11 It is not what enters into the mouth*

that defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man."

Peter and the disciples are confused so they probe deeper.

15 *Now Peter answered and said to Him, "Explain the parable to us." 16 And Jesus said, "Are you still lacking in understanding also? 17 Do you not understand that everything that goes into the mouth passes into the stomach, and goes into the sewer? 18 But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. 19 For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, sexual immoralities, thefts, false witness, slanders*.

Paul's list in vs. 19 sounds just like Jesus list does in this text. Amazing similarity. Evil comes out of us because evil dwells in every fallen human heart.

For ordinary unredeemed fallen men, only the boundaries and restraints of what the culture will allow actually restrains the evil dwelling in each of us.

Non christians pretty much do what they can get away with. Right. There's an unwritten code. How many times have you heard or read, Oh, he's a good person. She's a good person. What's a good person. The people on my block are all pretty much good persons. They leave me alone. I leave them alone. They don't steal my stuff. I don't steal their stuff. We wave to each other. We're all following the good person code.

But beneath an ever shallower exterior code, evil is boiling like a pot. The veneer of good person is getting thinner and thinner. Hey boomer. What do you think will happen when civil society collapses after the church is taken out, and evil just comes out with no boundaries, no restraints.

The book of Revelation pictures mass murder in that time frame that could be only months away for all we know. R6:*3 And when He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come." 4 And*

another, a red horse, went out; and to him who sits on it, it was given to him to take peace from the earth, and that men would slay one another; and a great sword was given to him. Rev. 6

Revelation pictures 25% of humans dying in a first wave, and then 33% in a second wave of death. Half the population of the earth will die in that time frame from killing and pestilence. That's what happens when there is no restraint on the evil dwelling in every fallen human.

The veneer of civility is thin and getting thinner. Already Pam and I many times will choose to go north by way of Gabbs, just to get us off of the highways a little bit because of the increasing number of humans and the decreasing civility of one to another. It's getting crazier by the day it seems. But we haven't seen anything yet.

The book defines the problem and the book has the single viable solution.

16 But I say, walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. 17 For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you do not do the things that you want. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law.

The single force that can completely tame the wickedness latent in every fallen person . . . is Jesus. Jesus is the antidote to my fallen flesh. Jesus is the single source of power that can have ultimate victory over the evil that dwells in me.

2 Cor. 5:17 *Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*

That is the single solution for indwelling evil. How terrifying that our world has dismissed the single source of hope in a dark and evil world. How thankful we are that when all the restraints are vanished, we will have vanished from this world at the same time.

The judeo-christian ethic that formed western civilization came directly from this book. Family boundaries. Civil government boundaries. Spiritual boundaries of the church. Morality defined with the authority of God, from this book. Judgement promised for those who would rebel.

All of those boundaries defined in this book became the social norms, not just for christians, but for everyone. We are still living in the shadows of the morality and restraint against evil defined in this book. But that shadow of morality is almost completely gone. In my lifetime. Wiped out.

Christianity and Judaism seasoned the culture like salt. The culture itself took on the flavor of this book. But in the last 20 years, the church, the christians took on the flavor of the world. That salt has become tasteless.

Look around you. We who understand the human problem and condition of the fall are not surprised at the cancer that is closing in on the human race. We hold the solution in our hands. We have the single message that can pluck fallen sinners out of the fire. We can watch as God does miracles in peoples lives, changing them into His likeness, one life at a time.